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**Strategies for correcting oral expression errors in  
english at the junior level of secondary school**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI**  
**INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED PEDAGOGY**  
**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

**STRATEGIES FOR CORRECTING ORAL  
EXPRESSION ERRORS IN ENGLISH AT THE  
JUNIOR LEVEL OF SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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**DEDICATION**

To my son, Joe Just Ruboneza,

I warmly dedicate this work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to many people who contributed to the completion of this work.

First and foremost, my special thanks are due to Dr. Beatrice Ekanjume, senior lecturer at the University of Burundi, whose availability and support are praiseworthy. Her comments and suggestions have been considerably important in bringing this work to its present state.

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Last but not least, my friends and classmates should find here my gratitude for their companionship.

**ABSTRACT**

Many oral expression errors are noticed in class at the junior level and they are committed by both teachers and students. In this study, we are interested by the correction of errors committed by students. The way these errors are treated has an influence on the language teaching/learning process. In fact, knowing different types of oral expression errors and their causes, the appropriate time for correction and the person to correct these errors is a key to an efficient correction of oral expression errors. Besides, the way teachers respond to students' errors in classroom determines how students receive the feedback. Finding out strategies for correcting oral expression errors made by students at the junior level of secondary school is our preoccupation in this study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
DEDICATION-----	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS-----	ii
ABSTRACT-----	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS-----	iv
<b>CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION-----</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Background Information-----	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem-----	2
1.3. Purpose of the Study-----	4
1.4. Motivation-----	5
1.5. Research Questions-----	6
1.6. Research Hypothesis-----	7
1.7. Scope of the Study-----	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW-----</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1. Introduction-----	10
2.2. The Teacher's Professional Background-----	10
2.3. Error Analysis-----	12
2.3.1. Definitions-----	12
2.3.2. Types of Errors-----	16
2.3.3. Causes of Errors-----	18
2.4. Interpretation of Learner's Errors-----	22
2.5. Oral Error Correction-----	23

<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</b> -----	30
3.1. Introduction-----	30
3.2. Data Collection Procedures-----	30
3.2.1. Research Population-----	30
3.2.2. Classroom Observation-----	32
3.2.3. Questionnaire-----	33
3.3. Data Analysis Procedure-----	35
3.3.1. Data from the Classroom Observation-----	35
3.3.2. Data from the Questionnaire-----	36
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS</b> -----	
4.1. Introduction-----	37
4.2. Data Analysis-----	37
4.2.1. Analysis of Data from the Classroom Observation-----	37
4.2.1. Analysis of Data from the Questionnaire-----	37
4.3. Findings-----	44
4.3.1. Types of Errors Committed by Students-----	61
4.3.2. An Approach to the Correction of Oral Expression Errors----	61
4.3.2.1. When to Correct Oral Expression Errors-----	69
4.3.2.2. Who and how to Correct and How to Correct-----	69
	70
<b>CHAPTER 5: GENERAL CONCLUSION AND</b>	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> -----	
5.1. Introduction-----	74
5.2. General Conclusion-----	74
5.3. Recommendations-----	74
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> -----	76
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
	79

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## CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background Information

Every human being needs to know a language in order to communicate, and communication is extremely complex because partners are not only people of his area but also those from other areas who have other languages different from his. This is the reason why apart from the mother tongue, one has to know foreign languages which is not an easy task, and the learning process differs greatly as Hubbard et al (1983:132) comment that:

*Learning a foreign language is. different from learning one's mother tongue. The learner is more natural, has acquired a language and has probably developed strategies for learning in general.*

Knowing a language presupposes mastering the four main communicative skills which are: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Of all these skills, speaking is the most fundamental as Lado (1961:239) states:

*The ability to speak a language is without doubt the most highly prized skill and rightly so, because he who can speak a language well can also understand it and learn to read with relative ease. Also, the ability to speak a language will greatly expediate and facilitate learning to write it.*

However, it has been proved that every learning brings with it errors of different kinds. It is then obvious that learning a language is a process that requires coordination of many factors which cannot be possible without eventual errors. A person learning to drive or to write does not follow a straight line although it is possible to control both the road and the car for example or a

pen on a piece of paper. Then, it will be more difficult for the second language learner or the foreign language learner to easily acquire a language because the latter requires interaction of psychological factors that cannot be controlled by the learner. Indeed, it is not very easy for second language learners or foreign language learners to speak well since many oral expression errors are noticed even after completing secondary school. This is the reason why oral expression errors must be seriously dealt with from the junior level of secondary school. We should know that these errors hinder communication in such a way that the message sender will not give the intended message and the decoder will not get the right one. To correct oral expression errors at the junior level of secondary school is thus our preoccupation in this work. This study is made of five chapters namely:

- General introduction
- Literature review
- Methodology
- Data analysis and findings
- General conclusion and recommendations

In fact, the General introduction chapter deals with the back ground information, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the motivation, the research questions, the research hypotheses and the scope of the study

## **1.2. Statement to the Problem**

If English language is taught at school, it is for the sake of communication. Thus, it is expected that when students reach the end of secondary school level, they are able to communicate effectively with their English speaking partners since they have been studying that for at least six

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years. However, what is observed with these students at the end of the six years in Burundi is not what is expected. The majority of Burundian secondary school students are almost unable to hold a two-minute speech in English or just make a free conversation with English speakers. Some students are even shy when asked to speak English simply because they are afraid of making oral expression errors. In classroom situation, oral expression errors made by one student are heard by the whole class. Hence, one who wants to speak knowing that he/she is not good at English, thinks first about his/her classmates' reaction to his/her errors since sometimes students laugh at their classmates when they commit errors.

In addition, some teachers are severe and blame a student who made oral expression errors. Students then become afraid of not only the teacher but also the English Language itself. They thus begin to hate both the English teacher and the English Language because the teacher's reaction to each of them is heard and seen by the whole class. Furthermore, teachers respond to students oral expression errors depending on the knowledge they have concerning these errors. Sometimes, a teacher does not stand the repetition of the same oral expression error or the error he/she thinks could not be made at the level of his/her students. As such, they become irritated when such errors are committed and sometimes making the learning process difficult for the learners. Moreover, some teachers do not take enough time to make an analysis of the oral expression errors made by their students. By ignoring the types of oral expression errors and their causes, teachers correct them anyhow and this hinders the oral expression learning. Besides, methods of correcting oral expression are useless to the teacher who does not know how to apply them as Mackey (1965) states: "a good method is useless in the hand of a teacher who does not know how to use it." And this situation hinders the oral expression learning because errors are not well corrected.

To sum up oral expression errors are over committed and repeated depending on the way they are treated that is ignorance or bad correction of an error makes student commit it again.

### **1.3. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the present study is to find out strategies for correcting English oral expression errors made by students at the junior level of secondary school. In Burundi, English was only taught at the secondary school and the University level but nowadays, a new English programme is introduced at the primary school level. However, the programme attributed to school boys and girls is constituted by preliminary elements that are greeting expressions, parts of the body and names of things they use in classroom.

The junior level of the secondary school is considered as the foundation of the English language teaching/learning. Hence, more attention should be paid to students of this level. This is because what students learn at the senior level of the secondary school is based on what they learnt at the junior level. This is supported by Byrne (1980:84) who says that:

*If we remember De Saussure's words that language is 'a self-contained system', in which each part is related systematically to another part, the learning of all the items requires the relearning of all the items already studied; hence the necessity in language learning of a cyclical syllabus.*

This is why the correction of oral expression errors at the junior level is the central point to deal with in this study.

However, before finding strategies for correcting these errors, we ought to analyse them. So, this study seeks to know different types and causes of oral expression errors, the reason why they are made by students at the junior level, since we know that to know a disease is half the cure. Knowing that error correction is part of the teaching process, error analysis is then one of the practical ways to approach the language teaching in general and oral expression teaching in particular.

To sum up, the purpose of this study is to find out strategies for correcting English oral expression errors at the junior level by first making an analysis of these errors.

#### **1.4. Motivation**

The motivation for the choice of this topic has its root from our teaching practice in the fourth form at Lycée NTAHANGWA in October 2004. We noticed that students were shy when asked to speak English because they were afraid of making errors and when they spoke it, many errors were made. We think that this situation depends on the way oral expression errors are treated. Students become what teachers want them to become meaning that the way teachers respond to students' oral expression errors affect the oral expression learning. Teachers should be facilitators and not let students struggle with their errors because if they do so, more errors can be committed. This is supported by Byrne (1980:83) as saying that:

*Not only does he not always recognise his mistakes, but when his attention is drawn to them, he often cannot correct them, he may even commit another error in trying to do so.*

It is not good to let a student to struggle with an error because some times he/she does not know what to do and commit more errors.

The next motivation is pedagogical and it stems from the fact that error analysis is very important in the teaching process. This is supported by Byrne (1980:84) when he says that:

*The most obvious practical use of error analysis is to the teacher. Errors provide feedback, they tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques, and show him what parts of the syllabus he has been following have been inadequately learned or taught and needed further attention. This is a day-to-day value of error.*

It is then obvious that the learners' errors are necessary in the teaching of languages in general and oral expression in particular

Furthermore, error analysis helps to know strategies for correcting errors as Corder (1981:1) states: "A good understanding of the nature of learners' errors is necessary before a systematic means of eradicating them could be found."

To know the nature and the cause of the error committed by a student is very important before the correction. It helps the teacher to know how to respond to that error.

This thus motivated the choice of this topic as we hope to bring a contribution to the oral expression teaching in general and the correction of oral expression errors in particular.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

Learning to speak a foreign language is not an easy task; this is the reason why errors occur when students speak English. However, errors are important

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in the teaching/learning process as they lead to the correction and the review of teaching techniques and the lesson content.

The present work aims at looking into oral expression errors and proposes strategies of correcting these errors in order to help teachers to know what to do when dealing with oral expression errors in the language teaching process. In order to achieve the goal of this study, there are three questions which guide the research:

1. What are the oral expression errors committed by students in the classroom at the junior level of secondary school?
2. When and how should oral expression errors committed by these students in the classroom be corrected?
3. Who should correct oral expression errors committed by these students in the classroom?

Answers to these questions will be found throughout this study.

### **1.6. Research Hypotheses**

Every student who learns English as a foreign language makes oral expression errors. These are to be corrected. However, the way this correction is done may enhance or inhibit the English language learning. This is the reason why correction is to be done with much attention. In carrying out this study which deals with the correction of oral expression errors, three hypotheses are posited.

1. Many teachers do not take time to analyse their students' oral expression errors which leads to an effective correction that enhances the language learning.

2. Correction is perfect when the teacher knows how and when to correct oral expression errors. The bad correction frustrates students and makes them afraid of speaking English
3. The choice of the person to correct oral expression errors committed by students in classroom is very important in correction. The good choice of the person to correct leads to student's confidence in the correction done.

### **1.7. Scope of the Study**

The correction of English oral expression errors is the main focus of this research. The study is to be done at the junior level of secondary school because this level is considered as the foundation of language teaching/learning process since what the learner learns at the higher level depends on what he/she learnt earlier. This means that the later studies are based on what one learns at the junior level. The perfect error correction at the junior level is therefore a basis of a good learning process of all years of the language study.

Much attention should be paid to the correction of errors in all the four skills though this study cannot cover all of them. It will be restricted to the errors committed in the oral skill.

As it is too difficult to cover the whole country for financial constraints, the present study will be conducted in ten (10) schools located in Bujumbura city. Two of them are private schools: Ecole Arc-en-Ciel and Ecole La Colombière whereas the rest are public ones: Lycée Municipal Buyenzi, Lycée Municipal Gasenyi, Lycée Municipal Kamenge, Lycée Ngagara, Lycée Notre Dame de Rohero, Lycée Pédagogique Ngagara, Lycée Sainte Famille and Lycée Vugizo.

