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**The Role of Speaking Activities in the Development of the Learners' Speaking Skill:
The Case of First Year Secondary School Coursebook "At the Crossroads"**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master
Degree in Language Sciences**

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Dedications

***In the name of Allah,
The most compassionate,
The most merciful, without whom this
Work would have never been possible.***

*This work is dedicated
To My dear parents; for their support,
To The only one of its kind: my brother Adel,
To My sisters: Nadia, Dalila and Imene,
To My two faithful princesses both called Sara,
To My incomparable friend Isra,
To My work-partner Siham,
To All my extended family: Laouir,
Thank you all.*

Dedications

In the name of Allah,

The most compassionate,

The most merciful, without whom this

Work would have never been possible.

I dedicate this work to

My dear parents, the pillars of my life,

To my beloved husband, Aziz, my other half,

To all my brothers and sisters,

With whom I was raised like bees in their hive,

To my nephews and nieces the roses of my family,

To my teachers and classmates,

And to my work-partner Samra.

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Abstract

This study attempts to examine the role of the speaking activities introduced in first year secondary school coursebook 'At the Crossroads' in the development of English speaking skill. It aims at discovering the extent to which these activities meet the teachers' expectations and the learners' needs. In order to accomplish this aim, we relied on two questionnaires, which have been submitted to teachers and learners to assemble the required data about their views towards the coursebook speaking activities. The results obtained reveal that the coursebook speaking activities are suitable to develop the learners' speaking skill, however, due to some factors; they are difficult to be implemented adequately. According to the findings, the coursebook speaking activities neither meet the teachers' expectations nor the learners' needs because, they are not interesting, they are either too easy or too difficult and do not suit the learners' levels. Moreover, the speaking activities are not enough; there is dominance of reading and writing activities in the coursebook. Finally, the speaking activities are not suitable to the Algerian classroom and context; learners need definitely more opportunities to practice the speaking skill.

List of Abbreviations

1 A.S	Première Année Secondaire (first year secondary school)
1 A. M. 87	Première Année Moyenne (first year middle-school)
CBA	Competency-based Approach
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FL	Foreign Language
F/ L2	Foreign/ Second Language
Q	Question
N	Number
STT	Student Talking Time
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TTT	Teacher Teaching Time
%	Percentage

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INTRODUCTION

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General Introduction

When learners study a foreign language, they can master grammar and vocabulary, but they cannot put them in practice and communicate spontaneously. They encounter difficulties in converting their declarative knowledge into procedural language use. Learners build their declarative knowledge from their coursebook, likewise, when the aim is to improve learners' speaking skill the teacher uses the coursebook speaking activities as a source to help achieve this aim, however, teachers should spot if there is enough speaking activities in the coursebook; as speaking is considered as the most difficult skill to develop among the four basic language skills. It needs essential knowledge, which enables students to cover all necessary things to communicate with other people. Moreover, teachers need to make adaptation to the coursebook' speaking activities when these latter do not help much in developing the speaking skill, bearing in mind their students needs, interests, ability, and level.

Statement of the Problem

In the first year secondary school coursebook "At the Crossroads", numeral speaking activities are set up to help learners develop their abilities in order to master the English language and improve their speaking fluency. Yet, what is noticed is that many learners fail to speak English well in the classroom mainly because they seldom practice it outside the classroom, or that they feel afraid to make some errors in speaking English, so they decide to keep quiet. The plausible justification for this problem is the ineffectiveness of the speaking activities or tasks introduced in the coursebook in acquiring the English speaking skill. On this basis, the following question could be raised: Are the speaking activities introduced in 'At the Crossroads' coursebook effective in developing learners' speaking skill?

Aims of the Study

The main goal of this study is to evaluate the English textbook of first-year secondary school “*At the Crossroads*” which aims at:

- Discovering the extent to which the coursebook speaking activities help in developing learners’ speaking proficiency meeting their needs, levels and interests.
- Identifying whether the textbook speaking activities meet the teachers’ expectations.
- Raising the textbook writers’ awareness about the weaknesses of the textbook with regard to the development of the speaking skill.

Assumptions and Hypothesis

Secondary school learners face difficulties when engaging in the production of messages for the intention of communication exchange. We assume that the inability of first year secondary school learners to speak fluently is due to the deficiencies of ‘*At the Crossroads*’ coursebook speaking activities and if these activities were effective enough, learners would be more competent in speaking. Thus, it is hypothesized that: if the coursebook speaking activities are to be varied, students’ speaking skill will be improved.

Means of the Research

In the present study, we try to verify the hypothesis through two questionnaires, which will be directed to the teachers of English who have already used the first year secondary school coursebook “*At the Crossroads*” and to the secondary school first-year learners who are using this book.

These questionnaires will be conducted in two secondary schools: Terkhouché Ahmed and Boraoui Ammar Secondary Schools.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is about developing the speaking skill and it is composed of two sections. The first section is on speaking in general; the second one is about developing speaking. The second chapter is on the evaluation of "*At the Crossroads*" coursebook and it is also divided into two sections. The first section is devoted to teaching materials evaluation; the second one to the evaluation of '*At the Crossroads*' textbook in terms of the speaking skill. The third chapter is concerned with the analysis and interpretation of the teachers and learners' questionnaires followed by a discussion of the results.

CHAPTER ONE
DEVELOPING THE SPEAKING SKILL

Chapter One

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Introduction

This chapter is devoted to one fundamental element, which is the development of the speaking skill. It is divided into two sections. The first section talks about speaking in general including its definition, its importance in learning a foreign language, its function in the development of communicative competence and the main goal of language learning. The second section highlights the competency-based approach (CBA), involving a background, a brief consideration of its status in the Algerian educational framework as well as its main features and the role of both the teacher and the learner within it. Most importantly, this section considers how speaking is being developed within the CBA.

Finally, the main factors behind speaking difficulties that the Algerian learners encounter are to be introduced.

Section One: Speaking**Introduction**

Learning a foreign language involves learning the four basic skills: speaking; listening; reading and writing. It is crucial to develop all the skills in order to facilitate communication. Yet communication has been mainly based on speaking at first place. As such the case, speaking should receive much attention from the part of scholars and educators. The different elements of the whole educational system; be them syllabus designers, coursebook writers or teachers are all responsible for the development of the learner's speaking skill. What is speaking and how important it is for communication are the two main questions to be discussed in this very first section.

1.1. Definition of Speaking

Speaking has been clearly defined. Most of English dictionaries including Encarta Dictionary define *speaking* as the act of communicating using language as a way of transmitting information in different situations. It has been also defined as the act of expressing feelings, thoughts and opinions by uttering with the voice. Being skillful in speaking means being able to use language or to converse in a particular language; delivering speech to audience.

As a working definition for *speaking*, Hedge (2000:261) defines it as “*a skill by which they (people) are judged while first impressions are formed.*” That is to say, the speaking skill is the skill that reflects people’s thoughts and feelings thus giving first impressions about them.

1.2. Importance of Speaking

In the past years, the speaking skill was devalued by educators as importance was given to written language more than the oral one. Traditional teaching methods, Grammar-Translation Method in particular, had completely neglected the role of speaking in the learning of foreign languages; as a result, learners were not given the chance to utter a word. However, speaking in the recent years has come to be considered as much important as reading and writing; teachers and learners become more and more interested in speaking. That interest grew to the extent that this skill is nowadays regarded as the skill that should be developed from the very beginning stages of foreign language learning. Today teachers of English ask their learners to speak, speak and just speak.

Celce-Murica (2001:103) asserts that for most people “*the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means*

of human communication.” In other words, speaking is important to the point that knowing a given language is been determined by the ability to speak that language.

Baker and Westrup (2003:05) support that a student who can speak English well may have greater chance for further education, of finding employment and gaining promotion. This is, in fact, true especially in the recent decades where most, if not all the technology, media, businesses and sciences are in English.

1.3. Speaking for Communication

The ability to communicate in English is the main goal of an English language course. At the end of a course, the learners should be able to communicate effectively in English outside the classroom for study, work, or leisure. For this to happen, learners should be exposed to intensive input that allow them to speak. Teachers can focus on how to develop listening comprehension skills, and then speaking skills. An important element in this is the use of English as the main classroom language. That is to say making learners speak in English intensively during the lesson, because the speaking skill is the natural result of using English as the main means of communication in the classroom.

The speaking skill involves a communicative ability of producing and receiving information. Byrne (1986:8) states: “*Oral communication is tow-way process between speaker and listener (or listeners) and involves the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding or listening with understanding.*”

In this, Byrne supports the idea that speaking is one significant element of communication. In addition, communication cannot take place without a speaker.

1.3.1. What is Communication?

When asked to define communication, most people will relate to the forms of communication-talking or listening .But communication goes beyond that. Communication involves getting information from one person to another. Yet; even this is not a complete definition because communicating effectively involves having that information relayed while retaining the same in content and context. If I tell one thing and you hear, have I communicated? In general, *Communication* is the process of sharing ideas, information and messages with others in a particular time and place. It includes both writing and talking. It is a vital part of personal life as it is important in any situation where people encounter each other. If we look at communication from another angle, it involves the perception of information as much as the delivery of that information. In other words, we can define communication as the art and process of creating and sharing ideas. Effective communication depends on the ideas' richness and for them to be delivered ; one should be skillful in speaking.

1.3.2. Practice and Communication

Practice in the classroom may emphasize formal accuracy or communicative fluency. In accuracy practice, errors are not tolerated and the teacher who helps the learners correct themselves as well usually deals with them on the spot. In case of a fluency practice, errors are not corrected, although a teacher may bring some errors to the learners 'attention when they are speaking. Davies and Pears (2000:35) maintain, "*The objectives of practice include enabling learners to recognize, pronounce, and manipulate new language items with some degree of subconscious automaticity.*"

1.3.2.1. Accuracy vs. Fluency

Encarta English Dictionary defines *accuracy* as the correctness or truthfulness of something. What is accurate is that which is correct and precise. In this sense, accurate language is one that is error-free. (Skehan, 1996: 23 cited in Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005: 139) define accuracy as referring “*to how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language.*” Therefore, learners should focus on a number of things in their production of the spoken language, mainly, the grammatical structure, vocabulary and pronunciation. Fluency is defined, by the same resource, as the ability to speak with ease and effortlessly. Someone who is said to be fluent is someone who is able to speak language easily and without too much hesitation. The main goal teachers wish to achieve in teaching the productive skill of speaking is oral fluency; it is the main characteristics of the speaker performance. Hughes (2002) defines fluency as the ability to express oneself in an intelligible, reasonable and accurate way without too much hesitation; otherwise the communication will break down because listeners will lose their interest. To achieve this goal, the teachers then should train learners to use their personal language freely to express their own ideas and then avoid imitations of a model of some kind.

1.3.2.2. Oral Accuracy Practice

Accuracy practice focuses on producing correct examples of language use. Learners are required to use correct and precised language. It involves the repetition of language pattern or patterns, for example ‘my car is blue’. This kind of repetition is called drills or drilling, because it can be very mechanical like an army training exercise.

Nowadays language drills are not considered fundamental or effective in language

learning and teaching, but they are still widely used in a form or another, especially for accuracy practice. Davis and Pears (2000: 36-37) point out that:

A distinction is often made between accuracy and fluency practice. Accuracy practice is intended to establish some correctness in the production of new items immediately after they are presented; or to correct errors later on. Fluency practice is intended to get the learners to use new items in more natural communication... In fluency practice, a teacher should try to get the learner's attention off the language and onto the communication of ideas. Repetition, or repeated use, of the new items is important, but it should be naturally combined with other language in communication.

1.3.2.3. Oral Fluency Practice

One goal of speaking is to develop fluency in language use. Fluency occurs when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence. A teacher can develop his or her learners' fluency assigning them complete activities in which they negotiate meaning, and use communication strategies.

1.4. The Status of Speaking in the Classroom

Speaking for a long time has played a special role in language education and applied linguistic theory beyond what might be simply regarded as 'teaching speaking'. This fact has affected the way speaking is regarded in the classroom and in teacher training.

Hughes (2011: 144) states: *"there are several reasons for the special status of spoken interaction in applied linguistics and language pedagogy... Spoken interaction is*

seen as an important, if not key, aspect of the language learning process and has been for over a hundred years.” For Hughes spoken form is variously conceived of as:

- The primary form in which ‘natural uptake’ can occur.
- A powerful tool for developing automatic and fluent output, together with consolidation of grammatical patterns (as in ‘The Direct Method’ or ‘The Audio-lingual Approach’),
- The perfect medium for the exploration of language and one that allows a focus on communication to take predominance over form, (a fundamental aspect of ‘The Communicative Approach’ and later developments such as ‘Task Based Language Teaching’).

Krashen as well had his own view on the role of spoken interaction in the classroom. In his input hypothesis, Krashen emphasizes the idea that meaning should be given primary importance in the classroom then comes grammatical structures which usually be acquired naturally, when the learners are exposed to enough rich input. Moreover, he parallels first mother tongue acquisition to SLA. (Krashen, 1981:1) affirms that:

Language acquisition [original emphasis] is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language – natural communication – in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages, they are conveying and understanding.

That is to say learners should be given the chance to speak freely and not be burdened by producing correct grammatical structures, because this makes it difficult to develop fluency. The focus should be on conveying meaning adequately.

Section Two: Developing Speaking**Introduction**

This section sheds some light on the latest and most current approach to English language teaching that is implemented in the Algerian schools (CBA), more particularly, how the speaking skill is being developed within this approach; what are the different roles of both teachers and learners and what strategies they use. Finally, the main reasons or factors that affect the development of the speaking skill and that may hamper it are to be highlighted.

