The Acquisition of the Verbs of Saying by Arab EFL Learners

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Abstract: *This paper investigates the extent to which university Arab learners of English as a FL have acquired the verbs of saying, i.e., say, speak, talk, and tell at the two levels of linguistic competence: recognition and production. An attempt was made to answer the following questions: (i) How well have Arab learners of English acquired the English verbs of saying at the levels of both recognition and production? (ii) Can they recognize the similarities and differences in use between these verbs? (iii) Can they recognize the differences in collocations and idiomatic uses between these verbs? (iv) What are the major difficulties that these students encounter in handling these verbs? (v) What implications for teaching EFL can such a study provide? The data were elicited through two specially designed questionnaires: one for recognition and one for production. It was found that the percentage of acquisition in both recognition and production for all verbs was 61%. It was also evident that the learners encountered a number of problems in acquiring the target verbs.*

1. Introduction

One of the major goals of teaching a FL (FL) is to enable learners to use the target language for communication. This general goal is easy to pronounce but quite difficult to realize. For FL learners to be able to communicate effectively, they need to attain an adequate level of mastery or acquisition of the various components of language including phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Most FL teaching programs focus on teaching pronunciation, syntax (grammar), reading, and writing. These language skills are, more often than not, taught independently. In other words, they are directly taught in separate classes, and very often through separate textbooks. The component that is often neglected and not given equal attention in FL teaching programs is vocabulary, despite the fact that many teachers even at the university level still use the old Grammar-Translation method where there is heavy emphasis on teaching vocabulary. Despite the complex nature of lexical knowledge, and despite the fact that communication cannot be achieved without having at one's disposal a functional knowledge of an adequate portion of the FL lexicon, vocabulary acquisition and expansion are often assumed to take place indirectly in the process of teaching the reading skill.

The complex nature of lexical competence makes it unlikely for a FL learner to develop an adequate command of vocabulary items without being directly taught the various aspects of this lexical competence. This paper

attempts to provide evidence in this direction. It aims at examining the extent to which Arab learners of English have acquired the various aspects of lexical competence pertaining to the four verbs of saying: say, speak, talk, and tell.

Research in FL acquisition has primarily focused on the acquisition of grammar and phonology with a relative neglect of semantics. This tendency was reflected in teaching FL as well. Most EFL programs offer training courses in grammar, reading, writing, and sometimes in listening and speaking. One can hardly find a separate course for teaching and developing vocabulary. In many EFL programs, lexical items are very often indirectly taught in the reading course, and in many cases vocabulary is given less priority and little attention despite the vital role that lexical items play in the process of FL learning. In this respect, Zimmerman (1997a) holds that "many EFL teachers give little or no classroom attention to vocabulary, assuming that students will learn words incidentally." He concluded that teachers should give more consideration to vocabulary instruction. In another article Zimmerman (1997b:5) holds that "learning vocabulary is of critical importance to FL learners. The teaching and learning of vocabulary have been undervalued in the field of second language acquisition throughout its varying stages and up to the present day." The same idea was earlier voiced by second language researchers. Levenston (1979:147) claimed that vocabulary learning has been a "victim of discrimination." Krashen (1981: 109) stated that teaching vocabulary was restricted to give more focus on teaching syntax.

The acquisition of English vocabulary by Arab learners is not an exception. Most of the research in this field was devoted to investigating the acquisition of certain syntactic and phonological aspects (Kharma 1981; Kharma and Hajjaj 1989). This paper is expected to fill in a gap in vocabulary acquisition research by Arab learners of English (ALE).

The paper proceeds as follows. The objectives of the study will be presented in the following section. Section (3) presents the components of lexical competence. The research methodology will be detailed in section (4). The analysis and findings will be displayed in section (5), and the conclusions will finally be presented in section (6).