This chapter is a foretaste of what this research is all about. After reading this introduction, the reader is expected to be familiar with what he/she will find in the following pages or chapters.

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## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

Errors occur in every learning process in general and particularly in language learning. These errors are of different types and causes. However, the knowledge on the causes and types of errors are very significant in error correction. It has been proved that the identification and the description of an error are the main stages in error analysis and a perfect error correction must be based on the result of the error analysis.

However, even though learners' errors must be corrected, we have to know that they are of great significance in the teaching/learning process. Many linguists have written on the importance of learners' errors. Even though learners and teachers consider errors to be negative, error analysts have noticed that errors do not only have a negative element but have a positive side on any learning process in general and particularly in language learning.

### 2.2. Teacher's Professional Background

The teacher's professional background which includes his training qualification and experience is very important in any teaching/learning process. Researchers have found out that a teacher should have a wide knowledge on how to present items to his/her students, thanks to available materials. Otherwise, he/she cannot teach properly. In relation to this, Mackey (1965) contends that a teacher should "be able to tell a good method from a bad method. A good method is useless in the hand of a teacher who does not know how to use it."

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This implies that a teacher will only be able to make a distinction between methods and use the good ones appropriately if he/she knows much about them. However, qualification is not enough for the teacher to be effective. In order to improve his/her competence, the teacher has to gain more knowledge through wide reading and participating in seminars related to his/her profession.

For this reason, a teacher should be open to his colleagues and should always be willing to give students everything he knows. The learners need to benefit from his/her experience and expertise. He should constantly be open to suggestions from his/her colleagues and pay attention to critical remarks given by the inspector, since we know that the observer sees much more than the doer. A teacher, with his/her knowledge and experience, must master his/her discipline in the way that he/she is able to answer all the students questions and correct his/her students' errors effectively. All these views imply that a teacher's experience is important, for, in following up current developments in his/her field does not only help to enrich him/her professionally but also motivates his students in giving them suitable lesson that fits his objectives.

However, effective error correction cannot be achieved when the teacher is not well informed about eventual errors committed by his/her students. This is the reason why any teacher of English language must take enough time to analyse oral expression errors that are made by his/her students in order to correct what he/she masters.

As far as error analysis is concerned, books written on oral analysis and memoirs are available in the library, it is up to the teacher to visit the library and gain knowledge about error analysis since we know that before curing a disease it must be known. The weakness in error analysis influences error correction and consequently the language learning process becomes inhibited.

Therefore, a teacher who is not efficient in correcting oral expression errors will produce poor learners. This is the reason why many students are not able to hold a two-minute discussion in English even at the end of the junior level.

Investigations into the English programme for secondary school in Burundi reveals that many teachers are well versed with the grammar and structural approach from the training they have received. In a situation when the training leans on one aspect of teaching, other aspects are bound to suffer because teachers will not feel comfortable to teach them. Indeed, when the teacher is not at ease when teaching oral skills, he/she cannot spend enough time to pay much attention to his/her students' errors related to that skill. Some teachers consider that oral skill is a way of having a break in classroom and much time is reserved to grammar and texts exploitation.

## **2.3. Error Analysis**

### **2.3.1. Definition**

According to Richards et al (1985:95), an error is "(in the speech or writing of a second or foreign language learner), the use of linguistic item (e.g. a word, a grammatical item, a speech act, etc.) in a way which a fluent or native speaker of the language regards as showing faulty or incomplete learning."

However, a distinction is sometimes made between an error which results from an incomplete knowledge, and mistake made by a learner when writing or speaking and which is caused by a lack of attention, fatigue, carelessness or some other aspects of performance.

Bell (1981:172) defines an error as "a sure sign that a learner has not mastered the code of the target language". This means that an error is

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something that indicates a sure sign that a learner has something faulty knowledge of the grammar of the second or foreign language. An error should then be seen as something arising as a result of second or foreign language learning.

So far only the term 'error' is dealt with in this study. One may wonder whether it has the same meaning as 'mistake' or 'lapse'. Norrish (1983:7) makes a distinction between these three terms. He defines each of them as follows:

- Error: a systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong.
- Mistake: sometimes, he (the learner) will use one form and sometimes the other quite inconsistently. Sometimes, the learner gets it right but sometimes, he makes a mistake and uses the wrong form.
- Lapse: due to lack of concentration, shortness of memory, fatigue, .

Besides, Corder (1967&1971) cited in Bell (1981:172) distinguishes 'error' from these other two terms, that is, mistake and lapse when he says that:

*There is a much clear and useful distinction between the three concepts "the grammatical incorrectness form termed 'error', the socially inappropriate form 'mistake' and the slip of tongue and pen 'lapse'."*

However, the above definition of 'error' given by Corder in Bell (1981:172) cannot be considered in this study because it assumes that an error can only be grammatical. This study considers that an error may occur in oral expression at any linguistic level.

Later, Corder (1973:259) views errors as 'Breaches of the code of the target language' while he takes mistakes as 'social gaffs of varying degrees of

seriousness'. The latter is regarded by Bell (1981:74) as 'grammatical utterance breaking some social rules for the use of a language'.

Gove et al (1986), on their part, define an error, on one hand, as "an act or condition of often ignorant or imprudent deviation from a code of behaviour" and on the other hand as "an act involving an unintentional deviation from truth or accuracy: mistake in perception, reasoning, recollection or expression". However, we have drawn our attention to the second definition which is in relation to our study.

As far as the mistake is concerned, Gove et al (1986) defines it as "a wrong action or a statement proceeding from faulty judgement, inadequate knowledge, or inattention." Concerning the lapses (lapsus), they define it as "an accidental error in fact or departure from an accepted norm."

In the present study, we are concerned neither with mistakes nor lapses but with learners' oral expression errors. It is important to note that the errors committed by learners can be of various or different gravity.

According to Richards et al (1985:96), error gravity is "a measure of the effect that errors made by people speaking a second or foreign language have on communication or on other speakers of the language." The degree of error gravity of different kinds of errors (e.g error of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, etc.) varies: some errors have little effect; some cause irritation, while others may cause communication difficulties.

Richards et al (1985:96) define error analysis as "the study and analysis of errors made by second or foreign language learners." Errors analysis may be carried out in order to:

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- (a) find out how well someone knows a language;
- (b) find out how a person learns a language;
- (c) obtain information on common difficulties on language learning as an aid in teaching or in the preparation of teaching materials.

As a part of applied linguistic activity, error analysis has two functions namely theoretical and practical functions. Under its theoretical aspects, error analysis is part of the methodology of investigating the language learning process. The practical aspect of error analysis sees its function in guiding the remedial action we must take to correct unsatisfactory state of affairs for the learner. Error analysis has always aimed at helping in constructing an account of second language learner's competence. It also aims at telling people about psycho-linguistic process of language learning.

According to Corder (1981:35), error analysis is "part of the methodology of the psycholinguistic investigation of language learning." The data for error analysis come from language learners sentences in the target language. Error analysis has engaged interests of applied linguists in that it provides insights into the language learning process which eventually has relevance to the improvement in language teaching materials and methods.

We should not end these definitions without saying something about the correction. According to *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1961:161), to correct means to make right, to get rid of mistakes or to point out the mistakes.

### 2.3.2. Types of Errors

Different views are pertained to the types of errors. According to Dulay et al (1982:45), three types of errors are distinguished. These are developmental errors, interlingual errors and ambiguous errors:

#### - Developmental Errors

These are errors which are similar to the ones made by children learning the target language as their first language. However, Richards (1984:53) defines the developmental errors as those errors that illustrate the learner's attempts to build up hypotheses about the language for his limited experience of it in the classroom or textbook.

#### - Interlingual Errors

According to Ellis & Tomlinson (1980:21), interlingual errors are those errors that reflect the learners' competence at a particular stage rather than reflecting on the learner's ability to separate the mother tongue and the target language. Little (1984:22) on his part views these errors as those that show that the learner is processing the second language in his own terms.

#### - Ambiguous Errors

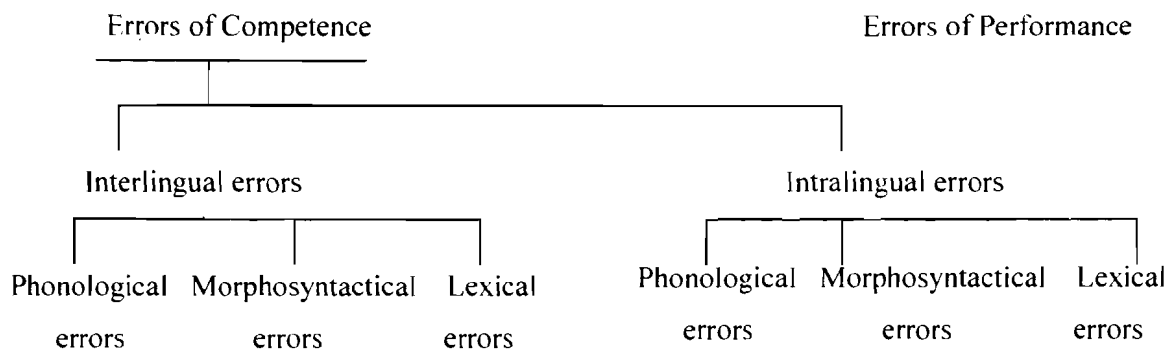
Dulay et al (1982:145) define these errors as those that could be classified equally as developmental and interlingual. That is because these errors reflect the learner's native language structure and at the same time they are found in the speech of children acquiring a first language.

Corder (1973:257) on his part makes a distinction between performance and systematic error. He defines errors of performance as those produced by learners unsystematically, due to situations like memory lapses, physical state when tired, sick or upset, and systematically on errors of competence those that indicate the development of the learner's language to-date.

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According to Arnold (1984:53), there are errors of competence and errors of performance. Among errors of competence, there are what are commonly called intralingual and interlingual errors. In both categories, they are phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical errors. The following tree diagram is a summary of the various types of errors as distinguished by Arnold (1984:53).

### Classification of Errors



According to Corder (1981:36), errors should be classified in a superficial basis as “errors of omission” where some elements are omitted which should be present, “errors of addition” where some elements are present which should not be there; “errors of ordering” where elements presented are correct but wrongly sequenced. For more explanation, Corder provides us with an example saying that when a learner says, ‘I am here since three o'clock’, we do not explain anything by saying he has made an error of ‘wrong selection’ and ‘omission’ by selecting the one word ‘am’ in the place of the wrong tense: non perfective in the place of perfective.

In other words, the learner has not mastered the tense system of English. The learner should have said ‘I have been here since three o’ clock’.

Ellis and Tomlinson (1980:259) on their part, list the types of errors among which the most important are the following:

- Gross error: a gross error breaks a general rule and therefore involves the generation of many others. Thus, a student who says: ~\* Kathy is my sister. He lives in Mombassa and his husband never stays with him for a long time." replaces Kathy by a wrong subject pronoun which generates the use of a wrong possessive adjective and a wrong object pronoun.

However, gross errors are very important since they reveal the students' great problem in their learning process. These errors must be seriously dealt with because they are dangerous in the way that one error generates many others.

- Breakdown errors: these errors cause a breakdown in communication. Thus, a student who says: \* I borrowed him a car" instead of saying ~I lent him a car" is guilty of making a breakdown error. Such an error is great because the intended message is not given and the decoder gets the false one. A situation like this demands emphasis on these items that bring confusion.
- Transient error: these are errors which do not persist very long. Very often, they are similar to those errors made by native speaking children when learning English, and are caused by such factors as overgeneralization (wrongly assuming that a particular item is governed by a seemingly relevant rule as in ~I haved a delicious tea yesterday morning") and a false analogy (assuming that a new item is similar to an item already known as in 'a person who drives is a driver', therefore 'a person who fishes is a fisher').

### **2.3.3. Causes of Errors**

There are different elements that are responsible for errors committed in language teaching. These include context of learning, inadequacy of teaching , overgeneralization and interference.

