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Developing Learners' Interactive Competence through the
Speaking Skill:
Evaluation of Third Year Secondary School Textbook New Prospects.

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I dedicate this work to:

The two candles who always enlighten my life; my father Mohamed and my mother Dahbia

*My dear husband Karim for his patience, help and encouragements during the realization
of this work*

My twin Rabia for her spiritual assistance

My sister Hafida and my brother Toufic

My family in law

To all my best friends

Fouzia

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My lovely mother Yamina

My dear brothers and sisters

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My best friend Mohamed

All my dear friends

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List of Abbreviations

CBA: Competency-Based Approach

CBALT: Competency-Based Approach to Language Teaching

CBLT: Competency-Based Language Teaching

CC: Communicative Competence

CBE: Competency-Based Education

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

S/F: Second and Foreign Language

SLT: Second Language Teaching

TBLT: Task-Based Language Teaching

U.S: United States

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List of Symbols

%: Percentage

\bar{x} : The Arithmetic Mean

Σ : The Sum of Values

x : The Mid Points

N : The Number

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Abstract

The present research attempts to evaluate the third year secondary school EFL textbook: New Prospects. It seeks to investigate first, to what extent the speaking activities included in the corpus under study are communicative; and then, to what extent they help to develop learners' interactive competence. To achieve this goal, two analytical frameworks are used: first, Littlewood's (1996) classification of communicative activities and second, Jones' (1996) three functions of speaking. To collect and interpret data, we have used quantitative analysis and qualitative content analysis. The obtained results demonstrate that New Prospects speaking activities help to some extent to develop learners' interactive competence. It has been found that communication and interactive competence are stressed to some extent in New Prospects. The results reveal that 60% of the speaking activities are pre-communicative activities while 40% are communicative. This indicates that New Prospects tasks are not all communicatively directing. Structural practice is significantly emphasized in New Prospects since the percentage of the structural activities is 67% and quasi-communicative activities are 33%. Concerning the interactive competence, the activities provide learners with opportunities to interact in the classroom and they are in favor of developing some interactive skills for learners. However, there are some limitations in this concern.

Key Words: *Communicative competence, interactive competence, communication, interaction, activities, textbook, New Prospects.*

General Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Starting from the late 1970s, the field of foreign/second language teaching and learning has witnessed significant changes. Learning has become more oriented towards social integration and professional life. This view reflects a new conception of teaching/learning which represents a shift in focus away from linguistic accuracy towards skills and competencies development. In this respect new approaches and methods appeared. One of them is the Competency-Based Approach. The latter addresses learners' ability to apply the linguistic knowledge in real life situations. Algeria as many other countries around the world launched an educational reform in 2002 which is grounded on the Competency-Based Approach. This educational reform resulted in designing new syllabuses and textbooks at different levels. The new official curricular for the English language in the secondary school requires the implementation of Competency-Based Approach through the development of the three competencies of interaction, interpretation and production (SE1 Syllabus, 2005: 7, cited in Aimeur. R., 2011).

In addition to the focus on the four basic skills: listening and speaking, reading and writing; the Algerian textbook designers of secondary school have made from the development of interactive, interpretative and productive competencies a priority. Although the three of them are of a significant importance, interactive competence is directly related to the social environment and students' real life. Indeed, interaction is a subject of interest for many scholars and researchers in the field of language teaching and learning all over the world. According to Swain (1998), learners' interaction permits them to practice the target language, and this will lead to fluency. It also provides learners with opportunities to receive comprehensible input and feedback (Gass (1997); Long (1996); Pica (1994)) and makes

changes in their own linguistic output (Swain, 1995). Additionally, Ellis and Van Lier (1996) point out that language learning does not arise through interaction but in interaction. The latter then, plays a significant role in the process of S/F language learning.

Indeed, interaction is often linked with one particular skill which is speaking. Allwright (1984), Littelwood (1981), Davies (2000) and Thornbury (2005) agree on the fact that students learn to speak in the second language by interacting. In other words, proficiency in speaking is attained when learners are able to communicate and interact in real life situations and able to accomplish basic communicative transactions in English. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges that face teachers, material developers and specialists in the field of education is how to narrow the gap existing between classroom and real life. The main purpose is to make learners of foreign languages in general and EFL/ ESL in particular, able to communicate and interact effectively in authentic environments using their linguistic knowledge.

On the basis of what has been stated before, there are many studies which have been conducted in this field of investigation all over the world. These studies review the different types of interaction and the effect of these types on learning. Moore (1993) and Moore and Kearsley (1996) provided the distinction between three types of interaction: learner/content, learner/teacher and learner/teacher interaction. Studies in this regard have also revealed that each type of interaction could have different effects on different aspects of learning. Moreover, Hedge argues that, speaking in the classroom makes learners capable to cope with their lack of language knowledge.

Furthermore, the importance of this issue in both human communication and F/S language teaching and learning makes of it a subject of study of many research works in the Algerian educational context. Different works have been devoted for this issue. It is worth to note some

magister theses of which the aim was communicative competence and interaction. DOUADI. F. (2010) has worked on the teaching of teaching of the speaking skill in order to develop learners' communicative competence in the middle school. The major findings of this research reveal that there are still some teachers that give great importance to grammar and they dominate talk in the classroom. Moreover, the speaking tasks according some teachers are not communicatively directing and do not reflect pupils needs and interests. There are also some cases where pupils say that they do not find the designed activities of their book interesting. Additionally, LADJALI. D. (2011) has investigated the issue of improving the quality of interaction in the Algerian foreign language classes in secondary school. The major results show that the teacher-learner interaction is dominated by (the teacher initiation-learner response-teacher follow up) sequence. The data indicates how the heavy reliance on this pattern in classroom interaction constrains the learners' opportunities to practice in an authentic communication. In fact all these researches fall under the descriptive method. They describe classroom interaction between learners and teachers or between learners only and the effect of this interaction on the learning process.

Aims and Significance of the Study

This study aims at evaluating the Algerian Secondary School third year EFL textbook namely New Prospects to figure out whether the activities included in this corpus mainly speaking activities, match the objective put forward in the syllabuses. In this concern the present work aims to investigate to what extent the textbook speaking activities are communicative activities or not. It seeks also to investigate the type of these activities and to see whether they are in favor of enhancing learners' interactive skills and abilities or not and to find out what type of skills are stressed more in the textbook.

In fact, the concept of interactive competence is of a significant importance because it is at the core of human communication. This is why it has become one of the objectives that material developers want to reach. For this reason, this study aims at investigating this issue within the Algerian context in order to see to what extent the Algerian textbook designers have taken the achievement of interactive competence into consideration. Moreover, it seeks to show the strengths and limitations of the EFL textbook New Prospects.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

So far, there is no research which deals with interactive competence in relation to speaking activities in the teaching materials. Accordingly, this study deals with the development of interactive competence through speaking activities in the third year secondary school EFL textbook New Prospects. For the sake of investigating this subject of study the following research questions are asked:

Questions

1. Are the speaking activities set in New Prospects communicative?
2. If yes, to what extent are the speaking activities of the textbook interactive?

Hypothesis

For the sake of answering these research questions three hypotheses are advanced:

1. New Prospects' activities are communicative to some extent.
2. The speaking activities set in the textbook aim to develop learners' interactive competence.
3. The speaking activities of New Prospects are interactive to some extent and the focus on this competence is limited.

Research Design and Methodology

The present study is an in- depth evaluation of New Prospects activities. In this evaluation two theoretical frame works are adopted. The first one is Littlewood's (1996) classification of speaking activities and the second one is Pauline Jones (1996) three part version of speaking functions. The first one is a model for classifying activities under two categories: pre-communicative and communicative tasks. Each category is divided into two sub-categories. This frame work aims at determining the different types of activities according to the degree of communication. The second frame work is a three part version of speaking functions suggested by Jones in (1996). Each of the three functions consists in a number of features and skills to develop.

The research work falls under the mixed method research. Content analysis is required as a procedure for data analysis. According to Holsti (1968 in Elmer, 2008: 24), it is "*Any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of the data*". It can be defined as a technique for identifying and selecting the presence of certain words, expressions or sentences in the text that are used to convey a specific objective. Content analysis is appropriate for this work because it focuses on the content of the activities. It seeks to determine special characteristics in the selected activities that permit to classify them in different categorizers according to the frameworks adopted in this research work.

Structure of the Dissertation

This study follows a traditional complex model. It consists of four chapters, in addition to a general introduction and a general conclusion. The introduction consists in presenting the previous research works related to the topic, stating the aims and significance of the study. Then, it presents the research questions and hypothesis, the methodology. Lastly

it shows the overall structure of the study. The first chapter is a review of literature, in which some definitions and theoretical concepts are reviewed. The second chapter is research design and methodology. It aims at presenting the procedures of data collection and data analysis. The third chapter is devoted to the presentation of the results' study sorted out from the analysis of New Prospects activities. The last chapter is a discussion of the results. Here, the results are discussed and interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework and the review of literature. Finally, the dissertation ends with a general conclusion which summarizes the whole work. It restates the subject of the study, the methodology, the analytical framework and the results obtained from the analysis. At the end, it provides an answer to the research questions raised in the introduction and confirms or disconfirms the suggested hypothesis.

Chapter One: Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter attempts to highlight the theoretical aspects that are related to the topic of the present research. It consists of four main parts: the first part deals with the definition of communicative competence and its place within S/F language approaches, mainly CLT and CBALT. As a second point, it deals with the definition of interactive competence and its place in CLT and CBLAT. After that, this chapter is devoted to reveal the main concepts related to speaking as an interactive skill. It presents the types of speaking and classroom interactive speaking activities. The last part of the review chapter attempts to explain the two theoretical frameworks adopted to conduct this study; Littelwood's (1996) classification of communicative activities and Jones' (1996) three functions of speaking.

1. Communicative Competence

The notion of competence was first advanced by the American linguist Noam Chomsky in his book Aspects of the theory of Syntax (1965) where he distinguished between the two concepts of "competence" and "performance". Chomsky's "competence" was later developed by the linguist Dell Hymes into what is known now as the communicative competence (CC). He states that "*communicative competence is the aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts*" (Brown, 2007: 219). Hymes claims that the speaker needs to communicate in the language and to be able to use it according to the sociocultural environment. In other words, foreign language learners should learn to use the language in specific context (Hedge, 2000: 44-46).

Canal and Swain (1980) and Canal (1983) as cited in Fedoul.M. (2010) regard CC in S/F language teaching in terms of the following competences: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence and discourse competence.

Grammatical Competence: according to Canal and Swain (1980), this competence includes the rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar, semantic and phonology (Canal and Swain, 1980: 29). They claim that grammatical competence is important in the communicative approach; thus it is the means by which to determine and express the meaning of utterances (ibid).

