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**EFL Teachers/Students Attitudes towards Using Thematic Activities  
in Developing Students' Speaking Skill  
The Case of first year LMD students of English at Tébessa University**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in language sciences

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## *Dedication*

*First and foremost, I would like to express my praise to the Almighty Allah for giving me the strength and the ability to finish this research.*

*This work is dedicated to my great parents, "Mr. MOHAMMED" and "Mrs. FADJRA" for their endless love, and sacrifices for me, the source of my happiness and success in my life.*

*To the candles of my life my brothers and sisters*

*To my dearest nieces and nephews*

*To my extended family,*

*To my best friends, and to my partner kawther with whom I share this work*

*To all those who are forgotten by my pen and never forgotten by my heart*

***HELIMI Souad***

***Dedication:***

*To the almighty God:*

*Quran Ali 'Imran 8 "Our Lord let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and  
grant us from Yourself mercy Indeed You are the Bestower"*

*To the seeds of my family tree, the God miracle, the depth of tenderness, my dear  
parents*

*To its branches, my heart beats brothers and sisters.*

*To its innocent papers, lovely nieces and nephews*

*To the twin of my heart my husband*

*To the special me*

*To my partner and my friends*

*GasmiKawther.*

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate teachers/ students' attitudes towards using thematic activities in developing the communicative skill (speaking) in EFL classrooms. Accordingly, the present dissertation hypothesizes that teachers of Oral Expression at the University of Tebessa hold positive attitudes towards using thematic activities and students of English at the University of Tebessa hold positive attitudes towards using thematic activities. To achieve the aim of this study, two questionnaires are administered to both oral expression teachers and First Year LMD students, at the department of English, at the University of Al-Arbi Tebessi, Tebessa. The results of this study show that using thematic activities/approach helps EFL students to develop their speaking skill and also motivates them to practise the English language outside the classroom. Moreover, it is clearly noticed that the teachers and the students who took part in this research hold positive attitudes towards implementing thematic activities in teaching/ learning English as a foreign language. In other words, the findings of the two questionnaires confirm the hypothesis of the present research. Therefore, the authors of this dissertation highly recommend the use of thematic activities in EFL classes.

## **List of abbreviation**

**TEFL:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language

**GTM:** Grammar Translation Method

**L1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

**CLT:** Communicative Language Teaching

**TBL:** Task-Based Learning

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ESL:** English as a Second Language

**CBI:** Content-Based Instruction

**TBI:** Theme-Based Instruction

**FL:** Foreign Language

**SL:** Second language

**EAP:** English for Academic Purpose

**CALP:** Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency

**BICS:** Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

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## General Introduction

### Introduction

English is dominant, global, and language number one in the world. No one can deny its importance and its powerful position. In this context Harmer (2007) claims: “By the end of the twentieth century English was already well on its way to becoming a genuine *Lingua Franca*, that is a language used widely for communication between people who do not share the same first (or even the second) language”(13). EFL learners can learn the four English language skills easily. The speaking skill takes a great part in developing their English faster because of its advantages. Thematic activities are important in raising the oral communication skill in the EFL classes and they are important for learners’ communicative competence. Because the learner can be engaged in the discussion when she/he feels that these themes suit her/his needs and interests and that are associated to real life. Donna & Snow (2017, p. 04) say: “Theme-based refers to instruction that focuses on specific themes of interest and relevance to the learners. The themes (e.g., Heroes, Save the environment, or Online Romance) create the organizing principle for the course”. In other words, theme-based instruction focuses on the selection of topics/themes that suit the learners and make them more comfortable to express their thoughts and ideas freely. This means that the learners will interact and focus when they find the appropriate atmosphere that the teacher creates throughout the adequate selection of themes.

## **1. Statement of the problem**

The primary reason of learning a foreign language is to be able to communicate accurately in a certain language. Today people's demand to acquire English is increasing since English has become the vehicle language used for communication across the world. Harmer (2007, p.13) notes that: "English is spoken by at least a quarter of the world's population." This means that English is widely spread and largely used. A large part of EFL students have different kinds of difficulties when communicating in English and the majority of them possesses weak performances and make errors. Al Hosni (2014, p. 22) considers that: "Speaking problems can be major challenges to effective foreign language learning and communication. English as foreign language (EFL) learners, no matter how much they know about the English language, still face many speaking difficulties." That is to say, learning to speak English as a foreign language remains difficult regardless of the amount of knowledge the learners have.

The EFL teachers use a variety of methods to improve student's communicative skill. Thematic activities are one of those methods which can help EFL students overcome their problems in speaking.

## **2. Aims of the study:**

The main aims of this study are:

- To investigate teachers/ students' attitudes towards using thematic activities in developing the communicative skill (speaking) in EFL classrooms.

### **3. Research questions:**

- Do teachers of oral expression at the University of Tebessa hold positive attitude towards using thematic activities?
- Do students of English at the University of Tebessa hold positive attitude towards using thematic activities?
- Do all EFL teachers of oral expression at the university of Tebessa use thematic activities?

### **4. Assumptions:**

It is assumed that:

- 1- Teachers of Oral Expression at the University of Tebessa hold positive attitudes towards using thematic activities.
- 2- Students of English at the University of Tebessa hold positive attitudes towards using thematic activities.
- 3- All teachers of oral expression at the University of Tebessa use thematic activities

### **5. Research Methods**

The method which is used in this research is a survey method. In this research the researchers want to investigate two variables: The use of thematic activities (In the theme -based model, the lessons are structured around topics or themes) (as cited in Durmaz, 2001), and EFL teacher/students attitudes towards using this in developing EFL students' speaking skill.

There are various types of research instruments and in this research the researchers used a questionnaire as a tool for gathering data. This questionnaire addressed both EFL teachers and students to know their opinions. The researchers decided to choose 30 participants out of the total population of first year LMD students at the department of English language university of Tebessa (70 students). In addition, they selected four teachers of oral expression module for doing this work.

## **6. Structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into two parts the theoretical and the practical part: The theoretical part contains two sections, in the first section the researchers speak about the speaking skill; in the second section they discuss the role of thematic activities in developing students' speaking skill. The practical part contains one chapter; the researchers deal with the presentation and the analysis of the data that are collected from the questionnaires.

# Chapter One: Speaking and Thematic Activities

## Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) requires the integration of the four language skills to master the language itself and to reach an advanced proficiency. In this dimension the speaking skill is the one of the most important skills in learning a second or a foreign language because speaking is considered as the mainstream skill of communication between the participants. In this respect, Ur (2009, p.120) claims: "Many if not most foreign language learners are interested in learning to speak". In other words, learners of foreign language consider that developing their speaking skill is important in language learning. Given the importance of the speaking skill many approaches and methods have been introduced to help EFL students develop their speaking skill. The thematic approach is one approach which is considered as an effective approach due to its importance.

This chapter provides an overview of the speaking skill and the thematic approach respectively. It is made up of two sections. The first section sheds light on the speaking skill while the second one deals with the thematic approach and its effectiveness in developing speaking.

## **Section One**

### **The Speaking Skill**

#### **1. Definition of speaking**

Speaking has attracted the attention of many linguists, pedagogues and scholars due to its importance in language teaching and learning. Thompson et al (1979, p.12) define speaking as: “a learned pattern of behavior and the principal means by which an individual conveys thoughts and feelings to others”. This indicates that speaking is a basic tool for communication. Nunan (2001, p.48) defines speaking as “a productive aural/oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning”. This means that speaking is a chain of verbal sentences which build a meaningful discourse. Speaking is an activity that requires the transformation of linguistic package into oral communication using specific body organs. Thompson et al (1979, p.12): “Speaking is a complex process that requires the coordination of both physical and mental skills”. It means producing a speech involves the combination of the activity of the body and the mind. Additionally, learners should speak both inside as well as outside the classroom walls (Thompson et al, 1979).

## 1.2. Functions of Speaking

Learners need to achieve specific functions of speaking in each interaction they make and there is a variety of functions depending on every language expert. Brown and Yule (1988, p.1) note two different functions of speaking: the interactional and the transactional functions. The interactional function is concerned with social relations and individuals' behavior while the transactional function is related more to the content. First, the interactional function is the casual and normal discourse in daily life. Brown and Yule (ibid, p.3) consider that: "It is clearly the case that a great deal of everyday human interaction is characterized by the primarily interpersonal rather than the primarily transactional use of language". This means that its aim is to make conversations for the purpose of conserving social relationships. And it is possible that these short conversations lead to broader social relations. This type of functions of speaking is found in short conversations about the weather, the news, and sports...etc. The transactional language transmits true and actual information and the speaker aims to send correct and clear information. This means that the main focus of transactional function is the message, its meaning, and how it is transmitted. It focuses on the understanding of the message and language use in each situation (Brown & Yule, 1988). In other words, the transactional language is important because it is part of human daily life and needs. But this kind of language must be clear and correct otherwise the information received by the recipient will take wrong direction in comprehending its meaning.

### **1.3. The Importance of the Speaking skill**

Speaking is important in the professional life and academic promotion of learners. EFL learners' dependence on the text book is not enough to master the language. Thus, the ability to communicate effectively with other English language speakers is an important factor in enhancing and developing the language. In the EFL context, learners have to practise the language repeatedly and interact with others. The speaking skill is important because it is a combination of all language skills. This idea is supported by Sarosdy et al (2006, p.57) who state that: "Of all the four simplex skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) speaking seems to be the most important as people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing a language". This means that speaking is highly important to be mastered among the other skills due to the reason that it includes all factors of language proficiency. Therefore, EFL learners ought to take advantage of every opportunity to speak due to its effectiveness in developing the language. Moreover, speaking is essential to overcome the linguistic difficulties such as grammar and vocabulary as well as the psychological issues such as lack of self-confidence which most of the students suffer from. Broughton et al (2003, p. 76) say:

However good a student may be at listening and understanding, it need not follow that he will speak well. A discriminating ear does not always produce a fluent tongue. There has to be training in the productive skill of speech as well.

This statement means that receptive skills are not enough for the learner. The student has to practise repeatedly what she/he receives through speaking otherwise she/he would face difficulties. Furthermore, the teacher has to encourage the learners and give them the priority to speak and give them chance to talk and discuss freely. She/he has to support them to interact inside and outside the classroom in order to

develop this skill and to make it a habit for them. Thus, the learner will get rid of her/his fears towards speaking. Because each time the student interacts in different contexts both inside and outside the classroom they will be able to discover something new that makes them able to speak fluently. Speaking is important for EFL learners to develop their language learning because they will enhance their ability to control the effective use of language.