### **a. Context of Learning**

In a classroom context, the teacher or textbook can lead the learner to make fault hypotheses about the language. This is what is called 'false concepts' while Stenson (1947) calls it 'induced error.' Students make errors because of a misleading explanation from the teacher, faulty presentation of a sentence or a word in a textbook or even a pattern that was memorized in a drill but not properly contextualised. In the same perspective Corder (1981:27) says;

*It may well be that some of our teaching techniques interfere with the smooth running of the learners' programme. It may also be that the sequence of data presentation, the syllabus, does not correspond with the logical processing requirement of the learner: that some data is prematurely so that it cannot form part of the syllabus or that it is not readily available when it is logically required .*

As such teachers should be careful when presenting materials to their learners.

### **b. Inadequacy of Teaching**

Errors may depend on the way teaching materials are presented. In relation to this Norrish (1983:12) states that

*Errors may arise from the choice of the material itself: from its teaching points being presented in a certain order ;from the ordering of the examples of the language ;as a result of the practice work accompanying the examples or from the learners processing of these materials.*

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The inadequacy of teaching has a very important influence on the learning process. It becomes more important when the bad teaching occurs at the beginning of the learning process which is at the junior level of the secondary school. It will be very difficult to uproot the habit already acquired. In the classroom, a teacher is considered as model to follow and in the case he/she is making errors, it is obvious that learners will grasp them as they are because they are confident in their teachers.

Furthermore, a learner who has been taught using the grammar translation method cannot do without referring to the first language regardless of the differences between the two languages. That is the reason why it is common to find many learners who have learned many vocabulary items and grammar but who are unable to use them in any situation.

### **c. Interference**

It is the negative effect that one language has on the learning of another one. It is also known as negative transfer which Richards et al (1985:160) define in the following lines as follows:

*negative transfer also known as interference is the use of native language pattern or rule which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language.*

Interference may be due to the native language or a language previously learned. The native language is the linguistic system in which learners can draw reference. Sometimes, they think in the native language and they translate their speech in the target language.

It is the case for a Burundian learner of English who said: "My family eats me. I would not have been miserable." (Umuryango urandiye simba ngowe).

This sentence causes a break down in communication because any English speaker will not understand how a person can be eaten by the family.

Having already mastered the French language, learners of English may produce the incorrect sentence \* "I'm here since Monday" instead of "I have been here since Monday" because of the transfer of the French pattern "Je suis ici depuis lundi". Native language pattern may also lead to inappropriate form in the target language. It is the case of the French learners of English who may say: "The book of Jack" instead of "Jack's book" or English learners of French who may say: "Je sais Jean" instead of "Je connais Jean". These are not errors as such but they are inappropriate forms.

#### **d. Overgeneralization**

Learners make a generalization of rules which results in errors. According to Richards et al (1985:203),

*Overgeneralization is a process in both first and second language learning in which a learner extends the use of grammatical rules or linguistic items beyond its accepted uses generally by making words and structures follow a more regular pattern.*

For example, by looking at 'dance' whose past participle is 'danced' and simple past "danced", a learner may think that 'come' will have past participle 'comed' and simple past 'comed' and the learner may say: "He comed yesterday" instead of "He came yesterday".

## 2.4. Interpretation of Learner's Errors

Language learning brings with it errors of different kinds and many teachers consider errors to be negative features in the language learning. But on the contrary, they reveal to which extent the language teaching/learning has been achieved.

Kroll & Schaffer (1978) assume that "instead of viewing errors as a disease to be healed, the error analysts view errors as necessary stages in all language learning as a product of intelligent cognitive strategies and therefore as potentially useful and indicators of what processes the student is using." Richards (1974:62) supports this idea by saying that the learner's errors provide evidence of the system of the language that he is using, that is, what he has learned at a particular point of the course. As far as language learning is concerned, all language teachers are aware that learners make errors. So, they must have an analytic view of these errors in order to know its importance in the teaching learning process as Byrne (1980:84) points out:

*From the study of his (student) errors, we are able to infer the nature of his knowledge at that point in his learning carrier and discover what he still has to learn.*

So, when the teacher knows, by interpreting his/her learners' errors, what they have still to learn, it is for him an important source of information for the selection of items to be incorporated in the syllabus.

These learners' errors also provide a feedback. They tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and teaching techniques, and show him what parts of the syllabus he has been following inadequately learned or taught and need further attention. They enable him to decide whether he can move to the next item of the syllabus or whether he must devote more time to the item he has been working on.

According to Burt & Dulay (1974) cited in Bell (1981:171) "none can learn without goofing." For that, errors should not be viewed as troubles or something abnormal; they are rather part of the language learning. Stevens (1969) in Richards (1974:4) supports this point of view by saying that "errors should not be viewed as problem to overcome but rather as normal and inevitable features indicating the strategies that learners use."

Learners' errors are therefore a way to get information about the nature of their knowledge and this helps the teacher to decide on what to do in order to improve his/her teaching.

The interpretation of learners' errors is very important in that it helps the teacher to understand the psychological reasons behind the occurrence of errors as Corder (1981:35) puts it: "The diagnostic and treatment of errors is one of the fundamental skills of the teacher." So, when the teacher knows that carelessness is the cause of his/her students' errors, it is up to him to know the reason why that student is careless when studying and help him/her to overcome that situation.

## **2.5. Oral Error Correction**

Every learning brings with it errors and it is important to deal with them from the lower level because they impede the mastery of the speaking skill. However, to ensure proper communication, students should sometimes correct themselves. To support this, Freeman (1983:65) says:

*The teacher works with students in getting to self-correct. Students are thought to learn much if the teacher merely supplies the correct language. Students need to learn to listen to themselves and to compare their own production with developing inner criteria. If students are unable to self-correct and their peers cannot, then the teacher would supply the correct language but as a last resort.*

However, some teachers keep on correcting every single error. This inhibits students from thinking more about errors because they only repeat the teacher's correction. Teachers who have emphasized on the communicative skill, therefore, have also favoured selective correction of errors. After all, they felt, it was impossible to embrace the former without the latter. To support this, Lantolf (1977) [Internet source] says that "if the language programs are to emphasize communication, teachers will have to develop a great tolerance to errors than they have displayed to the present." However, according to some Internet sources, the need for such tolerance seemed important without it students would come to regard oral fluency in the foreign language as unattainable, because their effort toward that goal would be marked by frustration and perhaps even by a loss of self confidence. Rivers (1964:96) supports this by saying that "if a teacher is a perfectionist and tends to be too critical of every small error, a group or individual may perceive a task as an impossible one." And Hendrickson (1978) concurs by saying that: "When teachers tolerate students' errors, students often feel more confident about using the target language than if all their errors are corrected. However, some teachers are irritated when they get their students' errors. In this perspective, Byrne (1980:35) says the following:

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*It is not part of your job ( . ) to worry about mistakes students make. Sometimes of course you may have to help students to get their message across or making their meaning clear but this should be done with tact perhaps by a restatement of what the speaker said.*

In addition, students should not be encouraged to avoid making errors because avoidance of errors is likely to discourage the learner from being creative. Supporting this point of view, Ellis and Tomlinson (1980:262) state that

*Protecting students from making errors helps them to imitate model utterances or mechanical exercises but does not help to initiate or to create utterances or to use language situations on their own, which generally reflect their real lives.*

As such learners should be allowed to use the target language in a more natural way and which will of course imply the production of errors from time to time, and consequently, their correction.

When deciding how to respond to learners' oral errors, there are a number of facts that have been taken into consideration.

According to information from the Internet (<http://www.pt.britishcouncil.org>), firstly, the most compelling reason for carrying out correction is that many learners expect their errors to be corrected and can feel disappointed or resentful if they are ignored. Secondly, there is the danger that by leaving errors untreated, the defective language might serve as an input model and be acquired by other students in the class. Thirdly, the provision of corrective feedback can significantly speed up the process of language learning by providing information about rules and the limits of

language use which would otherwise take learners a long time to deduce on their own.

Hugh Moss at British council, talking about the types of errors to be corrected (source: Internet), says that we should treat those errors that are regularly repeated by one or more learners and also we should attend to those we considered to be the most serious. But for the supporters of the communicative approach who give emphasis to the importance of fluency over accuracy, this tends to be those errors that hinder communication of the speaker's message. Arguably however, this has led to an increase in the number of students who though capable of communicating freely, continue to make a significant number of grammatical errors, sometimes even at higher levels. Interestingly, if students were asked about this situation, they would probably claim that their aim is to learn to speak accurately and fluently at the same time.

Another consideration when deciding whether errors should be responded to or not is the nature of these errors and how ready or capable students are when dealing with particular errors. In the case of slip of tongue, for example, it would seem wisest to overlook them, unless they are frequent or result from carelessness. With regard to errors resulting from faulty or insufficient knowledge of the language, however, the situation is more complicated and if students have not been exposed to a language form or are not ready to learn a particular structure, then it could be argued that there is a little point in intervening or giving feedback.

As far as when to correct the learners' errors is concerned, it is necessary to consider first of all the nature of activity being undertaken. If for example students are being drilled in order to practise pronunciation of a word or phrase, then they should be stopped immediately when they make a mistake, otherwise,

they will continue repeating defective language, which is pointless. This said, if the teacher wants to encourage the students to self-correct, they must give them sufficient time to do so. With regard to fluency activities, the usual advice is to delay feedback until the end of the activity so as to avoid interrupting the students' flow of speech.

According to the information got from the Internet, there are different types of corrective feedback that the teacher can use as shown below.

1. He can make use of explicit correction where he clearly indicates that the student's utterance was incorrect and provides the correct form.

E.g: Student: The cr. cane.

Teacher: We say, 'the crane'.

2. He can use recast, where he implicitly formulates the students' errors or provides the correction without directly indicating that the student's utterance was not correct.

E.g. Student: \* My father love me.

Teacher: My father loves me.

3. The teacher can equally use the clarification request where he indicates that the message has not been understood or the student's utterance contains some kinds of mistakes and that a repetition or a reformulation is required by using phrases like 'Excuse me' or 'I don't understand'.

E.g: Student: \* Did Mary comed yesterday?

Teacher: Pardon?

4. With the metalinguistic clue, the teacher can pose questions or provide comment or information related to the information of the student's utterance without providing the correct form.

Student: \* He will return back home.

Teacher: Do you say it like that?

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5. Using elicitation, the teacher can directly elicit the correct form by asking him or her to reformulate the utterance. Elicitation questions differ from questions that are defined in metalinguistic clues in that they require more than a yes/no response.

Student: Mummy found all eggs were rancid.

Teacher: All eggs were . .? (addled)

6. The teacher can also make use of repetition where he repeats the student's error and adjust intonation to draw student's attention to it.

Student: I'm waiting for a reponse.

Teacher: I'm waiting for a **reponse**.

When an error committed is related to the previous lessons, the teacher can explain the item of the language which causes trouble again. However, in discussion practice where correcting errors is considered as criticism, teachers must be careful because it is not given to everybody to welcome the critics, depending on the age or any other reason. According to Harmer (1991:8), the teacher should never then forget that adolescents need to be seen in a good light by their peers and that with the changes taking place at their age, they are easily prone to humiliation if the teacher is careless with criticism.

Similarly, Norman et al (1989:18) acknowledge that "it is easy to assume the traditional role of the teacher as the authority who constantly corrects mistakes. Often students expect this from the teacher." There are however situations where correcting may do harm than good. It is important in such practice to just let learners about their errors but asking a student to correct errors each time is boring and time consuming. However, the teacher should write down what he/she considers as great errors and that he/she should explain in the remedial teaching.

However, talking about error correction, Wood (1993:38) says that "many students agree that they learn much if they just correct their own works, learning from their mistakes is the philosophy behind using correction code to aid students in writing their composition." She further argues that "self-correction instils in students' feeling of self-sufficiency and success and allow them to take a moral active role in their own learning.