Sociolinguistic Competence: Canal and Swain (1980) point out that sociolinguistic competence is made up of sociocultural rules of use. The sociocultural rules identify the appropriateness of certain propositions and communicative functions within a sociocultural context depending on textual factors like topic, role of participants, settings and norms of interaction. Second, they determine to which extent appropriate attitude and register or style are conveyed by a particular grammatical form within a given sociocultural context.

Strategic Competence: The third type of competence is related to verbal and non-verbal communication strategies.

Discourse Competence: Canal (1983, 1984) described discourse competence as mastery of rules that determine ways in which forms and meanings are combined to achieve a meaningful unity of spoken or written texts. The unity of a text is enabled by cohesion in form and coherence in meaning. Cohesion is achieved by the use of cohesion devices (e.g. pronouns, conjunctions, synonyms, parallel structures etc.) which help to link individual sentences and utterances to a structural whole. The means for achieving coherence, for instance repetition, progression, consistency, relevance of ideas etc., enable the organization of meaning, i.e. establish a logical relationship between groups of utterances.

1.1. The Place of Communicative Competence in S/F Language Approaches

1.1. CLT

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) go back to the 1960s. It emerged as a result of the changes in the British language teaching tradition (J.C.Richards and S.T.Rodgers, 1986). British applied linguists emphasized the functional and communicative potential of language. They saw the need to focus in language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of language structures. One of the main contributors to the emergence of CLT as an approach to language teaching was D.A.Wilkins. In 1992, he proposed a functional or communicative definition of language that could serve as a basis for developing communicative syllabuses for language teaching. He also proposed an analysis of the communicative meanings that a language learner needs to understand and express, rather than describing categories of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary (D.A.Wilkins, 1992: 65 cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 64).

Discussions of foreign language teaching have been dominated by the concept of ‘communication’ and its various derivatives such as ‘communicative language teaching’ (CLT) and ‘communicative competence’ (Littlewood, 2013: 1). Since 1986 this trend has continued. Even if much discussion now refers to ‘task-based language teaching’ (TBLT) rather than CLT, this is not so much a shift of direction as a continuation within the same direction. As many writers have noted (e.g. Nunan, 2004: 10; Richards, 2005: 29), TBLT is best understood not as a new departure but as a development within CLT, in which communicative tasks ‘serve not only as major components of the methodology but also as units around which a course may be organized’ (Littlewood, 2004: 324).

CLT is assumed to be a perfect approach in language teaching. The primary reason is that rather than its emphasis on linguistic forms, CLT aims to improve learner's CC in interactive situations of real life. It enables language learners to use meaningful language in authentic contexts. In addition, CLT is a learner-centered and task-based approach. Many researchers have studied and discussed this approach in different ways. It is commonly believed that *"CLT method is a way of language teaching which features the application of communicative activities and target language with the aim to develop learners' communicative competence of understanding and exchanging different ideas, behavioral modes, values, beliefs and cultures"* (Berns, 1990: 104).

CLT enables students to communicate in the foreign language using the different components of communicative competence. However, the language techniques encourage them to use the target language in different situations. It pays attention to cultivating language learners' communicative competence, a concept which was developed by the American linguist Dell Hymes. He claimed that knowing a language is not only mastering grammatical structures and forms but also using them appropriately in different social setting (1972). From his point of view CC is *"knowing when and how to say what to whom"* (Hymes, 1972 cited in Kouicem, 2010: 30). This means that CC is the ability to use a language to express different functions like giving advice, offering a help or to welcome somebody, appropriately with the appropriate person using suitable expressions and words. For example, the function of giving an advice can be expressed by the use of different expressions like "you should.....", "you can/could/ may....." or "it is better to.....". The use of the appropriate words or expressions (word choice) depends on the person to whom we are speaking. We can use the greeting word "hi" to welcome a friend but not a teacher or a strange person, we have to use hello or good morning.

2. Interactive Competence

Interactive competence or the competence of interaction is a combination of two concepts; competence and interaction. In what follows we will try to provide definitions for both of them.

First, competence is the ability to act using a range of skills and knowledge in various situations that may differ from those in which they were learned. Competence as defined in the Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary means "*the ability to do something well*" (2003: 82). Furthermore, in Programmes d'Anglais de la 2ème année moyenne, Competence is defined as "*a know how-to-act process which integrates a set of capacities, skills, and knowledge mobilized to face problem- situations*" (2005: 44). In this respect, competence can be understood as the use of individual knowledge presented in terms of structures and cognitive skills and social norms in order to adapt to various situations on the basis of gained experience and practice.

Second, interaction is regarded as "*the social behavior that occurs when one person communicates with another*" (Ellis, 1999: 1). Ellis also argues that, it "*can occur inside our minds, both when we engage in the kind of 'private speech' discussed by Vygotsky (1978), and, more covertly, when different modules of the mind interact to construct an understanding of or a response to some phenomenon*" (ibid). In Hadfield and Hadfield's point of view, interaction involves more than just putting a message together, it involves also responding to other people. Thus, choosing the language that is appropriate for the person you are talking to (interlocutor), it means also responding to what others say, taking turns in a conversation, encouraging people to speak, expressing interests, changing the topic, asking people to repeat or explain what they say and so on, in order to facilitate communication among them (Hadfield and Hadfield, 2008 cited in Batite, T. 2013:10). Nunan in his turn states that

“learning to speak in a second or foreign language will be facilitated when learners are actively engaged in attempting to communicate” (Nunan, 1991: 51). Relying on what has been advanced, it can be said that the competence of interaction is the ability to communicate, interact and engage in conversations with other people using the necessary linguistic knowledge, skills and strategies appropriate to a particular situation of communication. In the second year English syllabus, it is stated that students must be able to act out an oral statement using the pronunciation/intonation, the structures and vocabulary that corresponds to a particular situation of communication. This competence must permit students to interact, negotiate, persuade and give their points of view in “Brainstorming”, negotiations and problem solving situations (Programme d’Anglais de la 2^{ème} Année Moyenne 2005:7). Hence, interactive competence is the ability to accomplish all these tasks in a given situation of communication.

2.1. The place of Interactive Competence in S/F Language Approaches

2.1. a. CLT

CLT is an approach to teaching S/F language; it emphasizes interaction as a means and a goal of learning a language. It is interested in giving students the skills to be able to communicate in different situations. David Nunan (1991: 279) lists five key elements to the communicative approach; one of them is ‘the emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language. As such; it makes the use of activities such as role play, pair work and group work.

CLT views language as a system for expressing meaning where the main function of language is to permit interaction and communication (Richard, 2001). William Littlewood (1981) states that CLT means to pay systematic attention to both functional and structural aspects of language merging this into a communicative view. The goal of CLT is to involve

students in realistic communication through different activities. In this case, the accuracy of the target language is less important than successful achievement of the communicative task (Harmer, 2001). In “*Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*”, Richards and Rodgers (2001: 60) summarize the communicative view of language as:

- Language is a system for the expression of meaning
- The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication
- The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses
- The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning.

So, the communicative approach views language as a system through which the meaning is expressed perfectly. Its main function is to permit interaction and communication; the primary elements of language are not only grammatical and structural features but also the functional and communicative meaning.

2.1. b. CBLT

Competency-based education CBE is surging in popularity as schools around the world scramble to implement their own versions of competency-based curricula (Ash, (2012), Mulder, Eppin and Akkermans (2011) and Nederstigt, Mulder and Wong, (2008). CBE has its roots firmly in the Behaviorist tradition popularized in the United States during the 1950s by educators such as Benjamin Bloom. CBE became popular in the U.S. during the 1970s where it was used in vocational training programs. The approach spread to Europe in the 1980s and by the 1990s, it was being used in Australia to measure professional-skills. Throughout its evolution, CBE has been known by a variety of names including performance-based learning, criterion-referenced learning, and capabilities-driven instruction (Bowden, 2004).

Competency-based language teaching CBLT is an application of the principles of CBE to a language setting (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Its earliest applications were probably in

adult survival-language programs for immigrants. By the 1990s, the approach had become widely accepted in the U.S. that refugees wishing to receive federal assistance were required to attend some kind of competency-based ESL program to learn the skills necessary to function in society (Auerbach, 1986; Grognet and Crandall, 1982).

CBLT demands that language be connected to a social context rather than being taught in isolation. CBLT requires learners to demonstrate that they can use the language to communicate effectively (Paul, 2008; Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Wong, 2008). According to Docking (1994:16), CBLT:

...is designed not around the notion of subject knowledge but around the notion of competency. The focus moves from what students know about language to what they can do with it. The focus on competencies or learning outcomes underpins the curriculum framework and syllabus specification, teaching strategies, assessment and reporting. Instead of norm-referencing assessment, criterion-based assessment procedures are used in which learners are assessed according to how well they can perform on specific learning tasks.

This means that CBLT is planned in relation to competence. That is to say that it focuses more on what learners can do with the language they have learned rather than with their knowledge about the language. In addition to this, learners are evaluated according to their performance in different situations.

2.2. The Importance of Interactive Learning

Interaction is central to language learning, it is very important for students to interact and communicate to develop their speaking skill. According to Brown (2000: 48), interactive learning is the main concern of current theories of communicative competence. Most of interactive classes emphasize the following:

- Doing a significant amount of pair work and group work.

- Receiving authentic language input in real world context.
- Producing language for genuine, meaningful communication.

Michael Long (1996, 1985) described “*interaction hypothesis of second language acquisition*” as the main theoretical foundation of interactive learning (cited in Brown, 2000:48).

Interaction is considered as a central part in communicative language teaching, it helps students to get involved in communication using the target language. Rivers emphasized the idea that the communicative classroom should be interactive. He affirmed that: “*in interaction students can use all they possess of the language, all they have learnt or casually absorbed, in real life exchange*” (Rivers, 1987: 4-5; in Brown, 2000: 165).

3. Speaking as an Interactive Skill

Teaching English as a foreign language requires students to learn the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Interactive competence is mainly linked to the speaking skill. Speaking is an important skill in the field of foreign language learning. According to the Oxford Pocket Dictionary (2009), speaking is “*the action of covering information or express ones thought and feeling in the spoken language*”. Chaney (1998:13 cited in Mennai, 2013) in his turn defines this skill as “*the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of context*”. Moreover, in Bygate’s (1987: 5) terms, oral expression involves making the correct choices when using language forms, following the right order, sounding in a way that is similar to that of native speakers, and producing the right meanings that can be understood by the listener. For him, speaking is a skill that all people use when they are interacting with each other; therefore, it is required for learners. In addition to the previous definitions, Hedge (2000: 261) considers speaking as, “*a skill by which they [people] are judged while first impressions are being formed.*” This means that, speaking is an important skill because it is given more

attention in both first and second language and because it reflects peoples' thoughts and opinions.