2. Objectives and Rationale

2.1. Objectives

This paper investigates the extent to which university Arab EFL learners have acquired the verbs of saying at the two levels of linguistic competence, i.e., recognition and production. These verbs include say, tell, speak, and talk. They have been selected because they are the most frequent ones among the verbs of saying in English. Furthermore, they are the ones that are generally taught in textbooks at schools. The problem of the study stems from the frequent complaints of English language teachers that students frequently confuse and erroneously use these verbs. In the case of Arab EFL learners, this problem is aggravated when they resort to bilingual Arabic-English dictionaries to look

for the equivalents of the verbs *qaala* or *haddatha*. Most of these sources provide the verbs *say, speak, tell*, and *talk* as equivalents to the Arabic *qaala* or *haddatha* without indicating the subtle differences in usage between these verbs. In the absence of such dictionary guidance, FL learners may be tempted to believe that these synonyms have the same syntactic behavior, i.e. interchangeable. In brief, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How well have University Arab learners of English acquired the English verbs of saying at the levels of both recognition and production? What level of mastery have they attained?
2. Can they recognize the similarities and differences in use between these verbs?
3. Can they identify the differences in collocations and idiomatic uses of these verbs?
4. What are the major difficulties that these students encounter in handling these verbs?
5. What implications for teaching EFL can such a study provide?

2.2. Rationale
Knowing the meanings of lexical items is indispensable for the comprehension of texts. The more vocabulary items a reader knows, the better his comprehension. Therefore, learning vocabulary is of critical importance to FL learners. The role of vocabulary in text comprehension and in predicting success in reading was highlighted by Beck et al (1982) and Stahl (1983) who demonstrated that improvement in reading comprehension can be ascribed to an increase in vocabulary knowledge. The same results were later corroborated by Laufer (1992), who found a high correlation between vocabulary knowledge and success in reading comprehension. Furthermore, Coady et al (1993) conducted two experiments which revealed that increased proficiency in high-frequency vocabulary led to an increase in reading proficiency. More importantly, the study of FL learners' acquisition of vocabulary is often motivated by the high frequency of lexical errors in these learners' performance. These errors in the use of vocabulary very often disrupt the process of communication and may usually lead to communication breakdowns. Gas and Selinker (2001: 372) state that "Lexical errors constitute the most serious and disruptive obstacles to communication." This implies that it is easier for native speakers to understand an utterance or a sentence that is grammatically imperfect, but with properly used vocabulary than to understand the same sentence or utterance with perfect grammar, but with wrongly used vocabulary.

It can now be readily concluded that conducting such a study is significant in many respects. The paucity of research in the field of lexical acquisition in general (see Meara (1980: 221-246), and the lack of lexical acquisition studies, especially those conducted on Arab learners of English, put such a study in place. One of the recent studies in this field is the study conducted by Amro (2002) in which she examined the lexical achievement among tenth grade students in the schools of Hebron. Furthermore, the results

of this study may, on the practical sphere, have significant implications to teaching vocabulary to Arab learners as it may reveal a deficiency in teaching vocabulary to Arab learners, and it may highlight a gap in textbook and curriculum development. Consequently, the need for systematic lexical acquisition studies becomes apparent since "vocabulary continues to be learned throughout one's lifetime," (Crystal, 1987: 243). Research in vocabulary acquisition necessitates knowing what it means to know a word. Thus, it might be convenient at this stage to shed light on what it means to know a word.

3. What does it Mean to Know a Word?

Research in FL vocabulary acquisition necessarily entails knowledge of what it means to know a word. Researchers in this field should be aware of certain facts pertaining to vocabulary acquisition in a foreign or second language. At the outset, one should be aware of the fact that lexical acquisition takes place at two levels: the receptive or recognition level and the productive one. We also need to be cognizant of the fact that reception/recognition precedes production. Furthermore, the acquisition of vocabulary is cumulative and incremental. This means that native speakers as well as FL learners gradually develop their stock of vocabulary over a long period of time. This nature of vocabulary acquisition entails that mastering a lexical item passes through stages or degrees of mastery. For example, one, at a certain developmental stage, may learn one of the basic senses of a word without necessarily knowing the other less frequent ones. Similarly, a FL learner may be aware of only one grammatical form of a word with total ignorance of the other derivatives. Another notion to remember is that receptive/passive knowledge is more than the productive one. A FL learner does not actively use all the vocabulary items he/she can recognize. This means that many vocabulary items become part of one's passive repertoire, probably due to the fact that they are infrequent, or to the fact that they are not frequent in the user's English. These facts, among many others, reveal the complex nature of word meaning.