Brumfit et al (1980:27) supports this idea by saying that "practice in looking for errors or faulty organisation in students' work helps a student to detect errors in his own work.

This chapter has revealed what previous researchers say as far as error analysis is concerned in general, and the correction of oral expression errors in particular. The information in this chapter also shows how the works that have been reviewed are different from the present study.

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## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Introduction

This study, like any other scientific study, comprises a chapter dealing with a methodology that aims at describing the way data was collected and analysed. The procedures we used to collect the data helped us to answer the research questions

This chapter is divided into two main sections namely data collection and data analysis procedures.

### 3.2. Data Collection Procedures

The procedures we used to collect data for this study are of two kinds:

- Classroom observation;
- Research questionnaire.

Before dealing with these procedures, it is important to comment on the research population.

#### 3.2.1. Research Population

As the title of this work indicates, the research was carried out on students and teachers of the junior level. However, we chose to work with students of the 4<sup>th</sup> form because having studied English for two years, we expect that they should be able to sustain a conversation in English. They speak English not only when they are reading a text, answering and asking questions but also when they have a discussion or tutorials. This population is more interesting than students of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> form whose speaking skill is most of the

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time based on repeating after the teacher or answering by very short sentences or even presenting what they have got by rote-learning. In this logic, since the 4<sup>th</sup> form was chosen, we decided to use students and teachers of that class as our research population. As far as the number of the subjects is concerned, the total is one hundred and ten (110), that is, one hundred students (100) and ten (10) teachers selected from ten (10) schools located in Bujumbura city. Those schools include Ecole Arc-en-Ciel and Ecole La Colombière, Lycée Municipal Buyenzi, Lycée Municipal Gasenyi, Lycée Municipal Kamenge, Lycée Ngagara, Lycée Notre Dame de Rohero, Lycée Pédagogique Ngagara, Lycée Sainte Famille and Lycée Vugizo.

Concerning the choice of one hundred students, we used the systematic list sampling. Having already decided to use 20% of the class with the class register, the total number was divided by the size of the sample in order to get interval. Hence, we went down in the list of the students, choosing the student who came after the interval until we got the 20%. The starting number was randomly chosen in the first interval. For example, at Lycée Municipal Gasenyi, there were 66 students in the 4<sup>th</sup> form and we wanted to choose 13 who make up the 20% of students of that class. And then, we had 66 divided by 13 to get 5 as the interval number.

Hence, we went down the list of the 66 students, choosing the 5 students until we had 13 students chosen. The starting number was randomly chosen. It was 4 and the successive numbers were 9, 14, 19, 24 and so on until 13 students were selected.

As far as schools are concerned, we used the simple random sample. We wrote down names of as many schools as possible in Bujumbura city on similar papers, folded them and put them on the table. We chose one at a time until we had 10 schools.

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### 3.2.2. Classroom Observation

The classroom observation is an important procedure in data collection for many reasons. The first reason why we observed English teaching is that we wanted to know what really happens in classroom regarding oral expression errors, their causes and their correction. Witnessing the teaching process helped us to get additional information that teachers would not reveal in answering to the questions of the questionnaire. Everyone knows how it is difficult or uncompromising to talk about one's weaknesses. The teacher would not, for example, say that some of his/her student's oral expression errors are due to an inadequate teaching or a bad presentation of item or that errors of pronunciation result from his/her bad model.

The second reason supporting the classroom observation is explained by Wallace (1991:62) who talks about direct observation which has to take place during a lesson. He says that such a kind of observation is extremely valuable since certain aspects of the action will be too clear to the observer in a way that they cannot be to the teacher. As he says, this is emphasized by the sport saying that "the spectator sees most of the game."

The third reason for classroom observation is that there is a relation between errors in foreign and second language learning and the classroom situation. This is also supported by Norrish (1983:37) who states that "errors in the foreign language situation really has to be a result of something that happens in the classroom since it is usually here that the learner comes into contact with the target language. Moreover, classroom observation helped us to know what opportunities students get to speak English because even oral exercises indicated in the course book are sometimes done on the blackboard

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without giving oral answers orally. The classroom observations were based on 6 criteria which are:

- (i) oral expression errors committed
- (ii) oral expression errors committed by students
- (iii) oral expression errors committed by the teacher
- (iv) how oral expression errors already corrected are dealt with when they occur again
- (v) when error expression errors are corrected
- (vi) who frequently corrects oral expression errors?

For this classroom observation, we went to the ten schools mentioned above where we got the opportunity to observe 2 English lessons at each school, meaning that we observed 20 English lessons.

### **3.2.3. Questionnaire**

In addition to the classroom observation done within the perspective of collecting data, questionnaires were distributed to selected teachers and students of the 4<sup>th</sup> form in order to get their opinion concerning the oral expression errors and their correction.

As far as questions are concerned, there are of two types namely: open questions and closed questions as distinguished by Pinto and Grawitz (1971:657). In the former, the informant is free to organise the answer while in the latter the informant's freedom of expression is limited. So, in this kind of questions, the informant is provided with many answers among which he/she is invited to make a choice of the right one. The questionnaire was of two types: the teacher's questionnaire and that of students', and contained both open and closed questions

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## **1. The Teacher's Questionnaire**

The teacher's questionnaire which comprised 13 questions was distributed to the English teachers of 4<sup>th</sup> form of the schools already cited. 10 among the 13 questions are classified as open questions. In fact, we favoured this type of questions because we wanted to get as more information as possible. This is the reason why even with closed questions, we asked our respondents to give a brief comment. However, these questions are based on four main criteria which are related to the research questions. The four criteria are the following:

- (i) oral expression errors (question 1, 2, 3, 12, 13)
- (ii) when to correct oral expression errors (question 4)
- (iii) how to correct oral expression errors (question 6, 7, 8, 9)
- (iv) who should correct oral expression errors (question 11)

The remaining questions (question 5 and 10) are general questions. These helped us get information about the possibility of correcting all oral expression errors and whether fluency and accuracy are needed at the same time.

## **2. Students' Questionnaire**

Unlike the teacher's questionnaire where open questions were overused, only closed questions were present in students' questionnaire. We favoured this type of questions because we did not want to oblige our respondents to make much effort in answering since we know it was a task they might be unable to fulfil. Besides, we did not want to be much demanding, thinking that information could be falsified. However, after choosing the right answer according to his/her opinion, the student was to give a brief comment on each

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question to clarify his/her point of view. The students' questionnaire comprised 8 questions based on 3 criteria namely

- (i) oral expression errors (question 1,4,5)
- (ii) when to correct oral expression errors (question 2)
- (iii) who should correct oral expression errors(question3)

The remaining questions (question 6 and 7) are general questions. These were asked in order to know whether fluency and accuracy are needed at the same time and all oral expression errors should be corrected.

### **3.2. Data Analysis Procedures**

This section aims at showing how the data collected were analysed. As far as the analysis is concerned, we went through the data collected thanks to the data collection procedures namely the classroom observation and the questionnaire designed for teachers and students.

We made a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data from the questionnaires. The responses to most questions were provided in table form with percentages and an interpretation followed. Then, a comparison of these responses was made in relation to what was observed in the classroom. This enabled us to draw our own conclusions and even recommendations.

#### **3.2.1. Data from the Classroom Observation**

English lessons were observed in order to get oral expression errors committed by students when they are reading, answering, asking questions or presenting their work which are the opportunity of 4<sup>th</sup> form students to speak English in class. During this classroom observation, we noticed not only the

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oral expression errors but also the way these errors were corrected, when and who often corrected them.

### **3.2.2. Data from the Questionnaire**

As far as the teacher's questionnaire is concerned, our respondents did not have the same point of view on each question asked. So, similar answers were grouped together in their comments. We then compared them and at last commented on them. Tables show how these answers were grouped which is a quantitative analysis and the interpretation of their points of view is the qualitative analysis.

Concerning the students' questionnaire, each item was analysed by going through answers from all respondents and those answers were marked in the tables to show the quantitative analysis. As they were asked to add brief comments to their answers to the closed questions, these comments were analysed, item by item, and having similar comments grouped together.

This chapter showed the procedures we used in collecting data and analysing them. It also showed criteria on which the classroom observation and the questionnaire were based.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The present chapter aims at showing how the data collected using the data collection procedures cited above have been analysed. In addition, it shows the extent to which the research questions of this study have been answered. Moreover, this chapter gives the opportunity of discussing and interpreting results from the classroom observation done in 4<sup>th</sup> form English classes of the secondary schools already cited and those from the questionnaire answered by teachers and students of the same classes and schools.

### **4.2. Data Analysis**

#### **4.2.1. Analysis of Data from the Classroom Observation**

Classroom observations were conducted in 10 secondary schools situated in Bujumbura city during 20 English lessons. These were done in order to notice what really happen in English lessons in relation to the oral expression error correction.

Knowing that some teachers consider errors as a disease to be eradicated and some others understand that they reveal the extent to which the teaching/ learning process has been successful, we wanted to witness how these teachers handle their students' oral expression errors.

The classroom observations were based on criteria which helped us to find out the answers to the research questions. These criteria once more are:

- (i) oral expression errors committed
- (ii) oral expression errors committed by students

- (iii) oral expression errors committed by the teacher
- (iv) how oral expression errors already corrected are dealt with when they occur again
- (v) when error expression errors are corrected
- (vi) who frequently corrects oral expression errors?

Oral expression errors have been noticed and this was not scandalous because it is normal to find errors in the teaching/learning process and teachers should not expect to notice errors only from students who are weak. Hubbard et al (1983:131) support this point of view by saying that "we must agree that even the most intelligent, conscientious and motivated students do make errors, even when learning under the best conditions."

In this logic, we have noticed that intelligent students committed oral expression errors as well as those who were obliged to speak English. However, the number of these errors depended on the opportunity they got to speak. Many oral expression errors were noticed when students were dramatising dialogues or having a discussion about a given topic or else during an exposé. In these situations, students spoke much and then errors occurred. However, in grammar lessons where students spoke only when they were answering or asking a question, few oral expression errors were noticed because they most of the time answered by sentences they read in their books (mechanical exercises).

Oral expression errors committed by students we observed were not the same.

We have classified them in three main categories which are:

- grammatical errors;
- phonetical errors;
- lexico-semantic errors.

As far as grammatical errors are concerned, we noticed that they were of a great number. Among these types, we found developmental errors, gross errors and transient errors. For example, students produced these erroneous sentences.

- \* The girl don't love you.
- \* They was at home.
- \* Where are you come from?

Instead of saying:

- The girl doesn't love you.
- They were at home.
- Where are you coming from?

Talking of phonetical errors, these were noticed especially in reading comprehension texts and these were caused by many factors as will be explained later. These are some of the phonetical errors noticed:

- 'chemist' was pronounced [ɛmist] instead of [kɛmist]
- 'mathematics' was pronounced [mætemætrɪks] instead of [mæθmætrɪks]
- 'meaning' was pronounced [menɪŋ] instead of [mɪniŋ]

Lexico-semantic errors were not noticed at a high rate. This does not mean that they do not normally occur. It is only because when students had hesitation about an item they preferred to stop speaking. This is an example of a lexico-semantic error noticed.

A student said: 'I was preparing an English interrogation.' But he wanted to say that he was preparing an English test.

More about these types of oral expression errors will be dealt with in the section dealing with the findings.

Let us now see at what rate these main types of oral expression errors occurred in the 20 English lessons observed.

**Table 1: Average of the Main Types of Oral Expression Errors Noticed**

Types of errors	Number	Percentage
Grammatical	88	56.05
Phonetical	52	33.12
Lexico-semantic	17	18.82
TOTAL	157	100

The big number of grammatical errors is explained by the fact that during discussions or dialogue dramatisation, many students, if not all, committed these errors related to the present tense of the third person singular.