3.1. Types of Speaking

Brown (2004) has identified five types of speaking according to the speaker's intention; imitative speaking, intensive speaking, responsive speaking, interactive speaking and extensive speaking.

3.1. a. Imitative Speaking

Imitative speaking is the ability to parrot back or repeat the others speech as a word, phrase or a sentence. This kind of repetition may include different properties of language as grammar and lexis in order to convey a meaning or even to interact in a conversation, by paying attention to pronunciation as an attempt to help learners to be more comprehensible (Brown, 2004).

3.1. b. Intensive Speaking

Intensive speaking is defined as the production of short stretches of a discourse through which speakers demonstrate competence in a narrow band of grammatical relationships such as intonation, stress and rhythm; here the speaker must be aware of the semantic properties in order to be able to respond. This type of speaking also includes some assessment tasks like reading aloud, sentences and dialogue completion, and so on (Brown, 2004).

3.1. c. Responsive Speaking

This type of speaking involves brief interactions like short conversations, small talk and simple requests in order to preserve authenticity with only one or two following up questions (Brown 2004).

3.1. d. Interactive Speaking

Interactive speaking differs from responsive speaking in terms of length and complexity of interaction. This type involves two forms of languages; transactional language and interpersonal language. The former is aimed at exchanging specific information whereas the latter has the purpose of maintaining social relationships. In this form of language (interpersonal), oral production can become more complex with the use of colloquial language, ellipsis, slang and so on. Interactive speaking includes some assessment tasks such as interviews, role play and discussion activities (Brown, 2004).

3.1. e. Extensive Speaking

The final type of speaking that was stated by Brown (2004: 142) is the extensive one. For him, extensive speaking or monologue includes speeches, oral presentation and story-telling, but the language style that is used in this type of speaking is more formal for extensive tasks, because we cannot rule out some informal monologues like a casually delivered speech and so on.

3.2. Classroom Interactive Speaking Activities

There are different classroom speaking activities of which the interest is language functions rather than grammar and vocabulary. Harmer (2001: 271) introduces some major activities that are used in oral expression course, such as communication games, information gap activities, and discussion.

3.2. a. Communication Games

According to Harmer (2001: 272), this type of activities is presented in form of games. The latter are designed to stimulate communication between students, so that one student has to talk to another student in order to solve a puzzle (game). Examples of these games are found in radio or TV. The teacher here can bring these activities into the classroom. For example, in “describe and draw”, one student is asked to describe a picture and the other

student should draw it. In “describe and arrange”, one student describes a structure which is made of some objects and the other student organizes it and puts it in its right order without seeing the original picture. In contrast, in “find the difference”, two students have the same picture with some differences and students must find these differences.

3.2. b. Information Gap Activities

This type of speaking activities is used where two speakers have different parts of information that make a whole image when relating the two parts together. Each student has missing information which he is required to complete through communicating with other students. In most foreign language classes, the teacher uses this kind of activities aiming at sharing information between students during a classroom oral course (Harmer, 2001).

3.2. c. Discussion Activities

Discussion activities are interesting tasks and play a significant role in the oral practice in the classroom because they permit students to exchange ideas and points of view, exchange different opinions and express their own feelings and experiences. In fact, in doing so, students make use of the target language in different ways and situations which develop their communicative and hence interactive abilities (Harmer, 2001). Littlewood (1981: 47) states that, “*It [discussion] provides learners with opportunities to express their personality and experience through the foreign language*”. This means that, discussion activities put learners in authentic situations of communication. They develop both communicative and interactive skills and abilities through the use of target language.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1. Littlewood’s (1996) Classification of Communicative Activities

The last part of the literature review aims at presenting the analytical framework followed to analyze New Prospects activities. In this study, we will rely first on Littlewood’s

classification of language classroom activities. Littlewood (1996) distinguishes between pre-communicative and communicative activities, (see the figure below).

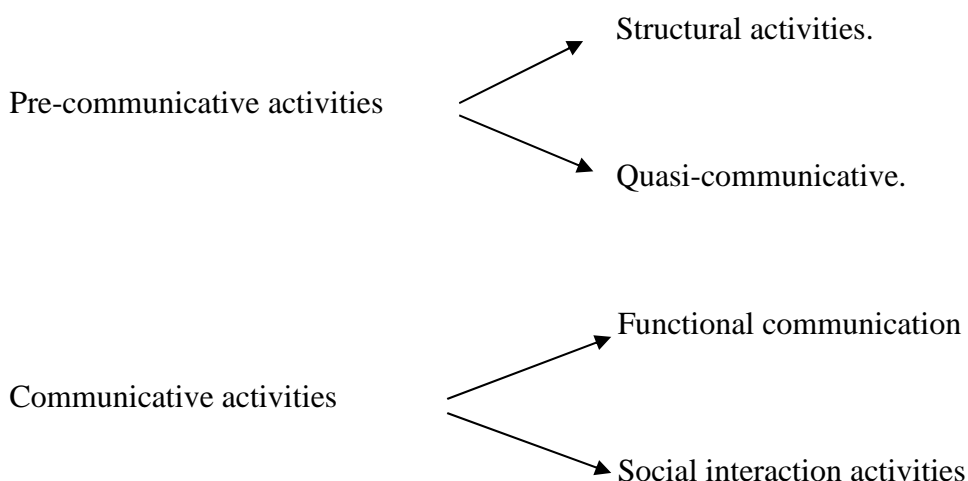


Figure01: Littlewood's *Classification of Communicative Activities* (1996: 86)

4.1. a. Pre-communication Activities

According to Littlewood (1996: 89), the aim behind pre-communicative activities is “...*to give the learners fluent control over linguistic forms, so that the lower-level processes will be capable of unfolding automatically in response to higher-level decisions based on meaning*”.

Structural Activities: stress the importance of grammatical rules and the various combinations of linguistic items.

Quasi-communicative Activities: have to do with conversational exchanges (dialogues and drills). These types of activities help learners to practice: communicative function, specific meaning and social context.

4.1. b. Communicative Activities

The focus in this type of activities is on meaning rather than form. They include functional communication and social interaction.

Functional Communication: here learners are asked to solve a problem or overcome an information gap with whatever language they have, because what is important at this stage is the achievement of ‘the communicative demands of the immediate situation’.

Social Interaction: this type of activity requires from learner to select language in relation to social dimensions. It seeks social acceptability.

4.2. Jones’ (1996) Three Functions of Speaking

Second, we will use a three-part version of Jones’ framework: talk as interaction; talk as transaction; talk as performance. Here we will use the expanded framework of Jones (1996) as cited by Richards (2008). The latter suggests three functions of speaking. They form the basis of the speaking competence; and hence make the learner able to use language appropriately in social interaction.

4.2. a. Talk as Interaction

It refers to what is normally meant by “conversation” and describes interaction that serves primarily social function. The focus is more on the speakers’ presentation for themselves and for each other rather than the message. The main features of speaking as interaction are:

- Has a primarily social function.
- Reflects relationships.
- Reflects speakers’ identity.
- May be formal or casual.
- Uses conversational conventions;
- Reflects degrees of politeness.

- Employs many generic words.
- Uses conversational register.
- It is jointly constructed.

Some of the skills involved in talking as interaction:

- Opening and closing conversations.
- Choosing topics.
- Making small talk.
- Recounting personal incidents and experiences.
- Turn-taking.
- Using adjacency-pairs.
- Interrupting.
- Reacting to others.

(Jones, 1996 cited in Richards, 2008)

4.2. b. Talk as Transaction

Talk as transaction refers to the situations where the focus is on the message (what is said or done). Burns distinguished between two types of transaction. In the first type, the focus is only on giving and receiving information. While the second, the focus is on obtaining goods and services. The main features of talking as transaction are:

- It has a primarily information focus.
- The main focus is on the message not the participant.
- Participants employ communication strategies to make themselves understood.

- There may be frequent questions, repetitions, and comprehension checks.
- There may be negotiation and aggression.
- Linguistic accuracy is not always important.

Some of the skills involved in using talk as transaction:

- Explaining a need or attention.
- Describing something.
- Asking questions.
- Confirming information.
- Justifying an opinion.
- Making suggestions.
- Clarifying understanding.
- Making comparisons.
- Agreeing and disagreeing.

(Jones, 1996 cited in Richards, 2008)

4.2. c. Talk as Performance

This one refers to public talk, that is, talk that transmits information before an audience.

The main features of talk as performance are:

- There is a focus on both message and audience.
- It reflects organization and sequencing.
- Form and accuracy is important.
- Language is more like written language.
- It is often monologic.

Some of the principles involved in talking as performance:

- Using an appropriate format.
- Presenting information in an appropriate sequence.
- Maintaining audience engagement.
- Using correct pronunciation and grammar.
- Creating an effect on the audience.
- Using appropriate vocabulary.
- Using appropriate opening and closing.

(Jones, 1996 cited in Richards, 2008)

Conclusion

In second language learning, interaction and speaking are considered as key concepts. The two are strongly related to each other. Interaction plays an important role in the development of the speaking skill. However, speaking also has a significant influence in enhancing students' interactive competence in both classroom context and outside it. This chapter then, was an attempt to shed light on these two concepts. It deals first with the approaches to language teaching that give prominence to communicative competence, interactive competence and speaking. This part also has reviewed some definitions of interaction and the importance of interactive learning. Then, it presents the speaking skill, the different types of speaking, classroom speaking activities and finally the theoretical frameworks adopted in the dissertation.

Chapter two: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter deals with the research design of this dissertation. It describes first the procedures of data collection. The latter provides a detailed description of the corpus of this research, which is EFL third year secondary school textbook namely *New Prospects*. Second it describes the procedures of data analysis which are the mixed method, content analysis and the statistical method.

1. Procedures of Data Collection

1.1. Description of the Textbook *New Prospects*

New Prospects is the textbook designed for third year intermediate learners. It is composed of six units which deal with different topics. The units are presented in the textbook in the following order: “Exploring the Past”, “Ill-gotten Gains never Prosper”, “Schools: Different and Alike”, “Safety First”, “It’s a Giant Leap for Mankind”, “Keep Cool”. All the units of *New Prospects* are designed in the same way; they are made up of similar sequences which are structured in the same way.

Part one: Language Outcomes

This part is divided into **Listen and Consider** and **Read and Consider**. The two deal with the grammatical structures, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling. At the end of each sequence, there is a rubric called **Think, Pair, Share**. The later presents three different types of work; individual work, pair work and group work. This rubric puts learners into practice through a set of different activities targeting both speaking and writing.

