

Strategies Used to Teach English Conversation in High Schools: Case of Mont-Ngafula/ Democratic Republic of Congo

Bushaminga Kwete Georges¹; Kasonga Kambaja Merveil²

^{1,2} Teaching Assistant at the University of Kinshasa, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences / English Department.

Publication Date: 2025/09/25

Abstract: The current paper has examined some strategies used to teach English conversation in some Kinshasa high schools, mainly in the municipality of “Mont-Ngafula” in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It has investigated ten English teachers in teaching conversation materials through strategies. Data were collected through survey questionnaire, interview, class observation as research tools. At the end of all research some teachers are not aware of these strategies: Follow up questions, turn talking, back-channel clues, requesting and giving clarification, changing the subjects. And other teachers use these strategies and others.

Keywords: Teacher, Teaching Strategies, Conversation Steps.

How to Cite: Bushaminga Kwete Georges; Kasonga Kambaja Merveil (2025) Strategies Used to Teach English Conversation in High Schools: Case of Mont-Ngafula/ Democratic Republic of Congo. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(9), 1497-1501. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25sep924>

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching relies on methods, procedures applied to any course of all levels but the success and the failure come from teacher strategies used in teaching, particularly in English conversation lesson. Teaching strategies are very essential when they bring teachers' success in achieving teaching goals conversation lesson. Strategies used in teaching the English conversation in Kinshasa schools, mainly in Mont-Ngafula. And these Strategies should be interesting when they capture learners' attention.

This study attempts find out strategies used by surveyed teachers and proposes some hints in order to in order to solve problem the failure of teaching English conversation or to improve on teaching English conversation

As an English teacher and researcher, I went to supervise an English teacher of my pedagogical unit while he was teaching English conversation on “introducing oneself or self-introduction” at Mont-Ngafula municipality schools, he presented the material to his learners et directly he called them to present the conversation and the learners could not speak or say anything on the lesson. After serious assessment with the teacher, he accepted his failure to teach English conversation lesson. Indeed, qualitative and quantitative designs are both mixed up in our survey.

II. STRATEGIES USED TO TEACH ENGLISH CONVERSATION IN HIGH SCHOOL

Here are teaching conversation strategies:

A. Strategies 1: Follow-Up Questions/Comments

For these strategies, the teacher demands learners to watch pictures or video of sophomores playing (if they exist). After watching them, the partner must ask/make a following-up questions comments. This is then, used conversation strategy, introduced in the semester. In introducing this conversation strategy first comes an advance organizer of pictures that will be shown to learners, which simply let them know what they will be seeing and looking for in these pictures. Then, pupils can watch the pictures (video), listen for the strategy, write what they see/hear and finally provide original examples of the strategy that would be appropriate in the conversation.

➤ Sample of Conversation Strategy Activity: Follow-Up Questions and Comments

The good way to show that you are interested in what another person is saying is to ask questions or make comments. When you ask for more details out, or add your own ideas to what the speaker is saying, the speaker knows that you are really interested. He then knows that you want him I her to keep talking.

➤ Example of a Following-Up Questions/Comment Conversation

• First Conversation

A: We practiced with the new members

B: (Students write: how many new members)

A: Two new members

B: (Students write: that's great!)

A: our instruction is teacher Kwete

B: Students write: is he wrong?)

• Second Conversation

During this conversation, the students did not ask many follow-up questions. Write a possible follow-up questions/comments after each one.

A: I went there to cheer our team, but we lost the final game

B: That's too bad

A: We went down town to go shopping and sigh seeing.

B:

A: I bought party goods, for examples firecrackers and makes

B:

A: After completing this activity, learners have to or 20 minutes for talk/depending on their levels.

B. Strategy 2: Turn-Talking

According to this strategy, conversation is introduced with a short demonstration in class. How difficult can be to begin a conversation. Learners are given a formula with natural exchange with which to start a conversation.

e.g: François: Hi (first name)? what's new

Helene: Not much. How about you?

François: Well...

Helene: Where do you come from,

François: I'm from Mashana.

This informal beginning is appropriate for peer interactions which displays the conversation strategy of turn-talking. I.e "Not much. How about you?" "learners continue practicing turn-talking, making statements and asking "How/what about you/yours?"

Then, pairs of learners are asked to perform their first conversation flowing. The teacher uses turn-talking for the evolution sheet; along with the evaluation and general comments.

C. Strategy 3: Back-Channel Clues

It consists of giving back-channel cues to show comprehension and/or agreement. These are introduced as "English borrowing" from other languages. The students watch pictures or video-taped conversations that display good examples of English borrowing".

These include: Merveil: ok!

Clarisse: yes

Merveil: oh! I see

Clarisse : that's great

Merveil: hmm

Clarisse : uh-huh etc.

D. Strategy 4: Requesting and Giving Clarification

This strategy is introduced simply with the questions. E.g. "- what can you do if you don't understand? (Ask for clarification)

"- What can you do if the other person doesn't understand you?" (Giving clarification).

With this strategy, first learners watch another picture or video of former learners where negotiation meaning, and they are asked to make notes of:

- What words/sentences are not understood
- What do the learners in the picture or video say to make the meaning clear?