## **1.4. Elements of Speaking**

For EFL learners speaking is a difficult task because they need to be fluent and skillful in the process of learning a foreign language. According to Harmer (2001, p. 269) the learners should hold specific characteristics that make them proficient in learning a second language. In other words, they should not depend only on language features to achieve the speech production but also should be linked to social process.

### **1.4.1. Language features**

For EFL learners it is very important to know these features to acquire the ability to express their ideas and opinions. These features include connected speech, expressive devices, lexis and grammar, and negotiation language.

#### **1.4.1.1. Connected speech**

The EFL speakers should not only have the ability to produce the speech but also to modify the speech production such as assimilation, omission, and addition. They can produce both separate utterances (as in saying I would have gone) and connected speech (as in saying I'd've gone) (Harmer,2001, p. 269).

### **1.4.1.2. Expressive devices**

Native speakers alternate their speech production such as pitch, volume, stress of the utterances, and speed via the use of non-verbal expressions. For the learners it is necessary to know this device to manipulate their speech production and convey the intended messages. From another perspective, the learners should know some if not most of the suprasegmental features to become good communicators.

### **1.4.1.3. Lexis and grammar**

In order to create useful forms of language and reach the communicative goal, most of EFL learners use the same lexical utterances to communicate with each other. It is necessary for the teacher to give her/his students' feedback about the language functions such as agreeing or disagreeing, surprise, and shock...etc. Students adopt those new utterances and start to use them when they communicate depending on various contexts.

### **1.4.1.4. Negotiation language**

The process of learning a foreign language deals more with negotiation of language to empower the learners' process of learning throughout further clarification, and explanation of unclear ideas. Negotiation of language can be via the use of formal expressions and phrases such as:

(I'm sorry) I didn't quite catch that.

What exactly does X mean?

Could you explain that again, please? (ibid, p. 270)

## **1.4.2. Mental/social processing**

According to Harmer (2001) the previous elements are not enough for EFL learners to master the language, there are other elements that are necessary too. These elements include language processing, interacting with others and on-the spot information processing.

### **1.4.2.1. Language processing**

In order to become effective speakers, learners need to process the language in their mind and set it in coherent order so that it leads to a clear and comprehensible output. Moreover, language processing deals with how to retrieve the words from the learners' memories and use them frequently when interacting. So, this leads to the development of vocabulary in the second language.

### **1.4.2.2. Interacting with others**

Interaction is an adequate way that makes the learners effective speakers. Moreover, the learners should be good listeners to build their understanding and to know how to understand the others and make them understand too.

### **1.4.2.3. (On –the spot) Information Processing**

Students should have the ability of processing information immediately when they get it and be ready to respond quickly.

## **1.5. Background of teaching speaking**

Throughout the history of teaching English as a foreign language, various methods, and approaches, have been adopted. Before the twentieth century the methodology of language teaching balanced between two types of approaches "*getting learners to use a language* (i.e., to speak and understand it) versus *getting learners to analyze the language* (i.e., to learn its grammatical rules)" (Celce-murcia,

2001, p.3). That is to say, those approaches focused on two main objectives either to learn how to use the language or to learn its structure. However, Many linguists such as (Richard and Rodger (1999), Nunan(2001)) have provided an overall view about the status of speaking in these methods.

To begin with, the **Grammar translation method (GTM)** grew up in the nineteenth century. This method is based on the form of language and its grammar rules. Additionally, it neglects the use of the target language and gives priority to the students' mother tongue. The GTM is based on the translation of sentences from L1 to L2 or vice versa. Hence, through the application of this method learners do not observe any progress in their ability to communicate and the use of the target language. However, the GTM has been criticized because it neglects speech production as Richard and Rodger (1999) claim that the GTM focuses on writing and reading and neglects speaking and listening.

As a reaction to the grammar translation method, a new method to teaching foreign languages has been developed which is the direct method. The **direct method** appeared to compensate for the deficiencies of the GTM method. This method developed new principles and it did not allow the use of the student's mother tongue. Moreover, it created an active classroom atmosphere which permits practising the target language to develop the students' pronunciation. Hence, the direct method gives more importance to the speaking skill as compared to the GTM (Celce-murcia,2001). Then, the reading approach came into appearance. It focuses on reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar. However, it neglects the speaking skill as Celce-murcia (2001, p.07) notes that "The teacher does not need to have good oral proficiency in the target language". This means that speaking in the target language is

not necessary for the teachers. In other words, developing the speaking skill is not a priority under this approach.

The **Audiolingual method** appeared as a reaction to the reading approach. Following this method, the teachers should be proficient in the listening and the speaking skills among the other skills because they are the models of their learners (Celce-murcia, 2001). Nunan, (2001) assumes that this method is based on the principles of behaviourist psychology. Students start to learn how to speak the target language through memorization. They learn the utterances, rules, and conversations or dialogues by heart from the books then repeat them.

According to Nunan (2001, p. 50) at the end of the twentieth century, language acquisition research rebuilt pedagogues' point of view about "how people learn to speak". It concludes that the learners cannot learn the spoken language through repetition of what has been done in the form of conversations. Instead, people should interact with each other to acquire a second language. According to him this led to the emergence of a new method which is communicative language teaching.

**Communicative language teaching (CLT)** is an approach to the teaching of second or foreign language. This method has two versions. The weak version states that teachers must form communicative activities through teaching the language. In the second version if the students learn via interaction, the teacher should provide them with lessons that make them interact in the second language (Nunan, 2001). In the same respect, Harmer (2001) adds that CLT approach plays a great role in developing the learners' communicative skill through the use of practical activities in the target language. The Communicative Approach is based on the practising the

target language throughout the integration of the four skills to become more accurate and fluent (Celce-murcia, 2001).

**Task-based learning (TBL)** is a new approach to teaching the second or the foreign language through the use of practical activities that involve all the learners. These activities provide the learners with opportunities to practice the four language skills and negotiate language and achieve communicative competence. However, this approach has been criticized because it is not appropriate to all the learner's levels ( Harmer, 2001).

**Content-based instruction** is considered as a newly born approach for teaching English as a foreign or a second language. This approach aims at enhancing EFL learners' speaking skill.

## **1.6. Aspects of Speaking**

Each language requires specific features; those features are readily linked to the learners' speaking skill. In this sense the speaking skill holds two important characteristics which are accuracy and fluency. According to Gower, Philips, & Walter (as cited in Derakhshan et al, 2016, p.178)

Speaking is the production skill that is included in two main categories: accuracy and fluency. Accuracy consists of using vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation through some activities, fluency takes into account "the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously.

According to them speaking which is a productive skill is composed of two main aspects which are accuracy and fluency. Accuracy consists of three elements which are vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation whereas; fluency is linked to the speed of the speech.

## **1.6.1. Accuracy**

According to (Hammerly, 1990; Pallotti, 2009; Wolfe-Quintero et al, 1998) accuracy refers to “the extent to which an L2 learner’s performance (and the L2 system that underlies this performance) deviates from a norm (i.e. usually the native speaker)” (cited in Housen et al, 2012, p.04). It means that accuracy represents the correct structure of second language production. In addition, Srivastana (2014) assumes that accuracy refers to the use of correct grammatical structure, word choice, and sound to become a good communicator. Accuracy does not only deal with spoken language but also with written language. Therefore, the learners of second language should respect these elements to become more accurate when they speak.

### **1.6.1.1. Grammar**

Grammar means the appropriate use of well-structured sentences to gain expertise in language production. If the grammar rules are violated or misused, the speech production becomes inappropriate and the communicators might be ineffective when they communicate (Harmer, 2001).

### **1.6.1.2. Vocabulary**

According to Nunan (2015) vocabulary is also necessary as grammar and pronunciation because if the speakers do not have the appropriate vocabulary they cannot communicate with others. Also, the learners should know all the functions of the word; how to acquire it, how to use it, and how to put it in a new context. These steps make the learners more accurate.

### **1.6.1.3. Pronunciation**

Grammar and vocabulary are not enough to become an accurate speaker, pronunciation is also another element of accuracy. Nunan (2015) argues that if the learners can pronounce the language accurately and avoid mispronunciation when they communicate, they become effective communicators.

### **1.6.2. Fluency**

Fluency is the main characteristic of speaking proficiency. According to Chambers & Lennon: "the term *fluency* has often been used to refer to a learner's or user's global language proficiency, particularly as characterized in terms of the ease, eloquence, 'smoothness' and native- likeness of speech or writing"(cited in Housen et al 2012 , p.p.16,17 ). This means, fluency has to do with the learners' degree of proficiency in the target language.

In addition, fluent learners hold the ability to communicate freely and easily without any hesitation, express themselves, and at the same time avoid misunderstanding and become fast and vivid (Nunan, 2015). Furthermore, speakers do not make pauses during their speech production. They produce the sounds directly without interruption, they respect the place of articulation of each sound without being neither fast nor slow (Thornbury, 2005).

## **1.7. Principles of Teaching Speaking**

According to Nunan (2001) learning a second language or a foreign language requires the mastery of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Many linguists (such as Nunan, 2001) see that speaking in the target language is the most difficult among the other skills because of two reasons. First, the speaking

skill is far from the other skills because the speakers should practise the language throughout negotiating with other people. Second, throughout the speaking skill speakers cannot brainstorm their speech like what they can do in the writing skill.

Teaching the speaking skill in foreign language contexts holds optimal principles which are discussed by many linguists such as, Harmer (2001), Thornbury (2005) and Brown (2000). Nunan (2001, ppp.54,55,56) proposes a number of principles of teaching speaking skill which are explained below.

- **Be aware of the differences between the foreign language and second language learning contexts**

Learning how to speak can take place in two broad contexts: foreign language and second language situations. A foreign language (FL) context "is one where the target language is not the language of communication in the society" (Nunan,2001, p. 54). Speaking in the FL context seems challenging for the learners because they lack opportunities to practise the language outside the classroom. A second language (SL) context "is one when the target language is the language of communication in the society" (ibid, p. 54). Second language learners are refugees, international students, in addition to some second language learners especially the immigrants who achieve their goal in developing their fluency in speaking skill but they lack accuracy (ibid).

- **Give students practice with both fluency and accuracy**

Both accuracy and fluency are two principles that need to be practised. Accuracy and fluency are the main focus of FL learners to become proficient in their language production. For that reason, teachers should provide their students with opportunities to develop their accuracy and fluency.

