ATTAINING FLUENCY IN ORAL COMMUNICATION:
THE CASE OF STUDENTS AT DLU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBA: Competency Based Approach

CBLT: Competency Based language teaching

CLT: Communicative language teaching

DLU: Djilali Liabès University

FL: Foreign language

IL: Interlanguage

LMD: Licence, Master, Doctorat

NS/NNS: Native speaker/non-native speaker

SLA: Second language acquisition

TBLT: Task-based language teaching

TL: Target language
ABSTRACT

Efficient skill of communication has become a passport to success during these last decades. People are judged according to how well they master the skills of communication in various aspects of their lives: professional, social, and private. Many competencies are measured according to our ability to express ourselves in a clear and convincing and why not elegant way.

People have never communicated so much and in so diverse mediums as they do today. The tremendous advances in technology have undoubtedly influenced the nature of communication in this modern life, thus giving it new dimensions: today, the individual can communicate simultaneously with different interlocutors who are at opposite poles of the globe (such as in video conferences). He can transmit and receive messages almost instantly from partners who are at huge geographical distances from where he is via electronic mails, phone, and voice messages. It has even been made possible today to communicate with interlocutors in a ‘virtual’ relationship.

In such a world, communicating in one’s native tongue only has almost come to be considered as a handicap, and learning at least one foreign language has become a must. Yet, learning a foreign language is often equated with learning to speak this language. Oral communication in today’s world gained more importance and this is why a major mission of successful foreign language teaching institutions is to offer a pedagogy centred around “helping the learner attain as advanced communication skills” as possible. The ultimate objective of an efficient educational programme is to send back his learners with enough skills to manage oral communication fluently in the language they have chosen to learn: this is the central motivation and concern of the present work.

In fact, this research grew out of the author’s awareness of the distress so many FL learners are made to go through when they find themselves in real target communication situations. Although most of them can read and write this language with some ease, they often find it more demanding to express
themselves orally, their outcome remains to a large extent inappropriate and hesitant.

Because there is often at least one explanation to the failure of any pedagogical experience, the present work attempts to explain the reason(s) behind this state of affairs in DLU English department. It then offers a view which might make our students succeed, at least partially thanks to their efficient communication skills; in their future professional as well as personal lives not only as foreign language learners, but also as ordinary citizens. This is, we believe, what one of the noble missions the university ought to have.
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In a time where people are continuously moving to different places over the world and for so many different purposes, in a world where contact and communication between individuals is increasingly being made possible; the need to discover and learn new languages has become an imperative. It has become largely acknowledged today that knowing only one’s mother tongue is a limited and limiting human experience and the fact of knowing more than one language –bilingualism and multilingualism- are no more exceptional phenomena. In such a context language professionals are becoming ever more eager to find efficient ways to make the endavour of learning a new language both interesting and rewarding.

Foreign language pedagogy is a dynamic process that requires the continual need to reassess language teaching in different educational institutions. The evolutionary character of foreign language pedagogy is thus a reflection of advances in the understanding of basic issues such as the nature of language knowledge and the process of language learning.

This work relates to the teaching of English as a foreign language in the context of the language department of an Algerian university (Djilali Liabès). It focuses on the development of one aspect of communicative competence, namely fluency in oral communication. By this is meant the ability of the language user to comprehend and transmit messages with ease and facility in natural interaction.

The assumption underlying this work is that the extent to which students attain this goal is highly determined by what goes on in their classroom. This is not to say that there is a systematic, direct relationship between all that teachers do, and make learners do in the classroom; and the type or level of competence these learners achieve. Language development is to a large extent, an individual accomplishment. But typically this private process takes place in the public context of the classroom, the individual is one of a group, a member of the class,
and the activities which are to set the process in train are determined by the teacher. In any language classroom there seems to be a specific general pattern of teaching/learning: some tasks, types of interaction, activities, and attitudes appear to be more common and customary than others. It is these that are believed to affect the outcome of a classroom experience.

The viewpoints expressed about the nature of teaching/evaluating oral communication skills in Djilali Liabès university English department, are based on classroom observation and recording, as well as information gathered through questionnaires and informal discussions with students and teachers.

The development of such skills is confined to the ‘conversation’ class, as a reflection of a skill-division approach to language teaching. This leaves learners with a limited opportunity to develop oral fluency, especially given the fact that they are already learning in a typical foreign language situation where English use outside the classroom is largely restricted. In the conversation class, emphasis is on language form. Thus although many students will leave the university with a reasonable linguistic competence, the majority of them will have a limited capacity to communicate naturally and fluently. The author is aware of the distress such a situation brings particularly when the need arises to communicate with native speakers. In fact, the objective of this work grew to some extent out of the concern with this frustrating experience that so many foreign language learners are made to go through.

The aim of this work therefore, is to examine the inadequacies presently behind developing oral fluency in D.L university and to propose different attitudes and practices to make the learning of English a more enjoyable and rewarding experience.

The role of foreign language departments is to provide the most advanced and specialised proficiency in the target language. Consequently, D.L. university English department should be concerned with developing learners’ communicative competence to the highest level possible. This of course needs to be done according to an integrated model which encompasses the four skills:
reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, as noted earlier, the major problem of our students is their limited oral fluency competence which is important for them both as general foreign language learners and as future middle and high school English teachers. (See chapt. 6, 2)

Taking this concern into account, this work suggests that a single language classroom (providing teaching and practice in the 4 skills) needs to be established. It should aim at helping learners develop their overall competence in English to the highest level possible. In addition to this general language classroom, an additional oral communication class may be required. This class is meant to provide learners with extended practice in communicating in English. It is a supplement to the FL classroom, and its aim is to widen the learner’s communicative environment and offer him a suitable space where he can use English as naturally as possible in order to reach an agreement, solve a problem, express and defend a viewpoint and so on. Communication tasks in this class should be set in such a way as to foster learners’ attention on exchange of meaning rather than accurate production only. It is hoped that in this way learners may gradually develop further fluency.