As far as the oral expression error correction is concerned, we should mention that all errors noticed were not corrected. Some of them were ignored for different reasons. At first, some oral expression errors were ignored because the teacher did not pay attention to the students' speech and did not therefore notice their errors. This happened for example when two students were dramatizing a dialogue and the rest of class kept on disturbing and preparing theirs. The teacher did not get the formers' errors because he was busy with those disturbing and unfortunately did not call up those two students to repeat their dialogue. Secondly, some teachers did not take into consideration errors which were not related to the day's lesson and did not then correct them. For those teachers, a major error is the one which is related to the day's lesson, so it is to be corrected. And that which is not related to the day's lesson is considered as minor and thus ignored. This is illustrated by these grammatical errors that occurred during the reading comprehension lesson. When students were asked to use in their own sentences the vocabulary items studied, they said

\*Our sports teacher always use a whistle

\* Don't break the speed limit because you could have an accident

They should have said:

Our sports teacher always uses a whistle.

Don't teacher break the speed limit because you can have an accident.

In this situation, the teacher was interested in the use of the vocabulary item 'whistle' and the expression 'to break the speed limit' which were correctly used because these two sentences are acceptable even though incorrect. The teacher considered these grammatical errors as minor and then ignored them.

Thirdly, there are teachers who considered that correcting all oral expression errors is a waste of time and it inhibits students' fluency. This is what happened at Arc-en-Ciel when a student was reading a text and committed many phonetical errors. The teacher ignored some of them for the sake of saving time.

We should not end this without mentioning that there were teachers who did not correct errors simply because they were the first to commit them.

This happened for example when a teacher was reading a text and committed a phonetical error that students repeated. For example, one teacher said: 'show me your licence' [ʃaumɪjɔːlɪsɔns]. Students went on pronouncing [lɪsɔns] as it was done by their teacher. The correct pronunciation should have been:

[ʃaumɪjɔːlɪsɔns].

However, we noticed that the correction of oral expression errors was not done by the teacher only. Sometimes, students correct their errors. During the twenty English lessons observed, we noticed that most of the time the teachers did not give their students the opportunity to correct themselves. And, they used the explicit correction where they clearly indicated that students' utterances were incorrect and they provided the correct forms. They then asked the learner who committed the error to repeat. Exception was noticed at Ecole La Colombière where the clarification request and the metalinguistic clue were used as corrective feedback. The students who committed the errors were asked

to repeat what they had said which helped them to notice their errors and to self-correct if possible. If not, the whole class was asked whether the utterance was correct and there then asked to correct it.

Below is a table which shows the number of errors corrected during the twenty English lessons observed, as well as who did the correction. The table equally reveals the number of errors which were not corrected (ignored).

**Table 2: Average of the Corrected Oral Expression Errors**

Name of schools	Number of errors committed by students	Number of ignored errors	Number of corrected errors	Number of errors corrected by students	Number of errors corrected by teachers
Ecole Arc-en-ciel	21	11	10	1	9
Ecole la Colombière	10	1	9	8	1
Lycée Municipal Buyenzi	19	4	15	4	11
Lycée Muncipal Gasenyi	25	7	18	6	12
Lycée Muncipal Kamenge	15	2	13	2	11
Lycée Ngagara	13	3	10	3	7
Lycée Rohero	8	1	7	4	3
Lycée Pédagogique Ngagara	19	4	15	5	10
Lycée Sainte Famille	17	3	14	5	9
Lycée Vugizo	10	2	8	4	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>77</b>

As shown in the table, most of the oral expression errors committed by students in the classroom were corrected and few were ignored. However, as revealed by the classroom observation, correction was often done by the teachers. This correction was not done at the same time. It was most of the time done by interrupting students' speech.

#### **4.2.2. Analysis of Data from the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire as already stated was given to students and teachers. They were asked to give their point of view concerning oral expression errors and their correction. The analysis of data from the questionnaire was divided into sections namely analysis of data from the teacher's questionnaire and analysis of data from the students' questionnaire.

##### **4.2.2.1. Analysis of Data from the Teacher's Questionnaire**

The teacher's questionnaire was made up of 13 questions among which most were open questions. All the questions were related to oral expression errors and their correction which was our focus. The analysis was done from one item to the other because each question had a particular focus, as we will soon discover.

Question one sought to know if teachers need to know all types of errors and their causes and why. The responses to this question are presented in the table below.

**Table 3: Answers to Question 1**

Answers	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	9	90
No	1	10
No answer	0	0
TOTAL	10	100

Most of the teachers (90%) accepted that they need to know all types of errors and their causes. Concerning the reason why it is needed, these teachers said that it is very important for them to know the errors because this helps to make an effective correction. The analysis of those errors guide the teachers in situating the students' difficulties and overcoming them by providing more explanation or reviewing the lessons related to the errors committed by their students with the use of adapted teaching methods and materials. Besides, these teachers said that to know the disease is half the cure. This means that when the teachers know the errors and their causes, they find it easy to correct them. However, one of our respondents found that there is no need for teachers to know all types of errors and their causes. According to him, there are so many errors and the teacher cannot have time to analyse them. The teachers of 4<sup>th</sup> form are busy finishing the programme which is very big and preparing their students for the National test. He added that analysing all errors is a waste of time. So, teachers should look at some errors committed by their students.

Question 2 was intended to find out the types of oral expression errors that students commit and their possible causes. All of our respondents cited the following as the types of oral expression errors committed by their students:

- errors of pronunciation;
- errors of grammar;
- errors of vocabulary.

However, many teachers emphasised on the errors of pronunciation. This is because for some English teachers at the junior level, oral expression lesson is for the sake of pronunciation. Brown (1987) in Njuki (1992:23) observes that there is an imbalance in the teaching of the spoken language and adds that all emphasis is laid on the teaching of pronunciation. He added that little is done on the comprehension of the spoken language. This is the reason why these teachers only pay attention to errors of pronunciation in order to verify their objectives and correct those errors.

As far as grammatical errors are concerned, most of them cited particular errors of conjugation. Concerning the causes of oral expression errors committed by students, our respondents cited the following:

- mother tongue interference;
- French interference;
- Carelessness of students;
- No use of the language
- Lack of materials.

As far as the third question (3) is concerned, our intention was to check the oral expression errors that are frequently committed by these students. The following table reveals the responses we got from our informants.

**Table 4: Presentation of Answers to Question 3**

	Omission	Addition	Selection	Ordering
Phonetical errors	1	1	8	0
Grammatical	4	1	4	1
Lexico-semantic errors	6	0	4	0

As shown by the table, our respondents chose the errors of selection among the phonetical errors. This is caused by the fact that students do not distinguish the vowels [æ] and [ʌ]; [ɪ] and [i:]; [ɔ] and [ɔ:] as in these words ‘cat’ [kæt] and ‘but’ [bʌt], ‘be’ [bi] and ‘bee’ [bi:]; dog [dɒg] and door [dɔ:r] respectively. This also happens for the consonants [θ] and [f]; [ʒ] and [d] respectively in something [sɪmθɪŋ] and mother [mʌðə]. The problem of these consonants is also acknowledged by Norrish (1983:30) when he says that “it is difficult for native speakers as far as learners of English as a foreign language to distinguish between the English sounds [v] and [ʒ], [f] and [θ].

For grammatical errors, as conjugation is the most cited, many students omit to add –s or –es with the third person singular. Besides, the errors of selection occur when students do not master the simple past or past participle form of the verbs.

For lexico-semantic errors, most of the time students start to speak and then miss the following words. This is the reason why many teachers chose error of omission.

Concerning question 4, it was conceived to know when it is actually appropriate to correct oral expression errors. To this question, the teachers responded differently as shown in the table below.

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**Table 5: Presentation of Answers to Question 4**

When to correct	Number of respondents	Percentage
Within the students' speech: interruption	3	30
By the end of the students' speech	7	70
Any other opinion	0	0
TOTAL	10	100

Most of our respondents (70%) said that the teacher should correct by the end of the speech. According to them interrupting the student's speech for correction breaks the flow of ideas and sometimes the student becomes lost in his/her speech. This hinders the students' fluency which is to be promoted for the sake of communication. Besides, correcting oral expression within the students' speech makes him/her lose self-confidence especially when this one makes many errors.

However, although many teachers agree with what is said above, during our classroom observation, most (if not all) of them did the contrary. They interrupted the students, which is of course not good for these learners. Correcting by the end of the speech helps students to pay attention to the correction because when his/her speech is over, he/she waits for errors noticed and their correction.

As far as the fifth question is concerned, we wanted to check if students need fluency and accuracy at the same time. To this question, our respondents found it very important for students to be fluent and accurate at the same time because this shows at which extent students master the language. So, students need to express their thoughts without hesitation.

However, fluency alone is not enough since we know that there are errors that break down communication. Students need to express their ideas not only smoothly but also correctly.

Question 6 was intended to find out how oral expression errors can be corrected in order to achieve accuracy and fluency. To this question, our respondents asserted that oral expression errors have to be corrected in the way that enhances fluency and accuracy. For this reason, all errors must be corrected. In order to promote accuracy and for not hindering fluency, errors that need correction with more clarification are to be corrected by the end of the speech. Only some errors of pronunciation can be corrected within the speech. When the teacher wants the correct pronunciation to be repeated by the class, he/she then keeps it for the end of the speech.

The seventh question, 'How do you deal with common oral expression errors', intended to check the way errors committed by many students are corrected.

Our respondents stated that these errors reveal the difficulties encountered by many students. So, they are to be dealt with seriously. These errors are first of all put on the blackboard in order to call the attention of the class. The teacher asks students to correct. This is done in order to know whether there are some students who do not have such difficulties. If there are some who are able to correct, they do it and then the teacher adds more clarification and recall the rule if necessary. If a student is able, the teacher corrects the error with clarification, recall the rule or review the lesson to which the errors are related with adapted teaching methods.

However, this answer does not match with what we saw in class during the classroom observation. We noticed that, sometimes, common errors were ignored, or they were quickly corrected by teachers without putting them on the blackboard. This often happened for the error of the third person singular in simple present tense.

During the classroom observation, we noticed that what the teachers say above was not done for errors of pronunciation. When a phonetical error was corrected in the student's speech, it was often ignored when another student repeated it.

The next question (8) was to find out how teachers respond to the error they have already corrected. Students repeat sometimes an error that has been already corrected. This can be caused by the student's carelessness, that is to say, the student did not pay attention when it was corrected or it can be due to bad correction. However, answers to this question were varied. 7 out of 10 teachers stated that the first thing to do is to avoid getting irritated which has negative impacts on the learning process because the student who committed the error will not be willing to speak again. To correct it, the teacher asks the student who committed the error to tell what was said about that error. If he/she does not remember it, the class is called up. If some students remember it, teacher asks the student who committed the error to repeat the correction. But, if no student is able to remember it, this shows that the correction was not effective. The teacher consequently reviews his/her corrective feedback that she/he does with more clarification. Some other respondents said that the teacher has to remind students of what was said and make him repeat it if time allows. They added that much time would not be spent on something already said.

As far as the ninth question (9) "How do you respond to an error you think is minor?" is concerned, our respondents gave varied answers.

Some of them said that a minor error is not to be corrected. However, other respondents were against that idea. They stated that an error, being minor or major, remains an error and thus must be corrected because it can even generate many others. According to them, a student is invited to correct it without losing much time.

Concerning question 10: "Do you think every oral expression error should be corrected? Why?", only one respondent finds it impossible to correct all of them because they are many. Others said that every error is to be corrected for the sake of accuracy. According to them, when an error is untreated, students may think that it was not an error and continue to say it like that. This is supported by Hammerly (1991:87) who says that "errors that are not corrected tend to become habitual, that is, occur without conscious awareness. He even rejects the opinion that only errors that reflect comprehension should be corrected or they should be given a priority.

Although most teachers (9 out of 10) say that every oral expression is to be corrected, during the classroom observation, we have noticed that some oral expression errors were not corrected. As shown in table 2 (see page 44), among 157 oral expression errors committed by students, 38 were not corrected, that is 24.20%. We should then mention that what teachers say was not really what they did in class.