In this respect, Nation (1990: 31) holds that mastering a word involves the following types of knowledge:

1. The meaning(s) of the word (denotation)
2. The written form of the word
3. The spoken form of the word
4. The grammatical behavior of the word
5. The collocations of the word
6. The register of the word (the choice of a vocabulary item according to the context in which it is used. Schmitt (2000: 31) states that register "describes the stylistic variations that make each word more or less appropriate for certain language situations or language purposes." The factors that may determine the choice of a lexical item include the topic under discussion, the interlocutors (their status and relationships with each other), the mode of discourse (spoken

or written), the intention of the sender of the message, the formality level of the situation, and the regional or geographical variations.

7. The associations of the word (the words that are connected with a certain lexical item through a sense relation such as synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy, etc. For example, the words 'leave' and 'give up' are some associations for the word *abandon*...)

8. The frequency of the word: These types of knowledge can be subsumed under a few major categories: semantic, morphological, syntactic, phonological, and pragmatic.

4. Methodology

4.1. Data collection

The data were elicited through two specially designed questionnaires: one for measuring recognition (see Appendix: Part 2), and the other was for measuring production (see Appendix: Part 1). The first one was designed to measure the subjects' ability to recognize the target items as they are used in context. This part of the questionnaire is composed of two subsections with 16 items each. The first 16 items are multiple choice questions in which each of the target verbs is represented in four items. Different aspects of each verb were tested including idiomatic uses, collocations, syntactic and morphological information. The subjects were requested to circle the most appropriate answer. The second subsection of the recognition test consisted of 16 items in which the subjects were requested to pass grammaticality judgments by indicating whether the statement was grammatical or not. Each of the target verbs was represented in four sentences representing different aspects of meaning. This means that each target verb was also represented in a total of eight items, four multiple choice items and four grammaticality judgments.

The production part of the questionnaire was in the form of a completion task comprising 32 items designed to measure the subjects' ability to actively use each target verb in different contexts. Each of the four verbs was again represented in eight items. The subjects were asked to fill in the blank in each sentence with the most appropriate form of the correct verb. The subjects were asked to do the completion task first in order to minimize the washback, i.e. the effect of learning that may result from performing the recognition task at the beginning. The subjects were given enough time to do the completion task under the supervision of the researcher. The recognition task was given two days later under similar conditions.

The data elicitation techniques employed in this research do not, by any means, undervalue the significance of other methods such as the use of translation tasks. Translation tests were excluded from this study for two reasons. The first relates to practicality of data elicitation methods. Students usually tend not to answer long questionnaires or leave many items unanswered. The second reason is that a translation task, for such a specific purpose, may involve us in open and controversial issues of translating Arabic into English and vice versa.

4.2. Subjects

Many universities in the Arab World, and of course abroad, admit large numbers of students whose proficiency in English is limited and who speak languages other than English. These students are usually not allowed to join their academic departments unless they pass an entry test and prove that they can function efficiently in the English-medium colleges. If these students fail to attain the required proficiency level in English, they are placed in the Intensive English Program according to their grades in the English language placement test, which is often the TOEFL as is the case at the University of Sharjah, where the present study was conducted. The courses taught to such students focus on reading, writing, grammar, listening, and speaking. Unfortunately the vocabulary component is, more often than not, neglected, or not given due attention.

The subjects of this study are graduates of the Intensive English Program. This means that they had studied English for at least one or two semesters and attained a minimum score of 487 on the TOEFL before they joined their academic departments. Furthermore, the test was given to the subjects at the end of the semester when they had almost completed a course in English titled *Academic English 1*, in addition to other content courses that were also taught in English. It may be worthwhile mentioning that the subjects of the study were students in science and business colleges where the language of instruction is English.

Three sections of *Academic English 1* were randomly selected for the purpose of the study. The total number of subjects was 73 female students. However, the responses of only sixty subjects were studied, and 13 papers were excluded because some of these students handed in their papers blank and others responded only to a few items of the questionnaire.