The development of oral fluency requires continual and frequent practice and a class which aims to teach learners how to communicate effectively, should reflect as much as possible, the process of genuine communication in the FL. Its goal is that the learner leaves the course with an ability to behave and communicate efficiently, appropriately and fluently in the target language. To put it another way, the learner needs to develop an inter-cultural oral communication competence if he has to ‘succeed’ in participating in any true target language exchange.

Two aspects of communication namely language and culture are indissociable. In this respect, any attempt to understand how oral communication should be taught and/or evaluated without taking into account the ethnological dimension of the target language is restricted. A conventional view of communication widely adopted by most applied linguists and foreign language teachers consists of the following well-known scheme:
Conventional representation of communication process

Such traditional model proposes a schematization that is of little use and help to applied linguists and language teaching methodology in the sense that it does not reveal nor reflect the complex mechanism of spontaneous interaction. The development of oral communication skills should take into account the cultural awareness or ‘knowledge’ any native language user possesses and uses when communicating. (see culture and oral communication, chapt.2,4). It is such awareness that most foreign language learners lack which makes them use the TL correctly, but not appropriately. A lack of or limited cultural awareness results in FL learners producing an inter-communication (as one aspect of their overall inter-language) rather than a genuine, real-like communication.

Besides, if the oral class is to be based on as well as reflect inter-cultural communication, what aspects of this skill should be evaluated? What should teachers look at and/or listen to when the difficult task of evaluation is needed? Teachers often find it difficult to test their learners’ oral production capacities as there are no reliable objective tests so far. Thus, some use the reading of texts
and dialogues as a written support to oral testing while others make individual interviews or do their assessment through ‘exposés’. There is no doubt, however, that such techniques give teachers little ‘information’ on how well learners can use the TL in true and natural communication.

This work attempts to discuss the issues above with the hope of proposing methodological principles, classroom practice procedures as well as teaching and learning attitudes which are likely to promote natural fluent communicative exchanges in the extra oral class.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one describes an integrative model of communicative competence which includes the linguistic, sociolinguistic and strategic competences. It then looks at fluency as another aspect of communicative competence and how a lack of it can influence the flow of communication.

Chapter two is devoted to the concept of oral communication and attempts to examine its constituents. It later discusses how the skills of speaking, understanding, and listening interact in oral communication. The concept is also dealt with in the light of its cultural as well as paralinguistic dimensions. The chapter ends with an attempt to find out the implications these theoretical issues may have on the oral classroom.

Chapter three consists of a review of some influential approaches to foreign language teaching, namely the lexical approach, the competency-based one, and the natural approach. It then examines communicative language teaching, and task-based language teaching in more detail as most appropriate approaches for the ‘teaching’ of oral fluency.

Chapter four is concerned with examining the nature and amount of input that is usually available in most foreign language teaching/learning environments and the impact that such input has on learners’ interlanguage development.
Chapter five concentrates on DLU English department and attempts to reveal its major teaching procedures and prevailing practices. A close look is then directed to” the oral expression” class there.

Finally, after highlighting DLU students’ communicative difficulties, chapter six proposes a framework for the enhancement of oral fluency. It attempts to justify how an extra oral class, as an extention of learners’ communicative environment, can help improve this situation. A number of methodological principles related to this new class are set. Some inherent difficulties are rather looked at as challenges that the teacher can take in order to make of his job a rewarding experience .The chapter ends up with an investigation in the assessment of oral communication and its different facets. It ultimately points out how future research in the teaching and evaluation of this skill can respond to present day difficulties encountered by many foreign language teachers in different educational institutions.
CHAPTER ONE

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND FLUENCY

INTEGRATED

Introduction
Most people who embark on the adventure of learning a foreign language aspire to use it for communication purposes be it inside the community where it is being used or outside it as traveling opportunities are made much easier today. Even in cases where the objective of learning a foreign language is restricted (ESP situations), the desire to communicate in the target language is most of the time manifested. Many students equate being able to speak a language as knowing the language and therefore view learning the language as learning how to speak the language.¹

It is however frequently reported in the FLT literature that both learners and teachers are dissatisfied with the communicative outcome of their learning/teaching experience. Foreign language learners complain about their 'handicaps' in communicating in the target language. Asked whether they find difficulties speaking in English, some students at DLU English department gave the following answers:

- …we are as students who are dealing with grammar since we started foreign languages, that are a language that we learn in educational system- schools- , but we are still unable to speak the foreign language fluently and even we face many problems to understand the natives (A 4th year student, mars 2008)

- …after that I meet some tourist from England, France and America. I talked with an English man, but I can’t understand nothing, because he speak very fast, what I understand “ “England”, “welcome”, “you from”...and some words. (A 2nd year student reporting about his encounter with tourists in Bechar, April, 2008)

In fact such complaints relate to learners' limited communicative competence in the foreign language, or at least some aspect(s) of it. One reason is that while they are taught facts about English, they are not trained to use it and they are short of experience in the use of it.² Language teachers often complain about the foreign language learners' deficiency in the communicative use of their target language. Widdowson writes,

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¹F., Lawtie, “Teaching speaking skill 2- overcoming classroom problems”, 2004

²J., Miyauchi, “Attepting to improve students' communicative competence trough speaking activities “, 1996
...students, and especially students in developing countries, who have received several years of formal English teaching, frequently remain deficient in the ability to actually use the language, and to understand its use, in normal communication …

Applied linguists are increasingly concerned with finding ways of improving this situation through providing different pedagogical principles, teaching methods and classroom procedures. However, for research in applied linguistics to be fruitful, it has to draw sound theoretical insights from various disciplines such as descriptive linguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. Advances in language teaching cannot disregard what explanations linguistics and sociolinguistics have to offer about the nature of language and language use, and how psycholinguistics explains the process of language learning in order to interpret them in pedagogical terms. It is these issues that the present chapter and the following ones attempt to address. Thus whereas this one examines what it means to know a language or to be communicatively competent, the next chapter will concentrate on the process and dynamics of oral communication and the place given to it in FL methodology in general and in DLU English department in particular.

1- An integrative theory of communicative competence

The growth of the concept of communicative competence is mainly attributed to research in linguistics and sociolinguistics and to a lesser extent psycholinguistics. An integrative model of this theory including different areas of competence will be examined as it provides a comprehensive and general view of the concept.

