

## **Chapter III : The speaking skill**

### **Introduction**

Speaking among the other foreign language skills (listening, reading and writing) seems intuitively the most important one. As the process of learning and applying the skills of oral English are so closely related, classroom should be a place where the use of spoken language is sensitively supported since it enables students to make connections between what they know and what they are learning, and it is the one through which they are going to be judged while the first impressions are being formed, that's why according to (Ur, 1984):

**"Many if not most foreign language learners are interested in learning to speak"**  
**(P120)**

In practice or in real classroom situation, those learners find it difficult to communicate or interact using the target language. They think that speaking a foreign language perfectly with a good pronunciation, fluency,...is a so complex task to fulfil.

This latter is the concern of the forgoing chapter. It aims at presenting a brief description for foreign language speaking skill and its recent status in the light of what was presented in the related literature particularly within the emergence of the recent communicative approach to FLT. It tends to clarify the factors that affect students' speaking abilities, with specific expression of the common dilemmas teachers face when trying to address the teaching of speaking.

It covers some issues or points needed to tackle when dealing with speaking, as it shows the necessary activities must be designed by the teacher in classroom in order to enable his learners to produce a meaningful English oral performance as well as to overcome their weakness and difficulties.

### **A.III.1.Speech production in a foreign language**

Similar to listening, speaking is a skill which deserves much attention every bit as much as other language skills are concerned, in both first and second languages since in EFL classrooms, teaching speaking plays a great role for the learner's good oral achievement( Bygate, 1987).He quoted that:

**"Speaking is the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business .It is also the medium through which much language is learnt, and which for many is particularly conducive for learning. Perhaps, then, the teaching of speaking merits more thought" (P, 1)**

So, besides this big importance, it is necessary to deal first with what good speakers of a foreign language can do. Hence it was assumed that the ability to speak fluently is all the time associated with certain characteristics to be owned by the speaker. This latter is presented in the teaching of grammar, an amount of vocabulary with some care about pronunciation so that the piece of the produced speech sounds as the native speakers' ones. But, now we all know that this skill is more complex than that; it involves the cooperation of different types of knowledge with the good command of certain skills. (Bygate, 1987).

A good starting dealing to tackle this skill is to ask ourselves; how we achieve this ability? and how to do it all over again in a foreign language such as English .

Different factors are involved in speaking. The first one to emphasize is that this human ability is an interactive process, its form and meaning depend on the participants, their previous experiences, the physical setting and the purpose of speech (Brown, 1994).

Generally speaking , this process takes place in real time and is described to be linear ; so this process follows a certain permanent series of stages ( words follow words an phrases follow phrases) ( Thornbury, 1998 ). At the level of utterances, or the spoken presentation of sentences, this produced speech goes utterance by utterance opposite to word by word with the same rhythm from the part of the interlocutor.

In its production, speech nature is described to be contingent through which we find that each word is dependent on the previous one and the same thing for utterances (interrelationship between utterances) and this fact leads to what is called in speaking "spontaneity" and this concept doesn't mean that speech is unplanned but as (thornbury, 1998 ) clarifies, the planning time is limited . He adds that :

" the planning of one utterance may overlap with the production of the previous one " ( p, 7 ) , according to him all the previous explained characteristics are closely related to "real time processing" which is well determined by (Bygate , 1984) to be :

" we have to produce sentences and adopt them to the circumstances . This means making decisions rapidly, implementing them smoothly as unexpected problems appear in our path"( P, 17 ) .

### **A.III.2.Differences between L1 and L2 speaking**

According to (thornbury, 1998 ) , it is too important when dealing with the speaking skill to clarify the difference between first and second speaking process.

The majority of foreign language learners complain about their lack in L2 fluency , low pronunciation level, no accuracy,...and so many dilemmas they confront in their oral practices in classroom. Those learners need to know what can be the factors which lead to the intrubution of face to face interaction and more precisely the lack of confidence and often an acute sense of anxiety .

Following the foreign language comments as being teachers of English , they argue that many factors are considered to be causes of these problems or this failure in developing the skill, thus, their grammatical and lexical knowledge isn't enough , the shortage of chances and opportunities for practice as well as the shortage of interactive speaking in classroom atmosphere ( Thornbury ,1998 ).

