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**Enhancing Students' Speaking Skill through**

**Role Play Techniques**

**The Case of 1<sup>st</sup> Year Students of English  
at Guelma University**

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Requirement for the Degree of Magister  
in Language and Civilisation

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## DEDICATION

To the memory of my second mother to whom I owe a lot

**My grandmother “Fatma”**

To my parents who were so patient while waiting for their youngest son to make some success in his life and bring some happiness to their big hearts

To my only brother Ahmed who helped me so much

To my sisters and their children

To the Scout Family in which I spent many years learning something new everyday

To all my friends wherever they are

To all my colleagues and my students

*I dedicate this humble work and I sincerely say to all of them “thank you very much”*

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I am more indebted to all my family members for their patience, encouragement, financial and spiritual assistance, special thanks to my brother Ahmed.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research was conducted to sensitize teachers about the potential advantages of the Role-play technique (RP) which is not widely used though it has proved its usefulness and strong contribution in enhancing the speaking abilities of students. The concentration of students on developing their speaking skill –among some other motives- pushed us to investigate such a subject putting a hypothesis that RP activity as a technique may break some psychological difficulties that hinder students’ speaking level from getting better. Overcoming problems like shyness, fear of making mistakes and lack of self-confidence would make students feel at ease and therefore perform better. To collect information we administered two similar questionnaires both to first year students of English and their teachers of Oral Expression (OE). Later the obtained results were analyzed and interpreted. Some pedagogical recommendations are suggested in order to raise O.E teachers’ awareness about the great benefit they would get if they use the RP technique. Some advice were addressed to students of English to make them feel more concerned and raise their sense of responsibility. This research seeks to shed light on the most important efficient ways to better students’ level in English oral expression.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ALM</b>	Audio-lingual Method
<b>AM</b>	Alternative Methods
<b>CDA</b>	Course Design Approach
<b>CLL</b>	Community Language Learning
<b>CLT</b>	Communicative Language Teaching
<b>CQ</b>	Complementary Question
<b>DM</b>	Direct Method
<b>EFL</b>	English as a Foreign Language
<b>FL</b>	Foreign Language
<b>GTM</b>	Grammar-translation Method
<b>MT</b>	Mother Tongue
<b>NA</b>	Natural Approach
<b>OE</b>	Oral Expression
<b>Q</b>	Question
<b>RP</b>	Role-play
<b>SLT</b>	Situational Language Teaching
<b>SW</b>	Silent Way
<b>TPR</b>	Total Physical Response

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## **Introduction**

Learning foreign languages in Algerian universities is one of the most preferred streams for new students. Even those who have got a diploma in other branches have a strong desire to ameliorate their level in English for different reasons. (job, studies, immigration, etc).

Students are more interested in written and oral expression modules and once asked why they reply that they don't feel concerned with courses like linguistics, literature, civilization, etc. Many of them change their specialty just after the first year while the reason is that they did not expect to learn such sort of modules. Getting contact with a language does not mean learning it. Harmer (1998:24) asserts:

“...not all adults who come into contact with a language learn it .They might not want to. Perhaps the language they come into contact with is, in their view, just too complex for them...”

It is also agreed on that knowing a language (grammar, vocabulary, etc) and being able to speak it are not synonymous; i.e. there is a lot more to speaking than the ability to form grammatically correct phrases or sentences and then to pronounce them (Thornbury, 2005).

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

Relying on the question that anyone may ask once meeting another person which is, of course: “do you speak English?” we can deduce the importance of the speaking skill and proficiency in English in people's daily lives. It is the skill by which people are frequently judged and through which they may make or lose friends when first impression is made (Hedge, 2000; Bygate, 1987).

Luoma (2004: Preface of the editors) claims that “the ability to speak in foreign language is at the very heart of what it means to be able to use a foreign language”. Of course we are not diminishing the role of the other skills in making learners proficient in English. It is still controversial which of the so called “four skills” (writing, reading, speaking and listening) is the most difficult; so to be given more importance and focus. It is according to the learners' needs that teachers (or even a whole department's strategy) concentrate on such or such skill allotting much time for it (White, 1982).

Interviews with some teachers showed that students themselves are not satisfied with their level. It was noticed, too, that students in the department of English at Guelma University are aware of the great importance of developing one's competences in speaking. The will and motivation are available but to put those beliefs and "wishes" into practice is something difficult. Students' marks were another reason behind the choice of researching about speaking. These marks are totally discouraging if we consider that we are speaking about students learning English as a speciality (see Appendix 1). Linguistic and communicative mistakes have been observed in students exam sheets (see Appendix 2). Besides the low marks, many writing difficulties, according to some scholars, are said to be due to psychological barriers like: shyness, fear of making mistakes, lack of self confidence, and even disinterest (especially for ill-oriented students). Several researches (Hughes, 2002; Harmer, 1998, 2001; Ur, 1991; Bygate, 1987; White, 1982) were made hoping to find good methods and techniques for better teaching oral expression module at the university level. It is according to the target population, the available materials, the allotted time and many other aspects that such or such a technique is used.

In this research we want to investigate one of the techniques in teaching oral expression module: the role-play techniques (RP). RP has proven its effective contribution in developing students speaking abilities; Davies and Pearse (2000:83) assert that: "Among the speaking activities [...] are to explore this technique script-based role plays and simulation..."

Of course, speaking could be taught in several ways using different methods and techniques. Nevertheless, the choice to explore this technique was not made randomly. It was noticed that the program of oral expression (OE) is general and focuses on phonetic and grammatical issues and guided dialogues rather than fluency and continued flow of speech (see Appendix 3).

The fact that "prudent" students are attempting to get rid of some hindrances made us eager to explore why they are so and try to investigate possible causes to put an end to some psychological barriers. Students are not used to holding conversations. Even exams are based on the written medium which leaves no opportunity to the speaking skill to be evaluated.

## **2. Significance of the study**

Considerable number of studies was made on teaching speaking. Different suggested methods and techniques were proposed (Total Physical Response, Silent Way, Community

Language Learning, Natural Approach, etc). Opposing the ancient methods in which lessons were teacher-centered, new techniques recommend teachers to make lessons student-centered to ensure making students more active. Many learners undervalue speaking as a skill; perhaps because we can almost all speak and so take the skill too much for granted (Bygate, Ibid).

It is somehow easy to solve pedagogical problems if they are related to material, for example. Nobody objects that the most difficult issues are those concerning the psychological state of the human-being (the student in this case).

Organic illness may cause hindrance, this is quite normal, but some other reasons are not easy to be known. Fear of making mistakes, shyness, lack of self-confidence and underestimating oneself cause also strong obstacles for students to speak freely. As a result, many of the students remain silent and do not seem interested to talk. This kind of problems is sensitive and difficult to solve because if we do not use the adequate "remedy" we may get the student more reluctant. "...it makes no sense to try and bully such students into talking. It will probably only make them more reluctant to speak..." Harmer (1998:131).

For better getting them participate with their colleagues other better ways are possible. Among them, Harmer (Ibid) suggests the use of role-play; relying on the stratagem that through it students have not to be themselves, they can speak more freely with their new identity. We wanted to show the addition that RP may give in improving students' oral performance in Algerian universities, specifically in Guelma university. This is to make teachers aware of its contribution in OE teaching operation as a "good cure" for the above-cited psychological problems and then trying to get it widely used.

### **3. Aims of the study**

Although students are convinced that "to speak" is an indispensable task and that they should participate to increase their abilities in it, and although they are in the 'trustful hands' of teachers who are their models, facilitators and guides in most cases, they are still seeking to reach a good level in English, particularly in speaking.

Moreover, they think that learning to speak as well as possible should be put in the first rank. Hedge (2000:261) asserts:

“...what reasons we have for asking out students to participate speaking in the classroom. There could be several reasons. One is that for many students,

learning to speak competently in English is a priority. They may need this skill for a variety of reasons... keep up rapport in relationships, influence people, win or lose negotiations..."

This shows that the use of speaking doesn't stop in the classroom. Rather, the larger environment this skill is expected to be useful in is the whole society; i.e. in different real-life situations. To get the student ready to use the target language in daily interaction we should put him/her in similar cases and situations. The best activity that provides such an environment is the role-play one. Doff (1988) assures that role-play is a way of bringing real life situations into the classroom.

By doing so we are not only encouraging students to speak, but also helping them overcoming some of the obstacles they face especially shyness since they pretend to be other persons and moreover in free-role-play- they have to decide what language to use and how conversation should develop. (Doff, Ibid).

We are, then, conducting this research aiming at:

- Understanding the nature of Role-play in foreign language teaching/learning process
- Presenting Role-play activity as a good model for bringing real-life situations into classroom and exploring the various functions of language
- Shedding light on Role-play as one of the efficient communicative activities used in TEFL classroom
- Showing the role of such technique in promoting students self-confidence necessary for a good performance of language
- Suggesting some practical recommendations that would enhance student's speaking competence

This research studies a specific case which is: first year student of English in Guelma University. This makes it clear that any obtained result(s) cannot be directly generalized nor taken as a definitive solution. It's an attempt for an overall understanding of role-play and its implementation. Thus, we seek some insights and moreover we still hope for other similar researches to be carried out in the same subject for better results.

#### **4. Research questions**

Our research deals with one of the most important issues in foreign language teaching/learning process. Practising the target language English has always been a recommended effective way to get proficiency in it. Role-play as a communicative activity can “break” students’ silence.

We are, now, in a position to ask the following research questions:

- 1- Why are first year students of English not able to hold and sustain a short conversation?
- 2- To what extent are teachers of oral expression module aware of the remarkable results that can be obtained by using role-play in their classrooms?
- 3- How can the teacher exploit to the full the role-play technique in the oral expression course?

#### **5. Hypotheses**

We think that role-play would be an indispensable efficient technique to better overcome students’ shyness and lack of self-confidence, and thus, enhancing their speaking competences. We suppose that this could be reached if the teachers are aware of the invaluable advantages they would get by integrating this technique in the preparation of oral courses.

Then the following hypothesis can be formulated:

- \* We hypothesize that if teachers are aware of the advantages of RP, they would integrate it in their teaching of the speaking skill.

#### **6. Research methodology**

##### **6.1 Choice of the method**

The present study investigates the nature of RP techniques and their implementation in teaching OE to students of English. This inquiry is also conducted to see whether the teachers are aware of the benefits they may get from the use of RP techniques, starting from breaking some psychological barriers to getting students more free to speak. In such a case, two

variables are interrelated. The independent variable is RP techniques and the dependent one is a better preparation of oral classes. Such investigation with such aims calls for a descriptive method.

## **6.2 Population**

Two categories are directly involved in the present investigation following its nature. The population that will be examined during this dissertation consists of first year students of English and their teachers of OE at Guelma university for the academic year 2007-2008. The choice of students was made randomly. They have different characteristics of age, social background and come from various learning streams (literary, scientific, technical, etc). As it is noticed all over the Algerian universities, especially in literary branches, there is a female over representation. Teachers, too, were randomly chosen; they vary from green to experienced. For degrees, they range from License to Doctorate.

## **6.3 Data gathering tools**

Following the nature of our work, two types of questionnaires are administered to both students and teachers of Oral Expression. Colleagues' opinions and help are recommended, and some measures of clarity and accuracy are taken into consideration while preparing the questionnaires like simple language and objective questions. Once handed back, both questionnaires are analysed and results are interpreted.

## **6. Structure of the Dissertation**

The present dissertation consists of two main parts: theoretical and practical. The first part deals with oral communication as a whole before moving to discuss the nature of the speaking skill, how to teach it, difficulties in teaching and learning it, etc. The RP techniques and their relationship with the speaking skill are also discussed in an overview on the related literature.

The first chapter explores oral communication by surveying the components of communicative competence as well as the different problems that affect students' oral abilities. Some opinions and viewpoints of many educators about various teaching approaches

and methods and their relationship with the teaching of oral communication are introduced.

The second chapter starts with the definition of terms and deals with some of the most difficult problems that hinder students from getting a better level in speaking. Widely used teaching techniques are also discussed in this chapter.

The third chapter deals with Role-play. It gives an overview on researchers' and educators' opinions about it, its advantages, its relationship with drama, and its different types that can be applied. This chapter gives some practical examples that can be used according to various situations and conditions. Finally, it cites the roles a teacher of oral-expression can play in applying RP.

The practical aspect of the work is treated in the second part which investigates what has been discussed in theory. For this purpose the fourth chapter is devoted to the research design. It elucidates the way the subject under investigation is inquired. It gives a full description for the adopted method, target population, variables included in the study, as well as the used tools for data collection.

The fifth chapter seeks to describe, analyze and interpret the results obtained from the questionnaires administered to the first year students of English and their teachers of the module of "oral expression" at the University of Guelma.

Pedagogical recommendations to improve oral sessions preparation are proposed in order to develop students' oral communication abilities, enhance their speaking competences and get good results from the use of RP are all discussed in the last sixth chapter.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ORAL COMMUNICATION AND TEACHING METHODS.

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## CHAPTER ONE

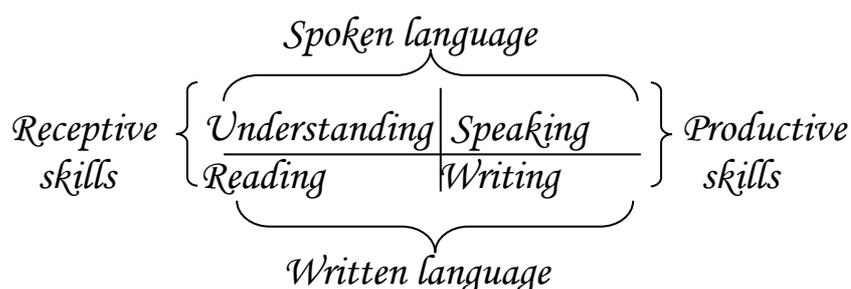
### ORAL COMMUNICATION AND TEACHING METHODS.

#### Introduction

According to two kinds of classification the so-called "four skills" are divided into two classes. The first classification that deals with the mode of communication, considers the productive skill of *speaking* and the receptive skill of *listening comprehension* as components of the spoken language. And also gathers the productive skill of *writing* with the receptive one of *reading* as elements of written language (Byrne, 1986).

The second classification, based on production/reception idea, i.e. the direction of the communication, shows that *speaking* and *writing* are productive skills whereas *listening* and *reading* are receptive skills (ibid). We just draw attention that saying "receptive" does not mean at all "passive".

The following diagram clarifies how all four skills are interrelated:



**Figure 1: Interrelation of Language Skills Byrne (1986:8)**

A similar diagram is given by Widdwson (1978):

	Oral	Written
Receptive	Listening	Reading
Productive	Speaking	Writing

**Figure 2: Classification of Language Skills**

#### 1 Oral communication

In an oral communication a two way process between speaker and listener(s) involves one productive skill (speaking) and one receptive skill (listening comprehension). The interaction between the two (speaker and listener) is a complex process; i.e. the speaker has to encode the message he wishes to convey in an appropriate language, while the listener (no less actively) has to decode (interpret) that message (Byrne, 1986)

We should never confuse between “receptive” and “passive”. Outside the classroom, listening is used twice as often as speaking (Rivers, 1981). Inside the classroom, speaking and listening are the most often used skills (Brown, 1994). But since listening cannot be easily noticed, the dominating skill is speaking. Grognet (1997) claims that practice time is being devoted to such speaking skills as: reporting, negotiating, clarifying, and problem solving.

### **1.1 Oral production**

Judging someone’s oral production is always based on some criteria. Most crucial are those two elements of *fluency* and *accuracy*. Judgments may differ depending on the selected criterion. No one can neglect the role of the two, but the question is that which of them should be given more importance and thus, be the basis of any oral production evaluation. Let’s first give a brief definition for the two terms.

**1.1.1 Accuracy** is the ability to produce correct sentences using correct grammar and vocabulary. It is relative; a child is not able to attain the same level of accuracy as an adult.

**1.1.2 Fluency** is the ability to read, speak or write easily, smoothly and expressively. In other words, the speaker can read, understand and respond in a language clearly and concisely while relating meaning and context. It generally increases as learners progress from beginners to advanced. Fluency is probably best achieved by allowing the stream of speech to flow.

In English teaching dominated by the Grammar-translation Method, accuracy is emphasized more than fluency, and vice versa, when Communicative Language Teaching Approach is used. It is impossible, however, to achieve 100% error-free communication. During the controlled and semi-controlled language practice periods, a high degree of accuracy is required. Students are encouraged to make few mistakes and expected to manipulate language system as spontaneously and flexibly as possible (Harmer, 2001).

Once students have mastered the language forms, grammar, pronunciation, and have a certain amount of vocabulary, they ought to use language more freely. At this stage errors should be tolerated and error-making should not be seen as disgraceful but rather as a natural and common practice. If we focus on accuracy we can get a student able to complete any grammar drill, but he won’t be able to order a cup of tea in real English situation. Accuracy and fluency are two factors which would determine the success of English language students in the future. They are not mutually exclusive, but are interdependent (ibid). So we cannot imagine a student learning accuracy and neglecting fluency or vice versa; to equilibrate the two should be the aim of any English language learner.

## 1.2 Communicative Competence

Abilities differ from one person to another. Since they are not given to anyone, only few people have some special "gifts". This does not mean that all those who possess a kind of particular capacities are born with them; many persons try hard to develop their abilities through continuous "training" and study. Thus they reinforce their competences sometimes to build a strong personality, to impress others, or mainly to please them.

Everyday, life puts people in persisting interaction. This latter implies influencing others and being influenced by them. In a normal speech communication situation, a speaker tries to exert and influence on a listener by making him perceive, understand, feel or do something particular. In doing so, the speaker exposes a linguistically structured speech behaviour which operates together with non-verbal signals and various kinds of background knowledge both (the speaker and the listener) have.

Before discussing communicative competence, we should first, have a look at what a « linguistic competence » means. The term itself emerged in the work of the linguist Chomsky (1965, cited in Harmer, 2001). It referred specifically to syntactic competence. Chomsky believes that communication goes hand in hand with understanding grammatically correct expressions. Damarau (1971) emphasizes that attention should be paid to two essential points to understand Chomsky's approach to linguistic competence:

- 1) the subject matter of linguistics and,
- 2) the properties that are necessary in a model for it to be regarded as an adequate model for language.

According to the definition given by Ottenheimer (2006), linguistic competence is the ability of a speaker-hearer to speak and understand language in grammatically correct manner. Thus, a linguistically competent person is someone who can differentiate between right and wrong, true and false. Phillips and Tan (2005, cited in Literacy Encyclopedia: 67) assert in their article that:

Linguistic competence defines the system of rules that governs an individual's tacit understanding of what is acceptable and what is not in the language they speak [...] competence, in Chomsky's sense, is to be regarded as entirely independent of any consideration of performance...

Concerning communicative competence, we can say that it is, first of all, larger and broader than the former linguistic competence. Ekayati (2007) claims that:

Communicative competence, indeed, includes the whole of linguistic competence plus the whole of the amorphous (indefinite shape or form) range of facts included under socio-linguistic pragmatic competence (the rules and conventions) for using

language items in context and other factors like attitudes, values, and motivation.

The term « Communicative Competence » was coined by the sociolinguist Hymes (1972). His work came as a criticism to Chomsky's linguistic competence (1965). Hymes saw that Chomsky's theory was too limited, because it discussed competence as an intrapersonal construct, and the "rule-governed creativity" that described a child mushrooming grammar at the age of three or four did not account sufficiently for the social and functional roles of language (Byrne, 1986).

Many researchers tried to distinguish between linguistic and communicative competences (Hymes, 1972 ; Paulston 1974 ; Savignon 1983, Canale & Swain 1983) mainly to change the traditional view that focused on linguistic abilities, and as a consequence, a mixture was made between the notions. Widdowson (1978: 67) asserts:

Communicative abilities embrace linguistic skills but not the reverse[...] it will also be generally agreed, perhaps, that traditionally the focus of attention has been on the linguistic skills and that it has commonly been supposed that once these are acquired in reasonable measure the communicative abilities will follow as more or less automatic consequence

Widdowson (ibid, 67) did not only think that this is true but he thought also that the contrary may happen, he adds:

What evidence we have, however, suggests that this is not the case....on the contrary, it would seem to be the case that an over emphasis on drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentences tends to inhibit the development of communicative abilities.

Communicative Competence, therefore, is not only to have the language knowledge but to be able to use that knowledge too. Savignon (1983, cited in Hedge, 2000) claims that communicative competence is not absolute, depends on the cooperation of all involved participants, and relative.

Hymes' reaction against the predominating structural approaches of the 1960's and early 1970's opened the door of investigation widely and many researches were made upon his work. Perhaps the main work that we can cite, is that carried out by Canale & Swain (1983) who tried to define communicative competence. In Canale & Swain's (ibid) definitions we can find four different key components that make up the construct of Communicative Competence - other researchers' works (Faerch, Haastrup, and Phillipson 1984, cited in Hedge, 2000; Bachman 1990), have similar classification of components to that of Canale & Swain (1983).

Littlewood (1994:06) suggests four broad domains of skill which make up a person's communicative competence, and which must be recognised in foreign language teaching (from the speaker's perspective). It is cited, too, in Nunan's (1996:13).

- The learner must attain as high a degree as possible of linguistic competence. That is, he must develop skills in manipulating the linguistic system, to the point where he can use it spontaneously and flexibly in order to express intended messages.
- The learner must distinguish between the forms which he has mastered as part of his linguistic competence, and the communicative function they perform. In other words, items mastered as part of a linguistic system must also be understood as part of a communicative system.
- The learner must develop skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings as effectively as possible in concrete situations. He must learn to use feedback to judge his success, and if necessary, remedy failure by using different language.
- The learner must become aware of the social meaning of language forms. For many learners, this way does not entail the ability to vary their own speech to suit different social circumstances, but rather the ability to use generally acceptable forms and avoid potentially offensive ones.

**1.2.1 Linguistic Competence** deals with the knowledge of the language itself; i.e. knowledge of spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, word formation, grammatical structure, sentence structure, and linguistic semantics. Hedge (2000) claims that listening object shows that a learner is developing the ability to select specific vocabulary and knows their pronunciation and graphic forms. Development in using word formation rules correctly is noticed if a learner is able to add prefixes correctly. Too, a learner who can make a right use of tenses is showing a kind of grammatical competence development. Hedge (ibid) emphasizes the fact that linguistic competence is an integral part of communicative competence. According to Faerch, Haastrup and Phillipson (1984:168, cited in Hedge, 2000) this is of great value and the two are indispensable. They say that: "it is impossible to conceive of a person being communicatively competent without being linguistically competent."

**1.2.2 Pragmatic Competence** means to be able to use the language along with a conceptual system to achieve certain communicative goals or intentions (Hedge, 2000). Sometimes, it is called *illocutionary* competence. Hedge (ibid) gives the sentence example 'it

*is so hot today*' which can have more than one 'illocutionary' force. It can be a statement about physical atmosphere, a request to open the window, or an attempt to elicit the offer of cold drink (ibid). It is also called sociolinguistic competence. Savignon (1983: 37) assures that this kind of competence:

requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used : the roles of the participants, the information they share, and the function of the interaction. Only in a full context of this kind can judgment be made on the appropriateness of a particular utterance.

Hymes (1972) concludes that this competence could be reached by being able to know "when to speak, when not, what to talk about, with whom, when, where and in what manner".

**1.2.3 Discourse Competence** while grammatical competence focuses on sentence-level grammar, discourse competence is concerned with inter-sentential relationships (Byrne, 1986). Shumin (1997: 8) emphasizes that in a discourse one has to produce comprehensible sentences and be able to understand what other communicator(s) say(s). She asserts:

In communication, both the production and comprehension of language require one's ability to perceive and progress stretches of discourse and to formulate representations of meaning from referents in both previous sentences and following sentences.

According to her (ibid) rules of cohesion and coherence aid in holding communication in a meaningful way. Effective speakers are those having a large repertoire of time, and indicate cause, contrast, and emphasis (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992).

Hedge (2000) presents three new aspects of sub-competences which are:

- how to perform the turns in discourse,
- how to maintain the conversation, and
- how to develop the topic.

**1.2.4 Strategic Competence** is perhaps the most important of all the communicative competence elements. Yule and Tarone (1990:181, cited in Shumin, 1997) refer to this subcategory as "an ability to select an effective means of performing a communicative act that enables the listener/ reader to identify the intended referent." It consists of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that a speaker may use in actions. To compensate for breakdowns due to insufficient knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse rules (Berns, 1990). To conclude, and with reference to speaking, Shumin (1997:8) claims that strategic competence refers to the:

Ability to know when and how to take the floor, how to keep a conversation going, how to terminate the conversation, and how to clear up communication breakdown, as well as comprehension problems.

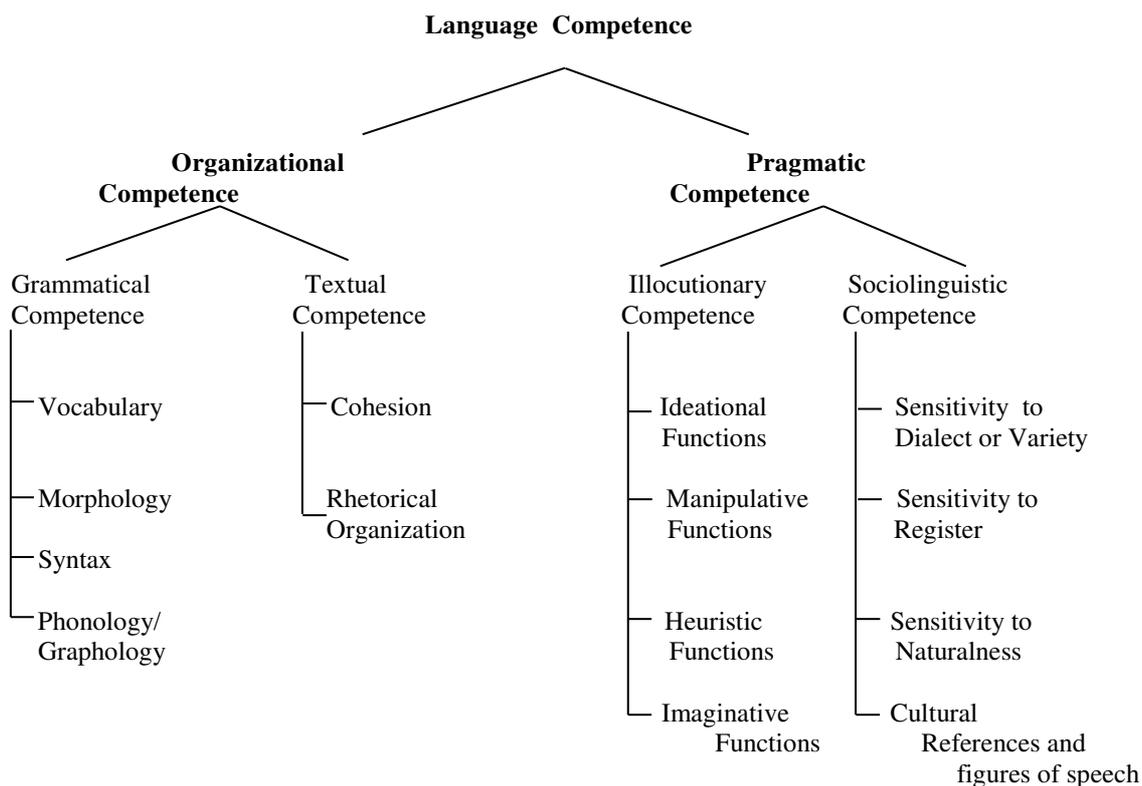
**1.2.5 Fluency** although it is normally reserved for speech, it can be the fifth element that the communicative competence includes. In a kind of comparison between strategic competence and fluency, Faerch, Haastrup, and Phillipson (1984: 168, cited in Hedge, 2000) claim that:

Whereas strategic competence presupposes a lack of 'accessible' knowledge, fluency covers speakers' ability to make use of whatever linguistic and pragmatic competence they have.

They list three types of fluency:

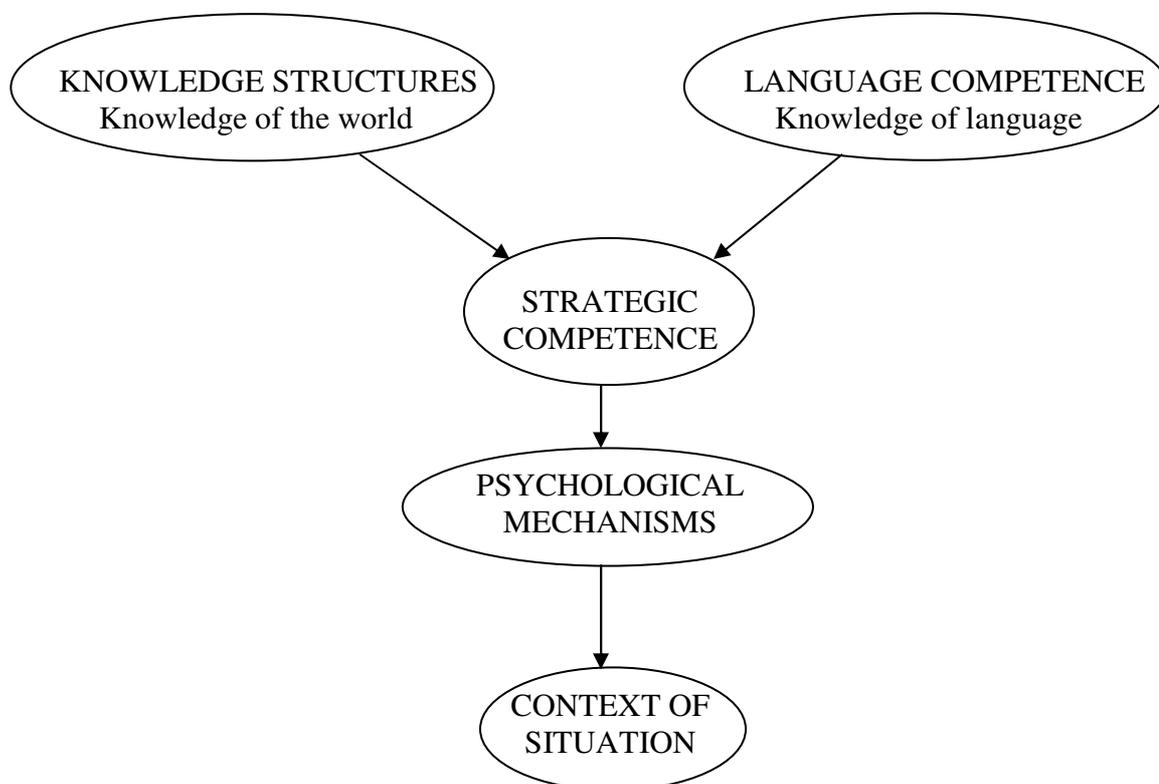
- Semantic fluency: linking together propositions and speech act.
- Lexical-syntactic fluency: linking together syntactic constituents and words.
- Articulatory fluency: linking together speech segments (ibid: 143).

So, components of fluency are all gathered and done quickly in what Johnson (1979, cited in Hedge, 2000) calls "real time". Fluency includes: the ability to respond coherently within the turns of the conversation, to link the words and phrases of the questions, to pronounce the sounds clearly with appropriate stress and intonation (Hedge, 2000). This means that fluency in all is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation (ibid). Communicative competence is a very important point that should be paid great attention by foreign language teachers and learners. Knowing grammatical and semantic rules of language is not enough; learners must acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use the language in the context of structural interpersonal exchange, in which many of the previous factors interact. Below is a figure made by Bachman (1990: 87) in which he clarifies the different components of language competence. We can understand how each of the components includes other sub-elements.



**Figure 3: Components of Language Competence**

In the same way Bachman (1990: 85) shows in the following figure how the strategic competence is the result of a combination between the knowledge of the world and that of language itself.



**Figure 4: Components of Communicative Language Ability in Communicative Language Use**

### 1.3 Factors Affecting Adult EFL Learners' Oral Communication

A learner before all is a human being who can manage some factors and circumstances but not all of them. That's why we want to investigate some of those factors enhancing or diminishing learners' oral communication capacities.