After the **Think, pair, share** rubric, **Take a Break** comes. It provides learners with a kind of relaxation by asking learners to carry on a fairy tale, a story, or discuss some proverbs.

Part two: Skills and Strategies Outcomes

Skills and Strategies Outcomes focuses on compositional skills and communication strategies. It contains the following sequences:

Research and Report: this sequence is an opportunity for learners to put into practice what have been already learned in terms of grammar and vocabulary. It is also a training ground for learners' interaction.

Listening and Speaking and Reading and Writing: these two sequences permit learners to practice the four primary skills and the social skills like responding to problem-solving situations. Listening and Speaking contains four main rubrics: **Before Listening, As you Listen, After Listening** and **Say it in Writing**. The **Reading and Writing** sequence follows the same organizational pattern: **Before you Read, As you Read, After Reading** and **Writing Development**.

Project Outcome: is an outline of the project. It provides learners with instructions and guidelines about how to carry out the selected project.

Assessment: in this rubric, a set of activities are given for learners in order to assess their level of performance.

At the end of each unit, there is a rubric entitled **Time For....** This one is a time for learners to relax with a song or a poem. The units are followed by the Listening Scripts section containing a radio interview, conversations and debates related to the topic of each unit, a grammar reference which includes some grammar rules and a Resource Portfolio that contains a selected number of texts corresponding to each unit.

1.2. Techniques of Classification of New Prospects Speaking Activities

The selected activities are all speaking activities. They are first classified according to Littlewood's (1996) classification of communicative activities. The speaking activities are classified into two categories pre-communication and communication activities. Each one of them is sub-divided into two other categories. After that, we have analyzed the selected activities relying on Jones (1996) model of speaking functions. We have compared the activities with the characteristics and skills suggested by Jones. Relying on this analysis, the activities are selected within the appropriate function of speaking. Finally, we have converted the qualitative results into quantitative data so as to make the study more explicit and more reliable.

2. Procedures of Data Analysis

2.1. Techniques of Data Analysis

The present research aims at investigating the development of interactive competence through speaking activities in New Prospects. The activities of the corpus under analysis share some features of two categories of communicative tasks or two speaking functions. However, through reading the activities several times, skimming the content using qualitative content analysis and making reference to the two theoretical frameworks, different characteristics may be identified.

First, Littlewood (1996) has not identified clear and precise characteristics for each category of exercises, but he presented descriptions and some examples of possible exercises for almost all the categories in order to facilitate the identification of the types of exercises.

- **Structural Activities:** the common feature of these activities is the focus on grammatical structures.

- **Quasi-Communicative Activities:** conversational exchanges (dialogues and drills), clarifying facts, students' personal knowledge, open and cued dialogues.
- **Functional Communication Activities:** Solve a problem or overcome information-gap activities, yes-no questions, identifying pictures, discovering identical pairs, discovering missing information, discovering differences, following directions, jigsaw activities, share and process information.
- **Social Interaction Activities:** conversation or discussion sessions, basing dialogues and role-plays on school experiences, simulation and role playing.

Second, Jones (1996) has given some skills and features of speaking that may permit the identification and selection of a particular speaking function in *New Prospects*' speaking activities:

- **Talk as Interaction:** opening and closing conversations, choosing topics, making small talk, recounting personal incidents and experiences, turn-taking, using adjacency-pairs, interrupting, reacting to others.
- **Talk as Transaction:** explaining a need or attention, describing something, asking questioning, confirming information, justifying an opinion, making suggestions, clarifying understanding, making comparisons, agreeing and disagreeing.
- **Talk as Performance:** using an appropriate format, presenting information in an appropriate sequence, maintaining audience engagement, using correct pronunciation and grammar, creating an effect on the audience, using appropriate vocabulary, using appropriate opening and closing.

2.2. Content Analysis

The analysis relies on content analysis. It is one of qualitative research techniques for data analysis. According to Cohen et al. (2007: 475 cited in Harold, 2015: 13), "*a strict and*

systematic set of procedures for rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the content of written data". Wilson in his turn defines CA as *"The non numerical organization and interpretation of data in order to discover patterns, themes, forms, exemplars..."* (cited in Denzine and Lincoln: 1994). The reason to rely on content analysis is because this research study deals with analyzing content of the exercises. This means that it seeks to compare patterns, themes, forms and so on.

2.3. Statistical Method

The statistical data are obtained by using a statistical method and the results are presented in forms of percentages. We have proceeded to the calculation of the means by using the arithmetic means which is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Arithmetic means} = \frac{\text{Sum of values}}{\text{Number of subjects}}$$

The means for the gathered data is calculated, first by multiplying the frequency of each category by its mid-point. Second, these products are totaled; and third, this total is divided by the total frequency. So for the gathered data, means are calculated using the

following formula: $\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$ (cited in Yassine, S., 2010: 139).

3. Mixed Method

First, this study is a mixed method research. It uses both qualitative and quantitative tools. The former consists in textual data, while the latter refers to the presentation of the data in terms of rates and numbers. Mixed method is called "the third methodological movement" after the development of quantitative and qualitative research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003:

5) and “the third research paradigm” by (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 15). This means that the mixed method is the third method in the field of research. In fact, it is a combination of the two first methods: quantitative and qualitative. Mixed method is adopted in this research work because qualitative method is more suitable to this research in order to collect the necessary and appropriate data from the textbook activities to answer the research questions. In addition, quantitative method makes the qualitative results more explicit and gives the research study a kind of scientific credibility.

Conclusion

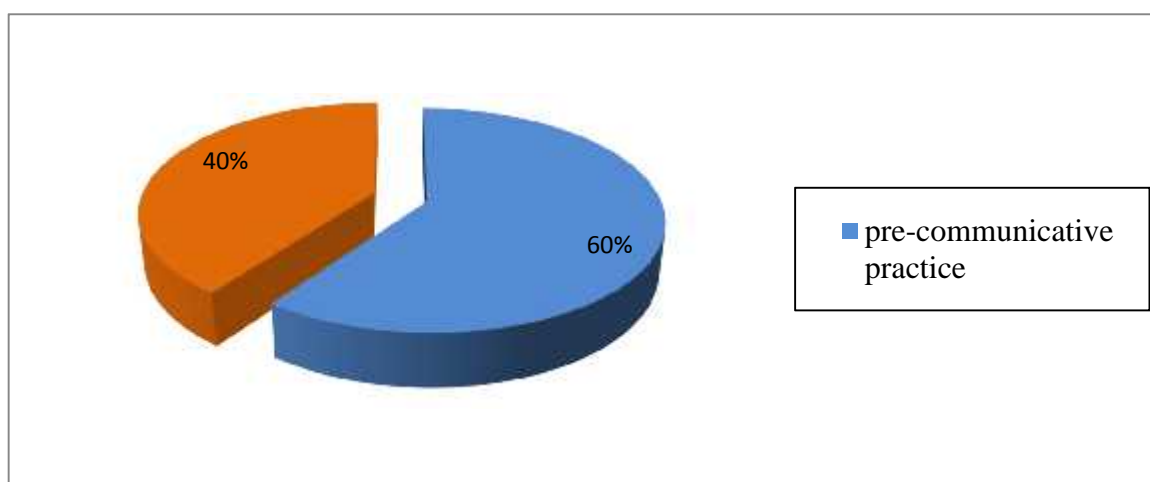
This chapter is devoted to the methodology. It focuses on presenting the data collection tools and data analysis. It starts first with a detailed description of *New Prospects*. Then, it moves to identifying the techniques of data collection. Finally, it explains the data analysis procedures, and the reasons behind their use.

Chapter Three: Results

Introduction

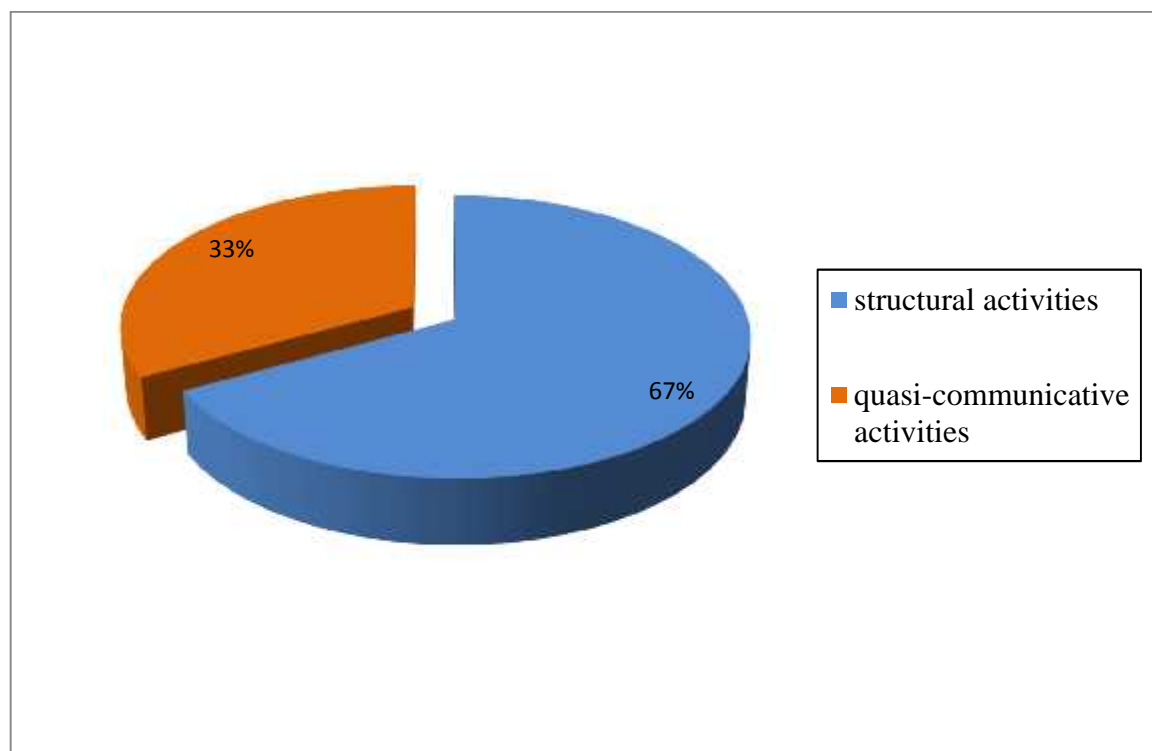
As its title suggests, this chapter is designed to display the quantitative results obtained from the scrutiny of the textbook speaking activities namely *New Prospects*. For this concern, two units have been analyzed following the two theoretical frameworks explained in the literature review. The reason behind this choice is that all units follow the same organizational pattern. The analyzed activities are selected from three (03) different sequences: *Listen and consider*, *Read and consider* and *listening and speaking*. The research findings are presented in form of pie-charts. The results of classification for speaking activities in *New Prospects* according to Littlewood's(1996) framework are presented first followed by the results of classification for speaking activities according to Jones' (1996) framework .