So, in this lack of genuine speaking opportunities which account for many foreign language learners to think that even their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary are acceptable but , still they are enable to speak fluently , accurately with a good pronunciation , that's why the first step towards finding solutions to speaking difficulties the learners meet in their learning is to know first the difference or its better to describe it as the status of speaking in the native language as well as the target one (L1, L2).

Through the comparison, specifically at the level of speaking as a mental process , there is probably no difference at all , since this process follows the same stages , Both L1 and L2 speakers produce speech through the processes of conceptualization , formulation , articulation and self monitoring .

Like L1 speakers , L2 ones contribute similarly or share the same roles in communication as (Thornbury,1998 ) states :

**" They will be attending to their interlocutors , adjusting their message accordingly and negotiating the management of conversational turns " (p , 28).**

From what is cited above , the skills of speaking seem to be completely the same in the two languages (L1, L2) ,

**"they are essentially the same and should , in theory , be transferable from the speaker's first language into the second one " ( Tornbury,1998 , 28 ),** but what is significantly different is the first language itself , then L2 speakers' knowledge of the L2 ( grammar , vocabulary ...)isn't the same as in L1, and L2 speakers in this case are closely resembled to **" Students who said , I can't find words , I always use the same sentences " ( Tornbury, 1998 , 28 ).** This problem of knowledge difference may be more clarified when examining the availability of that knowledge , this later is described by ( Tornbury,1998 ) to be insufficient integrated into the L1 speakers' existing language knowledge and rarely accessed or not yet easily retrievable and most importantly **" the process of arranging the grammar of retrieving the word is not yet automatic" (p 28) .**

On the other hand , we must consult the factor of translation into L2 after the process of utterances' formulation in L1 .This will rule incorrectly the self monitoring process which is in this case overused and over prolonged in terms of speed , accuracy and effects negatively fluency .Learners here have **" troubles in their intentional capacity between planning and articulation" (p29).** Of course not all L2 learners are concerned with these extended mental deliberations, since we find many speakers having different strategy which consists of **" use the little language they have at their linguistic " fingertips" so to speak rather than construct novel utterances from scratch "(p29).** The perfect use of this strategy for realizing a good communication in L2 is called "strategic competence ".

### **A.III.3.Classroom speaking activities**

In a foreign language classroom, being able to be clearly understood when speaking, and the ability to use effective oral communication skills are so important particularly that given speech remains the form of communication most often used.

To deal with speaking a foreign language, it requires a degree of real time exposure; this latter can be realized through a set of classroom activities which have to be developed best in a dynamic interactive learning environment where both teacher and learners collaborate and

cooperate with one another to create a safe , comfortable and relaxed atmosphere for a perfect productive talk in classroom .

For that aim , FL teachers try to develop their learners communicative competence through the diversity of activities in their classes which must include the different types and styles of expressions , the different accents and dialects of native speakers and acquainting students with the different language discourses and situational as well as contextual expressions( business English , post office , jargon...ect). Each teacher is going to select and adapt the suitable activity and strategy that meets his learners needs , interests and goals . According to ( Harmer, 2001), in the Oral expression course ; the most widely used speaking activities should:

**" fall at or near the communicative end of the communication continuum" (p, 271).**

Through the following classroom speaking activities , the teacher tries all the time to create interaction by exchanging information and expressing ideas of course with an exclusive care about the correct grammar (accuracy) , adequate vocabulary , acceptable fluency as well as a good pronunciation to convey a meaning through speech which sounds like a native speakers ' one.

### **A.III.3.1. Discussion (debate):**

Discussion is considered as one among the best ways of presenting speech and it is an interesting form of oral practice in the classroom .

**"it can provide some of enjoyable and productive speaking in language classroom"**

**( Harmer, 1995, 46 )**

According to ( Thornbury, 1998 ), **"many teachers would agree that the best discussions in class are those that arise spontaneously either because of something personal that a learner reports or because a topic or a text in the course book triggers some debate" ( p,102).**

Discussion differs from conversation in the fact that it generally has an identifiable purpose .Then, it is similar to conversation in the sense that both involve listening carefully, considering what others say and speaking . Many of students conversational abilities will transfer into a discussion situations.