1.5. Background

The competency-based approach originated in the United States in the 1980s. It focuses on acquiring life coping skills while developing the language to perform these skills. This approach is based on theories of adult learning which state that for effective learning to take place, adults need to know that what they are studying will improve their lives. Because of its success, it was widely adopted in vocationally oriented education and adult ESL program to develop the complex capacities and find coherence between the different stages of learning. It was introduced in Quebec in 1999. In Algeria it has been introduced by the Algerian Ministry of Education in 2005 (2005:50) and has been adopted in the new casebooks and program of English to develop intellectual competencies among the learners.

Before digging deep in CBA, it is seems to be very necessary to first explain what the term '*competency*' means. A competency may be defined in multiple different ways. It can be defined as the ability of a student or worker to accomplish tasks adequately, to find solutions and to realize them in real life situations. Or else, a competency is a system of conceptual and procedural parts of knowledge organized into operating schemes that help

identify a problem-task and its solution through an efficient action within a set of situations. In short, competency is all about a '*know-how-to act*' process.

CBA, then, is defined as an approach, which aims at enabling the learner to use his knowledge and apply skills in realistic situations. It focuses on the process a learner goes through while engaged in a task as well as the final product, enabling him to find solutions and make decisions throughout the learning process. The aim for students is to develop intellectual, linguistic and problem-solving capacities in school that will enable them to tackle cognitively and pragmatically challenging situations both in and out of school. Students will thus see learning as being worthwhile and having relevance for both their studies and their future. Docking (1994:16) finds that:

Competency-based language teaching 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 and assessment.

1.5.1. Competency-based Approach within the Algerian Framework

Since 2005, EFL teaching methodology in Algeria shifted to use the Competency-Based Approach answering the 21st century needs and the world's new changes. A key concept of this approach is competency meaning:

A_{know}-how-to-act process, which integrates and mobilizes a set of capacities and skills, and an account of knowledge that will be used effectively in various problem-solving situations or circumstances that have never occurred before. I.e. a competency continues throughout and beyond the school curriculum.”

(Louznadji, 2003)

Competency-based approach (CBA) to teaching English is similar to communicative teaching; it focuses on students or learners as the center element of teaching. Inspired by the cognitivist and socio-constructivist theories, the CBA tends to make the learning skills related to the outside environment. It aims at making the learner able of sharing knowledge and cooperating with others. The spokesmen of this approach give the following characteristics on the part of the teacher:

- A less authoritarian attitude.
- Openness to discussion and negotiation.
- Sensitiveness to learner's concerns.

The Algerian secondary school pupil is seen as described in coma's statement:

"Unfortunately, many students dislike learning English; and although they attend lessons, they are not interested in speaking properly. They only want to pass the compulsory exams."(Corria, 1999: 17)

1.5.2. Distinguishing Features:

Competency-based approach is not very new approach to the teacher of English in Algeria because most of its aspects were dealt with implicitly. What CBA has mainly come out with is illustrated in the following table:

a) A reinforcement of the concept a competent performing learner, who is part and parcel of the learning process; using the knowledge he acquires for the sake of real performance in appropriate situations.	a) In this; CBA views the learner as an active element in the learning process, who acts, solves problems; creates and knows exactly how and when to perform. This makes the learner the center of the whole affair.
b) A more rigorous planning, integrating teaching and assessment.	b) Continuous assessment is a key element in CBA, it allows the learner to check his progress thanks to the various tests; tasks and projects he is required to accomplish throughout the whole year.
c) A more pronounced independence and autonomy as he is guided and given the tools to research and use resources others than those brought by his teacher.	c) A learner, within CBA, no longer relies on the teacher in his learning, he is no longer spoon-fed. The learner is rather guided by the teacher and looks for knowledge by himself.
d) A change in the teacher's attitudes towards knowledge and teaching.	d) A teacher under the framework of CBA does not consider himself as the center of the learning process; he performs his role as a guide, he is cautious not to directly transmit information but rather let the learners deduce or try to search for it.
e) Awareness of his learning and his progress.	e) CBA produces very smart and conscious learners, for it makes them aware of what they are learning, how they are learning and whether they are doing well or not. In short, they are not learning blindly.

Figure 1.1: The Main Distinguishing Features of CBA

1.5.3. Teacher's Role

The approach based on competency leads to some revision of the teacher's profession. As the Ministry of Education in Algeria states; the teacher will have to:

1. Put emphasis on what is essential in order to ensure the learner's academic success, his personal development and his integration in society.
2. Develop the cultural dimension by facing the learner with fundamental and universal values.
3. Make sure that the learners will be thoroughly taken in charge; for that; it is necessary to specify the requirement the teacher must satisfy and propose a progression of the learning processes.
4. Give the learner an appropriate and personalized answer to each particular need.
5. Encourage and guides the learner's efforts by showing the learner that he is allowed to make errors and to have doubts.
6. Enhance the value of co-operation between the learners.

In short, a teacher supports a learner's learning by taking a facilitative role in the classroom. He is a co- learner, counselor, and helper; seeks pupils' participation, develops learning autonomy, and teaches individually (when necessary).

1.5.4. Learner's Role

A learner under the frame of competency-based approach is required to be very active in his learning. He is constantly accomplishing tasks, taking tests; and searching for information. He is considered as a '*knowledge seeker*'. Moreover, if he does not seek knowledge by himself he might be doomed to failure. The main roles of a learner as cited by the Ministry of Education in Algeria are the following:

1. He is responsible for his learning.
2. Learns better through action.
3. Builds his own strategies.
4. Defines himself the processes he will make use of when working.
5. Strengthens skills into problem solving.
6. The learner wants to know what he learns.

1.5.6. The Speaking Skill within CBA

According to the Algerian English framework, learners of first year secondary school can pronounce most language used with a foreign accent often evident and mispronunciation to be expected. They can interact orally to start, maintain and close conversation, for instance, greetings, asking questions, and follow up questions, giving and seeking facts and opinions, good-byes... on topics of interest and familiar matters.

1.7. Factors behind Speaking Difficulties

The ability to communicate using speech is one of the most effortless taken-for-granted human faculties. Its importance, however, becomes readily apparent when an individual fails to acquire the skill; loses the skill or cannot use it effectively. Speaking comes naturally to humans, but sometimes it is not an easy task, as it may seem. Usually, many people do not like to speak in front of a large group of people; this is true in foreign language, because people worry about producing erroneous utterances; their biggest fear is to be laughed at and get embarrassed. It is, in fact not an easy task for a teacher to develop a learner's speaking skill, for many factors can affect it and may, unfortunately, impede its progress. These factors are mostly psychological, pedagogical, and socio-cultural.

1.7.1. Psychological Factors

The goal of teaching the oral skill is to enhance communicative efficiency. Not every act of communication involves a rapid-fire exchange. In fact, when learners try to express themselves, there is hesitation; cliché expressions which fill in pauses, much repetition and frequent indefiniteness as the speaker seeks the most convenient combination of element to express his intended meaning (Rivers, 1968: 192-8). These deficiencies are, essentially, due to low level of motivation, lack of self-confidence, and to anxiety.

1.7.1.1. No Motivation

Psychologists from all branches of the discipline study the topic of motivation, as an inner state that moves an organism toward the fulfillment of some goal...motivation is important in educational psychology because it explains and predicts the behavior of students. (Neil. J. Salkind, 2008: 687).

Motivation is one of the main psychological factors that influence SLA in general and speaking in particular. Cohen (1990) defines motivation as that something that drives people to do what they do. That is to say, motivation is the inner desire that drives people to act in a certain way; it is the impetus that some learners have in learning. In addition, Taylor and Thornton (1995: 16) state, “*no one is responsible for the motivation of another person.*” From this, we conclude that teachers cannot control the motivation of their learners but can act to influence it. A teacher thus, can motivate his learners to speak by making them know how important it is to be able to speak English today and how can it serve their future lives. When the learners feel how they need to develop their competence in speaking they would be more willing to learn and interact in the classroom. Contrarily, if the learners are not aware of the importance of learning English in their studies or daily

life they will not be motivated to, even, attend the English sessions let alone learn to speak it fluently.

1.7.1.2. Lack of Self-confidence and no Self-esteem

Self-esteem is the evaluation a learner makes of himself; this factor has shown to be toughly related to speaking or not speaking in the classroom. Usually, learners who speak more in language sessions are those who highly estimate themselves as learners. They have a kind of confidence in themselves, in their capacities in language. Therefore, they do not experience fear when speaking and just speak naturally; they try all the time even if they make mistakes, and do not feel uncomfortable when being corrected. These attitudes help confident learners so much in developing their speaking skill. On the other hand, learners who do not possess a kind of self-respect are expected to be less successful learners, they are most of the time silent in the classroom; they speak only because the teacher wants them to. Yet, it may happen, sometimes, that a student is not uttering a word in the classroom but when it comes to writing, or listening he excels and may even write much better than those who speak much.

Such a student is, in fact, a good language learner but, unfortunately, he is not confident enough to show his capacities in front of the teacher and classmates avoiding being the center of a session. The teacher may be helping those learners as Brewster et al (2004:218) point out, *“the teacher needs to provide the classroom atmosphere which promotes pupils’ confidence and self-esteem so that they can learn more effectively and enjoyably.”*

1.7.1.3. Anxiety and Introversion

Anxiety and introversion are directly related to the learner’s personality. Anxious, shy and reserved learners are those who worry much about being not successful in their

learning. An anxious learner is afraid of speaking because he does not want to make mistakes; this fear is a great impediment to natural speaking. Whenever an anxious introvert learner tries to speak, he hesitates much before doing it. As a result speaking skill develops at a snail's pace and may even not develop in years if he does not free himself of anxiety. That is why, it is recommended that speaking skill be developed only in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere where students feel at ease with the teacher and with each other. The teacher must adopt a motivating attitude in such a way that all students are involved in the learning process.

1.7.2. Pedagogical Factors

Any learning situation is affected by the whole environment in which it takes place. Pedagogy is one aspect of the environment and it influences learning, in general; and speaking, in particular, in a very direct way. Pedagogy comprises the teacher, the method, the techniques and the physical settings, i.e. the classroom, and tools of teaching.

1.7.2.1. Teacher' Method

A teacher, in addition to other factors, may be directly responsible for his/her learner's failure to develop speaking. As learners have the chance to practice speaking mostly in the classroom. The teacher can impede speaking development by the teaching method s/he chooses to follow. As mentioned earlier, a teacher under the framework of CBA is not the center of the teaching learning process but instead is required not to monopolize learning s/he rather must let the learners speak and give them the chance to express themselves.

The teacher has to learn when to talk and when to let students talk. S/he has to talk to guide them, to explain what is needed to be explained, and then let the students practice to

show their knowledge, to show their real level, this will help the teacher her/himself to modify the lesson accordingly.

In fact, largely, the balance between Teacher Talking Time (TTT) and Student Talking Time (STT) depends on the type of lessons and activities involved and on the level of the students. In the classroom, the teacher will usually speak more when presenting, clarifying, checking and modelling new or revised languages. Setting up activities or giving instructions and feedback, providing language input. The learners, on the other hand, need considerable time for speaking when correcting tasks or even interact during lesson presentation with the teacher.

1.7.2.2. Teaching Materials and Media

The teaching materials are forms and contexts of language use and usage, they are the various tasks designed for teaching and learning. They are a valuable source of language for learners to build their vocabulary and develop their speaking skill. The coursebook is one of the major materials that are widely used in the Algerian classrooms. If the textbook does not contain enough activities that develop the oral skills then this can be regarded as a serious problem.

One of the main reasons behind low level of oral skill of the Algerian students may be due to the inadequacy of the materials presented and or to a lack in the media. In most of the Algerian schools, the media to which learners are exposed are the textbook, and the blackboard. This textbook, obviously, is been expected to cover the four skills not just speaking. As a result, speaking activities will not be available in abundance to allow students to do enough practice, as they need to. In order to develop speaking effectively, learners need to listen intensively to English using tape recorders, headsets in a language laboratory, overhead projectors and the like. These media, regrettably, are not available;

learners listen to English only from their teacher who is not all the time a competent fluent speaker.

1.7.2.3. Crowded Classes

One major problem that the Algerian educational system has been struggling with since a long time is the huge number of students in each classroom. Most of the Algerian classrooms contain as minimum thirty students and forty-five, often fifty students, as maximum. Teachers are suffering and complaining all the time from such a classroom, which is obviously noisy.

As it has been discussed before, students can better build up their speaking skill when the class is at a relaxed friendly atmosphere. The teacher is also required to work with the individual from time to time; learners need to have their chance of participation equally. However, in such conditions it becomes very hard for the teacher to manage the class or control her/his students. In this context, I remember a story that makes me upset.

Once we were having an English session in the ninth grade with a very competent friendly teacher, thanks to whom I loved English. All the learners raised their hands to participate in the discussion and the teacher was lost in translation, he was trying to give us equal opportunity to speak but we were forty or more and he could not manage to do it. So, one of the learners started weeping. When poor teacher asked her why she was crying, she replied, *“I have been raising my hand since a long time and you did not let me speak, you work more with the third row!”*

1.7.3. Socio-cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors may affect the development of speaking skill positively or negatively. When English is used in the society in which the learners live they will have

greater chance to practice it among themselves out of the confines of the classroom or with other people as is the case of India, however, in Algeria English is regarded as a foreign language and it is only used in the schools. Learners cannot speak English outside as they feel uncomfortable because other people may see them as awkward.