**1.3.1 Age** Is perhaps, one of the most commonly cited determinant factors of success or failure in the L2 or FL learning. The age of learners decide what and how to teach. Harmer (2001) says that «people of different ages have different needs, competences, and cognitive skills». Many linguists claim that children learn languages faster than adults do. Pinker (1994: 293) asserts that: “acquisition...is guaranteed for children up to the age of six, is steadily compromised from then until shortly after puberty, and is rare thereafter.”

Learners who begin learning as adults achieve lower proficiency. Many adults fail to reach native like proficiency in L2. At a certain age they may suffer from "*fossilization*"; the permanent cessation of L2 development. This shows that aging itself may affect or limit adult learners' ability to pronounce the target language fluently with native-like pronunciation (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992). Adults fear losing creative powers; they are concerned to maintain a sense of generativity (Williams & Burden 1997:32). Rogers (1996:54, cited, in Harmer, 2001) points that generativity is related to the previous learning experiences.

**1.3.2 Aural Medium** After all researches made in the different fields of linguistics, no one can deny the strong interdependence of listening and speaking skills. Listening plays an extremely important role in the development of speaking abilities. In fact, during interaction, every speaker plays two roles at the same time: listener and speaker. Mendlsoln & Rubin (1995, cited in Shumin, 1997: 8) claim that:

while listening, learners must comprehend the text, be retaining information in memory, integrate it with what follows, and continually adjust their understanding of what they hear in the light of prior knowledge and of coming information.

It is that interdependence that makes the rules of language internalized. Shumin (1997: 8) says:

the fleetingness of speech, together with the features of spoken English-loosely organized syntax, in complete forms, false starts, and the use of fillers, undoubtedly hinder EFL learners' comprehension and affects the development of their speaking abilities, as well.

**1.3.3 Socio-cultural Factors** As we saw before, with the discussion of linguistic and communicative competences, (especially pragmatic component) language is a form of social action because linguistic communication occurs in the context of structured interpersonal exchange and meaning is thus socially regulated (Copoulou, 1990). For the same idea, Carrasquillo (1994: 55) emphasizes that language used by individuals in a certain community expresses the shared values. He asserts: “shared values and beliefs create the traditions and social structures that bind a community together and are expressed in their language.”

Each language has its rules of usage as to how, when and to what degree a speaker may impose a given verbal behaviour on his or her partner (Bern, 1990). In addition non verbal communication system included in oral communication can ever contradict the message provided through verbal channel or at least may lead to misunderstand it. Shumin (1997) gives the example of the Chinese students who heard «*let's get together for lunch sometimes*» and immediately responded to fix a specific date without noticing the native speaker's indifferent facial expression since he had not understood the non-verbal message (facial expression), he puzzled when his interlocutor left without giving him an expected answer.

**1.3.4 Affective Factors** They are mostly related to the psychological side of the learner such as: emotions, self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude and motivation. Oxford (1990:140) sees affective factors as very important in determining success or failure for a language learner, “the affective side of the learner is probably one of the most important influences on language learning success or failure.”

Anxiety, for instance, is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, and apprehension. It can be easily proved if someone speaks in public (especially in front of natives). L2 or FL learning, according to Brown (1994) is a complex task that is susceptible to human anxiety. For motivation, as Brown (ibid) points out, it includes factors such as the need for exploration, activity, simulation, new knowledge and ego enhancement. Two kinds of motivation are cited by Harmer (2001), *intrinsic motivation* and *extrinsic motivation*. The former comes from within the individual (enjoyment of the learning process itself or desire to feel better). The latter is caused by any number of outside factors (hope of financial rewards or possible future travel...). And in both cases, a general idea is made on the basis that a motivated learner -whatever the kind of his motivation is- is a person who is psychologically well prepared to acquire more than others.

## 2 Approaches and Methods in Teaching Oral Communication

How to teach language has been for a long time, and still is, the linguists' number one issue to investigate. "What approach should be followed? What method should be applied? What technique should be used?", all these questions are quite frequent to be asked by any teacher; "green" or experienced. When the teaching matter is related to foreign languages, it needs some special care. Teaching any language –even the mother tongue- requires right choice of the way to do so, we think then that while teaching a foreign language (English) great attention and care should be paid.

Although some of the terms cited above like "*approach*" and "*method*" are often used interchangeably, they, however, do not mean the same. So, before examining some famous approaches and methods, let's first define items and clarify the differences between them. The first linguist who defined these three terms was the American Anthony Edward in 1963. His definition had a great impact on all those concerned in the field of teaching (teachers, trainers, linguist's, didacticians...etc). Edward (1963, cited in Brown, 1994) suggests that an "approach" is the large system of ideas and thought behind a teacher's lesson plans, whereas a "method" stands for specific ways to teach English. Specific techniques are used by a given method. He (ibid) claims that the arrangement is hierarchical; i.e. different techniques exist in one method and this latter is consistent with a given approach.

### 2.1 Definition of terms

**2.1.1 Approach** An approach is based mainly on theories, implicit or explicit, which refer to principles governing the teaching process in a way that they establish a kind of "philosophy" of language teaching (Davies & Pearse, 2000). Edward (opcit, cited in Brown, 1994: 158) actually says that:

An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught

A language learning approach consists of the following three elements:

- views about the nature of language.
- beliefs about language learning and,
- ideas about how the above should be applied practically to language learning and teaching. (Brown, 1994)

It is thus, all these elements gathered in the teacher's mind to form general assumptions about language learning.

**2.1.2 Method** Is the procedure or the different organized steps prepared by teachers to be applied with their classes. Edward (opcit, cited in Brown, 1994: 158) defines method as:

an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural...within one approach, there can be many methods

Davies & Pearse (2000) agree with all these ideas. They claim, too, that an approach can include many methods which teachers are not obliged to use unlike approaches that are in most cases compulsory to be followed. They (ibid, 186) say that:

A method has a general approach behind it....but it goes into more detail about such things as the syllabus, learning activities and teaching techniques. Different methods may have essentially the same approach behind them.

In brief, and according to a dictionary definition, a method is "*the way of doing something*". From this perspective in relation with language, a method represents the way teachers teach language following certain strategies that deal with the practical side of foreign language teaching (Mackay, 1965)

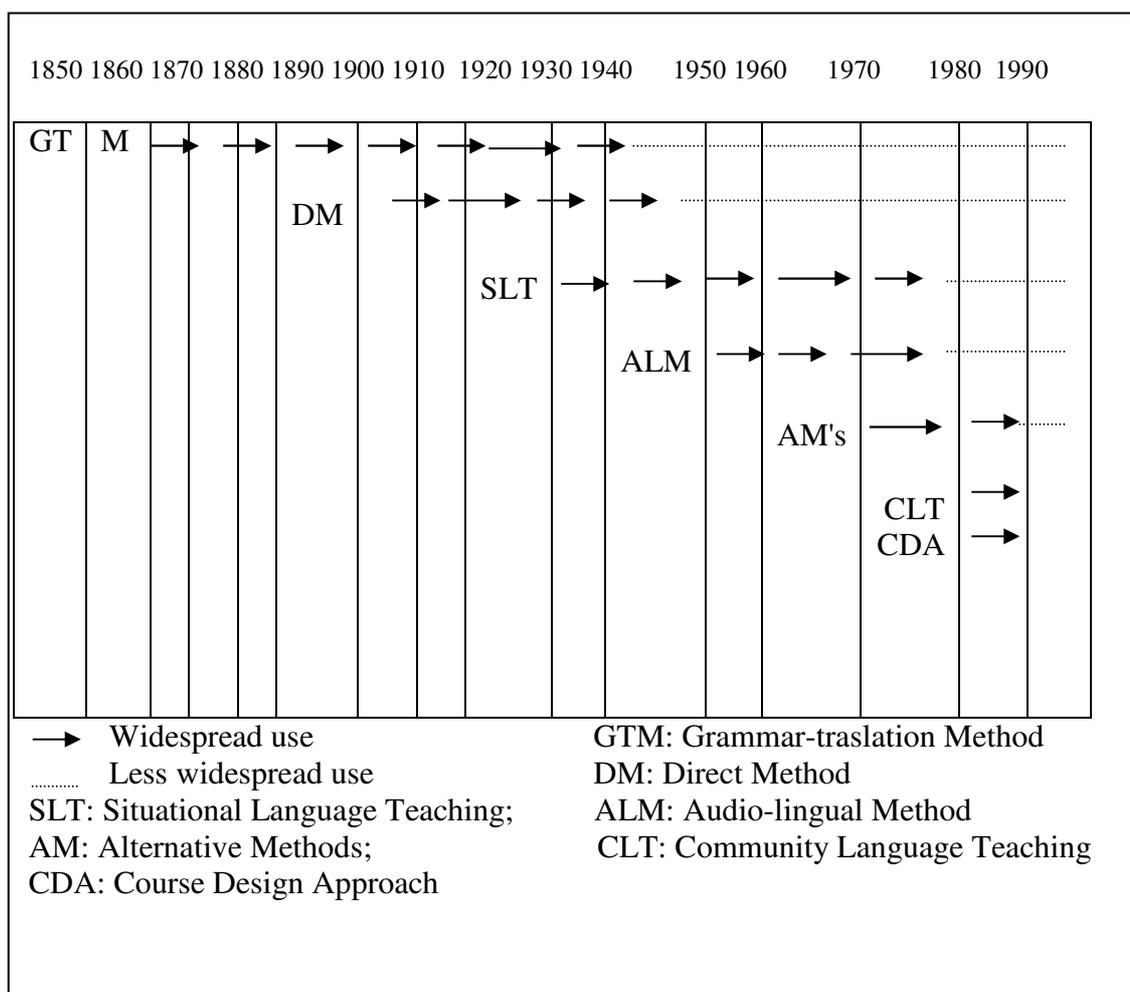
**2.1.3 Technique** Is an explicit procedure used to reach an immediate goal. While one technique can be suitable for accomplishing some objectives given in a certain method, some other techniques cannot. Edward (1963, cited in Brown, 1994:158) asserts:

A technique is implementational – that which actually takes place in a classroom. It is a particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in a harmony with an approach as well"

It is exactly what happens between the teacher and his students inside the classroom. The choice of such or such a technique depends on the teacher's 'intelligence' and experience, as well as the choice of the assistant material.

We can, now, conclude that the confusion between the three terms: approach, method, and technique should not be made; each term means something more or less broader than the other. We move in a hierarchical order from the theoretical (approach), in which basic beliefs about language and language learning are considered, to design (method) in which a practical plan for teaching – or learning- a language is considered, to the details (technique) where the actual learning activity (ies) take(s) place (Orwing, 1990).

In presenting some of the famous approaches and methods, we are going to follow a chronological order suggested by Davies and Pearse (2000: 188) and diagrammed as follows:



**Table 1: Historical Sequence of the Main Approaches and Methods**

## 2.2 Approaches and Methods

### 2.2.1 Grammar-translation Method (GTM)

It emerged when the western people wanted to learn such foreign languages as Latin and Greek. It focuses on learning grammatical rules and memorizing bilingual vocabulary lists. Classroom activities and homework include text translation and written exercises because writing is considered to be the « superior » form of a language. Translation is the basis of this method since it is used during almost all the learning process inside and outside the classroom (homework). Davies & Pearse (2000: 188) say:

Translation is considered as one of the best ways of practicing the application of rules, as well as the transformation of sentences from, for example, Present Tense to Past Tense, or Active to Passive.

The teacher's presentation and explanation of grammar rules and meanings of words are in the student's native tongue. The learner/student is very passive. He has only to pay careful attention to all what the teacher explains and corrects, keeps information in his mind and uses the memorized rules and vocabulary only when asked.

Practicing the target language was limited. Little stress was on the content of texts and meanings of words in sentences. Students do not speak the target language a lot since speaking –or communication as a whole- is not the objective of learning a foreign language.

GTM lasted for more than fifty (50) years before other methods emerged – and it is still used in a way or another from time to time. It was sharply criticized for the above principles which concentrated on the written language and neglected the spoken one. Some of the critics, like Richards & Rodgers (1998, cited in Brown, 1994: 10) say:

The Grammar-translation Method creates frustration for students and makes few demands on teachers. It is used in situations where understanding literary texts is the primary focus of foreign language study and there is little need for a speaking knowledge of the language

We can clearly notice that GTM was not concerned with developing students' speaking abilities. Students had no right even to discuss such or such a point they did not understand. May be the only opportunity given to students to use the target language was while repeating sentences or reading aloud sentences they had translated themselves !

### 2.2.2 Direct Method (DM)

It originated in the late 19th century as a revolution against GTM. New sciences, especially Linguistics and Psychology helped the emergence of this method with thinkers like the Frenchman Lambert Sauveur who opened a language school in Boston in 1869. In this school the system of teaching French became known as the « *natural method* ». On the basis of these natural method principles, the Direct Method was founded.

It is based on the idea that second/foreign language learning should be more like first language learning. Translation between L1 and L2 is extremely avoided, and only little emphasis is put on the rules of grammar. The DM focuses on spontaneous use of the target language and includes lots of oral interaction. That's why the teacher gives instructions exclusively in the L2, and uses the everyday vocabulary and sentences. Students learn L2 in a natural way by imitating what they hear. They are encouraged to ask and answer questions, and to speak as much as possible. Moreover, this is regarded as the best way to practice L2 and develop oral communication skills; since language itself is a 'system of communication'. Davies & Pearse (2000: 189) say that:

Languages are seen as systems of communication, primarily oral, in which words are used together in sentences, and sentences are used together in discourse. Languages are believed to be learnt best in a natural way by hearing [...] and imitating what you hear. The learner's L1 should be avoided at all costs. Asking and answering questions is considered one of the best forms of practice.

For the teacher, he can convey meaning through showing, drawing, miming or demonstrating things. He has to be active, demonstrate the language, organize practice and correct the learners (ibid). The learner has to listen carefully, imitate, and participate as much as possible in the oral practice of language. This intensive practice of conversations and discussions enable him to build his own grammar gradually –since L1 is forbidden inside the classroom.

### 2.2.3 The Situational Language Teaching

Again, as it happened to GTM, the Direct Method was criticized in the 1920's and 1930's by British applied linguists who- though not totally opposing the DM- were not satisfied with its weaker aspects. British linguists see that “language can be properly understood only in the context of oral situations of use” (Davies & Pearse, 2000). They kept the same idea of the DM which consists of presentation and practice using objects, pictures and demonstration but they claimed that it is only within one coherent ‘*realistic situation*’ that this procedure should be followed. This shows the strong similarity between the Direct Method and the Situational Language Teaching.

Davies & Pearse (ibid) see that “the DM was weak in syllabus design and classroom techniques”. They claim that activities in the SLT are based on ‘*substitution practice*’. Therefore, the sentence patterns, in which grammar content is organized, are the basis of substitution tables.

In both methods, the DM and the SLT, a great emphasis is put on oral practice of the target language. The slight difference is that the SLT insists on providing coherent realistic situations (driving, shopping, familial problems,...etc) for the learners who are supposed to produce as much as possible sentences following the same pattern the teacher gives. This shows how the learners are controlled and their production is restricted to that pattern. Most of the time is allotted to the teacher to speak. Murphy (1991: 52) says that: “in the Direct Method and Situational Language Teaching, teachers do the most of the talking while students engage in many controlled, context explicit, speaking activities.”

The difference given above is not the only one; the SLT, opposing to the DM, sees “a more important supporting role for reading and writing” (Davies & Pearse, 2000) which DM neglects.

### 2.2.4 The Audio-lingual Method (ALM)

It is also called the “aura-oral” method referring to hearing and speaking in Latin. It appeared in the mid-1950 and began to spread in Western schools. It was first implemented in US Army in the Second World War. Two theories were combined to be the basis of the ALM:

Structuralism and Behaviorism. Davies & Pearse (ibid: 190) call them the ‘*twin foundations*’ from which ALM emerged. They, also, describe ALM as the ‘*scientific approach*’ that contributed in an impressive way in developing teaching foreign languages. They assert that:

it (ALM) really took shape when American Structural Linguistics and Behaviorist Psychology were adopted as the twin foundations of a ‘scientific’ approach to foreign language teaching in the late 1950’s

The ALM uses the Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement model that builds good habits in language learners. In addition, it relies heavily on drills to form these habits; students repeat and manipulate language forms in a way that they are ‘constantly learning’ and, moreover, are ‘shielded’ from the possibility of making mistakes by the design of the drill (Harmer, 2001: 79-80). Harmer gives an example of an Audio-lingual drill:

*Teacher:* there’s a cup on the table ...repeat

*Students:* there’s a cup on the table

*Teacher:* spoon

*Students:* there’s a spoon on the table

*Teacher:* book

*Students:* there’s a book on the table

*Teacher:* on the chair

*Students:* there’s a book on the chair

He claims that although one of the most important interests of ALM is to get students use correct language only, it runs counter the idea – agreed on by language theorists- of acquiring language by trial and error model. Dialogues are the most used form within which the students mimic the teacher’s pronunciation and intonation. Grammar is learnt through analogy rather than explanation, and vocabulary through pronunciation rather than written words. Communication is seen as a primary function of language and speaking is one of the two emphasized skills in ALM. Students are strongly discouraged to use their mother tongue and thus intensive contact with the target language is the only way to get good mastery of it.

### **2.2.5 Alternative Methods**

Following the survey of approaches and methods made by Davies & Pearse (2000) we speak briefly about some other methods and an approach which were developed between 1960’s and 1980’s. Although none of them was widely used, they nevertheless have contributed in the search of the *perfect method*.

#### **2.2.5.1 Total Physical Response (TPR)**

It was developed in the mid 1960’s by James Asher in the USA. He based his theory on the fact that an adult’s L2 acquisition is the same as the child’s L1 acquisition

though he himself confessed that “his method is more suitable to children and therefore should be included together with other methods” (Davies & Pearse, *ibid*; Harmer, 2001)

In TPR students are asked to respond physically to the language they hear. For instance, the teacher asks a student to ‘*pick up the triangle from the table and give it to me*’ or ‘*walk quickly to the door and hit it*’ (Asher, 1982:54, 56). After that, the teacher can draw back and let one of the classmates give instructions to his peers.

TPR demands a physical response to oral orders which is not the case with other methods. Students rarely speak but they are challenged to physically demonstrate listening comprehension (Murphy, 1991). So, listening is taught before speaking and according to Asher (*opcit*) speech production will start spontaneously once students are trained enough on listening comprehension.

### 2.2.5.2 Silent Way (SW)

Gattegno (1972) founded this method in USA in the early 1970’s. Almost totally contrasting with TPR, the SW is based on the learner’s awareness. It is a learner-centered method in which the role of the teacher is quite limited to guiding activities and intervening only when necessary. One of the remarkable features of the SW is that instead of entering into conversations with the students, the teacher says as little as possible. “He rarely speaks, while student’s speaking is focused upon grammatically sequenced language forms” (Murphy, 1991:53). Accordingly, it is the learner’s role to discover and create language rather than just remembering and repeating what has been taught (Harmer, 2001). He (*ibid*) sees that the matter is controversial. While for some SW seems inhuman, with the teacher’s silence acting as a barrier rather than an incentive, others see the good side of it in that students would rely on themselves and upon each other, and this would be very exciting and liberating.

Concerning oral communication SW encourages students to speak as much as possible and contrarily to TPR, listening is not focused on since the teacher is most of the time silent and it is the students’ *duty* to produce, create and learn the target language. (Davies & Pearse, 2000:191) say that: “The method is based on the hypothesis that discovery and problem-solving produce much better learning than imitation and repetition.”

Theoretically the SW seems a very supporting method for oral communication in general, but practically it is too difficult to be applied for two reasons at least.

- a- when we speak about the students' awareness, independence, sense of responsibility, priority, discovery of language ...etc, this means that this method should be applied only with aware advanced students, which could never happen

– classes include students with various innate, social and psychological characteristics.

- b- teaching itself is a hard task. When we add such a complex behavior in which a teacher should act with his students, the matter would call for special training in the use of the needed materials and techniques.

### 2.2.5.3 Suggestopedia

The period from the late 1960's to the late 1980's saw the emergence of many language teaching methods. From the early 1970's Suggestopedia was first developed by the Bulgarian psychiatrist, Giorgi Lazanov (1978) and later by Jane Bancroft in Canada and others elsewhere. Although, it seems similar to some methods based on memorization of language items and patterns, Suggestopedia is different in the way and manner in which memorization objective is realized. Suggestopedia makes '*favorable atmosphere*' the first compulsory condition for better learning. Harmer (2001:89) says:

Suggestopedia sees the physical surroundings and atmosphere of the classroom as of vital importance. By ensuring that the students are comfortable, confident and relaxed, the effective filter is lowered, thus enhancing learning.

One of the features Suggestopedia emphasizes is the 'parent-children' relationship between the teacher and students and the sympathetic way of the teacher's treatment of students (Harmer, *ibid*).

Memorization of the learnt material is a vital, important element in the learning process. Therefore, keeping information in mind needs 'relaxing surroundings'. Davies & Pearse (2000:192) assert that:

Memory is facilitated by relaxing surroundings (for example, pleasant decor and comfortable furniture), soothing background music, and confident, authoritative reading and behavior by the teacher. The teacher's reading [...] should be matched to the rhythm of the background music.

More clearly, Harmer (*opcit*:89-90) gives the three essential steps followed in any Suggestopedia lesson. He says:

A Suggestopaedic lesson has three main parts. There is an oral review section in which previously learnt material is used for discussion. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of new dialogue material and its native language equivalent. Finally...students listen to relaxing music....while the teacher reads the new dialogue material in a way which synchronizes with the taped music....students leave the room silently"

Memorization of interesting texts in L2 and their translation in L1 to be understood shows that in Suggestopedia speaking activities are very controlled and based upon lengthy

written scripts and dramatic teacher performances (Murphy, 1991). Although this method was seen as mysterious, time and money consuming, and highly questionable, some of its principles are applied in many situations. Music is frequently used -even if not in the way Lazanov (ibid) recommended- and affective filter is suggested to be lowered in most of methods.

#### **2.2.5.4 Community Language Learning (CLL)**

It was developed by Charles Curran in the USA from the mid-1970's. In this method the teacher serves as the '*knower*' whose role is to translate what the students want to say from their L1 to English. The general atmosphere requires students sitting in a circle whereas the teacher should stand outside it. The student can either say what he wants in English or just in his mother tongue and it will be the teacher's role to translate it to English. Consequently, the student can now convey what he wants to the circle. It is only later when the students are confident enough with language that they can be put in parallel lines facing each other for pair work discussion (Harmer, 2001).

Sometimes, each intervention is recorded. At the end, a conversation is slowly built up onto the cassette. The teacher replays all the recording and the students listen to their 'conversation' (Davies & Pearse, 2000). What is really interesting in this method is that the teacher is at the 'disposition' of his students because his job is to 'facilitate' rather than to 'teach'; he is not restricted to the syllabus, but to the students' interests and concerns. Murphy (1991:53) claims that in CLL: "many peer-to-peer interactions that contribute to a community spirit among students, whereas the spoken forms incorporated into the syllabus are generated by students themselves."

#### **2.2.5.5 Natural Approach (NA)**

It represents a combination between more than two methods. It was developed by Tracy Terrell (1977) in the USA from the 1970's and later in collaboration with Stephen Krashen (1978). It is similar to the Direct Method in that both of them see language as a means of communication in specific situations. Variations in language are many: formal and informal styles, regional and social dialects, etc. However, formal study of foreign language is a waste of time. Language is acquired by hearing and using it in real communication. NA encourages subconscious *acquisition* (Davies & Pearse, 2000). NA focuses on comprehensible listening; it emphasizes maximum exposure to listening related to actions (one of the essential principles of TPR) - this is mainly in early stages. In later stages, other activities associated with other approaches and methods especially the DM, SLT, and CLL are preferable (ibid).

NA emphasizes the fact that students learn language better when they are at ease and spontaneous. Making errors should not restrain students; all disturbing factors should be eliminated. "It emphasizes the importance of reducing stress and anxiety, and promoting the learners' motivation and self-confidence" (ibid).

All the four methods and one approach discussed above have had a considerable impact upon language teaching though they were not widely used. Most of them insist on the importance of lowering the students' affective filter and thus removing a psychological barrier to learning (Harmer, 2001). Nevertheless, SW or TPR bear some principles that may cause anxiety; a psychological problem that humanist theorizing – to which most of the above methods belong- aims to prevent.

The reason behind which those "alternative methods" did not succeed is that all of them require 'highly-trained' teachers, mature and motivated learners, and specific types of classrooms (Davies & Pearse, opcit).

### **2.2.6 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Also called 'the Communicative Approach', CLT was developed on the basis of all preceding approaches and methods in the 1960's and 1970's most of which have already been discussed above. Accordingly, it is seen -by its very nature- as 'eclectic' (Davies & Pearse, 2000). CLT did not bring anything new about the necessity of making communicative ability the goal of foreign language learning (Littlewood, 1994); since each of the previous 'members of the approaches family' claims to be communicative (Nunan, 1996). CLT does not focus on one single method for the realization of its theory but rather it has wide variations (Davies & Pearse, 2000:193-194). Its main principles perceive language in terms of:

1-What we do with utterances, their specific communicative functions (for example, informing, enquiring, ordering, and inviting) and not just in terms of the formal structure of sentences and their basic meanings.

2- How we really use language in authentic discourse

For example, when we say:

A: Hey, you're wanted in Room 13.

B: Where is it?

A: On the next floor.

B: Thanks.

And when we say:

A: Excuse me. Could you tell me where Room 13 is?

B: Yes, it is on the next floor.

A: Thank you.

B: Not at all.

As well as the fact that we seldom, if ever, say:

A: Where is Room13?

B: Room 13 is on the next floor."

CLT is founded on two crucial pillars: '*What to teach?*' and '*How to teach?*' The first aspect emphasizes the functions of the language –we have said that language according to CLT is seen as a system of communication. Therefore, the focus is made on using these language forms appropriately in different situations and for various purposes (Harmer, 2001). The second aspect stresses the importance of plentiful exposure to the target language and providing opportunities to use it in developing students' knowledge and skill. CLT's main concern is to get students communicate as much as possible. That's why accuracy is less important in any communicative activity. Harmer (ibid) in many occasions gives the example of 'role-play' as a very popular activity in CLT. This may stand as another supportive reason upon which we have chosen to investigate this technique and its vital contribution in enhancing students' communicative skills, speaking in particular.

Harmer (ibid: 85) summarizes the specific characteristics of communicative activities in contrast with non communicative ones.

#### *Non communicative Activities*

- \* no communicative desire
- \* no communicative purpose
- \* form not content
- \* one language item only
- \* teacher intervention
- \* materials control

#### *Communicative Activities*

- \* a desire to communicate
- \* a communicative purpose
- \* content not form
- \* variety of language
- \* no teacher intervention
- \* no materials control



**Figure 5 : Communication Continuum**

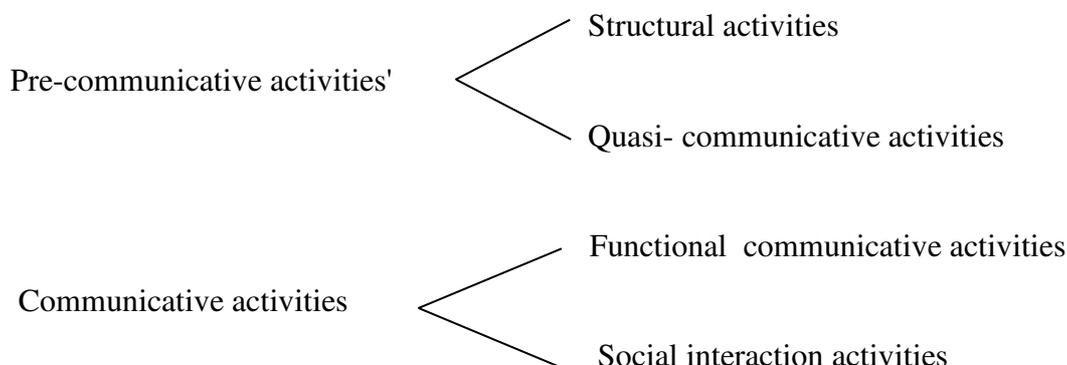
He (Harmer, 2001:85) gives two examples to explain the reason behind classifying such or such an activity as communicative or non-communicative. He says:

Not all activities occur at either extremes of the continuum [...] An activity in which students have to go round the class asking questions with a communicative purpose, but with some language restriction, may be nearer the right-hand end of the continuum, whereas a game which forces the use of only one structure (with the teacher intervening occasionally), will come near the non-communicative end

Littlewood (1999) presents two kinds of learning communicative activities: pre-communicative and communicative activities. In the first type, specific elements of knowledge and skill which compose communicative ability are isolated and practiced separately. The learner is asked to produce acceptable accurate and appropriate language rather than to communicate meanings effectively. Littlewood (ibid) calls such type of activities "quasi-communicative" since they are neither fully structural –like mechanical drills- nor purely communicative. The second type is a continuation of the first; the student has to integrate what was practised in pre-communicative activities in the communication of meanings. He is then "engaged in practising the total skill of communication". As the distinction is made between structural and quasi-communicative activities in the first type, another could be made according to the degree of importance attached to social as well as functional meaning. In 'functional communicative activities' the learner does his best to perform the task he is assigned, whereas in 'social interaction activities' the learner is supposed to produce socially appropriate speech to specific situations and relationships with others (ibid, 1999).

Littlewood argues that there is a familiar evolution from '*controlled practice*' to '*creative language use*'.

Littlewood (ibid: 86) diagrams what he says as follows:



Although it has sometimes been criticized to have focused on fluency that eroded the explicit teaching of grammar that resulted in a consequent loss among students in accuracy, CLT stays one of the most widely used approaches for that its main concern is to get a student who is really able to communicate with others inside and outside classrooms with respect to the situation, and the social relationships which attach him with others.

Again ,as Harmer (2001) and others did, Littlewood (1994) in many occasions cites *role-play* as a very typical example of communicative activities. He asserts, for instance: "...with a communicative activity, such as a role-play based on a situation which the learners might expect to encounter".

It is on purpose that we have -somehow- focused on this approach since it deserves to be called 'eclectic'. It concerns developing communicative skills through one of the most useful techniques called: *role-play* which we are investigating in this research.

### **2.2.7 Course Design Approach (CDA)**

Davies & Pearse (2000) claim that they have 'invented' this term (Course Design) in their book "Success in English Teaching". CDA is so similar to the movement that began in the late 1960's called ESP (English for Specific Purposes). Its main principles emphasize the fact that differences in learners' needs, interests and objectives, learning styles, and other circumstances make teachers so prudent in choosing the material they want to present, and moreover the approach or the method they follow in giving such or such a material. Taking all the previous conditions into consideration, Davies & Pearse (ibid) show that two groups of learners (medical researchers and tourist resort waiters) need quite different courses, especially if they "both have an immediate need for English in their work and limited time for study".

As a conclusion, by giving these two extreme examples Davies & Pearse (ibid) want to clarify the point that every teaching-learning situation calls for some special course book material and ,also, for an adaptation of a specific teaching methodology.

In some departments of English in Algerian universities "ESP" is taught as a module totally independent from that of "Didactics" (e.g., university of Guelma), though they are very close in their syllabuses, whereas in some other universities, ESP is taught only as a chapter or a single lesson included in the program of Didactics (e.g. university of Biskra).

In the discussion of the different approaches and methods above, we followed the chronology suggested by Davies & Pearse (ibid) though many other classifications exist (e.g. Audio-lingualism, PPP Procedure, Task-based Learning, Humanistic Teaching, the Lexical Approach...; cited in Harmer, 2001). We tried to show the relationship between each of the approaches and methods from one side and the oral communication from the other.

### **Conclusion**

We wanted to make this chapter introductory and devoted to dealing with oral communication as a whole. Of course, we have not detailed items a lot, but we hope that we were very clear in removing the curtain from some aspects in relation to oral communication. We also attempted to explore some inhibiting factors which prevent students -in general- from learning the target language and communicating with each other.

Although approaches and methods are many, and while some of them are widely used and others are 'dead', we focused only on some of them. We tried to give some definitions of items before explaining and investigating them. We dealt with methods more than we did with approach because we think that we need to understand the procedure a teacher follows in presenting his material and not the theory behind it.