Discussion in foreign language classrooms generally help FL learners to develop their communicative abilities since it gives them practice in expressing ideas orally in an organized manner and enables them to arrive at conclusions , to clarify or modify ideas , resolve differences and find alternative solution because through discussion , learners can bring their personal experiences and outside world into the classroom, where they tackle different topics and subjects which concern every individual. (Littlewood, 1999) explains that through class discussions the

learners are able to use the foreign language as a medium to talk about their experiences and express their views , opinions and handling their social relationships.

Besides this great importance , FL teachers generally claim about what is named "discussion failure "(Harmer,2001,272). The reason of this later as he explains is that FL learners are reluctant to give their opinions in front of the whole class because of a noticed lack of self confidence ( shyness and fear of making mistakes, lack of adequate vocabulary and accurate grammar...)

**"Many students feel extremely exposed in discussion situation" (Harmer,2001,272)**

In this stream , (Harmer,2001) suggests a technique to realize a successful oral discussion and to avoid all the speaking difficulties which might encounter the learners , this will be through " Buzz group" which is based upon the formation of small groups , it gives the learner the chance to talk and interact at the same time .

Through this" Buzz group" ' application , Before being asked to perform orally in front of the whole class , the level of learners stress will be reduced . (Harmer, 2001) has illustrates some examples to show the usefulness of the cited technique for a whole range of discussions, for example :

- 1/ Let students to predict the content of a reading text or invite them to talk about their reactions to it after reading.
- 2/ Discuss what should be included in a news broadcast or have a quick conversation about Types of music for example.
- 3/ The topic may be fashion and the statements to discuss might include the following:
  - Fashion is universal.
  - Fashion is an art form .
  - People shouldn't be judged by what they wear .
  - Fashion is just a way of making people spend money.
  - Fashion celebrates diversity ,...

Extracted from ( Thornbury , 1998 , 102).

- of course all these statements should be reinforced with a view of eliciting a more personal response phrased as questions during the discussion such as ;
  - How important is the label on an item of clothing?
  - How often do you shop for clothes ?
  - How would you describe your style of dressing?

4/ To train learners to respond directly and spontaneously through ' instant comments ' through showing them pictures or introducing any topic at any stage of the lesson then ask them to make their first impressions .

5/ An other example for EFL classroom oral discussion involves 'formal debate' where students are asked to prepare arguments in favour or against various prepositions ( Harmer, 2001) , e.g.

An invigilator during an official exam catches a student sheeting from a hidden notes .The class should discuss the topic of sheeting in exams in general and decide about the following statements :

- The invigilator should ignore him.
- She should give the student a sign to show that she has seen him, so that the student will stop.
- She should inform the exam board so that the student will not be able to pass that exam again.

As a result, the important factor to consider when dealing with oral discussions in FL classrooms is students engagement with the topic and their interest, provide them with period for thinking, arrangement of ideas and language expressions they will use.

### **A.III.3.2. Role plays**

It is among the very common classroom speaking activities, according to (Ur, 1984 ), it is one way to consider when a teacher wants to vary the kinds of the spoken interaction experienced in classroom. Role plays provide the opportunity for students and revise their understanding and perspective by exploring thoughts and feelings of characters in a given situations.

More precisely (Ur ,1984) comes to define it as follows:

**" Role plays [...] is used to refer to all sorts of activities where learners imagine themselves in a situation outside the classroom[...] , sometimes playing the role of someone other than themselves , and using the language appropriate to this new context" (p , 131).**

This special speaking activity is said to have many positive impacts on learners in classroom

- It gives them empathy as they examine others' ideas, feeling and points of views.

- It is a chance to practice their oral skills and interpretations as they use the foreign language to describe perceptions, emotions and reactions .
- It provides them with the opportunity to practice decision –making and problem-solving skills as they gain experience in an independent thinking and cooperative learning.
- It develops both speaking and listening activities .

(Doff, 1988) presents those advantages saying that ;

**" Role play gives a chance to use language in new contexts and for new topics [...] , because they are 'acting out' a situation .Role play encourages students to use natural expressions and intonation, as well as gesture" ( p, 240).**

-In role plays students have to imagine a role (e.g. a farmer ) and a situation (e.g. accidents).