Conclusion

Considering what have been discussed previously, three major points can be drawn.

First, developing speaking is one of, if not, the most important language skill to be developed since the ultimate goal of learning a foreign language is developing the learners' communicative competence, as communication does not take place without speaking. Yet, developing speaking skill is not an easy task. A learner needs intensively and extensively to practice it inside and outside the confines of the classroom. A teacher, on his part, has to be a fluent speaker of English. Second, for a learner to be said a skilful speaker, s/he needs to speak both accurately and fluently, that is to say s/he needs to master correct good language and to speak naturally without too much hesitation, because accuracy and fluency are the two main pillars of well-developed speaking skill.

The third point that has been highlighted in this chapter is the fact that most of the learners face difficulties in speaking and that this is due to three major factors namely psychological factors, such as lack of motivation, lack of self-confidence and negative attitudes; pedagogical factors such as inadequate teachers' method, lack of necessary language material and media and huge number of learners in one class impede the development of the speaking skill.

Finally, speaking may be hampered because of not being used in the learners' society and not being part of his culture.

CHAPTER TWO
EVALUATION OF THE COURSEBOOK

Chapter Two

Evaluation of the Coursebook

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Introduction

The teaching of English in the first year of secondary school has the aim of fusing, deepening and developing the learners' capacities, skills and knowledge that have been already acquired in the intermediate school. Chapter two is divided into two sections. The first section casts some light on teaching materials evaluation, particularly the textbook and the second section aims at evaluating whether the coursebook speaking activities play a vital role in developing learners' speaking skill or not.

Section One: Teaching Materials Evaluation**Introduction**

It has been widely accepted that teaching materials, particularly the textbook, determine largely what has been taught/ learned in a FL classroom. Evaluation of textbooks, therefore, is of paramount importance so that its pedagogical contribution to the teaching and learning process can be assured. In the first section of this chapter; the meaning of teaching materials is identified, as well as that of the mostly used teaching material in the Algerian classrooms, the textbook also called coursebook and its role in the EFL classroom is to be mentioned. Next, what coursebooks can and cannot offer is discussed in this section.

2.1. Definition of Teaching Materials

Materials are resources for whatever procedures used in specific classroom and are said to provide a backbone for classroom activity. Materials provide the actual *syllabus* of the class they are intended for, specify the bulk of the *learning and teaching activities* used, delimit *learner and teacher roles* through instrumental texts both in the student's and the teacher's book, dictate *techniques* to be used, mainly in the teacher's guide, regulate the

patterns of interaction, and even supply the means for evaluation of learning, as defined by Dendrinos (1992: 29-30). Teaching materials are a source of knowledge but at the same time a practice, in other words, they serve as a basis for most language input and language practice in the classroom.

2.1.1. The Textbook

2.1.1.1. Definition

Textbooks are said to be one type of teaching materials. A textbook can be defined as a published book designed to help language learners improve their linguistic and communicative abilities. According to Richards & Schmidt (2002: 550), “*a textbook is a book on a specific subject used as a teaching/learning guide.*” Textbooks are regarded as instruments to access the target language and are means of dealing with grammar, syntax, phonetics, and cultural matters. They are essential because they function as stimulus to promote learning. Furthermore, they are commonly referred to as coursebooks. According to Sheldon (1988), “*Coursebooks are perceived by many to be the route map of any ELT programme.*”

We shall use the terms interchangeably.

2.1.1.2. The Role of the Textbook in the EFL Classroom

Textbooks play an important role in the teaching/learning process and are considered as central agents of conveying knowledge to the learners. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that the textbook has a very important and positive part to play in the teaching and learning of English. They state that textbooks provide the necessary input into classroom lessons through different activities, readings and explanations.

“English stands as a foreign language in Algeria. Algerian learners meet it only in the classroom whereas the “national environment is far from being supportive.”

(Balato 1996: 31)

Since English is a foreign not a second language in Algeria, classroom serves as the main source of exposure to English for students and it should be stated clearly that the main material, which is used in the Algerian schools, is the textbook also called coursebook. Therefore, it plays a crucial function in exposing the students to the English language (Dudley-Evans & St John, 2000: 171). This entails that it is the coursebook which determines the classroom activities, influences teachers' teaching methods and the students' roles. As Richards (2007: 251) maintains, materials provide the main input for the students and the type of the "language practice that occurs in the classroom." *"They are not simply the everyday tools of the teacher; they are an embodiment of the aims, values and methods of the particular teaching/ learning situation"* (Hutchinson, 1987) Cunningsworth (1995:7) as has stated the role of a textbook in language teaching and learning:

- A resource for presentation material (spoken/written)
- A source of activities for learner practice and communicative interaction.
- A reference source (on vocabulary and grammar)
- A syllabus.
- A resource for self-directed learning or self-access work.

Nunan (1999: 98) believes that the coursebook is the main element of any curriculum and "it is difficult to imagine a class without books ... It is the coursebook which enhances the learning process by mediating between the teachers and students and offers a coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control ... (Harmer, 2002: 304). Although materials do not usually represent the actual process of teaching, they "represent plans for teaching" (Richards, 2007: 270). In this regard, Robinson (1991: 57) argues that coursebooks provide *"a framework for a course, forming in essence a syllabus."*

Hutchinson and Waters (1989) argue that the major role of materials is to facilitate the learning process because useful materials do not teach rather that they encourage learning. Hedge (2002: 36) maintains that good materials allow the learners to prepare in advance by offering a grammatical and functional framework that provide for their common needs and wants. Mainly, materials provide students with the main source of contact with the language, the content of lessons, the balance of skills taught, and the type of practice learners participate in (Richards, 2007: 252).

In brief, the textbook has the aim of presenting and practicing content, making interaction between students much easier, promoting learner autonomy and perception of their progress, providing materials for revision as well as engaging them in multiple ways.

2.1.1.3. What Coursebooks Can Offer

Davis and Pearse (2000: 133), state: *“To use a coursebook, you must know it well”*. According to them, a coursebook can offer the following:

- **The Syllabus**

The table of contents, coursebook material, and the teacher’s guide can offer a clear program of work, in other words, what to teach and on what order. The contents may exist of much more than a list of grammatical structures, functions, and vocabulary. They usually include communication situations and topics, and establish the balance between language work and skills work. The course syllabus may even indicate how much time to spend on each unit.

- **Language Presentation Material**

Language presentation material may include visuals, printed models of language, and recorded models of language. Nowadays, coursebook presentation material usually attempts to provide a realistic context of use for the new language items. The presentation

material in the coursebook is particularly useful for learners after class. It provides examples and a record of what they did in class, even if they did not use the book at the time. Studying examples at home, they may grasp things they missed in class.

- **Language Practice Material**

Language practice material usually includes both oral and written activities. There should be fluency as well as accuracy work. Different interactions may be indicated, for example, pair, group, or individual work. Like presentation material, coursebook practice material can be useful, especially for inexperienced and hard-working teachers. Teachers have to exploit it effectively, because without appropriate handling, oral practice working from the book can become mechanical and boring for the learners.

Like presentation material, practice material in the coursebook provides examples and a record of what learners did in class, and the opportunity to study at home.

- **Skills Development Material**

Skills development material addresses the major objective of English teaching: enabling the learners to use the English language for real communication outside the classroom. The teacher should bear in mind that all skills, receptive as well as productive, require the active involvement of the learners. The book alone cannot usually create this involvement.

The listening element may consist of verbal material in the book. Here the teacher needs to have a clear plan for carrying out a sequence of activities. One decision to make is whether to allow the learners to have their books open and read it as they listen.

The speaking material will almost certainly require a lot of careful management and handling on the teacher's part. Again, a basic decision may be whether to work with books

open or closed. Generally, it is better to have books closed for communicative speaking activities. Then the teacher may need to:

- Adapt activities to the learners' interests and needs.
- Bring situations to life, perhaps with specific aids and supplementary material.
- Explain and demonstrate activities and tasks.
- Organize changes of interaction.
- Monitor and help the learners during pair and group work.

The writing activities may require similar organizing and facilitating, though they tend to be less dynamic and demanding. It is often a good idea to have a quiet period of writing after oral work.

Coursebook skills development material can be useful for all teachers, but especially inexperienced and busy ones. It can be difficult, time consuming and costly for the teacher to find or produce most of the material himself, especially for listening and reading. But it is good if s/he can provide some material and activities with her/ his own learners' interests and needs in mind.

- **Sequence of Work**

Presentation of new language items, then practice of new language items, then skills development is the sequence followed by units in most coursebooks. But even at beginner level, the coursebook author may not design every lesson to begin with presentation and practice of new language items.

The Teacher's Guide may recommend communicative warm-ups and extended communicative handling of presentation and practice topics or situations before the teacher

goes into explicit presentation and practice work. In other words, authors may intend that communication should be the base the teacher constantly works from and returns to.

What can be put in a coursebook is obviously limited, and the teacher must handle the material in the light of recommendations in the *Teacher's Guide* and principles in his/her own head that guide his/her teaching.

- **Recycling and Review of Language**

It is difficult for teachers to cover the necessary recycling and review of previously practiced language as systematically as a good coursebook. Most books nowadays have specific review units, and constantly recycle previously presented language. This may be done largely by means of skills work, where 'old' language can be combined naturally with new. In this way, language review does not become a boring task for learners since they will be practicing 'old' language with fresh topics and tasks.

- **Additional Material**

Coursebooks may also offer pronunciation material and grammar summaries:

- *Pronunciation material:* pronunciation can be an overlooked area of language teaching, partly because teachers themselves may feel more uncertain about it than about grammar and lexis, worried that they do not have enough technical knowledge to help the learners appropriately. However, when teachers take the risk, they are often surprised to find that it makes for very enjoyable and useful classroom work.
- *Grammar summaries* can help the teacher to clarify points in class, and are useful for learners to study at home. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that

looking at a grammar table does not mean learners will understand, retain, or be able to use the grammar it contains.

2.1.1.4. What a Coursebook Cannot Offer

Coursebooks are probably written by authors who do not know the teacher's specific school or learners. The book can provide the teacher with all the useful resources mentioned above, but only the teacher can respond fully to his/ her specific teaching conditions and his/ her learners' interests and personalities. Only the teacher can bring coursebook material to life and make it work in his/ her classroom. This usually means adapting and supplementing the book to some extent. Moreover, a coursebook cannot have a personal relationship with the learners. Only the teacher can project enthusiasm, respond sensitively to learners, and make language learning a personal, enjoyable, and satisfying activity.

2.2. Textbook Evaluation

No book is perfect in itself, or for a particular teaching-learning context. This usually means that the coursebook should be adapted and supplemented in some way for learners' specific needs and teaching context. Thus, it is important to evaluate a coursebook in order to pin point its weaknesses and improve them.

2.2.1. Definition of Evaluation

Rea-Dickins (1994: 72) gives a sample of definitions gathered among some authors:

Evaluation is the principled and systematic collection of information for purposes of decision-making. (Rea-Dickins and Germaine, 1992)

Educational evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives. (Stufflebeam et al. 1971: 43)

Educational evaluation is a systematic description of educational objects and/ or an assessment of their merit or worth. (Hopkins, 1989: 14)

From this bunch of definitions, we conclude that evaluation is a principled and systematic process in which most well run programs engage from the outset.

2.2.2. The Need for Textbook Evaluation

The major material commonly used in ELT classrooms is the coursebook. Murphy (1985: 12) states that materials should be evaluated “in the light of current needs” and objectives. Therefore, material evaluation should be the top priority of any curriculum. It is not an easy task; it becomes an educational necessity for the success of a teaching/ learning process. Hutchinson and Waters (1989: 96) argue that material evaluation should be carried out in order to judge the fitness of our materials to our “particular purpose.” Mukundan (2006: 175) believes that the major focus of evaluation should be on “the expected language learning outcomes” which results from using the materials. However good the materials are, they can hardly cater to and satisfy different students with different needs, objectives, wants, learning styles, attitudes and aptitudes (Tomlinson, 2006: 1). This is because each individual student thinks, feels, and believes in divergent ways. The reason that coursebooks need to be evaluated is that they might be suitable and ideal in a particular situation and with some particular students but they might turn out to be useless in a different situation (Richards, 2007: 256).

2.2.3. Textbook Evaluation Methods

Materials, especially coursebooks, need to be evaluated in order to find their weaknesses and improve them. According to Davison (1975: 314), the materials should match the objectives of the language for communication rather than just to practice it in situations controlled by the teacher and the materials.

A variety of methods is been used in material evaluation depending on the content. Ellis (1990: 191) put too much emphasis on the fact that materials ideally should provide opportunities for interaction among the learners. Since the aims and objectives of learning / teaching programme can reflect the learners' needs in terms of both language content and communicative abilities, a selected coursebook should help in attaining these objectives. He differentiated between predictive and retrospective evaluation. The former is been designed to make a decision regarding what materials to use in respect to their suitability to the objectives. The retrospective evaluation, however, as defined by Ellis (1997: 37)

Such an evaluation provides the teacher with information which can be used to determine whether it is worthwhile using the materials again, which activities 'work' and which do not, and how to modify the materials to make them more effective of 'testing' the validity of a predictive evaluation, and may point to ways in which the predictive instrument can be improved for future use.

From this quotation, it is noticed that the retrospective evaluation is more valuable than the predictive one in the sense that it can measure the actual effects of the materials on their users and provides data on which reliable decisions can be made.