1. Classification of Speaking Activities in *New Prospects* According to Littlewood's (1996) Model.



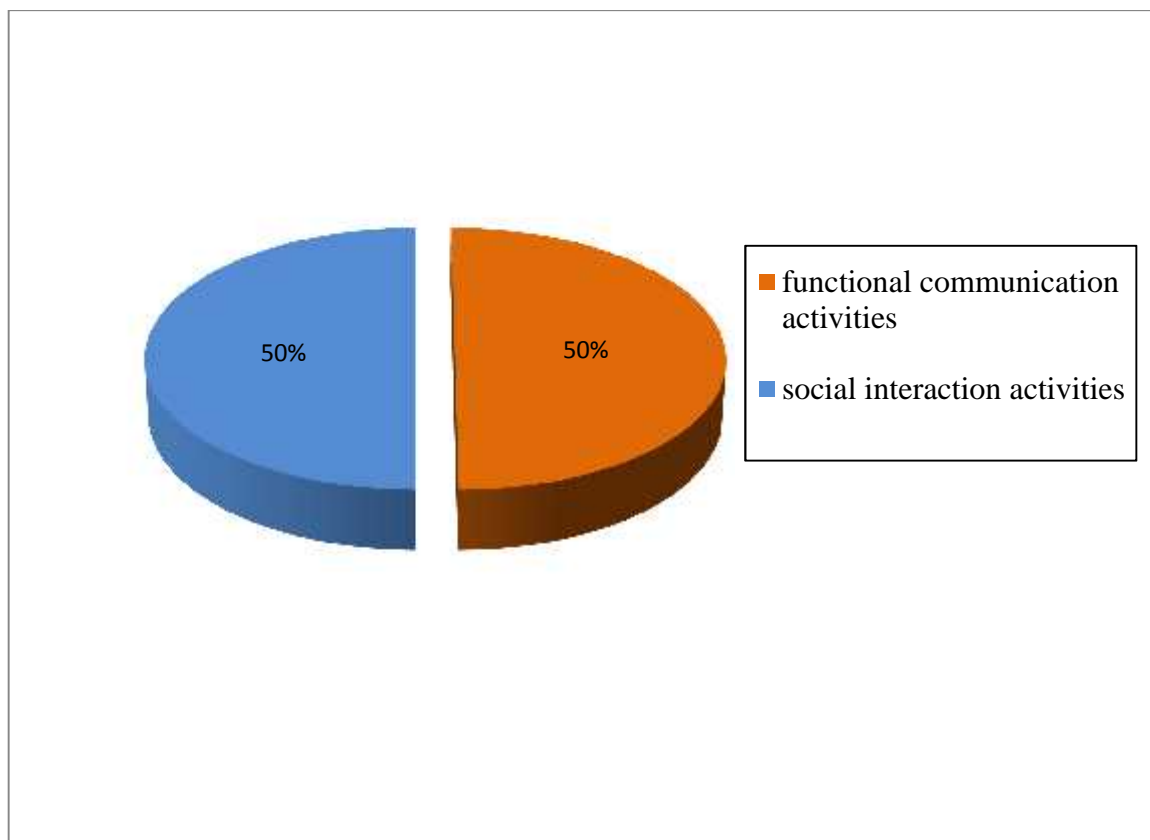
Pie Chart One:Frequency of Pre-communicative and Communicative Activies in *New Prospects*

This pie-chart represents the rate of pre-communicative and communicative practice in *New Prospects*. It is shown that pre-communicative activities present 60% from the over all practice, while communicative activities present 40%. This reveals that, the majority *New Prospects* speaking activities are pre-communicative.



Pie Chart Two:Pre-Communicative Activities in *New Prospects*

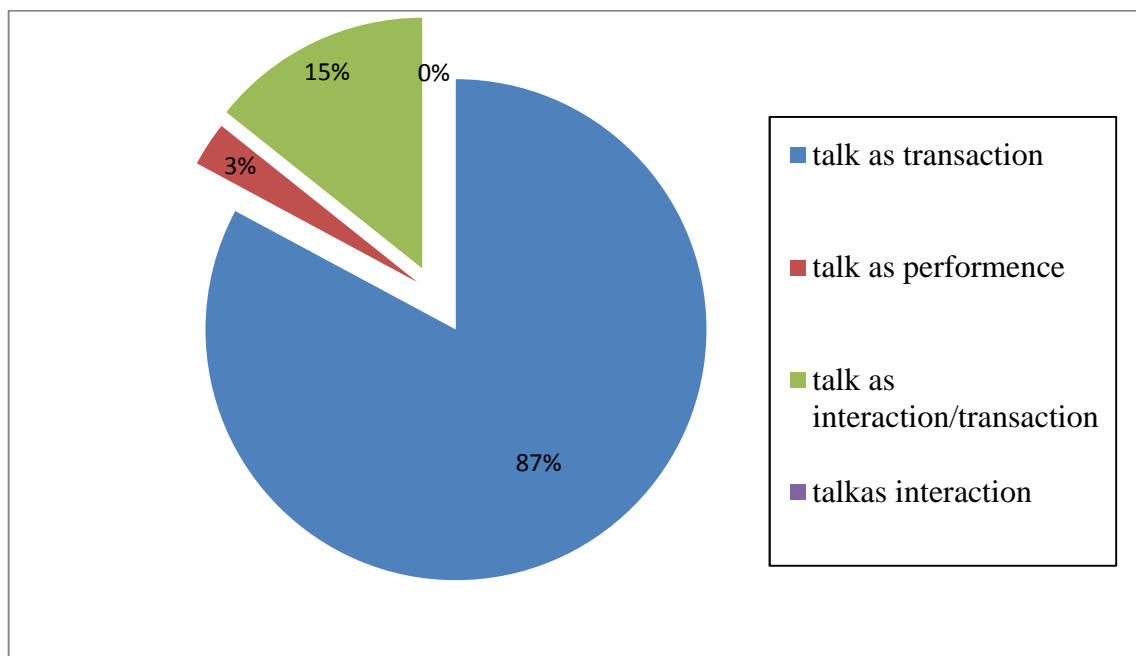
The above pie-chart deals with the two sub-divisions of the pre-communicative category tasks in *New Prospects*. It indicates persontage of each of the two sub-divisions. It is clear that structural practice is more stressed than the quasi-communicative one. The first indicates that 67% of speaking activities are structural activities, and only 33% of them are quasi-communicative. This justifies the importance of structural practice in *New Prospects*.



Pie Chart Three: Communicative Activities in New Prospects

The above graph is a representation of the communicative practice results in the textbook. After the analysis, it has been found that the rate of the two sub-categories of communicative practice is equal in the two units 03 and 04 . The percentage of both functional communication and social interaction is 50% .

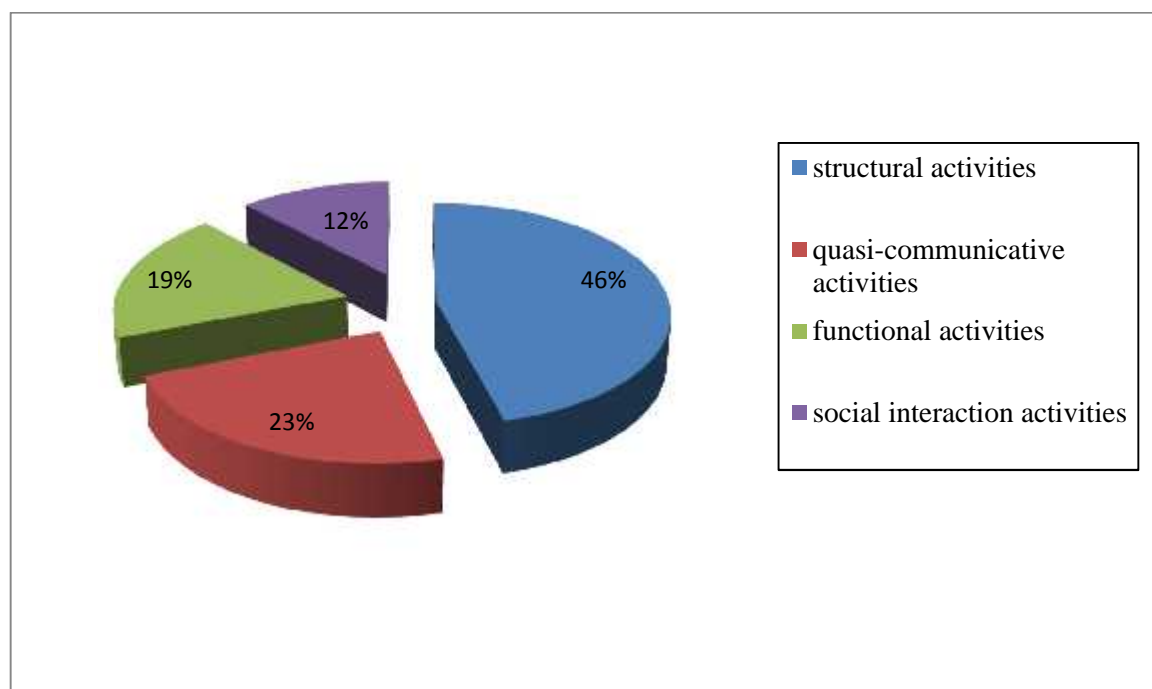
2. The Frequency of Speaking Functions in New Prospects' Speaking Activities According to Jones' (1996) Model



Pie Chart Four: The Frequency of Speaking Functions in New Prospects' Speaking Activities According to Jones' (1996) Model