Even though oral communication includes many aspects such as listening and pronunciation, we –on purpose- focused on speaking as one of the most crucial elements in any communicative task and in developing students' fluency.

All what concerns speaking as a skill, speaking activities, problems in teaching-learning it and other points will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

## THE SKILL OF SPEAKING

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## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SKILL OF SPEAKING

#### Introduction

As our research seeks helping teachers and students of English to enhance students' abilities in speaking, we thought that this skill deserves to be discussed on its own. Following this idea, we are going to explore students' problems in speaking; linguistic and psychological difficulties. As an attempt to find solutions to these problems, we would like to identify speaking activities that would be applied with students according to urging situations. We hope that clear explanation supported by detailed examples will be very helpful to our teachers -especially.

#### 1. Definition of Terms

Many terms are close in meaning that people -more precisely learners- may confuse between them. So let's first remove that ambiguity and be clearer.

We may ask the following questions:

- What is a skill?
- What is the difference between intelligence and skill?
- What is the difference between knowledge and skill?

##### 1.1 What is a Skill?

Developing a skill is a complex learning problem. A skill is the capability for a smooth sequence of coordinated behaviour that is effective relative to its objectives, given the context in which it occurs. Thus, the ability to serve a tennis ball well is a skill, as the ability to cook, drive a car, operate a computer...etc. A skill, then, is a set of abilities specific to a particular field.

##### 1.2 Skill & Intelligence

Furthermore, any skill involves a sequence of steps. A skillful person cannot cite all the details of his performances. Thus, options are selected automatically-without conscious volition.

Unlike skill, intelligence is much broader. It is largely defined as the ability to learn (or recall, or think abstractly, etc) rather than a specific set of abilities as in a skill. Intelligence is measured to predict who has the capability to excel in a given vocation (medicine, literature, mathematics...) and who has not.

##### 1.3 Skill & Knowledge

It is crucial, too, to know that having some knowledge in any field does not mean you are skillful in it. A coach in a team may not be a good player. If he knows all the laws, the exercises and even football techniques, this does not probably enable him to make a good performance when he is requested to play on the field. This means that bearing in mind a large 'quantity' of information is not enough to say that someone is skillful. It is only through putting what he knows into practice that we can judge competence and skillfulness.

For speaking -or any of the language skills- this is also true. To know grammatical rules and a certain amount of vocabulary is essential to be able to speak in a foreign language, but some other 'ingredients' are important, too. Bygate (1987:3) emphasizes that: "We do not merely *know* how to assemble sentences in the abstract: we have to produce them and adapt them to the circumstances..."

Real-life situations are many; while how to react when involved in differs from one person to another according to various reasons; psychological, social and linguistic communicative reasons.

Knowledge is basically a set of grammar, pronunciation rules, vocabulary, and knowledge about how they are normally used. Skill is simply the ability to use all the above mentioned items. Bygate (ibid, 50) gives some details for this distinction in the following figure:

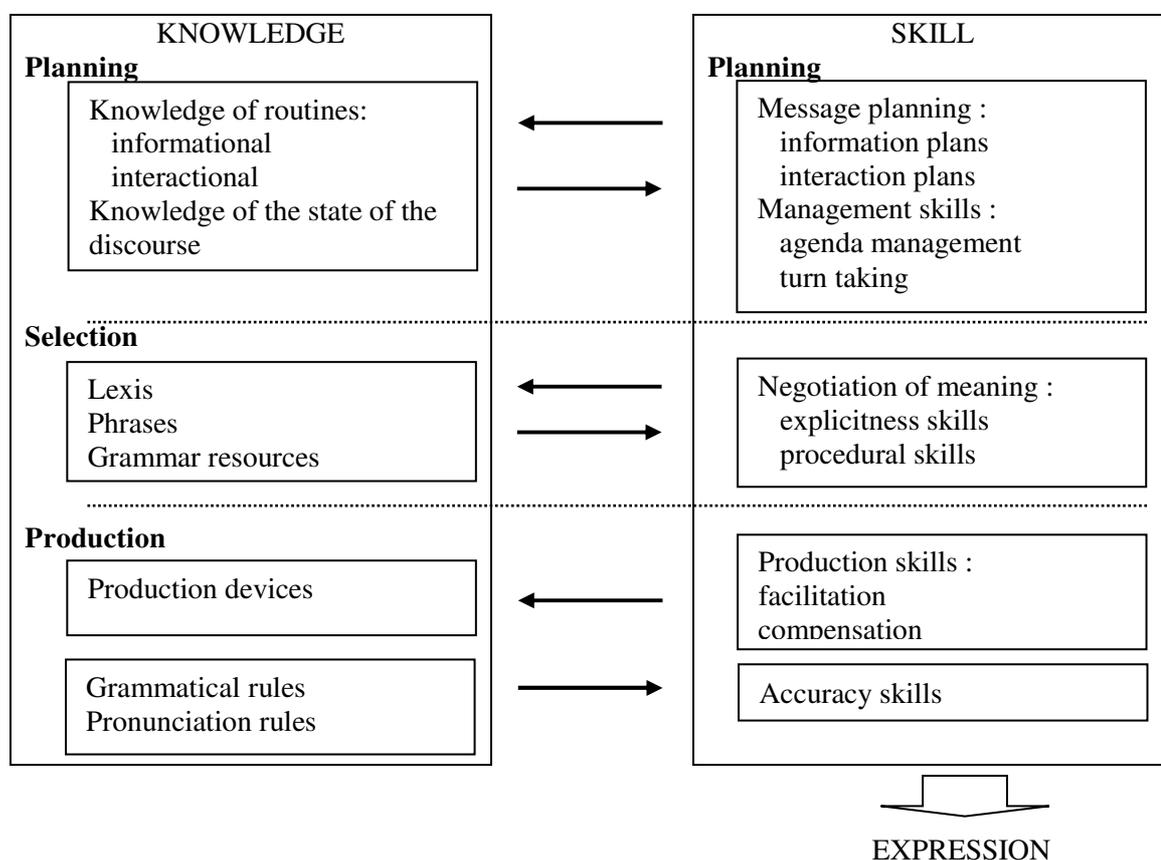


Figure 6: Summary of Oral Skills

## 2. Difference between Speech and Writing

The ability to speak is the most remarkable sign that distinguishes humans from the rest of the animal kingdom and it is innately acquired. Children generally develop their speaking abilities at the same rate. This development runs as follows in the first months:

<b>Sounds</b>	<b>Months</b>
Non linguistic vocalizations	00-03
Babbling	03-06
Beginnings of Recognizable Speech Sounds	06-09
Holophrastic-One-Word Sentences such as 'dad'	09-12

Linguists regard speech as primary, writing as secondary. Lado (1964, on-line pages) assures that speech is prior in a very brief precise phrase "speech before writing ". Lyons (1968:38, on-line pages) agrees with Lado and asserts that "the spoken language is primary and...writing is essentially a means of representing speech in another medium". Moreover, Bloomfield (1933:21, on-line pages) focuses that writing is just the use of 'visible marks' to record language, denying at the same time any idea that confuses between 'writing' and 'language'. He says: "writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by means of visible marks ".

Speaking, of course, appeared before writing. Writing is the reflection of the spoken language but there is always a feeling that language of books is the norm on which speech should be modeled and judged (Widdowson, 1971). He (ibid, 61) asserts that: "spoken language is the primary phenomenon, and writing is only a more or less imperfect reflection of it. We all learn to understand speech before we learn to read and to speak before we learn to write."

Hughes (2002) claims that all humans develop the capacity for speech and it is only later in literate societies that the skill of writing develops. Thus she agrees that speech is primary. Given the fact that each of the two -not apposing but rather complementary- aspects has some features that characterize it and make it different from the other, we have to consider some of them just to show to what extent they are either close or far from each other.

For this purpose we have chosen Bright's (2007:45) distinction between speech and writing, in which he studies some differences from various aspects. We tried to organize them in the following table:

Aspects	Speech	Writing
<b>Age</b>	Goes back to human beginning perhaps a million of years ago.	Relatively recent; it was first invented by Sumerians, in Mesopotamia.
<b>Universality</b>	People everywhere start speaking during the first two years of life; many of the abilities are probably inborn rather than learned.	Learning to write typically depends on learning to speak.
<b>Levels of Structure</b>	Consists of two types of basic units : meaningless units (phonemes) which are combined into meaningful units (morphemes) E.g. phonemes /b/, /i/, /t/ form the word 'bit'	In different type of script, the syllabary, the basic unit, corresponds to a spoken syllable ; Japanese and Cherokee use this system.
<b>Interdependence</b>	Typically conveys more explicit information. Hebrew and Arabic indicate consonants but often omit symbols for vowels.	In spelling pronunciation, people may come to pronounce the 't' in "often" even though historically it had been lost. Some formal literary styles, like classical Chinese, acquire a life of their own in written form.
<b>Retrievability</b>	Until the invention of magnetic recording, speech could not be captured or preserved, except by fallible memories and by writing.	Can be reserved for millennia. Its permanence has made possible such human institution as libraries, dictionaries and what we generally call 'Civilization'.
<b>Literary Use</b>	Non literate societies have traditions-songs, rituals, legends, myths-composed orally and preserved by memory.	Writing permits what is more often called 'literature'; i.e. bodies of the text which are much larger and more codified than memory permits.
<b>Prestige</b>	Can perceive writing as more 'colder' and impersonal than speech.	Associated with political and economic power, admired literature and educational institutions, all of

		which lend it high prestige.
<b>Standardisation</b>	Spoken languages have dialects. So we have no exact standard spoken language.	Complex societies need a single written norm, codified by governmental, educational, and literary institutions.
<b>Formality</b>	It is more used between friends and close relatives.	In formal circumstances (oratory, sermons) a person may "talk like a book" adapting written style for use in speech.
<b>Change</b>	Spoken language undergoes continual change of which speakers may be relatively unaware.	Because of its permanence and standardization, written language shows slower and less sweeping changes. This is, too, linked to the factors of formality, and prestige.

**Table 2: Distinction between Speech and Writing.**

It's not a question of opposition, but rather a matter of priority that should be given to one aspect rather than another. Speech and writing are two complementary aspects of the same subject; language. In other words, they are "two faces of the same coin". Historically, socially, scientifically and even politically, it has been proved and, moreover, emphasized that speech occurs before writing and, thus, should be given a certain priority.

### **3. Student's Problems in Speaking**

In language learning, especially speaking, a supportive atmosphere is needed to help students overcome difficulties occurring during the learning process. Increasing the student's communicative abilities can only take place if opportunities to express one's own identity are given. The atmosphere which makes students feel secure and valuable as individuals is the one needed in our classes (Littlewood, 1981). Therefore, classroom atmosphere should be relaxed and comfortable that leads to a higher performance on creative tasks; if students feel more relaxed and comfortable while learning, they feel more confident to speak English. Thus, we have to bear in mind that the acquisition of linguistic skills does not seem to guarantee nor necessarily lead to the acquisition of language communicative abilities (Widdowson, 1978).

Studying grammar, learning by heart vocabulary, structures, functions, and phonology are not enough to be able to communicate with others. Moreover, 'knowledge' does not mean 'skill' and does not lead to it if language is not practiced (Bygate, 1987).

This does not deny the importance of the linguistic knowledge; it is not underestimated, but it seems that students need something more that enables them to transfer the interactive skills they possess in their mother tongue to the target language. Questions that any of us may ask and to which try to find some solutions are:

- why don't students speak English inside classrooms?
- what prevents them?
- what are the problems they encounter?

Ur (1981) speaks about four crucial points that represent problems preventing students to speak freely inside the classroom. We draw attention that we are not speaking about external factors like; the family, social status, previous learning experiences etc...; we are focusing on problems related directly to the student and his psyche.

**3.1 Inhibition** Speaking in front of a group is by far a great fear of most students. To do so, to speak in front of a public, became a so admired quality. What differs speaking from other skills (reading, writing and listening) is that it requires some degree of real-time exposure to an audience. This can be very similar to that difference we find between theatre and cinema, if we dare say. In theatre actors are facing the public directly and there is no way to correct an error -if made- on the stage. Contrarily, cinema actors have all the time to repeat again and again a single part of the movie if it does not please them. Moreover, they prepare scenes -most of the time- far from the pressure of public. Ur (1991:121) states that: "Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom: worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts"

In fact some of the inhibition reasons are not related to the target language, but rather to the student himself. Shyness, for instance, can disturb the student's learning process even in his mother tongue. Nevertheless, the problem is doubled when studying a foreign language. And foreign language classroom is a favourable atmosphere to create inhibitions and anxiety Littlewood (1981). He (ibid, 93) gives three reasons for inhibition:

Learners remain constantly aware of their own state of ignorance before a teacher who possesses all relevant knowledge; they are expected to speak or act only in response to immediate stimuli or instructions... whatever they say or do is scrutinized in detail with every shortcoming being made a focus for comment.

**3.2 Nothing to Say** Another problem occurs in oral expression sessions. If asked to speak in a given topic, students claim that they have no idea about that point or just shrug

their shoulders showing some indifference. They argue their negative response by saying "I have never heard anything about this subject", "I don't know", "I have no idea"...etc. Some of the responses can be true but many of them appear to be a kind of 'escape' not to be asked again. This can affect, not only those students who 'have nothing to say', but also affects the whole class atmosphere and even the teacher himself. The teacher is therefore 'obliged' to do his best to choose the right subject to speak about; a class of women majority has less interest in politics if compared with men. Even if the topic is inappropriately chosen, the teacher can change it rapidly once he feels that a "boring atmosphere" is being spread.

Some uninterested students remain silent, this is not good for them, of course, but the worst is their effect on the others. Sometimes, their lack of interest or boredom leads to disruption and bad behaviour (Harmer, 2001). What is needed, then, is to search for a motive that makes students engage in the discussion of the chosen topic. In another way, they have to feel 'free to speak' not to feel 'guilty' of not to speak.

**3.3 Low or Uneven Participation** Differences in personalities are a fact that no one can deny. Students in a classroom have various perspectives and styles; we find talkative ones who tend to dominate their classmates, but at the same time, silent students are many. These latter 'allow or permit', indirectly, the former to dominate them. Under the pressure of all kinds of inhibition (fear of making mistakes, anxiety, shyness,...) mixed with the large number of students per class, a new problem related to time given to each student emerges.

Crowded classes are difficult to control. For FL learners, the time allotted to speaking activities is very important. Speaking inside classrooms could be the only opportunity for them to use the target language "English". Moreover, the type of some modules (lectures) gives no opportunity to students to speak; they are almost all the time listening only. So, their last chance to speak as much as they can is during the Oral Expression module sessions. If we make a very rapid calculation to the time allotted to every student in a class of thirty (30) during a whole week, we will find the following:

Three (3) hours per week (see Teachers' and Students' questionnaires) = 180 minutes.

180 minutes divided by thirty (30) students means that each one speaks for 6 minutes per week, twenty four (24) minutes per month!

To have such a result, we suppose that:

- 1- Students speak equally.
- 2- The teacher does not speak at all and listening is totally neglected.

And both of the supposed points cannot be true in reality. So, we may have students who speak less than two (02) minutes per week, or even less than that.

**3.4 Use of the Mother Language** Harbord (1992, Cited in Harmer, 2001) claims that the use of L1 is a habit that occurs most of the time without the teacher's encouragement. The use of L1 is clearly noticed when students perform pedagogical tasks, especially when one of them is explaining something to his/her friend. And this is widely spread among foreign language students of the same mother tongue. Harmer (2001) cites many reasons as examples that clarify why FL students use their mother tongue in classes:

*Language required by the activity*

The activity itself should be adequate to the students' level. When students are asked to do something that is higher than their linguistic capacities, they tend to prefer to use their L1 to express their ideas. This means that the inadequacy of the task makes the use of L1 inevitable.

*It is an entirely natural thing to do*

Translation is one of the most used strategies followed by learners to acquire a second/foreign language -almost without thinking about it. This is because "we try to make sense of a new linguistic (and conceptual) world we are already familiar with" (Harmer, 2001:131). Nevertheless, code-switching between L1 and L2 is naturally developmental (Eldridge, 1996, Cited in Harmer, 2001).

*Teachers themselves!*

L1 can be used by teachers from time to time, this is quite normal. One of the causes of the use of L1 by FL students is the frequent use of the same L1 by their teachers. FL students listening to their teachers speaking most of the time L1 makes them feel more comfortable doing it too. The teacher is supposed to represent a 'linguistic model', thus, he/she should be aware of the example he/she, him/herself is providing.

As a matter of fact, almost all the FL classes speak the mother tongue with different amounts. What should be paid great attention is that the role of teachers is very crucial; preparing suitable tasks/activities, and making themselves good examples/models to be followed, are their most important tasks to make students gradually get rid of their L1 -inside classrooms at least.

#### **4. Prominent Psychological Factors**

FL students do their best to acquire the new language without any difficulty. But unfortunately they are almost all the time suffering from different types of obstacles. Whatever they do they are in need of others' help. Inside the classroom the 'number one' responsible of diminishing -not to say deleting or whatsoever- these problems is the teacher(s). Anxiety, negative attitude, and lack of self-confidence are major psychological

problems which our FL students suffer from. We are now trying to explore some of these items hoping to suggest some solutions.

#### **4.1 Anxiety**

As it is mentioned above, a problem like anxiety cannot be completely erased. On the other hand, anxiety can be a good stimulus for adequate preparation of a speech or even provide the surge of energy needed for a powerful delivery. Anxiety should be, then, controlled in a way that the audience cannot notice it (quavering voice, hand wringing, or fidgeting). The less anxieties the learners have, the better acquisition proceeds (Saetan, 1991).

We suggest three solutions to reduce negative effects of anxiety: depersonalization, behaviour modification, and practice.

##### **4.1.1 Depersonalization**

At this stage, the speaker has to put in mind that even if some of the audience are not interested in what he is saying, a part of it are concentrating on his speech and are following him. The speaker should let his/her enthusiasm and commitment to the argument itself not to personal concerns. Imagining the argument taking control of one's mind and body for that short period of speaking time would be a better way to reduce one's own feeling of vulnerability.

##### **4.1.2 Behaviour Modification**

Trembling, fidgeting, weak or quivering voice and losing one's concentration are common manifestations of anxiety. These symptoms are generally acute at the beginning of a speech. Gradually they disappear and by the end of the task there are almost no signs of anxiety for even the most nervous speakers.

A speaker has first to try how to control himself as much as possible in a way that the audience feels the beginning part of the speech comfortable. Unfortunately most persons cannot perceive nervous behaviours for their own. There is no cure for speech anxiety, but eliminating the symptoms of anxiety is clearly possible.

##### **4.1.3 Practice**

The most effective way to diminish or reduce the degree of obvious anxiety is to be comfortable with the act of speaking. And practice is the best -if not the only- method to attain that level of comfort. Students have to speak as much as possible, inside and outside classrooms, with natives and non-natives; they should take every opportunity to speak aloud. By doing so, they get used to different situations and be experienced to learn more about their effective speech patterns.

## 4.2 Attitudes

It is commonly agreed upon that learners' performance depends on their understanding and feelings. "A feeling....towards a fact or someone's opinions and feelings" is the definition of an attitude given by the Webster's New Universal Dictionary of the English Language. Students' attitudes towards the target language stand as the corner-stone of the learning process. Once a student form a certain attitude, it is too difficult to get him convinced to change it. O'Grady (Cited in Edison,2005:30) noticed that:

The hardest thing to change is a hardening of attitudes: nothing kills change faster than attitudes that resist it. High self-esteem results from making small positive changes in spite of fear. Confidence comes from conquering fear of change"

Three types of attitudes affect students' speaking and influence communication: attitudes towards yourself, attitudes towards others, and attitudes towards communication (Kelly & Watson, 1986). Stern (1983:386) shows the effect of positive attitudes on students' learning process. He says that: "Learners who have positive attitudes learn more, but also learners who learn well acquire positive attitudes."

Nunan & Benson (2004:155-156) claim that change of attitudes is quite possible. They assure that "language learning practices and attitudes towards learning are unstable and change over time". Since change can occur and attitudes can be transformed from one state to another, teachers have to encourage students to reach their goals, particularly at their own pace, to improve and develop positive attitudes towards speaking.

## 4.3 Student's Confidence

Gander (2006) claims that many individuals appear most satisfied and successful when they have gained at least the independent or fluent levels of proficiency where they feel confident in their work. To make the student confident is one of the essential factors to improve learning.

Dornyei (2001) suggests that the ways to promote students confidence are through providing experience of success, encouraging the learners and reducing anxiety. Moreover, a model that specifies four kinds of strategy has been developed by Keller and summarized and discussed by Small (as cited in Aik & Tway, 2006:31). This model is called the ARCS (Attention, Relevance, Confidence and Satisfaction) model:

Confidence strategies help students develop positive expectations for successful achievement of learning objects. One confidence strategy is to inform the learner about the learning and performance requirements and assessment criteria. A second confidence strategy is to provide challenging and meaningful opportunities for successful learning. A third strategy is to link learning success to personal

responsibility, for example, providing positive feedback to the learner about his or her efforts to learn.

Undoubtedly, students' confidence in language learning, especially speaking, is one of the main factors to inspire students to reach their goals. Such great importance makes the degree of teacher's responsibility higher. Teachers have to be all the time aware and reflective, and always have to try to promote students' confidence to achieve their task. In doing so, they can, then, be sure that the results will be very impressive because the students' learning repertoires will be gradually increased, students' confidence as well.

To sum up, the three cited-above elements causing hindrance for FL students are some among many others. It is, then, a titanic task for teachers to help students overcome such obstacles, by diminishing anxiety, changing attitudes, and building up student's confidence in their abilities.

## **5. Teaching Speaking Activities**

Each of the four skills is taught according to its specificity. Some techniques can be applied in teaching more than one skill. Dialogues, for instance, are used in teaching both listening comprehension and speaking and why not reading as well. Other activities are restricted to a given skill; when we hear the word 'punctuation' we directly think about 'writing'.

For speaking, many techniques are possible to be used; some of them do not need a lot of time or expensive material whereas others consume time, material and even money. Since these activities are many, we are going to focus on the most widely used. They are generally divided into two major categories: Controlled Oral Practice Activities and Free Oral Practice Activities.

Controlled oral activities provide intensive practice of various items. They carry a specific language focus; thus, they are teacher controlled.

For free oral practice activities entirely spontaneous and fluent communicative language is used.

### **5.1 Discussion/Conversation Activity**

It is too common to hear two persons (or a group of friends or relatives) having a conversation on a given topic of common interest. Any exchange of ideas and opinions is made generally in discussions either inside the classroom with classmates or within a given group. Byrne (1986) defines discussion as:

By discussion is meant any exchange of ideas and opinions either on a class basis, with you (teacher) as the mediator and to some extent as the participator, or within the context of a group, with the students talking amongst themselves.

Discussions are made for many reasons; they may be the ultimate goal itself, or just a tool to reach another objective, or serve as an introductory or closing phase of some group activities.

Two factors are essential to determine whether a discussion is a success or a failure:

a-The stimulus for Discussion:

The activity must motivate the students; i.e. make them want to talk. This may depend to a larger extent on how it is presented to them.

b-The Role of the Teacher:

Either as a group member (participator) or as a guide in a class discussion, it is not the teacher's job to inform students or force his opinions on them. His role is to encourage them to express theirs. The teacher's intervention should only serve to stimulate further ideas on the part of the students not to inhibit them. What is important in the teacher's role, too, is that he should appear to be more interested. (ibid, 1986)

Harmer (2001) thinks that discussions fail because students are reluctant. They lack self-confidence and further they do not want to 'reveal' their opinions towards a given topic. To keep the problem under control, he suggests some solutions as the 'Buzz Group' and 'Instant comment' techniques.

The 'Buzz Group' technique is based on small group and quick discussions before speaking in public. In this way, students can have enough time to think, prepare well what they are going to say and, thus, can be at ease from any pressure. He (ibid, 2001:272) asserts:

Students have chance for quick discussions in small groups before any of them are asked to speak in public. Because they have a chance to think of ideas and the language to express them with before being asked to talk in front of the whole class, the stress level of that eventual whole-class performance is reduced

'Instant comment' is like a brainstorming technique by which students can be trained to respond fluently and immediately. This is done by showing them photographs or introducing a topic at any stage of the lesson. Then, students are asked to say the first idea that comes to their minds. After finding many ideas related to the subject, they can hold the conversation as longer as they can (or as longer as they want).

To make a final decision or a consensus is a very useful stratagem to push students to speak. Harmer (ibid, 273) says that: "one of the best ways of encouraging discussion is to provide activities which force students to reach a decision or a consensus, often a result of choosing between specific alternatives."

He (ibid, 273) gives the example of a situation that is related to school. An interesting scenario is considered by students where an invigilator catches a student cheating. A range of options is given and students have to choose among them:

*Option 1:* the invigilator should ignore it.

*Option 2:* she should give the student a sign to show that she's seen.

*Option 3:* she should call the family and tell them the student was cheating.

*Option 4:* she should inform the examining board so that the student will not be able to take that exam again.

Although we think that 'discussion' is only an activity among others, it could be just a 'big title' for many other activities related to it. Ur (1991:125) gives a series of discussion activities that includes: describing pictures, picture differences, things in common, shopping list and solving a problem.

### 5.1.1 Describing a Picture

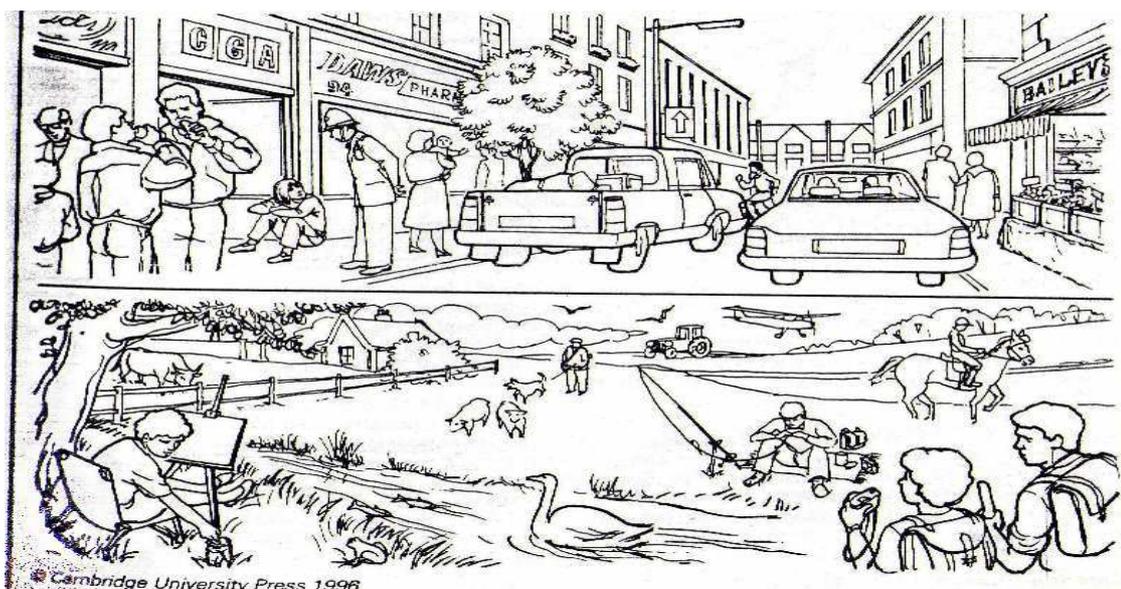
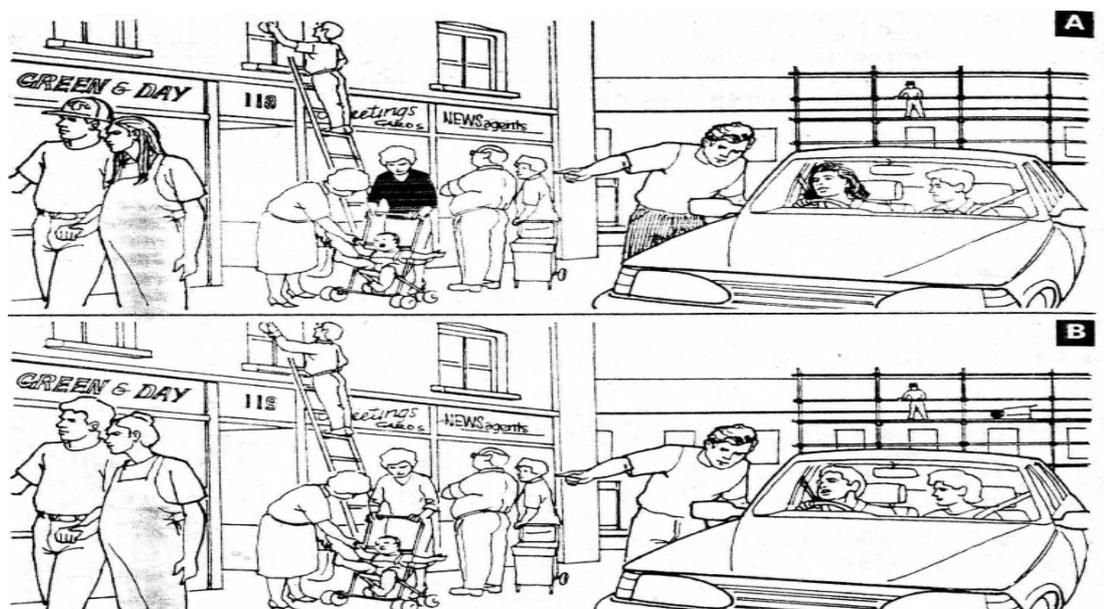


Figure 7: Describing Pictures

She (ibid) divides the class into two groups. Each group has a picture (one of the two shown above). A 'secretary' marks a tick for every sentence one of the two groups gives. At the end of the 'competition' the winner group is the one having more ticks (more sentences). The activity is, then, repeated for another round hoping to get more ticks than the first one.

### 5.1.2 Picture Differences

She (ibid, 126) proposes that students are in pairs, each member of the pair has a different picture (either A or B) without showing each other their pictures, they have to find out the differences between them (there are eleven)



**Figure 8: Picture Differences**

In this activity the vocabulary needed is specific and fairly predictable. Plenty of purposeful question–answer exchanges are produced.

### 5.1.3 Things in Common

Students sit in pairs (preferably they do not know each other well). They talk with the purpose to find as much as they can things they have in common; i.e. hidden things: opinions, points of view towards different subjects, hobbies, etc. At the end they share them with the whole class. This activity fosters a feeling of 'solidarity'. Finally, some volunteers select ideas they think are particularly original or pleasing.

### 5.1.4 Shopping List

Students imagine a miracle store that sells commodities like: more free time, popularity, fame, perfect health, etc. The owner of this store will only stock items that are demanded by at least three buyers. The aim is to convince the owner to stock all the chosen items. To avoid the sterility that could be found during this activity, it is recommended to omit numbers and insist on giving arguments to persuade each other to change his/her choice.

### 5.1.5 Solving a Problem

Students imagine themselves members of an educational advisory committee. They are advising the principal of a school on problems with students. Students have to choose right advice and write it out in the form of a letter to the principal. If the problem given to the students is really suitable for their age and interest, results will be better and a high level of participation and motivation is produced because participants tend to become personally involved; they relate the problem as an emotional issue as well as an intellectual and moral

one. Further, when the letter is finally read, a new discussion is created. According to Ur (1981), all these activities can be included in the 'discussion activities'. Many other suggestions and recommendations can be found in different shapes, data and details.

### 5.2 Information-gap Activity

This kind of controlled oral practice activity is based on working in pairs. Communicative need is created by giving each learner in pair different pieces of information. To find the missing information and fill the gap, students are asking and answering each other. Thus, a lot of realistic language use is possible and many sentences are generated. Since students must be given different information, care must be taken while distributing worksheets (especially with large classes). Examples of this type of controlled activities are: filling in maps, graphs, timetables, picture dictation...etc.

To complete a dialogue is a very famous exercise where students have to guess what one of the two speakers responds according to what is already given as a hint; they (students) predict what is to be said (information) and which words will be adequate (vocabulary) as well. Below is an example about this exercise:

A: hello,

B: .....

A: I just want to book a table.

B: .....

A: yes, this evening.

B: .....

A: thanks a lot.