As concerns question 11, it was intended to find out who should correct learners' oral expression errors. Answers to this question are provided in the following table:

**Table 6: Presentation of Answers to Question 11**

Who should correct	Number of respondents	Percentage
The learner	3	30
The teacher	7	70
Any other opinion	0	0
TOTAL	10	100

Most of our respondents asserted that the teacher is the one who should correct the learners' oral expression errors. According to them, the teacher is expected to know every thing about the lesson. So, he/she must be the best to correct. In addition, students accept their teachers' correction quickly because they trust them. They sometimes do not want to pay attention to their peers' correction. They even feel complexed of being corrected by their classmates especially when it is the weak student that brings correction to the intelligent student. Our respondents' view match with what Ladousse (1987) says:

*The teacher corrects immediately by deciding the correct form from the students by writing them on the blackboard or by providing them with some kind of exercise that he had predicted would be necessary.*

As far as question12, "Which oral expression errors do you think students can correct?", is concerned, our respondents said that students should correct errors of pronunciation that do not cause break down in communication. For example, when the students did not pronounce [z] which makes the plural forms of nouns in the sentences:

"Cars make much noise", that he/she pronounced: [kɑ:mɛɪkɪn/nɔɪz ] instead of [kɑ:zmeɪkɪn/nɔɪz ] and "dogs started barking", that he/she pronounced [dɔgzstɑ:tba:kɪŋ] instead of [dɔgzstɑ:tba:kɪŋ]

For these sentences, the absence of an article before those mispronounced nouns showed that the students were aware of the plural form but did not pronounce the plural of these nouns that bear the plural form correctly. These kinds of errors and other minor errors were to be corrected by these students.

Question 13 sought to know the type of oral expression errors that must be corrected by the teacher. To this question, most of our respondents said that since the task of correction is for the teacher, the latter is to correct all oral expression errors except those that students are able to correct. They insisted that errors related to the day's lesson must be corrected by the teacher by providing more clarification. The teachers are the ones who notice the students' oral expression errors and decide their treatment. Their points of view about these were very important and helped us to draw a conclusion and to make recommendations.

#### **4.2.2.2. Analysis of Data from the Students' Questionnaire**

Students' views about oral expression errors and their correction were not ignored since we know that they are concerned by them. Like teacher's questionnaire, students' questionnaire contained questions related to oral expression error correction. The students' questionnaire was made up of seven questions, all geared towards getting information to help achieve the aims of this study. The questions were treated individually and responses provided in table form for some.

Question one sought to know the type of oral expression errors that students commit and their possible causes. To this question, our respondents insisted on the errors of pronunciation. They said that they always commit errors of pronunciation. They also cited errors of grammar especially

conjugation. We would like to mention the lack of word as it was cited by most of our respondents. They said that when they are presenting their exposé or dramati-zing dialogues without the help of notes, they miss what to say and this breaks down communication.

As far as the causes are concerned, they said that the first and the very important cause is the fact that teachers are not interested in teaching the teaching skill. Besides, they did not have enough time because even exercises were done by writing in their drafts or on the blackboard. Moreover, lack of use of the items studied makes them forget what they got in class. For example, vocabulary items studied in the second unit "THE HUNT", were only used in that lesson at school. They did not have any other opportunity to use them, being at home or at school except during English examination. Another cause stated by our respondents is the lack of materials. They said that even though the teacher is their model for pronunciation, it should be better to listen to the English native speaker. Unfortunately, radios which can use the tapes on which the speeches of native speakers of English are recorded do not exist. Moreover, there are some students who had psychological barriers and said that English is a very difficult language. They also mentioned students' carelessness and bad teaching as the causes of oral expression errors. This carelessness is mixed with the lack of interest. For this case, some of our respondents said that they do not see the interest of studying English when they do not have any projects of continuing with the arts section in the senior level, and do not hope to go abroad. They find that knowing French which is spoken officially in Burundi and can help them get a job is enough. Because of this, they neglect the English language and then do not follow English teaching normally.

As far as question 2 is concerned, we wanted to know when students think is appropriate for them to be corrected. The responses to this question are provided in the table below.

**Table 7: Presentation of Answers for Question 2**

When to be corrected	Number of respondents	Percentage
Being interrupted	65	65
By the end of the speech	35	35
Any other answer	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

To this question, some respondents (35%) preferred to be corrected by the end of the speech. The reasons given were fundamental. They stated that interruption frustrates in the way that the speaker is not free to express his/her ideas because he/she is stopped any time an error occurs, for correction. In addition, the interruption makes the speaker be lost in the idea. In this situation, fluency is not developed. Moreover, correction accompanied by clarification cannot be done within the speaker's speech without causing him/her forget what he/she was saying.

However, some other respondents (65%) preferred to be interrupted for correction. They said that they do not want to continue with a speech full of errors. According to them, interrupting the speaker makes him/her notice the error committed and then pay attention to the correction. Besides, this would prevent the speaker from repeating the same errors because they are regularly treated. One should notice that the first group preferred fluency over accuracy, what is contrary to the second group.

Concerning question 3, we wanted students to chose the person who should correct their oral expression errors and why. The answers to this question are shown in the following table.

**Table 8: Presentation of Data for Question 3**

Who should correct	Number of respondents	Percentage
Your classmate	6	6
Your teacher	67	67
Any other answer	27	27
TOTAL	100	100

Most of our respondents (67%) preferred to be corrected by the teacher. Students believe in their teacher's correction. They said that the teacher knows much about the English language. So, he must be the best to correct. This is illustrated by the fact that they pay more attention to what is said by the teacher than their classmates. Our respondents who chose any other answer told us that they wanted the self-correction with guidance of the teacher. All these respondents considered the traditional role of the teacher as it is stated by Norman et al (1989:18) that "it is easy to assume the traditional role of the teacher as the authority and constantly correct the mistakes. Often, students expect these from the teacher." Our respondents added that if they are corrected by their classmates, the latter would think that they are more intelligent than the students who committed the errors.

However, one can have comments about this behaviour. Our respondents are adolescents and they do not want to be corrected by their peers because they are afraid of being judged weak. For this reason, the correction at this level must be done carefully.

This is acknowledged by Harmer (1991:8) who points out that "the teacher should never then forget that adolescents need to be seen in a good light by their peers and that with the changes taking place at the age, they are easily prone to humiliation if the teacher is careless with criticism. We should also mention that there are some respondents who said that they do not take care of the person to correct. What is necessary for them is effective correction.

By asking the fourth question, we were interested in knowing if learners can correct some oral expression errors and if so, which.

**Table 9: Presentation of the Data for Question 4**

Answers	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	38	38
No	53	53
No answer	9	9
TOTAL	100	100

Most of our respondents (53%) gave a No answer. They said that to correct is the teacher's task. Even though some of them know the correct form, they cannot say it because it is the teacher's correction which is quickly considered by students. However, other respondents (38%) said that there oral expression errors that they can correct. They cited errors' pronunciation because they seem to be easy. Errors of grammar were also cited especially the conjugation.

As concerned question 5, our intention was to find out if the teacher should correct oral expression errors, and if so, which ones. The answers are presented in the table below.

**Table 10: Presentation of Data for Question 5**

Answers	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	82	82
No	18	18
No answer	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

Most of our respondents (82%) said that oral expression errors that must be corrected by teachers are especially those of vocabulary and other breakdown errors. They also cited grammatical and phonetical errors. However, there are some of them who said that the teacher must correct all oral expression errors except those that students are able to correct. They added that the student who commits an error should first of all try to correct him/herself and the teacher would intervene when the former does not find the correct form.

Question 6 was to find out if students' need accuracy and fluency at the same time and why. The responses to this question are given in the table that follows.

**Table 11: Presentation of Data for Question 6**

Answers	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	87	87
No	13	13
No answer	0	0
TOTAL	100	100

Apart from some respondents (13%) who found that accuracy is more important than fluency, others found it necessary to have them at the same time.

The first group of respondents said that when the errors are not many, the students would not miss something to say and so fluency would be there. For them, teachers should work only for accuracy because fluency would come by itself. However, the second group asserted that when they committed oral expression errors, they feel ashamed because the whole class hears them. This means that accuracy is very important. It is also the same case when a student stands up for a speech and misses words. This one feels ashamed. Teachers should work for fluency too. All these situations show that accuracy and fluency are needed at the same time because the lack of one of them hinders communication.

Question 7 sought to know if all oral expression errors should be corrected and why. For this question, the following responses were given as the table indicates.

**Table 12: Presentation of Data for Question 7**

Answers	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	92	92
No	7	7
No answer	1	1
TOTAL	100	100

Our respondents find it very important for all oral expression errors to be corrected. They stated that if an error is left untreated, students think it is not an error. In this case, they continue to produce it because they did not notice it. This situation shows that students are in need of accuracy and do not want to grow up with errors.

However, we should not ignore the views of others who said that correcting all errors does not help the students who commit errors especially when they are many. They illustrated it with what happened to a student who committed many oral expression errors in an exposé. By the end of the exposé, students were asked to say and correct errors they noticed. Most of her classmates had something to say. This correction frustrated her and she thought that she was considered as weak by her peers and this hindered her participation in English lessons.

Considering this example, correcting all errors can have a negative impact on foreign language learning. Supporting this point of view, Hendrickson (1979) [Internet source] says that

*Many language educators recognise ( . ) that correcting every error is counter-productive to learning a foreign language. Therefore, teachers need to create a supportive classroom environment in which their students can feel confident about expressing their ideas and feelings freely without suffering the threat of having each one of their errors corrected.*

This section on data analysis has revealed what subjects (teachers and learners) had to say about oral expression errors and their correction. Information drawn from these two groups of informants in addition to the information we got from classroom observation have helped us come out with the findings of this study.

## **4.3. Findings**

### **4.3.1. Types of Errors Committed by Students**

After the analysis of the classroom observation done in 20 English lessons at the selected schools visited and questionnaire distributed to teachers and students of the fourth form, we found out different oral expression errors which are classified into three main types namely

- grammatical errors;
- phonetical errors;
- lexico-semantic errors.

#### **1° Grammatical Errors**

Many oral expression errors committed by students of 4<sup>th</sup> form were grammatical. Among them, the recurrent ones were those related to the misuse of the present tense especially in the case of the third person singular. The following erroneous sentences illustrate this:

1. \* A girl love the boy who have much money.
2. \* When a boy give money to a girl, he want something.
3. \* The doctor go out.
4. \* She don't know it.

The correct form of these sentences is as follows:

1. A girl loves a boy who has much money.
  2. When a boy gives money to a girl, he wants something.
  3. The doctor goes out.
  4. She does not know it.
-

These examples show that on one hand these errors could result from overgeneralization. Knowing that the simple present tense is made of the stem of the verb, they ignore that things change at the third person singular, they had to add '-s' on verbs that end in 'e', 'y' (preceded by a vowel) or in a consonant; '-es' on verbs that end in some consonants like [ʃ], [tʃ] or in 'o'; 'y' becomes 'i' + 'es' on verbs that end in 'y' preceded by a consonant. Exceptions are to be mentioned on verbs like 'to have' and 'to be' where the stem is not considered. For the verb 'to be', we have 'he is' and the verb 'to have' becomes 'he has'.

On the other hand, those errors could result from carelessness of students because this structure is known to them from the 6<sup>th</sup> form. However, we cannot ignore that they can equally result from the error correction. If the English teacher considers these errors as minor and ignores them, they persist because they have not been treated. So, even though these are not errors of their level, they should be treated seriously by correcting and restating the structure rule if necessary. Among the grammatical errors, we also noticed gross errors caused by the misuse of pronouns. In this situation, one error generates many other errors. These small extract taken from the students' exposé illustrates it:

\* I love my aunt Rose but he lives in Europe. His son Alan does not live with him.