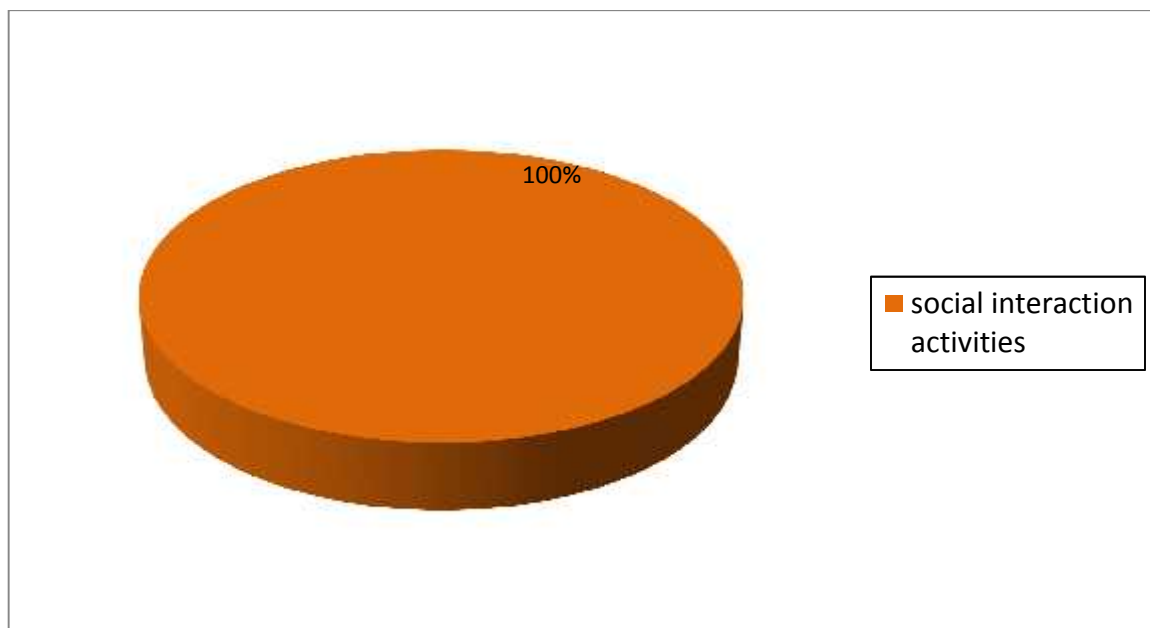
This graph indicates the different percentage of each of the three speaking functions in New Prospects' activities according to Jones' (1996) model. The data reveals that talk as transaction occupies 87% of the speaking activities designed in New Prospects. This function is the most targeted and developed through the activities. While, only 3% is devoted talk as performance and 0% for talk as interaction. The analysis indicates that some of the activities share some features of both functions interaction and transaction. For this reason, we have taken these results into consideration in this research by analyzing them as a separated additional function.

3. Frequency of Speaking Functions within Pre-communicative and Communicative Activities in New Prospects



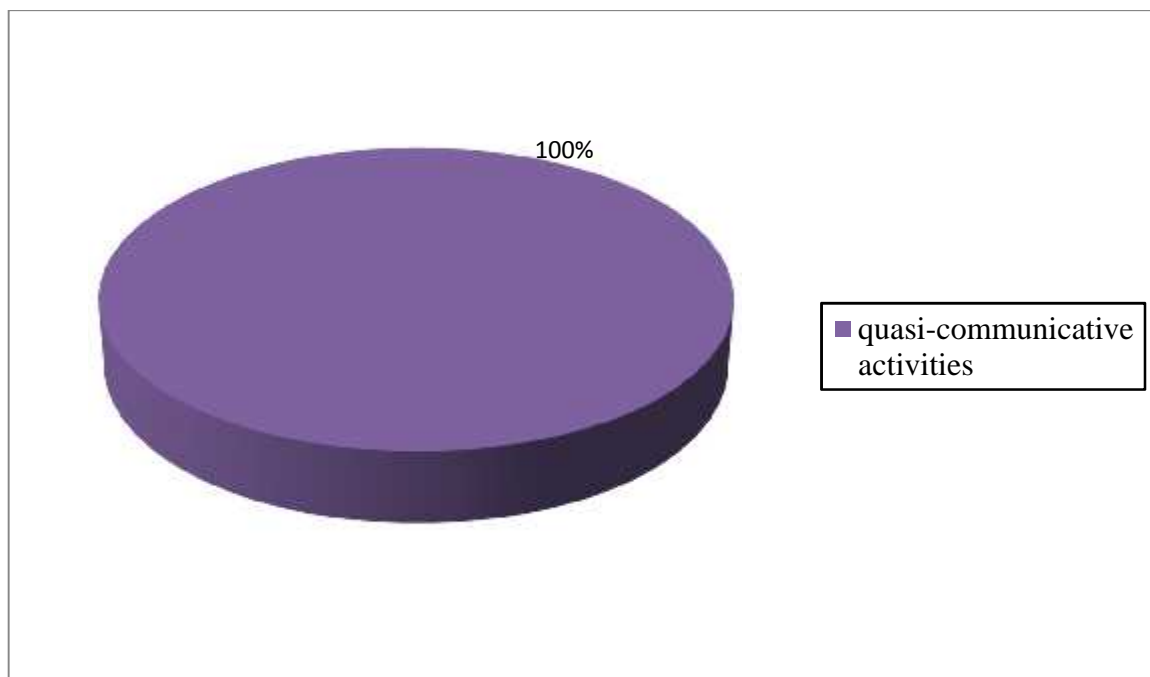
Pie Chart Five: Talk as transaction in the Categories of Communicative Speaking Activities in New Prospects

These results represent the rate of occurrence of the transactional function in the communicative speaking categories of communicative speaking activities in New Prospects in relation to the framework suggested by Littlewood in 1996. The data show that this function is developed in the four categories of speaking: 46% of structural activities, 23% of quasi-communicative, 19% of functional communication and 12% of social interaction. This illustrates the importance of this function in New Prospects speaking activities.



Pie Chart 06: Talk as Interaction/Transaction in the Categories of Social Interaction Speaking Activities in New Prospects

This pie-chart represents the frequency of interaction/ transaction functions in social interaction activities in New Prospects. These two functions occupy 15% of the overall activities. This pie chart shows that the three speaking activities classified as talk as interaction/transaction according to Jones'(1996) model are found in the category of social interaction activities in relation to Littelwood's (1996) framework.



Pie Chart 07: Talk as Performance in the Categories of Quasi-communicative Speaking Activities in *New Prospects*

This chart is a representation of the frequency of talk as performance function in the category of quasi-communicative activities in *New Prospects*. The classification of the speaking activities in the textbook according to Jones' (1996) model shows that only one activity from the overall tasks is categorized as talk as performance with a rate of 3%. This activity is classified as a quasi-communicative one following Littlewood's (1996) framework with a rate of 100%.

Conclusion

This chapter then is devoted to present the results gathered from the analysis of the textbook activities. Two theoretical frameworks are used to analyse these data: Littlewood's (1996) classification of communicative activities, and Jones(1996) three functions of speaking.

Chapter four: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter aims at interpreting the findings sorted out from the analysis of New Prospects' speaking activities. The research outcomes are discussed in relation to the analytical framework and to the literature review. The discussion follows the same organization as the results. It is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the results obtained from the classification of speaking activities according to Littlewood (1996) model of communicative activities. The second part discusses the results of the three functions of speaking in New Prospects according to the functions suggested by Jones (1996).

1. Discussion of the Speaking Activities in New Prospects According to Littlewood's (1996) Classification of Communicative Activities

1.1. Pre-Communicative Tasks in New Prospects

The results show that 60% of New Prospects' activities are pre-communicative. Littlewood (1996: 86) argues that the aim behind this type of activities is “...to give the learner fluent control over the linguistic forms, so that the lower-level processes will be capable of unfolding automatically in response to higher-level decisions based on meaning”. This means that pre-communicative tasks are designed in order to give learners the necessary linguistic tools; including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation that could help them to practise speaking in meaningful situations. New Prospects designers have given importance to pre-communicative practice, since more than half of the speaking activities fall within this category. These activities are found in the two sequences of New Prospects *Listen and Consider* and *Read and Consider*. Here students are given an opportunity to work on the “language dimensions” through the study of the linguistic items of the unit; vocabulary,

grammar, pronunciation and spelling. “*What is aimed at is getting the students to internalise the thematic and linguistic ‘tools’ they will make use of, more naturally, so to speak, in the second part of the unit*” (*New Prospects*, 2008: 5). This quotation taken from *New Prospects’ FOREWORD* justifies the use of this type of practice and its importance in building up learners’ linguistic competence so as to be used in the practice sequence ‘*Listening and speaking*’.

1.1.a. Structural Activities in *New Prospects*

Structural activities are a sub-division of pre-communicative practice. This category includes the activities of which the focus is on grammatical rules and different linguistic items. In *New Prospects*, structural practice is of a great importance. In fact 67% of pre-communicative activities are devoted to grammatical and phonological practice. After the analysis of the third and fourth units’ activities, we have found that from 18 pre-communicative tasks, 12 tasks are structural while only 6 are quasi-communicative. This number shows the significant importance given to linguistic knowledge over the other categories of language practice. This type of practice is found in the rubric named ‘*Grammar Explorer*’. Here, students are asked to drill grammatical rules given in the ‘*Grammar Reference*’ at the end of the textbook. As example:

Grammar Explorer II

Consider sentences A-D below and answer questions 1-3 that follow.

A. *They prefer buying organic food.* B. *The eating of organic food will certainly keep increasing.*

C. *Organic foods are somewhat healthier and less damaging to the environment.*

D. *More and more farms are turning to organic farming.*

1. *In which sentences can you find a word with **–ing** function as a verb?*
2. *Which **two** sentences contain a word with **–ing** functioning as a noun?*
3. *Which sentence contains a word with the **–ing** form functioning as an adjective?*

(New Prospects: 109 see appendices).

1. *With your partner, compare your answers to task 1 above. Then explain to your classmates why you have used the **gerund** or the **present simple** tense with the verbs in bold type.*

(New Prospects: 110 see appendices).

In the first activity, students are given a set of sentences followed by a set of questions to ask. This activity is speaking but its aim is purely linguistic. The three questions seek to make students identify in which case **-ing** is used as a verb, a noun or an adjective; that is to say the rules of using the **-ing** form.

The second is a continuity of 'Grammar Explorer II' p.109 and it is related to the task before. Although this one is a speaking activity because students are required to justify orally the use of gerund and present simple, it targets the linguistic or more precisely the grammatical competence of students. Another example is:

Grammar Explorer I

Consider the tenses used in the text above and answer questions A-B below.

- A. *The tense which is mostly used in the text is present simple. Why?*
- B. *In what other situations/cases do we use this tense? Give sentences of your own to illustrate your answers.*

(New Prospects: 115 see appendices).

The previous activity is also designed in order to practice the use of present simple. Here students are asked first to deduce the rule; when to use present simple relying on the text. Indeed, the text is set as a support for students. Then, as a second step they are asked to go beyond the text and suggest other situations and illustrate with examples. Giving examples ensure students' understanding and assimilation of the concept. For instance:

Pronunciation and Spelling

.Task: Listen to your teacher reading aloud the sentences below and note how s/he pronounces the models in bold. Then practice saying them.

.Would you come here, please?

You **should** stop talking.