Robinson (1991: 59) proposes three types of material evaluation: "preliminary, summative, and formative." She states that preliminary evaluation takes place before the course begins and a checklist can be used to evaluate or select a coursebook. Summative

evaluation is performed at the end of the course and investigates whether the coursebook is effective or has any deficiencies. Formative evaluation is carried out during the lifetime of the course, the weaknesses are identified, and possible modifications are made. McDonough and Shaw (1993, cited in Jordan, 1997: 138) mention two types of evaluation: external evaluation, which means investigating cover, table of contents, and introduction, in other words, it examines the presentation of the skills, the sequencing of the material and appropriacy of the content as stated explicitly by the author/ publisher. However, internal evaluation aims at investigating every aspect in detail. Similarly, Cunningsworth and Kusel (1991, cited in Jordan, 1997: 138) list two types of evaluation: global appraisal also called an impressionistic approach, which is based on a general overview of the materials' possibilities, its strengths and weaknesses noting significant features, which stand out. The second type is detailed evaluation which calls for a close examination of each unit of a book, it examines how specific items are been dealt with, particularly, those which relate to the learning needs of learners, syllabus requirements, and how different aspects of language are dealt with. Morrow (1977) suggests four simple comprehensive and direct criteria to be considered while evaluating a coursebook:

- What is my material about?
- Why was my material produced?
- Who was my material produced for?
- How was my material produced, i.e., is the language in an appropriate mode (written, spoken, etc...).

The missing criteria in Morrow's list are obviously the teachers' expectations, the learners' needs and the syllabus requirements. As Mukundan (2006: 170) contends, traditionally, coursebooks were evaluated "impressionistically or used a checklist." However, he believes that a checklist only provides partial information. In this vein, the

best information about a coursebook can be obtained “in the light of classroom use” (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 125-6). However, evaluation based on a checklist has lost its credibility and teachers can make a professional judgment backed up by their practical experience (Cunningsworth, 1995). Apparently, most of the checklists are prepared in haste and their reliability is questionable. The checklist proposed by Cunningsworth (1995) for the analysis of the target teaching and learning situation involves five features as follows:

- The aims and objectives of the English programme
- The syllabus
- The teaching and learning situation (the role of English in the country, the class size, supplementary materials, etc...)
- The learners (their levels, expectations, preferred learning style and interest, motivation, previous learning experience etc...)
- The teachers (their roles, the teaching methods, their adaptation and supplementing of the coursebook, etc ...)

Cunningsworth (1996) affirms that it is important to try out or pilot the material before adopting it. Because according to him, the effective way to become familiar with the material is through a detailed analysis of it.

Section Two: Evaluation of the Coursebook in Terms of the Speaking Skill**Introduction**

In the second section of this chapter, a general descriptive information about ‘At the Crossroads’ coursebook, in use in the first year of the secondary school is given, as well as how its units are organized and what its aims and objectives are. Then the coursebook speaking activities to be evaluated are made clear, defining what an activity is, giving a general presentation of the coursebook speaking activities, their aim and role in developing the speaking skill.

2.3. General Descriptive Information

Level of Proficiency: 1 A.S.—1st Grade in Secondary Cycle (Fifth year of English as FL2)

Number of pages: 155.

The coursebook is essentially designed for learners aged 15 to 16, who have already four years/ tuition in English at Middle school level. In the section *To the Teacher*, the author (Arab) explains that the textbook is designed to comply with the relevant Ministry of Education curriculum as lead down in January 2005, thus applying the new programs in which English is taught as a second foreign language (FL2) from the first grade (1 A.M.87) of Intermediate Cycle. The authors assume that students are then familiar with the competency-based teaching and the learner-centered approach. The textbook is intended for all streams, though one unit (*Once Upon a Time*) is specifically meant for the literary stream. It consists of five units distributed on the basis of 20 hours per unit and is organized topically.

At the Crossroads is composed of:

- Contents (p. II)

- Map of the book (pp III-VII)
- A note to the teacher (pp VIII-IX)
- A note to the pupil (pp X-XI)
- Phonetic symbols (pp XII-XIII)
- 5 units (pp 2-155)
- Scripts for listening (pp i-ix).

From an impressionistic overview, it can be clearly noted that although it introduces clearly, who the coursebook is addressed for, its purpose, and its contents, it has not presented procedure on how to plan and make use of the coursebook, how to teach diverse language skills, how to run activities in the classroom, and how to handle evaluation. In short, the coursebook presentation is pitiable and does not supply teachers with firm methodological guidelines to smooth the progress of the learning/ teaching process.

2.4. Unit Organization

The coursebook has five units; each unit consists of four sequences and includes three sections:

1. Sequence 1: Listening and Speaking,
2. Sequence 2: Reading and Writing (These two sequences are of the same pattern, each according to its specificity; they aim at producing oral and written discourse),
3. Sequence 3: Developing Skills. (The students combine the four skills in problem-situations),
4. Stop and Consider (a language reference section, exercises based on the implementation of grammar rules),
5. Sequence 4: Consolidation and Extension (afford a combination of knowledge and know-how, its aim is to develop and consolidate social skills, and to make students aware of problems areas in pronunciation and stress).

6. Project Workshop (guidelines for the realization of a project, students are expected to reinvest, in an integrative way, functions and skills acquired earlier),
7. Check your Progress (self-evaluation section).

The units are detailed in the following table:

Unit	Titles of the Topics	Number of Pages
1	Getting Through	32
2	Once Upon a Time	30
3	Our Findings Show	30
4	Eureka !	30
5	Back to Nature	30
Total		152

Table 2.1: Units in (At the Crossroads)

A quick look at the table of organization makes us realize that the coursebook is packed with sequences and activities, the teachers do not have much time to cover the whole unit effectively (refer to Appendix III). As a result, they dash through all of it without giving the learners time to use and understand thoroughly what they have learnt. The accumulation and variety of its components do not come up with the weekly time allocated to the teaching of English, distributed on the basis of 20 hours' teaching per unit. Consequently, it is hard for them to cope with the inevitable workload. The second serious blemish of the coursebook has to do with the project workshop. Although projects are one useful way of providing an ongoing 'thread' to classroom work where learners invest their energy in something that has a tangible outcome through planning, decision-making, ideas-collecting, structuring, discussion, negotiation and problem-solving as well as having a strong group-building outcome; the teacher must have first an idea before he starts

teaching the unit and this activity should be indicated at the beginning of the unit not the way around in order to prepare the learners through activities that are going to benefit and reinforce each project.

The table of the different projects throughout the coursebook goes as the following:

Unit	Project Workshop
1	Making a job application booklet
2	Writing a book review
3	Conducting a survey
4	Making an invention profile
5	Making a consumer guide

Table 2.2: The project workshop in (At the Crossroads)

2.5. Aims and Objectives

The main objectives of the coursebook are stated in the syllabus as follows:

- Interacting orally in English.
- Interpreting oral and written texts.
- Producing oral and written texts.

According to the objectives, the coursebook seeks to create a real-life communication in the classroom so there has been an attempt to develop language fluency not just accuracy. In other words, the learners are expected to acquire the communicative competence in hearing the target language.

Communicative competence, according to Hymes (1972) is the ability to know how language is used and use it appropriately and effectively for communication.

Widdowson (1996: 28) recommends that:

Ability is the executive branch of competence, so to speak, and enables us to achieve meaning but putting our language to work. If we did not have this accessing ability, it can be argued, the abstract structures of knowledge – would remain internalized in the mind and never see the light of day. We could spend all our lives buried in thought in a paralysis of cognition.

The phase – check your progress- which is about self –assessment and which offers the learners the opportunity to assess their progress on a unit – by – unit basis, appears in a form of a checklist at the end of each unit. As far as this phase is concerned, it can be said that it cannot be properly filled in and fairly done by the pupils especially at that age; they are not mature enough to evaluate their real capacities and measure their own progress. The teacher should not rely on checklists to see whether there is any remedial work to be undertaken before moving to the next unit. He has to give enough activities and assessment tasks and tests on problem points.

The communicative teaching materials, therefore, need to be used for the sake of upgrading the learners’ needs and satisfying the objectives of the course. Communicative teaching materials would then imply that the coursebook should be oriented not only towards teaching purposes but also for real – life communicative purposes where the learners will have the opportunity to use the target language in actual situations.

In “*At the Crossroads*”, the student learns to recognize and produce important language functions, such as: expressing opinions; expressing agreement and disagreement; describing a person, a place; expressing likes and dislikes; asking for and giving directions; expressing condition and result; giving instructions and other language functions.

Although the coursebook emphasizes the communicative functions of language – real life situations – by giving the learners a solid background in the basic elements of

language, individual work, in many cases is the most dominant activity. Teachers, then, should develop different kinds of teaching for setting up pair work, which is a generally active tool, where there must be less teacher control and more pupil-centeredness. In addition to this, purposeful and meaningful speaking activities, which suit learners' levels, interests, and environment, should be organized in order to make them talk and think in a critical way, because communication is not merely an aid to thinking- it is tantamount to thinking itself. Learners come to know more as they struggle to communicate. Talk is a powerful motivator in the learning process.

2.6. Evaluation of the Coursebook Speaking Activities

2.6.1. Definition of Activity

Activity is defined in English Larousse Dictionary (1968: 08) as "*the state of being active*". Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995: 13) defines it as "*the state of being active or lively; functioning*". In another dictionary called Oxford World Power, activity is defined as "*a situation in which there is a lot of action or movement*".

2.6.2. General Presentation of the Coursebook Speaking Activities

Speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998: 13). It is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. In order to teach second language learners how to speak in the best way possible, the English speaking activities such as role plays, simulations, information gaps, interviews, and other speaking activities offer great opportunities to accomplish this aim. Teaching speaking is to teach ESL learners to:

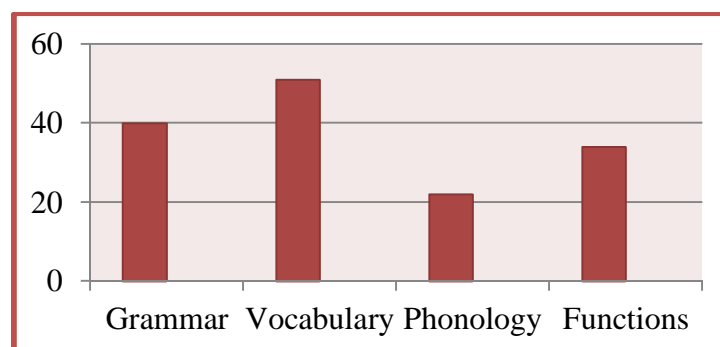
- Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns.
- Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.

- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
- Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. (Nunan, 2003)

The first year secondary school coursebook ‘At the Crossroads’ contains a negligible diversity of speaking activities since in the “traditional textbooks”, vocabulary is still allocated a great deal of time as the following table shows:

Unit	Grammar	Vocabulary	Phonology	Functions
1	11	17	9	12
3	9	20	6	8
5	20	14	7	14
Total	40	51	22	34

Table2.3: Types of Activities in (At the Crossroads)

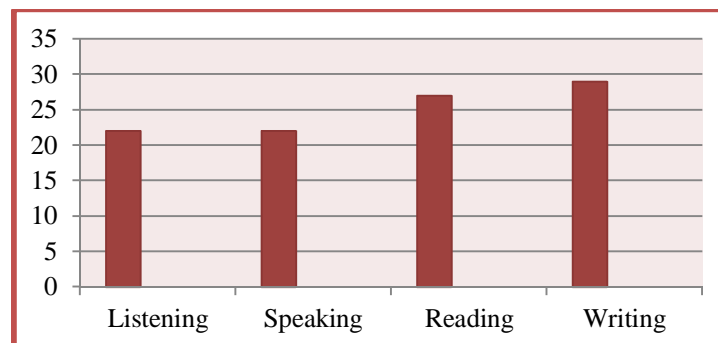


Graph 2.1: Types of Activities in (At the Crossroads)

“At the Crossroads” is a multi-skills syllabus and therefore covers both productive (speaking and writing) and receptive (listening and reading) skills. However, it does place a larger emphasis on reading and writing and the table below demonstrates this fact:

Unit	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
1	9	10	10	10
3	7	6	7	8
5	7	7	10	10
Total	23	23	27	28
%	22%	22%	27%	29%

Table: 2.4: Balance of Skills in (At the Crossroads)



Graph 2.2: Balance of Skills in (At the Crossroads)

The speaking activities, which are said to enhance learners speaking skill, are found throughout each unit by means of a sequence called *Listening and Speaking*.

Speaking activities include pair work, which can be found in Unit 1, page 19 in the following instruction *Take turns to show your partner how to create an e-mail account. Use the instructions above and the modals **must**, **need to** and **have to** to emphasize what must be done at each step of the process.*

Start like this:

A: you want to create an e-mail account, don't you?

*It is easy. First, you **need to/ have to** ...*

B: what must I do next?

The pair work comes into sight again in task 4, pages 24-25:

Use the tactic summary on the next page to prepare a telephone conversation. Act it out once you are ready.

Situation 1: You are at home and a friend of yours phones you to suggest that you go out for a football match. Accept or refuse the invitation.

Situation 2: You are a company secretary. The person the caller wants to talk to is not there. Take the caller's name and phone number and the message.

Situation 3: You phone a friend of yours, but s/he is not there at the time you are calling. Leave a message for him/ her.