- **Provide opportunities for students to talk by using group and pair work, and limiting teacher talk**

According to Nunan (2001) teachers should minimize their intervention in the classroom and maximize the learners' practice. Moreover, the lessons should be learner-centered rather than teacher-centered.

- **Plan speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning**

According to Nunan (2001), research suggests that learners can progress through communicating in the target language because interaction builds the learners' confidence to express their ideas and make them understood by the others.

- **Design classroom activities that involve guidance and practice in both transactional and interactional speaking**

Speaking inside the classroom needs to incorporate both interactional and transactional purposes in teaching the target language to involve the learners and become more active.

## **1.8. The Roles of the Teacher**

The teacher is one of the basic units in the educational system. The essential function of the teacher is helping the learners to raise their educational level and to develop their abilities and competencies. Moreover, the teacher can take different roles in one session. As N. V. Fedicheva (2011, p.87) declares that: "The way the teacher behaves in different kinds of facilities will change according to the nature of the activities." In other words, the teacher does not take only one role while teaching but a variety of functions depending on the activities she/he provides to the learners. Sárosdy et al (2006, p.26) assume that: "The teacher has several roles in the

classroom. According to Harmer (2001) s/he can be a controller, an organiser, an assessor, a prompter, a participant and resource.”

## **1.9. Classroom Speaking Activities**

Speaking activities change when the context changes to fulfill the needs of the students. And the teacher should find the relevant activities to enhance her/his learner’ speaking skill. Scholars such as Harmer (2001) and Bygate (2009) provide many types of activities such as information gap, role-plays, prepared talks, and communication games.

### **1.9.1. Information gap**

Harmer (2001, p.88) states that: “One type of speaking activity involves the so-called ‘information gap’ – where two speakers have different parts of information making up a whole. Because they have different information, there is a ‘gap’ between them.” This means that information gap is a kind of speaking activities in which two students share different information to do one task. In this type of activities the teacher tries to bridge the gap between them and makes them collaborate to complete the task. Bygate (2009, p.70) gives an example in which he explains the procedure of this activity: Students in pairs each has a card bearing complementary information. Each student asks the other for their missing pieces of information:

A: How many bananas are there?

B: Five kilos (A writes five kilos on his list). . . How much cheese is there?

A: Three kilos . . .

This example shows the way the students have to answer the activity in which one of them stands on the other's information to solve the task. This kind of activities helps them to interact and cooperate with each other. In addition, it develops their speaking skill and it raises their creativity.

### **1.9.2. Role-plays**

The learners like the role-play because it breaks the routine and creates an enjoyable atmosphere. Harmer (2001, p.92) notes that "Role-play activities are those where the students are asked to imagine that they are in different situations and act accordingly". This means the learners take different characters depending on the context of the activity they have. They role-play what they imagine and interact through speaking. In addition, the teacher has to provide them with enjoyable and easy characters such as a teacher, a doctor, a journalist, a cook, and a singer...etc. At the end of the role play the teacher gives the learners a feedback and she/he takes their opinions about what they have done. Moreover, the advantage of role-play is that it enhances the learners' communicative skill.

### **1.9.3. Prepared talks**

One of the well-known activities in the curriculum is the prepared talks. The learners are asked to prepare talks about topics which they like and present them in the classroom. This type of prepared talks is written and formal and the students present them orally from notes (Harmer, 2001).

#### **1.9.4. Communication Games**

Games are highly preferable for the learners of foreign languages because they create vital and enjoyable sessions and they make the students more active. These games stimulate learners to interact and share ideas with others. And these games are found in many types of activities such as an information gap, description of pictures, arrangement of things, and looking for similarities and differences; where two or more students help each other to do the task (Harmer, 2001, p. 272). To explain this activity with an example, Bygate (2009.p.78) writes: ““What’s my Country?” is a guessing game, in which a student takes a card which has the name of a country on. The others then have to attempt to discover the country, asking as few questions as possible.” This means that the teacher gives one student a name of a country on a card and her/his partner has to guess it with some questions.

## **Section Two**

### **The Role of Thematic Activities in Developing Students' Speaking Skill**

#### **2.1. Overview of Content Based Instruction**

Content Based Instruction emerged in North America at the beginning of the 1960s with French immersion programs in Canada. In 1986 Mohan provides a new approach known as content-based instruction. This approach is an integrative approach which requires the connection between language learning and content learning, because it considers language as a medium of learning and acknowledges the role of context in communication. The combination of teaching of content and language through CBI enriches the context for language teaching and learning to expose students to a considerable amount of comprehensible language while learning content. Also, it motivates them to engage in real communication through interactions in the target language which has a crucial role in second language development (Byrnes, 2005; Gass& Mackey, 2006). CBI is applied in the secondary level, and in the universities of California, Los Angeles and the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California along with the University of British Columbia and the University of Ottawa (as cited in Brinton & Snow, 2017).

Content Based Instruction as an approach overemphasises the integration of both language and content in the teaching process. Further, Mohan (1986) contributed to the progress of CBI pedagogy. Second language learners and foreign language learners are in need to the use of content-based instruction to practice the language. The backbone of central research in second language acquisition considers that second language learners

need to practise the language in the classroom (Mohan cited in Brinton & Snow, 2017).

At the end of the 1980s the modern language teaching community in the US started to use CBI principles. As a result, this approach spread in many universities such as; the University of Minnesota, Eastern Michigan University, Earlham College (Indiana), and the University of Rhode Island (Krueger & Ryan, 1993). This approach has developed through time and has been used in the EFL and ESL contexts. CBI approach holds specific principles that give its opportunities to become a successful approach in enhancing the second language learners.

## 2.2. The Three Prototype Models of Content-Based Instruction

Content-based instruction consists of three models which are: sheltered instruction, adjunct instruction and theme-based instruction. These models are discussed in what follows:

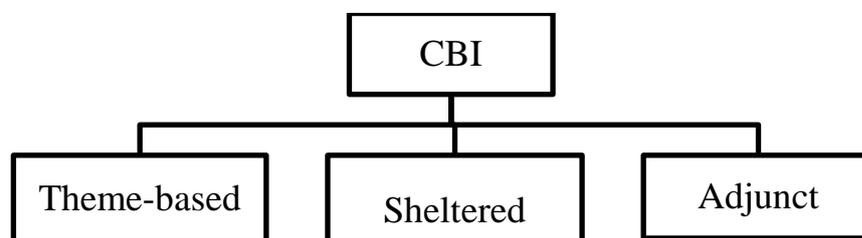


Figure 1. The Three Prototype Models of CBI by Brinton & Snow (2017, p.05)

### 2.2.1. Sheltered instruction

The sheltered model is the first type of the content based instruction. Dueñas (2003, p.6) assumes that: “The term ‘sheltered’ derives from the model’s deliberate separation of second language students from native speakers of the target language for the purpose of content instruction“. This means that the purpose of sheltered model is to differentiate between the second language learners and the native speakers of the

target language. This model was designed at the University of Ottawa, and through time it is applied in both the elementary and the secondary level in the U.S in addition to the EFL contexts (Brinton and Snow, 2017).

As an example of the sheltered model, (Long and Porter cited Moore and Sayer, 2009). Argue that teachers should encourage their learners' involvement with activities that motivate them to practise the language using various modalities: input (reading, listening) and output (writing, speaking). That is to say, teachers should provide the learners with both comprehensible input, and opportunities to interact with the teacher as well as with their classmates.

### **2.2.2. Adjunct instruction**

The adjunct model is the second type of content-based instruction; the main focus of this model is integrating the language course with the content course. In other words, it is the integration of these two aspects in order to achieve the intended goal. In this trend Brinton and Snow say that: “This model offers students “two for one”—that is, increased language proficiency as well as in depth mastery of the content material“ (2017, p. 08). Put differently, the importance of this model lies in the fact that it focuses on both the content and language proficiency which can increase the students’ competence.

An example of the adjunct model involves an English/Philosophy adjunct course offered at an English-medium private university in Turkey. The adjunct model is used in the second level at the university to enrich their level in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes. In this example, the learners of the second level link both English and philosophy courses, the main purpose of this model is to help

the learners learn the content and acquire the academic language proficiency simultaneously (Brinton and Snow, 2017).

### **2.2.3. Theme-Based Instruction**

Theme-based instruction, which is the main focus of this research, holds numerous terminology such as: theme-based instruction (Brinton and Snow, 2017), thematic approach (Min, Rashid, Nazri, 2012). Integrative theme (Barma& Bader, 2013), themed courses (Mangan, 2014), thematic teaching (Lipson, Wixson, & Peters, 1993) and thematic program (Lung, 1999). Thematic approach is widely used in teaching second or foreign languages. Scholars have mentioned the rationale behind using a theme based approach as a "meaningful" way to engage the learners in the learning process (Handal & Bobis, 2004; Lipson, et al., 1993); related to learners' life experiences, interests, and previous knowledge, (Mangan, 2014). This approach promotes positive attitudes in the learners (Lipson, et al., 1993) (as cited in Lisa and Jack Tessier, 2015).

In this respect, Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) state that theme-based instruction is the most common model of CBI. Theme-based instruction is usually used in ESL courses with content; its goal is to enhance L2 competence within specific topics. In theme-based course, the language instructor is responsible for both language and content, but students are evaluated primarily on their L2 skills (Brinton, Snow and Wesche cited in Master, 1997, p. 01). Moreover, Stoller and Grabe(1997) advocate that among the sheltered instruction and adjunct instruction, theme-based instruction seems to represent all the practical instruction. They argue that both sheltered and adjunct instruction cannot replace theme-based instruction.

Additionally, the two terms theme-based and content based are used alternatively, Stoller & Grabe (1997, p. 04) provide that:

In the CBI literature, there are common references to other models of content-based instruction (e.g., adjunct or sheltered instruction models). These models are not alternatives to theme-based instruction; rather, they represent two different organizational structures for carrying out theme-based instruction. For this reason we see the two terms, content-based instruction and theme-based instruction, as interchangeable.

In other words, theme-based instruction and content-based instruction are used interchangeably. However, the other instructions such as adjunct and sheltered are differed from the theme-based.