Such model also could be used in relation to the four language skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking and the way they are used in interaction. One theory of communicative competence that we believe fits into such a model is that of Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) which is the most widely known current one. Finally, a view of communicative competence suitable to our work will be proposed.

Canale and Swain first suggest that communication involves verbal and non-verbal symbols, oral and written media as well as productive and receptive skills. They suggest further that communicative competence or rather its interaction with other areas of knowledge, can be indirectly observed in communicative performance. Their model is intended to be applied in foreign language teaching and testing. Canale and Swain suggest three major types of abilities that make up an individual's communicative competence.

1-1- **Linguistic competence**

Linguistic competence or grammatical competence as it is also referred to is generally understood as the knowledge of grammatical rules and expectations relating to sentence and text grammar, semantics, morphology and orthography. The linguistic competence of the child develops gradually as he acquires new vocabulary which is continuously built up to form complete sentences to develop later into structured discourse. The linguistic mastery of the native language is done almost effortlessly, and to a large extent unconsciously.

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4 M., Canale, & Swain, “Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing”, 1980

5 M., Canale, “From communicative competence to communicative pedagogy”, in Richards & Schmidt, 1983
as the child picks up the communication tool available in his immediate environment. It is this linguistic competence which will enable native speakers or highly competent language users write or speak language in a correct, acceptable manner in terms of syntactic structure and vocabulary.

Any attempt to learn a new language, i.e. second or foreign goes hand in hand with developing the ability to learn and use its linguistic structure correctly. Appropriate learning of grammar should then provide the learner with a grammatical competence that will enable him/her to use linguistically or structurally correct language. Furthermore, such competence will make it possible to recognize ill formed utterances or what we commonly call mistakes, and the learner will then become able to judge whether the sentence: "I buyed a new book" is grammatically acceptable or not.

Grammatical competence is in fact an important factor for successful communication as it is the knowledge of how to express one's meaning accurately. As Canale and Swain point out:

\[ \text{...grammatical competence will be an important concern for any communicative approach whose goals include providing learners with the knowledge of how to determine and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances.} \]

Finally grammatical competence is in a sense no more than a reflection of the grammatical system that has been internalised, and which is revealed when language, especially written language\(^7\), is used.

\[ ^{1-2-} \text{Sociolinguistic competence} \]

\(^{6}\) M. Canale & Swain, Op.Cit., p.30

\(^{7}\) This is because written language is most of the time more correct in terms of structure, syntax and vocabulary as writers have time to organise and control what they write, which is not the case in speaking which is subject to time constraints.
Canale and Swain include two sets of rules in this competence: sociolinguistic rules on the one hand, and discourse rules on the other. Sociolinguistic rules as well as sociocultural rules of use will determine how to use language appropriately in different sociocultural contexts. The sociocultural rules of a speaker would consist of his 'knowledge' of what, when, why, to whom, and how to say something in a given situation. The end-product, i.e. the selected utterance is determined by several contextual factors such as: the purpose of the communication, the setting, the scene, the status and age of the interlocutors, the topic of communication and the relation between the interlocutors. Accordingly, it would for example 'sound odd' to hear a young pupil greeting his school headmaster by: «Hi, John!" we would rather expect him to say something like: "Good morning Mr. Smith» or «Good morning Sir". Such expectations are based on the following assumptions:

- the probable difference of age,
- the formal setting—school,
- the relation between the interlocutors→ headmaster/student and the respect it involves.

Therefore, unless given extra information or clue (such as the headmaster and the student being good friends), we would judge the student's greeting as inappropriate. The above example then shows that our sociolinguistic competence dictates the form as well as the content of what we say. Accordingly, it would generally be inappropriate in an Algerian context to invite someone saying for example:

'I’m giving a party next week-end, come if you don't have anything else to do.'

It would be more appropriate and polite to say instead:

'I would be very glad if you could come…

'I insist that you come…', or

'I’m expecting you …'

Consequently, we decide whether an utterance is appropriate or not according to the context in which it occurs. The language user underlying competence consists of rules of appropriateness which enable him to use socially acceptable
communication. Finally, what has been argued suggests that the knowledge of sociocultural rules of a language is necessary in terms of language use and hence language learning.

Discourse rules form the second component of Canale and Swain's sociolinguistic competence. Discourse competence relates to the way grammatical forms and meanings relate in order to achieve a spoken or written discourse of various genres. Genres here refer to the kind or nature of a text or discourse, i.e. whether it is a letter, an advertisement, a narrative, etc. Obviously, each genre of discourse requires a given set of rules, principles and conventions.

Canale and Swain describe their use of discourse in terms of the notion of cohesion and coherence of Halliday and Hasan (1978) and Widdowson (1978).\(^8\) We shall then briefly state here that cohesion which is related to language usage consists of the way utterances are linked as well as the shift from one utterance to the other in such a way as to facilitate the understanding of discourse.

Cohesion as Halliday and Hasan define it is a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it.\(^9\) Cohesion at sentence level is achieved through the use of cohesive devices such as adverbs and pronouns: e.g. If you see Sue, tell her I have her book. Here, 'her' in the second part of the sentence refers to Sue, thus the word 'her' acts as a cohesive device. Cohesion in discourse refers to the relation of an actual sentence with the following or preceding one. As Halliday and Hasan put it cohesion (in discourse) refers to the range of possibilities that exist for linking something with what has gone before.\(^{10}\)

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\(^8\) The concepts of cohesion and coherence have already been examined in Widdowson's version of communicative competence.

\(^9\) Halliday, M.A.K., & Hasan, R., *Cohesion in English*, 1976, p.8

\(^{10}\) Ibid, p.10
Coherence on the other hand, relates to language use. It consists of the way ideas and communicative acts are organized in discourse, and the relationship between one meaning and the other. For example:

A: Are you going to Mick's party?
B: I've got to do some work.

Although the two sentences are structurally independent, they are related through semantic interpretation. In other words, although (B) does not answer explicitly 'No, I'm not', we understand that his utterance 'I've got to do some work' implies just the same.

Therefore, in order that a communicative act is considered successful, it needs to be grammatically correct, socioculturally appropriate but also well organised and combined in terms of discourse. In other words, a set of utterances can be grammatically correct, appropriate but still fail to achieve a communicative function simply because they are not well combined in terms of cohesion or coherence.