Here, the misuse of the subject 'he' which does not match with Rose which is the feminine noun causes the use of the possessive adjective 'his' and the object noun 'him' which also do not match with 'Rose' (feminine noun). Knowing that 'Aunt Rose' is a woman, that student should have said:

I love my aunt Rose but she lives in Europe. Her son Alan does not live with her.

Besides, students attempted to build up hypotheses about the language from their limited experience. In this case, they committed developmental errors. This is illustrated by this erroneous sentence.

\* My mother brang it yesterday. Instead of : My mother brought it yesterday.

In this erroneous sentence, the student assumed that the verb 'bring' which seem to be new to his/her is similar to 'sing' which is already known and the simple past tense as in:

My mother sang yesterday.

However, students should know that apart from the regular verbs to which a known rule is applied (that is, '- ed' is added to verbs that end in a consonant or in 'y' (preceded by a vowel) and '-d' added on verbs that end in 'e'; 'y' becomes i + ed on verbs that end in 'y' preceded by a consonant) there are irregular verbs that do not follow this rule. The simple past tense and the past participle forms of these irregular verbs must be memorised and be frequently used in order to prevent students from forgetting them. In addition, these kinds of errors should be corrected intelligibly and put on the blackboard to help the whole class to rememorize the correct form.

Moreover, students committed errors of tense match. Having studied 'if-clause' and 'unless' structures and others, students mismatched tenses that were to be used in relation to these structures. To illustrate this, let us have these erroneous sentences.

1° \* I could come if you call me.

2° \* Go home unless you would be punished.

3° \* Don't break the speed limit because you could have an accident.

The correct form of each of these sentences is given below:

1° I would come if you called me or

I will come if you call me.

2° Go home unless you are punished.

3° Don't break the speed limit because you can have an accident.

Furthermore, we would not end with grammatical errors without mentioning that we noticed transient errors which normally did not persist very long. These errors were most of the time related to the singular or plural forms and use of article. For instance, students said:

- 1° \* There is a children out.
- 2° \* Some mens are not serious.
- 3° \* A money is not everything.
- 4° \* A love is from God.

For these sentences, students should have said:

- 1° There is a child out.
- 2° Some men are not serious.
- 3° Money is not everything.
- 4° Love is from God.

Normally, the plural form is made by adding '-s' on the stem of the nouns but there are some irregularities which cause problems.

The student who said '\* There is a children out' thought that 'children' is a singular noun because it does not end with '-s'. It is the same case for the second student who said : '\*Some mens are not serious'. He thought that 'men' was in singular and he adds '-s' to put it in plural.

However, the words 'money' and 'love' which are uncountable cannot bear an article which shows the singular form. We had noticed that these were transient errors because each student who committed them was able to correct him/herself.

## 2° Phonetical Errors

Another type of oral expression errors committed at a great rate was the phonetical errors. We noticed that the pronunciation of English was not good at all. However, most of the mispronounced words were cognates. Students had tendency of pronouncing them as they are in French. It is the case of the following words:

verb [vɜ:b] which was pronounced as [vɜ:rb]

person [pɜ:sn] which was pronounced as [pɜ:rson]

money ['m ni] which was pronounced as [moni]

patient [peɪʃnt] which was pronounced as [paʃnt]

exciting [ɪk'saɪtɪŋ] which was pronounced as [eksɪtɪŋ]

nation ['neiʃn] which was pronounced as ['naʃn]

temperature [temprətʃə] which was pronounced as [temperatʃə]

banker [bæŋkə] which was pronounced as [baŋkə]

train [treɪn] which was pronounced as [tren]

realise [rɪəlaɪz] which was pronounced as [realɪz]

licence [laɪsəns] which was pronounced as [lɪsəns]

In this situation, the second language which is already mastered had influenced the foreign language learning. In case of cognates, teachers should explain similarities and differences that lie between the two languages. Supporting this point of view, Martinet (1974:12) says that

*Enseigner les langues suppose l'étude de leurs ressemblances et de leurs différences qui agissent donc comme interférences positives lorsqu'elles facilitent l'apprentissage de la nouvelle langue, négative lorsqu'elles les gênent.*

This is translated as

*Teaching languages implies the study of their similarities and differences which act as positive interference when they facilitate the learning or as negative interference when they inhibit the learning of the new language.*

Everyone knows that there is a difference between French and English especially in relation to sounds. This should be told to students in order to show them that even if the cognates are written in the same way and have the same meaning in the two languages, that is, French and English, they are pronounced differently. This is because some French sounds are not found in English and vice-versa.

In addition, there are sounds found in English that exist neither in the students' first language which is Kirundi nor in the second language which is French. This is the case of sounds like [ʒ] and [θ] for example. These sounds are new to students at the beginning of the English learning. However, some students still have problems of pronouncing them even in the 4<sup>th</sup> form.

Illustration: mother [mɑʒɔʁ] was pronounced as [mɑdɔʁ] or [mɑzɔʁ]  
something [sɑmθɛŋ] was pronounced as [sɑmfɛŋ]

In this case, students replaced the new sounds with those from the languages they already mastered: [ʒ] was replaced by [d] or [z] and [θ] by [f].

As a solution to this problem, when students come across a new sound, they have to listen carefully as MacCarthy (1978:14) puts it when he says that "the education of the ear is a prerequisite for efficient foreign language study". This would help students to get the correction of phonetical errors. In addition, students have to educate organs that produce sounds according to the new sounds as Ellis and Tomlinson (1980:3) state in the following lines:

*In order to form the speech sounds of a foreign language, the student has to learn to put his tongue/lips and other parts of the organs of the speech into a certain definite position.*

However, we noticed that errors of pronunciation sometimes resulted from the bad model that teachers themselves give. This was illustrated by the following case:

A teacher was reading a text and said: Show me your licence

[ʃəʊmɪjɔ:lɪsəns]. Students while reading said: [lɪsəns] following their teacher's model. The latter could not correct this mispronunciation because he did not notice it as he was the initiator of the error. They should have said

[ʃəʊmɪjɔ:lɑɪsəns]. This teacher failed to follow Gimson (1980:304) view which states that

*The foreigner teacher constitutes a special case and that he has the obligation to present his students with as faithful a model of English pronunciation as possible. The students will imitate a bad pronunciation as exactly as they will a good one.*

The imitation of bad pronunciation is what occurred in an English lesson that we observed. In a case like this, the teacher cannot detect the error and so cannot correct it. We also noticed that the lack of material is another cause of phonetical errors. A tape recorder for the recording of speeches by speakers of English could help teachers and students to improve on English pronunciation. Unfortunately, this material was found only in one school out of the 10 visited.

### **3° Lexico-Semantic Errors**

The other type of oral expression errors committed by students in the classroom was lexico-semantic. These are very dangerous because they falsify the message. Generally, the message sender who commits this kind of error does not send the intended message and thus the message receiver does not get the right one. This is the case of breakdown errors which were noticed when

students were dramatizing their dialogues. Here is an extract of a dialogue which illustrates it:

Student 1: You have a nice school bag. Where did you get it from?

Student 2: I lent it my cousin.

In this dialogue, student 2 did not give the intended message. He wanted to say that he borrowed it from his cousin. The use of 'lend' instead of 'borrow' had broken the communication. One can thus notice that this breakdown error was caused by a bad selection of items.

Moreover, the mother tongue interference had been noticed as a major cause of lexico-semantic errors. In this situation, students thought in mother tongue, which is Kirundi in our case, and made a literal translation into the target language, that is, English. This is illustrated by the sentence said by a student while explaining how hard it was for him to get school fees.

"My father has to eat a goat in order to give me school fees" (Data ategerezwa kurya impene kugira ampe amahera y'ishure).

In this context, 'kurya' does not mean 'to eat'. This student wanted to say that his father has to sell a goat in order to get school fees. A word bears meaning depending on the context. However, the communication between this student and anyone who does not know Kirundi could not succeed. It was broken down.

Another example was noticed when students were dramatizing a dialogue. Here is an extract from it:

Student 1: Where are you going?

Student 2: I am going to take one

(Ngiye gufata kamwe).

In this dialogue, 'one' does not reflect anything. It was just an answer thought in Kirundi and translated into English. In "Ngiye gufata kamwe",

everyone who knows Kirundi recognizes the reference of 'kamwe' as one bottle of beer.

These two examples showed that Burundian English learners think in Kirundi and then translate their speech into English. The mother tongue interference hindered effective communication and the time spent for translation made it impossible for students to get a smooth flow of ideas.

### **4.3.2. An Approach to the Correction of Errors**

There are some steps which are very important in order to achieve the effective correction of errors. The teacher has first to know errors and their causes since we know that it is not convenient to prescribe a medicine without knowing the disease and its causes. So, the error analysis which not only discovers errors but also goes deeper into their causes is very important to the teachers. However, knowing errors and their cause is one thing and correcting them effectively is something else. It has been noticed that the bad correction of errors especially oral expression ones has a negative impact on the teaching learning process. To achieve an effective correction, teachers must take into consideration when, how to correct errors and who is to correct them.

#### **4.3.2.1. When to Correct Oral Expression Errors**

The appropriate time for oral expression error correction depends on the activity and the objective of the lesson. For instance, if the teacher is checking the right pronunciation of new vocabulary items, the student who is reading or using the vocabulary item in a context will immediately be aware when he/she mispronounces the new vocabulary item. This will be corrected and repeated not only by the student who committed the error but also the rest of the class.

But if during an exposé the teacher is checking communication with flow of idea, he/she will keep on writing down the students' oral expression errors in order to correct them by the end of the exposé. This is because interrupting the speaker can make him/her be lost in the ideas. Correcting errors by the end of the students' speech is valuable when checking not only fluency but also accuracy. When for instance an error related to the day's lesson occurs in a student's answer, it is preferable to correct by the end of the students' answer because more clarifications are to be given or the rule is to be reminded if necessary to help the whole class to master the day's lesson. This is also valuable for common errors, for they must be corrected by calling attention of the whole class.

#### **4.3.2.2. Who is to Correct and How should the Correction be Done**

To correct oral expression errors is the teacher's task when no one else in the class is able. However, the first person who has that task is the student who commits the error. Here, the teacher uses the metalinguistic clue in order to help student to notice the error and then the latter will be asked to correct him/herself. If he/she is not able, the class is called upon for the correction. To support this point of view, Goodman (1987:30) asserts that "students should be involved in correcting their own errors with the teacher's guidance. The teacher will then correct oral expression errors only if no student is able to do it. When the error treatment reaches this step, it reveals that the class has difficulties. The teacher helps them to overcome the errors by reviewing his/her teaching.