A role play in EFL classroom is a drama like activity , it can take many forms :

### **A.III.3.2.1. Role cards**

**"Participant are given a situation plus problem or task, as in simulation, but they are allotted individual roles, which may be written out on cards" (Ur, 2000, 132).**

So, role cards as a role play technique gives the opportunity for learners 'performances to be guided through instructions presented in cards for enabling them to act out what may occur.

#### **Example A**

##### **Student A:**

##### **Situation A**

You are a student, you have lost your bag and you are in the police station reporting it to the police

##### **Student B:**

##### **Situation B**

You are a police officer and you are going to ask the student for more details.

#### **Example B**

In this example we illustrate a role card where the participant has the task easier since they are given more details about the topic they act.

##### **Student A**

##### **Situation A**

You are a parent of a six- year –old girl. You are doing your best to bring up your child, and you are moderately strict .The big problem, you feel, is your own parent (your



daughter's grandparent), who lives with you .He/she is always spoiling your child. You want this to stop, and you will now complain to your parent. Here are some example of the behaviour that upsets you:

- Giving her too much candy and too many sweets in general (cakes, ect).
- Allow her to leave her meals half eaten.
- Letting her watch too much TV.
- Buying her too many toys.
- Allow her to stay up as late as she likes.
- Buying her whatever she wants in the supermarket
- (Think about more!)

You remember that your parent was much stricter with you when you were a child!

You will speak first. Say, "Mom/Dad, could we talk, please? There's something I've been meaning to discuss with you" then listen and respond.

**Student B**

**Situation B**

You are the parent of a grown –up child who has a six –year-old daughter .You live together, and these past six years you have really been enjoying being a grandparent . You feel it's more fun than being a parent , because you have all of the pleasures of parenthood without the heavy responsibilities .In recent years ,your philosophy of child –rearing has changed .

You now believe:

- Children should enjoy food and eat what they like.
- Forcing a child to eat can lead to weight problems.
- TV helps develop a child's imagination.
- Toys and other playthings are essential to a child's development.
- Children have lots of energy, and shouldn't be put to bed too soon.
- It's best to let children learn to make decisions (about shopping, ect.)

Right now your son / daughter wants to speak with you. He/ she will speak first .Listen and respond.

### **A.III.3.2.2. Simulation**

It is another role play activity which can be to develop oral fluency, "**where student simulate a real life encounter [...] as if they were doing so in the real world as themselves**" (Harmer, 2000, 274).

It is similarly defined by (Ur,19984):

**"In simulation the individual participants speak and react as themselves, but the group role, situation and task they are given is an imaginary one" (132).**

For a simulation to work it must according to (Kenjohns reported in Harmer ,2000) have the following characteristics :

- "Reality of function"; where students feel their complete involvement in the situation as if it really exists and they act as a real participants .
- "A simulated environment " created by the teacher
- "Structure " in which students must have a general view about the tasks to be performed and the activity to be done

Furthermore , it seems somehow difficult to distinguish between the two sorts of activities ( role play and simulation as a type of a role play) , but the clear difference lies in the fact that simulation is more difficult than role play since it requires learners not to act as characters that are not their own but get more personally involved ( using their own background and knowledge to the situation).

In simulation students generally work with small groups to feel confident, cooperative, sharing ideas and create motivation.

#### **Example:**

You are the managing committee of a special school for blind children. You want to organize a summer camp for them, but your school budget is insufficient .Decide how you might raise the money"

(Ur, 2000, 132).

### **A.III.3.3.Formation gap activities**

Another type among the classroom spoken interaction activities is what is described by (Harmer, 2002 ) to be ;

**"Where two speakers have different parts of information making up a whole ,because they have different information, there is a gap between them"(p,88)**

In foreign language classrooms, gap activities are proved to be among the most useful in second language acquisition since **"it provides negotiation of meaning and the conversational adjustment which push students to more accurate output"** (Hedge ,2000 ,281).

This activity has a requirements for information exchange

**"It involves each learner in a pair or a group possessing information which the other learners do not have"**(Hedge ,2000 ,281).

Of course in practice, this information has to be shared through right questions. It exists many variants of information gap activities, for example ;"describe and draw" activity, in which one learner has a picture which mustn't be shown to the other learners , what the rest of the class has to do is to draw the same picture without looking at the original one. Of course the role of the first student is to give instructions and descriptions to act as a guide for his partners who have to ask questions. (Harmer, 2002 ).