You **ought to** respect him.

Mind! You **could** hurt the teacher!

(New Prospects: 81 see appendices).

This activity is directly related to speaking since it makes students practice one of its aspects which is pronunciation. The aim here is to stress students' speaking proficiency through enhancing the pronunciation skill. The sentences suggested consist in different models.

All these activities and others (see appendices) are classified within structural practice. The linguistic competence plays an effective role in enhancing speaking skill and communicative competence and hence interactive competence because an effective communication requires an accurate use of grammatical and phonological rules. Students need to be aware of when and how to use the linguistic items, in order to ensure a meaningful communication between students either in the classroom environment or in everyday situations.

1.1. b. Quasi-Communicative Activities

The second sub-division of pre-communicative activities is quasi-communicative activities. At this point, students go a bit further from linguistic practice. The aim here is not only linguistic accuracy but also introduce students to some authentic situations. Littlewood (1996: 10) argues that "...to practice responses which would be (a) realistic ways of performing useful communicative acts in (b) situations they might expect to encounter at some time". In other words, the objective of quasi-communicative activities is to put students in authentic situations of language use. They start to use the linguistic knowledge acquired before to carry out some communicative tasks. Furthermore, this category of exercises helps

to narrow the gap between learners' linguistic competence and communicative competence since students make use of both. The results show that 40% of pre-communicative tasks are quasi communicative. This rate indicates a little use of quasi-communicative tasks in comparison to structural tasks. We find that the focus is more on the practice of linguistic items. Littlewood (1996) claims that quasi-communicative practice has to do with conversational exchanges (dialogues and drills). In New Prospects, we have noticed that few activities are based on dialogues. For example:

2. Explain in what ways the current British educational system is similar to and different from the Algerian educational system. Refer to the text

(New Prospects: 84 see appendices).

3. Compare and discuss your answers to task 2 above with your classmates. Than make a similar dialogue and act it out with your partner

(New Prospects: 119 see appendices).

These two activities are examples of quasi-communicative tasks. In both of them there is a combination of linguistic structures and communication. In the first one the focus is on making comparisons showing both similarities and differences. Despite this, focus is also given to communication, because the linguistic forms are not learnt in isolation but in context. While in the second, students perform a dialogue. This pair work is one kind of quasi-communicative tasks. Students learn at the same time how to ask questions and make suitable responses to these questions and make requests and use some conversational strategies. The situations also may be encountered in students' every-day life.

1.2. Communicative Tasks in New Prospects

The results reveal that 33% of speaking activities are communicative. In this type of practice, the focus is directed more towards communicating meaning rather than practising linguistic rules. But in fact, practice on this type is limited. 33% is a small rate in comparison with per-communicative practice and mainly structural activities. Students are not provided with enough situations to communicate and interact. According to Littlewood (1996), this category consists in functional communication and social interaction communication.

1.2.1. Functional Communication Activities

Within communicative tasks, functional communication occupies 50% of the overall practice. A key feature of functional communicative activities is problem-solving situations. What matters here as Littlewood (1996) argues is students' achievement of "*the communication demands of the immediate situation*"; that is to say, the ability of students to communicate in response to a given situation of communication and the appropriate use of language in order to solve a problem. The problem is the task given to students.

3. Report and discuss your findings with your classmates. Then write a consumers' report following this discussion.

(New Prospects: 122 see appendices).

This activity is a functional one. Students are put in a situation in order to find solution for a problem. This situation is communicative since it treats advertisement which is a social topic. It is worth noting that students are asked to report and discuss their findings with their classmates. First, the problem-solving requires group work which is one characteristic of communicative practice. And second, it is about sharing and processing information. The latter is a type of functional communication activities suggested by Littlewood in 1996. This

activity is taken from the rubric entitled '*Research and Report*'. As its title indicates, there is a research made by students about a given subject in this case it is advertising and students have to report their findings to the class. This means that each member of the group or the class has information unknown by the other members. When they meet as a group each of them reports his or her findings and they discuss them together. Through this discussion, students select the appropriate ingredients, additives, etc for the selected product and then they agree on a way to write a consumers' report. This meets Littlewood's clarification "*...each learner in a group processes information which is unique to him; together, the different pieces of information provide the material for solving a particular problem*" (1996: 33). It is also noticeable that this activity joins both speaking and writing, but as a whole it targets communication.

1.2.2. Social Interaction Activities in New Prospects

This category is the last one suggested by Littlewood (1996) for the classification of exercises. In New Prospects, 50% of communication practice is social interactive. Language here is used under social dimensions. That is to say, the focus is more on social acceptability. The situations are simulations to real-world ones. Interaction also is not limited to teacher/learner interaction but students are given certain freedom in their discussions. Littlewood (1996) suggested some activities that go with social interaction principles. One of them is classroom conversation or discussion sessions. He argues that these techniques have a number of advantages. They are useful in stimulating communicative interaction since it provide learners with opportunities to express and share their experiences, interests and opinions via the foreign language. They also provide contexts for a wide range of communicative functions and domains of meaning (Littlewood 1996: 47). This explains in details how social interactive activities, mainly conversations and discussion sessions provide learners with real situations to practise communication and hence to develop their communicative skills and abilities.

'Getting started' (p.75) in 'Listen and Consider' sequence (unit 03) is an example of social interactive activities.

. *Look at the pictures, then discuss the following questions.*

1. *What will you study at university if you pass your Baccalauréat examination?*
2. *Do you think that your parents will accept your choice? What if they don't?*

(New Prospects: 75 see appendices).

The aim is to make students discuss the given questions in relation to the presented pictures. The subject of discussion in these questions is students' choice for their university studies. First of all, this topic is communicative and stimulates learners' interaction since it is tightly related to their everyday life. This subject is one of students main interests especially as they are preparing to pass their *Baccalauréat* exam, most of them are motivated to participate in this classroom discussion.

1. *In your opinion, what is the most important thing about education: training for citizenship, preparing people for life, or training a workforce?*
2. *Why should a parent ask to see a headmaster?*

(New Prospects: 75 see appendices).

The answers to these two questions permit students to express their opinions and points of view towards some concepts. Each student has a different vision and a different explanation for the above questions. The result of this diversity in opinions is a rich, interactive discussion. Although this task is communicative and the process of language learning is interactive, there is a limitation concerning this interaction. Students are not completely free in handling such a conversation, but there is a certain dependency on the teacher. The latter controls students' answers and manages the classroom discussion because he is the one who asks the questions and selects the students to answer.

'Getting started' (p.107 unit 04) follows the same principle; it consists in a set of questions to discuss in relation to a picture that works as an aid for more clarification. The topic is social, it treats food safety.

3. *Have you, or any of your friends ever been victim of food poisoning? If yes, tell your classmates about this experience.*

(New Prospects: 107 see appendices).

Students are given an opportunity to express their experiences. This point is useful in developing learners' competence of communication; because they use language to recount personal incidents. This technique helps to narrow the gap between language classroom and authentic use of language. Despite this, there is a kind of control over this interaction;

. Task: *With your partner, prepare a short dialogue asking for and giving opinions about advertising. Use the information in the coping box above and the arguments on the next page.*

Voice your opinion by starting like this:

A: *In my opinion, advertising is more likely to harm consumers than serve them. What do you think of that?*

(New Prospects: 125 see appendices).

Dialogues and role-play are another example of social interactive activities. Students interact using their own language and strategies and this is a way to develop learners' communicative and interactive competence at the same time. Littlewood (1996: 51) supports this idea by saying that the teacher "...controls only the situation and learners' role in it; but leaves the learners themselves to create the interaction".

To sum up, the results show that the rate of pre-communicative practice (60%) is bigger than the one of communicative practice (40%) and mainly structural activities (67%). This means that New Prospects gives importance to linguistic items since many speaking activities are devoted to structural practice. But it is worth noting that some speaking activities

focus on communication and interaction. Indeed, these activities are found in three different categories; quasi-communication, functional communication and social interaction activities. The degree of communication and interactivity differs from one category to another. The starting point is quasi-communicative activities where the aim is to approach students from real world situations by practicing the linguistic forms in context. And then, students move to solve problems using different language functions to increase the level of communication. At the end, students are put in simulations for real situation and make use of authentic language. Relying on the results and the above discussion, *New Prospects* speaking activities are communicative activities to some extent. The activities share characteristics of communicative practice, but most of the time linguistic accuracy is more focused.

2. Discussion of Speaking Activities in *New Prospects* According to Jones' framework for Speaking Functions

2.1. Talk as Interaction in *New Prospects*

Talk as interaction refers to what is called “conversation” and describes interaction which serves a social function at the first place (J.C.Richards, 2008: 22). This means that, learners are exposed to situations in which they are expected to interact through conversations in which the aim is primarily social. This also means the conversation does not deal with linguistic items or language functions transactional acts. Indeed, the aim is to establish social relationships. After the analysis, we have noticed that *New Prospects* speaking activities do not target the interactive function. Jones (1996) suggests a number of features that characterize talk as interaction (these are explained in a detailed way in the literature review chapter). The textbook activities do not much these features. There are some activities mainly those of ‘*Getting Started*’ rubric share some of talk as interaction characteristics. As example:

3. *Have you, or any of your friends, ever been victim of food poisoning? If yes, tell your classmates about this experience.*

This question is taken from ‘*Getting Started*’ (p.107). Students here recount their personal experiences which is one characteristic of talk as interaction. But it is limited to one question, because the rest of the task targets other language functions. The focus is not on the participant but rather on the subject of discussion or more precisely how to make the meaning explicit. The speaking activities designed in the corpus under analysis do not develop the skills suggested by Jones (1996). He also suggests some examples for talk as interaction.

2.2. Talk as Transaction in New Prospects

The results reached from the scrutiny of New Prospects speaking activities reveal that most of them are considered as talk as transaction (87%). They almost meet all the features of speaking as transaction. This type of activities focuses more on what is said or done. As J.C.Richards (2008: 24) claims “*The message and making oneself understood clearly and accurately is the central focus...*”. This means that this type of activities provide learners with opportunities to practise the language in terms of linguistic accuracy, social functions and social acceptability. They are provided with simulations and social context activities in order to practice language in social context. Thus, the objective is to make learners able to interact in order to communicate meaning and act something. Transactional activities are found in four categories of communicative activities suggested by Littlewood (1996).

Starting with the structural activities, 46% are classified as talk as transaction because the aim is linguistic accuracy. The latter is an important step in learning how to carry real-world transactions. Issues like comparisons, quantifiers, tenses use, pronunciation are useful in developing learners’ communicative and interactive competence through the accurate and appropriate use of every day transactions.

2. Consider the comparatives in the table you have filled in task 1 above and explain how they are formed. Draw the rule (p.85).