Speaking activities include also the learners acting out dialogues such as in Unit 2, task 4, page 50: *prepare a short dialogue using the adjectives above and act it out.*

Example: A: I saw/ read a detective film/ book...

B: What was it like?

A: It was wonderful/ depressing. You should read/ see it.

Acting a dialogue is also found in Unit 3, page 81: *Use the information in the horoscope page below to act out short dialogues.*

Example:

Ali: Tell me Ryan. What is your star sign?

Ryan: It is... What does it say?

Ali: Well, it says that

Ryan: Oh! That is absolutely/ completely/ quite/ totally right/ wrong!

In addition, there are activities in which the learners are asked to interview each other using a questionnaire (task 4, page 22), playing the game ‘Tell me ...’ using cues from a box (task 3, page 113), and responding to a radio interview about pollution (page 141).

The coursebook takes into account a discussion aspect, which is exemplified in a question about the world climate change. It goes as the following: *Do you think the world climate is changing? Justify your answer.* This activity helps pupils learn how to express and justify themselves, as well as foster critical thinking and quick decision making (page 140), it has also the aim of making learners fluent speakers, because fluency is an important goal when considering a speaking lesson. As Scrivener (1994: 213) states: “*There is no point of knowing a lot about a language if you cannot use It.*”, which, sadly, is the case of many learners in the Algerian schools- able to conjugate a verb, but unable of responding to a simple question. To help achieve this aim teachers have to find ways of enabling as many learners as possible to speak as much as possible.

Despite the fact that the coursebook attempts to develop fluency among the learners, apparently, what is noticed is that many tasks are done individually rather than in pairs, which is the case of some of the speaking activities introduced in Unit 2, in the *Listening and Speaking* sequence. Here are some examples to demonstrate this fact:

Task 1:

Look at the pictures and guess which of the following tales from the Arabian Nights they illustrate. Justify your answer.

- A. *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp.*
- B. *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*
- C. *The Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor*
- D. *The Fisherman and the Jinnee*

E. The Story of King Shahryar and his Brother.

Task 2:

Look at the characters in the pictures again, and then estimate who the hero is.

Task 3:

Look at picture B and deduce which part of the world the map represents. Justify your answer by circling the right letter.

a- China

b- North Africa

c- The Middle East

d- Iran

Story telling is not absent in the coursebook, it is seen in task 5, page 49 of Unit 2:

Close your books and tell Sindbad's tale to your classmates.

Start like this:

I am Sindbad the sailor. You probably know about me if you have read Arabian Nights. I have made seven voyages. Today, I will tell you about my adventures during my first voyage. Well...

This speaking activity, where learners briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from their teacher, promotes creative thinking largely, and helps them express ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have, however, it is done individually. Furthermore, another way of making use of pictures in a speaking activity is through giving the learners just one picture and having them describe what it is in the picture. This activity is illustrated in Unit 3 page 79, where the pupils are asked to look at a picture, and discuss questions about the people in the picture, what are most of them doing, where they are going and other questions. Picture

describing fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.

Pair work has shown to be more motivating and more helpful for oral fluency than individual work. The teacher should allow more opportunities for learner/ learner interaction to occur in the classroom in order to motivate the learners; make them feel comfortable when using the language, and develop their communicative abilities.

Here are some suggestions for English language teachers while teaching oral language:

- Provide maximum opportunity to students to speak the target language by providing a rich environment that contains collaborative work, authentic materials and tasks, and shared knowledge.
- Try to involve each student in every speaking activity; for this aim, practice different ways of student participation.
- Reduce teacher-talking time (TTT) in class while increasing student-talking time (STT). Step back and observe students.
- Indicate positive signs when commenting on a student's response.
- Ask eliciting questions such as "What do you mean? How did you reach that conclusion?" in order to prompt students to speak more.
- Provide written feedback like "Your presentation was really great. It was a good job. I really appreciated your efforts in preparing the materials and efficient use of your voice..."
- Do not correct students' pronunciation mistakes very often while they are speaking. Correction should not distract the student from his or her speech.
- Circulate around classroom to ensure that students are on the right track and see whether they need your help while they work in groups or pairs.
- Provide the vocabulary beforehand that students need in speaking activities.

- Diagnose problems faced by students who have difficulty in expressing themselves in the target language and provide more opportunities to practice the spoken language.

In brief, it is essential that language teachers pay great attention when teaching speaking by providing learners a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place. Thus, s/he should provide various speaking activities, which may contribute a great deal to learners in developing basic interactive skills for life, making them more active in the learning process, and at the same time making their learning more meaningful.

2.6.3. The Role of the Speaking Activities in Developing the Speaking Skill

The basic building block of a lesson is the activity or task. According to Scrivener (1994: 37), “*activities are something that learners do that involves them using or working with language to achieve some specific outcome.*”

The most important classroom endeavor of the teacher is to initiate and manage speaking activities that provide students with opportunities for effective practice of the speaking skill. S/he must know the factors or characteristics that make these activities successful. The classroom speaking activities set for learners should be rich in language. Making use of pairs and small groups maximizes the opportunities for learners to speak. In other words, speaking activities have an important role in promoting oral language, which can occur when students collaborate in groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task.

Scrivener (1994: 40) came out with an activity route map plan for running a simple activity in the classroom. It goes as the following:

- 1 Before the lesson: familiarize yourself with the material and activity; prepare any materials or text you need.
- 2 In class: lead in / prepare for the activity.
- 3 Set up the activity (or section), i.e. Give instructions, make grouping, etc.
- 4 Run the activity (or section): students do the activity, may be in pairs or small groups while you monitor and help.
- 5 Close the activity (or section) and invite feedback from the students.
- 6 Post-activity: do any appropriate follow-on work.

Figure 2.1: Activity route map plan

2.6.4. Aims of the Coursebook Speaking Activities

What might students have learned or be better able to do when an activity has finished is the aim of the activity. In the case of the speaking activities, Scrivener (1994: 48) states:

It is worth noting that the students are practicing fluent speaking under some degree of pressure. They have limited time to prepare what they are going to say and cannot worry about getting their grammar 100% accurate. Students will become more focused on the message they wish to communicate and on getting that across successfully. This shift of values from ‘getting the grammar right’ to ‘achieving successful communication’ is an important one for many students to come to terms with. While a fair degree of good grammar is necessary to succeed in the task, successful communication is a more important real-world goal than simply being perfect.

The speaking activities of this coursebook aim at focusing on the following speaking micro-skills:

- Pronounce the distinctive sounds of a language clearly enough so that people can distinguish them. This includes making tonal distinctions (e.g. activities 1 and 2 page 112 / activity 1 page 142/ activity 3 page 151).
- Use stress and rhythmic patterns and intonation patterns of the language clearly enough so that people can understand what is said (e.g. activities 4 and 5 page 112).
- Use the correct forms of words. This may mean, for example, changes in the tense, case, or gender (e.g. activity 1 page 59).
- Put words together in correct word order (e.g. activity 1 page 17/ activity 5 page 133/ activity 8 page 134).
- Use vocabulary appropriately (e.g. activity 1 page 96/ activity 3 page 116).
- Make the main ideas stand out from supporting ideas (activity 1 page 56).

Conclusion

This endeavor to analyze the speaking activities of the coursebook “At the Crossroads” has made us aware of its weaknesses. Although the coursebook attempts to present a great deal of support for learning to provide a sense of balance of work on accuracy and fluency, generally the focus is evidently on reading and writing. The different units of the coursebook include a significant range of activities; however, it is dubious whether there are adequate speaking activities to promote interaction in the classroom. In short, adjustment and enhancement cannot be denied.

CHAPTER THREE

FIELD WORK

Chapter Three**Field Work**

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Introduction

This study aims at examining the role of the speaking activities included in the first year secondary school coursebook ‘At the Crossroads’ in the development of English speaking skill. That is why it should be supported by information collected from people who are in direct contact with this coursebook. These data are collected through two questionnaires. The first one is given to 20 pupils from the secondary schools: Terkhouché Ahmed and Boraoui Ammar, which took the form of a three-page questionnaire designed to be readily comprehensible to a large range of learners of the first year secondary school. The second one is handed to 10 teachers; it took the form of a four-page questionnaire. Most of the questions in both the pupils and teachers questionnaires involved closed questions (yes or no) expressed by ticking boxes, and sometimes open-ended questions like the last question for teachers which invites them to write any additional comment. In this chapter, an analysis of both learners and teachers’ questionnaires will be given as well as a discussion of the questionnaires results.

3.1. Learners’ Questionnaire

3.1.1. Sample Description

The coursebook ‘At the Crossroads’ is taught to students of all streams. The sample consists of 20 learners taken from the two secondary schools mentioned previously: Terkhouché Ahmed and Boraoui Ammar.

Schools	N of learners	%
Terkhouché Ahmed	10	100
Boraoui Ammar	10	100
Total	20	100

Table 3.1: Number of learners from each school

3.1.2. Questionnaire Description

This questionnaire is divided into two sections. Each section includes open-ended questions, closed questions as well as multiple-choices questions. Sections are structured as follows:

Section One: General information (Q1-Q7): this section contains seven questions. They are designed to collect general information about the learners and the English speaking skill.

Section Two: The coursebook (Q8-Q20): this section includes thirteen questions. Within this section, information about the textbook speaking activities is gathered from two secondary schools: Terkhouché Ahmed and Boraoui Ammar. Twenty questionnaires were given to the learners through their English teachers, but only 17 questionnaires were given back. The learners were asked to answer the 20 questions by ticking the appropriate box. The aim of the questionnaire is to get learners' attitudes towards their coursebook speaking activities, to find whether they are appealing and useful in developing the English speaking skill or not.

3.1.3. Questionnaire Analysis

Section One: General Information

Q1: Learners' gender:

a- Male

b- Female

Options	N	%
Male	3	17.64
Female	14	82.35
Total	17	100

Table 3.2: Learners' Gender

Among the seventeen respondents, fourteen are females and three are males. This indicates that in the Algerian classrooms, the number of girls (82.35%) is higher compared to that of boys (17.64%).

Q2: Learners' age:

a-Under 17 years old

b- 17 years old

c- More than 17 years old

Options	N
Under 17 years old	8
17 years old	9
More than 17 years old	/

Table 3.3: Learners' Age

The questionnaire reveals that learners are aged 16 to 17, and have already four years' tuition in English at Middle School level. The coursebook speaking activities they are going to do in the classroom should certainly correspond to their needs and help them develop the English speaking skill.

Q3: Do you think that English language is important?

a- Yes b-No

Learners' Answers	N	%
Yes	16	94.11
No	1	5.88
Total	17	100

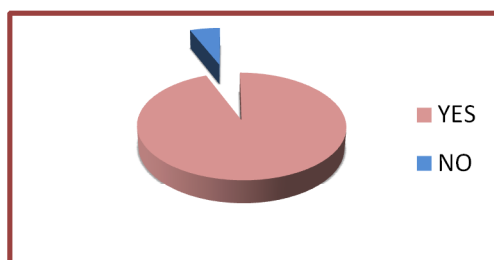


Table 3.4; Figure 3.1: Rate of Learners who Think that English is Important

Figure 3.1 shows that 94.11 % of learners (the majority) think that English language is important and only 5.88 % of them answered 'no'. This means that English language course is given an importance by most of the learners; thus, they are ready to make efforts to learn it.

Q4: Do you like English language?

a- Yes

b- No

Learners' Answers	N	%
Yes	16	94.11
No	1	5.88
Total	17	100

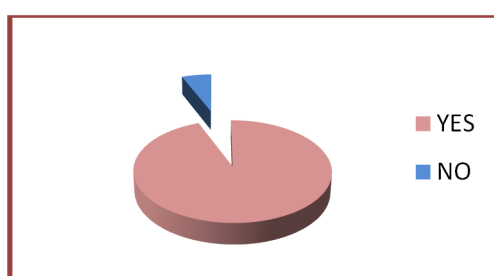


Table 3.5; Figure 3.2: Rate of Learners who like English

From the obtained results, we can say that the majority of learners (94.11%) like the English language, only (5.88%) said they do not like it.

Q5: Is it easy or difficult to learn it?

a- Easy b- Somehow difficult c- Difficult

Learners' answers	N	%
Easy	10	58.82
Somehow difficult	6	35.29
Difficult	1	5.88
Total	17	100

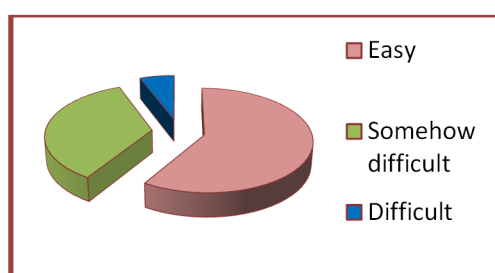


Table 3.6; Figure 3.3: Rate of Learners Who Think That English Learning is Easy

According to the results, 58.82 % of learners said that English is easy to learn, 35.29% said it is somehow difficult and 5.88 % said it is difficult.

Q6: Is your level of English?

a- Good b- Average c- Less than average d- I do not know

Learners' answers	N	%
Good	6	35.29
Average	11	64.7
Less than average	/	/
I do not know	/	/
Total	17	100

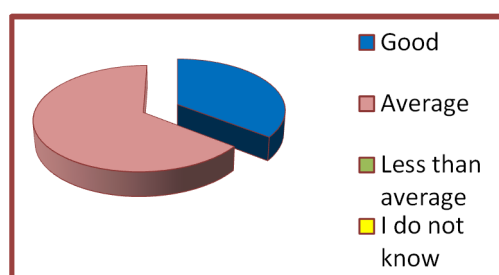


Table 3.7; Figure 3.4: Learners' Level of English

The question aims at assessing learners 'English level. As far as the results obtained,

We notice that most learners (64.7%) have an average level in English.