5. Data Analysis

The recognition and the production tests were answered by the researcher before marking the students' responses, and these answers were double-checked by a native speaker of English, who is a colleague of the researcher. A table was drawn to display the results of each student on each item. In what follows, the results of the subjects' responses in the recognition part will be presented followed by the results of the production part. Finally, a comparison between the subjects' results in the two parts of the questionnaire will be held.

5.1. Recognition

The first half of the questionnaire was a multiple choice test consisting of 16 items in which the subjects were asked to circle the correct answer. The second half was composed of 16 statements in which the subjects were asked to determine whether each statement was grammatical, or ungrammatical. Each test item was given one point when the answer was correct, and a zero when the answer was incorrect. The total mark was eight if all the answers to each verb in

the two recognition tasks were correct. The averages and percentages of correct answers were calculated for all subjects and for each verb. Table (1) below shows the averages and percentages of the subjects' correct responses on all items of the recognition part.

Table (1):   Recognition: Correct Responses

Verb	Average /8	Percentage%	Rank of difficulty
say	5.68	71	2
speak	5.95	74.4	4
talk	5.1	63.8	1
tell	5.8	72.5	3
Average		70.4	

It can be readily noticed that the least difficult verb for the subjects to recognize was the verb 'speak'. Only 25.6 % of the subjects encountered some difficulty in recognizing the correct usage of this verb. This low level of difficulty may be attributed to the practice that this verb is among the first words taught to FL learners. It might also be ascribed to the influence of Arabic in which the verb 'haka' *speak* is very commonly used. The analysis revealed that the subjects encountered more difficulties in the multiple choice part, especially in recognizing the idiomatic uses of the verb when used in the form of multi-word units as in 'speak of, speak up, speak for'. This might reveal a deficiency in the subjects' knowledge of the verb 'speak' when used with a preposition.

The grammatical judgment section was noticed to be a little bit less difficult than the multiple choice one. This may be ascribed to the fact that the multiple choice test required the subjects to select the correct answer out of four distracters, whereas in the grammaticality judgments section the students were asked to choose one out of two options.

The second least difficult verb for the subjects to recognize was the verb *tell*. Only 27.5% of the subjects faced difficulty in recognizing the appropriate use of this verb. Most of the problems were due to the fact that the subjects were unable to differentiate between this verb and the verb *say*. The grammatical structures 'tell somebody something', and 'say something to somebody' constituted the major source of difficulty to the learners. Another area of difficulty was clearly noticed in the idiomatic use of this verb as in ' tell the difference.'

The verb 'say' was found to be the third verb in terms of difficulty as 29% of the subjects were unable to recognize the various uses of this verb. Again, the most problematic area pertaining to this verb was its idiomatic uses as in '…goes without saying, to have nothing to say,   easier said than done'. Finally, the most problematic verb was the verb *talk*. A relatively high percentage of the subjects (36.2%) found it difficult to differentiate between this verb and the other target ones. Most of the students found it difficult to recognize the idiomatic uses of this verb as it appeared in the sentences "Money

talks" and "Voltaire talks about London in this book." The second source of difficulty was manifested in the confusion between 'talk' on the one hand and the verbs 'say and tell' on the other.

The analysis leaves no doubt that the fine semantic and syntactic distinctions between the four verbs of saying create a source of difficulty for the learners. The subjects' level of mastery of these verbs at the recognition level is low taking into consideration that they have been studying English for more than 10 years at schools, in addition to two more years at university level. The average percentage of correct responses for all subjects on all recognition items was 70.4%. It might be expedient at this point to see how the subjects' responses on the recognition part compare with those on the production test.