Grammar Explorer II (p. 109).

Grammar Explorer II (p. 116).

(New Prospects: 85 see appendices).

The second sub-category in Pre-communicative practice is quasi-communicative activities. Indeed, they aim at relating language to social practice through putting learners in realistic situations. 23% of quasi-communicative practice is transactional speaking. When carrying out the activities students learn the linguistic items like: the use of conditional, comparative and superlative not taking; at the same time they express agreement or disagreement, points of view or value judgment (activities p.63, 94, 96, 125). As Littlewood (1996 : 10) claims “...to practice responses which would be (a) realistic ways of performing useful communicative acts in (b) situations they might expect to encounter at some time”.

2. Compare and discuss your answers to task 2 above with your classmates. Then make a similar dialogue and act it out with your partner.

(New Prospects: 119 see appendices).

The activity consists of many tasks; first students compare and discuss their answers. They practise comparison which is a grammatical activity and interact at the same time through the discussion. After that, they are asked to act out a dialogue. The latter is about going to a supermarket and buying some goods. Through this kind of practice, learners use authentic language because students encounter this situation in their everyday life. In such activity students learn how to act out daily transactions.

The third is functional communication. From its title, it can be deduced that it stresses two main points: communication and functions. The aim here is to make students

communicate in order to perform a function. Problem-solving situations are a key feature in this type of practice.

*'Research and Report' / Assignment one and two (**New Prospects**: 122 see appendices).*

The two are examples of problem-solving situations that are similar to real ones. Students interact as pairs or as groups in order to solve the problem. Through this interaction they make use of language. In the case of these activities they practice comparisons in relation to food brands; they learn how to write a consumer's reports (*assignment one*). While in the second, they are required to:

Think of 3 or 4 types of home accidents and Prescribe rules that can avert such accidents

(New Prospects: 122 see appendices).

According to J.C.Richards, group work activities, information gap activities and role plays provide a source for students to learn and practice talk for obtaining and transmitting information as well as carrying real-world transactions (J.C.Ricards, 2008:30).

The last class of activities is social interaction activities. They also develop transactional function. In *'Proverbs and sayings' in 'Take a Break'*, students are asked to explain the presented proverbs and give the equivalent in students' language. Students are supposed to use discussion and conversation in order to do the activity. Classroom discussions and conversation sessions are a key feature in both social interaction activities and transactional speaking (**New Prospects: 121**).

2.3. Talk as Performance in New Prospects

The third function of speaking is talk as performance. This type tends to be more formal and close to the written language, it refers to public talk such as classroom

presentations, public announcements and speeches (J.C.Richards, 2008: 27). Talk as performance is not given a significant importance in the third year textbook of English as the previous function. After the analysis of the corpus' speaking activities, it was found that only one activity which meets the features suggested by Jones (1996). The others are not considered as talk as performance because they focus more on writing rather than speaking. The task is taken from the rubric entitled '*Think, pair, share*', it is at the end of '*Listen and consider*'.

Prepare a speech about the possible changes that are likely to happen in our life styles.

(New Prospects: 112 see appendices).

The task in this rubric aims at getting students re-invest in speaking or writing, the thematic and language elements acquired throughout the sequence by foregrounding a particular function (advising, comparing, informing, etc.). The activity seeks to make students use the acquired knowledge and skills from the previous sequences. This is termed in the third year syllabus "l'objectif final" (**New Prospects, 2008: 6**).

2.4. Talk as Interaction/ Talk as Transaction

This category is not suggested by Jones (1996) but when analyzing the tasks in New Prospects, we noticed there are some tasks that combine between two functions of speaking; talk as interaction and talk as transaction. Indeed, there are some activities in the textbook that share features with these two functions of speaking.

Listen and consider/ Getting started (**New Prospects: 75 see appendices**). The latter shows a variation in the type of questions. Students are asked first some personalized questions which are directly related to their everyday life.

1. *What will you study at university if you pass your Baccalauréat examination?*
2. *Do you think that your parents will accept your choice? What if they don't?*

The subject of the task is social; and it is one of the students' most concerns in life. It is about their education and their future choices. This type of speaking is considered as talk as interaction because the answer to these questions do not require students to make reference to a particular function of language or grammar; accuracy may not be a priority at this stage. What matters is to make students communicate their ideas and express themselves. While in the two last questions students are supposed to give their opinions and justify their choices.

1. *In your opinion, what is the most important thing about education: training for citizenship, preparing people for life, or training a workforce?*
2. *Why should a parent ask to see a headmaster?*

The latter are included in talk as transaction. Hence, this task joins between two functions of speaking. It is also worth mentioning that the third question targets students' opinions. In fact, including such a question can stimulate a classroom discussion because of the difference between students' opinions especially when the subject is directly related to their social life. Indeed, classroom discussions are talk as transaction activities. *Getting started* p.107 unit (04) starts with two personalized questions about food safety; the subject treated in this task is taken from everyday life situations.

1. *Have you or any of your friends ever been victim of food poisoning? If yes, tell your classmates about this experience.*

(New Prospects: 107 see appendices).

Students are first asked a general question about food packages and some of the information found in the labels on the packages. Indeed, this question serves as an introduction to the theme of the unit. In the second question, students are supposed to tell their classmates about a personal experience of food poisoning. Recounting personal experiences is one technique of talk as interaction. These two questions provide learners with an opportunity to interact. Although, it stills within the context of teacher/learner interaction because it is in form of small talk; the teacher asks and students answer.

1. *Do you think your fellow countrymen are, on the whole, mindful about food safety or not? Explain.*
2. *Do you approve or disapprove of what the on the Greenpeace are doing protesters in the picture are doing? Justify your answer.*

(New Prospects: 107 see appendices).

Moving to the two last questions of the task, it is noteworthy that there is a difference in the type of questions. There is a shift in focus. The focus here is on the information rather than the participants. Students now are ready to give their opinions and explanations about the subject.

As an answer to the research questions raised in the introduction; New Prospects speaking activities are in favour of the development of learners' interactive competence. Most of the speaking activities are transactional activities. Indeed, transactional function makes use of classroom discussions and conversation sessions; and many times, problem solving situations. The two are considered as interactive speaking activities. However, the type of interaction is not varied, but is limited to one type which is the transactional function of speaking. Almost all the activities require discussion. Students are asked most of the time to explain, justify giving opinions or approving or disapproving. The interactive function is completely neglected. Students are not given situations in which the focus is to establish a social relationship. The activities do not reflect degrees of politeness, conversational register or employing generic words.

Conclusion

On the whole, it has been found that communication and interactive competence are stressed to some extent in New Prospects. The results reveal that 60% of the speaking activities are pre-communicative activities while 40% are communicative. This indicates that New Prospects tasks are not all communicatively directed, structural practice is significantly emphasized in New Prospects since the percentage of the structural activities is 67% and

quasi-communicative activities is 33%. Concerning the interactive competence, the activities provide learners with opportunities to interact in the classroom. And they are in favour of developing some interactive skills for learners. There are some limitations in this concern. The textbook follows one organization and the activities are almost the same in all units. There is no variation in the type of activities within the same unit or throughout the different units. There are some activities that fall under communicative category. The latter serves to develop both interactional and transactional functions; but interaction here is a bit limited. It is more learners/teacher interaction and it is more oriented towards transactional function. Indeed, the transactional function is stressed in 87% of the activities while the interactional function is included in three activities within the transactional function. Talk as performance also is not really stressed in *New Prospects*, it occupies 3% of the overall practice. This may be due to the focus of the textbook more on linguistic accuracy on one side; in other words the mastery of grammatical rules. On the other side, the focus on the writing skill more than speaking because *New Prospects* activities focuses more on preparing students to the Baccalauréat examination. This exam takes the written form.

General Conclusion

Communicative competence and interactive competence are two important concepts in EFL/ESL learning and teaching. Indeed, they are related to one another and lot of interest is devoted to investigate the two. In this concern, the present study is designed to tackle one of these issues. It aims at evaluating third year EFL textbook New Prospects. Therefore, its main focus is to investigate whether the speaking activities set in this textbook are communicative or not, and to which extent these communicative tasks help to enhance learners' interactive competence.

To carry out this investigation, the mixed method is adopted and content analysis is used as a procedure for data analysis. The results of this research have been reported qualitatively in form of texts and quantitatively in form of numeral data. The obtained results were discussed in relation to two analytical frameworks. The first one is Littlewood's (1996) classification of communicative activities, and the second one is the three functions of speaking suggested by Jones (1996). The first analytical framework is adopted to investigate the types of speaking activities as an attempt to answer the first research question. The second framework is used to investigate the functions of New Prospects' speaking activities; in order to figure out what function is more stressed. Furthermore, these functions of speaking help to see to which extent interactive competence is developed in New Prospects.

The results obtained indicate that New Prospects' speaking activities are communicative to some extent. 60% of the speaking tasks fall under the pre-communicative category of activities and 40% are considered as communicative practice. The topics selected for the units are of a social basis. Some of the tasks develop classroom communication. The communication moves from simple communication in which the focus is on linguistic

accuracy to complex that is social interaction practice; where authentic communication and social acceptability are stressed. It is also worth mentioning that all the units follow the same organizational pattern and the same activities are found in all the units; there is no variation in the type of tasks.

Relying on Jones (1996) framework for speaking functions, it is noticed that all the activities except (04) activities “(01) as talk as performance and (03) join the two functions of interaction and transaction”, (26) activities are considered as talk as transaction. This means that 87% of the activities are designed to help students to learn how to carry out transactional world acts. This indicates that speaking activities play a role in developing learners’ interactive competence, but this interaction is limited to some skills and strategies and language functions and is controlled by teacher.

From what has been pointed above, it can be concluded that *New Prospects*’ speaking activities contribute to a certain degree in the development of learner’s interactive competence. But in fact, the focus is given more to linguistic competence and written skill rather than the competence of interaction. Thus, the third hypotheses advanced in the introduction which states that the speaking activities of *New Prospects* are interactive to some extent and the focus on interaction is limited is confirmed.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has some limitations. Interactive competence can be investigated from different sides and in many other ways. In this study, we dealt with interactive competence in relation to one skill which is speaking. The investigation is made relying on textbook evaluation the case of EFL third year secondary school textbook.

Suggestions for Further Researches

Further studies can also examine the issue of interactive competence in relation to classroom interaction in order to sort out the role of classroom interaction in enhancing this competence. Another suggestion for further researches is in relation to other language skills, interactive competence can be investigated in regard to both listening and speaking skills. In addition to this, the development of interactive competence through the different secondary school EFL textbooks; how it is taught and developed from first year to the third year can be also an interesting topic of research.

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