Then, after this warm-up, and the following discussion of what they saw on the picture, introduces four strategies asking for clarification and a simple mnemonic: "Russ: (Repeat, ask, show and suggest).

- Repeat the word or phrase as question. e.g. (what are martial arts?)
- Ask the other person to explain. (e.g: what are martial arts?)
- Show that you don't understand e.g "what" or "huh"
- Suggest another word you think has a similar meaning (e.g. "martial arts?" such as karate).

For giving clarification, the teacher must introduce three strategies, and the mnemonic dug.

- Define the word(s)
- e.g. "Martial arts are traditional fighting styles
- Use another word (e.g. "ways of fighting"
- Give examples

(e.g: Martial arts for example karate, judo, box, etc).

Dug = Define, use and give examples.

Sample of conversation strategy activity: asking and giving clarification

Georges: What's new

Rachel: Not so much. How about you?

Georges: I slept until, oh, 15 yesterday

Rachel: Huh? 15

Georges: 15 is 3 p.m

Rachel: Pardon!

Georges: Yeah, uh, I slept until

Rachel: Until

Georges: 15 o'clock

Rachel: 15 o'clock

Georges: Yes, my boy is...

Rachel: 15?

Georges: Yes. It's afternoon

Rachel: Oh, I see; I see, why?

Georges: I don't know (both laugh)

Note that through this conversation, the teacher can ask learners to check the strategies that Georges used to show Rachel that he didn't understand and vice versa. Then write examples.

- Repeat-ask for an explanation
- Show that you don't understand.
- Suggest another word. Pupils complete the blanks.

E. Strategy 5: Changing the Subject

It concerns using student pictures, audio record tapes (if they exist at school), along with some expression which are new for learners, for example, "I'd rather not talk about it that". And encouraging breakdowns in communication.

With this strategy, learners can control the topics and the vocabulary of their own conversation, communicating meaning becomes easier for them as their confidence grows. Their conversations between learners of different levels are more likely to produce the need for negotiation. This technique is also called "fluency practice" because it is used to practice avoiding and repairing breakdowns which presents a minor variation on the personal communication. Learners can simply change their partners for adding the potential need for negotiation.

The learners who are divided in pairs are assigned a topic and are required to begin talking before they can think about what to say. They must talk for one or three minutes without allowing any pauses over five or ten seconds in length, at the teacher's discretion. They must avoid or repair breakdowns. The teacher has to make a quite realistic pressure on pupils for maintaining a conversation without pauses on a topic not of one's choosing invites breakdowns which learners are able to repair or avoid.

Changing the subject strategy encourages the teacher to use "magic word" in teaching conversation in secondary schools. It consists of giving to each member of a pair one or more secret words which they must try to incorporate in to one or three minutes of conversation. This requires learners to change the subject. Otherwise, learners are given one or more secret words which they must try to get their partners to say within one to three minutes. Thus, learners are encouraged to use paraphrases like "what's another word for xxxx?" "it's forty".

What can be known in this part is that "learning a foreign language is like learning to play tennis", mentioned Christopher Ely (1986). One must have the knowledge of the strategies for teaching conversation for avoiding the frustration of the high school students or pupils to improve their spoken language. Requiring learners to converse creates a genuine need for the strategies which we show them, and allow teachers to monitor their use. These self-generated and self-directed conversation give the students an opportunity to experience themselves as successful English speakers, even though they are imperfect speakers. Furthermore, by using these successful English conversation strategies, teachers encourage learners to learn from each other and from themselves.

Then, students will be empowered to take responsibility and control of their own English. Students and use.

However, we cannot finish our work without giving some models of the preparation of the conversation lesson otherwise our work will be incomplete. The preparation lesson of conversation that we provide to English teachers is as follows but can vary every moment basing on different researchers and teachers for the purpose of succeeded conversation lesson.

RENE p. BOX quoted by Kasamba M. (2017) suggested the following procedure to teach English conversation:

➤ *Step 1:*

The teacher tells the story with easy Words and structures (which have been previously taught) and introduces the new words gradually.

- Supply the meaning of words about 100 or 1000 words done by objects in class room or outside the school, picture, drawings on the black board, gestures explanations in easy English which begins to be possible until the weaker learner will understand,
- Pronounce the new words distinctly and as slowly as is necessary for comprehension.

➤ *Step 2*

Ask pupils to repeat the sentences or item in choral or individually. Pupils read the passage twice; each pupil should read at least one or two sentences.

➤ *Step 3*

Write sentences on the black board; put them in clearly separate columns or in a context (short sentences). Have the pupils copy in their note-books what is written on the black board, list new items.

➤ *Step 4*

Ask two or three questions on the new you have in produced. Tell the story following the same procedure, for each sentences or item.

➤ *Generalization*

As the pupils have been listening and imitating, ask them to open textbooks. Read the actual passage slowly but in a natural way. The original passage.

And the story may be little different, then ask pupil if there are any difficult words, explain them as briefly as possible for a better understanding.

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

This section concerns the teaching of English conversation or English conversation in some high schools of Mont-Ngafula where the questionnaire was given to different English teachers to get relevant data.