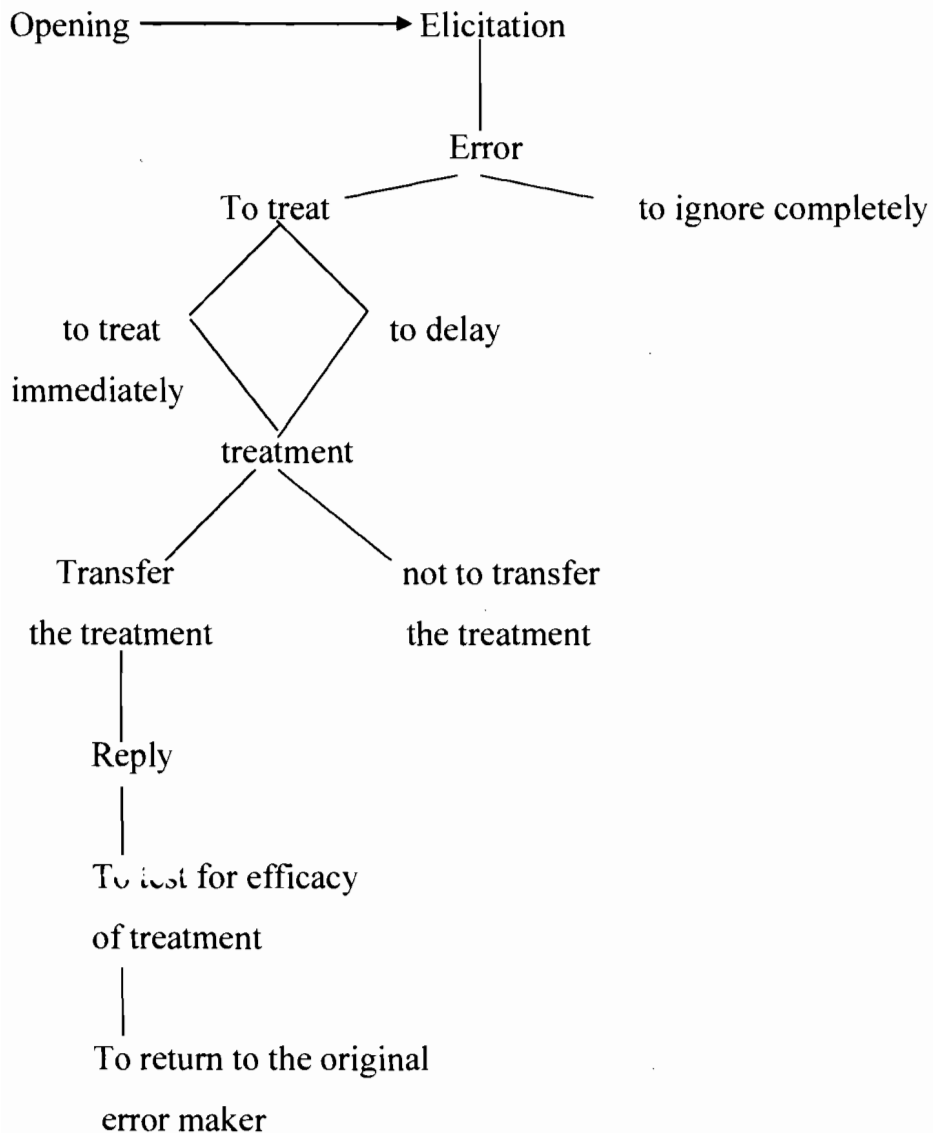
As seen in the analysis of the data, students did not often have the opportunities to correct their oral expression errors. For the few opportunities they had, they corrected errors of pronunciation. However, self-correction was

sometimes favoured. In this case, the student who committed the error tried to correct him/herself.

To correct errors is the teacher's task. This is what we noticed during the classroom observation and from teachers and students' view about who should correct oral expression errors. Even though all of these errors were not corrected, the corrected ones were most of the time the teacher's correction. Teachers corrected errors without considering whether there are errors which must be corrected by learners.

Below is a format that indicates how errors can be corrected, when to correct, who to correct and what to ignore.

## Correcting moves and acts



However, this is time consuming. If time does not allow, some errors are directly corrected by the teacher. But the latter is to help first the error maker and/or the class to notice the error.

All this must be done in way that will not frustrate the student who committed the error. Since the oral expression error is heard by the whole class, the teacher's reaction is noticed by the whole class. For this reason, the teacher

must avoid getting irritated by his/her students error especially those he/she considers as minor or over repeated. Talking about the correction of oral expression errors at the junior level, the teacher must be careful in choosing the person who is to correct and in the correction itself. Students at this level are adolescent, so very sensitive and afraid of humiliation.

To sum up, oral expression errors committed by students at the junior level are corrected. But some of them are ignored. The correction is most of the time done within the learner's answer or speech by teachers.

This chapter on data analysis and findings has revealed what happens at junior level of secondary schools in Bujumbura as far as oral expression error correction is concerned. It has provided answers to the research questions that guided this study. And findings helped us to come out with some recommendations as will be seen in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5. GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, the results of the research were presented and analyzed. In fact, the fourth chapter, that is, data analysis and findings is considered as the heart of the study since it allowed us not only to identify oral expression errors committed by students but also to know their correction. This helped us to find out answers to research questions. Therefore, the fifth chapter which draws this work to its close helps us to formulate a conclusion as well as to make recommendations with regard to the oral expression error correction.

### **5.2. General Conclusion**

This work has been shaped by four main chapters that we would like to recall briefly.

The first chapter that deals with the general introduction gave the reader a picture of the work to be undertaken. In this chapter, we gave the reasons why we chose to direct our study in the area of oral expression error correction. It is in this part that we showed the factors that motivated us to conduct this study. We recall that we were motivated by the fact that learners do not want to speak English because they are afraid of making errors and this depends on the way their oral expression errors were treated.

In the second chapter which is Literature Review, we looked at the works that have been published in the field of applied linguistics and mainly in the area of error analysis and error correction. We also used the new technology and consulted the works that have been published on the internet in the field of oral

expression error correction. So many works in this field have brought a great contribution to our study. This chapter equally showed how the present study is different from what the previous writers did.

In the Methodology chapter, we went through two main procedures in collecting our data namely classroom observation and the questionnaire. All these were geared to discovering the oral error correction at the junior level. Ten secondary schools of Bujumbura were selected and the target population was the teachers and the students of 4<sup>th</sup> form. In fact, twenty English lessons observed and questionnaires were distributed to ten teachers and one hundred students.

The fourth chapter dealt with data analysis and findings. Here, the data were presented and analyzed. In fact, the present study revealed a number of facts.

First of all, a great number of oral expression errors were committed by students at the junior level. Grammatical errors were often noticed. While speaking many students committed errors related to the third person singular in the simple present tense. The simple past tense and the past participle form of irregular verbs were another area where many students committed many errors. In addition, most of the students often committed phonetic errors and sometimes those of semantics. These errors were caused by students' carelessness, bad teaching, lack of materials, no use of the English language, and bad correction which makes the latter over repeated. The information above provides answers to the first research question of this study.

Also we noticed that all oral expression errors were not corrected. Some of them were ignored because teachers did not notice their students errors, or they considered the noticed errors as minor and wanted to save time. Others

considered that to correct all oral expression errors was counter-productive. We should not forget to mention that some were not corrected because they were first committed by teachers themselves.

As far as the error correction is concerned, it was done within the student's speech, that is, interrupting the speaker or sometimes by the end of the student's utterance. However, this was not seen with the same eye. Some of our respondents found that correcting oral expression when it occurs helps to notice them and then to pay attention to their correction. Others stated that this would make the speaker be lost in his/her ideas, so they preferred correction to be done at the end of the speech for it gives the teacher enough time to say more about the committed error. This information gives us the answer to our second research question.

Concerning who should correct oral expression errors, it was frequently done by teachers. This was supported by teachers and students. However, the student who committed the error should at first try to correct him/herself because this helps him/her to notice the error and to pay attention to the correction. This information provides the answer to our third research question.

As we worked on correction of oral expression errors committed by students, future research should be based on correction of oral expression errors made by teachers in class.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

The findings which come out of this study appeal for a number of changes to be effected in order to help teachers and students to achieve an effective oral expression error correction. This led us to come out with a number of recommendations directed to various bodies.

## **1. The government through BEPES [Bureau d'Etude et de Planification de l'Enseignement Secondaire]**

First, teachers ignore to correct some oral expression errors because they work with time since the 4<sup>th</sup> form curriculum is very wide. But we found out that the 5<sup>th</sup> form curriculum is too short. The English department of BEPES should balance these curricula. This would help the 5<sup>th</sup> form students to have much to do and the 4<sup>th</sup> teachers to have enough time and then to correct all oral expression errors.

Second, BEPES must put at the teachers' disposal native pronunciation material in order to help them to make an effective correction of phonetical errors because, sometimes, they fail to be good models in pronunciation. Thus, BEPES should have native speakers pronounce all English sounds, read all the texts, play all the dialogues presented in the students' books and have them recorded. So, they should have tapes duplicated and distributed in all the schools which should also be given radios.

Third, BEPES should introduce training courses for teachers by means of seminars. These should help teachers to review the error analysis and especially the oral expression error correction.

The final appeal is made to the government in general which should promote opportunities of the English language use. This is because many students said that what they study is used only during English lessons and this lack of linguistic environment makes them forget what they learn including the error correction that has been made.

## **2. Teachers of English**

Teachers should correct as many, if not all, oral expression errors as possible committed by their students as possible in order to promote accuracy which is very important in language learning. They should make this correction at an appropriate time but favouring correction at the end of the student's answer so as not to hinder fluency. And, this should be done in the way that cannot frustrate the student who committed the error.

Teachers should also favour self-correction which helps the student to notice the error committed and so try to improve. They should also favour the learner-learner correction. Teachers should avoid getting irritated when an error is committed especially when it is over repeated. Rather, the repetition of an error already corrected should help teachers to review the error correction.

## **3. Learners of English**

Students should pay attention to their peers' speech in order to notice the error and be willing to correct them. Hence, students should accept the correction from their classmates or their teachers. They should also learn to accept errors as part of the learning exercise. They should therefore not mock at their peers when they commit oral expression errors.

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**Appendix A: A Letter to Respondents**

Jeanne d 'Arc NDUWAYO  
Institute for Applied Pedagogy  
English Department

Dear Respondent,

I am a student at the University of Burundi, and at the moment I am undertaking a scientific research for the completion of my studies.

Enclosed in this letter is a questionnaire designed for you as someone who is involved in the teaching/learning of English and my purpose is to gather information that would help me carry out my study entitled, " **An approach to the correction of English oral expression errors at the junior level of secondary school.**", successfully.

The answers that I expect from you are vital to the realization of my work and I would be grateful if you could answer as sincerely and clearly as possible .In addition, I promise that your answers will be treated solely for the completion of my research and not for any other purpose.

Expecting good cooperation from you, I express my thanks in advance.

Yours faithfully

Jeanne d 'Arc NDUWAYO

**Appendix B: Teacher's Questionnaire**

- 1) Do teachers need to know all types of errors and their causes? Why?
- 2) What types of oral expression errors do your students commit?
- 3) Place a tick to the frequent oral expression errors committed by your learners?
  - a. Phonetical errors
    - Omission
    - Addition
    - Selection
    - Ordering
  - b. Grammatical errors
    - Omission
    - Addition
    - Selection
    - Ordering
  - c. Lexico-Semantic Errors
    - Omission
    - Addition
    - Selection
    - Ordering
- 4) When is it appropriate for oral expression errors to be corrected? Why?
  - a. The teacher should interrupt the speaker each time for correction
  - b. The teacher should correct errors at the end of the students' speech
  - c. Any other opinion
- 5) Do students need fluency and accuracy at the same time?
- 6) How do you correct oral expression errors in order to achieve accuracy and fluency?

### III

- 7) How do you deal with common oral expression errors?
- 8) How do you respond to errors you have already corrected?
- 9) How do you respond to error you think is minor?
- 10) Do you think every oral expression error should be corrected?
- 11) In your opinion, who should correct learners' oral expression errors?
  - a. The learner should correct the learner
  - b. The teacher should correct the learner
  - c. Any other opinion
- 12) Which oral expression errors do you think students can correct?
- 13) Which oral expression errors must teachers correct?

## Appendix C: Students' Questionnaire

- 1) What are the oral expression errors that you commit? What are their causes?
- 2) Choose the appropriate time when you want to be corrected?
  - a) You should interrupted for the correction
  - b) You should be corrected by the end of the speech
  - c) Any other answer

Why?
- 3) Choose the person who should correct your oral expression errors?
  - a) Your classmate
  - b) Your teacher
  - c) Any other answer

Why?
- 4) You can correct some oral expression errors.
 

Yes	No	No answer
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What are they?
- 5) The teacher must correct oral expression errors
 

Yes	No	No answer
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Which ones?
- 6) Students need accuracy and fluency at the same time
 

Yes	No	No answer
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Why ?
- 7) All oral expression errors should be corrected
 

Yes	No	No answer
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Why ?