B: .....

Tables are the most obvious way of representing information in this type of activity. Other forms, however, are possible provided that they make it clear that some items are missing. Littlewood (1981:26) gives one of the examples possible in this activity.

For example, each learner might have a map on which the names of some streets and buildings are not marked, or which does not show all of the places visited by a character in a story. By questioning each other, they can obtain the missing information"

Another form of representing this kind of missing information activity is that a learner 'A' may have a football league table showing a summary of each team's results (how many games they have played/won/lost/...etc). Some items of information are deleted. For learner 'B' the deleted items are different from those of learner A. Each learner can therefore complete the table by asking a partner for information he lacks (ibid).

Bygate (1987) suggests a similar exercise. It is called 'passport descriptions'. It is taken from one of the earliest publications in this type of activities. He (ibid, 76) explains the exercise as follows:

Students work in pairs, one with each part. The materials consist of fictitious graphics and/or charts or tables to be completed. The information to be transmitted is present in pictorial or note form on the speaker's page, and is communicated either when asked for by one's partner, or because the speaker deduces that if he -the speaker- has the information, his partner does not.

Of course, different sides of language function are included like: comparisons, narrations, descriptions and instructions (ibid).

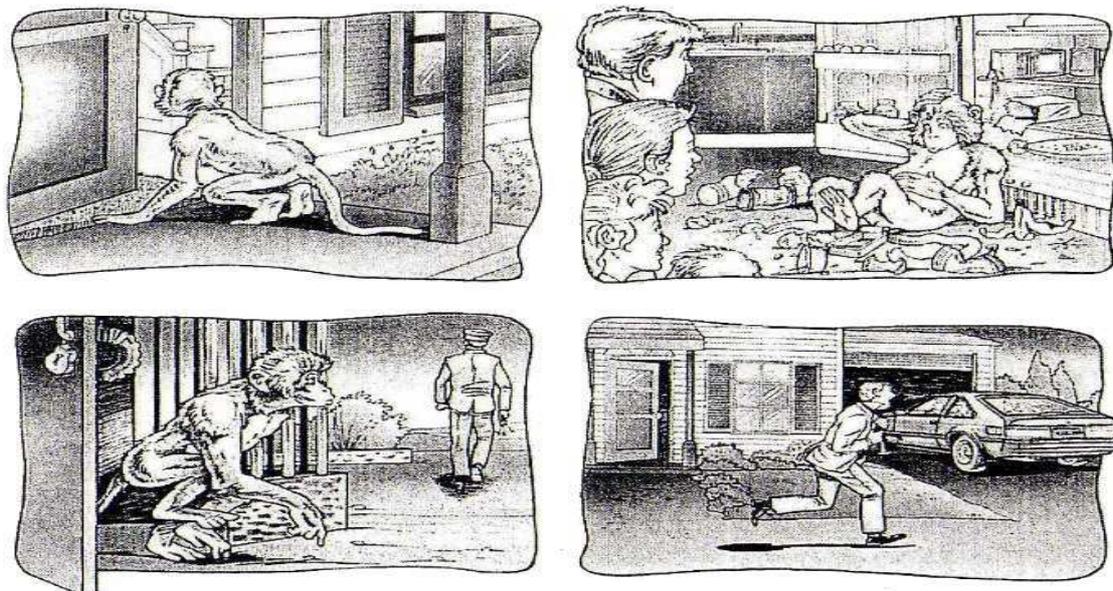
				
<b>Name</b>		Andrew Martin		John Grant
<b>Age</b>	47			
<b>Job</b>			Housewife	Actor
<b>Country</b>	U.S.A.	England		Ireland

				
<b>Name</b>	Sue Turner		Linda Williams	
<b>Age</b>		32	25	29
<b>Job</b>	Teacher	Postman		
<b>Country</b>			Scotland	

**Figure 9: Information-gap Activity**

'Describe and draw' is another popular information-gap activity. In it, one student 'describes' a picture to his partner, the other student follows the description and 'draw' the picture without looking at the original one (Harmer, 1998). A further extension of information-gap activity occurs in story-telling. After dividing the class into four groups A, B, C and D, each group is given one of the pictures.



**Figure 10: Information -gap Activities**

Different abilities are shown by students during this kind of activities. Moreover, these capacities are enhanced and developed. Predictability of the vocabulary and the information, as well as the likely effect of it on the communication are required. Nevertheless, other aspects should be considered too, like the amounts of: negotiation, listener reaction and preparatory explanation by the speaker.

First, the groups have to memorize every thing they can get about the pictures: who is in them, what's happening...etc. Later on, pictures are gathered and new four-person groups are formed. Describing to each other what every student has seen, a final story is reached. Final versions may be different and the teacher can at the end re-show the pictures.

### 5.3 Communication Games

Activities used to have students talk as much as possible are many and some times interdependent, similar and complementary. 'Describe and Draw', for instance, is an information-gap task because there is something missing and one of the two students is trying to find with the help of a partner. This activity is also a communication game. Because students are interacting with each other and roles are reversed each time. Harmer (2001) suggests some communication games emphasizing that importing TV and radio games into the classroom can provide good fluency activities. The first communication game Harmer (ibid, 272) suggests is 'Twenty questions', he explains:

In twenty-questions, the chairperson thinks of an object and tells a team that the object is either animal, vegetable or mineral -or a combination of two or three of these. The team has to find out what the object is asking only 'yes/no' questions such as: can you use it in the kitchen? Or is it bigger than a person? They get points if they guess the answer in twenty questions or less.

In such a game, team-members have to ask no more than twenty questions. That's why they have to choose the right question with the adequate vocabulary to get useful information.

A very funny game is that of 'Just a minute'. It is a long running comedy competition in which each participant should demonstrate all his different competences; he uses a lot of vocabulary since words should not be repeated and, as well, no stop or hesitation is permitted, thus, fluency is requested. Harmer (ibid) describes the game as:

Each participant has to speak for sixty seconds on a subject they are given by the chairperson/teacher without hesitation, repetition or deviation-or, in the case of language students, language mistakes. If another contestant hears any of these he or she interrupts, gets a point and carries on with the subject. The person who is speaking at the end of sixty seconds gets two points.

In The same way, the class is divided in two teams to play the 'Call my Bluff' game. It is a guessing game in which one team gives more than one definition for a word (one is correct, the others are not) and the other team has to guess which of them the correct definition is. Points are given each time one of the two teams finds the right answer/definition.

Doff (1988) in similar suggestions proposes three kinds of guessing games:

### 5.3.1 Guess a Picture

The teacher has a set of flashcards with simple pictures (e.g. clothes, food, places, actions...). He or she chooses one card, but does not show it to the class. They must guess what it is by asking questions. For example:

Teacher: Guess how I went to X

Students: Did you go by car?

Did you go by bus?

Did you walk?

### 5.3.2 Guess the sentence

The teacher writes a sentence on a piece of paper or card. Without showing it, he writes basic structure on the board; e.g. *I went (somewhere) to (do something)*. Students must guess the exact sentence by asking questions:

Did you go to the park?

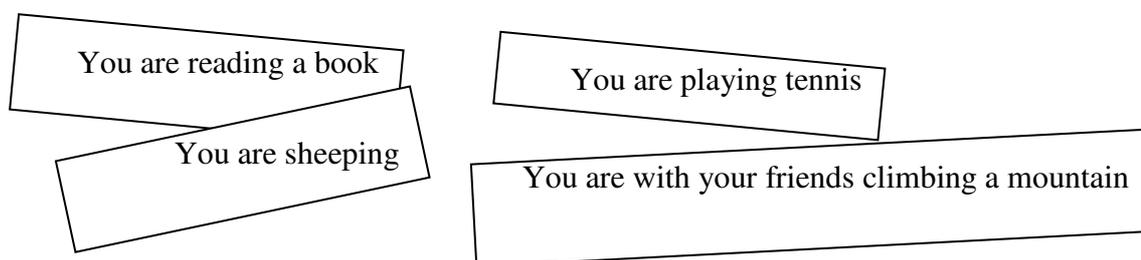
.....to school?

.....to the stadium?

.....play football?

### 5.3.3 Mime

A chosen student mimes the activity according to a simple sentence the teacher gives to him. Other students try to guess the situation.



Other guessing games are possible, too. Thornburry's (2005) games like: *Who am I?* *What sort of animal am I?* *What is my line (job)?*, etc, are of great usefulness, especially when games take place in the real time, so there is an element of spontaneity and unpredictability; the focus is on the outcome (winning the game) not the language being used to get there.

Taking into consideration the actions which participants have to perform in order to complete the tasks, Bygate (1987) classifies communication games as follows:

- Describe and Draw
- Describe and Arrange
- Find the Differences
- Ask the Right Questions

We have discussed 'Describe and Draw' (with Harmer, 1998, 2001) in both information-gap activities and communication games. A clear example for 'Find the Differences' is given in the discussion of the previous point (discussion activities/picture differences) with Ur (2001). Concerning 'Ask the right question', we think that the clear sample explaining it is Harmer's (2001) 'Twenty questions' game. For 'Describe and Arrange', one student describes a structure made of rods, match sticks or simple objects and the other(s) reconstruct it without seeing the original. This can take a sequence of instruction.

What can be concluded, here, is that communication games with its various types of activities can be very useful since it includes a competition between groups and partners. This makes students so motivated and thus so productive.

### 5.4 Acting from a Script

Different phases are following each other in this activity. First, students have a written play or their course book. They are asked to 'perform' according to what is given to them.

Secondly, as they get somehow experienced to the task, we can ask them to prepare their own dialogues and act out of them. Of course, when we say 'students perform' or when we just utter the word 'scene', it is directly understood that they are requested to come out to the front of the class.

As it is mentioned in the Introduction of this research, performing on a stage can break some psychological barriers like shyness, provided that the right choice of the theme, first student to start, etc are made. Invitations, apologies, compliments, greetings and other functions that are influenced by social and cultural norms often follow patterns and scripts. With the teacher's guidance students can practice, manage and vary the language that different scripts contain.

Students are already used to dialogue, either as a classroom activity or in their every day life interaction; since language in its functional side is essentially dialogic. For a start, a dialogue can be enacted by the teacher and a selected student. For example, the teacher can ask a volunteer student to read aloud one of the roles of a dialogue that appears in the course book, while the teacher takes the other role. The same dialogue can be repeated in the same way with another student and roles can be reversed (Thornbury, 2005).

Two forms of student-student pair work are possible. He (ibid, 73) speaks about '*open pair work*' and '*closed pair work*', explaining the first form as:

Open pair work: is when two students -either adjacent to, or opposite, one another- perform a dialogue while the rest of the class observes. This is a useful transition phase from the teacher-student stage to the next stage, the closed pairs stage.

He continues defining the second form saying that:

Closed pair work: is when adjacent students perform the dialogue, all pairs working at the same time [...] when pairs finish their dialogue, he can be asked to switch roles and do it again, [...] or to attempt to do the dialogue from memory.

Performance in front of the whole class is delayed after having practiced the dialogue several times in the closed pair stage. The dialogue can be rehearsed or even memorized. Selected pairs are asked, then, to perform it in front of the whole class and the task is repeated for many times. Harmer (2001:271) assures that: "by giving students practice in these things before they give their final performances, we ensure that acting out is both learning and a language producing activity".

What should be paid great attention here is the way we choose students who come out to the front of the class. We should never start with a 'timid' one. His/her predictable failure will not affect his production only, but also that of the next performers and subsequently that of the whole class (discouraging atmosphere can be created).

The teacher can behave like a 'theatre director'. Accuracy and fluency are both recommended. Speed, intonation, stress and any other supra-segmental features should also be emphasized. Harmer (ibid) insists that: "when choosing who should come out to the front of the class we need to be careful not to choose the shyest students first, and we need to work to create the right kind of supportive atmosphere in the class". He (ibid) also advises, that: "...we can go through the script as if we were theater directors, drawing attention to appropriate stress, intonation, and speed."

### 5.5 Prepared Talks (Reports)

It is widely used when presenting a well prepared topic as an "exposé". It is not a spontaneous task to do, the teacher first has to distribute different topics for all his students - generally gathered in groups of two, three or even four members. He has the choice of assigning proposed themes or let the students be free to prepare any other topics of their own - in consultation with him. This makes them feel at ease; they can talk confidently. Underhill (1987:47) assures that: "However well-prepared speaker is, he will not be able to talk as confidently about a new topic as he will about one he already knows well."

We understand that choosing a topic itself is not an easy task. According to Underhill (ibid), it should have at least the following characteristics:

- Relevant to the aims of the programme.
- Relevant to the needs of the programme.
- Contain new information or put over a new point.
- Not so specialized that only the speaker himself is interested.
- Not so general that it has no apparent purpose other than as a language exercise.

Before presenting talks, some lessons are required. Teachers do their best to show learners how to select pertinent information, locate and organize the materials and, of course, how to present their prepared ideas correctly. Otherwise, we should not expect a well-presented talk (Dawson et al, 1963).

The development of talk goes through many steps: it starts by choosing the topic, forming original ideas, defining and organizing them, then, finally presenting the talk in front of an audience. If a talk is properly organized, it would be extremely interesting for both speaker and listeners (Harmer, 2001).

Presenting a talk is a popular authentic activity. In it learners use different functional skills, such as: expressing opinions or arguments, dealing with questions, explaining factual data, and summarizing. Nevertheless, some drawbacks can influence the good preparation and presentation of a talk. Dawson et.al (ibid, 240) say that:

Perhaps the most common weakness in any oral presentation that has been planned a head of time is the speaker's reliance on reading what should be actually spoken. Without constant effort by the teacher, oral reports are likely to be largely copied from printed sources or written hastily and then read before the class.

For this purpose, presentation of a topic should not be done in one direction; listeners should not be passive, they can ask questions, or add information the speaker did not cite, etc. The talk is productive when the maximum of learners are interested and active. A kind of short discussion or conversation is made each time the speaker reaches/explains a given point. However, it is recommended, too, if possible that student(s) presenting a topic should speak from notes rather than from a script (Harmer, opcit).

Unprepared reports are not recommended. Students have different personalities and capacities. To force them come out in front of the whole class, we risk doubling or multiplying the problem of shyness for some of them. Underhill (opcit, 49) emphasizes that: "Making unprepared reports, even short ones, is going to favor some types of personality over others, such as shy people."

So, to avoid enlarging the gap between students, it would be better to give sufficient time for all of them to prepare a talk (report) on a topic of their own choice, if possible, with the consultation of the teacher whose role is essential before, within and even after the presentation.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have tried to survey the differences between some similar terms like: skill & intelligence; skill and knowledge; and speech and writing to remove ambiguity and confusion. As a second step we have attempted to examine some problems students face while learning the speaking skill and suggested some solutions. We have also explained how some of them are related to the absence of a "healthy" academic atmosphere (teaching material, teachers...etc) while some other problems concern the psychological aspect of the students themselves (attitudes, self-confidence,...etc). Among many activities used in teaching speaking, we cited the most used ones. Some of them are somehow difficult to be applied in the Algerian context for different reasons. It does not cost almost anything. It only depends on the readiness and aptitude of both the teacher and students to be applied. Concerning time, it is not time-consuming because students are generally supposed to perform short skits. Accordingly, the coming third chapter will be devoted to RP techniques.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### ROLE -PLAY TECHNIQUES

#### Introduction

In the previous two chapters, we tried to present an overview on oral communication as a whole and how to promote it. More precisely, we discussed speaking abilities, problems and activities used to enhance or develop students' capacities and competences in this essential skill: speaking. As it appears right in the Introduction of this research, we have said that role-play (RP) is not widely used in teaching oral expression (OE). We hypothesized, too, that through the use of this technique some psychological barriers like shyness, low self-confidence, etc, would be better controlled, students would speak freely and thus enhance their speaking abilities. According to Snyder & Deselms (1983), RP helps students to gain confidence in their interactions with one another while using the target language at the same time.

As it is widely known, RP is a drama-like activity in which students are supposed to play different roles from real-life situations. On this basis we are trying to shed the light on some of the related items, such as drama, plays, and simulation, hoping to show the relationships as well as the differences between all of them.

#### 1. Definition of Role-play

Let's, first, have a look on what role-play means. In role-play activities learners are asked to take on a particular role and imagine themselves in that role (Underhill, 1987), or take on the role of a character different from themselves or with thoughts and feelings they do not necessarily share (Harmer, 1998; 2001).

Students may feel uncomfortable "being themselves" (Thornbury, 2005). So two choices are given to students according to Byrne (1986:117-118) who says that:

Role-play, like other dramatic activities, involves an element of 'let's pretend' [...]. We can offer the learners two main choices; a- they can play themselves in an imaginary situation [...] b-they can be asked to play imaginary people in an imaginary situation...

Many terms are used interchangeably in the role playing simulation literature. Just few of the terms which are used are "simulation", "game", "role-play", "simulation game", "role-play simulation", and "role-playing game" (Crookall & Oxford, 1990). Nevertheless, while Ladousse (2004) says that simulations always include an element of role-play, Scarcella & Oxford (1992, Cited in Tompkins, 1998) make the difference between the two when they claim that simulation imitates real-life situations whereas role-play experiences character types known in people's every day life

Brown (2001, Cited in Huang,2008) clarifies that role play can be conducted with one single person, two persons (pairs) or even a whole group, in which every participant has an objective to accomplish.

Dr. J. L Moreno was the first who designed the known role playing technique in 1910. After he moved from Vienna, Austria to the U.S in the 1930's, role-playing became more widely known and used.

White (1982:19-20) believes that to encourage students to speak is a 'fundamental' problem in the spoken English class. He suggests a number of stages to achieve that goal. He thinks of moving "from complete language control by the teacher to a large degree of freedom by the students". The stages White speaks about are in brief:

*Stage one:*

- Ask students to repeat a scripted dialogue.
- Present the dialogue to the class by playing a recording of it or take both parts yourself (the teacher).
- Gradually, have two students repeat the dialogue.
- Finally, put the class into pairs. They now take turns at reading both parts of the dialogue.

*Stage two:*

It involves making substitutions.

- Substitutions are either suggested in the textbook, made by the teacher, or by the students; e.g. how about going? = what about going = let's go...
- More pair practice is done (this time with substitutions).

*Stage three:*

- Students are now freer over language and form of the dialogue.
- Instead of giving whole lines as in a play script, they can be given cues or prompts only.
- Pairs are given separate cards to make the dialogue more like real-life.

*Stage four:*

- Give students roles to play.
- Information might be provided in the form of hints. (you tell the student what his role should be only (e. g. persuade his friend to go to disco with him).

In this way, according to White (ibid), we can get students prepared to be involved in a dialogue. It's first recommended to provide all the data necessary for the dialogue, then, we

can (as teachers) substitute or even 'draw back' letting students practice, substitute vocabulary and innovate new sentences of their own.

## 2. Drama and Role-play

In fact, determination of terms is important. Some words tend to be used interchangeably though in many cases differences are big between them that may be cited as synonyms. Linguistically speaking, in any language there is no single word that has a 100% exact meaning of another. We say that role play is a drama-like activity, so what is drama first? Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2000:400) defines drama as «a play for the theatre, television or radio; plays considered as a form of literature». Similarly, it is defined by Elam (1980:2) who underlines that:

By drama[...], is meant that mode of fiction designed for stage representation and constructed according to particular ('dramatic') conventions [...] the epithet 'dramatic' indicates the network of factors relating to represented fiction.

From the above definitions, we can notice the relationship between 'Drama' and 'Role-play' in a way that indicates that the latter has many of the characteristics of the former; performers, acting, presentation, etc. For some researchers role-play is restricted to two performers while for drama a lot of people are involved. Sometimes, drama is used to refer to a variety of teaching activities such as mime, role-play, simulation, etc. All the dramatic activities involve 'fantasy'; i.e. they contain an element of 'let's pretend' (Byrne, 1986). This gives the opportunity to both the teacher and the students to 'escape' from the classroom on an imaginative level. In this way, drama (or drama-like) activities improve students' oral abilities from talking language to behaving through language. They make students more fluent by using the target language freely, purposely, and creatively. Byrne (1986) says that:

they also provide yet another range of opportunities for the learners to develop fluency skills: to use language freely, because they offer an element of choice; to use language purposefully, because there is something to be done; and to use language creatively, because they call for imagination.

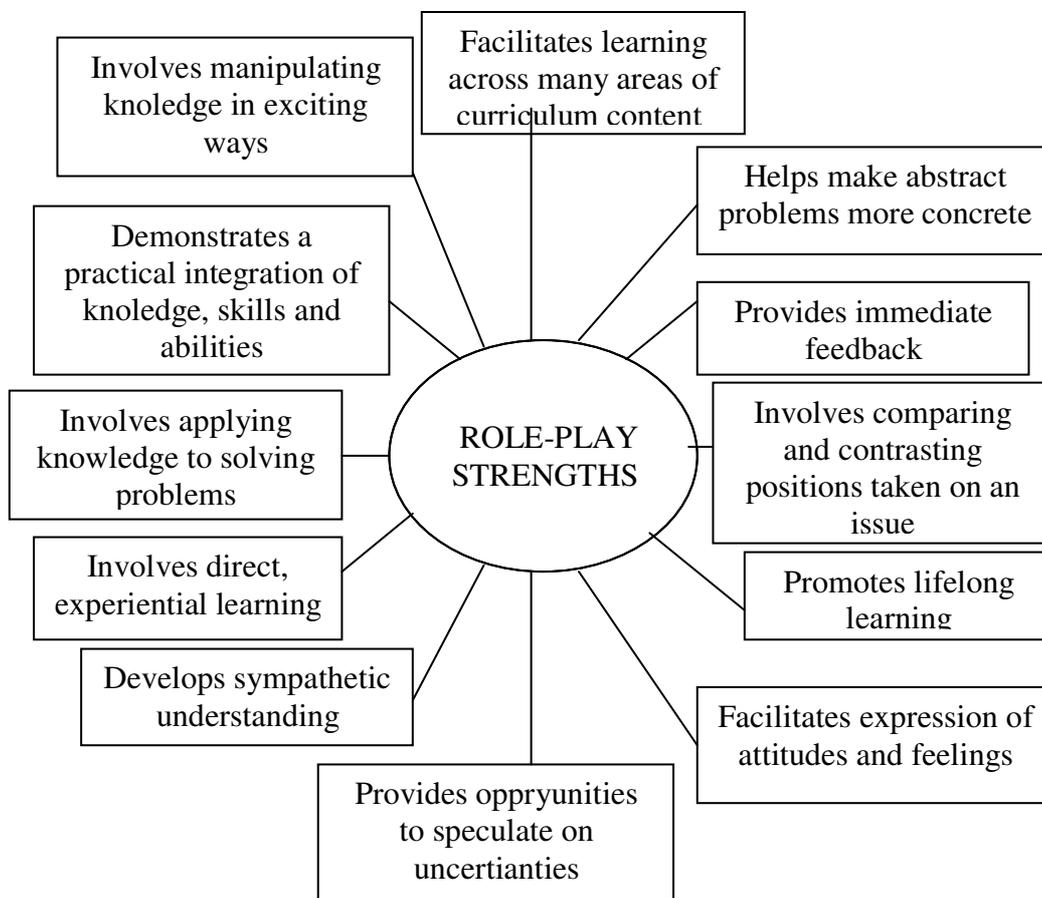
All benefits that we can get from applying dramatic activities make us eager to investigate –at least- one of them called 'Role-play'.

## 3. Advantages of Role-play

Furness (1976:19, Cited in Huang, 2008) provides seventeen (17) advantages of role-play, among them he cites: "In terms of improved communication skills, creativity, increased

social awareness, independent thinking, verbalization of opinions, development of values and appreciation of the art of drama"

Errington (1997), too, summarizes the advantages of RP in the following figure:



**Figure 11: Strengths of Role-play.**

We can integrate role-play into many topics and make it serve as a tool for target language acquisition. Christina (1997:2) claims that: "Role-play can be integrated into many themes and/or content-based lessons... while being a fun and creative way for learners to practice and/or improvise verbal and non-verbal communication." She claims that role-playing authentic situations in the language classroom is one 'successful' technique she used in teaching ESL and EFL classes. Experiences in which students role-play authentic situations can provide them with a 'deeper awareness' of the target culture (Shrum & Glisan, 1994, cited in Christina, 1997).

Christina (opcit) gives some other advantages students can benefit from; role-playing and dramatic techniques can also:

- increase motivation and interest,
- convey and reinforce information,

- develop language skills,
- change attitudes, and
- teach language and cultural awareness

In the course of RP students can use the target language for a long time; this improves their level of fluency, promotes interaction in the classroom, and makes language students more motivated to learn (Ladousse, 2004).

RP as well increases a kind of shared responsibility between teachers and students because, according to Ladousse (*ibid*), it is “perhaps the most flexible technique in the range” of communication techniques and if RP exercises are suitable and effective teachers will meet an infinite variety of needs.

Before Ladousse (*ibid*) speaks about flexibility and 'sense of responsibility' as advantages of RP, Stern (1991:213) suggested that RP makes students flexible to various kinds of real-life situations, and it is by practice that they will be able to well manage different situations. She says:

role-playing helps the individual to become more flexible [...] through role play, L2 learners can experience many kinds of situations in which they will use the language; and as they develop a sense of mastery in them, they should be able to apply the language more easily to new situations.

These are some among many of the advantages of RP. It's by nature that children and even adults enjoy playing roles. But when they are aware of the benefit they get by practicing that technique, their concentration, attitudes and motivation are all increased and doubled.

#### **4. Types of Role-play**

The situations in which students imagine themselves (in a restaurant, at the airport, visiting a doctor, etc), may happen in their every day life (outside the classroom). For this reason they have to choose the appropriate language for each situation. Ur (2000:131) clarifies that:

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

In this way, students play different roles, and use different language adequate to different contexts. This gives the idea that it exists a variety of RP types. These types range from a simple pair dialogue to a whole play gathering a considerable number of participants. "Thus far, we have spoken of role-playing involving two students only, but of course several people can interact in a role-playing situation. This brings us to the matter of plays." (Dobson, 1996:47)

Simply, the teacher can make all the class interact by having the students act out either a public meeting with many speakers or a party scene in which all students go either as themselves or as any living or dead person they would like to be (Harmer, 1998). We can notice that RP is not restricted to pairs but can also be expanded to all the class members.

From another perspective, where RP types are discussed according to the preparation that precedes presentation, some kinds are possible. Dialogues and improvisations are forms of role-playing (Dobson, opcit). We are going, therefore, to explore some kinds of role playing hoping to clarify the differences and similarities between all of them.

#### 4.1 Dialogues

It is a traditional language learning technique that is not widely used nowadays; it has gone somewhat "out of fashion" as Ur (2001) claims. Harmer (1998) thinks that since language is essentially dialogic in its use, this makes dialogues the most used technique in any grammar structure or lexical area.

Dialogue is a language model of a short conversation between two persons. Students often repeat dialogues for good pronunciation of the target language words and sentences, for grammar drills on selected lines and for practicing memorization of what they learn (Dobson, 1996).

Dialogues have some criteria -or rather advantages that prose passages or any similar material does not have. Among these advantages Byrne (1986:23) cites:

- a- They (dialogues) present the spoken language directly in situations in which it is most commonly used;
- b- They permit and encourage the learners to practice the language in the same way;
- c- They encourage active participation in the lesson

In addition, Byrne (ibid) suggests some points he sees essential and have to be present in a "successful" dialogue; and through which a dialogue is evaluated. We mention them just to show their importance, relevance, and usefulness in any dialogue:

*a-The language should be relevant* (main items should be ones that help to build up the learner's communication ability).

*b-The language should be appropriate* (forms typical to spoken language; contracted forms, hesitation marks...).

*c-The situations should be realistic and relevant*

The dialogue should create the impression that speakers are real people in a real world using language for a purpose.

*d-The structural or functional items should be limited*

The dialogue concentrates on presenting one or two items; the other related items can be added at the practice stage.

*e-The lexical items should be limited*

Only little vocabulary is taught in a dialogue; additional items are left to the practice stage.

*f-The dialogue should not be too long*

A convenient length is about 8 to 10 exchanges (of course it depends on the situation)

*g-The dialogue should be interesting*

It is helpful if the dialogue has some action, so it can be dramatized, not simply said aloud.

Based on teaching experience, Dobson (1996:36-37) claims that several ways are possible to turn dialogues into "stepping stones" to free communication. She suggests the following procedures that have been tested by experience and can help students develop fluency in English.

1. Make the dialogue conform to the surrounding reality. Suppose that students already know the following dialogue:

*George:* Do you have any hobbies?

*Ann* :Yes, photography and gardening.

*George:* I don't have any hobbies at all.

*Ann* : I thought you used to collect stamps.

*George:* I did, but now that I have two jobs, I don't have time for anything else.

*Ann* : Speaking of time, I must get to the bank before two o'clock. See you later.

On the basis of such a dialogue, a measure of reality can be introduced; we use the names of our students for the characters. Moreover, we can introduce variations on specific dialogue lines or aspects for question-and- answer practice. Answers should be consistent with reality.

-What are your hobbies?

-Do any of your friends collect stamps?

-Would you like to have two jobs?

.....

.....

2. Write the dialogue on the blackboard and let students suggest more exchange(s) that would be a logical addition.

As an addition to the previous dialogue, the characters continue:

*Ann:* see you later.

*George:* wait a minute. I'll give you a ride.

*Ann:* that would be wonderful.

.....

.....

Doing so, students express themselves in an imaginative way while remaining within the spirit and general form of the dialogue.

3. Have students paraphrase the lines of the dialogue.

-What are your hobbies? Instead of 'do you have any hobbies?'

-Collecting postcards instead of 'yes, photography and gardening'.

-I don't have any hobbies these days instead of 'I don't have any hobbies at all'.

Each student is supposed to say something similar to a line of the dialogue.

4. Call two students. Each taking one of the two parts and using the appropriate motions such as raising the eyebrows, looking at a watch...etc. In this way the student's paraphrase becomes a real conversation. Facial expressions and actions give the conversation a genuine touch of reality and enjoyment.

5. Outline a similar situation to that in the dialogue and have two students perform it on their own.

It represents a kind of test to students' competences. The situation as cited by the teacher would be: it is quarter to five in the afternoon and Marco and Giulia (two students in the class) are talking about hobbies. Giulia suddenly remembers that she has to be somewhere by five o'clock.

*Marco:* did you say that your hobby is gardening?

*Giulia:* yes, how about you? Do you have any hobbies?

*Marco:* I don't have time for hobbies, I have to work at the shop all day and some times in the evening too.

*Giulia:* that's too bad. Every one should have some time for relaxation.

*Marco:* you're right, but we have to take care of a lot of customers these days.

*Giulia:* oh, excuse me. I must meet my sister at five, and it's ten to five now. Good bye!

Such creation should be prepared carefully. Correction of errors can be done with playing back a tape recorded conversation.

6. Use the dialogue as a departure point.

The reference to hobbies in the previous dialogue could open a general discussion among students, their hobbies, why they enjoy them, etc. this is advised for advanced students.

7. Give students a chance to compose their own dialogues.

It is a kind of 'group project', where the teacher outlines beforehand common dialogue types so that students are familiar with the ways dialogues can be directed to different aspects of language: specific grammar point, meaning of a specific word or expression, collecting

related vocabulary...etc. After students have chosen the construction of their dialogue, the teacher corrects it on paper and may ask the pair to perform it in front of the class.

8- Choose one of the situations for improvisation.

Write it on the blackboard, students discuss their preferred kind of dialogue, bring it to you for correction and perform it in front of the class.

We can notice from the above procedures that we move gradually from a controlled task to a freer one. We start from the point where students are asked only to repeat a given dialogue and substitute items to a final step where they can imagine –or choose- a situation, compose dialogues for themselves and perform it in front of their peers.

We have said that dialogue -although seen as out of fashion- is the most used technique. In relation with RP we can see all the characteristics of it present; preparation, presentation, being other than oneself, stage (in front of the class) performance, etc.