A. Sample Characteristics (Qualification)

➤ Qualification

About the qualification we observe that the number of D6 (those who have the state diploma) is high that means 50 %; when to the undergraduate 30 % and 20 % for those of B.A (Graduate). In the qualification characteristic we see directly the failure of the teaching of that lesson because there are not many qualified teachers and the reason why we must advice to our university to increase the number of qualified teacher in order to provide good teaching.

B. Interest Variables

➤ Teaching English Conversation

All teachers of different schools of Mont-Ngafula answered by “yes” that means among twenty questioned English teachers, 100 % teach conversation in their classroom but, what kind of conversation do they teach? Do they reach their objective of marking pupils of secondary school to speak English? The reality met on these schools showed that that the majority of learners do not understand what they are taught and are not motivated to converse each other in English out school even at the city everywhere.

Regarding what makes a good English teacher the “yes” to this answer was given by fair of being diminished by the owner of the questionnaire. But good teacher must be competent, he must have knowledge of the language. He must study a lot to muster the language he is teaching and the skills it involves to teach that language. Some teachers teach by chance for searching money. Greg Tabios Pawilen (1966) argued that “people teach because they have a passion for their chosen subject and for passing on their knowledge to pupils, not for money or fame” of cause an English teacher is one who needs to have a handle on the element of English as well as background in education. But the reason should be the money in the country where people do not have easily a work.

➤ Seniority

To this question 4 teachers have been teaching conversation for a year that means 40 percent; 3 teachers or 30 percent claimed for two years; 3 teachers 30 percent for three years. It appears that 7 teachers are beginners and three are experienced teacher because they have already taught for more than two years. Gail Goodwin (2003) explained that “Good teaching is one fourth preparation and three fourths teacher”. That means a teacher must have a long period of training before coming to teach people what they need to know. Unfortunately, those teachers do not teach conversation or speaking lesson in the way the children learn because they are not willing to explore the different ways of teaching a language, to provide pupils with the best chance to learn conversation.

https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/22/08/2025, 16:45

➤ Method Use in Teaching Conversation Lesson

Different methods are used by the ten surveyed teachers. Some of them are not appropriate to teach conversation. From the 4 questioned teachers 40% use the direct method. This method was practiced by language teachers of the 1920s and 1930s at commercial language schools; 20 % teachers use interrogative method which is not appropriate to teach conversation; 20% percent apply the audio lingual method, the most used method because it leads learners towards communicative competence. Two teacher used the active method to teach English conversation in their classroom that means that 20% percent. The failure of teaching English comes from the using of the inappropriate method that are not required in it. There are plenty of method to use for succeeding in teaching of conversation but certain or some teachers do not care about them.

➤ Pupils Motivation While Teaching English

From 10 questioned teachers, 2 teachers claimed that their learners are very motivated in English conversation that gives 20 % and 1 teacher, his learners are less motivate that means 10% and 70 % their learners are not motivated. Teachers don't use strategies to teach conversation, this lesson is neglected by the majority of English teachers in general.

➤ The Way Motivating the Learners

According to this, 3 teachers claimed that they firstly motivate their learners in telling them the funny stories in order to attract their attention in teaching English conversation that gives 20 % and 1 teacher tries to make effort that gives 10% and 70 % their learners are not know motivate their learners. Et this shows the failure of teaching conversation.

➤ Comments On Teaching English Conversation

The teaching of conversation lesson seems to be a hard task to fulfill because the answers got from different teachers is not wealth. This question gave the following result: 6 teachers said that teaching conversation is a hard task and that gave 60 percent; 2 teachers said conversation is an easy task that means 20 percent of them; 20 percent said conversation teaching lesson is a difficult task and they cannot succeed.

IV. CONCLUSION

The present work has tried to reveal some strategies used to teach English conversation at the secondary schools in general and particularly those from Mont-Ngafula. After clarifying all the keys terms which compose the subject of our work.

The analysis of the questionnaire given to English teachers gave us an idea on the teaching of conversation in those schools. It appeared that the majority of teachers do not know the strategies for teaching conversation in their classrooms. The methods used to teach conversation are not adapted to make learners speak the language.

For helping English teacher to succeed in teaching conversation lesson which can motivate learners to speak or converse in English, this work has suggested some useful teaching conversation strategies and steps which must be followed for the success of conversation lesson.

What we have done through this study is to add one more to teaching strategies which could help English teachers together with learners to use the spoken language fluently in all circumstances. Far from claiming to have achieved searching on teaching conversation strategies, we thought that our work is accurate and interesting, but all criticism aiming at improving teaching methods is welcome.

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APPENDIX

The answers got from the English teachers to the given questionnaire constitute the central of analysis on conversation teaching.).

- *Questionnaire to English teachers*
- *Qualifications*
- *Research interest variables*

- Do you teach conversation?
Yes no
- If yes, how long have you been teaching English conversation?
- Are your learners motivated while teaching English conversation?
- What do you do to motivate your learners?
- What method do you use to teach English conversation?
- Check the strategies you use in teaching
- Provide comments in teaching English conversation?