A further extension of the information gap activities is suggested in stories where for example the teacher provides his learners with an unfinished story and it depends on the rest of the class to guess and discuss the way it ends.

In another gap activity, students are given incomplete dialogue and they have to complete it such as the following example:

**A:** Good morning, can I help you?

**B:** .....

**A:** I'll see what I can do.

**B:** Yes .....

**A:** Yes, of course, Surely castle, I think it's open all the day.

**B:**.....

**A:** Yes, it costs 4,86£ for adults and £3 for children

**B:** .....

**A:** Oh, it's a museum, an absolutely fascinating collection of all sorts of things like clocks, masks, cabinets...ect

**B:** .....

**A:** Enjoy your visit, good bye.

These information gap activities are seen by ( Hedge,2000) to **" have their own advantages and limitations, they assist language acquisition, but they do not involve students in conversational strategies in the same way as role plays or discussion"** ( P 281)

### **A.III.2.4.talking circles**

Talking circles provide safe environment where students are given the opportunity to share their points of view with there partners using the target language, of course without fear of criticism or judgment. This activity is useful when the discussed topic has no right or wrong answer, when students are sharing, feeling, considering moral or ethical issues as well. It is an effective strategy for reaching group consensus and for real life problem solving.

In class, the students sit in a circle and each one has the opportunity to speak . During this spoken activity, both parts of interaction have some guidelines to follow:

- Only one student speak at a time, while the others listen and remain non judgmental.
- Address all comments to the issue or topic, not to comments made by other students (avoid both positive and negative responses to another student's comments).
- Encourage listeners to focus on the speaker supporting him by taking an interest in what he/she says, rather than turning and thinking about what they will say when it is their turn.
- Encourage speakers to share their comments in a way that is easiest and most comfortable for them( e.g. personal story, examples or metaphors, analytical statements).

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### **A.III.3.5. Storytelling based activities**

This type of activities has always been one of the main means of practicing speaking in classroom . It functions as a clear tool towards autonomy and takes many forms;

#### **a) Guess the lie:**

In this activity learners tell each other three short personal anecdotes , where two among them are true and the third one is untrue and it depends on the others to guess the lie and to find the untrue anecdote so they argue their guesses. They can be allowed to ask a limited number of questions after the story has been told by their colleague (Thornbury,1998 ,96).

#### **Example:**

Think about a lucky or unlucky experience you have had .You are going to tell your partners about it, choose from the list below the things you want to talk about .think about what you will say and what language you will need.

- Was it a lucky or unlucky experience?
- When did it happen?
- Where were you?
- Who were you with ?
- What happened?
- Why was it lucky or unlucky?
- How did you feel afterwards?

**b) Insert the word:**

Each student is given a card in which an unusual word or expression is written and has to be kept secret. The student has to tell his colleague an anecdote in which he / she incorporates 'the secret item ' as unobtrusively as possible, by the end ,the students have to guess the secret word .

**Still in the same concern of storytelling based activities, student are allowed to tell jokes since the repeated practice of jokes in EFL classroom "Fulfil an important function of good speaking tasks" (Thornbury, 1998, 96).**

### **A.III.3.6.Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are useful as a communicative tool in classroom. They serve as **"a way of provoking conversation and opinion exchange "(Harmer, 2000 ,89).**

This activity by being pre-planned by the students themselves becomes more useful, as (Harmer, 2000) had argued;

**"Questionnaires are useful because, by being pre-planned, they ensure that both questioner and respondent have something to say to each other" (p, 274).**

The questionnaire as a spoken activity is considered to encourage the natural use of some repetitive language patterns (Harmer, 2000) . Generally speaking , the questionnaire 'results can be taken as a basis for different oral tasks like : prepared talks , discussion and even written works(Harmer, 2000).

● Example

TV Watching Questionnaire
● Do you like watching TV?
- Yes
- No
● If 'No', why?
.....
● If 'Yes', How many hours do you normally watch TV
.....
● What do you prefer to watch?
- films
- movies
- talking shows
- news
- others
● Explain why
.....