In content-based instruction the learners practise the four language skills while participating in activities that focus on the content in various areas such as science, mathematics, and social studies. Furthermore, Mohan (cited in Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989) states that in content-based language instruction, the primary goal of the teachers is to help students to enhance their communicative competence, through the use of real life topics. The secondary goal is to present interesting topics that contain new concepts and new terminology to enrich the learners' vocabulary. Theme-based instruction is an effective approach because the themes are chosen according to the importance, interest, and needs of the students (as cited in Huang, 2001, p.223). Moreover, Rusdi provides that: "By using thematic materials, the students are expected to be more interested in their English class. They can be involved in the class activity by speaking up their opinion related to the theme" (2015, p. 258). Moreover, EFL learners become more interested and more active due to the use of thematic approach.

Bolanos states that: “Theme based CBI is usually used in EFL contexts, theme based CBI can be taught by an EFL teacher or team taught with content specialist“ (2013, p. 25). Teachers can create a course of study structured on the students’ own interests and the content can be chosen from an enormous number of various topics. This model which can be applied in EFL classes starts with selecting what the content will be then the choice of the useful materials (Bolanos, 2013). Furthermore, theme-based instruction is the most common model of CBI at preliminary and intermediate levels of language education. Theme-based courses are organised in two ways either focusing on one single overarching topic divided into more specific subtopics or link the sub-topics and increase the learners’ interest (Dupuy, Weigle & Jensen cited in Abasi, 2013).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) both theme-based instruction and content-based instruction share some principles such as when the information of a second language is getting as meaningful, interesting, and intended the learners can be more successful. In addition content-based instruction is an approach whereas theme-based instruction is a method.

### **2.3. Designing a Theme-Based Instruction**

Through the use of the thematic approach teachers make their teaching more planned, structured, active and interesting. In the theme -based model, the lessons are structured around topics or themes. Brinton, Snow & Wesche provide that; this model is different from the other traditional types because the traditional ones restrict the learners to just one single activity like speaking or reading. However, in this model learners deal with various activities organized around one major topic or topics. In addition, the topics are more related to the vocabulary and the concepts are recycled

throughout different activities and this help the learners to enhance their communicative competence. Since teachers in theme-based courses are responsible for teaching the topics, they must be enthusiastic about them in order to stimulate their learners' interest (Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989). In a study done by Gianelli (1991), thematic approach was applied with kindergarten learners including first, second, third and fourth grade learners, the themes were broad, multiple concepts. According to her, the results were dramatic because the learners did not forget what they were learning and they became experts in the subject they learnt (as cited in Durmaz, 2001).

Snow (2001) states that theme-based syllabus has been widely used in teaching language courses for university level students with different backgrounds since it also serves as a basis for English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The topics can be chosen from a wide variety of contents which will lead students to expand their background knowledge and integrate themselves into the lessons easily (cited in Can, 2009).

Moreover, Esu (2012) cited in C.O. & C.U Okoro. (2016, pp.65, 66) highlight the following steps in selecting a theme:

- 1) Choosing a theme: The teachers synthesize to link the theme to the student's real life.
- 2) Designing the integrated curriculum: The teachers must build the learning objectives of the curriculum by both language skills and content knowledge around the theme.

3) Designing the instruction: It involves a dynamic schedule in the class, managing the time to devote specific topics organizing fieldtrips, and group work...etc.

4) Encouraging presentation and celebration: "Because thematic instruction is often project oriented. It frequently involves students going collective presentation to the rest of the school or community."

Theme-based syllabus is structured in two various ways. The first way is structuring the syllabus with separable topics such as sports, politics, and business and this is considered as a preferable way for learners that have different backgrounds (Can, 2009). The second way is centered on one major topic as a title and divided into some subtitles. For instance, sports as the main theme and the syllabus can be structured around it by adding some subtitles like football, tennis, handball and... etc (Can, 2009).

Stoller and Grabe (1997, ppp. 5,6,7) outline the organization of theme based course which is also known as the six T's approach (themes, texts, topics, threads, tasks, transitions) as follows:

**1. Themes:** The units organized around themes according to students' interests, needs and likes, taking into account the relevance and the appropriateness of those themes.

**2. Texts:** Students accessories (interest, like, and appropriateness, length, coherence, connection to other materials), should be present in the classroom through the use language in meaningful texts.

**3. Topics:** Themes in the unit are divided into topics. A theme may consist of several subtopics structured around one topic to provide students with opportunities to explore both content and language.

**4. Threads:** They are defined by natural linkages across themes. They help students to recycle content and revise the selection of the learning strategies.

**5. Tasks:** learners can enhance their skills through the use of language, such as taking notes, summarizing, and picking out the key information from texts through tasks. They may also develop skills such as problem solving, and critical thinking.

**6. Transitions:** Topics and tasks are linked smoothly by transitions.

## **2.4. Theories Supporting Theme-Based Instruction**

The rationale behind applying the thematic approach is supported by many scholars who believe that the learners should use topics and/ or themes which would engage them in the classroom and develop their speaking skill. Krashen, Vygotsky, Cummins and Genesee are among the advocates of theme based instruction.

### **2.4.1. The input hypothesis (Krashen's hypothesis)**

Krashen's hypothesis or what is called the input hypothesis (1982) is one of the main theories of second language acquisition. This theory is based on meaningful and understandable input for the learners. In addition, both learning the second language and learning the first language can be in parallel. Also, the input should be comprehensible for the learner to use the language easily without any difficulties. In this trend Kavanagh (2016, p.241) states that:

Central to Krashen's (1982, 1985) theories is the notion that second language acquisition can parallel the way children learn their mother tongue. The hypothesis claims that adults do not lose the ability to acquire languages the way that children do.

Furthermore, this theory supports the thematic approach because this approach also creates a comprehensible, interesting, and appropriate atmosphere for the language input (Omoto and Nyongesa, 2013).

The input hypothesis suggests that comprehension in the second language acquisition is the main element of successful language learning. Krashen assumes that successful language acquisition focuses on meaning rather than form. Crandall claims that: "Successful language learning is possible when there is a sufficient opportunity to engage in meaningful use of language and thematic instruction is good strategy for it." (cited in Can, 2009, p. 19). In other words, effective language learning can happen when the learners are engaged in language use and this can be achieved through thematic instruction.

#### **1.4.2. Vygotsky Theory**

Vygotsky's theory of teaching a second or a foreign language is a support to this approach. Vygotsky's theory is about cognition and learning. He cited two key concepts which are related to the practice of integrated instruction or thematic approach. The first key concept is the mental function because it occurs first between people in the social environment when they interact with each other (interpersonal), then within the infant on the psychological plane (interpersonal) (Rogoff and Wertsch, 1984). Vygotsky's second key concept related to the development of this dynamics process, exactly, how the individuals proceed psychological functioning from lower stages to upper stages. It is the distinction between what a learner can achieve individually in one hand, and what he/she can achieve in interactional social environment on the other hand. Since the learners interact with each others

throughout theme based they may create an active environment and develop their speaking skill.

### **1.4.3. Cummins Theory**

Cummins (1980) proposes another significant support to the theme-based instruction. He makes a distinction between the concepts Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills is the social environment that enables the learners to become more interactive with other individuals. He assumes that BICS cannot take a lot of time through the acquisition process; it takes approximately two to three years. However, although the Cognitive and Academic Language Proficiency is a complex process, it is more demanding. Depending on a collection of variables for each ESL learner, Cummins provides that the CALP process takes from 5 to 12 years to develop. According to Crandall (1987), it seems that the learners may enhance their communicative competence, meanwhile they can find themselves in front of other obstacles in the discussion such as, sciences, Politics, civilization, literature, or social studies. In addition, a course is surrounded by themes that are created according to the environment that upholds communicative elements which perhaps enable the learners to acquire academic language in professional way (as cited in Can, 2009).

### **1.4.4. Genesee Theory**

Genesee (1994) provides another argument supporting thematic approach. Since the themes and/or topics can be chosen according to the students' interests and needs, it is possible to build the courses depending on the learners' previous knowledge. He articulates that learning becomes eloquent when the learners practise

their already existing knowledge and skills into new situations of learning (Can, 2009). Also as the learners make use of their previous schemata, learning becomes more eloquent and comprehensible demonstrating the development in linguistic, cognitive and academic skills recursively. This situation also minimizes anxiety, and maximizes motivation and self-esteem in learning the foreign language (Kasper, cited in Can, 2009).

## **2.5. Theme-Based Instruction as an Integration of Language Skills**

Theme based instruction contributes to the integration of the four language skills. In this respect, Martinez provides that: “Theme-based instruction has proven to be effective in integrating language skills and creating a learning environment that allows the learner to become comfortable with the process“(2016, p. 12). This means that, in teachers should avoid the segregation of the skills because it minimizes learners' chances to practise the language inside the classroom. In addition, teachers should know how to create an enthusiastic atmosphere which makes the learners participate during classes as well as to use the appropriate language that suits the topics being discussed while speaking. Furthermore, interaction among learners and teachers is necessarily in a learning situation. Therefore, it is important to integrate the skills in order to make learning more meaningful and relevant to the learners. The integration of skills makes the students responsible to face challenges in real life communication in the second language (Martinez, 2016).

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001) in the same context, theme-based course offers a good basis for integrated skills approach because the topics selected show coherence and continuity across skill areas. Theme-based model is designed around multiple themes in one unit such as urban violence, cross-cultural differences

in marriage practices, natural wonders of the world, or a broad topic such as change (Tolstykh, 2012, p. 40).

## **2.6. The Importance of Theme-Based Instruction in Developing Speaking**

The use of thematic approach improves the learners' level because it fosters their responsibility and independence, and creates an interactional classroom atmosphere. Through the use of interesting themes, the learners will practise the language, since they do not just listen to their teachers but rather speak, interpret, and discuss academic issues together. As Stoller and Grabe (1997) assume that topics are the main focus of the course. These topics help to build effective classroom activities, motivate the learners to participate in the classroom and they develop their language skills and learning strategies. Moreover, the thematic approach is an effective approach that is useful for both teachers and students.

Varun (2014) assumes that thematic approach is a way of teaching and learning the second or the foreign language. Thematic approach is a process that enables the learners to communicate effectively. In addition through this approach the learners can practise the language inside the classroom through themes then outside the classroom via interacting with the others. Also, it helps the learners to enrich their vocabulary. Additionally, thematic approach increases the interests of the students throughout classroom activities, thus enhancing the cognitive development of the learners. Moreover, this approach stimulates the learners to practise in social life and use the language outside the classroom. In addition, the learners could enlarge their language skill to do more in the other fields such as economy, management, business (Xiao, 2010).