1-3- Strategic competence

Finally, strategic competence is the last component of communicative competence. We talk of strategic competence in those cases where language users (and mostly foreign language speakers) adopt strategies or techniques to express themselves when faced with communicative difficulties.

Difficulty in this sense may refer to the insufficient mastery of the language used for communication. Communication strategies are used almost unconsciously when a particular communication difficulty arises as foreign language learners (as well as children) attempt to express themselves when their interlanguage is still limited. Here, the 'linguistic attempts' represent willingness + difficulty. The phrase "imperfect control of the language" means knowledge of some aspects of the language (+) and ignorance of some others (-). Given these facts, we cannot but expect the learner to use his strategic competence to cope with such a situation. In those cases where the speaker (both native and learner)
is 'in trouble' and cannot find the appropriate word, structure or form to express himself; he will tend to:

- **Avoid communication**: This, of course, is the simplest and easiest attitude to adopt when a speaker encounters a problem. However, this alternative is rather negative since it does not allow any practice.

- **Adjust the message**: While the speaker is already engaged in a conversation and faces a problem, he may sometimes tend to slightly change his message in such a way to be more comfortable with the new one.

- **Use paraphrase**: The learner may paraphrase to express the meaning he wants to convey, like saying: ‘I’m looking for a place where I would be allowed to park my car’ instead of: ‘I’m looking for a car park.’

- **Use approximation**: A learner may use words or expressions that express not the exact meaning, but ones that are as close as possible. e.g. 'sport' for 'cricket'

- **Create new words**: The learner may create words that do not exist in the target language to express the desired meaning. These words can be the result of literal translation.

- **Switch to the native language**: If the learner does not know the equivalent of what he wants to say in the target language, and if he fails to use any other strategy, he may simply shift to his native language. The condition here is that the speaker's native language should be known to the interlocutor (s).

- **Use non-linguistic resources**: Learners as well as native speakers may use mime, gestures, and signals…to express something they find difficult to put into words.

- **Seek help**: Finally, a learner may seek help from outside. This may be done through consulting a dictionary, asking questions or indirectly through hesitation.
The different strategies mentioned so far relate mainly to grammatical competence. They are used when the speaker encounters linguistic problems. The speaker (or learner) may also find sociolinguistic difficulties; in which case he will have to resort to sociolinguistic strategies. In other words, the speaker (or learner) may as well use strategies of a sociolinguistic character. Examples of sociolinguistic strategies would appear in such situations as how to address strangers, how to speak on the phone, how to avoid participation in a conversation, how to decline turns, etc…

Finally, some of the strategies like avoidance of communication, literal translation and shift to the native language may have negative implications for learner's language development as they make him 'escape' from the genuine use of language. Other strategies on the other hand, like paraphrasing and seeking help are believed to help develop the learner's communicative abilities. But as a whole, communication strategies can be supportive and we believe that learners can gain quite a lot in communication thanks to strategies.

A concluding remark that may be worth making at this stage is that communicative competence components should be regarded as interrelated and integrated aspects of the concept. They are separated for the sake of investigation only. Canale and Swain's theory of communicative competence which is outlined above seems to be the most suitable for our present research. It includes the components we find both important and relevant to foreign language pedagogy (linguistic, sociolinguistic and strategic).

However, there is one aspect that we feel should be added to this theory in order to make it fully adequate to our context. This new aspect or component is fluency. Our view of communicative competence then would consist of four components namely: linguistic, sociolinguistic, strategic competencies and fluency.
1- Fluency: A constituent of communicative competence

Wood, D. rightly claims that …L2 teachers and assessors tend to bypass the facilitation of fluency and focus instead on language accuracy and hope that input and practice will help learners to speak “more smoothly.”(2006). Compared to other dimensions of communication such as accuracy and appropriateness; fluency has been generally neglected by language professionals… Little attention had been given to fluency and student interaction during the previous years… (Costas, G..). This concept refers to the ease with which a person expresses his/her thoughts. Faerch, Haastrup and Phillipson also define this concept as the "speakers' ability to express what they want to say with ease”.

However, fluency is not to be associated with speed, but rather with the ability to link language units smoothly. Phenomena like extensive hesitation, long pauses, self-corrections and false starts are indicators of lack of fluency. Lack of fluency can have different ground categories; in other words, it can be due to a difficulty in different areas:

- **Lexical** = difficulty to link words and utterances
- **Semantic** = difficulty to link meanings
- **Syntactic** = difficulty to link syntactic rules
- **Articulatory** = difficulty to link language segments (a good example of this at a high level is the stuttering phenomenon).

So lack of fluency may occur subject to one or a combination of more than one of the above linguistic categories. However, linguistic difficulties are not the only cause of lack of fluency. This 'problem' can also occur because of psychological factors.

Fluency is closely linked to personality and thus is influenced by social and psychological factors, such as relation with interlocutors, fatigue, self-

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confidence, switching of attention, anxiety and so on. Such variables may intervene and distort the intended performance of a language user.

Psychologists, therefore, are interested in finding out and explaining those psychological factors that make performance deviate from competence. One factor that is believed to have an important impact on fluency is anxiety. One widespread definition of anxiety is by Spielberger, Gorswch and Lushene (1970)\textsuperscript{13} who refer to two types of anxiety: trait and state anxiety.

Trait anxiety is a stable, general anxiety state that is part of the anxious individual's personality. State anxiety, on the other hand, is transitory and variable in intensity according to the situation in which the individual is. Thus it seems that put in non-threatening communication situations language users (non-stutterers) will feel confident enough so as to produce fluent speech.

Put in stressful speaking conditions, these people will tend to be less fluent. Besides anxiety, there are other personality traits, and/or psychological factors that may affect fluency. Shy people as people with low self esteem may be assumed to be less fluent than those who have a positive high self esteem. Similarly, self-confident people may have fewer fluency problems than non-self-confident ones. To sum up, lack of fluency may be due to linguistic or communicative difficulties. It may also be manifested because of some individual psychological factors.