In classroom, with practicing questionnaires , students are allowed to go around the class and talk to their classmates and this latter allows them to have

**" a bit of physical movement and provide a welcome variety of interaction"**  
( Thornbury , 1998 , 90).

#### **A.III.4.Criteria in a speaking test**

The main goal in teaching speaking is to realize a good oral production , this can be defined as **"the ability to express one self intelligibly , reasonably , accurately without too much hesitation otherwise communication may break down because the listener loses interest or get impatient "**

**(Hughes,2002 extracted from Byrne 1986 ).**

When we come to assessment , testing orally is very important to care about ;

**"Testing , both formally and informally takes place at the beginning and at the end of most language course, as well as at various times during the course itself [...] it aims to test progress during the course ,or achievement at the end of it"**

**(Thornbury, 1998 ,124).**

Following what has just been quoted above , to test learners' speaking abilities , teachers have many criteria to examine : pronunciation, fluency , accuracy and interaction.

#### **A.III.4.1.Pronunciation**

**" A consideration of learners' pronunciation errors and how these can inhibit successful communication is a useful basis on which to assess why it is important to deal with pronunciation in classroom."**

**(Kelly,2000,11)**

Pronunciation generally speaking refers to the ability produce comprehensible speech to fulfil the speaking test requirements; its key indicators will be the amount of strain caused to the listener, the amount of speech which is unintelligible and notice ability of L1 influence .( Hughes ,2002 )

According to (Harris quoted in forum 1997 );**"pronunciation is the most difficult to assess , the central reason is the lack of general agreement on what good pronunciation of second language means :is comprehensibility to be the sole Basis of judgment, or must we demand a high degree of phonetics and allophonic accuracy and can we be certain that two or more speakers will find the utterance of a foreign speaker equally comprehensible"**

Many scholars believe that teaching pronunciation in EFL classrooms tends to be neglected .This fact is caused by two key problems .Firstly , teachers tend to make grammar as well as lexis and vocabulary their first concern, as (Kelly,200) claimed that ;

**" A look at the contents pages of most course books will show that we tend to think of the organization of language in terms of grammatical structures , although some more recent publications claim to have a lexically arranged syllabus" (p , 13).**

Secondly, those teachers feel doubt how to teach it as they argue all the time that this doubt is due to the lack of knowledge of the theory of pronunciation.Thus , language learners on the other hand show a great enthusiasm towards pronunciation and consider it as a very important factor to realize a successful communication (Kelly, 2000). Even though, pronunciation presents one among the difficulties learners encounter , that's why when dealing

with assessing speaking, it is considered as a clear factor to examine in oral tests as well as in ordinary communication in classroom using the target language.

As a result , in a communicative test of speaking , students are asked to pronounce the language intelligibly even if some influences from L1 remain or though residual accent is acceptable (Hedge, 2000 ).They have to :

- Produce individual sounds correctly.
- Link words appropriately.
- Use stress and pitch to convey the intended meaning
- First language accents are acceptable provided and communication isn't impeded

**" the aim of pronunciation improvement is not to achieve a perfect imitation of a native accent , but simply to get the learner to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other (competent ) speakers "** (Hughes ,2002,68 quoted in Ur 1996).

#### **A.III.4.2.Fluency**

It is necessary to determine the impact of fluency on foreign language comprehensibility .It refers to the learners' ability to talk with normal level of continuity ( speed) , rate and effort to link both ideas and language together to form coherent connected speech (Hughes, 2002), , . Its two key indicators are

- Speech rate .
- Speech continuity.

In assessing learners' fluency , they are not asked to produce speech fastly following the same rhythm as native speakers one , but only to follow a normal speed with clear continuity and logical sequencing of sentences (Hughes, 2002).

**" testing fluency is to assess coherent spoken interaction with good speed , rhythm and few intrusive hesitations" (Pye, Greenall,1996,99).**

#### **A.III.4.3.Accuracy**

On this scale ;

**" Candidates are awarded marks for the accurate and appropriate use of syntactic forms and vocabulary in order to meet the task requirement at each level "**

**( Hughes ,2002, 88).**



In addition , the key indicators for the grammatical accuracy are :

- The appropriate use of subordinate clauses, sentences structure and specifically concerned the number of grammatical errors in a given amount of speech and the communicative effect of error (Hughes, 2002).

According to (Hedge,2000) , to assess this concept , accuracy is highly through occasional errors which do not impede communication are accepted . For advanced learners , this accuracy must be consistently high.