Elaggoune (2015) claims that in this approach themes may be announced through both videos and/ or handouts. Thematic approach enlarges the learners'engagement and involvement in the learning process. It might help the learners simultaneously to develop language skills, communicative competence and other skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation, collaboration, social interaction, productivity and leadership (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

The initial aim of the theme based approach is to assist learners to develop their second language competence with a focus on language skills and function via a particular theme. Furthermore, Brown (2001) argues that theme-based instruction offers an alternative in the teaching learning process by structuring a course around a topic or a theme that can increase learners' interest (cited in Fathimah, 2014). Furthermore, Cameron (2001) argues that theme-based teaching provides more opportunities to initiate new vocabulary concepts that focus on a topic which can enrich the vocabulary meaning and use. This will help them to communicate effectively. In addition, she also states that teaching that is integrated around a theme is interesting to learners since it can support them to learn naturally.

Theme-based instruction has proven to be an effective approach in integrating language skills and creating a learning atmosphere that allows the learners to become more comfortable during the courses. Thematic instructional approach is a way of teaching and learning where arranging interesting and appropriate themes are connected together and integrated within a thematic approach to empower the curriculum. Here the learners are put in the context of a real life situation to allow the learners for creative exploration (Martinez, 2016).

In this trend, Rusdi(2015, p. 258) claims that:

By using Thematic materials, the students are expected to be more interested in their English class. They can be involved in the class activity by speaking up their opinion related to the theme. Here the students will ask to be more active in communicating what comes in their mind when the teacher introduces a theme. Students in the class will be guided to describe something related to the theme and other will be asked to response their friends. It will be a good way for students to interact with one another.

In other words, thematic activities motivate students to interact with each other and communicate their ideas. These activities stimulate them to speak about a given theme introduced by their teachers.

The thematic approach maximizes the learners' interests, it helps them to understand the connections between real situations and life experiences, and it keeps learners engaged. Also it saves the teachers' time because it incorporates all contents and draws on connections from real situations and life experiences (John, 2015). This approach is an effective strategy that helps the EFL learners to develop their competence in speaking. It is built up under the students' need and interests to create active classrooms. In addition throughout the use of thematic materials the students are actively involved in the learning process. By the use of a variety of themes learners enhance their communicative competence and enrich their schematic knowledge. Moreover, EFL learners are expected to be more interested in their class via the application of this approach (Rusdi, 2015). Additionally, thematic approach is a way of teaching integrating themes within the curriculum. However, through the integration of various themes the students may have many opportunities to communicate in the classroom and share their ideas with the others.

## **Conclusion:**

In a nut shell, it has been mentioned in this chapter that the speaking skill is one of the basic skills that EFL students should develop. However, the development of this vital aspect of language learning depends to a large extent on the approach and/ or method followed by the teacher. The thematic approach can be effective that can be adopted by foreign language teachers to enhance their students' speaking skill. The next chapter aims to explore the attitudes of teachers of oral expression and students at the department of English at the University of Tebessa to see whether they believe in the importance of thematic activities or not.

## **Chapter two**

### **The Field work**

#### **Introduction**

The current chapter is dedicated to the presentation and analysis of the data obtained from the two administered questionnaires; the teachers and the students' questionnaires. It begins with the presentation of the sample. Then, it moves to the description, the analysis, and discussion of the questionnaires' results. This chapter ends with providing a set of recommendations.

#### **3.1. Students' questionnaire**

##### **3.1.1. Description of the sample**

In this research the population is first year LMD students at the department of English at the University of Laabi Tebessi, Tebessa. The sample is composed of 30 students, which has been randomly selected from the total population (70 students) following the simple random sampling strategy which done by pulling names out of a hat. The aim for choosing first year level is to see how they develop and perform their speaking skill in a new environment and how can thematic activities help them to do so.

##### **3.1.2. Description of the questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire is composed of eighteen (18) questions, which are varied; either close-ended, or open-ended questions. The questionnaire is divided into three (3) sections: the first section aims to gain general information about the

respondents. It contains three questions. The second section is about the speaking skill, it comprises eight questions from question four (4) to question eleven (11). The third section aims at investigating the role of thematic activities in developing EFL learners' speaking skill. It consists of seven questions from the question number twelve (12) to the question number eighteen (18).

### 3.1.3. The Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

The collected data was analyzed via IBM SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to yield frequency, percentage, means (Measures of Central Tendency), and standard deviation. This program calculates and analyses the students' responses to the questionnaire. Each question will be analyzed and discussed separately.

#### Section One: General Information

##### Tables of frequencies

##### Question One: Age:...

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid 18	13	43,3		
19	7	23,3		
20	6	20,0		
21	1	3,3		
22	3	10,0		
Total	30	100,0	2,1333	1,30604

Table 01: students' Age

In this sample students' ages vary between 18 and 22 years old. The table above shows that 13 students are in the age of 18 years old. In addition, it shows that (7) which represents (23.3%) of the students are in the age of 19 years old. This

means that the majority of the students are in the ordinary age of first year students at the university. Additionally, 6 representing 20.0% of the students are in the age of 20 years and only student is in the age of 21. Finally, three students are in the age of 22 years old. It can be noted that the mean score of students' age (Q1) is (M=2,1333), while standard deviation (SD=1,3060) is high which indicates variation in the students' age.

**Question 2: Specify your gender**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Male	8	26,7		
Female	22	73,3		
Total	30	100,0	1,7333	,44978

Table 02: Students' gender

The results of the table above show that 8 students which represent (26.7%) of the students are males. However, 22 representing 73.3% of the students are females. These results indicate that the majority of the students are females and this may be because girls are more interested in learning languages than males. The mean score of students' gender (Q2) is (M= 1,7333), and the standard deviation (SD=,44978) is low which shows a small variation in the students' gender.

**Question 3: Was English your first choice**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Yes	21	70,0		
No	9	30,0		
Total	30	100,0	1,3000	,46609

Table 3: Students' choices

The results in the table above show that 21 students (70.0%) are the ones who opted for the first option indicating that studying English was their first choice. However, nine students (30.0%) state that it was not their first choice. This indicates that the majority of the students prefer studying English. The mean score of students'

choices to study English language (Q3) is (M=1,3000), and the standard deviation (SD= ,46609) is low which designates a small variation in the students' choices.

## Section Two: The Speaking Skill

### Question 4: In your opinion, speaking in English is regarded as

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Easy	7	23,3		
Difficult	4	13,3		
Average	19	63,3		
Total	30	100,0	2,4000	,85501

Table 4: Students' opinions about the degree of difficulty of speaking

The table above demonstrates that seven students (23.3%) find speaking in English easy. In addition, four students or (13.3%) find it difficult and this result represents the minority of the sample. Moreover, the majority of the students (19) find speaking in English average. The mean score of question (4) is (M=2,4000), and the standard deviation (SD= ,85501) is relatively high which denotes a small variation in the participants' answers .

### Question 5: Among these skills what is the most difficult skill for you?

	Frequenc	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Listening	10	33,3		
Speaking	13	43,3		
Reading	3	10,0		
Writing	4	13,3		
Total	30	100,0	2,0333	,99943

Table 5: The most difficult skill

The results in the table above indicate that 10 students or (33.3%) find listening as the most difficult skill among the four skills. In addition, the majority of the sample (13 students) find that speaking is the most difficult skill this may be due to the fact that speaking requires the integration of the four skills. Moreover, only 3

students believe that reading is the most difficult skill. Finally, 4 students or about (13.3%) believe that writing is a hard task to do. The mean score of question 5 is (M=2,0333), and the standard deviation (SD=,99943) is considerably high which points a variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 6: How often do you participate in the classroom?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Always	9	30,0		
Often	8	26,7		
Sometimes	10	33,3		
Rarely	3	10,0		
Total	30	100,0	2,2333	1,00630

Table 6: Students' frequency of participation

The table above demonstrates that 9 students or (30.0%) state that they always participate. This result may suggest that they are interested in the topics they study and they are not afraid to speak. Additionally, eight (8) students claim that they often participate in the classroom. However, the majority of the sample (10) or about (33.3%) sometimes participate. These results show that they may have difficulties in speaking and practice the language in the classroom. Finally, the minority of the sample (3) or about (10.0%) say that they rarely participate. It can be noted that the mean score of question (6) is (M=2,2333), and the standard deviation (SD=1,00630) is high which reveals a disagreement and variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 07: If you opt for the options d and e (Rarely and Never) answer the following question. Your lack of participation in the classroom is due to: ( you can choose more than one answer)**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid difficulty in pronunciation	4	13,3		
Poor vocabulary and grammar	20	66,7		
Psychological factors	6	20,0		
Total	30	100,0	2,0667	,58329

Table 7: The reasons behind students' lack of participation in the classroom

The results in the table above show that four students believe that their lack of participation in the class is due to difficulty in pronunciation. However, most of them about twenty (20) students say that their lack of participation in the classroom is due to the poor vocabulary and grammar. Moreover, six (6) students claim that their lack of participation in the class is due to psychological factors. The mean score of question (7) is (M=2,0667), and the standard deviation (SD=,58329) is low which shows a small variation in the respondents' answers.

**Question 08: On which language aspect do you focus more while you speak?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Pronunciation	11	36,7		
Fluency	3	10,0		
Grammar	12	40,0		
Vocabulary	4	13,3		
Total	30	100,0	2,3000	1,11880

Table8: The language aspect students focus on

As it is indicated in the table above, 11 students state that they focus on pronunciation. In addition, the minority of the sample (3) or about (10.0%) focus on the fluency. Moreover, the majority of the sample (12) or about (40.0%) focus on the grammar and this indicates that they want to make a correct conversations. Finally, four (4) students or about (13.3%) focus more on vocabulary. The mean score of the

question (8) is (M=2,3000), and the standard deviation (SD=1,11880) is high which indicates a disagreement and variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 09: When you speak, what do you feel?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Confident	9	30,0		
Nervous	8	26,7		
Shy	13	43,3		
Total	30	100,0	2,1333	,86037

Table 09: Students' psychological state when speaking

The table above shows that nine (9) students or (30.0%) feel confident when they speak. In addition, the minority of the sample (8) or about (26.7%) feel nervous when they speak. Finally, the majority of the sample (13) or about (43.3%) feel shy when they speak. It can be noted that the mean score of question nine (9) is (M=2,1333) and the standard deviation (SD=,86037) is relatively high which indicates variation in the respondents' answers.