In a dialogue, students play different roles according to the given situation. In the previous suggested dialogues, Marco & Giulia or George & Ann could be just friends, classmates, neighbors, etc. Also, they could be sad, happy, bored, etc. Addition of new sentences -exchanges- is possible too. Ur (2000:132) emphasizes the efficiency of dialogue tasks on learners especially beginners or less confident ones. He says:

Particularly for beginners or the less confident, the dialogue is a good way to get learners to practice saying target-language utterances without hesitation and within a wide variety of contexts; and learning by heart increases the learner's vocabulary of ready-made combinations of words or 'formulae'

## 4.2 Improvisations

It can be considered as a conversational technique used in the field of drama where speakers interact without any preceding preparation. It is generally used with students after they have been adept in performing their own renditions of a given dialogue situation (Dobson, 1996).

We can rapidly notice that we are speaking about dramatic hypothetical situations (improvisations). This has a strong relationship with theatre. In this latter, actors learn 'human behavior' skills so that they can create interaction that appears real in given situation. Similar skills are useful for effective interaction across diverse groups in real situations (business, for example).

Improvisation is the invention or fabrication of a story or line of logic using a given set of parameters. For this reason improvisations demand a high degree of language proficiency and imagination, and thus, they should only be used with relatively advanced level English students (Dobson, *ibid*).

Note that stage acting techniques -in general- are based on spontaneity and the understanding of human behavior. This makes improvisation an excellent 'training ground' for students to promote and develop their skills -speaking skill in particular. Without forgetting that it is used most of the time with groups in an atmosphere of fun that helps actors (students) to be more dynamic, and entertains the rest of the class who play the role of the audience, the act of improvising is not done alone; interaction itself is a key component of the process.

In improvisations a large supply of hypothetical situations is needed. Dobson (*ibid*) suggests fifty (50) situations and claims that they have proved suitable for use in classrooms or conversational clubs. We cite some of them as examples:

1-You are in a restaurant. You have just had a good dinner. The waiter is waiting for you to pay the bill. You look for your wallet and find that you have left it at home.

2-You are at home alone. Suddenly, the telephone rings, you pick up the receiver and hear a strange voice on the other end of the line.

3-Your friend asks you to return a book that you borrowed from him several months ago. At first, you cannot remember what you did with it. Then, you explain why you kept the book for such a long time.

4-At the theatre you discover that another person is sitting in your seat. You talk to him, explaining that he is in the wrong seat.

5- You are strolling down town. Suddenly you meet an old friend of yours whom you haven't seen since you were in elementary school. You are surprised to learn that he has become a millionaire.

6-Your house has been robbed. You call the police. When the policeman comes, he asks you a number of questions.

7- You are a teacher. When you walk into the classroom, you see that one student is crying at his desk. You ask him why he is so upset.

8- You are in a good mood, but your friend is in a bad mood. You try to cheer him up, but he remains unhappy.

9- You are a government official. A journalist interviews you, asking you your opinions on world affairs.

10- You and your wife are returning home from a movie. You suddenly discover that neither of you has the house key.

From all the above example situations, we can notice three important remarks. First, the word 'suddenly' is repeated many times or even understood from other words meanings. This emphasizes the fact that any improvisation should be 'spontaneous' and not prepared in advance. Second, there is always at least one person to interact with; interaction is a crucial

element while improvising. Third, all imaginary situations can be real and happen to any ordinary person. They are not so imaginary to the point that some of the students cannot suppose themselves interacting in some of them one day!

Frequent use of this technique will help students get over their shyness in speaking a foreign language, and provides rewarding communication activity for speakers and onlookers alike.

### 4.3 Plays

As has been said before, dialogues and improvisations are forms of role-playing. We used to make (perform) dialogues and improvisations –generally- in pairs, though it is quite possible to involve many students in one given dialogue to play different roles. This expansion –by allowing a larger number of students to participate and 'act' together –brings us to the matter of 'plays'.

A play is a 'story' performed on a stage. Instead of reading a script and being told about what already *happened*, in a play we see and hear what *is happening*. Actors pretend they are the people in the story; they talk according to what the playwright (or the teacher) gives them to say, and do what the playwright (or the teacher) tells them to do.

A play (or stage play) is a form of literature (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000) written by a playwright that almost always consists of dialogues between fictional characters.

Richard Monett who held the longest tenure of artistic director at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival (1994-2007) claims that “plays on the shelf are literature, whereas plays on the stage are theatre.” (Found in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/play-theatre>).

Plays differ according to the theme they treat, the objectives they are written for and the message the playwright wants to convey to the audience. The difference between plays leads us to the notion of 'genre'. 'Genre' is a French word that means 'kind' or 'type'; it is used in many disciplines to refer to the various categories in which works are classified (whether a piece of writing drama, novel, or a short story, etc) ( Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory, 1998). Major two known genres of plays are *Comedy* and *Tragedy*. In a comedy the protagonist (the main character) overcomes the dramatic obstacle(s) and attains his major objectives, whereas in a tragedy, he goes down in defeat. This emphasizes the basic distinction between the two genres, that comedy ends happily and tragedy unhappily. In tragedies, threats and dangers that any plot involves are fulfilled while in comedies they may be evaded.

The enjoyable plays are those funny and open-ended ones. Nevertheless, it is not recommended to teachers to work on a whole play; it requires too much time. Therefore, they

may "wish to schedule a short skit or skits during a class period to give several students a chance to participate in role-playing" Dobson (1996). She (ibid) provides some procedures that can be followed:

- Dialogues -fairly long dialogues- can be used as a basis for a skit.
- Think of a situation that involves the maximum number of students.
- Participant students should write the situation on a piece of paper.
- Choose the easiest situation for each student to act out.
- Describe the situations you have selected to the class.
- Assign roles and have the students enact the situations on an impromptu basis.

Working in such a way provides a helpful atmosphere in which students enact situations they think they are easy. They can even choose the roles they are going to play. Once again, when they pretend to be 'the character of the story' their production (oral production) will be of great value. Keep in mind that 'plays' is a kind of role-playing; or rather, it is just an expansion of it.

#### 4.4 Simulations

It is another type of role-play. In many occasions the two items are used interchangeably (Role-play & simulation) because of the close similarities they share.

In role-play participants are given both a situation and a problem, and they are allotted individual roles. In simulation, the individual participants speak and react as themselves with no audience but the group, situation and task they are given are imaginary ones. This is may be the only slight difference between role-play and simulation. Thornbury (2005:98) says:

A distinction can be made between role-plays and simulations. The former involve the adoption of another 'persona' .... In simulation, on the other hand, students 'play' themselves in a simulated situation.

Example:

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

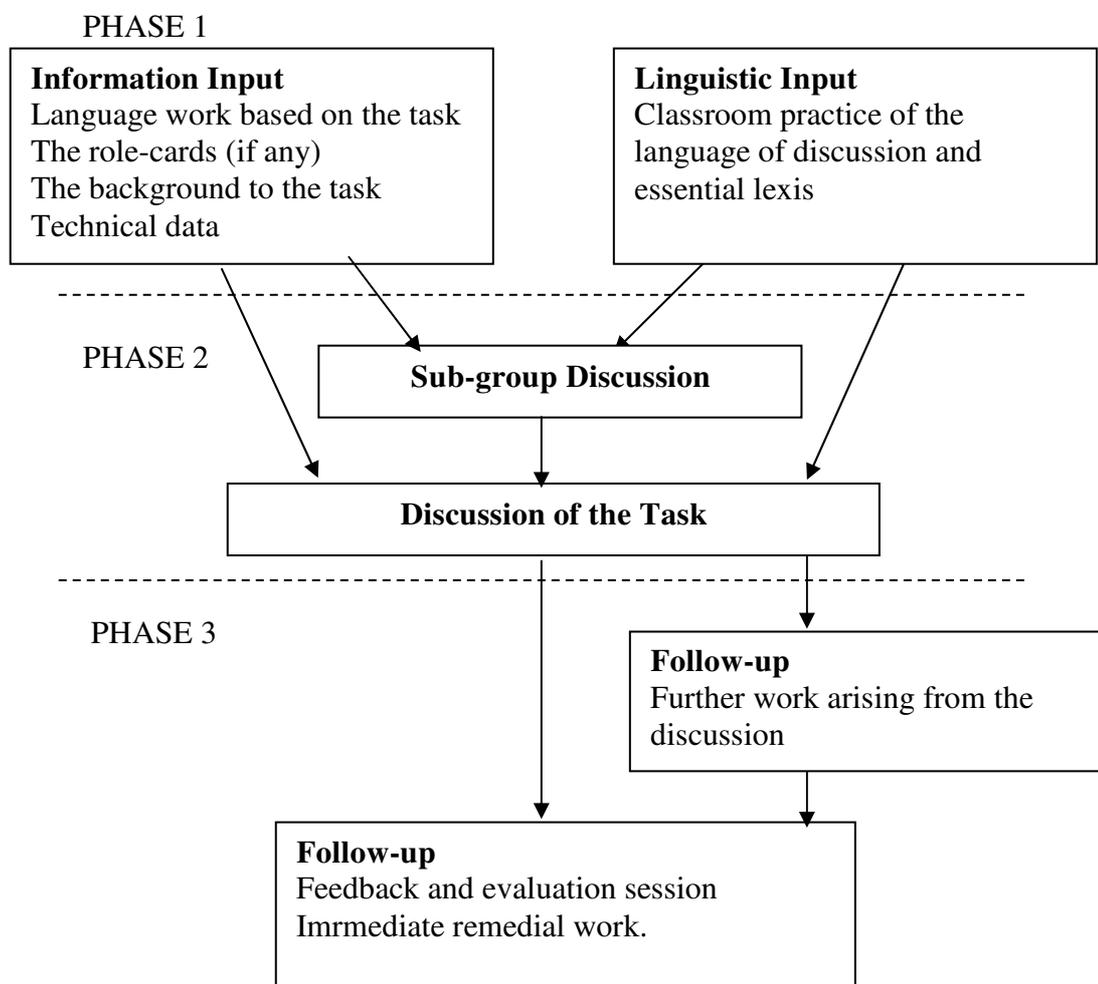
(Ur, 2000:132)

Many kinds of simulation can be considered, and it is according to the kind that the language used by students differs. Students simulating a committee meeting will interact in a way different from that when simulating an interview situation or a public meeting.

Simulation generally goes through three phases. Bygate (1987:81) discusses them on the basis of Herbert & Sturtridge 1979 work. He says that: "Firstly, a stage for giving the

participants necessary information; secondly, the problem-solving discussions; and thirdly, follow up work".

The following diagram, proposed by Herbert & Strutridge (ibid), illustrates the three phrases cited above:



**Figure 12: Structure of Simulation.**

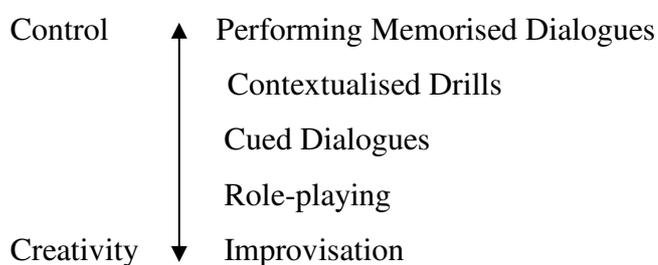
Bygate (ibid) gives the example of 'the Cambian Educational Aid Project (cited by Herbert & Strutridge, 1979) which is considered appropriate for language teachers. Simulation, in this view, is more successful if teachers can draw on the personal experience of the participants. In this example simulation, a fictitious country 'Cambia' is offered one million pounds for English language teaching. Participants are, then, going to simulate a situation in which the Minister of education, teacher trainer, etc are discussing how to use the above mentioned sum of money.

Another suggestion was made by Ur (1981:115). It is more complex and lasts longer than the previous one. He gives a school simulation example involving a huge number of

participants (financial negotiations, negotiations for building; job advertisements and interviews; and local problems like parking, catering, or friction between the school and the community). What is really interesting is that it is quite possible to enlarge the simulation to involve more than one class members if they are needed.

### 5. Examples of RP Activities

After we discussed different types of RP, and although we gave some examples of possible situations students can improvise, we want just to clarify what has been said with practical examples. In this chapter we have seen that improvisations, plays, dialogues and other techniques can all be kinds of the RP activity. Littlewood (1999:50) makes a classification for all of them ranging from teacher-control to learner-creativity:



Littlewood (ibid) chooses the ‘cued dialogues’ as the point where RP becomes sufficiently creative in terms of communication language use, to give an example of how to manage a RP activity. He does this in a kind of comparison between role-playing activities controlled through:

- ✚ Cued Dialogues,
- ✚ Cues and Information, and
- ✚ Situation and Goals.

#### 5.1 Role-play through Cued Dialogues

In this case students are given their cues printed on separate cards. Students will behave spontaneously as if the situation is happening really. Accordingly, each student:

- Must listen to his partner before he prepares a response,
- Predicts what the other will say, and
- Will have the time to prepare his sentence and choose the easiest words he knows.

<i>Learner A</i>	<i>Learner B</i>
You meet B in the street	You meet A in the street
A: Greet B	A:.....
B: .....	B: greet A
A: ask B where he is going	A: .....
B: .....	B: say you are going for a walk
A: suggest somewhere to go together	A: .....
B: .....	B: reject A's suggestion make a different suggestion
A: accept B's suggestion	A: .....
B: .....	B: express pleasure

The teacher also can equip his students with suitable forms and vary the learners' scope for creativity in two main ways:

- The cues which specify the functional meaning can be more or less detailed (e.g. suggestions: cinema, theatre ...etc).
- The activity can move further especially with the more skilled students. When students are encouraged not stick to the cues and are given some freedom to go beyond them, the activity can move from '*maximum control*' to '*maximum creativity*'.

### 5.2 Role-play through Cues and Information

Tight limits are put on the possible amount of creativity and no contradiction should be found in the given cues. Generally, one student is given detailed cues whereas the other is not. The following examples present a role-playing between hotel manager (ess) and a prospective guest:

*Student A:* You arrive at a small hotel one evening. In the foyer, you meet the manager (ess) and:

Ask there is a room vacant.

Ask the price, including breakfast.

Say how many nights you would like to stay.

Ask where you can park your car for the night

Say what time you would like to have breakfast

*Student B:* You are the manager (ess) of a small hotel that prides itself on its friendly, homely atmosphere. You have a single and a double room vacant for tonight. The prices are £8.50 for the single room, £15.00 for the double room. Breakfast is £1.50

extra per person. In the street behind the hotel, there is a free car park. Guests can have tea in bed in the morning, for 50p.

Following the cues given to both students, it is A who can initiate or modify the cues whereas B will not initiate but rather will respond according to what A says without being confused. In such a situation one person seeks information or needs a service. Social context is focused on when information are being gathered.

### 5.3 Role-play through Situation and Goals

**Student A:** you wish to buy a car. You are in a showroom, looking at a second-hand car that might be suitable. You decide to find out more about it, for example how old it is, who the previous owner was, how expensive it is to run, and whether there is a guarantee. You can pay up to about £900 in cash.

**Student B:** you are car salesman. You see a customer looking at a car in the showroom. The car is two-years old and belonged previously to the leader of a local pop group. It does about twenty miles to the gallon. You offer a three-month guarantee and can arrange hire purchase. The price you are asking for the car is £1.400. To make the situation clearer, it is preferred to bring a picture of the car to avoid any misunderstanding.

Students interact spontaneously to each other's communicative acts and strategies for that they know only the overall situation and their own goals in it. It's only the teacher's intuition and experience which enable him to decide about (a) the shared knowledge; (b) the aspects of the situation and roles which can be left to each individual's imagination; and (c) facts that should be known by more than one student.

### 5.4 Role-play through Debate or Discussion

In this example, student participating in the RP activity share adequate knowledge and they discuss a given issue to reach a final decision(s). What follows, here, is an activity from *over to you*, in which students are in groups of four. The situation is:

You are a group of people who are anxious to help the old in your small town, and you have managed to make a start by collecting £1.000 from local inhabitants and holding jumble sales. Study your role and then discuss how the money can best be used.

**Student A: Role:** Miss Julia Jenkins, spinster.

You feel that you should contact on of the charity organizations advertised on pages 94-95 [of over to you], at least for device.

**Student B: Role:** Rev. Ronald Rix, the local vicar.

You wish to found an old people's club which will meet in the church hall. Some of the £1.000 that has been collected was raised by holding jumble sales in the church hall.

*Student C: Role:* Mr David Hicks, headmaster of the local primary school.

You are anxious for the pupils at your school to play a role in helping the aged.

*Student D: Role:* Mrs Dorothy Foster, widow.

You think the money should be used to renovate an old country house which could be used as an old people's recreation centre.

It is a kind of mixture between two activities presented in Chapter II: 'Discussion' and 'Problem-solving'. Sufficient conflict of opinion will assure the interaction to last for a long period of time.

The four examples given, here, are not the only possible ones. We have spoken previously in this chapter about improvisation which could be applied as an RP activity, too. Improvisation is the least controlled RP activity; only a stimulus-situation is presented to students who have to exploit and interpret the way they wish (Littewood, 1990).

## 6. Teacher's Role

In the learning process many factors contribute together either to guarantee a suitable environment in which learning occurs and is sustained or to spread a feeling of disgust and boredom among students and teachers as well. We have already said above that the teacher is the first responsible of all what happens in his classes. Of course we are not denying the learners' role, but since the teacher is supposed to control, motivate the class, provide information, guide students, etc, we focus on his role –or more precisely 'his roles'. The teacher has many roles to play; it is according to the situation that he moves from one role to another.

It is commonly agreed upon the fact that teaching is a very 'noble difficult job'. One of the hardest difficulties is that of teaching foreign languages. Byrne (1986:1) gives a strong answer arguing why it is too difficult to teach a foreign language. He says: "to a large extent, it is because we are attempting to teach in the classroom what is normally -and perhaps best-learned outside it". Byrne (ibid), focusing on developing oral skills (understanding and speaking), gives a list of obstacles that we have to cope with as teachers:

- The size of the class (often thirty or more learners).
- The arrangement of the classroom (which rarely favours communication).
- The number of hours available.
- The syllabus itself, and particularly examinations, which may discourage us from giving adequate attention to the spoken language.

It is, then, the teacher's role to have himself and his students get rid of all these obstacles and "create the best conditions for learning ". To do so, the teacher needs to play different roles.

Davies & Pearse (2000:127) emphasize some roles the teacher should play in his classes; he needs –according to them- to:

- Present new information, control *accuracy* practice from the front, and make sure that as many learners as possible participate [...] and *that most errors are corrected*.
- Organize and facilitate lockstep *fluency* and skills activities from the front, encouraging voluntary participation and *ignoring most errors*.
- Monitor individual, pair or group activities, moving around among the learners and helping and encouraging them.
- Inform the learners about their progress, trying to combine *encouragement* with *honest evaluation* and useful feedback.

Presentation, practice and production are the three stages of the learning process that Byrne (1986) speaks about. At each stage the teacher has a different role to play. These stages are discussed as follows:

### **6.1 Informant** ( Presentation Stage)

At this stage, the teacher is the one who *knows* the language. Then, he selects the new material to be learned and presents it in a way that the meaning of the new language is as clear and memorable as possible, students are almost all the time listening, they are passive except when asked to join in. However, it should not be understood that the teacher speaks as much as possible letting no opportunity to students to practice the language themselves (Byrne, *ibid*).

### **6.2 Conductor and Monitor** (Practice Stage)

After new information are introduced and learned it is now the students' turn to talk. At this stage, the teachers' role is to devise and provide the maximum amount of practice (Byrne, *ibid*). Contrarily to the presentation stage, the teacher has to do the minimum amount of talking and monitor the performance of his students who are all given the chance to participate.

### **6.3 Manager and Guide** (Production Stage)

Presenting new material to the students and giving them the opportunity to practice are not enough to claim that the teacher has done the job. It is only when students are able to use the language for themselves that a real learning is assumed to have taken place. Furthermore, students should be given regular and frequent opportunities to use language freely-regardless the mistakes they may make (Byrne, *ibid*). When students feel they are able to express their

own ideas, they become aware that they have learned something useful to them personally; this pushes them to go on learning. By offering these opportunities, the teacher takes on the role of a manager and guide rather than any role else.

The three stages mentioned above show different roles that a teacher takes on in helping, guiding, managing and advising students to get them develop their abilities in learning foreign language and communicating without any difficulty in it. Nevertheless, the above-mentioned stages can have another order moving from production to presentation to practice. We have already said that a teacher plays many roles. Each role should be taken according to many conditions: age of the students, their level, the available material, the skill being learned, etc. Harmer (2001) claims three of them having particular relevance to get students speak fluently:

#### **6.4 Prompter**

When students are involved in a speaking activity they may lose the thread of what is going on or they are just lost for words. They may be in bad situations in which they are not able to find the right vocabulary to use. In such situations the teacher has to choose; either to let them struggle out on their own or, instead, ‘nudge’ them forward in a supportive way. It is according to the context and surrounding circumstances that s/he is going to react. Sometimes choosing the first option would be better (letting them struggle out on their own) while in many cases, the second choice would be the best. Prompting role that a teacher can play helps both: students and the activity itself to progress by offering discreet suggestions.

Doing so can ‘stop the sense of frustration’ that some students feel when they come to a ‘*dead end*’ of language ideas (Harmer, 2001).

#### **6.5 Participant**

Traditionally, a teacher intervenes at the end of a speaking activity to offer feedback or correct mistakes. However, sometimes, it is better to the whole class (or the activity to progress) to have the teacher as a ‘team member’. For many reasons a teacher might want to take part in a speaking activity. Harmer (ibid, 276) says:

however, teachers may want to participate in discussions or role-plays themselves. That can prompt covertly, introduce new information to help the activity along, ensure continuing student engagement, and generally maintain a creative atmosphere.”

For the students, it is so encouraging and enjoyable to have the teacher participating with them. For the teacher, too, it is a relaxing time to enjoy, even if it lasts for some few minutes only! What we may risk is the ‘dominance’ of the teacher on his students since he has more

English at his disposal. That's why teachers should not forget that their participation is a kind of help and sustainment to prompt students' commitment.

### 6.6 Feedback Provider

By 'feedback' we mean both: assessment and correction. The way a teacher reacts depends on the stage of the lesson, the type of the made mistake, the activities, etc. In a speaking activity, the teacher should not over-correct students' mistakes, for it may inhibit them and stop the flow of speech and communication. However, It is valuable to allow students evaluate their work themselves. Harmer (ibid) says:

“when students are in the middle of a speaking activity, over-correction may inhibit them ...when students have completed an activity it is vital that we allow them to assess what they have done and that we tell them what, in our opinion, went well.”

In most speaking activities, fluency is the target skill that the teacher focuses on; for that reason he should not interrupt students in mid-flow to point out a grammatical point or a pronunciation error.

We figured out different types of RP and we think we should then, shed light on the teacher's role in any RP activity. “The teacher can of course guide to a greater or lesser degree according to how explicit he makes his instructions.” (Broughton *et al*, 1980:83). This clarifies to a greater extent the teacher's role in preparing any RP activity. The teacher intervenes at any stage of the task, he chooses the adequate situation, right roles to be played, suitable assignment of roles, precise repartition of time allotted to each of the 'characters',...etc.

Generally speaking, the teacher defines, as a starting point, the 'general structure' of the role-play. In most cases -especially with advanced learners- he does not actively participate after setting the structure. Jones (1991, Cited in Tompkins, 1998) shows that there is a resemblance between the teacher's way in controlling the class and that of a traffic controller who helps the flow of traffic and avoids bottlenecks, but does not tell individuals which way to go. This is quite consistent with Scarcella & Oxford (1992) principles, too. Tompkins (1998) claims that giving students more freedom while interacting inside the classroom is of great value. She emphasizes, too, what has been said formerly in this paper that concerns the benefit we obtain by getting students at ease, away from any pressure; i.e. learning process will be improved and many psychological obstacles are eliminated. Tompkins (ibid) says that contrarily to traditional teacher-centred classroom structure, students interact freely and spontaneously while the teacher keeps a relatively low profile. This reduces student anxiety and facilitates learning.

Motivation is one of the most crucial aspects that should be paid greater attention at all the learning process stages. Thus, in role-play activities, the teacher *must* try his best not only to motivate students at the beginning of the role-play activity, but to keep them motivated by stimulating their curiosity and keeping the material relevant; this creates a “tension to learn” (Burns & Gentry 1998, Cited in Tompkins, 1998).

We discussed the different roles a teacher plays during oral communication activities, in various stages (presentation, practice and production). We focused in particular on roles during the speaking activities (prompter, participant and feedback provider). We showed how much important the existence of a teacher in the classrooms is, as well as his guidance, participation, and membership of the group. All what is previously said leads to a general conclusion that emphasizes the fact that presence of the teacher in the classroom is valuable and different roles can be played by this latter. Nevertheless, his roles change from time to time according to the teaching situation. We cited above some factors that can either encourage or hinder the teaching process in which of course the teacher is a central element.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter we tried to define RP and discuss its different types and how to apply them as well. Each of which has some special characteristics. We preferred to do so for many reasons. Firstly, to bring something new to teachers and students who either do not know RP and its application and types, or take it for granted neglecting its contributing role in enhancing and promoting students speaking abilities. Secondly, many teachers would like to use RP with their classes while they may hesitate and be afraid of misusing it. That’s why we chose to encourage them by mentioning some of the RP advantages. We say that it is up to the teacher himself to establish a good group spirit (an atmosphere where each class member feels at ease).

Also we tried to give some practical examples of different types of RP, moving from the teacher-controlled example (memorised dialogues) to the least controlled, or learner-creativity ones (improvisations).

For the teacher’s role in this kind of activities, we tried to explain some of the roles he can take on. We said that role-play is a ‘drama-like’ activity that’s why while speaking about the teacher’s role we think we dare say that the teacher is a ‘director’ of the play or the sketch being performed in front of the whole class. Of course a director has to assign roles, correct mistakes, choose the right scenario, etc.

At the end of this chapter we hope that all the elements that any RP activity could include were discussed even in short details.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**RESEARCH DESIGN**

Introduction

1. Design and Methodology .....

2. Variables .....

3. Target Population .....

    3.1 Sample .....

    3.2 Participants .....

4. Data Gathering Tools .....

5. Data Analysis .....

6. Discussion .....

Conclusion .....

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 1. Design and Methodology

Of course many methods can be possible for one single subject. To prefer one method to another should be based on its adequacy to the subject under investigation. In our case, two variables (independent and dependent) are in a cause/effect relationship. More precisely the independent variable is the RP technique which we presume to have a positive effect on making the dependent variable, students' speaking skill, better. We are, then, attempting to identify and understand the nature of RP and inquire teachers' and students' awareness of about it. To make an in-depth investigation, a case study research strategy is followed. Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon with its real-life context (Yin, 2009). It also assures a longitudinal of a single event, group, incident, or community, during which four basic steps are provided: events are looked at in a systematic way, data are collected, information are analyzed and results are finally reported (Greene, 2003). At the end of the study, the researcher may gain good comprehension of why and how the phenomenon happens in a way that makes him able to test his hypotheses (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The basic reason that makes descriptive research the most commonly used is to identify the nature of something that happening and some of the circumstances that may affect it. It is supposed that RP is an element that may help students overcome some psychological problems and be more talkative especially in OE sessions. First, it is a funny activity that students enjoy. Secondly, it does not cost at all; students are to play roles and they are not to buy nor bring any thing with them, and the administration is not asked to prepare anything special for them each time they use RP. Thirdly, it is a very active and vivid; new ideas and large participation opportunities are offered. Finally, RP may remove some psychological barriers that prevent some students from integrating in the group (class). Questionnaires were given to students and teachers, and once handed back they were analysed and interpreted to verify and test the hypothesis put right in the beginning of the study.

#### 2. Variables

Researches are generally made to identify, measure or check how a variable is affecting another. The variable that affects another is called 'independent' because it is new circumstance that the researcher wants to apply on an already existing element to see what result(s) he would get according to the put hypothesis. At last, the results are the only facts

able to prove whether this independent variable has a positive or negative, or no effect on the existing element.

The already circumstance that the researcher intends to change is called the 'dependent' variable. It supposed and expected to change once the independent variable is applied on it. In this study, it is made clear that the independent variable is RP which is presumed to have a positive effect on the dependent variable the students' speaking skill.

### 3. Target Population

To investigate any subject, the researcher has to choose the right population which should be really concerned by the study. Otherwise, it would be non-sense to investigate a problem with people who have no interest or no relationship with it. For that purpose, the present study concerns first year students of English at Guelma university during the academic year: 2007-2008. Therefore the population is about 180 students. Since teachers of oral expression are also concerned by the study, we added them to the whole population. Although there are only few teachers of this module (15 teachers), with some green ones among them, their opinions and contributions are indispensable.

#### 3.1 Sample

Generally, speaking a sample means some chosen participants from the whole concerned population. Sampling is widely used for gathering information about a population (Adèr, Mellenberg and Hand, 2008). It is more convenient and credible if the sample is as big as possible. If it is so, any made generalization would be more convincing and reliable. Adèr et al (ibid) claim that the entire population is rarely surveyed because the cost is too high and the population could change over time. Thus, they (ibid) give three advantages of sampling:

- The cost is lower,
- Data collection is faster, and
- It is possible to ensure homogeneity and to improve the accuracy and quality of the data since the data set is smaller.

At first, we wanted the sample to be the entire number of the first year students of English at Guelma university which is 180 students. But due to some circumstances it was not practically possible to do so. First, two groups with sixty (60) students were not administered the questionnaires on the basis that the researcher himself is their teacher of OE. Second, some of the 120 students were given the questionnaire but unfortunately they did not hand them back to the researcher. At last we could gather eighty-seven (78) filled questionnaires

only. The sample, then, consists of 78 first year students randomly chosen. Results will be generalized on the whole population.

### **3.2 Participants**

to carry out the present inquiry, students and teachers of OE were asked to participate. Some of them accepted while others seemed indifferent and did not hand back the questionnaires they were given to answer. To provide equal opportunities to all participants, questionnaires were randomly administered to all first year students of English (except those who were taught by the researcher himself). Students were asked the same questions organized in an anonymous questionnaire to get objective responses and avoid any kind of pressure or embarrassment. Unfortunately, only seventy-eight (78) of them replied. For teachers, we got no problem and all of them answered the questionnaires with no problem. Therefore the sample under investigation is 78 first year students of English and their teachers of OE at Guelma university.

## **4. Data Gathering Tools**

Collecting data and analyzing information cannot be done unless some tools are used. Following the nature of our work, two types of questionnaires are administered to both students and teachers of Oral Expression. Colleagues' opinions and help are recommended, and some measures of clarity and accuracy are taken into consideration while preparing the questionnaires like simple language and objective questions. Bygate (1987:105) advises that:

“...Firstly, questions can be easily misunderstood, so it may be useful to try them out on a colleague. Secondly, try to make sure the answers are easy to analyze: objective questions produce answers which are easiest and quickest to analyze...”

Nunan (1996:143) claims that "the construction of valid and reliable questionnaires is highly specialized business." We chose this kind of tools for its proven reliability. Questionnaires enable the researcher to obtain different perspectives by asking the same questions to different persons who come from different social classes, educational backgrounds... etc. It is one effective tool for a good research plan that focuses on both qualitative and quantitative forms of action research which Wallace (1998:4) defines as: "Systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what your practice should be."

What makes it more useful is its confidentiality; the questionnaires we administer are anonymous. This gives more freedom to our subjects to express themselves, their opinions and points of view without being under any sort of pressure (the presence of a teacher or

colleagues in front of the subjects, fear of revealing some personal secrets in a conversation or interview, expressing opinions opposing those of the teacher, etc).

Questionnaires are afterwards analyzed, results are interpreted, conclusion is made, and suggestions are recommended.

### **5. Data Analysis**

Questionnaires were so useful for collecting different opinions and ideas from the participants (students and teachers). A descriptive-analytic strategy is followed in analysing and commenting on the obtained answers. Both students and teachers were asked open-ended and close-ended questions. The fact that questionnaires were anonymous helped in getting more frank objective responses. This reduced bias since there were no opinions nor visual clues that could influence or affect respondents' answers.

Teachers of OE are asked about the different techniques they use in teaching the speaking skill, the easiest and efficient ones in particular. They are also requested to report the difficulties they encounter while teaching OE as well as the major problems students meet in learning speaking. Used teaching strategies, implementation of RP techniques and motivation towards using it, are all items that are examined.