2- The impact of lack of fluency on interaction

Duran (1984) relates lack of fluency to those cases when a speaker slows rhythm speech or hesitates in order to search for a better word of. We believe that such a phenomenon affects interaction. We thus assume that it is easier and more enjoyable to take part in a conversation with fluent rather than non-fluent participants. Poor fluency may result in distraction and even irritation on the part of receivers, and we may all admit that we are usually more indulgent with speakers’ grammatical mistakes than with their endless and repeated hesitations.

Thus, it may be safe to assume that people (native speakers) appear to be more tolerant of lack of accuracy than lack of fluency. Faerch, Haastrup and Phillipson (1984) also reached a similar conclusion. Let us first briefly examine their view.

They include fluency as a component of communicative competence and this is how they consider the latter:

Communicative competence

- Grammar
- Lexis
- Pragmatics
- Communication strategies
- Fluency

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14 Duran, R., “Some implications of communicative competence research for integrative proficiency testing”, in Rivera, C. 1984, p. 51

15 Faerch, Haastrup and Phillipson, Learner language and language learning, 1984
As already mentioned, they define fluency as *speakers’ ability to express what they want to say with ease*. However, one point on which we need to react is that they restricted fluency to 'spoken communication'. We, on the other hand, believe that fluency refers to all aspects of reading, writing, listening and speaking. Faerch, Haasstrup and Phillipson conducted a "tolerance test" to assess communicative competence in a foreign language by native speakers of English. One of their findings was that low comprehensibility of foreign discourse was due to extensive hesitation phenomena (which are one aspect of lack of fluency). Following this finding, Faerch, Haasstrup and Phillipson claim that *In the light of this finding [poor fluency==limited understanding] the authors draw the conclusion that in interaction with native speakers and given contextual support, it may be more important to be fluent than correct*. Moreover, although it is difficult to give evidence about the relation between fluency and learners' receptive skills, we may at this stage assume that poor receptive fluency may also impede comprehensibility. Therefore limited comprehensibility in interaction can result from:

- a low productive fluency on the part of the sender
- a low receptive fluency on the part of the receiver

Finally, because of the importance of fluency on communication, it seems necessary to take it into account in the theory of communicative competence. Bearing this in mind, we would like to go back to the previous components of communicative competence (linguistic, sociolinguistic and strategic) and show how fluency as a fourth component may fit into the theory.

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17 Ibid., p. 176
The following diagram may help illustrate our view of the concept:

![Diagram showing components of communicative competence]

**Components of communicative competence**

Therefore, in order to communicate successfully, we need to:

- use language correctly
- use language appropriately
- use language fluently
- use linguistic and sociolinguistic strategies when needed.

Canale and Swain’s definition of communicative competence (which we have adopted for our research) briefly claims that in order to be communicatively competent, language users should have a knowledge of the linguistic or grammatical system of the language. They should also know the sociocultural rules of this language so they can use it appropriately in different situations. Language users should more over use discourse procedures to make their language production 'cohesive' and 'coherent' thus understandable. Besides,

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they should develop strategies they make appeal to when faced with linguistic and/or sociolinguistic difficulties.

According to Canale and Swain's theory then, a person is communicatively competent if he/she develops these three competences. However, we believe that we can possess linguistic, sociolinguistic and strategic competences, and still fail to communicate successfully simply because we do not use language fluently. Therefore, one may wonder what is the use of 'knowing' a language (in terms of these three competences), if one cannot use it fluently both to understand and make ourselves understood in actual situations.

In other words, by including fluency in our model of communicative competence, we are concerned both with competence and performance. This is why we need a theory that considers fluency in whatever aspect of language: reading, writing, understanding and speaking. Thus in the foreign language classroom, teachers should help learners develop the ability to use language fluently in the different language skills. Fluent language use may be achieved in a relaxed, non-inhibiting atmosphere where language is used for genuine and authentic communication.
Conclusion

The assumption behind the present work is that until any foreign language is used readily and fluently, for whatever purpose, it cannot be considered fully learnt, and unfortunately, many L2 learners grapple with the effects of comprised fluency long after completing basic L2 training. Fluency can be revealed when learners are using the foreign language for communication: exchanging ideas, arguing, promising, etc… In other words, fluency occurs when language is used naturally and spontaneously and when the focus of speaker's-hearer is on content rather than form. This is because if learners keep focussing on form they will not only be less fluent, but also miss the essence of communication: spontaneity. In addition, fluency may determine the success or failure of communication in the sense that it affects comprehensibility. In other words, there is a clear relationship between poor fluency and low or limited comprehensibility in interaction. Finally, poor fluency (in speech) may lower the speaker's self-esteem and irritate the listener. For such reasons, we believe that fluency needs to have a place in any theory of communicative competence that is meant to be adopted in foreign language methodology.

CHAPTER TWO

ORAL COMMUNICATION:
ITS PROCESS AND DYNAMICS
Introduction

We spend a great deal of our time talking to express a variety of needs and to various interlocutors. We talk to friends in order to inform, we exchange opinions, we talk or “chat” with the taxi driver, we greet the neighbor to socialize, we talk with colleagues about work or the weather, we talk with children and family members at home about all sorts of things. It is largely the most basic and widespread means of conducting human affairs. This activity, i.e. talking to others, constitutes an important part of our act of “socializing”. Talking in such a case is done most of the time with ease, it is quite undemanding, and though we are largely unaware of the rules that govern conversation, we operate daily using them.

When foreign language teaching institutions embark in the challenging task of helping learners acquire a new and additional language, they generally set sights on the development of these learners’ communication skill (beside other skills) in the target language. This is because according to the Mississippi Language Arts Framework (2000) for example,

*Skill in oral communication helps the individual to think logically, clearly, and creatively. It also contributes to the student’s understanding of himself and his management of relationships. The oral communication course is designed to help a student see himself as a whole person with a proper understanding of himself as a communicator as both a source and a receiver.*

The present chapter concentrates on the concept of oral communication, its process, dynamics and attempts to consider how all this “fits” into the foreign language classroom. Having said this, we are aware that our description will remain partial. The understanding of the process of oral communication is far from being full and comprehensive in the related literature. Mostly, it is far from being agreed upon by all researchers and may thus imply different things to

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different people. And it may be therefore for this reason (i.e. lack of consensus), that one needs to specify what he/she means (or does not mean) by this concept, and what processes-though partial- he/she includes. It is also important to try to understand what oral communication implies in pedagogical terms and more particularly in the context of FLT.