**Question 10: How do you prefer to be corrected when you make errors?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid in front of everyone?	16	53,3		
Privately	13	43,3		
not to be corrected at all	1	3,3		
Total	30	100,0	1,5000	,57235

Table 10: Students' correction preferences

The results above indicate that the majority of the sample (16) or about (53.3%) prefer to be corrected in front of everyone. Moreover, (13) or about (43.3%) of the students prefer to be corrected privately in case they make errors this may mean that they are shy from their classmates. However, just one student states that she/ he

does not prefer to be corrected at all. The mean score of the question (10) is (M=1,5000), and the standard deviation (SD=1,5000) is high which signals a disagreement and variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 11: Does your teacher’s feedback encourage you to speak in Oral Expression classes?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Yes	26	86,7		
No	4	13,3		
Total	30	100,0	1,1333	,34575

Table 11: Students’ attitudes towards feedback

The table above indicates that the majority of the sample (26) or about (86.7%) are positively affected by the teachers’ feedback to speak in classroom. However, the minority of the sample (4) or about (13.3%) find that teachers’ feedback is not a factor that motivates them to speak in oral expression sessions. The mean score of the question (11) is (M=1,1333), and the standard deviation (SD=,34575) is low which denotes a small variation between the students' responses.

**Question 12: Which type of oral activities motivates you more to speak?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid role-playing	21	70,0		
problem-solvingactivities	4	13,3		
information gap activities	5	16,7		
Total	30	100,0	1,4667	,77608

Table 12: Students’ motivating speaking activities

As the table above indicates, the majority of the sample (21) or about (70.0%) claim that they prefer the role-play kind of activities to speak. However, four (4) students say they like problem-solving. Finally, five (5) students or around (16.7%)

prefer the information gap activities. The mean score of the question (12) is (M=1,4667), and the standard deviation (SD=,77608) is relatively high which designates variation in the participants' responses.

**Question 13: Have you ever heard about thematic activities?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Yes	27	90,0		
No	3	10,0		
Total	30	100,0	1,1000	,30513

Table 13: Students' familiarity with thematic activities

The results in the table above indicate that the majority of the respondents (27 students) know what thematic activities are. Perhaps they are used to do this kind of activities. However, only three (3) students have never heard about thematic activities. The mean score of question (13) is (M=1,1000), and the standard deviation (SD=,30513) is low which indicates a small variation in the respondents' answers.

**Question 14: What type of topics encourages you to speak in oral expression classes?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Politics	1	3,3		
Science	6	20,0		
Romance	5	16,7		
Education	14	46,7		
social media	4	13,3		
Total	30	100,0	3,4667	1,07425

Table 14: Students' preferable topics

The results above show that there are different topics that motivate the students to speak. Only one student states that she/ he prefers political topics. In addition, six students like the scientific topics. Five students favor romantic topics.

Moreover, the majority of the informants (14 students) state that they prefer the educative topics. Finally, four students prefer topics about social media. This variety of results indicates that every student has her/ his own kind of topics that encourages her/him to speak in oral expression sessions. The mean score of question (14) is (M=3,4667), and the standard deviation (SD=1,07425) is high which shows a disagreement and variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 15: I participate more when the teacher engages me in themes which are of interest of me**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Agree	18	60,0		
Stronglyagree	11	36,7		
Disagree	1	3,3		
Total	30	100,0	1,4333	,56832

Table 15: Students' attitudes towards themes

The results above present that the majority of the sample (18 students) agree that they participate more when they have themes they prefer. In addition, 11 students strongly agree that preferable topics make them feel more engaged inside the classroom. Perhaps these results show that these topics make them more motivated to speak and share the ideas they have. Finally, only one 1student disagrees. The mean score of question (15) is (M=1,4333), and the standard deviation (SD= ,56832) is low which indicates a small variation in the students' responses.

**Question 16: I feel highly motivated when I am engaged in themes which belong to me**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Agree	18	60,0		
Stronglyagree	12	40,0		
Total	30	100,0	1,4000	,49827

Table 16: Students' attitudes towards the use of themes of their interest

The table above demonstrates that all the informants agree with the statement provided claiming that they are highly motivated when they are engaged in themes which belong to them. The mean score question (16) is (M=1,4000), and the standard deviation (SD=,49827) is low which signals a small variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 17: Do thematic activities affect your level of speaking in the classroom?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid yes	27	90,0		
no	3	10,0		
Total	30	100,0	1,1000	,30513

Table 17: Students' opinions about the influence of thematic activities

The table above indicates that the majority of the respondents, 27 students agree that thematic activities affect the level of speaking. However, three students disagree that thematic activities are helpful for them to enhance their level of speaking. The mean score of question (17) is (M=1,1000), and the standard deviation (SD=,30513) is low which indicates a small variation in the students' responses.

### **Discussion of the Students' Questionnaire**

From the analysis of the student's questionnaire, it can be deduced that most of the students are in the ordinary age of first year at the university and most of them are females. Additionally, the majority of students sate that they have chosen to study

English which may suggest that they like this language and they want to develop it. Moreover, most of the respondents claim that their level in speaking is average because they are fresh students and they have not been trained in speaking yet. An important point to raise here is that most of the students who participated in this study state that speaking is the most difficult skill for them. In addition, most of them do not participate in oral expression activities because of poor vocabulary and grammar. Furthermore, they feel shy when they speak and they prefer to be corrected in front of everyone because they want to get rid of this shyness and get self-confidence. Additionally, the majority of the students favor the role-play technique because it helps them to practise the language. Also, they are familiar with thematic activities and they like to be engaged in activities of their interest which would make them motivated to speak. In addition, they agree that thematic activities help them to develop their speaking level. Finally, most of the students did not answer question number 18 which is about the other activities that can enhance their speaking skill among the thematic activities. There are just four (4) students who replied to this question; the first participant states that she/he prefers project work and oral presentation among the thematic activities. The second participant says that she/he prefers group-work to practise the language and develop her/ his speaking skill. The third participant claims that she/he prefers the imitation of native speakers' speeches. For the fourth participant, she/he prefers reading books to enrich her/his vocabulary and become an effective speaker.

## **3.2. Teachers' questionnaire**

### **3.2.1. The Sample**

The sample of the current research consists of four teachers of oral expression at the department of English at the University of Laarbi Tebessi, Tebessa. They are chosen because they are teachers of the oral expression module and they can provide necessary information on how to develop their students' speaking.

### **3.2.2. Description of Teachers' Questionnaire**

. The questionnaire consists of nineteen (19) questions of two types: close-ended and open-ended questions. And the teachers have to tick the appropriate box (✓) to indicate their choice, and to specify their answer when needed. The questionnaire is divided into three (3) sections: the first section is about background information that contains three (3) questions from one (1) to three (3). The second section is about specific information of teaching the speaking skill; it starts from question four (4) to twelve (12). The third section is about the thematic activities; from question thirteen (13) to nineteen (19). And the teachers are asked to add further comments about this subject

### **3.3.3. The Analysis of the Results**

The collected data are analyzed via using IBM SPSS software to yield frequency, percentage, means (Measures of Central Tendency), and standard deviation. This program calculates and analyses the teachers' responses to the questionnaire, to find how thematic activities enhance the students' speaking skill. Each question is analyzed and discussed separately.

## Section one: General Information

### Tables of frequency

#### Question 01: Degree held

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid MA (magister/Master)	4	100,0	2,00000	,000000

Table 17: Degree held

The table above indicates that the four (4) teachers have magister/master degree. It can be noted that the mean score of question (1) is (M=2,00000), and the standard deviation (SD=,000000) indicates that the whole respondents' held the same degree, there is no variation.

#### Question 02: How long have you been teaching at the University?

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid 1-5	2	50,0		
6-10	1	25,0		
11-15	1	25,0		
Total	4	100,0	1,7500	,95743

Table 18: Teachers' teaching experience at the university

The table above shows that two (2) teachers have been teaching for five years at the university. Just one (1) teacher has been teaching for ten (10) years. In addition, just one (1) teacher has been teaching eleven (11) years. It can be noticed from the table above that most of the teachers are experienced in teaching at the university. This experience enables them to use various approaches and activities when they teach the speaking skill. The mean score of question (2) is (M=1,7500), and the

standard deviation (SD=,95743) is relatively high which shows variation in the participants' reponses.

**Question 03: How long have you been teaching oral expression?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Twoyears	1	25,0		
threeyears	2	50,0		
four years	1	25,0		
Total	4	100,0	2,0000	,81650

Table 19: Teachers' experience in teaching oral expression

The table above indicates that the teachers have no more than 4 years of experience in teaching oral expression module at the university. The first result shows that (1) teacher or about (25.0%) has two years of experience. Two (2) teachers have three years of experience. One teacher or about (25.0%) has four years of experience. It is noticeable that the experience of teachers in teaching oral expression module does not exceed four years. This is due to the fact that the department of English at the University of Tebessa is a new one. The mean of question (3) is (M=2,0000), and the standard deviation (SD=,81650) is considerably high which indicates variation in the teachers' responses.

**Section two: Teaching Speaking**

**Question 04: To what extent do you think your students believe in the importance of speaking?**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	Much	2	50,0		
	Little	2	50,0		
	Total	4	100,0	2,5000	,57735

Table 20: Teachers' opinions about their students' belief in the importance of speaking

As it is demonstrated in the table, two (2) teachers believe that their students give much care to the importance of speaking. However, the other two (2) believe that their students give a little care to the importance of speaking. It can be noted that the mean of question (4) is (  $M=2,5000$ ), and the standard deviation ( $SD=,57735$ ) is low which shows a small variation in the respondents' responses.

**Question 05:How can you describe your students' general level in the speaking skill?**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	Average	4	100,0	3,0000	,00000

Table 21:Students' speaking level

The table above shows that the four teachers (4) or (100.0%) believe that their students' performance in speaking is average. The mean score of question(5) is ( $M=3,0000$ ), and the standard deviation ( $SD=,00000$ ) is indicate the whole respondents' are in agreement; there is no variation.

**Question 06: Are your students motivated to speak in English?**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	Yes	3	75,0		
	No	1	25,0		
	Total	4	100,0	1,2500	,50000

Table 22: Teachers' opinions about their students motivation to speak

The table above shows that the majority of the sample three teachers agree that their students are motivated to speak in English. However, only one (1) teacher claims that her/ his students are not motivated to speak. The mean of question (6) is (M=1,2500) and the standard deviation (SD=,50000) is low which indicates a small variation in the teachers' answers.