Students, too, are demanded to express their thoughts freely. Personal attitudes toward speaking as a skill, different speaking activities and opportunities are all items of the asked questions. Nevertheless, the focus is made on the RP techniques.

All the obtained answers are commented on, analysed and interpreted.

### **6. Discussion**

After the collection of data, we analyzed all what we could gather. The results made us in better position to understand and identify the reasons behind students' weakness in speaking. We could also gather some useful ideas about the use of RP techniques in teaching speaking.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter was introduced to clarify the way this study was conducted. The choice of a descriptive analytic method was fruitful. We could gather different perspectives and opinions from the two categories of the target population (teachers and students) concerning different aspects that have been discussed in previous chapters such as oral abilities, speaking competences and the contribution of RP techniques in teaching/learning OE. The administered questionnaires enable us to collect data that was later on analyzed and

interpreted. This shift from theoretical literature to field study made a profound support and evidence for the supposition that was put right in the beginning of the research arguing the good contribution and high efficiency of RP techniques in teaching/learning OE.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**DESCRIPTION & ANALYSES OF TEACHERS**  
**AND STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRES**

**Introduction**

The paper in our hands inquires the effectiveness of the role-play technique in enhancing student's speaking abilities. In the introduction of this work, we made it clear that the target population would be the first year students of English at the department of English at the University of Guelma. We claimed that their teachers of the module of "Oral Expression" should be involved too, since they are also concerned with understanding, applying and teaching their O.E classes using RP.

**1. DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES**

The opinions of students and teachers are of great value. Therefore, two similar questionnaires have been administered to both of them.

**1.1 TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is administered to teachers of OE module to explore their ideas and opinions towards different items. It contains twenty-seven (27) questions divided into four (4) sections.

**SECTION ONE: Language Skills**

The aim of this section is to see which of the four skill is given more importance and why (Q1), how we should rank skills via their importance (Q2), and how teachers consider students' level in English (Q3), students' lack of motivation to learn English though it is their specialty (Q4), the most difficult skill to teach and citing some of the difficulties the teacher faces in teaching each skill (Q5), teachers' personal strategies used to overcome these difficulties and to what extent they succeeded in doing so (Q6).

**SECTION TWO: Speaking Proficiency**

This section deals with the time allotted to the OE module per week (Q7), if it is sufficient for EFL students or not (Q8), among the two aural- oral skills, which is emphasized and why (Q9), whether there is any program in teaching O.E module (Q10), how often the teacher helps his students overcome their speaking problems (Q11), his role in the classroom (Q12), the speaking activities he frequently uses with his classes (Q13), the most remarkable speaking problems the students suffer from (Q14). The degree of difficulty in teaching speaking skill (Q15), satisfaction with the students' level in speaking (Q16), if the teacher allows students to choose the topic they want to speak about (Q17), the effect of the teacher's

motivation on his students (Q18), the usefulness of involving students in the process to enhance their speaking abilities (Q19).

### **SECTION THREE: Role-play Techniques**

This last section is devoted to questions related to RP. We explore the teacher's use frequency of RP techniques in oral expression classes (Q20), if it is really an effective technique (Q21), if he assigns roles to students to be performed on the stage (Q22), gives them the chance to choose roles themselves (Q23), the use of RP techniques as a 'remedy' for shyness (Q24), the teacher's encouragement to students to play roles of their imagination (Q25), the teacher's preference between 'well prepared' and 'spontaneous' roles to be played by students (Q26), and finally the possibility of using RP techniques in teaching other courses (Q27).

### **SECTION FOUR: Suggestions and Beliefs**

In this last section, teachers are free to say whatever they want concerning the subject under investigation. Giving such an opportunity to them would bring new insights and clarify some issues even if we have forgotten to ask them about.

## **1.2 STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE**

This questionnaire is administrated to the 1<sup>st</sup> year students of English. It contains thirty-five (35) questions divided into five (5) sections following the items that have been discussed throughout the theoretical part of this research.

### **SECTION ONE: Personal Abilities and Attitudes towards Language Skills**

This section seeks to know how often students speak English inside and outside the classroom and the purpose behind outside conversations (Q1). This section investigates also the opportunities that were offered to students to speak English, in previous learning stages (Q2), its aim also is to see how students think about teaching the four skills and if there should be a given priority to some skill(s) (Q3), which skill should be given more importance and why (Q4), a comparison in preference between oral and written expression modules (Q5), a self evaluation in speaking (Q6) and the aim from studying English and making it a University term specialty (Q7).

### **SECTION TWO: Speaking Status**

It is concerned with the students' opinions about the importance of speaking in studying English (Q8), and to what extent learning speaking is a difficult skill (Q9), satisfaction with one's level in speaking (Q10) and motivation towards speaking as much as possible for better level (Q11), participation inside the classroom (Q12), being courageous enough to speak (Q13), and finally what prevents being at ease while speaking (Q14).

### **SECTION THREE: Teaching Speaking**

We asked students about the effect of teacher's motivation on students' (Q15), the opportunities given to them to speak during the OE sessions (Q16), which of the two skills (speaking or listening) is emphasized by O.E teachers (Q17), the activities often used in O.E. classes (Q18) the one(s) seen as most effective (Q19), the sufficiency of the allotted time of O.E (Q20), the preferred O.E exam form of (Q21). It deals, too, with the various roles a teacher should play (Q22).

#### **SECTION FOUR: Role-play Techniques**

It is devoted to the techniques of playing roles. The aim is to see if students know the techniques of RP (Q23), whether they experienced it before getting the baccalaureate (Q24), the frequency of using it in previous learning stages (Q25), enjoyment of playing roles (Q26), and preferred roles (Q27), chosen or imposed by the teacher (Q28), experiences in performing plays on a stage (Q29). We requested students to give their opinions in the effectiveness of RP techniques in helping them developing their speaking level (Q30), whether they prefer playing primary or secondary roles (Q31). We asked them also if the teacher uses RP (Q 32), if yes, how often (Q33) and the suggested frequency in applying RP (Q34), and finally their opinion about chosen/assigned roles distribution (Q35).

#### **SECTION FIVE: Suggestions and Beliefs**

By including this section, we wanted to offer a freer space for students to make any suggestions that concern different speaking activities, the way through which we should apply RP techniques and assign roles to students, and any further suggestions.

## **2- ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES**

### **2-1-ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRES**

#### **SECTION ONE: Language Skills**

**QUESTION ONE: Which of the Four Skills is Given more Importance in the Department of English?**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
a- Listening	04	26.66
b- Speaking	01	06.66
c- Writing	06	40.00
d- Reading	00	00.00
e- None	04	26.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: The most Given Importance Skill**

Most of the teachers (40.00 %) confess that the skill made under focus in the department of English is that of 'writing'. They argue their answer by the fact that writing reflects the students' mastery of grammar and vocabulary, it represents a combination of other competences and, according to them, it is the skill through which they can evaluate their students by getting a feedback about their proficiency level through written production required in answering exam questions.

What is really remarkable is that none of teachers thinks that reading is given 'some' importance, may be it is seen as a skill that should be worked on by students themselves especially when we remember that we are speaking about 'university' level; a teacher is not going to oblige a student to read if he does not want to do so!

#### QUESTION TWO: Are you 'For' or 'Against' this Priority-ranking?

	N	%
a- With	05	33.33
b- Against	09	60.00
c- No A	01	06.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4: For/Against Administration's Priority-ranking**

The majority of teachers (60.00%) claim that they are 'against' this priority-ranking. Only one teacher did not reveal any opinion about this question. Of course the five teachers who are 'for' the given ranking did not suggest any further proposition. This means that they agree with emphasizing teaching writing and considering it as 'superior and prior', whereas the nine (09) opposing teachers suggested the following priority classification:

<b>Rank</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Skill</b>				
a- Listening	2	0	6	0
b- Speaking	4	2	0	2
c- Reading	0	3	2	3
d- Writing	2	3	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>

**Table 5: Teachers' New Proposed Skills Priority Ranking**

Half of the teachers (50%) who were against giving writing more importance suggested to make speaking the skill that should be focused on in teaching students of English

the four skills. Listening is requested to be focused on, too. Reading is totally neglected and no teacher proposed to emphasize it in teaching English as a foreign language. One of the teachers said that he is against making writing the skill under focus, but he gave no suggestion. That's why the total number of answers is 8 instead of 9.

**QUESTION THREE: How do you Consider the Level of Students Year after Year?**

	N	%
a- Getting better	02	13.33
b- Getting worst	07	46.66
c- stable (no difference)	03	20.00
d- I cannot decide	03	20.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6: Teachers' Opinion About Students' Levels**

46.66 % of the teachers see the matter as dangerous with the level decreasing year after another. The two colleagues who said that the level is getting better represent 13.33% only and have teaching experiences between 4 and 8 years; that's why, perhaps, they answered that way. They know nothing about the previous generations to compare them with the present ones. They are green young teachers with "optimistic" views. All those who saw the student's level as getting worst have been teaching for periods between 12 and 25 years with two PhDs among them. This raises a big question mark and requests a reevaluation and reconstruction of some points concerning teaching English as a foreign language in Algerian universities because students of today will be teachers of tomorrow!

**QUESTION FOUR: Students Lack Motivation to Learn English though It is their Specialty Now!**

	N	%
a- Agree	13	86.66
b- I cannot decide	0	0.00
c- Disagree	0	0.00
d- Perhaps	02	13.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 7: Teachers' Opinion About Students' Motivations**

Almost all the teachers (86.66%) agreed on the fact that although English is their specialty, students are not motivated. To reveal the secret(s) behind this 'disappointment' we added a complementary question 'why?'. The teachers gave the following reasons:

- ✚ Students were oriented to study English; they did not choose it but rather it was imposed on them.
- ✚ The teaching methods are ancient and do not suit the teaching of English at a university level. Even the curriculum as a whole should be revised, updated for the current needs of students and adopted to their specific level.
- ✚ Absence of a 'healthy' academic atmosphere; this includes: qualified teachers, available teaching materials, attractive courses, etc.
- ✚ Some students did not expect this stream of studying a language with certain degree of difficulty. Before being a 'student of English' most students see it as quite easy, which is not the fact, of course.
- ✚ Lack of job opportunities; students are not motivated since they think they are studying to find themselves jobless after four years. The situation of their previous colleagues is disappointing.
- ✚ Students are interested in marks only and not in getting the more important thing 'knowledge'.
- ✚ They are in total despair; once they feel unable to express their ideas in English they rapidly tend to use their mother tongue with some tolerance from the part of their teachers who use L1, too.

#### QUESTION FIVE: Which of the Four Skills is Difficult to Teach?

	N	%
a- Listening	01	06.66
b- Speaking	08	53.33
c- Writing	04	26.66
d- Reading	01	06.66
e- No A	01	06.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 8: Teachers' Opinions About the Most Difficult Skill**

According to teacher's opinions (based on their experiences) the most difficult skill to teach is speaking. 53.33% see that speaking gathers many other sub-skills (pronunciation, vocabulary, social and psychological factors, etc and thus agree that mastering a language is measured by the ability of producing grammatically correct sentences, a variety of vocabulary items, right pronunciation of words in connected speech, etc. As a productive skill, writing also is claimed to be difficult to teach (26.66%).

We asked teachers to cite some of the difficulties which prevent the enhancement of students' abilities in the four skills. They gave many causes of the students' failure.

### **In listening**

Generally speaking almost all the teachers concentrated on the fact that students of English nowadays listen only to their teachers inside classrooms, though it is vital to listen to natives even on TV and radio channels. Students lack motivation, during lectures they seem uninterested and make almost no effort to identify what they are listening to. Time allocation and teaching materials (like laboratories) stay as one of the persisting problems in developing the listening comprehension skill.

### **In speaking**

In this brief survey, lack of practice especially outside the classroom, shyness, translation, lack of vocabulary items and translation from L1 to English are the major problems that hinder the improvement of students' speaking ability. Availability of material and time allocation are other problems that are directly related to the administration, thus we hope that our research will contribute in changing some aspects in favour of students and push responsables to do their best in providing the necessary materials.

### **In reading**

More than half of the teachers agree that students 'do not read' either 'at all' or 'often'. Statistics revealed that reading percentage in Algeria does not exceed 1%. Students have no inclination to read. They do not read even their hand outs/exam poly-copies -how come that they would read a book or a novel! For guided reading, teachers claim that it does not exist and the time devoted to reading is too short.

### **In writing**

A considerable number of teachers said that students have almost no written production opportunity; they learn theory more than practicing writing real texts (they write only when obliged as in the case of exams). Another big problem that teachers observed as a contributing factor in blocking the development of students' writing competence is that students are ignorant of grammar, have a lot of spelling mistakes and lack vocabulary items. If we dare say, we notice some similarities in the problems encountered in both 'productive

skills'; speaking and writing since it is through production (oral or written) that we can evaluate and discover the strong and weak sides of students' abilities.

**QUESTION SIX: Do you Have Any Personal Strategies to Deal with these Difficulties?**

	N	%
a- Yes	12	80.00
b- No	03	20.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 9: Teachers' Personal Strategies to Help Students**

As we see, a high number of teachers(12 over 15) assured that they have personal strategies to help students overcome various difficulties. Most of the suggested strategies concentrated on exposing students to real language (spoken by natives) and making them repeat dialogues. Some others who focused on overcoming writing difficulties advised that students should be assigned more grammar and vocabulary activities and claimed that even an oral expression session should always end up with a written assignment. Others saw that students have to speak as much as possible inside and outside classrooms, and teachers should vary their teaching techniques to cover all levels and all learning styles. All teachers agree that what really helps students overcome the difficulties they encounter is making them relaxed and feel at ease in order to gain their attention and confidence which they claim to be very important in the teaching/learning process as a whole.

We also wanted to see to what extent our teachers were successful in handling these problems. The results were:

	N	%
a- 25%	03	25.00
b- 50%	07	58.33
c- 75%	01	08.33
d- More than 75%	00	0.00
No A	01	08.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 10: Teachers' Strategies Success Degree**

One of the teachers who said that they have no personal strategies did not answer this complementary question.

The obtained results showed that more than half of the teachers have somehow succeeded in dealing with students' problems. Only one teacher claimed that he was able to overcome students' difficulties up to 75% though he is 27 years old and he has been teaching for four (04) years only! We think that he is so enthusiastic and eager to do his best in helping students and we think we cannot rely on his answer alone because he is still 'green' (at least according to our opinion).

## SECTION TWO: Speaking Proficiency

### QUESTION SEVEN: How Many Hours per Week are Allotted to the OE module?

	N	%
3 hours	15	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 11: Time Allotment to O.E Program**

All teachers said that three (03) hours per week is the time devoted to oral-expression module for first year students of English. This is of course planned by the administration; they have no hand in it.

### QUESTION EIGHT: Do you Think this Time is Sufficient for EFL Students?

	N	%
a- Yes	01	06.66
b- No	14	93.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 12: Teachers' Opinion About Sufficiency of OE time allotment**

14 out of 15 teachers assured that such an allotted time for learning/ teaching a difficult skill as speaking is definitively insufficient especially when we consider that this time is shared between listening & speaking, (more than 53% of teachers claimed in their

answers on question 5 that speaking is the most difficult skill to teach). To deal with this issue they suggested:

- ✚ More collaboration between the different modules.
- ✚ More practice, more time, and more effective devices (books, photocopies, videos, etc)
- ✚ Better exploitation of the allotted time.
- ✚ Use of new technologies (computer, data-show, internet...)
- ✚ Students should be more exposed to such a skill.
- ✚ All teachers requested the time allotted for O.E module is to be increased. Some suggested up to 6 hours (4 sessions with one hour and thirty minutes each). Others proposed 2 hours per session instead of 1h.30' per session.

#### **QUESTION NINE: Which Skill do you Give more Importance in your Classes?**

	N	%
a- Listening	01	06.66
b- Speaking	10	66.66
c- Both	04	26.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 13: Teachers' Concentration on Speaking and Listening**

The answers on this question gave a clear confession that teachers focus on speaking more than listening. 66.66% of them gave different arguments justifying their emphasis on speaking. They mostly do so because they think that it is almost the only opportunity given to students to speak English; they are all the time listening in other modules. It is, also, an opportunity for the teacher to listen to his students and therefore can figure out their mistakes (grammar, spelling, pronunciation, stress, intonation, etc) and correct them. One of the asked teachers (50 years old, magister) gave a valuable answer showing the importance of speaking that we prefer to cite word by word, he said: "a good speaker becomes a good inquirer and a good inquirer becomes a good learner."

A considerable number of teachers (26.66%) claim that they focus on both skills. They see that both of the skills are equally important, balance each other, and are interrelated.

#### **QUESTION TEN: Do you Follow Any Program in Teaching this Module?**

	N	%
a- Yes	11	73.33
b- No	04	26.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 14: Following a Given Program in O.E**

Although 73.33% of the teachers said that they follow a given program, others (26.66%) confessed that they do not. Moreover, most of them revealed that the followed program is theirs and not the administration's. We say this on the basis of our humble experience in teaching this module, too. There is no determined program.

**QUESTION ELEVEN: How often do you Help Students Overcome their Speaking Problems?**

	N	%
a- Always	07	46.66
b- Sometimes	01	06.66
c- When necessary	07	46.66
d- Never	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 15: Frequency of Helping Students Overcome Speaking Problems**

Answers were equally divided between 'always' and 'when necessary'. Although the two given choices seem alike, we on purpose proposed both of them to see to what extent O.E teachers intervene. To see that almost half of the teachers (46.66%) always correct students' mistakes gives the impression that there is an 'overcorrection' and a continues breaking of the flow of speaking which contrasts with the idea that has been discussed in chapter I and II (and praised by linguists) that in such a module teachers should focus on fluency and not accuracy and should not break the flow of the talk to avoid hindering, and inhibiting students from trying again and again.

**QUESTION TWELVE: What is your Role in the Classroom?**

	N	%
a- Participant	02	13.33
b- Friend	01	06.66
c- Corrector	01	06.66
d- Guide	05	33.33
e- Other, please specify	01	06.66
f- More than one answer	05	33.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 16: Teachers' Roles in O.E Classes**

In the last third chapter we have spoken of the teacher's roles. We deduced, then, that he can play various roles. On that ground we asked this question to which teachers replied differently.

Some of them prefer to be friends of their students, members of the whole team, participate with them, and correct their mistakes. This strongly explains that 'variation of roles' represents the 33.33% of the answer where teachers could not give one precise answer and claimed that they may play all these proposed choices according to the situation or lesson-phase. Nevertheless, 33.33% prefer to be guides. They see that guidance, especially at the university level should be the primary mission of the teacher. Moreover, to guide the student means that you indirectly participate with him and correct his mistakes in a friendly way that he would not feel embarrassed.

### **QUESTION THIRTEEN: What are the Activities you Generally Use to Improve your Students' Speaking Abilities?**

From the fifteen asked teachers we could gather over thirty five (35) answers; we tried to classify them in the following table to show the most used activities.

	N	%
01. Topic discussion	12	34.28
02. Role-play and drama-like activities	05	14.28
03. Guided dialogues	02	05.71
04. Problem solving activities	02	05.71
05. Oral presentation (exposé)	03	08.57
06. Commenting on videos	01	02.85

07. Quizzes, riddles and games	04	11.42
08. Songs	01	02.85
09. Pronunciation exercises	02	05.71
10. Repetition drills	02	05.71
11. Proverbs	01	02.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 17: Teachers' Most Used Activities**

The table above is the result of teachers' suggestions gathered all together. Most of them use the discussion of a topic (or conversation) as the primary activity. In our opinion, we see that this over-emphasis on discussing topics has two probabilities:

Probability one

The O.E sessions represent a kind of 'relaxing' time for students. Most of the teachers who use this activity say they let students choose what to speak about to put them at ease and get more participation and maximum of utterances and sentences. In discussions students give different points of view and they are asked to argue them. This gives a large possibility to make mistakes so the teacher can correct them either immediately or indirectly.

Probability two

Discussion activity is the last issue (refuge) for teachers especially those who claimed that they do not follow any program in teaching O.E module (Q10) so, the topic to be discussed with students is either prepared (or thought of) on the way to the classroom or created once the teacher meets his students; he has just to ask a question like 'what do you think about friendship nowadays?' and the debate starts!

Nevertheless, some teachers use quizzes, riddles, games and problem solving activities in teaching speaking, this is good if these activities are based on finding solutions to different kinds of problems in a way of 'thinking loudly'. Otherwise, i.e. to give a riddle to students and ask them to find the solution at home, will have nothing to do with enhancing students' speaking abilities. Role-playing and other drama-like activities ranked second. This shows that some teachers use it from time to time (see Q20 and Q21).

**QUESTION FORTEEN: Do your Students Have Problems in Speaking (or while Speaking)?**

	N	%
a- Yes	15	100
b- No	00	00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 18: Teachers' Opinions About Students' Speaking Problems**

All teachers, without any exception, said that students have different kinds of problems in speaking in general or at least while talking with someone especially inside the classroom.

In fact, when we asked our teachers to cite some of the difficulties students face in oral expression module, they gave us a relatively long list of problems which vary from linguistic shortcomings to psychological hindrances. They cited (19) points that are numerated below according to their reoccurrence in the teachers' answers:

**Lack of Vocabulary (8 Times)**

It is the linguistic problem number one which students suffer from. This is quite normal if we take into consideration that they are not natives and that in their previous learning stages they studied all the modules in Arabic (except foreign languages English and French). They had only few time to study English and French, this latter has sometimes similar vocabulary of that of English. Contrarily, the previous generations benefited a lot from being taught by natives and studied in a language that has a similar vocabulary (French)

**Shyness (6 Times)**

It is the second problem via its appearance in the teachers' answers. This is not a linguistic problem. It represents a psychological barrier that prevents students from speaking - at least in a module that is put in the curriculum for the purpose of providing a whole opportunity for students to speak as much as possible. We want, here, just to remind the reader of this study that it was right in the introduction that we insisted on shyness as a big psychological problem and the given answers are now confirming what has been hypothesized.

**Hesitation and Lack of Self-confidence (4 Times)**

Another psychological problem appears. In front of a teacher (students think that he knows everything), students are not sure of their answers. A teacher's facial expression of dissatisfaction is enough for a student to have a 'reddish face'. We spoke in (Ch II) about similar points like inhibition and anxiety, and we are emphasizing the fact that to remove them is really a hard task for the teacher to do.

**Fear of Making Mistakes (3 Times)**

It is so similar to the previous one (lack of self-confidence). Nevertheless, it is somehow different in the way that a student may hesitate not because he fears losing face but because he is not sure that his answer is right. Fear of making mistakes is similar to shyness, too. Both of them share the fact that if a student is with his close friends or at home with a brother or a sister who –at least understands English- would not have the same feeling he has while attending university classes and facing a teacher and mates from different backgrounds and social classes.

**Accuracy (3 Times)**

Another linguistic difficulty is accuracy. As it was defined in the first chapter; accuracy is "the ability to produce correct sentences using correct grammar and vocabulary". Teachers claim that students have "no mastery of grammar". This is something serious when a first year student of English is not able to produce a well prepared sentence that is grammatically correct and free of errors, especially if we consider that students of English are going to study grammar for two (2) years only. Grammar is so large; it would be up to students to learn it for their own.

**Lack of Culture (Superficial Thinking) (3 Times)**

This is quite normal, students do not read almost at all. They do not read even what they are "obliged" to read (lectures poly-copies, novels in the program, grammar books, etc). The lack of general culture is a widespread problem among the whole Algerian population, university students in particular (see Q5, reading). Another reason for this cultural background shortage and superficial thinking is that Algerian students come from a socially and religiously society totally different from that they are learning about and listening/speaking about. They are being in touch with a new culture for the first time (they are just 1<sup>st</sup> year students of English). Motivation plays a strong role also; if the students participate with superficial ideas, this might be due to their lack of interest and non-motivating topic or atmosphere. Moreover this problem of 'lack of culture' is strongly related to that of 'lack of vocabulary'; some times students do not speak not because they do not know or have no idea about such or such a topic, but simply because they do not know the right word or expression to be used in the given context.

**Mother Tongue Interference (2 Times)**

In the theoretical part we saw how the use of the mother tongue stands as one of the widely spread problems among FL students. We saw also that teachers themselves contribute directly, by using the mother tongue with students which gives the impression that it is quite normal to do that, or indirectly by being so tolerant when hearing the MT being used inside

the classroom. We think, then, that it is the teachers' role and seriousness that can make an end for this 'phenomenon' or to diminish the use of MT to the minimum (let students use it for strong necessity only).

#### **Other Problems (1 Time each)**

Teachers gave other difficulties. Some of them are either similar to the major ones cited previously or simply can be included in them, whereas others are totally independent. Those problems are: lack of practice, lack of proficiency, incapability to express ideas, fear of facing the audience, lack of motivation, student's skepticism, mispronunciation, lack of fluency, and lack of the knowledge about the importance of speaking as a whole. One of the asked teachers, who has a PhD degree with a teaching experience of 24 years, claimed that most of the problems are due to the inexperienced teachers and also to their lack of seriousness. We may agree with him for the first reason because Algerian universities (nearly in all specialties) suffer from the lack of qualified teachers who have at least the magister degree, but we do not agree with him in accusing any of teachers; nothing but the teacher's consciousness can make him serious or unserious!

#### **QUESTION FIFTEEN: Teaching the Speaking Skill is**

	N	%
a- Difficult	09	42.85
b- Easy	00	00.00
c- Pleasant	05	23.00
d- Boring	00	00.00
e- Valuable	07	33.33
f- Worthless	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 19: Teachers' Opinions About Teaching the Speaking Skill**

The number of answers is higher than that of teachers because some of the informants gave more than one answer.

The obtained results confirm once again that teaching speaking is not so easy as most of the people may think (see Q5). Nearly half of the teachers (42.85%) claimed that it is really difficult to teach such a skill. A teacher has to be a good model letting his students imitate his verbal and non-verbal competences. From another perspective, speaking is difficult to teach

because it involves many linguistic sub-skills (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, etc) and also needs the development of some psychological features (self-confidence, self-esteem, positive attitudes, etc).

**QUESTION SIXTEEN: Are you Satisfied with your Students' Speaking Level?**

	N	%
a- Yes	01	06.66
b- No	13	86.66
c- So-so	01	06.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 20: Teachers' Satisfaction About Students' Speaking Level**

Over 86.66% of the asked teachers replied that they are not satisfied with the level of their students in speaking. We will see later in the students' questionnaire that students themselves are not satisfied with their level in the same skill. We think we can say that it is a logical result via the time allotted to speaking sessions (see Q7 and Q8) and English being a foreign language in Algeria which makes its use restricted to classrooms or in the department of English in best cases.

**QUESTION SEVENTEEN: Do you Prefer your Students Choose What to Speak about?**

	N	%
a- Yes	11	73.33
b- No	01	06.66
c- No answer	03	20.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 21: Teachers' Opinions About Students' Choice of Topics**

The majority of the answers (73.33%) show that teachers are aware of the importance of making the student a 'partner' in the teaching process, thus giving him the opportunity to decide what, how and when to learn. Of course this does not always work, but in a similar case no harm is done if we assign the choice of some topics to students themselves. This makes them feel at ease, more thoughts are prepared, more ideas are generated, and thus they will speak the longest period of time which is the aim of making the discussion itself.

One fifth (1/5) of the asked teachers did not answer this question (20%), but at least two of the three teachers who did not answer seemed to have an inclination to say 'yes' because one of them said 'it depends' and this could be interpreted as having the aptitude of letting students choose the topic to be discussed but not in all cases. This is quite similar to his colleague's answer 'sometimes' which can also be interpreted in the same way. If we consider these two answers as positive ones saying 'yes', we would have more than 86.66% of teachers who prefer students choose topics to discuss.

**QUESTION EIGHTEEN: Do you Think that the Teacher's Motivation Affects that of Students?**

	N	%
a- Of course	15	100
b- I don't know	00	0.00
c- Not so much	00	0.00
d- Undecided	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 22: Teachers' Opinions About Effects of Teacher's Motivation**

All teachers without exception (100%) agree that the teacher's motivation has a strong direct effect on that of his students. I have a friend of mine who has been teaching in the lycée for more than 16 years, he is always saying "I am myself not motivated, how come that I'm going to motivate my students or even speak about motivation in front of them?" Most of the students claim that it is true that when the teacher is motivated he 'contaminates' his students (he transmits this positive feeling to them) and it is commonly known that if the student is not at ease with his teacher he would not be interested in the module itself.

**QUESTION NINETEEN: Students' Speaking Proficiency is best Developed when Students are Involved in the Process?**

	N	%
a- Agree	15	100
b- Disagree	00	0.00
c- Perhaps	00	0.00
d- Not really	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 23: Teachers' Opinions About Students' Involvement**

Again, it is strongly agreed upon that to enhance students' speaking abilities, it is recommended that students should better be involved in the process. All teachers seem to be against that traditional way of teaching where the teacher is "the boss" and students are only "passive receivers". 100% of the asked teachers see that the teaching/learning process especially in speaking, should gather members of the same workshop where chances and opportunities are equally divided between all 'partners' (teacher and students, and students among themselves).

### SECTION THREE: The Role-play Technique

#### QUESTION TWENTY: Have you Experienced Role-play Techniques in OE Classes?

	N	%
a- YES	13	86.66
b- No	02	13.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 24: Teachers' Trial of Role-play**

Most of teachers (86.66 %) claim that they have experienced RP with their students during OE sessions. Only two of them (13.33%) did not experience it though they have been university teachers for 8 and 25 years, and taught oral expression for 2 and 5 years respectively; during these periods they claim they have not even tried RP with their students.

For that reason we will not take into consideration their answers on the questions that follow since they are all related to RP and we think that whoever did not try this technique at least for one time, is not in better position to judge its efficiency or shortage.

In the continuation of Q20, the answers concerning the frequency of using RP for the 13 teachers who claimed that they have experienced it were:

	N	%
a- Too Often	00	0.00
b- Often	03	23.07
c- Sometimes	08	61.53
d- Rarely	02	15.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 25: Teachers' Frequency of Role-play Use**

According to these results, we can deduce that only few teachers use this technique frequently (23.07%). The majority of them use it 'sometimes' only (61.53%) –if it is not rarely (15.38%). This may support our idea mentioned in the beginning of this paper that RP is not widely used though -as we will see in the coming questions- all teachers confess that RP is both effective (Q21) and can be a 'good remedy for shyness' (Q24) which ranked second in citing the major students' speaking problems (Q 14).

**QUESTION TWENTY-ONE: Do you Think that Role-play Techniques are effective?**

	N	%
a- Yes	13	100
b- No	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 26: Teachers' Opinions About Effectiveness of RP**

All the informants -without any exception- claimed that RP is an effective technique that would give very high results when used in the teaching process especially in teaching aural-oral skills. This shows their awareness of its usefulness, though many of them do not usually use it and some have never experienced it (Q28).

**QUESTION TWENTY-TWO: Do you Assign Roles to your Students to be Performed on the Stage (in front of an audience)?**

	N	%
a- Yes	09	69.23
b- No	04	30.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 27: Assignment of Roles for Stage-Performance**

69.23% of the informants say that they assign roles to students to be performed on the stage in front of an audience. Nevertheless, nearly one third of teachers (30.76%) do not encourage students to perform on a stage and thus break their probable shyness –and why not explore their abilities in dramatic situations, have fun and reduce the tension of their

colleagues who may have similar problems. Playing on a stage should begin with the most 'courageous' talkative students to reassure shy ones who may perform later in less stressed atmosphere.

**QUESTION TWENTY-THREE: Do you Give Students the Opportunity to Choose Roles?**

	N	%
a- Yes	12	92.30
b- No	01	07.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 28: Students' Choice of Roles**

Almost all the informants (92.30%) claim that they give the opportunity to their students to choose the role they want to play. One of the most important reasons behind using the RP techniques is to reduce anxiety and shyness that inhibit students, and we advised before –in theoretical part of the research- that the application of RP should be prudent because, if we misuse it, we may have unpredictable negative results. Students may be more anxious, inhibited and blocked. One of the probable abuse is to assign a role to a student while he does not want to play it; e.g. to ask a male student to play the role of a lady (especially in a social and religious society that praises man and sees such an assignment as disdainful to his manhood).