The concept of oral communication as used in this work refers to the cooperative process whereby (at least) two interlocutors interact and exchange meaning. Oral communication as a cooperative exchange process thus implies that one participant is speaking while the other(s) is/are listening actively and interpreting his message. Hence oral communication entails the simultaneous and interchangeable manifestation of both productive and receptive mechanisms whereby messages are sent (encoded), interpreted (decoded) and answered to (or not), and in this way. This reciprocal nature of the interaction facilitates communication as both speaker and listener co-operate to ensure mutual understanding.\textsuperscript{22}

Wilkins ‘complains’ that…unfortunately, communication theorists, sociologists, psychologists, discourse analysts and others do not take the same view of what communication processes actually are. There is no authoritative account to be taken off the shelf.\textsuperscript{23}. And it may be precisely for this reason (the fact that there is no general consensus around the concept) that one needs to specify what he means or does not mean by oral communication, and what processes –although partial- he includes.

Most language professionals today recognise that many FL learners fail to communicate spontaneously and naturally in the target language and this even after several years of instruction. Consequently, current research in FL education stresses the need to find ways to help learners develop further communication skills and so there is now a great concern about providing conditions and tasks in the classroom. However, in order to achieve this successfully, it seems important

\textsuperscript{22} M.,Bygate, Speaking,1987

\textsuperscript{23} Wikins, 1984, in Brumfit, et al, 1985,p 39
first to try to understand what the process of oral communication involves, and mainly what it implies in pedagogical terms. This is because

While it is no innovation to define language as a system of communication, the way the dynamics of the communicative process influence the form of verbal communication is seldom fully appreciated. ESL/EFL materials too often focus only on the finished products of communication, rather than on the problems by which people communicate. 24

As mentioned earlier, oral communication entails the simultaneous and interchangeable manifestation of two processes: speaking and listening. Nevertheless for the sake of examination, the latters will be considered separately first. Then they will be discussed in interaction and some of their implications to the oral class in DL University will be highlighted.

1- Listening in oral communication

Compared to speaking, listening is a skill which has, until recently, been quite neglected in the literature of FL teaching and learning. It has generally been mistakenly considered as a passive activity. In fact, not only is listening as important as speaking in any communicative act; but it is far from being passive. The listener is constantly and fully engaged in decoding messages.

The other side of speaking is listening. Without effective listening, there can be no effective speaking, no communication; ...And no matter how much speaking a student may do in a given class, he or she will obviously spend much more time as a listener. All of us want to help our students become better speakers and better listeners. But in most courses both of these goals, especially the latter, remain implicit...

This leads us naturally to say that in order to use language communicatively, FL learners need to understand, interpret messages and construct their contribution(s) accordingly as true communication requires the ability to comprehend messages. Listening to others by no means implies listening to and interpreting every single word they say. The process of listening in natural communication is highly selective. This selection is often done on the basis of our interests, concerns or needs.

Case, A. (2008) points at this phenomenon saying that despite the fact that we cope with missing whole chunks of speech having a conversation on a noisy street in our own language, many people don’t seem to be able to transfer that skill easily to a second language. It seems that foreign language learners develop different ways of listening to spoken language due to their awareness of having limited comprehension abilities in the target language.

Teaching listening in this perspective involves helping learners develop the ability to focus on important clues and ignore irrelevant details.

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25 Farel,J,”Speaking across the university”,1999

26 Case, A., “Why your students have problems with listening comprehension “, UsingEnglish.com,2008
La compétence de compréhension de l’oral reste souvent pour la grande majorité des apprenants étrangers la plus difficile à acquérir et à développer. Même si elle est à priori plus étendue que la compétence d’expression les apprenants n’en ont en général absolument aucune conscience, tant est prégnant leur désir de « comprendre les mots ».  

This is why FL learners need to be made aware that not all that they listen to should be given the same interpretative value. In order to achieve this, the notion of context should be highlighted. What is worth pointing at here is that the ability to listen selectively consists an important part of a language user’s overall listening fluency (see chapt.2,2-1,2-2) And it is only when FL learners become comfortable in listening to messages selectively and interpreting them accordingly that they may be considered ‘fluent listeners’.

2- Comprehension in oral communication

Communicating tends to be seen solely in terms of the external processes of transmitting and responding to messages in FL pedagogy. In reality, the complex act of communication involves great internal mechanisms required and necessary to make sense of what is received, among which are constructing concepts, inferencing, and interpreting. It is thus mutual understanding between speaker and hearer that ensures the flow of interaction. When/if there is continuous misunderstanding, communication breaks down.

Different theoretical assumptions about what it means to comprehend language may be at the basis of explaining the process of listening comprehension:

- Listening comprehension may be viewed in linguistic terms, thus focusing on how the listener gets to construct a structural description of an utterance in terms of its semantic, phonological, syntactic and lexical constituents.
- It may also be seen as a conceptual process through which the listener builds a conceptual, non-linguistic representation of the linguistic form of the utterance.

Finally, listening comprehension may be considered in more general communicative terms (which is in our sense the most comprehensive one). Here, understanding is seen as the product or outcome of interaction between speaker and hearer. Communication is accordingly sustained when the listener successfully understands and interprets what the speaker intends to communicate through negotiation of meaning. Understanding involves the use of many different resources:

- It is obviously achieved via a shared medium of communication i.e. language. Language or spoken discourse is the most common means through which people communicate and understand each other.

- Understanding (especially in face to face communication) is also frequently assisted by paralinguistic clues such as the tone of voice of the speaker, stress, hesitations, gestures, facial expressions, body movements, etc. As Pridham (2001) rightly puts it,

  …Conversation is obviously far more than words. Communication can take place through body language, through prosodic features such as intonation, speed, stress and volume and even through silence or laughter.28

All such features facilitate the message decoding by the listener.