Q7: How well do you speak English?

a- Very well

b- well

c- Average

Options	N	%
Very well	/	/
Well	3	17.64
Average	14	82.35
Total	17	100

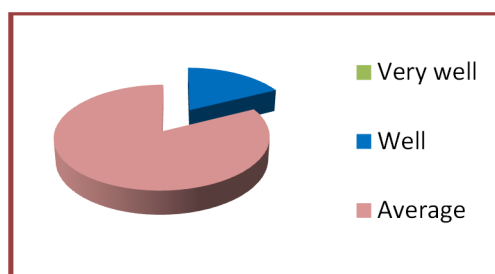


Table 3.8; Figure 3.5: Learners' Level of Speaking English

The question has the aim of assessing learners' speaking ability. Learners are asked to say how well they speak English: very well, well, or average. According to table 3.8, most of the learners have an average level of speaking English (82.35 %). This indicates that just a minority of learners master some rules of communication (17.64%), mainly because they find some difficulties while communicating. No one answers by 'very well'. The reason behind this may be the lack of interaction among learners, or that some learners hesitate to participate in the classroom, thus, not building a communicative competence.

Section Two: The Coursebook

Q8: Are the speaking activities in the coursebook interesting?

a- Yes b- No

Learners' answers	N	%
Yes	1	5.88
No	16	94.11
Total	17	100

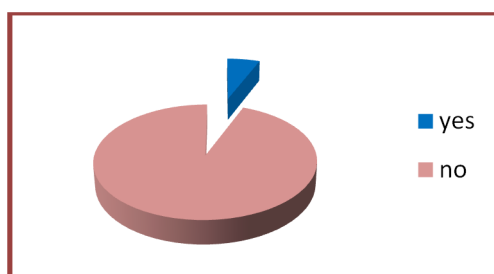


Table 3.9; Figure 3.6: Rate of Learners Who Think That the Coursebook Speaking Activities are Interesting.

Learners are asked to say whether the coursebook speaking activities are interesting or not. Figure 3.6 shows that 16 respondents felt that the speaking activities in the coursebook are not interesting, which translates to (94.11%).

Q9: If yes, justify which activities are interesting?

The (5.88%) of respondents who said that the coursebook speaking activities are interesting gave the same reasons which say that the speaking activities are really cool and easy.

Q10: If no, please justify.

The majority (94.11%) anticipated that the coursebook speaking activities are not interesting but boring; always the same as well as the lack of activities that give them the opportunity to practice pronunciation in the classroom. Others said that the speaking activities are beyond their proficiency level; moreover they do not motivate them to participate and speak in the class.

Most learners hoped to learn more songs and poems and to do activities with interest to teenage life such as games. Undoubtedly, games are one of the effective ways to make learners interact more and be involved enthusiastically in the activity.

Q11: What type of speaking activities do you like to do in the classroom?

- a- Dialogues
- b- Discussions
- c- Games
- d- Interviews
- e- Pair/ group work
- f- Picture describing
- g- Problem solving
- h- Role playing
- i- Story telling

Options	N	%
Dialogue	3	17.64
Discussions	2	11.76
Games	10	58.82
Interviews	6	35.29
Pair/ group work	8	47.05
Picture describing	2	17.64
Problem solving	4	23.52
Role playing	6	35.29
Story telling	1	5.88

Table 3.10: Type of Speaking Activities Liked by Learners

The data collected on the types of speaking activities preferred by learners are games, pair/ group work, and role-playing. First, games are proved to magnetize learners' attention, push them to communicate, and promote unity and familiarity among each other.

It is preferable that when the teacher starts to run a game activity, s/he should not allow learners to prepare yes-no questions, because by saying yes-no they get little practice in spoken language production. Rather, they ask open-ended questions to each other so that they reply in complete sentences. As far as pair/ group work is concerned, it is noticed that activities designed to be carried out in pairs or small groups provide learners with several benefits. They can learn from hearing the language used by other members of the group, they will produce greater amount of language than they would use in teacher-fronted activities, additionally, their motivational level is likely to increase, and certainly they will have the chance to develop fluency.

Learners are also found of role-playing, which is a good way of getting learners to speak. In role-playing activities, learners pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. They will improvise a scene or exchange based on the teacher's information or clues and this will help to stir their imagination and interact meaningfully.

Q12: Do you enjoy doing the speaking activities in the class?

	a- Yes	b- No
Learners' answers	N	%
Yes	14	82.35
No	3	17.64
Total	17	100

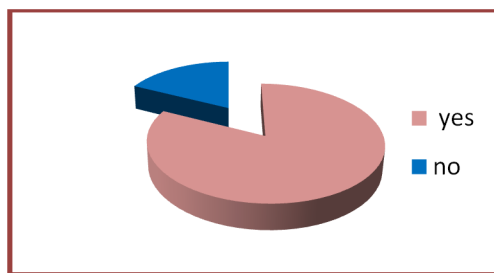


Table 3.11; Figure 3.7: Rate of Learners Who Enjoy Doing the Speaking Activities in the Classroom

Figure 3.7 shows that the vast majority of learners (82.35%), went for 'yes' and found that they allow them to exchange ideas, and communicate with their classmates.

Q13: If yes, which activities do you enjoy?

The following preferred speaking activities were mentioned:

- Story telling
- Pair/ group work
- Role playing
- Dialogues

From here, we assemble that learners prefer activities that permit them to ponder, bring about ideas, and involve themselves in the classroom work. They prefer activities such as pair work, because they can learn better through cooperating with friends, and discussing their ideas. Here is a learner's response of the question:

"I enjoy doing conversation between the classmates."

Q14: If no, please justify why you do not enjoy doing the speaking activities in the class.

According to three learners, the speaking activities are somehow difficult to be carried out for the reason that they are short of vocabulary and they do not feel self-assured to express themselves accurately.

Q15: Do you think that these activities meet your needs?

a- Yes b- No

Learners' answers	N	%
Yes	6	35.29
No	11	64.70
Total	17	100

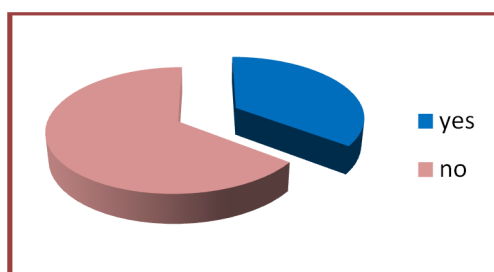


Table 3.12; Figure 3.8: Rate of Learners who Think that the Speaking Activities Meet Their Needs

Table 3.12 shows that 64.29% of learners said that the coursebook speaking activities do not meet their needs while 35.29% said they do meet their needs.

Q16: If no, please justify.

Those who claim that the coursebook speaking activities do not meet their needs justified their answer as the following. One student declared: *“The speaking activities are*

too easy and simple. The students do not have to be smart to do them.” Another learner expressed her answer as the following: “The speaking activities do not meet my needs, mainly because of the noise students make in the classroom, and this makes it difficult to understand them.”

Q17: Do you always contribute to and play an active role in the classroom?

a- Yes b- No

Learners' answers	N	%
Yes	8	47.05
No	9	52.94
Total	17	100

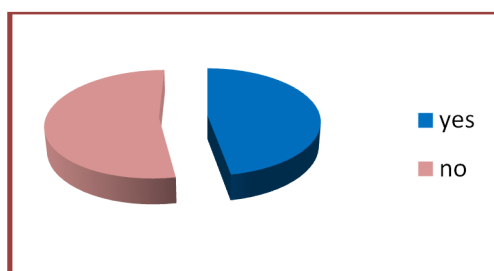


Table 3.13; Figure 3.9: Rate of Learners Who Always Play an Active Role in the Classroom

According to figure 3.9, 52.94% respondents answered with “no” and 47.05% said “yes”. This indicates that almost half of the learners are not self-motivated in the lesson and do not play an active role in the lessons, this is mainly the result of the factors mentioned in chapter one; the following question results affirm this claim.

Q18: If no, please justify.

Among the reasons provided by the learners who said ‘No’ are the following:

- Overcrowded classes do not allow us to participate in the classroom.
- Difficulty to express ourselves orally.
- Fear of making mistakes in front of my classmates.
- I am a shy person.
- Sometimes I have the right answer but I am afraid of saying it.
- Some activities are beyond my capacities, that is why I do not participate.
- I do not feel motivated to raise my hand and take part in the classroom.
- Lack of self-confidence.
- I am good at writing.

Q19: Do the coursebook' speaking activities help you in developing the English speaking skill?

a- Yes b- No

Learners' answers	N	%
Yes	1	14.28
No	6	85.71
Total	17	100

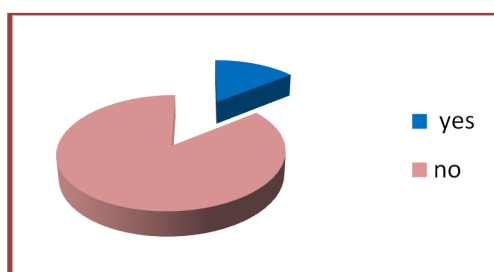


Table 3.14; Figure 3.10: Rate of Learners Who Think that the Coursebook Speaking Activities Help them Develop the Speaking Skill

According to Table 3.14, 85.71% of learners said that the coursebook speaking activities do not help them develop the English speaking skill. Only 14.28% said the opposite.

Q20: If no, please justify.

Those who said the coursebook speaking activities do not help them in developing the speaking skill justified their answer saying that:

- The speaking activities are not enough.
- The teacher should motivate us to speak English.
- I revise English just when exams approach. I do not give much importance to speaking.
- Most of the coursebook activities are about reading and writing.

3.1.4. Discussion of the Learners' Questionnaire Results

From this analysis, it is concluded that:

- The coursebook speaking activities are not interesting.
- The speaking activities do not meet learners' needs.
- Learners do not always play an active role in the classroom.
- The coursebook speaking activities do not help learners in developing the English speaking skill since they are not varied enough.

3.2. Teachers' Questionnaire

3.2.1. Sample Description

The sample of this questionnaire consists of English language teachers at the secondary school level. The sample consists of 10 teachers from two different secondary schools: Terkhouché Ahmed and Boraoui Ammar.

Schools	N of teachers
Terkhouché Ahmed	7
Boraoui Ammar	3
Total	10

Table 3.15: Number of teachers from each school

3.2.2. Questionnaire Description

Ten questionnaires were given to the teachers but only seven questionnaires were given back. The teachers were required to answer 24 questions by ticking the right box and writing sentences when necessary. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Each section includes open-ended and closed-ended questions as well as multiple choices questions. Sections are structured as follows:

Section One: General information (Q1- Q4): This section contains four questions. These latter are designed to gather general information about teachers, their age, gender, level they are (have been) teaching and most importantly their teaching experience.

Section Two: The coursebook (Q5- Q24): This section includes twenty questions. The last one is about adding some comments. This section includes questions about how the coursebook content is organized, how the content is sequenced, whether the

coursebook contains a variety of speaking activities that can help learners develop the speaking skill, how communicative abilities are developed, and other questions.

3.2.3. Questionnaire Analysis

Section One: General Information

Q1: Gender: please specify

	a- Male	b- Female
Options	N	%
Male	1	14.28
Female	6	85.7
Total	7	100

Table 3.16: Teachers' Gender

Six respondents of the questionnaire were female and only one was a male.

We find that in Algeria, generally speaking, the number of female teachers is higher than that of male.

Q2: Age: please specify

	a- Under 30	b- between 30- 50	c- 51 and above
Teachers' age	N	%	
Under 30	2	28.57	
Between30-50	4	57.14	
51 and above	1	14.28	
Total	7	100	

Table 3.17: Teachers' Age

According to the result obtained, the majority of teachers are aged 30 to 50. Thus, it is obvious that they have at least spent a significant number of years in the field of teaching.

Q3: Class: which level you are (have been) teaching?

- a- 1st year
- b- 2nd year
- c- 3rd year

Level taught	Number of teachers
a c	4
b c	0
a b	3
Total	7

Table 3.18: Levels Taught by the Teachers

It is of paramount importance to reveal that, all teachers mentioned that in addition to teaching second and third year, they have also taught first year learners, which means that they are familiar with the first year coursebook' strengths and weaknesses.

Q4: Teaching experience: how long have you been teaching English?

- a- Less than 5 years
- b- Between 5 and 10 years
- c- Between 10 and 15 years
- d- More than 15 years

Teaching Experience	N of teachers	%
Less than 5 years	1	14.28
Between 5 and 10 years	1	14.28
Between 10 and 15 years	/	/
More than 15 years	5	71.42

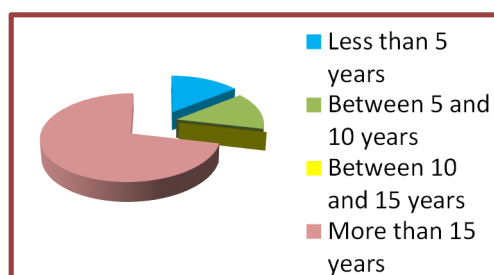


Table 3.19; Figure 3.11: Teaching Experience

As far as the teaching experience is concerned, table 3.19 shows that the majority of teachers have more than 15 years teaching experience (5). This indicates that they were well acquainted with the 1st year learners' program and are considered competent to a large extent. As a result, they were able to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook 'At the Crossroads'.