Testing accuracy was seen by (Pye and Greenal ,1996) to examine :

**" evidence of a wide range of structures and vocabulary .Errors minimal in number and gravity " (p, 99).**

#### **A.III.4.4.Interactive communication**

It is worth emphasizing that grammatical accuracy, fluency and pronunciation are not all what is needed to test EFL learners' speaking abilities, but teachers when assessing speaking need to examine their students' interactive abilities in classroom.

**"Interactive communication" as (Thornbury, 1998 ) observes is;" The candidate's abilities to interact with the interlocutor and the required speed and rhythm to fulfil the task requirements. It includes the ability to use functional language and strategies to maintain or repair interaction" (p, 129).**

In assessing learner's interactive level, teachers have to look after their capability to turn talking and without undue hesitation as well as their ability to participate competently in the different interactive situations and to develop the variety of topics by initiating and responding appropriately.

To conclude, students are asked to contribute with ease for most of interaction , **"with only occasional and minor difficulties or for advanced learners to contribute fully and effectively throughout the interaction"**

**(Pye and Greenal ,1996, 99)**

#### **A.III.5.Learners' speaking difficulties**

In teaching speaking , it is necessary to care about not going to extremes , either by being too exclusively concerned with theories and thinking about their application to teaching , nor by following a certain routines; playing the tape recorder , asking and answering

questions ..., but the teacher must have an overall understanding of what speaking is and what are the constraints or difficulties which may meet the learners to develop their speaking performances, and finally how to bring the gap between an analysis of speaking and the actual classroom teaching ( Yang, 1993).

Hence, foreign language students proclaim having obstacles in achieving a real and perfect oral performance and this is due to the following factors:

#### **A.III.5.1. Lack of motivation/ interest**

Speaking a foreign language can be a very uncomfortable task or experience in classroom. Yet, the majority of students find it hard to deal with it because of the non motivational atmosphere, as (Littlewood, 1999) stated. He expresses his perspective noticing that unless learners of a foreign language are giving full opportunities to express themselves, to present their ideas and to communicate and integrate with the world around them (classmates/ teacher), they aren't going to improve their speaking performance.

So, students' speaking skills develop best in a motivational atmosphere where dynamic interactive learning is highly valued to encourage learners to feel safe , comfortable and relaxed with little or no exposure to the target language .

Motivation is very important and is the key concept for avoiding inhibition. it is closely related with interest , so the students' failure to participate orally may stem from their lack of interest which can derive from the learners' impressions that the activities they tackle in classroom are too difficult in one hand. In the other hand , they complain about the nature and types of topics in discussion and they describe them to be boring and uninteresting as to put them in critical status.

It depends heavily on the teacher to ensure motivation as well as interest in his classroom, by choosing topics and issues that attract students' intention and interest as well as carrying out activities that do not put heavy demands on the learners and give them the chance to express themselves freely.

#### **A.III.5.2. Inhibition**

Unlike the other skills, speaking requires what is called' real time exposure . Foreign language learners are noticeably inhibited to talk or express their ideas in front of the others using the target language (Ur ,19984).

**"It is too easy for a foreign language classroom to create inhibition anxiety"** (Littlewood, 1999,93 ). He adds that inhibition from one side results from learners' feeling of ignorance in front of their teacher or instructor who they consider as the main source of input and the principle possessor of knowledge.

Hence, from the other side, inhibition appears closely related with students' shyness and fear of making mistakes as well as criticism. So , because of their feeling of linguistic inferiority and their inability to develop their communicative skills, they become ashamed when attempting to talk and they are cautious about making errors in their talk ;so they prefer to reduce their speaking time and participation .In some cases this inhibition pushes learners to prefer not to speak at all and remain silent.

**"Learners occupy a permanent position of inferiority before a critical audience with little opportunity for asserting their own individuality .They are likely to feel drawn out to communicate with those around them [...].On the contrary , may learners will prefer to keep a ' low profile ', in the hope that they will not be called upon to participate openly"**

( Littlewood, 1981, 93).