- People also understand each other because of their shared knowledge about the world as well as their past personal experiences. In this respect, it may be assumed that the greater shared knowledge among a group of people, the bigger their chances of achieving mutual understanding.

- Finally, the contextual aspect of communication also holds a great interpretative value. To put it another way, contextual elements such as who is speaking to whom, the time, place, topic, purpose of communication, etc… all add an interpretative force to the utterance and to a further extent to any exchange between interlocutors.

3- Speaking (language production)

Much of what we say in our daily verbal exchanges is not actually always said, it is transmitted. Language, and for that matter oral communication, is not based on the oral-aural channel only, it is also significantly relies on the visual medium. Interlocutors say things to each other with words, but they also say a great deal with their body postures, eye contact, facial expressions, etc…. In fact, some messages are more forcefully sent (and most probably interpreted) via such paralinguistic devices than via actual language itself. A smile or a look can say much longer than a lengthy sentence!

The language we use for our daily exchanges is generally spontaneous; we thus refer to such type of use as being natural, i.e. not prepared or planned beforehand. This in itself makes it quite different from the written language which may be subject to repeated revision and reorganization, a thing that is frequently done by most people, even highly competent language users, after they have finished writing something.

The time constraint in natural conversations together with the concern of the speaker (which is generally less focused on the form) make him produce a language characterized by such features as frequent repetitions, false starts, hesitations, short sentences, frequent use of linking words such as “and”, ”or”,etc…

La réalité en acte du langage est différente: ce sont des phénomènes qui sont produits automatiquement dans l’oral spontané- même lorsqu’on se surveille Il existe une dissociation entre les jugements normatifs explicites et la réalité fonctionnelle du langage: là ou’ l’on condamne les pauses, hésitations, réinitialisations, etc....dans une manie d’hypercentraction....

This, however, by no means implies that natural or spontaneous talk is ungrammatical; it simply means that it is besides governed by inherent conversational rules of use.

Sociolinguists emphasize that language is used with a wide range of variety both in terms of form and function. Language use changes across different cultures because of the socio-cultural rules governing it; but it also changes within the same culture because of differences in social contexts.

Although speakers are generally unaware that they adopt their talk; they do not use the same language whether they are addressing a colleague, a friend, a child, husband or wife, etc…. Similarly, speakers’ language is influenced by the environmental context in which it takes place. The language of pubs is different from that of the court!

All speakers are multidialectal or multistylistic, in the sense that they adopt their style of speaking to suit the social situation in which they find themselves. Such style shifting demands constant judgments, yet speakers are not normally conscious of making such judgments”

Most of the everyday language we use consists of automatic, conventional utterances. Such language is usually referred to as “formulaic speech”, “gambits”, “automatised language” or “conversational routines”. These are sentences, clauses or words we use without much thinking, planning or structuring. These are clauses which do not appear to be ‘uniquely generated’ or created anew each time they are required in discourse, but which are produced and stored as complete units. They usually emerge automatically as build-up wholes and are produced spontaneously in related social contexts. Examples of conversational routines in English are:

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30 M.,Stubbs, Discourse Analysis, the sociolinguistic Analysis of Natural language, 1984,p45

Nice to meet you                        Sorry, I’m late
You’re welcome                        Yes, please
Don’t worry                            I don’t think so
I’ll give you a ring                   I’m glad you came
Really!                                I’m glad to hear that.

In teaching oral language use to foreign language learners, attention ought to be given to such conversational routines as they constitute part of the sociocultural knowledge of the TL in the sense that they carry common and salient culture specific aspects.

Conversational routines also help learners with limited communicative capacities put their meaning across and in this sense they may consist of a communication strategy that enables learners to make up for their communicative deficiencies and thus achieve a higher level of oral communication as well as fluency.


In fluency research over many years it has been determined that automatic and controlled processing are a vital part of an explanation of how fluent speech occurs. Specially, it appears that automatization of elements of language enables speakers to achieve the speed and pause patterns which characterize fluent speech.\(^{32}\)

Finally, a lack or limited use of conversational routines is believed to impede natural oral communication. Wildner-Basset even claims that because of the prominence and the important functions of these formulae, deficits in their use when speaking the foreign language... are more serious and more disturbing to communication than are grammatical, lexical or prepositional deficits.\(^{33}\) The above arguments clearly suggest that a place should be given to conversational routines when the aim is to develop FL learners’ oral communication skills.

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Culture and oral communication

Before stressing the relationship between oral communication and culture, it may be interesting to examine first the concept of culture and attempt to explain the sense in which this work uses it. “Culture” has at its origin the Latin word “cultura” derived from “colere” which means to build on, to cultivate. Culture has been and is still being defined on different grounds. The fact that this concept has been defined extensively and in various and sometimes opposing ways is no more than a reflection of different theories about understanding human experience.

Culture generally refers to shared patterns of behaviour amongst a group of people. These patterns are based on common valued principles, beliefs, and assumptions which will determine the dynamic of the group. The culture of a community is also manifested via their music, literature, painting, etc and as such is often associated with an elitist classification based on social rank and position. In other words, culture in this respect is mainly measured in “civilizational” terms: high cultures belong to high civilizations and low cultures belong to low civilizations. This is the view which widely prevailed during the 18th century and early 19th century in Europe. Culture was identified then with ‘civilization’ as opposed to ‘nature’ which reflects whatever man has no impact or influence on. It is thus assimilated to primitive populations.

By the late 19th century, a broad definition of culture has largely been adopted by anthropologists. It commonly refers to the way human beings codify, classify and symbolize their experience of life. Culture here is reflected or manifested through all the behaviors, general way of life a community, and is transmitted from one generation to the other.

A recent definition put forward by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provides a wide range of meanings to the concept of culture:
...culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.  

Through the way they generally use the word culture, it seems that most people today understand it as including similar ingredients as those provided by the definition above.

As mentioned earlier culture is an indissociable ingredient of language, and consequently any act of communication necessarily holds a cultural dimension. Drawing the link between culture and language, Sanchez, S.Y. (1999) expains that

Infants learn a language for the purpose of functioning in a particular cultural and language community-that is, language allows us to be able to communicate in a culturally appropriate manner within a particular linguistic community. It is the cultural community, including the family and other members, who identify the key concepts and categories that are important to consider and pass them on across generations.