**QUESTION TWENTY-FOUR: Do you Think Role-play can be a 'Good Cure' for Shyness?**

	N	%
a- Yes	12	92.30
b- No	01	07.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 29: Teachers' Opinions About RP as a Remedy for Shyness**

The largest proportion of the teachers agrees on the fact that RP can be an effective solution to many of psychological problems among which we have “shyness”. 92.30% of the teachers think that RP can be an effective remedy for shyness -of course if well prepared and

carefully applied. This emphasizes once again their preceding answers concerning its effectiveness (Q21).

**QUESTION TWENTY-FIVE: Do you Encourage Students to Play Roles of their Own Imagination?**

	N	%
a- Yes	11	84.61
b- No	01	07.69
c- No answer	01	07.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 30: Teachers' Supports to Students' Own Role Plays**

The results shown in the table above reveal the fact that teachers concentrate on making students more relaxed and comfortable, this time by offering them the chance to choose a role and play it. In answering Q14, concerning students' problems in speaking, some teachers claimed that one of the influential difficulties is the 'lack of culture and superficial thinking'. It is then time to give students the opportunity to think 'deeper', produce their own scenarios (of sketches, for instance), prepare and perform them in front of the whole class (the audience). This encourages them to feel free, mature, and capable of going beyond performance to writing scenarios for their own. Post-performance criticism will be another occasion for making discussions on the presented theatrical piece (the teacher can either stand as a 'director' intervening from time to time with some useful advice, or behave as a 'spectator' with no intervention at all). One of the asked teachers saw that this question (Q25) has already been asked in another way in Q23. In fact the two questions are similar but not the same. Question 23 deals with those roles which have already been prepared by the teacher and distributed among students (the student has the 'right' to choose between, for instance, the grocer and the customer; no other choices are offered), but in Q25 we speak about students' imagination of characters and roles, and creation of ideas and personae; the teacher has almost no intervention if we do not count that of consultation before performance.

**QUESTION TWENTY-SIX: Which is better for Students, to Play a**

	N	%
a- Well prepared role	06	46.15
b- Spontaneous role	04	30.76
c- Both of them	03	23.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 31: Teachers' Opinions About Spontaneous/Prepared Roles**

According to the obtained results, the majority of the informants prefer well preparation of roles before they are performed. The reason behind this choice is that "to remedy the problem of self-confidence, it's easier for them with a prepared text to play", one teacher said. This means they are still 1<sup>st</sup> year students of English, they lack vocabulary, do not master grammar and pronunciation well, and before all most of them are shy and afraid of making mistakes (see Q22). Nevertheless, other teachers (30.76%) saw that it is better for students to play spontaneous roles. They think that it is through time that students will get rid of their psychological problems (shyness, lack of self-confidence, fear of making mistakes...etc) and by intensive spontaneous practice they will learn more vocabulary, and grammar rules. We cannot neglect, however, 23.07% of the informants who claimed that both of the types of roles are recommended, it only depends on the topic itself that we assign well prepared or spontaneous roles.

**QUESTION TWENTY-SEVEN: Role-play can be Used even in Other Courses and Give better Results**

	N	%
a- Agree	05	38.46
b- Disagree	01	07.69
c- I don't know	02	15.38
d- Perhaps	05	38.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 32: Teachers' Opinions About RP in Other Courses**

The only teacher who 'disagreed' with the given proposition that role-play can give better results if applied in other courses is one of the two only teachers who said that they use role-play 'rarely'. For this reason we think we cannot heavily rely on his answer to the present

question given the fact that he has not tried role-play a lot to see its effectiveness and usefulness ('rarely' may mean once, twice or thrice only)

At the same time 38.46% of the teachers agreed with the proposal along with another 38.46% who seem incapable of judging something they did not experience (to use RP in other modules). This is quite right. But at least they accepted the idea and thought the probability is quite possible.

### **Suggestions**

At the end of the teachers' questionnaire we gave a free space as an opportunity for teachers to give any suggestion or advice that concerns any of the sections the questionnaire includes. They suggested the following:

- Students' freedom is increased by decreasing the teacher's classical role of being the "boss" who knows everything and therefore commands every movement. Instead, he may better be their 'classmate'.
- It is time to treat the student as a mature learner who can think for himself and learn by using his own capacities.
- Avoid treating students as incompetent individuals; their abilities are only explored when they are intelligibly excited.
- Encourage students to make mistakes and ask questions.
- Allow them to be scientifically curious.
- Try RP because we did so and it proved to be very effective in developing students' speaking abilities.
- Speaking skill can be developed through:
  - Small groups (no more than eight students in each group)
  - Constant on-the-spot correction concerning pronunciation.
  - Bringing living topics to the classroom.
  - Rich vocabulary that fit the talk.
- Give students more freedom in choosing topics to discuss.
- Use new technologies to create motivation.
- Students' motivation can also be increased through linguistic immersion in the foreign countries and contact with natives (direct and indirect).
- Linguistic interchange might be a fruitful activity.

## 2-2- ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

### SECTION ONE

#### QUESTION ONE: Do you Use English Outside the Classroom?

	N	%
a- Yes	76	97.43
b- No	02	02.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 33: Use of English Outdoors**

Except two students, all informants (97.43%) said that they do use English for different purposes. This may show their eagerness to develop their level and their great “love” to English.

In the complementary question concerning the purpose from using English outside the classroom -addressed only to those who gave favourable answers- the results were as follows:

	N	%
a- For trade	01	01.31
b- For friendship	72	94.73
c- Other special courses	03	03.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 34: Aims of Outdoors Use of English**

Friendship is the first reason that pushes students to use English outside the classroom (94.73%). Most friendship relations in which they do really use English are those made through the internet device where people around the world with different tongues have to use the most spread universal language: “English”.

#### QUESTION TWO: How often did your Teachers of Pre-university Levels Give you the Opportunity to Use English?

	N	%
a- Often	15	19.23
b- Sometimes	36	46.15
c- Rarely	25	32.05
d- Never	02	02.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 35: Opportunities Frequency to Students Pre-university English Levels**

46.15% of the asked students revealed that they were given the opportunity to use their English sometimes only. This is made clearer when we take into account the other 32.05% who said they were 'rarely' given the same opportunity. This shows that teachers of pre-university levels are still following traditional ways where the pupil is entirely passive, and has only to keep information in mind and use them only when asked (either orally or on the exam sheet).

**QUESTION THREE: Do you think the Four Skills should be Taught All Together at the same Time or there Should be a Kind of Priority?**

	N	%
a- Priority	76	97.43
b- At the same time	02	02.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 36: Teaching the Four Skills**

All students – except two – with a proportion of 97.43% saw that there should be a kind of priority given to certain skill(s) over the others. This shows their awareness of the learning process and explains the preferences they make between modules. The following question reveals which of the four skills should be prior according to students' opinions.

**QUESTION FOUR: Which Skill do you Think Should be Given more Importance?**

	N	%
a- Listening	11	14.10
b- Speaking	49	62.82
c- Writing	00	0.00
d- Reading	00	0.00
“a” and “b”	12	15.38
“a” and “d”	06	07.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 37: Students’ Skills Priority Ranking**

Students, and even people outside universities, see languages as means of communication between each other. That’s why they think they have to do their best to develop their speaking abilities. All what they want to be capable of is to orally communicate with others in a good way; i.e. to be able to understand people when they speak (listening comprehension) and be able to convey ideas and feelings to others (speaking). 62.82% see that teaching speaking should be given more importance. Nevertheless, 14.10% think that they should first be able to understand what they hear. A third category believe that listening and speaking are so interrelated, so they have to be given the same degree of importance and priority (15.38%). If we make a simple addition we would find that over 92.30% of the informants believe that aural-oral skills should be prior. This may, in another way, explain why they are not interested in the other modules (Literature, Civilisation, etc) since they think that they have nothing to do with the study of a civilisation which is not theirs and a literature that was not written for them.

In addition to what has been said above, students have several reasons to focus on aural-oral skills. They gave some of them like:

- To build new relationships.
- To apply the different rules of the language they study.
- To practice English to the maximum.
- Others will judge your level in English according to your speaking competences.
- To improve one’s pronunciation through intensive speaking.
- Speaking is the key of communication.
- Students will be teachers; therefore their pronunciation (and speaking abilities in general) should be better.
- To be a native-like speaker

**QUESTION FIVE: What is your Favoured Module?**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
a- Oral expression	75	96.15
b- Written expression	03	03.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 38: Students' Favorite Module**

Three over seventy-eight students prefer written expression (03.84%) to oral expression module. Two of them, once asked to evaluate themselves in speaking, confessed that their level in speaking is “bad” (see Q6) and the third informant said that whenever he is asked to speak he gets embarrassed (Q13). Perhaps, that’s why they like the written expression module where they are not requested to speak if they do not want to. Contrarily to them, 96.15% of the informants claim that they enjoy OE for several reasons:

- They feel free to express their ideas, emotions and feelings.
- They can talk of several topics touching their daily life aspects.
- They can show their abilities in different speaking sub-skills (negotiation, kidding, counting...)
- They practice their English and its rules.
- They can be corrected on the spot if they make any mistake.
- They make face-to-face conversations where verbal and non-verbal communications are possible.
- The teacher of OE is “wonderful”; they love him and are always eager to meet him.

These are the most common reasons among students. Some of them gave other personal reasons related to their “disgust” towards writing, freedom to say whatever they want at any moment, etc.

**QUESTION SIX: You Think your Abilities in Speaking are**

	N	%
a- Very good	07	08.97
b- Average	39	50.00
c- Very bad	00	0.00
d- Good	27	34.61
e- Bad	05	06.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 39: Students' Self-evaluation of Speaking Abilities**

By asking such a question we wanted to have students evaluate their own speaking abilities. The results revealed that half of them (50%) see their level as ‘average’, whereas (34.61%) claim to have a ‘good’ level. Moreover, certain students (08.97%) –most of them had a good level in English before coming to the university– praised their level for having a ‘very good’ level. Only few students confessed to have a ‘bad’ level in speaking (most of this category revealed that they are silent in the classroom, hesitate when speaking and even get embarrassed (see Q13, Q14)).

**QUESTION SEVEN: You are Studying English to**

	N	%
a- Be fluent and increase your level	36	46.15
b- Just understand English speaking people	04	05.12
c- Just be understood once you speak English	02	02.56
d- Use English only when you are obliged	00	0.00
e- Get a diploma and therefore get a job	36	46.15
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 40: Studying English Objective(s)**

As it was expected, the responses concentrated on the two interdependent (‘a’ and ‘e’) reasons behind which most of the students prefer to study English at the university. Most of the students could not even choose between the two propositions so they ticked both of them. We organised the answers and got the same proportion for “a” and “e”. 46.15% of the informants replied that they study English to improve their level and thus be fluent in English.

In fact, we said that the two dominating reasons are related to each other; i.e. to get a diploma for the purpose of getting a job requests a good mastery of language because someone who does not work on building his knowledge of the language as well as his fluency, could not be a good teacher in the future. Only few students are not really ambitious to get a better level in English. They claim that it will be satisfying if they can understand others and speak some comprehensible English.

#### SECTION IV: Speaking Abilities

##### QUESTION EIGHT: To What Extent is Speaking Important in Studying English?

	N	%
a- Very important	68	87.17
b- Important	10	12.82
c- Somehow	00	0.00
d- Not important	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 41: Students' Opinions About Speaking Importance**

The obtained data revealed the high awareness of the students towards the importance of speaking in studying English. The highest proportion (87.17%) said that speaking is even "very important". The remaining proportion (12.82%) did not deny this fact. Rather, they claimed that speaking is "important". May be they did not want to say "very" just to give the impression that the other modules are also important in a way or in another; not to favour one skill on the others. No one of the informants neglected speaking as a crucial element that should be given more attention.

##### QUESTION NINE: Learning the speaking skill is

	N	%
a- Difficult	15	19.23
b- Boring	00	0.00
c- Worthless	00	0.00

d- Easy	00	0.00
e- Pleasant	35	44.87
f- Valuable	28	35.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 42: Students' Opinions About Learning Speaking**

A proportion of 44.87% said that learning speaking is 'pleasant' – the session of oral expression represents an occasion for relaxation to most of the students since they say whatever they want in different fields, they feel at ease and are given more freedom to express their ideas. In addition 35.89% said that learning speaking is valuable, this interprets again their awareness and enthusiasm to learn English –and speaking in particular. Only 19.23% said that learning speaking is difficult. The same question was asked to teachers and the answers were similar to those of the students. Nevertheless, the greatest proportion (42.85%) of the teachers concentrated on speaking as “difficult” to teach (see TQ15). No one of the teachers or the students said that the teaching of speaking is boring, worthless nor easy.

**QUESTION TEN: Are you Satisfied with your Level in Speaking?**

	N	%
a- Yes	43	55.12
b- No	35	44.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 43: Students' Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction with their Speaking Abilities**

More than the half of the informants (55.12%) are satisfied with their level in speaking via their learning level (they are just first year students of English) whereas a considerable proportion of them (44.87%) do not have the same opinion; they agree with their teachers on this dissatisfaction (see TQ16). It is their confession that makes them so motivated to speak as much as possible to get a better level (see Q11 below).

**QUESTION ELEVEN: Are you Really Motivated to Speak as much as Possible to have a better Level?**

	N	%
a-Yes	67	85.89
b-No	05	06.41
c-No A	06	07.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 44: Students' Motivation Towards Speaking**

Most of the students (85.89%) are so motivated to increase their speaking level. They have a great desire to speak as much as possible to have that high level. This has been made obvious from the choice they made to study English. (except some of them, most of the students were not “obliged” to study English; it was their choice). For speaking, too, they claimed that they prefer oral expression to written expression module (Q5). Only few students (06.41%) said that they are not motivated to speak for the purpose of developing one’s level. They are those who both: did not choose to study English and get embarrassed when asked to speak (Q13). For unknown reasons, six (6) students did not answer this question.

**QUESTION TWELVE: In the Classroom you are**

	N	%
a- Talkative	20	25.64
b- Just normal	31	39.74
c- Speak only when asked	23	29.48
d- Silent and just listening	04	05.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 45: Frequency of Speaking English Inside the Classroom**

39.74% of the students, which represents the highest proportion, said they are neither talkative nor silent. Others said that they are -to a certain extent- talkative (25.64%) whereas some of them (29.48%) confessed that they talk only when they are asked to. They can be added to the fourth proportion (05.12%) where informants confessed that they are all the time silent and just listen. Because if you speak only when asked, this means that you are silent and just listen to the teacher or to your classmates till you are requested to intervene. We wanted

to see if the reason of that silence is related to the course itself and the included activities, but no one made it the cause of remaining silent. For this purpose, we asked the following question.

**QUESTION THIRTEEN: When you are Asked to Speak, you**

	N	%
a- Speak without any problem	22	28.20
b- Hesitate	40	51.28
c- Get embarrassed	16	20.51
d- Make any argument to avoid speaking	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 46: Students' Reaction when Asked to Speak**

The majority of our informants (51.28%) confessed that they suffer from one of the main problems: hesitation. They are not sure of their answers and mostly do not take initiative to speak (they generally speak only when asked; Q12). Moreover, a considerable proportion (20.51%) claimed that when asked to speak they get embarrassed, panic and do not know what to say, or what to speak about. If added to the previous “hesitating” proportion we would get 71.79% of students who are not at ease when requested to talk inside the classroom either with each other or with the teacher. In the following question we are going to see why exactly these students are in discomfort.

**QUESTION FOURTEEN: If you are not at Ease while Speaking, this is because**

	N	%
a- You fear making mistakes	39	50.00
b- Prefer preparing your sentences	27	34.61
c- The teacher is always blaming	00	0.00
d- You are very shy	10	12.82
e- Not interested in the topic itself	02	02.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 47: Students' Discomfort Reasons**

In the theoretical part of this paper, we explored some of the psychological barriers that hinder students from speaking freely. Fear of making mistakes is related to self-esteem and self-confidence (see Chapter II, 4), that's why students prefer to prepare what they are going to say before being asked to speak (34.61%). They are afraid of losing face and being the 'central topic' of their friends' discussion (50%). Another problem is that of shyness (12.82%). In the third chapter of the theoretical part, we suggested one of the useful techniques that can represent a kind of remedy or cure to treat this "sickness". In the teachers' questionnaire, too, almost all teachers agreed on the fact that RP can be a "good cure" for shyness (see TQ24).

## SECTION TWO

### QUESTION FIFTEEN: To what Extent a Motivated teacher is Important to Motivate Students?

	N	%
a- Very important	68	87.17
b- Important	09	11.53
c- Not important	01	1.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 48: Effect of Teacher's Motivation on Students'**

Generally speaking, 98.70% of the informants assure that a motivated teacher is more than necessary in the classroom. We will see later in Q22 that only two (2) students prefer their teacher to play the role of 'a manager' whereas the others are divided among other less controlling roles: participant (29.48%), guide (32.05%) and classmate (35.89%). All the latter roles demand a motivated teacher to be able to guide his students and participate with them. S/he is, then, supposed to be a classmate, not a teacher. When they consider that s/he is so, they feel more confident and at ease. Thus, more utterances are made and many sentences are generated.

### QUESTION SIXTEEN: Does your Teacher Give you Sufficient Opportunity to Express your Ideas?

	N	%
a- Yes	73	93.58
b- No	05	06.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 49: Students' Opinions About Offered Speaking Opportunities**

93.58% claimed that their teachers give them all the opportunity to express their ideas the way they like, and in the moment they want. We should not forget, too, that OE is one of the few modules –if not the only one- which is considered as a ‘student-centred’ course. Accordingly, the large proportion of time should be – as it appears in this question- given to learners to use their English and speak as much as they can.

**QUESTION SEVENTEEN: Your Teacher of O.E concentrates on**

	N	%
a- Speaking	61	78.20
b- Listening	12	15.38
c- Both	05	06.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 50: Teacher's Concentration on Speaking and/or Listening**

As a continuation of the previous question we wanted to see how teachers of O.E divide the allotted time between two skills that they are supposed to teach in one single module. We wanted also to explore to which degree they provide enough time to students to speak. The results concerning this question confirm those of its precedent.

78.20% of the informants said that their teachers concentrate on speaking, whereas only 15.38% of them claim that focus is being made on listening. This assures again the fact that listening is still considered as “passive”. Some students with the proportion of 06.41% saw that the emphasis is made on both of the two skills.

**QUESTION EIGHTEEN: Cite three or four activities you often do in O.E sessions**

In answering this question students cited a lot of activities. Most of them are similar to each other or are just types of the same activity. We suggest citing them ordered according to their occurrence frequency in the students' answers:

- ❖ Proverbs, idioms and jokes.
- ❖ Topic discussion.
- ❖ Listening to natives' conversations and songs.
- ❖ Making dialogues.
- ❖ Interviews.
- ❖ Playing games and solving riddles.
- ❖ Social expressions and common speech mistakes.
- ❖ Playing roles.
- ❖ Oral presentation of topics (exposé).
- ❖ Performing skits.

**QUESTION NINETEEN: What are the most Effective Activities among those you have Cited?**

Our informants seemed focusing a lot on different types of the same activity: "discussion". When they say, for instance, that they think proverbs are quite effective they mean that "free discussion of proverbs" is effective. Most of them proposed proverbs, idioms, jokes, etc. They might feel "free" in such an activity. We think this is due to the three following reasons at least:

- 1- They find that analysing proverbs and idioms permit them to guess many ideas since similar expressions with similar meanings exist in their mother tongue Arabic.
- 2- The shift from one idea to another is very easy –even to say something 'out of subject' is usually tolerated.
- 3- Divergent points of view often appear in such conversations and topic discussions. For one given proverb or idiom several opinions are possible. E.g. where some students see that "there is no smoke unless there is fire" is totally right, some others could have unfavourable answers due to certain life situations they got through (they were victims of wrong rumours, for instance).

Nevertheless, students suggested other kinds of activities like listening to music and dialogues of natives, and making interviews. Playing roles ranked second as an effective activity. Students who said previously that they have experienced RP before coming to the university

emphasised on using it frequently. Others who did not try to play roles also have the same idea. They argue that they feel free in RP especially when performing funny skits. This shows that they have the aptitude to go ahead with RP following a “deep faith” in its effectiveness in “curing” some psychological problems and thus enhancing their interacting competences, speaking in particular.

#### QUESTION TWENTY: Is the Time Allotted to O.E Module Sufficient?

	N	%
a- Yes	05	06.41
b- No	67	85.89
c- No A	06	07.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 51: Allotted Time Sufficiency to O.E**

The majority of our informants (85.89%) agreed on the fact that the allotted time is not at all sufficient for students to express themselves in a good way since it is their only opportunity to use the target language, English. They cannot use English at home, nor in the street, and they are given very few time to speak in other modules generally in a question-answer form with “yes” or “no” responses, so they want to have more time and more chances to use their English. 06.41% claimed that the allotted time to O.E is enough whereas six (6) students, with a proportion of 07.69% did not answer this question due to unknown reasons.

In a complementary question we wanted the informants to argue their responses and suggest whatever they want. We gave this opportunity to both categories: students who see that the allotted time is sufficient and the others who say the opposite. The arguments were as follows:

❖ **Informants who said “yes; the time devoted to OE is sufficient”:**

These students argued their answers by saying the following "let everything as it is", "we have to carry on this plan". They either do not have a strong desire to learn or they are so accustomed with the routine to the point that they are 'afraid' of changing the time table by adding new learning hours. Some of them claimed that one hour and a half is 'enough to complete all the exercises'. They do not think of the benefit they gain from every minute they exploit in speaking –and even in listening- they cannot see the specificity of this course (OE). Activities –or exercises as they often call them- are put to provide speaking opportunities to

students, not to be just completed or solved; they are just means, they are not ends. Ne, some of the informants are 'sure' that it depends on the teacher's cleverness and good management that the time can be sufficient.

❖ **Informants who said “no; the time devoted to OE is not sufficient”:**

These students requested more time. They showed a high level of awareness; they said that the more they practice, the better their level will be. Moreover, they expressed a special care of the OE module. "It is the most important course where we can listen, understand and speak", they said. Many of them demanded to have between 5 and 8 hours per week instead of 3 hours only. Some of them asked even for learning this module everyday and a final demand was to assign the teaching of this course to the 'best' teachers.

**QUESTION TWENTY-ONE: In Evaluating your Speaking Abilities, do you Prefer the Exam form to be**

	N	%
a- Oral	71	91.02
b- Written	07	08.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 52: Written/Oral Favoured O.E Exam Form**

Except seven students who represent a proportion of 08.97%, all the other informants (91.02%) said that they want to be evaluated for their oral production using an oral exam. They claimed that it is a bit abnormal to have a written exam for an OE course. In most of the answers, students revealed that they prefer OE to WE (Q5) and assured that their teachers focus on speaking more than listening (Q17), so they think that it would be more reasonable to have an oral exam to get an accurate evaluation of the students' speaking competences.

**QUESTION TWENTY-TWO: Do you Think your O.E Teacher Should Play the Role of**

	N	%
a- Participant	23	29.48
b- Guide	25	32.05
c- Classmate	28	35.89
d- Manager	02	02.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 53: Teacher's Role in O.E Classes**

Students clearly demonstrated that they want their teacher to be as close as possible to them. Only two students (02.56%) said that they need a manager in the classroom more than anything else whereas the majority claimed that they need "company". They prefer their teacher to be a classmate, a participant or a guide in all activities, exercises and discussions with a total proportion of 97.43%. This is a clear evidence that the more the teacher gains the respect and love of his students, the more they are both (teacher and students) at ease, and this would have a positive effect on their reception and production as well; oral production in particular.

## SECTION VI : The Role Play Technique.

### QUESTION TWENTY-THREE: Do you Know Role-play?

	N	%
a- Yes	33	42.30
b- No	45	57.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 54: Knowledge About Role-play**

Although the results were somehow disappointing, they were, to a large extent-expected because we said right in the beginning of our research that RP is not widely used by many teachers. A considerable proportion of the students (57.69%) do not even "know" RP; this is perhaps due to the following two reasons:

- either they do not know RP at all because they have not practiced it before.
- or they practice it without being aware of its name, types and benefits.

In both cases, we think it is the teachers' task to provide all necessary information about any activity they use with students.

### QUESTION TWENTY-FOUR: Have you ever Practiced it before Coming to the University?

For this question we took into consideration only the answers of those who gave a favourable answer for the previous question (those informants who replied that they know RP) for the simplest reason that it is abnormal to ask someone whether he has practiced something he does not know at all! Thus the total number of the answers will be (33) instead of (78).

	N	%
a- Yes	29	87.87
b- No	04	12.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 55: Students' Previous Practice of RP**

A large number of students with a proportion of 87.87% gave a positive response; i.e. they have tried RP in the previous learning stages. Few of them declared that although they know RP, unfortunately, they were not offered the opportunity to try it.

**QUESTION TWENTY-FIVE: How often have you Practiced RP with your Colleagues before you Come to the University?**

Since the question is related to the precedent one, it is to be asked only to those who tried RP in middle and/or secondary schools; which means 29 students.

	N	%
a- Too often	02	06.89
b- Often	05	17.24
c- Sometimes	20	68.96
d- I don't remember	02	06.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 56: Students' Pre-university Practice Frequency of RP**

The majority of the respondents (68.96%) said that they practiced RP "sometimes". Some of them (17.24%) tried it "often" whereas a minority of the students claimed that they have practiced this technique "too often". Unfortunately, two students out of twenty-nine were not able to remember the frequency of RP use. Contrarily to this frequent use of RP in the pre-university learning stages, we will see that only few university teachers use this technique with their OE classes.

**QUESTION TWENTY-SIX: Do you Enjoy Playing Roles?**

	N	%
a- Yes	75	96.15
b- No	03	03.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 57: Students' Attitudes Towards RP**

Almost all the students confessed that they enjoy playing different roles. The big proportion (96.15%) said they are very eager to play a role in a skit or a play, whereas only 03.84% of our informants do not have the same attitude for the simple reason that they are the same students who said that they are silent, shy and get embarrassed when asked to speak in front of an audience (see Q12, Q13, Q14).

**QUESTION TWENTY-SEVEN: What Kind of Roles do you Prefer to Play?**

The purpose from asking such a question was to have a look at the psyche of our students –though we know very much that we are not really specialized in this field of psychology or psycho-pedagogy. Our aim is to be as close as possible to students. We think this could make us more able to figure out their preferences and needs. The results revealed the following:

- The roles of "doctor" and "teacher" are the most preferable –especially for boys.
- Since the majority of the informants are girls many of them enjoy playing the role of a "queen" or a "princess".
- We can feel a high level of “innocence” in many students; they seem very "romantic" because they focused on roles like: a gentle/generous person, princess, good mother, helpful boy, a victim, etc.
- Others seem so ambitious; they prefer to act as a business man/woman, an ambitious/intelligent person, a head master, a historical figure, etc.
- Few of the informants made the exception when they said they prefer to play roles of "a serial killer", "a slayer" or even "a bad woman"!

What should also be noticed is that all the informants prefer 'not to be themselves'; no one of them proposed to play a role of an ordinary person like a son, a student, (let's say a

clever/smart student), etc. This evidently emphasizes the idea of many researchers who advised that students should be assigned roles that are far from their real-life social status (Dobson (1996); Byrne (1986); Harmer (1998, 2001), etc). One of the informants said it frankly and we prefer to mention it as it was written in the questionnaire: “I prefer to hide my real face”.

#### **QUESTION TWENTY-EIGHT: Do you Prefer to Play a role**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
a- Of your imagination	68	87.17
b- Imposed by the teacher	06	07.69
c- Any role	04	05.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 58: Chosen/Imposed Roles**

From the table above we can easily understand that students are more at ease while playing a role of their imagination. 87.17% like playing their own imaginary roles. They favour to create for themselves an adequate relaxing atmosphere. This latter is provided – according to their vision- only when they build a scenario for their own, prepare scenes, revise well all the sentences and organize all what the roles demand (they prefer preparation of sentences). By doing so, negative effect of anxiety is reduced (see Ch II.4.1), fear of making mistakes is diminished (see Q14) and shyness is -to a high degree- cured (see Q14 and TQ24).

#### **QUESTION TWENTY-NINE: Have you ever Experienced Performing a Play on a Stage?**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
a- Yes	21	26.92
b- No	57	73.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 59: Students' Stage-Performance Experience**

Many of our informants (73.07%) have never participated in a stage-play performance. Only few of them did. By asking a complementary question “did you perform well (according to your friends’ opinion)?” to students who confirmed their participation in a stage play, we got the following results:

	N	%
a- Yes	17	80.95
b- No	04	19.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 60: Students’ Good/Bad Stage-Performance**

It seems that asking such a question is non-sense, but we think that it has a great value. It is right that we are not conducting a research on theatre, drama or whatsoever, but in fact this does not prevent us from knowing the competences of our students and exploring talented students and pushing them to go ahead to learn English the way they want using the activity in which they feel more at ease. Dobson (1996:48) claims that through her colleagues’ and her experiences in using RP as a teaching technique, they found that “students, who had been until then (until the implementation of RP) relatively passive in English conversation, revealed unsuspected talents in both drama and English”.

**QUESTION THIRTY: Do you Think that Playing Roles Develops One’s Speaking Abilities?**

	N	%
a- Yes	78	100
b- No	00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 61: RP Effectiveness in Speaking Abilities Development**

No one of the informants opposed the fact that applying RP would enhance students’ speaking abilities. This explains their strong desire to play roles (see Q26) as well as their request to apply RP frequently (see Q34). They are convinced that the use of RP will make their participation in speaking activities easier and give better results. It is a confirmation that would encourage teachers of OE to –at least- try to use RP with their students, especially

when we know that all the asked teachers gave the same opinion; 100% of them said that RP is an effective technique (see TQ21). This harmony between the teachers' and the students' opinions about the effectiveness of RP in enhancing students' speaking abilities makes the matter easier, and remove all the doubts and hesitation that prevent some teachers from using RP claiming that students would see it too childish and therefore would not respond positively.

**QUESTION THIRTY-ONE: If you are Assigned a Role, you Prefer it to be**

	N	%
a- Primary	68	87.17
b- Secondary	01	01.28
c- Any role	09	11.53
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 62: Playing Primary/Secondary Roles**

The majority of informants (87.17%) are so enthusiastic to play roles (see Q26). Moreover, the answers on this question revealed a strong desire to be the “number one” in any setting. Dramatically speaking, this indicates the hidden unemployed capacities students have and the high degree of eagerness that teachers should exploit to the maximum in the benefit of their students. On the other hand, having the intention to play a primary role would be enlightened as a personal strategy aiming at supplying oneself with the utmost of opportunities. It explains students' awareness of the importance of grabbing any possible occasion to speak as much as they can. Playing a primary role means directly speaking too much; which is the underlying goal from choosing to be the “hero” in any given scenario.

**QUESTION THIRTY-TWO: Does your Teacher of O.E Use this Technique?**

	N	%
a- Yes	14	17.94
b- No	64	82.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 63: Teachers' RP Use**

Similar results were expected, but what was not predicted is this massive majority of informants who assured what we have claimed in the introduction of this study concerning teachers' negligence of RP. A proportion of 82.05% claimed that their teachers of OE do not use RP at all. Only 17.94% said the opposite. This is confirmed also by the majority of teachers who said that they have experienced RP for few times only (see TQ20). What remains ambiguous is the fact that although many teachers do not use RP, all of them –with no single exception- agreed that RP is 'effective' (see TQ21) and most of them (86.66%) assured its reliability in treating at least one of the most difficult speaking problems; shyness (see TQ24).

**QUESTION THIRTY-THREE: How often Does He (your OE Teacher) Use RP?**

	N	%
a- Too often	02	14.28
b- Often	02	14.28
c- Sometimes	02	14.28
d- Rarely	08	57.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 64: Teachers' RP Use Frequency**

More than half of the informants (of course those who said that their teacher uses RP) with a proportion of 57.14% claimed that this use of RP is "rare". The remaining proportion of 42.86% is equally divided between: "too often", "often" and "sometimes" frequencies. If we dare say, "rarely" is not so far from "never"! This again makes us argue that RP is neglected especially at the university level –if compared with pre-university levels (see Q23, Q24). Teachers might think that RP is too childish and thus should be avoided in teaching advanced learners.