### **A.III.5.3.Vocabulary and grammar constraints:**

A good knowledge of vocabulary and a correct mastery of grammar rules are very important to speak a foreign language . In our context , many students show the desire to speak and to participate but unfortunately they fail to present their messages verbally arguing that they are unable to find out suitable words to specific topics or haven't enough vocabulary in their linguistic repertoire

Thus , not only vocabulary is essential in speaking, but grammar competence has also a great role to convey meaning .It is very important for learners so they will be able to combine words, sentences , phrases ... correctly to communicate .

**"The learner must attain as high degree a possible of linguistic repertoire "**  
(Littlewood, 1981, 6).

### **A.III.5.4.Poor listening practice**

It is strongly shown, the relationship between listening and speaking .Thus, poor listening practice will lead automatically to a poor speaking competence. So, students' inability to produce speech isn't only due to their lack of motivation and interest, inability to find

suitable words and use grammar correctly to combine them but it derives also from their restricted experience in listening to English, as they listen only to their teacher 's model of speaking and which isn't in fact the only model they encounter in their real life situation

Hence , our students should be aware about the importance of listening to native speakers 'model of speech ( intonation , pitch , fall, facial expressions...), those features which must exist for a successful listening , a good spoken production and an acceptable communication.

### **A.III.5.5.Pronunciation 'problems**

A consideration of learner's pronunciation errors and how these can inhibit successful communication, it appears a crucial problem to consult. FL learners' inability to pronounce well may affect their spoken performance and classroom participation.

In the case of the English language, a mispronunciation of one sound may lead to a big misunderstanding and a change in meaning. Unfortunately, many learners have developed habitual errors which cause an unrecognizability of certain words and in many cases the result is communication 'problems.

**"A learner who mispronounces a range of phonemes can be extremely difficult for a speaker from another language to understand. This can be very frustrating for the learner who may have a good command of grammar and lexis but have difficulty in understanding and being understood by a native speaker"**

(Kelly, 2000, 11).

In addition to words mispronunciation, other learners encounter the misuse of language supra -segmental features such as (intonation, stress ...).

**"The inaccurate use of suprasegmental elements such as stress or intonation can also cause problems". (Kelly, 2000, 11).**

As it is outlined, problems caused by pronunciation errors led to problems in both reception and comprehension of the meaning and the function of an utterance (Kelly, 2000). He explained another problem which is the first language of mother tongue interference on the pronunciation of second language in terms of accent and mood. Our students meet such kind of problems since they share the same mother tongue and they tend to use it usually, as they feel comfortable, natural and secure to speak it, and speaking a foreign language out of its context or outside the classroom seems really unnatural for them. It is too difficult for them to keep using it.

To conclude, " **all these problems are very real in our classrooms and worthy of investigation and remedial action in the classroom (Kelly, 2000, 12).**

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, we have tried to consult or examine some of the theoretical aspects that concern foreign language speaking skill. We have demonstrated the role the oral communication generally and of speaking specifically in the process of learning and find that speaking is appropriate for learning objectives. In this chapter , we have shown what is meant by a successful oral performance stating that it is the ability and right to speak freely and clearly , unashamed , to fully vocalize , to choose to make contact with a word and to communicate that word successfully . Besides, this oral performance is so complex to realize and the speaking skill is extremely difficult to practice where foreign language learners encounter many constraints.

Yet, our FL teachers try to overcome these difficulties adopting a variety of tasks and techniques that feat the learners' interest , needs and level in order to develop discussion skills , interpersonal skills , critical listening , group interaction and problem solving ...

All in all we came up to the following points:

- To participate actively in class, students must be able to communicate clearly, effectively and appropriately in a variety of moods and contexts.
- Speaking is the oral articulation of ideas; it influences the development of critical thinking, problem solving abilities and general learning outcomes. It is an intellectual, social function .It shapes students perceptions of the world and represents these perceptions as knowledge and encourage FL learners to transform it as they shift through observations, evaluate information and compare views.
- Students become more proficient speakers as they adopt their capacities to use the language and the ideas appropriate to the situation , respond to listeners verbal and non verbal cues , restate ideas , ask

questions to clarify understanding , use the language to create images and to produce emotional responses.

- For realizing the learners' active engagement in the speaking process, teachers need to determine the areas of difficulties their learners meet. So, they should structure, plan meaningful tasks and experiences within the classroom environment and present them in a more realistic and authentic manner.
- Teachers have to encourage students to use the foreign language outside the classroom and try to provide them with suitable opportunities to do so .