Section Two: The Coursebook

Q5: How is the content of the coursebook organized?

- a- Grammatical structures**
- b- Functions**
- c- Topics**
- d- Skills/ abilities**
- e- Situations**
- f- Combination of the preceding approaches**

Options	N	%
Grammatical structures	/	/
Functions	/	/
Topics	6	85.71
Skills/ abilities	1	14.28
Situations	/	/
Combination of the preceding approaches	/	/

Table 3.20: The Organization of the Coursebook Content

Almost all teachers (6) said that the coursebook is sequenced topically.

Q6: How is the content sequenced?

a- Complexity b- Learnability c- Usefulness

Options	N	%
Complexity	/	/
Learnability	7	100
Usefulness	/	/

Table 3.21: The Sequence of the Coursebook Content

All teachers responded that the content of the coursebook is sequenced on the basis of learnability.

Q7: Is there a variety of speaking activities in the coursebook?

a- Yes b- No

Teachers' answers	N	%
Yes	2	28.57
No	5	71.42
Total	7	100

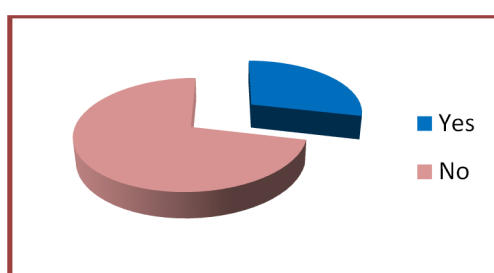


Table 3.22; Figure 3.12: Rate of Teachers who think there is a variety of Speaking activities

According to figure 3.12, almost all teachers assert that the coursebook does not contain a variety of speaking activities.

Q8: If yes, what type of activities?

Those teachers who claim that the coursebook contains a variety of speaking activities say they are the following:

- Interviews
- Dialogues
- Morphology
- Phonetics

Q9: If no, explain why.

The 71.42% of teachers who said that the coursebook does not assemble a great variety of speaking activities gave the following reasons:

- Many teachers believe that dialogues introduced in the coursebook are enough to get students speak English in the best way possible, however, they significantly over-estimate the extent to which students are involved in them; the vast majority of talk tends to come from teachers themselves and most individual learners only contribute a relatively tiny amount during the course of a lesson. A far more efficient way of developing speaking can be to get students talking to one another through discussions where the learners may aim to arrive at a conclusion, share ideas about an event, or find solutions in their discussion groups. Whatever the aim is in any group discussion, the learners should always be encouraged to ask questions, paraphrase ideas, express support and check for clarification.
- The coursebook should contain simulations activities, which are very similar to role-plays; however, they are more elaborate. First, they are entertaining and motivate the students. Second, they increase the self-confidence of hesitant learners, because in these activities, they will have a different role and do not have to speak for themselves, which means they do not have to take the same responsibility.

Q10: Do you think that these activities help the pupils develop their English speaking skill?

a- Yes b- No

Teachers' answers	N	%
Yes	2	28.57
No	5	71.42
Total	7	100

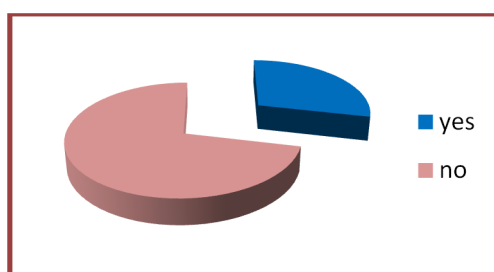


Table 3.23; Figure 3.13: Rate of Teachers who Think that the Coursebook Speaking Activities Help Learners in Developing the Speaking Skill.

Table 3.23 demonstrates that five teachers believe that the coursebook speaking activities do not help the learners to develop their English speaking skill, and only two teachers said the opposite. One of these two stated: "*the teacher is given freedom to add and to omit.*"

Q11: If no, please justify.

The five teachers who have the point of view that the coursebook speaking activities do not help the learners to develop the English speaking skill justified their answer saying that:

- Though the new approach (CBA) which is learner-centered has always been eagerly sought after, it is not an easy task to put it into practice since it needs reflection and training to be implemented. The learners are not really the center of the learning process, they do not have enough opportunities to speak and interact in the classroom mainly because of time constraints.
- Hypothetically, it seems that the coursebook speaking activities help learners to develop the English speaking skill, however, in practice, learners need more opportunities to develop communicative skills and to interact more in the classroom and this requires definitely more various speaking activities connected to learners' interests.

Q12: Do the speaking activities of the coursebook provoke personal responses, and permit pupils to interact intelligibly in the classroom?

a- Yes b- No

Teachers' answers	N	%
Yes	6	85.71
No	1	14.28
Total	7	100

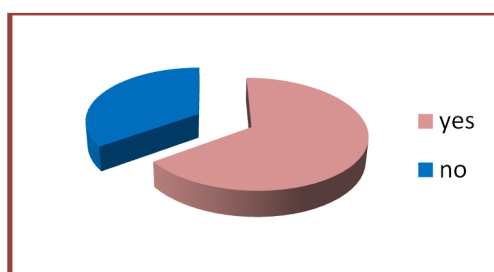


Table 3.24; Figure 3.14: Rate of Teachers who Think that the Coursebook Speaking Activities Permit Learners to Interact Intelligibly in the Classroom

The majority of teachers (85.71%) opted for ‘yes’, only a minority (14.28%) responded by ‘no’.

Q13: If no, please explain why or justify.

The only teacher who said that the coursebook speaking activities do not permit pupils to interact intelligibly in the classroom claims: *“Though there are some meaningful activities such as acting a telephone conversation (page 24) and acting dialogues (page 82), in which learners are asked to work in pairs, if we examine the activities on pages (79 and 140) we will absolutely conclude that the individual work is predominant.”*

Q14: Do the speaking activities allow for pair/ group work to be happened?

a- Yes b- No

Teachers' answers	N	%
Yes	7	100
No	/	/
Total	7	100

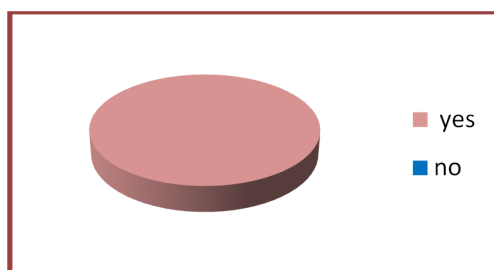


Table 3.25; Figure 3.15: Rate of Teachers who think that the Speaking Activities Allow for Pair/ Group Work to be Happened

Figure 3.15 shows that all teachers said that the coursebook speaking activities allow for pair/ group work to be happened.

Q15: If no, please justify.

No teacher disagrees with the fact that the coursebook speaking activities allow for pair/ group work.

Q16: Are the speaking activities suitable for the learners' level?

a- Yes b- No

Teachers' answers	N	%
Yes	2	28.57
No	5	71.42
Total	7	100

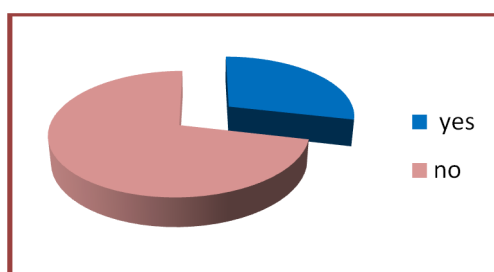


Table 3.26; Figure 3.16: The Suitability of the Speaking Activities to the Learners' Level

Table 3.26 implies that 71.42% of teachers said that the speaking activities are not suitable for learners' levels.

Q 17: If no, please justify.

From those teachers who maintained that the coursebook speaking activities are not suitable to the learners' level a teacher gave the following reason "*the activities are so easy*

and others are so difficult even for teachers and some bear details which are just a loss of time.”

Q18: Are the speaking activities suitable to the size of the class?

a- Yes b- No

Teachers' answers	N	%
Yes	2	28.57
No	5	71.42
Total	7	100

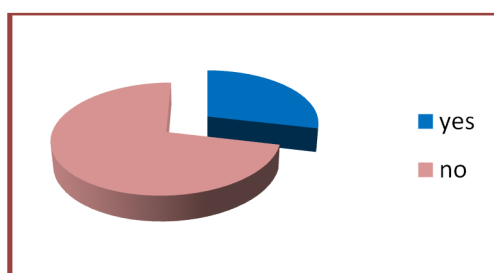


Table 3.27; Figure 3.17: The Suitability of the Speaking Activities to the Classroom' Size

Figure 3.17 infers that 71.42% of teachers responded that the speaking activities of the coursebook are not suitable to the size of the classroom.

Q19: If no, please explain why.

The Algerian large classrooms are an impediment to learners who want to participate in the classroom. A teacher says about this problem: *“Many activities want pupils to take part in the class work. However, there is no time for many to be given the chance to. So, each time a pupil does, many are sacrificed.”*

Another teacher claims: *“Most of our classes are overcrowded. Even if there is a group work, students do not benefit from it because of the mess done in the class.”*

Without doubt, teachers face difficulties of classroom management, they complain about the huge number of the learners, which does not allow communication to take place. In addition, they cannot cope with the noise learners make and find it challenging to set group work activities, which should be supervised by the teacher and this becomes impossible when dealing with large classes for they are time consuming and require firm organization. From this, it can be confirmed that there exists a gap between the theory of communicative methodology and the reality of the teaching situation. (Nolasco and Arthur, 1988).

In brief, when the objective is the mastery of fluency, the size of the classroom should be restricted

Q20: Is material for spoken English (dialogues, role-plays, etc) well designed to equip learners for real life interactions?

a- Yes b- No

Teachers' answers	N	%
Yes	1	14.28
No	6	85.71
Total	7	100

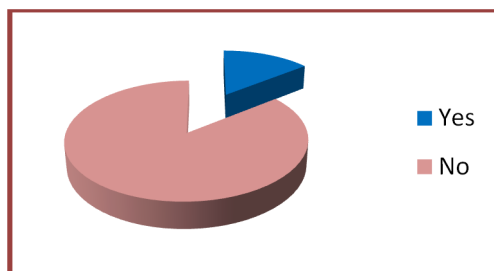


Table 3.28; Figure 3.18: Rate of Teachers who Think that Materials for Spoken English are Well Designed to Equip Learners for Real Life Interactions

According to figure 3.18, almost all teachers (85.71%) said that materials for spoken English are not well equipped.

Q21: Does the coursebook include material for pronunciation work?

a- Yes b- No

Teachers' answers	N	%
Yes	5	71.42
No	2	28.57
Total	7	100

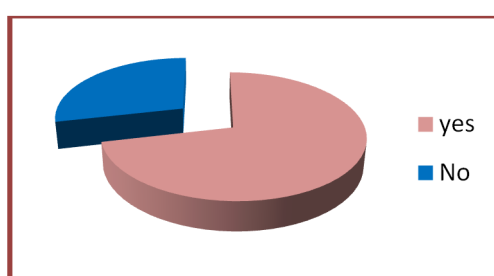


Table 3.29; Figure 3.19: Rate of Teachers who Think that the Coursebook Includes Material for Pronunciation Work

Pronunciation teaching deals with two interrelated skills_ recognition or understanding the flow of speech, and production or fluency in the spoken language. Figure 3.19 illustrates that 71.42% of teachers said that the coursebook includes material for pronunciation work.

Q22: If yes, what is covered?

- a- Individual sounds
- b- Word stress
- c- Sentence stress
- d- Intonation

Options	N
Individual sounds	3
Word stress	5
Sentence stress	/
Intonation	4

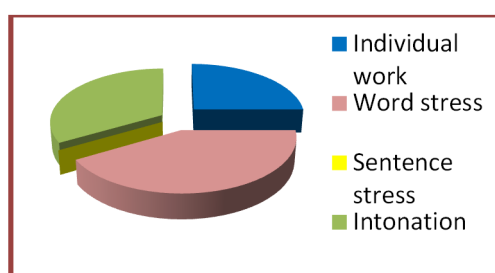


Table 3.30; Figure 3.20: Material Covered in Pronunciation Work

It is noticed from table 3.30 and figure 3.20 that the mostly covered materials of pronunciation work are word stress (5), intonation (4) and individual sounds (3). No teacher opted for sentence stress.

Q 23: How are communicative abilities developed?

Communicative abilities according to the teachers are not easy for learners to reach. According to one teacher: *“when we teach a text, we focus more on its content than on the learners’ pronunciation when reading, but we develop it through dialogues.”* . Another teacher says: *“Communicative abilities are developed through pupil- pupil interactions, as well as teacher- pupil ones. And through each of the five units which contains four sequences: speaking, writing, grammar and consolidation, in addition to other two sections: grammar activities and a project.”*

A third teacher declared that communicative abilities are developed through pupil-pupil interactions such as when acting out dialogues in the classroom or interviewing each other, and through teacher- pupil interactions when pupils check for clarification.

Q24: If you have any additional comment, please write it down.

The teachers were asked to add extra comments on the coursebook. They gave the following comments:

- The coursebook is too lengthy: It is impossible to cover all five units for all branches.
- There is no time to give projects hours. They must be omitted because of the lack of devoted time to teaching English which is just 4 hours.
- Too many mistakes in the textbook, contradictions, wrong pieces of information, vagueness and more.
- The characteristic secondary school class is large (anything upwards of twenty-five learners) and because of its size, communication abilities are hindered.
- Lacks of opportunities to use English in learners’ daily lives as well as the lack of interesting materials that can motivate the learners to study and develop the

speaking skill are the main reasons behind learners' failure to interact and speak well in the classroom.