**Question 07: As a teacher of oral expression, which role do you play in your class?**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	Feedback provider	1	25,0		
	Motivator	3	75,0		
	Total	4	100,0	2,5000	1,00000

Table 23: Teachers' role

The table above denotes that one (1) teacher or about (25.0%) assume the role of a feedback provider. However, the majority of the sample (3) teachers (75.0%) take the role of a motivator perhaps the students need more motivation. The mean of question (7) is (M=2,5000), and the standard deviation (SD=1,00000) is high which points variation in the respondents' answers.

**Question 08: How much do you speak in your classroom?**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	Most of the time	1	25,0		
	When necessary?	3	75,0		
	Total	4	100,0	2,5000	1,00000

Table 24: Teachers' speaking time

The results in the table above show that one(1) teacher claims that she/he speaks most of the time in the classroom while the remaining teachers state that they talk when it is needed. It can be noted that the mean score of question (8) is (M=2,5000), and the standard deviation (SD=1,00000) is high which indicates variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 09: To what extent do your students participate in the oral expression session?**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	Always	1	25,0		
	Sometimes	3	75,0		
	Total	4	100,0	1,7500	,50000

Table 25: Students' participation in oral expression sessions

The table above shows that one teacher says that her/ his students always participate in the oral expression module. This probably indicates that they find the adequate themes that suit them. The remaining three teachers note that their students sometimes participate in the oral expression session. The mean score of question (9) is (M=1,7500), and the standard deviation (SD= ,50000) is low which reveals a small variation in the teachers' responses.

**Question 10: In your opinion, what are the reasons that discourage students to participate?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid The nature of the classroom activities	2	50,0		
Psychological factors	1	25,0		
Careless	1	25,0		
Total	4	100,0	1,7500	,95743

Table 26: Reasons discouraging students' participation

The table above shows some of the factors that might discourage the students to participate. Two teachers believe that the nature of the classroom activities is the responsible for the discouragement of the students. Perhaps if the teacher chooses the best themes or activities then the students will participate more. One teacher believes that there are psychological factors that make the students' participation low. However, one teacher states that the students do not participate because of careless. the mean score question (10) is (M=1,7500), and the standard deviation (SD=,95743) is considerably high which indicates variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 11: What aspects your students face problems with when they speak?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Grammar	2	50,0		
Pronunciation	1	25,0		
Vocabulary	1	25,0		
Total	4	100,0	1,7500	,95743

Table 27: Aspects students face problems with when speaking

As it is shown in this table the results are varied. Two teachers believe that the biggest problem that students face when they speak is grammar while one teacher believes that it is pronunciation and the other teacher states that it is vocabulary. It can be noted that the mean score of question (11) is (M=1,7500), and the standard

deviation (SD=,95743) is considerably high which shows variation in the respondents' responses.

**Question 12: How do you teach your students to speak skillfully?**

This is an open question that requires teachers' reflections on how they teach speaking.

Starting with the first teacher who took part in this study, she/ he states that she/ he follows the following steps:

- Teaching pronunciation
- Focusing on developing the students' vocabulary
- Advising them to listen to music and watch movies that are in English language
- Encouraging them to use English outside the classroom with their colleagues.

The second participant states that she/he prefers:

- To teach them how to speak through variety of activities that will enhance their knowledge and scaffold their background in speaking. These activities depend on the type of the lecture , the objective from that lecture and the time allocated to it.

The third participant claims that she/he prefers to use role-play activities through the following steps:

- Setting the goal of the activity and making sure that the students understand what the product of the role play should be, whether a plan, a schedule, a group opinion,....
- Giving each student the chance to speak.

- Making the students predict what vocabulary, grammar.... to be taught.
- Dividing the students into groups to make all the students participate,
- Giving them time to prepare their discussion.

The fourth participant says that she/he prefers to use:

- Repetition drills
- Debates
- Providing instant feedback as they speak, elaborating on frequent mistakes
- guiding them to work outside the classroom to improve their speaking skill

### Section Three: Thematic Activities

**Question 13: What kind of activities do you use in your oral expression session?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Group work	3	75,0		
Discussion	1	25,0		
Total	4	100,0	1,7500	1,50000

Table 28: Activities teachers use in oral expression sessions

The table above shows some kinds of activities the teacher may use in oral expression session. First, the majority of the teachers (three teachers) note that they rely on group work activities the most while they teach oral expression session. Perhaps this activity helps the learners to develop and improve their use of English language through the repeated practice. One teacher claims that she/ he uses discussion as a kind of activity. May be through discussion EFL learners will enhance their speaking skill more when they exchange ideas. The mean score of question (13) is (M=1,7500), and the standard deviation (SD=1,50000) is high which shows a variation in the teachers' answers.

**Question 14: Have you ever used thematic activities when teaching oral expression?**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Yes	4	100,0	1,0000	,00000

Table 29: Teachers' use of thematic activities

As it is indicated in the table above, all the participants state that they use thematic activities in teaching oral expression. Perhaps they use them because of the important role they play in developing EFL learners' speaking skill and give them the freedom to speak. The mean score of question (14) is (M=1,0000), and the standard deviation (SD=,00000) which indicates that the whole participants are in agreement; there is no variation.

**Question 15: The use of thematic activities in the oral expression classes enhances the learners' speaking skill**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Stronglyagree	2	50,0		
Agree	2	50,0		
Total	4	100,0	1,5000	,57735

Table 30: Teachers' attitudes towards the use of thematic activities in the oral expression classes

The table above shows that all the teachers who participants agree with the importance of thematic activities. On the one hand, two teachers strongly agree with the role of thematic activities in enhancing the learners' speaking skill. On the other hand, two teachers agree that learners need this kind of activities to improve their speaking skill. Thematic activities give the chance to the EFL learner to speak and use

the language in a variety of situations. The mean score of question (15) is (M=1,5000), and the standard deviation (SD=,57735) is low which shows a small variation in the teachers' answers.

**Question 16: Thematic activities offer EFL students the opportunity to speak about different topics of their interest**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Strongly agree	3	75,0		
Neutral	1	25,0		
Total	4	100,0	1,5000	1,00000

Table 31: Teachers' attitudes towards the use of thematic activities to offer students the opportunity to speak about topics of their interest

As it is demonstrated in this table, the majority of the respondents (three teachers) opted for strongly agree claiming that thematic activities give students the chance to speak about topics of their interest. However, one teacher opted for neutral. It can be noted that the mean score of question (16) is (M=1, 5000), and the standard deviation (SD=1, 00000) is high which indicates variation in the respondents' responses.

**Question 17: The absence of English use outside the classroom affects student's speaking skill**

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid Stronglyagree	3	75,0		
Strongly disagree	Neutral(1)	25,0		
Total	4	100,0	2,0000	2,00000

Table 32: Teachers' attitudes towards the absence of the use of English outside the classroom

The table above indicates that three teachers or about (75.0%) strongly agree that the students have to use English outside the classroom to enhance speaking. In addition, (1) or (neutral) teacher opted for neutral. The mean score of question (17) is (M=2,0000), and the standard deviation (SD=2,00000) is too high which indicates a vast disagreement and variation in the participants' answers.

**Question 18: Thematic activities stimulate EFL students to practise the target language in social life and use it outside the classroom**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	Agree	2	50,0		
	Neutral	2	50,0		
	Total	4	100,0	2,5000	,57735

Table 33: Teachers' attitudes towards the role of thematic activities

The table above indicates that two teachers or about (50.0%) agree that thematic activities motivate students to use English outside the classroom walls. Perhaps when they are trained in the classroom to speak about different topics they will use the language easily outside. However, two teachers or around (50.0%) are neutral. The mean score of question (18) is (M=2,5000), and the standard deviation (SD=,57735) is low which indicates a small variation in the teachers' answers.

**Question 19: The thematic activities prepared according to students' interests increase students' motivation**

		Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valid	Stronglyagree	1	25,0		
	Agree	3	75,0		
	Total	4	100,0	1,7500	,50000

Table 34: Teachers' attitudes towards the use of thematic activities to increase motivation

The table above indicates that all the participants agree with saying that thematic activities which are prepared on the basis of students' interests increase their motivation. One teacher opted for strongly agree which the remaining three teachers chose agree. The mean score of question (19) is (M=1, 7500), and the standard deviation (SD=, 50000) is low which shows variation in the participants' responses.

At the end of the question the researchers left the participant free to add any further comment about this subject. Not all of them add comments;

- The first participant, exposed that developing speaking skill requires more than simply just getting the language learners exposed in the form of vocabulary or grammar descriptions. Unfortunately, most of the language teachers who are to run conversation course skill devote much of the time immersing the students with non-communicative activities.
- The second participant denoted that feeding the intrinsic motivation of the learners is the key to help them take any skill to the next level; in the other hand thematic activities is a just a technique for teaching speaking skill among the other techniques.

## **Discussion of the Teachers' Results**

It is noticeable from the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire that the teachers have magister/ master degree and the period of their experience in teaching at the university varies from five to 11 years. However, they can be considered as novice teachers as far as teaching the oral expression module is concerned (2 to 4 years of experience). Moreover, some teachers believe that the students give a special importance to speaking, while others believe that they do not really give it its

importance. Furthermore, the majority of them believe that their students' performance in speaking is average; and they are able to speak and use the English language (Q6). Besides, most of the teachers prefer to assume the role of a motivator and they speak only when necessary, i.e. they give their students more opportunities to speak. However, most of them argue that their students sometimes participate so; they need to be motivated by the teacher. Additionally, the nature of the classroom activities is the most discouraging factor for the students to participate in addition to the grammatical problems they face while speaking. Also, each one of the teachers who took part in this study states that she/he uses different activities to teach her/his students how to speak skillfully. Most of them use the group-work kind of activities to enhance students' performance because they share and exchange ideas.

Furthermore, the teachers also use thematic activities in teaching oral expression because they help them to enhance their learners' speaking skill through giving them the chance to talk about a variety of topics of their interest. In addition, the majority of the teachers strongly believe that the students have to use English outside the classroom to enhance speaking. Some teachers agree that thematic activities encourage the students to use the English language outside the classroom. Finally, most of the teachers believe that the thematic activities prepared according to students' interests increase their motivation. Therefore, the teachers who participated in the current research affirm that thematic activities can promote students to communicate in the target language and thus their speaking competence will improve.