**QUESTION THIRTY-FOUR: Do you Think RP Should be Applied Always?**

	N	%
a- Yes	59	75.64
b- No	19	24.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 65: Students' Opinions About RP Frequent Use**

Three quarters of the asked students (75.64%) think that RP should be applied always. It is significantly similar to that question asked to teachers whether they agree or disagree with using RP in courses other than O.E (see TQ27). We added, however, another complementary question to see the reason(s) behind the students' responses. Both groups with opposing responses were given the opportunity to argue their answers, and suggest other activities they see most effective:

Students who think that RP should always be applied claimed that:

- ❖ It gives us the chance to speak freely.
- ❖ It gives us the opportunity to make our pronunciation better.
- ❖ It improves our ability to talk English very well and express our emotions easily.
- ❖ In plays we feel as if we were native speakers and this encourages us to produce more sentences.
- ❖ In playing roles we feel more involved in the learning process as a whole; this makes our sense of responsibility higher.
- ❖ RP helps us to “escape” from the “shadow spot” we are always hiding in; it breaks our shyness.

Students, who think that RP should not always be applied, suggested other activities for being more effective. They proposed, for instance:

- ❖ Topic discussion and dialogues.
- ❖ Listening to songs.
- ❖ Discussion of proverbs, idioms and jokes.
- ❖ Telling stories.
- ❖ Oral presentation (exposé).

#### **QUESTION THIRTY-FIVE: Do you Think Roles Should be Distributed According to**

	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
a- Student's will	53	67.94
b- Teacher's appointment	18	23.08
c- No A	07	08.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 66: Chosen/Assigned Roles Preference**

The biggest proportion of the informants (67.94%) saw that it is better to give some freedom to students to choose roles. This would put them in better situation to produce more utterances and generate the maximum of sentences. Some students (23.08%) preferred roles to be assigned by the teacher. Perhaps they think that this could make them far from any obligation of preparing a short scenario to be acted –especially lazy ones. Seven (07) students with a proportion of 08.97% did not reply on this question for unknown reasons.

### **Suggestions**

At the end of the questionnaire we left free space for students to express their suggestions and propositions on either what they have been asked about or what we might miss to inquire.

Unfortunately many of them wrote nothing. In an attempt to be objective, we thought that mentioning their proposals and requests as they were given on the questionnaire sheets would be better. They said:

- Make some serious severe conditions and tests to those who want to study English
- Give us the freedom to speak English (but only English)
- Encourage pair conversation
- Provide us with more listening opportunities (specially to music)
- Put some kind of ‘pedagogical punishment rules’ to those who do not use English inside classrooms.
- We need to play more games because when we enjoy the session, we understand and participate more
- Let us prepare our contributions at home first
- Correct our mistakes

For the RP techniques they demanded:

- Give us the chance to perform plays on the stage, especially famous ones (Shakespeare’s, etc)
- Provide a special place (a stage) for performing plays
- RP should be applied regularly (why not making it a daily closing activity)
- Let students apply RP without the intervention of the teacher (s/he would better act as a guide only)
- We need to prepare our roles before acting them for better performance.

**Conclusion**

The results obtained from the two similar questionnaires helped us a lot in figuring out some important points. Teachers and students gave many similar answers. All of them agree on the fact that students of English encounter some linguistic and psychological difficulties that hinder them from getting a better level in English as a whole and in speaking in particular. Most of the teachers claim that the general level in the department is getting worst year after another. This calls for urgent measures that should be taken without delay. Moreover, students themselves confess that they are not satisfied with their level and are asking for help, guidance, more time and more seriousness. The questionnaires revealed also that all teachers and students praise the Role-play technique and strongly believe in its effectiveness in enhancing students' speaking abilities by reducing students' anxiety, shyness, fear of making mistakes, etc and raising the degree of self-confidence, self-esteem, eagerness toward useful participation, etc. Many of them requested a more frequent use of RP in oral expression sessions whereas others see that its efficiency makes it useful in teaching other modules, too.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PEDAGOGICAL IMPLEMENTATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

After having consulted the most important elements related to the three interdependent concepts of oral communication, speaking skill, and role-play technique, we think we are in better position to suggest some pedagogical recommendations that could be helpful to our teachers –at the first place– and students as well. In doing so, the basis is the accumulation of what has been said in the preceding chapters (theoretical & practical parts). Nevertheless, we preferred to keep the same methodology (the same order) moving from the broader to the narrower; i.e. we suggested recommendations concerning oral communication followed by those of speaking skill to reach the final step where we gave some advice related to the proper use of R.P techniques as a fruitful activity that should be paid more attention, given more importance, and allotted more time.

#### **1 Oral communication**

Oral communication is a complex process. Generally speaking it involves three main elements: listening, speaking and pronunciation. Accordingly, the focus should be made on these three components in any teaching/learning classes.

For this purpose our recommendations for teachers and students will not concern speaking only, but many other factors that we see necessary in any good oral production and communication.

##### **1.1 Listening**

At the university level, listening instructions should have some purposes similar to those we find while teaching L1. As a first step, though it does not concern teaching listening only, teachers have to identify students' needs before designing any kind of tasks. It is also recommended to fix the desired objectives, prepare and evaluate the needed materials, and construct the reliable listening tests. It is only after all these conditions are well studied and prepared, that classroom procedures can be designed and suitable technique (s) are possible to be applied.

##### **1.2 Pronunciation**

It is the third element of oral communication that in a certain way “gathers” the other two components; speaking and listening.

1. Teachers have to pay a great attention to the student's affective states especially when correcting mistakes; they have to choose the right moment and the more intelligent way (indirect correction) to avoid making students embarrassed.
2. Students are also requested to show a certain degree of seriousness by doing their best to provide themselves the necessary time and energy. This could include the presence of a strong aptitude toward changing attitudes and reducing that kind of "affective resistance" to change that might be the result of some sociolinguistic pressure of the mother tongue.
3. In teaching segmental and suprasegmental features, it is recommended that standard orthography and phonological information have to be coupled; this would make students able even to predict the pronunciation of words they did not encounter before.
4. Moving gradually from the less to the more complicated features is also a good strategy in teaching pronunciation. Teachers have to deal with segmental features (vowels, consonants...) before asking students to practice suprasegmental features that they are not familiar with; for them English is a foreign language that has special intonation, rhythm and stress –these aspects are different from those they find in their mother tongue (Arabic). For instance, it is better to present the weak forms of certain words after having already explained their contractive forms.
5. The best way to integrate the use of both segmental and suprasegmental sound system levels is getting students engaged in broader communication activities that provide speakers and listeners with wide range of meaningful communicative exchanges. The best example approach is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for that meaningful and purposeful uses of language are most emphasized.

## **2 Speaking**

Through the theoretical part of this paper we have seen that EFL students suffer from many linguistic and psychological problems that prevent them from progressing their speaking skill. We have also noticed that enough time is strongly recommended to be provided to students to share a wide range of ideas and information. The general atmosphere should be a safe relaxed one for better development of the productive talk for all the students. All this was confirmed in the practical part of this research in which both students and teachers of O.E module replied that the present allotted time for this module (O.E) is not sufficient and therefore should be added. Both of them also assured that the student learns well, studies better and specially speaks more when he/she feels in a safe atmosphere where he does not fear to make mistakes nor lose his/her face. Instead, the classroom is supposed to

be a place where students ask and answer meaningful questions with a teacher who tends to play a more encouraging role which is that of “co-learner”.

For this reason, we thought the following ideas would be very helpful to teachers:

1. Ask questions that result in a diversity of thought and response, and to which there is not always one right answer.
2. Encourage purposeful talk and tentative “thinking aloud”.
3. Value questions as much as answers.
4. Promote students' abilities to develop and participate in reasoned argument during discussion and debater.
5. Give students the opportunities to gather information, ask question and make interpretations.
6. Build on what students already know as new knowledge is achieved by reconstructing and reshaping prior understanding.
7. Encourage students to challenge their own and other's assumptions, prejudices, and information presented as facts.
8. Make informal talk and the sharing of facts and opinions as regular part of the program.
9. Share enthusiasm for the oral tradition by regularly reading and telling stories to students and by providing opportunities for students to tell stories.
10. Develop students' sensitivities to other's feeling, language, and responses.
11. Encourage and reward effort and improvement as well as competence.

## **2.1 Correction**

As in teaching any of the other skills, students may make plenty of mistakes. It is only according to the type and cause of the mistake that the teacher responds. Sometimes the teacher is recommended to correct the students' mistake immediately whereas s/he is not advised to do so in certain circumstances. Here are some samples of the possible mistakes with a suggested solution for each:

1. The learner makes an error because he has not had sufficient chance to observe the correct form or to develop sufficient knowledge of the language system. [don't correct the learner but give more models and opportunities to observe]
2. The learner makes an error because he has not observed the form correctly.[give a little correction by showing the learner the difference between the correct form and his error]

3. The learner makes an error because of nervousness. [don't correct. Use less threatening activities or, if and when appropriate, joke with the person/class/yourself to lighten the mood]
4. The learner makes an error because the activity is difficult, that is, there are many things he has to think about during it. This is sometimes called "cognitive overload". [don't correct. Make the activity easier or give several chances to repeat the activity]
5. The learner makes an error because the activity is confusing. Use of tongue twisters for pronunciation, for instance, can be confusing. [don't correct. Improve the activity]
6. The learner makes an error because he is using patterns from the first language instead of the patterns from the target language. [Give some correction. If there has been plenty of opportunity to develop knowledge of the target language, then some time should be spent on correction to help the learner break out of making errors that are unlikely to change]
7. The learner makes an error because he has been copying incorrect models. [correct the learner and provide better models]

## **2.2 Let students Interact, not Just Talk**

According to the purpose of this research, we need students to "interact" inside and outside the classroom. And this is of course the aim of oral interaction competency in spontaneous natural effective English. For this reason, some points would be fruitful:

- Encourage pair-conversation in a way that dialogues, for instance, are not directed at or through the teacher but rather by students at one another.
- Enhance students to comment on each other's talk or intervention.
- Allow them to oppose ideas or statements they do not agree with, especially when they give their own argumentation.
- Try to provide a "relaxing atmosphere" so students can speak spontaneously without waiting for "invitation" to speak.
- Push them towards "diplomatic" interruption of others when they want to insert a personal point of view or a new idea.
- Try to use (as a teacher) paralinguistic features such as exclamations, gestures, facial expressions ...etc. In this way – especially when they are relaxed- they would imitate you and use these features unconsciously.

### 2.3 Promote Students' Confidence

In the previous chapter we were able to understand that our students fear making mistakes, some of them are very shy, they lack self-esteem and of course self-confidence. All these problems hinder them from getting a better level in English as a whole and in speaking skill in particular. We are not going to speak about students improving their level and overcoming all those problems by themselves applying different socio-affective strategies, but we want to emphasize the role of their teacher(s) in using various techniques to promote their self confidence. The teacher should:

- Support students confidence is his persistent encouragement
- Show enthusiasm and happiness while teaching students
- Be enthusiastic because the presence of the teacher itself can inspire enthusiasm
- Vary activities and change lesson plans according to the students learning speed.

### 3 Role play Technique

As a matter of fact, since situation in life differ from one place to another and change according to the period of time in which they happen, teachers are recommended to choose the most provoking ones to be brought to the classroom and acted by students. Many plans can be put by teachers. One of theses many possible strategies is that made by Huang (2008). We are going to see how it can be applied without being in trouble with students -if well followed of course. Huang's procedure contains six major steps:

1- **Decide on the Teaching Materials:** it is crucial that the teacher should choose the scripts from which he is going to assign roles to his students. Many resources are possible: cartoons, movies, story books...etc. Moreover, he can himself create his own authentic materials. What is always stressed is the suitability of the chosen material to the students' level (keep in mind that English is taught as a foreign language).

2- **Select Situation and Create Dialogues.**

The material is chose the teacher should prepare the dialogues to be role played. For this point, too, the teacher can either select dialogues from the scripts he finds in books, cartoons, text books, or prepare his own dialogues. Nevertheless, students can create their own ones, too.

3- **Teach the Dialogues for Role Plays.**

The teacher has to make sure that all his students know how to use the vocabulary, sentences and dialogues that the role play activity includes. If the students do not

know how to use these elements, then the teacher should provide a kind of question-answer debate to clarify them.

#### **4- Have Students Practice the Role Plays.**

Role playing situation can be done in pairs or in small groups. By practicing is meant also reversing roles (exchanging roles). In acting one given situation, a student can play more than one role. After experimenting many roles, students are more confident. It is at that moment that they can be asked to perform in front of the whole class.

#### **5- Have Students Modify the Situation and Dialogues.**

To let some degree of freedom to students, the teacher is recommended to allow them substitute and modify the content of the situation they were given. This is generally advised after the students have become familiar with the original role play situation.

#### **6- Evaluate and Check Students Comprehension:**

Many ways are possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the role-play activity. Evaluation is so important to check if the put objectives have been attained or not, and also to check that the students have successfully comprehended the vocabulary, sentences and dialogues. To evaluate your students you can make some oral tests like:

- ❖ Ask students to answer simple questions relating to the role-plays.
- ❖ Ask students to reenact the role-plays.
- ❖ Ask students to translate the role plays in their native language.

Or you can check them by administering some listening tests in which they are asked “to listen and circle”, “listen and number” “listen and match”, and write words, lines and/or dialogues in the role-play. They can even be asked to create and write variations of the given role play.

Nevertheless, teachers can make their evaluation while the students are performing and practicing the role-play. It is according to their performance that the teacher can check to what extent they have really understood the vocabulary, sentences lines and dialogues of the role-play.

Following this RP plan Tompkins (1998) suggests an example activity. The simulated situation gives the story of a group who has been stranded on an island. They have to make an escape plan before a volcano erupts. Fortunately there are life boats to carry all to safety on neighboring islands, but unfortunately they have to reach an overall group consensus on who will go where, with whom...etc and in 30 to 60 minutes only. Tompkins (1998) suggests, the following figure:

- ✓ **Level:** advanced
- ✓ **Time:** 1/2 hours for the main game, 1 hour for follow-up.
- ✓ **Aim:** ice breaking, developing skills in decision making and cooperation.
- ✓ **Language:** language skills are used to reveal things about oneself, express agreement and disagreement, persuade, defend a point view, elicit cooperation, analyze data, and make judgments. Different skills are enhanced such as listening, understanding, directions, initiating, speaking, writing and reading.
- ✓ **Organization:** whole class and small groups of 3-7 students.
- ✓ **Preparation and warm-up:** students must not talk. They are given information on life boat numbers and capacities, neighboring islands, etc. each student must complete a “personal profile” with accurate information on sex, age, nationality, background, employment, practical skills, etc., and with the top three preferred islands indicated.
- ✓ **Procedure:** the group makes decisions to reach a consensus. The teacher makes sure that everyone stands up and moves around. Changes can be made (such as boats being declared unseaworthy, or islands declared out of bounds) when a group seems to have made a decision ‘too easily’. The time until the volcano explodes is periodically written on the board.
- ✓ **Follow-up:** small groups rank and discuss the five main factors that led to their decisions about forming groups, choosing islands and escape boats, etc.
- ✓ **Variation:** each group develops a society on its own new island, complete with a political structure. They draw up a set of guidelines, or constitution, for the community.

### 3.1 Teacher’s Role

Contrarily to the traditional teacher-centered classroom structure, the teacher is no more than a controller or a guide who helps students where necessary and very briefly. He can of course be an effective element in the preparation phase as well as while role-playing the given situation. A teacher has to:

- Provide more freedom to students to talk spontaneously
- Promote students confidence and reduce their anxiety
- Choose the relevant material which is suitable to their interest and curiosity
- Keep students motivated by creating a tension to learn

### **3.2 Learner's Role**

To have the teacher-learner equation equilibrated many of the roles that were traditionally assigned to the teacher are now attributed to students. It is their “duty” now to prepare, direct, speak, interact, etc. They have to:

- Help select themes and tasks
- Provide details on their learning process for teachers.
- Try to be spontaneous and do not rely only on scripts.
- Create their own role-plays.
- Suggest follow-up situations.

### **3.3 Role of Instructional Materials**

This means that any role-play or simulation requests special tools, instruments...etc, and to bring the real-life situation in the classroom needs the presence of all the necessary staff.

Another important effect of the instructional material is that it promotes students' confidence and curiosity. They feel more involved in the situation and thus their production will be better and can even be spontaneous and improvisational.

### **Conclusion**

Following the nature of this research, the theme it treats, and on the basis of the obtained results we could gather some inspiring points hoping that our teachers will benefit from them. Some suggestions were cited briefly whereas others were supplied some extra explanation and clarification. We also wish that the cited recommendations will be of great help to students of English.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

At the very beginning of this paper we assumed that students of English at the University of Guelma suffer from several problems related to their lack of knowledge about the foreign language they are studying, and to some psychological states that block their speaking abilities development. We hypothesised also that applying the Role-play technique with students in sessions of Oral Expression would give better results in enhancing those speaking competences.

To verify whether our hypothesis was confirmed or rejected, we conducted this research. Following a scientific methodology we divided the work into two parts theoretical and practical. We gathered the maximum information related to our topic from many books, articles, magazines...etc. We clarified, then, how skills are organized as productive and receptive according to the direction of communication, and as spoken and written via the mode of communication. Our focus on speaking led to talking about oral production and its components (fluency and accuracy), as well as discussing different types of competences, before moving to the discussion of ancient and contemporary teaching approaches and methods and their relationship with the speaking skill. This latter is taught through various activities from which RP is an effective one. We tried, however, to show the possible ways to integrate it. This set the ground for making the investigation more objective. For this purpose, we got the target population participate in the research by administering two similar anonymous questionnaires in which all the students and teachers of Oral Expression were given the opportunity to express their opinions and points of view freely.

This allowed us to get deeper insights and have some extra evidence that may lead us to think that –to a larger extent- the obtained results validated the already put hypothesis. The results revealed that students lack more exposure to authentic English, but moreover, they need more practice to the language they are studying. They also showed a special tendency towards learning speaking and most of all a high desire to experience and practice RP.

On that basis we suggested some practical pedagogical implementations we saw essential and reliable in teaching speaking. The same order was followed in advising some points. Interaction and self-confidence were the two crucial recommendations to perfect one's level in speaking. Teachers and students have also to work together -each in his role- to create a motivating learning atmosphere. Nevertheless, it is recommended to provide and select the adequate material for that aim. Finally, RP is suggested to be implemented for some reasons; like: it does not cost money, not time-consuming, funny, many students interact together...etc.

At the end, we hope that our attempt to contribute in this field and the recommendations we suggested for teachers and students will be valuable and fruitful, waiting at the same time for a lot of research papers in the field of teaching/learning foreign languages, through the use of dramatic techniques in particular.

## Appendix four : Teachers' questionnaire

**Dear colleague**

We are currently conducting an investigation that aims at demonstrating the effectiveness of the Role-play technique in developing students speaking proficiency. As a case study, we have chosen the first year students of the department of English, University of Guelma. We shall be, therefore, very grateful to you if you take part in this questionnaire which is, of course, anonymous and confidential. Your answers will be of great help to our work.

We thank you very much in advance.

Please, tick ( ) in the appropriate box or give full answer whenever necessary.

### **Section I: Language Skills.**

1) According to you, which of the four skills is given much more importance in the department of English?

a-  listening

b-  speaking

c-  writing

d-  reading

- Why in your opinion? (could you argue your answer)

.....

.....

.....

2) Are you "with" or "against" this priority ranking?

a-  with

b-  against

If "against", please rank them according to your own point of view:

1-

2-

3-

4-

3) After all those years you have been teaching at the university, how do you consider the level of students year after year?

a-  getting better

c-  stable (no difference)

b-  getting worst

d-  I can not decide

4) Students lack motivation to learn English though it is their speciality now!

- a-  agree                      c-  disagree  
b-  I can not decide      d-  perhaps

If you “agree”, why do you think so?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5) As a university teacher which of the four skills is difficult to be taught.

- a-  listening                      c-  reading  
b-  speaking                      d-  writing.

Can you cite some difficulties you think they prevent students abilities development?

<b>Skill</b>	<b>Difficulties</b>
Listening	1- 2- 3-
Speaking	1- 2- 3-
Reading	1- 2- 3-
Writing	1- 2- 3-

6) Do you have any personal strategy to deal with those difficulties?

- a-  Yes                      b-  No

If “yes”

1- What are these strategies?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2- To what extent you think you have succeeded in treating those problems.

- a.  25%                      c-  75%  
b.  50%                      d-  more than 75%

**Section III: Speaking Proficiency.**

7) How many hours per week are allotted to the oral-expression module (.....) hours

8) Do you think this time is sufficient for EFL students?

- a-  Yes.                      b-  No

What do you suggest?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

9) Which skill do you give more importance in your classes?

- a-  Listening                      b-  speaking

Why?.....  
.....

10) Do you follow any program in teaching this module?

- a-  Yes                      b-  No

11) How often do you help students overcome their speaking problems?

- a-  always                      c-  when necessary  
b-  sometimes                      d-  Never

12) Your role in the classroom is rather a:

- a-  participant                      c-  corrector  
b-  friend                      d-  guide  
e-  other, please specify.

.....  
.....  
.....

13) What are the activities you generally use to improve your students' speaking abilities?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

14) Do your students have problems in speaking (or while speaking)?  
a-  yes                      b-  No

If 'yes', what are the most remarkable problems your students suffer from (fear, shyness,.....)

.....  
.....  
.....

15) Teaching the speaking skill is:

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| a- <input type="checkbox"/> difficult | c- <input type="checkbox"/> pleasant   |
| b- <input type="checkbox"/> easy      | d- <input type="checkbox"/> boring     |
| e- <input type="checkbox"/> valuable  | f- <input type="checkbox"/> worthless. |

16) Are you satisfied with your students' level in speaking?  
a-  yes                      b-  No

17) Do you prefer your students choose what to speak about (topics)?  
a-  yes                      b-  No.

18) Do you think that the teacher's motivation affects that of his students?  
a-  of course  
b-  I don't think so  
c-  not so much  
d-  undecided

19) Students' speaking proficiency is best developed when the students are really involved in the process.

- a-  agree      c-  perhaps  
b-  disagree      d-  not really.

**Section II: Role-play Technique.**

20) Have you experienced Role-play as a technique in oral-expression classes?

- a-  yes      b-  No

If yes, how often do you use it?

- a-  too often      c-  sometimes.  
b-  often      d-  rarely

21) Do you think that Role-play is an effective technique?

- a-  yes      b-  No

22) Do you assign roles to your students to be performed on the stage?

- a-  yes      b-  No

23) When playing roles, do you give your students the opportunity to choose their roles?

- a-  yes      b-  No

24) Do you think Role-play can be a 'good cure' for shyness?

- a-  Yes      b-  No

25) Do you encourage your students to play roles of their own imagination?

- a-  Yes      b-  No

26) Which is better for students, to play a:

- a-  well prepared role.  
b-  spontaneous role.

27) Role-play can be used even in other courses and give better results:

- a-  agree      c-  I don't know  
b-  disagree      d-  perhaps.

**Section VI: Suggestions and Beliefs**

Any further suggestions or points of view are most welcome:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

***Thank you very much  
for your cooperation***

## Appendix five : Students' questionnaire

Dear student,

We are conducting a research that aims at demonstrating the effectiveness of the Role-play technique in developing the student's speaking proficiency. This questionnaire is designed to know you better, to know your needs in the oral-expression module and, therefore, to try to make an end to the difficulties you encounter in this module.

Your answers will be of great help and very useful to our work. Be sure that this questionnaire is anonymous and confidential. We appreciate your cooperation.

Thank you in advance.

Please tick ( ) in the appropriate box or give full answers whenever necessary to express your opinion.

### Section I: Personal Abilities and Attitudes towards Language Skills

1) Do you use English outside the classroom?

a-  Yes

b-  No

-If yes, for what purpose?

a-  trade (commerce)

b-  friendship

c-  other special courses.

2) How often did your teacher(s) of pre-university levels give you the opportunity to use your English?

a-  often

b-  sometimes

c-  rarely

d-  never

3) Do you think that the four skills should be thought all together at the same time or there should a kind of priority?

a-  priority      b-  at the same time

4) Which skill do you think it should be given more importance?

- a-  listening                      c-  writing  
b-  speaking                      d-  reading

-why, in your opinion?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5) What's your favoured module?

- a-  written expression                      b-  oral-expression

If 'oral-expression', please say why:

.....  
.....

6) You think your abilities in speaking are:

- a-  very good                      d-  good  
b-  average                      e-  bad  
c-  very bad

7) You are studying English to:

- a-  be fluent and increase your level.  
b-  just understand English speaking people.  
c-  just be understood once you speak English.  
d-  use English only, when you are obliged to.  
e-  get a diploma and, therefore, get a job.

**Section II: Speaking Status**

8) To what extent is speaking important in studying English?

- a-  very important                      c-  somehow  
b-  important                      d-  not important.

9) Learning speaking skill is:

- |                             |           |                             |           |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| a- <input type="checkbox"/> | difficult | d- <input type="checkbox"/> | easy      |
| b- <input type="checkbox"/> | boring    | e- <input type="checkbox"/> | pleasant  |
| c- <input type="checkbox"/> | worthless | f- <input type="checkbox"/> | valuable. |

10) Are you satisfied with your level in speaking?

- a-  Yes      b-  No

11) Are you really *motivated* to speak as much as possible to have a better level?

- a-  yes      b-  no

12) In the classroom, are you (concerning speaking):

- a-  talkative student  
b-  just normal (neither talkative nor silent)  
c-  only when asked  
d-  silent and just listening  
e-  not interested in the course at all.

13) When you are asked to speak in the classroom, you:

- a-  speak without any problem  
b-  hesitate  
c-  get embarrassed  
d-  make any argument to avoid speaking( e.g.: saying that you are sick)

14) If you are not at ease while speaking, it's because:

- a-  you fear making mistakes.  
b-  you prefer preparing your sentences.  
c-  your teacher is always blaming  
d-  you're very shy even with your closest friends  
e-  you are not interested in the topic itself.

### **Section III: Teaching Speaking**

15) To what degree do you think that a motivated teacher is important to motivate his students?

- a-  very important.
- b-  important.
- c-  not important.
- d-  he has no effect on the students motivation.

16) Does your teacher of oral-expression give you sufficient opportunity to express your ideas?

- a-  yes
- b-  no

17) Your O.E teacher concentrates on:

- a-  speaking
- b-  listening.

18) Cite three or four activities you often do in oral-expression classes:

- 1-
- 2-
- 3-
- 4-

19) Which of them is (are) the most effective?

- 1-
- 2-

20) Do you think the time allotted to the oral-expression module is sufficient?

- a-  yes
- b-  no.

-What do you suggest?

.....  
 .....  
 .....

21) In evaluating your speaking abilities, do you prefer the exam of oral-expression to be in:

- a-  an oral form
- b-  a written form

22) What do you think the role of your O.E teacher should be?

- a-  a participant
- b-  a guide
- c-  classmate.
- d-  a manager

**Section VI :The Role-play technique.**

23) Do you know what the Role-play technique is?

a-  yes                      b-  no

24) Have you ever practised it before you come to the university?

a-  yes                      b-  no

25) How often did you use it with your colleagues in the pre-university levels?

- a-  too often
- b-  often
- c-  sometimes
- d-  never
- e-  I don't remember

26) Do you enjoy playing roles?

a-  yes                      b-  no

27) What are the roles you generally prefer to play?

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

28) Do you prefer to play a role:

- a-  of your own imagination
- b-  imposed by the teacher
- c-  any role, it's not important

29) Have you ever experienced to be an actor in a play (on a stage)?

a-  yes                      b-  no

If 'yes', did you perform well? (According to your friends' opinions)

a-  yes                      b-  no

30) Do you think that playing roles helps developing one's speaking proficiency?

a-  yes                      b-  no

31) If you are going to perform a role, do you want it to be:

a-  primary (hero)

b-  secondary

c-  any role

32) Does your teacher of oral-expression use this technique?

a-  yes

b-  no

33) How often does he (your teacher) use it?

a-  too often

c-  sometimes

b-  often

d-  rarely

e-  never

34) Do you think this technique should be applied always?

a-  yes

b-  no

If 'yes', why?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

If 'no', what are the other activities you think more effective?

.....  
.....  
.....

35) Do you think roles should be distributed according to

a-  students will (intention and desire)

b-  teacher's appointment.

**Section V :Suggestions and beliefs**

Any further suggestions or points of view are most welcome:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

*Thank you very much and good luck.*

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## RESUME

L'intérêt du sujet abordé dans ce travail de recherche se justifie par la faiblesse que les étudiants d'Anglais de l'Université de Guelma affichent dans l'apprentissage et la pratique des compétences orales dans la langue étrangère. Cette recherche s'inscrit dans la perspective d'expliquer, et ce pour convaincre de la nécessité d'intégrer ce qu'on appelle « la technique de jeux de rôles » dans la pratique de la classe, méthode qui à notre avis s'impose par le potentiel qu'elle offre en termes d'opportunités de pratiques pour les élèves. Cette recommandation nous l'espérons apportera des réponses à plusieurs questionnements des enseignants d'orale tels que :

- \* Qu'est ce qui empêche les étudiants de parler aisément la langue étrangère ?
- \* Quels sont les problèmes qu'ils rencontrent ?
- \* Comment « le jeu de rôles » peut-ils être effectifs, renforcer et consolider les capacités orales ?

Il va sans dire que la « technique de jeu de rôles » permettrait de briser les barrières psychologiques : timidité, manque de confiance en soi, peur de faire des erreurs, etc. Ce travail de recherche, enfin, constitue, à notre avis un point de départ pour une meilleure prise en charge de l'enseignement des compétences orales chez les étudiants algériens.

## الملخص

لقد كان التفكير في البحث في موضوع هذه الدراسة من منطلقات عديدة؛ إذ أن طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية يعانون من مشاكل مختلفة في دراسة هذه اللغة الأجنبية، خاصة في مقياس التعبير الشفهي الذي يعتبره الطلبة أساسيا في دراستهم. هذا من جهة، ومن جهة أخرى، فالتقنية محل الدراسة مهمشة إلى حد بعيد، بل إن العديد من الطلبة وحتى بعض الأساتذة لا يعرفونها ولم يسبق لهم أن مارسوها مع أقسامهم. كل ذلك دفعنا إلى طرح عدة تساؤلات :

- ما الذي يمنع الطلبة من تكلم الإنجليزية بطلاقة؟
  - ما هي المشاكل التي تحد من تحسين إمكاناتهم؟ المشاكل النفسية على وجه الخصوص؟
  - كيف يمكن لتقنية لعب الأدوار تحسين مهارة الحديث لدى الطلبة؟
- وقد افترضنا في بداية البحث أن تقنية لعب الأدوار من شأنها أن تكسر العديد من الحواجز النفسية التي يعاني منها الطلبة مثل: الخجل، الخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء، الارتباك، نقص الثقة بالنفس... إلخ، وبتحطى هذه العوائق يصبح من السهل اندماج الطلبة في الفريق (المجموعة) ويكونون أكثر حماسا وعفوية مما يساهم في مشاركتهم الفعالة داخل القسم وبالتالي تنمو مهارة الحديث لديهم. وهدفنا من هذه الدراسة هو تبين مدى فعالية التقنية محل الدراسة وكذا تشجيع الطلبة وأساتذة مقياس التعبير الشفهي على استعمالها على نطاق أوسع.
- وبعد عرض نظري حول ما قيل عن التواصل الشفهي، مهارة الحديث وتقنية لعب الأدوار، قمنا بدراسة ميدانية تضمنت نوعين متشابهين من الاستثمارات وزعت على طلبة السنة الأولى بقسم الإنجليزية وأساتذة مقياس التعبير الشفهي بنفس القسم.
- وعلى ضوء تحليل موضوعي للنتائج المحصل عليها اقترحنا توصيات عديدة حول الطرق الأنجع لتنمية مهارة الحديث عند الطلبة وكذا حول كيفية التطبيق الميداني الصحيح والفعال لتقنية لعب الأدوار. نأمل أن نكون قد وفقنا في الوصول إلى الهدف المسطر وأن مساهمتنا في هذا المجال ستمثل انطلاقة حقيقية لأبحاث أخرى مستقبلا.