- As far as the majority of Algerian secondary schools are concerned, teaching materials are confined to traditional ones such as the board, the chalk, and the textbook (or handouts); there is the absence of audio-visual aids such as tapes, which are said to facilitate language learning.
- In practice, there are a number of shortages and negative aspects especially about the speaking activities, which may promote the speaking skill. This implies that the textbook speaking activities are not suitable to the Algerian context or classroom or that they are not implied in the right way.
- The coursebook could have been more pedagogically adequate if it had been taught under better circumstances.
- The coursebook speaking activities need adaptation and variation to suit learners' levels and capacities.

3.2.4. Discussion of the Teachers' Questionnaire Results

From this analysis, we conclude that:

- The teachers expect :
 - More communicative activities in order to promote learners' speaking skill through both pair and group work.
 - The use of up-date materials, such as tape recorders and headsets in a language laboratory so that learners will have the opportunity to access pronunciation.

The teachers are not satisfied with:

- The length of the coursebook, (5 units).
- The lack of speaking activities diversity in the coursebook.

- The size of the classroom: Teachers complain a lot about the enormous number of learners in the classroom, which makes it hard for them to manage classroom-speaking activities that require pair and group work, and this hinders communication to occur.
- The time allocated for teaching English is not sufficient to cover the whole units.

To sum up, the findings indicate that the coursebook is not totally suitable for use as it does not achieve the teachers' objectives. Though the coursebook speaking activities attempt to promote learners' fluency, it requires adjustment and this can be achieved through teachers' consultation, because the teacher remains, always, the main artist of the teaching/ learning setting to bring decision on the values and limitations of the coursebook. The teacher's duty is to make sure that his teaching is appropriate to his class, that is organized systematically, and that it is exciting. It is worth noting that a teacher who uses appropriate and well-organized materials usually has little difficulty in generating enthusiasm in his/her class.

Conclusion

The learners and teachers' questionnaires reveal that first year secondary school coursebook speaking activities help learners, to some extent; develop the speaking skill, however, they neither meet learners' needs nor teachers' expectations. They are not interesting, do not meet learners' requirements, and are not appropriate for their level. Another important thing that teachers are not satisfied with is the lack of speaking activities diversity in the coursebook. According to the questionnaires, some learners claim that the reasons behind the textbook speaking activities boredom lay on the fact that they are either too difficult or too easy. The former is not hard to recognize- the learners cannot do the

work. A trickier problem is when work is simply not challenging enough. Teachers often have rather limited expectations about what learners can do, and keep their classes on a rather predictable straight line through activities that are safe and routine. In short, teachers should try to keep the level of challenge high, be demanding, and believe that their learners can do more than they are aware of being able to do- and then help them to do it.

CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

This study was devoted to examine the speaking activities introduced in the first year secondary school coursebook “At the Crossroads” i.e. whether they have an effective role in developing learners’ English speaking skill or not. Even though numeral speaking activities are set up in the coursebook to help learners develop the English speaking skill what was noticed was that many learners fail to speak English well in the classroom. The explanation of this problem was the ineffectiveness of the speaking activities or tasks introduced in the coursebook in acquiring the English speaking skill. On this basis, the following question was raised: Are the speaking activities introduced in ‘At the Crossroads’ coursebook effective in developing learners’ speaking skill?

The study also tried to find out whether the speaking activities meet the teachers’ expectations and the learners’ interests thus raising the textbook writers about its weaknesses.

It was assumed that the reason behind first year secondary school learners’ difficulty to engage in the production of messages for the intention of communication exchange was due to the deficiencies of ‘*At the Crossroads*’ coursebook speaking activities, so if these activities were effective enough, learners would be more competent in speaking. Hence, it was hypothesized that: if the coursebook speaking activities are to be varied, students’ speaking skill will be improved.

The theoretical background of the study focused in its first chapter on the importance of the speaking skill of which both teachers and learners are aware since the ability to speak a language is identical with knowing that language. Moreover, there was focus on the latest and current approach to English language teaching which the Algerian teaching methodology shifted to use since 2005 “the competency-based approach”. This latter sees

the learner as the center element of teaching thus answering the 21st century needs and the world's new changes. The second chapter of this study stressed on teaching materials evaluation, defining what teaching materials are, particularly the textbook, its role in the EFL classroom and what can it offer. Then, attention was drawn to the need for textbook evaluation, which becomes an educational necessity for the success of a teaching/ learning process because no book is perfect in itself or for a particular teaching/ learning context. Next, the evaluation of the coursebook speaking activities was made clear in this chapter emphasizing their role and aims in the learning process.

The actual investigation was carried in two secondary schools: Terkhouché Ahmed and Boraoui Ammar. It made use of the questionnaire as a means of data collection.

After collecting and analyzing the required data, we concluded that regardless of the role the coursebook speaking activities play in promoting learners' speaking skill, they neither meet the teachers' expectations, nor the learners' interests. The majority of teachers and learners agree that some of the speaking activities included in the coursebook are not stimulating enough to suit the age, level, needs and interest of the learners and certainly do not help them develop the English speaking skill in the adequate way . In addition, the coursebook does not offer the learners enough opportunities to practice speaking.

Materials such as the coursebook and the activities are obviously selected by the Ministry of Education and are, to some extent, beyond the control of the teacher, but someone needs to make decisions. Whoever makes the initial selection of the material, it is the duty of the teacher to adapt it to the needs of his/ her learners as far as s/he can.

The textbook can be a tyrant to the teacher who is in his/ her preoccupation with covering the syllabus; feels constrained to teach every item in exactly the same sequence and context in which the textbook writer presents it. However, the teacher takes over where

the textbook leaves off, and s/he must be able to assess its strengths and weaknesses, moreover, s/he needs to be acquainted with the principles of textbook evaluation.

The textbook is a tool, and the teacher must know not only how to use it but how useful it can be. Finding out will involve distinguishing between method in the use of printed materials and method in face-to-face teaching. In the case of this study, it will involve using discretion in adapting the speaking activities to the needs and interests of pupils, choosing only those based on sound linguistic and pedagogical principles. The textbook will continue to play an important role, but it will not be a tyrant.

To sum up, the textbook should include relevant speaking activities offering sufficient practice so that learners can reinforce and retain what has been taught. Teachers from their part should strive continually to improve their teaching in order to deliver the best possible lessons to their students.

Based on the present study, further research could be done on the other components of the coursebook to investigate their suitability to the learners' levels and interests.

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APPENDICES

LEARNERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Learners' Questionnaire

Dear learner:

This questionnaire is part of a work research. It aims at examining the role of first year secondary school coursebook 'At the Crossroads' speaking activities, the way they are actually dealt with in the classroom and the extent to which they are efficient in developing pupils' English speaking skill.

Please read each question carefully, then tick (✓) the appropriate box (or boxes) and make full statements whenever necessary.

Miss. Samira LAOUIR and Miss. Siham DIB

Department of English

Jijel University

Jijel

Section One: General Information

Q1: Gender:

Male ☐

Female ☐

Q2: Age:

Under 17 years old ☐

17 years old ☐

More than 17 years ☐

Q3: Do you think that English language is important?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q4: Do you like English language?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q5: Is it easy or difficult to learn?

Easy ☐

Somehow difficult ☐

Difficult ☐

Q6: Is your level of English?

Good ☐

Average ☐

Less than average ☐

I do not know ☐

Q7: How well do you speak English?

Very well ☐

Well ☐

Average ☐

Section Two: The Coursebook

Q8: Are the coursebook' speaking activities interesting?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q9: If yes, justify which activities are interesting?

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Q10: If no, please justify.

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Q11: What type of speaking activities do you like to do in the classroom?

Dialogues ☐

Discussions ☐

Games ☐

Interviews ☐

Pair/ group work ☐

Picture describing ☐

Problem solving ☐

Role plying ☐

Story telling ☐

Q12: Do you enjoy doing the speaking activities in the class?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q13: If yes, which activities do you enjoy?

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Q14: If no, please justify why you don't enjoy doing the speaking activities in the class.

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Q15: Do you think that these activities meet your need?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q16: If no, please justify.

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Q17: Do you always contribute to and play an active role in the classroom?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q18: If no, please justify.

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Q19: Do the coursebook' speaking activities help you in developing the English speaking skill?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q20: If no, please justify.

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TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear teacher:

This questionnaire is part of a research work. It aims at examining the role of the coursebook 'At the Crossroads' speaking activities, in use in the first year of the secondary school, the way they are actually dealt with in the classroom and the extent to which they are efficient in developing pupils' English speaking skill.

You are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire. Please, tick (✓) the appropriate box (or boxes) and make full statements whenever necessary. Your answers will be important for the completion of this work.

Thank you in advance for your precious collaboration.

Miss. Samira LAOUIR and Miss. Siham DIB

Department of English

Jijel University

Jijel

Section One: General Information

Q1: Gender: please specify

Male ☐

Female ☐

Q2: Age: please specify

Under 30 ☐

Between 30-50 ☐

51 and above ☐

Q3: Class: which level you are (have been) teaching?

1st year ☐

2nd year ☐

3rd year ☐

Q4: Teaching experience: how long have you been teaching English?

Less than 5 years ☐

Between 5 and 10 years ☐

Between 10 and 15 years ☐

More than 15 year ☐

Section Two: The Coursebook

Q5: How is the content of the coursebook organized? According to:

Grammatical structures ☐

Functions ☐

Topics ☐

Skills/ abilities ☐

Situations ☐

Combination of the preceding approaches ☐

Q6: How is the content sequenced? On the basis of:

Complexity ☐

Learnability ☐

Usefulness ☐

Q7: Is there a variety of speaking activities in the coursebook?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q8: If yes, what type of activities?

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Q9: If no, explain why.

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Q10: Do you think that these activities help the pupils develop their English speaking skill?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q11: If no, please justify.

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Q12: Do the speaking activities of the coursebook provoke personal responses, and permit pupils to interact intelligibly in the classroom?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q13: If no, please explain why or justify.

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Q14: Do the speaking activities allow for pair/ group work to be happened?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q15: If no, please justify.

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Q16: Are the speaking activities suitable for the learners' level?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q 17: If no, please justify.

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Q18: Are the speaking activities suitable to the size of the class?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q19: If no, please explain why.

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Q20: Is material for spoken English (dialogues, role-plays, etc) well designed to equip learners for real life interactions?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q21: Does the coursebook include material for pronunciation work?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q22: If yes, what is covered?

Individual sounds ☐

Word stress ☐

Sentence stress ☐

Intonation ☐

Q 23: How are communicative abilities developed?

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Q24: If you have any additional comment, please write it down.

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Résumé

Cette étude vise à examiner le rôle des activités orales introduites dans le livre de la première année de l'enseignement secondaire « At the Crossroads » dans le développement de compétence orale en langue anglaise. Elle vise à découvrir la mesure dans laquelle ces activités répondent aux attentes des enseignants et aux besoins des apprenants. Afin d'atteindre cet objectif, nous nous sommes appuyés sur deux questionnaires qui ont été soumis aux enseignants et aux apprenants pour rassembler les données requises concernant leurs vues sur les activités orales du livre. Les résultats obtenus montrent que les activités orales sont appropriées pour développer les compétences de langue des apprenants, cependant, en raison de certains facteurs, elles sont assez difficiles à mettre en œuvre de manière adéquate. Selon les résultats, Les activités orales du livre ne répondent ni aux attentes des enseignants ni aux besoins des apprenants parce qu'elles ne sont pas intéressantes, elles sont soit trop faciles ou trop difficiles et ne conviennent pas aux niveaux des apprenants. En outre, les activités de production orale ne sont pas assez suffisantes, il y'a une prédominance des activités de lecture et de l'écriture dans le manuel de cours. Enfin, les activités orales ne sont pas adaptées à la classe et au contexte algérien ; les apprenants doivent certainement avoir plus de possibilités pour pratiquer la compétence oralement.

تحاول هذه الدراسة تحصيل دور الأنشطة الشفوية المقدمة في كتاب السنة أولى ثانوي في تطوير مهارة اللغة الإنجليزية الشفوية. كما تهدف إلى اكتشاف إلى أي مدى تلبي هذه الأنشطة توقعات المعلمين واحتياجات المتعلمين. من أجل تحقيق هذا الهدف، اعتمدنا على اثنين من الاستبيانات التي قدمت للمعلمين والمتعلمين لتجميع البيانات المطلوبة عن وجهات نظرهم تجاه الأنشطة الشفوية. تكشف النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها أن أنشطة الكتاب الشفوية عادة ما تساعد في تطوير المهارات الشفوية للمتعلمين، ولكن نظرا لبعض العوامل، من الصعب أن تنفذ على نحو كاف. إن أنشطة الكتاب الشفوية لا تلبي توقعات المعلمين واحتياجات المتعلمين لأنها ليست مثيرة للاهتمام، فهي إما سهلة جدا أو صعبة جدا و لا تتناسب مع مستويات المتعلمين. علاوة على ذلك، فإن الأنشطة الشفوية ليست كافية، هناك هيمنة أنشطة القراءة والكتابة. أخيرا هذه الأنشطة ليست مناسبة لأقسام و سياق الدراسة الجزائرية؛ المتعلمون بحاجة ماسة للمزيد من الفرص لممارسة مهارة التحدث.