5.2. Production

The production test consists of 32 completion items in which the students were asked to fill in the blank space in each sentence with the appropriate form of one of the four target verbs: *say, speak, talk,* or *tell*. Each verb was represented in eight items covering the use of the verb as a phrasal/prepositional verb (idiomatic uses), the use of the verb in collocations, in addition to the use of the correct form of the verb. The eight items representing each target verb were dispersed throughout the test. For example, the verb *say* was represented in items (2, 6, 10, 19, 22, 27, 28, 29) in the production test. Each correct response was allotted two points. The response was considered correct if the appropriate verb was selected in its correct form. One point was given to the response in which the verb was correctly selected, but in the wrong form. No points were assigned to the incorrect choice of verbs. For example, the item "He was telling us a story when the telephone rang" was assigned two points because the correct verb in the correct form was selected. The same example would be assigned one point if the student chose the wrong form of the required verb as in " ......was tell...." instead of 'was telling', and it would be given a zero if any other verb other than 'tell' was chosen. Thus the total mark for each item was 16 (8*2= 16) if all the responses were correct in terms of choice and form. The averages and percentages of correct responses were calculated and tabulated. Table (2) below shows the averages and percentages of the subjects' correct responses on the production test.

Table (2): Production: Correct Responses

Verb	Average /16	Percentage %	Rank of difficulty
say	9.51	59.4	3
speak	5.98	37.4	1
talk	6.00	37.5	2
tell	11.5	71.7	4
Average		51.5	

Table (2) shows that the production of the verb 'speak' ranked first in terms of difficulty. The analysis revealed that the subjects encountered a noticeable

difficulty in selecting this verb when used in combination with a particle/preposition as in 'speak of ', and 'speak up'. The verb *speak* was often replaced by the verbs *talk* or *tell*. The second most difficult aspect was the use of the verb in idioms and collocations as in ' on speaking terms ', and ' strictly speaking '.

The second most difficult verb for the subjects to produce was the verb 'talk'. The idiomatic uses of this verb were found to be the most confusing aspects of meaning for the learners. These uses included the use of the verb with prepositions as in ' talk of, and 'talk somebody into', and the use of the verb in idioms and collocation as in 'talk business' and 'idle talk'.

The verb *say* occupied rank three in terms of difficulty. More than 40% of the subjects faced a considerable level of difficulty in producing the various forms of this verb. It was very often confused with the verb 'tell'. The grammatical differences between *say* and *tell* seem to be the major cause of this confusion. The idiomatic uses of the verb say as in 'goes without saying' and 'no sooner said than done' were also problematic to the learners. The use of the verb say as a reporting verb in reported speech did not constitute a major problem.

Finally, the least difficult verb for the subjects to handle was the verb ' tell ' as 71.7% of the subjects' responses were correct. There was some confusion between the verb 'tell ' and ' say ' especially with regard to the syntactic behavior of the two verbs. The main problematic aspect of meaning for the subjects was the use of the verb ' tell ' in idioms and collocations as in ' tell the difference ' and 'tell the truth'.

The total percentage of correct answers on the production test was 51.5%. This means that about half of the subjects encounter a significant difficulty in using the target verbs. This may also reveal a serious methodological problem in the way vocabulary items are handled at schools. Furthermore, this low level of performance calls for a reform in the process of teaching vocabulary at all levels and stages of FL learning and teaching. It might be convenient at this point to examine the relationship between the subjects' responses on both parts of the questionnaire: the recognition and the production. Table (3) below shows the differences between the performance of the learners on the recognition and production tests.

Table (3): Production and Recognition

Recognition			Production	
Verb	Average /8	percentage	Average /16	percentage
say	5.68	71	9.51	59.4
speak	5.95	74.4	5.98	37.4
talk	5.1	63.8	6.00	37.5
tell	5.8	72.5	11.5	71.7
Average		70.4		51.5

Table (3) clearly shows the discrepancy between the performance of the students on the level of recognition and that of production. The acquisition level in production is consistently lower than that in the recognition for all target verbs. In other words, the subjects' ability to understand is superior to their ability to actually produce. This conclusion is in agreement with the findings of research in language acquisition since linguistic competence is always built before performance, and performance does not always match competence. In this respect, Brown (2000: p 33) holds that "research evidence indicates the general superiority of comprehension over production." Another point that might be relevant in accounting for this discrepancy is that a lot of the information that we gain becomes part of our passive knowledge. That is to say, we can recognize it as soon as we get exposed to it through reading, but we do not often use it actively in writing or speaking, or at least it may take us sometime to activate it whenever we need it.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this research clearly indicated that University Arab learners of English encounter a problem in attaining an acceptable level of mastery in their attempt to learn English vocabulary. The general mastery level of acquisition in both aspects of linguistic behavior, i.e. recognition and production, is shown in Table (4) below.