## **Conclusion**

As a conclusion, the collected data from both teachers' and students' questionnaires show that the thematic approach is an effective approach to enhance students' speaking skill. It also encourages the students' participation in interactional atmosphere, increases students' motivation to use the English language and decrease their difficulties and problems throughout the use of language. And we understand that both the teachers and the students hold positive attitudes towards the use of thematic activities/thematic approach in developing EFL students' speaking skill. The results that are revealed in this study confirm the hypotheses of the present research.

## Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the researchers provide some suggestions and recommendations for both teachers and students. They propose some roles that the teachers should perform in EFL classrooms in order to improve the students' speaking skill.

### Recommendations for teachers

- ✓ Since the speaking skill is the most important skill among the others skills, the teachers should reduce their speaking time during the oral sessions to give chances for each student to speak.
- ✓ Teachers should apply an effective approach or method to make their students more comfortable.
- ✓ Teachers should encourage the students when they speak through providing them with positive feedback and avoiding harsh comments. Brown (2001, p. 203) states some points for establishing such a relationship which are:
  - Showing interest in each student as a person.
  - Giving feedback on each person's progress.
  - Openly soliciting students' ideas and feelings.
  - Valuing and respecting what students think and say.
  - Laughing *with* them and not *at* them.
  - Working *with* them as a team and not against them, and
  - developing a genuine sense of vicarious joy when they learn something or otherwise succeed.

### **Recommandations for Students:**

- ✓ Students should practise the language more inside the classroom.
- ✓ They should use the language outside the classroom with their colleagues.
- ✓ They should develop their speaking proficiency by themselves through listening to music, reading books, and discussing any daily life topics or themes in English.

## **General conclusion**

The present study was conducted to investigate the teachers and the students' attitudes towards the use of thematic activities / thematic approach to enhance the EFL students' speaking skill.

This dissertation is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter represents the theoretical part that deals with the speaking skill and thematic activities/thematic approach. It is divided into two sections. The first section provides a general overview about the speaking skill, whereas the second one provides a deep understanding of the thematic activities/thematic approach. The second chapter is concerned with the field work. It provides the description and the analysis of both questionnaires addressed to both Oral expression teachers and first year LMD students at the university of Al-Arbi Tbessi, Tebessa.

The analysis of both students and teachers' questionnaires denote that both teachers and students hold positive attitudes towards using thematic activities. Therefore, the obtained results proved the hypothesis of this research which states that If EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards thematic activities and use them in classroom, students will feel more comfortable and their speaking skill will be enhanced. These activities help the students to speak and to use English in different situations because of the amount of vocabulary they gain from the variety of themes. Moreover, these activities can make the students feel more comfortable which may enhance their speaking skill

## **Limitations of the study**

The authors of this dissertation faced these problems during the research:

- The scarcity of references as far as thematic activities are concerned.
- Some teachers were not available and did not respond to the questionnaire due to their busy time.

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# Appendices

University of Tébessa

Department of English

## The Teacher's Questionnaire

Dear teachers,

We are conducting a research about teachers/students attitudes towards using thematic activities in developing EFL students' speaking skill. We would like to thank you for kindly contributing to this study by filling this questionnaire, your answers are very important for the validity of this research.

Please, tick the appropriate box (√) to indicate your choice, and specify your answer when needed.

### Section one: Background Information

1. Degree held:

a. BA (License)

b. MA (Magister/Master)

c. Ph.D (Doctorate)

2. How long have you been teaching at the University?

a. .... year/s

3. How long have you been teaching oral expression module?

a. .... year/s.

### Section two: Teaching Speaking skill

4. To what extent do you think your students believe in the importance of speaking?

- a. Very much
- b. Much
- c. Little
- d. Not at all

5. How can you describe your students' general level in the speaking skill?

- a. Very good
- b. Good
- c. Average
- d. Weak

6. Are your students motivated to speak in English?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If NO how do you motivate them?

.....  
.....

7. As a teacher of oral expression, which role do you play in your class?

- a. Feedback provider
- b. Participant
- c. Motivator

8. How much do you speak in your classroom?

- a. Most of the time
- b. Sometimes
- c. When necessary?

9. To what extent do your students participate in the oral expression session?

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Rarely
-

d. Never

10. In your opinion, what are the reasons that discourage students to participate?

- a. The nature of the classroom activities
- b. Psychological factors
- c. Careless
- d. Lack of fluency and/or accuracy

Others, please specify

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

11. What aspects your students face problems with when they speak?

- a. Grammar
- b. Pronunciation
- c. Vocabulary

12. How do you teach your students to speak skillfully?

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

**Section three: Thematic activities**

13. What kind of activities do you use in your oral expression session?

- a. Group work
- b. Role-play
- c. Problem solving
-

d. Discussion

Others

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

14. Have you ever used thematic activities when teaching oral expression?

- a. Yes
- b. No

15. The use of thematic activities in the oral expression classes enhances the learners' speaking skill.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

16. Thematic activities offer EFL students the opportunity to speak about different topics of their interest.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

17. The absence of English use outside the classroom affect student's speaking skill.

- a. Strongly agree

- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

18. Thematic activities stimulate EFL students to practise the target language in social life and use it outside the classroom.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

19. The thematic activities prepared according to students' interests increase students' motivation.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

Please feel free to add any further comments about this subject:

.....  
.....

Thank you for your corporation.

**University of Tébessa**

**Department of English**

### **Student's Questionnaire**

Dear students,

We are conducting a research about teachers/students attitudes towards the role of thematic activities in developing EFL students' speaking skill. We would like to thank you for kindly contributing to this questionnaire, your answers are very important for the validity of this research we are undertaking.

Please, tick the appropriate box (×) to indicate your choice, and specify your answer when needed.

#### **Section one: General Information**

1. Age: .....
2. Specify your gender:
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
3. Was English your first choice?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

#### **Section two: The Speaking Skill**

4. In your opinion, speaking in English is regarded as:
  - a. Easy
  - b. Difficult
  - c. Average
5. Among these skills what is the most difficult skill for you?
  - a. Listening
  - b. Speaking

c. Reading

d. Writing

6. How often do you participate in the classroom?

a. Always

b. Often

c. Sometimes

d. Rarely

e. Never

7. If you opt for options d and e (Rarely and Never) answer the following question. Your lack of participation in the classroom is due to: (you can choose more than one answer)

a. Difficulty in pronunciation

b. Poor vocabulary and grammar

c. Psychological factors

Others, please specify

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

8. On which language aspect do you focus more while you speak?

a. Pronunciation

b. fluency

c. Grammar

d. vocabulary

9. When you speak, what do you feel?

a. Confident

b. Nervous

c. Shy

If others clarify:.....

.....  
.....

10. How do you prefer to be corrected when you make errors?

- a. In front of everyone?
- b. Privately?
- c. Not to be corrected at all.

11. Does your teacher's feedback encourage you to speak in Oral Expression classes?

- a. Yes
- b. No

**Section three: thematic activities**

12. Which type of oral activities motivates you more to speak?

- a. Role-playing
- b. Problem-solving activities
- c. Information gap activities
- d. Others?

If others, mention them please.....

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

13. Have you ever heard about thematic activities?

- a. Yes
- b. No

14. What type of topics encourages you to speak in oralexpressionclasses?

- a. Politics
- b. Science
- c. Romance

d. Education

e. social media

Others.....  
.....  
.....

15. I participate more when the teacher engages me in themes which are of interest to me.

a. Agree

b. Strongly Agree

c. Disagree

d. Strongly Disagree

16. I feel highly motivated when I am engaged in themes which belong to me.

a. Agree

b. Strongly Agree

c. Disagree

d. Strongly Disagree

17. Do thematic activities affect your level of speaking in the classroom?

a. Yes

b. No

18. What other activities do you think would enhance your speaking ability other than thematic activities?

.....  
.....

.....  
.....

Thank you for your corporation.

**Résumé**

Cette étude vise à étudier les attitudes des enseignants / étudiants EFL envers l'utilisation des activités thématiques dans le développement des compétences d'expression orale des élèves. Cette thèse suppose que si les enseignants EFL ont une attitude positive envers les activités thématiques et les utilisent en classe, les étudiants se sentiront plus à l'aise. Pour atteindre l'objectif de cette étude, deux questionnaires sont administrés à la fois aux enseignants d'expression orale et aux étudiants de première année LMD, au département d'anglais, à l'Université de Al-Arbi Tebessi, à Tébessa. Les résultats de cette étude montrent que l'utilisation d'activités / approches thématiques aide les étudiants EFL à développer leurs compétences en expression orale et les motive également à pratiquer l'anglais en dehors de la salle de classe. En outre, il est clairement remarqué que les enseignants et les étudiants qui ont participé à cette recherche ont des attitudes positives envers la mise en œuvre d'activités thématiques dans l'enseignement / apprentissage de l'anglais en tant que langue étrangère. En d'autres termes, les résultats des deux questionnaires confirment l'hypothèse de la présente recherche. Par conséquent, les auteurs de cette thèse recommandent fortement l'utilisation d'activités thématiques dans les classes EFL.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقق من موقف الطلبة/الأساتذة تجاه استعمالهم للأنشطة الموضوعاتية في تنمية مهارات الكلام لدى الطلاب. وفقاً لذلك ، يفرض هذا الطرح الراهن أنه إذا كان معلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يتمتعون بموقف إيجابي تجاه الأنشطة المواضيعية واستخدامها في الفصول الدراسية ، فسوف يشعر الطلاب بمزيد من الراحة بتحسين مهاراتهم في التحدث. لتحقيق هدف هذه الدراسة يتم إجراء استبيانين لكل من ، في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية ، في جامعة الشيخ العربي التبسي LMDمعلمي التعبير الشفوي وطلاب السنة الأولى ، تبسة. تظهر نتائج هذه الدراسة في أن استخدام الأنشطة / المنهج الموضوعاتي يساعد طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية على تطوير مهاراتهم في الكلام ، كما يحفزهم على ممارسة اللغة الإنجليزية خارج الفصل الدراسي. علاوة على ذلك ، من الواضح أن المدرسين والطلاب الذين شاركوا في هذا البحث يحملون مواقف إيجابية تجاه تنفيذ الأنشطة الموضوعاتية في تدريس / تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وبعبارة أخرى ، تؤكد استنتاجات الاستبيانين فرضية البحث الحالي. ولذلك يوصي مؤلفو هذه الرسالة بشدة باستخدام الأنشطة الموضوعية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.