Table (4): Mastery Level of Acquisition: Recognition and Production

Verb	Recognition %	Production %	Mastery %
say	71	59.4	65.2
speak	74.4	37.4	55.9
talk	63.8	37.5	50.7
tell	72.5	71.7	72.1
Average	70.4	51.5	61

The percentage of acquisition in both aspects for all subjects on all verbs is 61%. From an academic perspective, this mastery level is far from being acceptable for several reasons. The target verbs are taught to Arab learners at an early stage of schooling. Almost all the subjects were graduates of public or private schools where English is taught from grade one. Furthermore, the target verbs are among the most frequent verbs in English.

        This inadequate level of acquisition may be attributed to a number of possible factors. A closer look at the questionnaire items motivates us to conclude that only the basic dictionary meanings, i.e. the denotations of each verb, were focused on in the teaching-learning process. This is clear from the fact that the subjects faced very few problems in identifying the correct form of

the verb when used in its general sense as in (repeat what you *said* "She was taken to hospital," he *said*.). The other aspects of meaning seem to have been neglected in the teaching learning process. These aspects or types of knowledge include the syntactic behavior of verbs, i.e. the constraints that govern the use of each verb and make it distinct from the others with which it can be confused as is the case with *say* and *tell (say something to somebody, and tell somebody something)*. Moreover, the verb collocations and idiomatic uses were not given proper attention during the previous years of learning English at schools and universities. This is clear from the difficulty that the subjects displayed in identifying lexical phrases or chunks containing the target verbs as in (strictly speaking, to tell the truth, easier said than done, idle talk, etc.). This finding corroborates the ongoing research on the nature and importance of lexical chunks in language teaching, see (Nattinger, J. R. & DeCarrico, J. E.(1992); Peters, A.M. (1983); Widdowson H. (1989); Willis, Jane (2004) (plenary presentation in the 20th SPELT International Conference in Islamabad.

The preceding findings might lead us to conclude that there was a methodological deficiency in teaching English vocabulary to Arab learners of English. It is possible that English language teachers do not exactly realize the complex nature of lexical competence or the reality of what it means to know a word.

These studies, among others, indicate that there is a dire need for the systematic teaching of vocabulary in any FL program. Teaching vocabulary should constitute a major component in FL practice. FL teachers, curriculum developers as well as textbook writers need to give high priority to teaching the lexical component in FL teaching programs. Vocabulary need to be directly and independently taught. We should not assume that adequate knowledge of vocabulary can indirectly be acquired through teaching reading, taking into account the limited exposure to the FL in non-English-speaking countries. Phrasal and/or prepositional forms of verbs need also to be duly taught to FL learners. Verb collocations, idiomatic uses as well as lexical chunks/phrases in which verbs may constitute potential sources of difficulty need to be incorporated in textbooks and taught to FL learners. The subtle semantic and syntactic behavior of potentially confusing words ought to be explicitly taught to FL learners. Therefore, these meaning aspects ought to be emphasized by curriculum designers, textbook writers, language teachers as well as teacher trainers.

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Appendix

Part 1. Production

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate form of one of the following words:

say   speak   tell   talk

1. The ambassador and the prime minister spoke of the need to improve bilateral relations between their countries.

2. I didn't hear you. Could you repeat what you said?
3. When I met him last night, he talked of applying for another job
4. He was ...telling....... us a story when the bell rang.
5. There is nothing new to speak of.
6. "She was sent to hospital," he ...said.........
7. Actions speak louder than words.
8. As Anne is too shy to say what she wants, her friend usually speaks up for her.
9. Has the prisoner talked?
10. Fire fighters ...say... there's no way of knowing whether the fire will spread west.
11. He asked me what I was doing and I ...told..... him I was swimming in the lake.
12. She lived in Spain for more than ten years. She speaks Spanish fluently.
13. That's enough. Let's talk business now.
14. Our guests talked so long among themselves that they did not notice we were falling asleep.
15. The policeman told ....the students to remain at school until the storm is gone.
16. The tutor ...spoke..... well of our daughter. We think she will do well in her exams.
17. We finally talked......... father into buying a new car.
    A. Where is your friend?
    B. We are not on ...speaking...terms today. So he did not come with me.
18. They wouldn't ...say.........no to pizza.
19. ...Telling........ lies is something everybody hates.
20. We haven't decided what to do next. We will ...talk...... things over before we come to the decision.
21. "Someone took my wallet," said Jasim.
22. Ali: I need to buy some bread from the grocery store.
    A. Sami: Talking....... of bread, did you know that brown bread is better for you than white bread?
23. "If that is the case," my friend told me, "then I will swim with you to the shore."
24. Strictly speaking..., children under the age of 18 are not allowed to get a driver's license.
25. We can't ...tell...you the time because it is dark.
26. If the wind gets any stronger tonight, the small trees in our garden may be broken. That goes without saying............
27. When my grandmother asked me to help her, it was no sooner ...said...... than done.
28. Sorry for being late. "Well, as the ...saying............ goes: Better late than never."
29. Can you tell......... the difference between butter and margarine?
30. Small-minded people often indulge in idle talk........... .
31. To tell....the truth, you are the most active student in class.

Part 2. Recognition

A. Circle the letter (a, b, c, or d) that represents the most appropriate answer.

1. I need you and your classmates to come early tomorrow. ....them to do so, please.
    a. say   b. tell   c. talk   d. speak
2. Sami was in the middle of .... that he couldn't solve the math problem.
    a. telling   b. saying   c. speaking   d. talking

3.   Sami was nominated to .... for the entire class.
      a. talk   b. say   c. tell   d. speak
4.   They .... of storms and hurricanes, but never of rain and snow.
      a. talked   b. spoke   c. told   d. said
5.   They were .... to each other about us when we came in.
      a. saying   b. talking   c. speaking   d. telling
6.   "Go and .... the policeman." Said Ali.
      a. say   b. speak   c. tell   d. talk
7.   She has nothing to .... for you at the moment.
      a. tell   b. speak   c. talk   d. say
8.   When the teacher walked into the room, everybody stopped ....
      a. speaking   b. telling   c. saying   d. talking
9.   Voltaire .... about London in this book.
      a. talks   b. speaks   c. tells   d. says
10.   How do you ....when to change gear?
      a. say   b. tell   c. speak   d. talk
11.   We want to know what you think. . ...something, please.
      a. tell   b. say   c. speak   d. talk
12.   It is often .... that our friend is a genius
      a. told   b. spoken   c. said   d. talked
13.   A. Hello. May I talk to Ahmad, please?
      B. This is Ahmad.................
      a. saying   b. telling   c. talking   d. speaking
14.   I can't hear what you are saying. Can you .... up please?
      a. talk   b. say   c. tell   d. speak
15.   The child is learning to......
      a. speak   b. say   c. talk   d. tell
16.   The student was ....the teacher about the experiment he was doing.
      a. saying   b. telling   c. speaking   d. talking

B. Write a tick (✓) in front of the correct/acceptable sentence and an (x) in front of the wrong/unacceptable one.
----   1.   He spoke the news to me.
----   2.   The president usually speaks to his people on the TV.
----   3.   She told her prayers everyday.
----   4.   I cannot give you a discount on this. You have to say to the manager.
----   5.   The boy finally spoke out about the problem that was bothering him.
----   6.   We told him "Happy birthday."
----   7.   He said she was ill.
----   8.   He spoke that he won a prize.
----   9.   He talked that he visited Japan.
----   10.   I said her that she was wrong.
----   11.   "She has to leave now," told her father.
----   12.   They were   surprised and talked so.
----   13.   "Why would I lie?" I talked to them.
----   14.   "The accident was terrible," said he.
----   15.   She finds it difficult to tell no.
----   16.   Money talks.