When people interact, the do so following the social norms of their community, and so respect the rules governing oral communication as any failure to do so will undoubtedly cause misunderstanding, or even breaking up.

Nevertheless, paying lip service to the social dynamics that undergrid language without trying to indentify and gain insights into the very fabric of society and culture that have come to charge language in many and varied ways can only cause misunderstanding and lead to cross-cultural miscommunication.

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34 UNESCO Chart, 2001

35 Sanchez, S.Y., ed., "Issues of language and culture impacting the early children care of young Latino, 1999

5- Extralinguistic or non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication has long been neglected by FL professionals. Its status as a genuine communicative phenomenon has generally been ignored. Sanchez, S.Y. clearly highlights the fact that extralinguistic features are a cultural manifestation of language. She thus writes that

*Families and communities hand down language and culture to their young. Young children learn to understand those around them and to express their own fears, needs, and desires in the distinctive vocabulary of the home language that includes not only words, but also rhythms, gestures, patterns of speech and silence.*

In fact, teaching oral communication in a FL means teaching the whole code of interaction of its people, and this of course includes both the verbal and non-verbal signals they naturally use. Such kinesic features such as gestures, facial expressions and body movement that accompany language may have different interactional significances in different languages and cultures.

Therefore, the student who is learning to communicate in the FL needs to know how to use and interpret these symbols. Livingston for instance mentions hand shaking as a variable non-verbal social behavior among Scandinavian and British people. *Scandinavians...shake hands on more occasions than the British. Minor embarrassments are often caused by offering a hand which is ignored, or regarded strangely for a few seconds before being taken in puzzled silence.*

Non-verbal behaviour certainly carries a cultural dimension that ought to be taken into account in the teaching of oral communication to FL learners if we want to save them from similar embarrassments.

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38 C.,Livingston , *Role Play in Language Learning*,1983,p4
1- From skills to interaction

As mentioned in the introduction, the two language skills involved in oral communication have been dealt with separately for the sake of examination only. In fact, language production and comprehension are systematically brought together in the process of communication. They are manifested interchangeably as participants interact. Oral communication is a reciprocal exchange whereby participant’s continuously change roles from speakers to listeners and vice versa. One way of drawing the meeting point of language production and language comprehension skills is by considering how people exchange turns in oral communication.

Rules governing turn taking are not universal. Different cultures may have different conventions regarding turn distribution in face to face communication. However, the general pattern seems to be that usually one person speaks at a time (although there may be overlaps of a few seconds, i.e. two or more persons speaking at once).

Turn taking involves expressing the desire to take part in an interaction and making decisions about what to say, how to say it, for what purpose and for how long. In order to maintain the flow of communication, participants should be alert to when a speaker is seeking a turn, is hesitant as he may still be organizing his message but does not intend to give up his turn, or is about to finish.

It may be relevant here to stress the fact that different languages, and thus cultures do not allow the same length for pauses, so that ‘blank pauses’ or silence may be interpreted differently depending on which culture of the interlocutors. Szlamowicz, 2003 for example explains that there is ...un fait culturel patent : les différentes langues n’acceptent pas la même dose de silence, ni aux mêmes endroits, ni de même longueur, ni de même nature (pause vides /pauses pleines) sans que cela ne cause des perturbations de l’échange...

A participant usually signals his desire to take a turn through various devices such as nodding, taking a deep breath, raising a hand, and so on. Once his desire has been noticed and acknowledged by the other participant(s), a turn becomes available for him. As the speaker takes his turn and starts speaking, he needs feedback from the others. He needs to be assured that what he is saying is being listened to, understood (and to some extent agreed with). Later, when a speaker shows that he is close to finishing either through verbal or non-verbal signals, such as making an overt concluding remark, or using a falling intonation the next participant gets ready to take the following turn.

Yet, turn taking distribution is not always as orderly as has been described. Participants do not necessarily wait for a speaker to finish using an ongoing turn to take over. Thus, interruptions in interaction are quite common. Interruptions often occur when in an ongoing turn a speaker shows hesitation or makes rather long pauses as he plans what to say next or how to say it. In this case although the speaker did not initially mean to leave his turn, he may lose it. In interaction language is produced under time constraints; this requires the speaker’s ability to decide what to say, and plan or organize the message at ‘normal’ speed. If/when he/she fails to do this (and mainly if he/she does not manifest his/her desire to keep the turn), he/she is very likely to lose it before he/she has made full use of it.

This is why it is important for anyone learning a foreign language to be aware of how native speakers manage turn taking in oral communication. One way of achieving this may be through the use of such expressions -or gambits- that are commonly used to seek a turn, maintain the floor, etc… In English turn keeping gambits may be for example: I mean, in other words, you see, you know.

For FL learners to develop the ability to manage turn distribution in interaction, they need to be given opportunities to interact freely and spontaneously. To put it differently, they need to be free without the teacher controlling turn distribution by constantly nominating the next speaker.
It is only in this way and out of learners’ need to express himself with others that he /she can experience turn distribution in natural conversations …without a chairperson to decide the order in which people will speak or what can be spoken about.\textsuperscript{40}

Therefore, in order to communicate efficiently, learners not only need to use the FL appropriately, but they also need to be good at managing turn distribution as this affects both the flow and success of communication.

Although a well balanced turn taking distribution system, whereby whoever desires to speak can do it, is important; it is not sufficient in itself for successful interaction. Oral communication is a dynamic process which entails a cooperative attitude from participants. The success or failure of communication is a joint responsibility and the extent to which understanding or agreement are reached depends on participants’ degree of cooperation. Nolasco and Arthur explain that normal conversations proceed so smoothly because we cooperate in them…\textsuperscript{41} The extent to which we are cooperative does affect the outcome of interaction. Being cooperative however, implies using several principles or ‘devices’ that help facilitate the flow of interaction and ensure understanding, among which the use of feedback, being explicit and negotiating meaning.

Feedback refers to a verbal or non-verbal indication of how well a message is being received and understood in face-to-face interaction. As mentioned earlier the speaker relies on the listener(s)’ reaction to what he/she is saying, and accordingly either carries on, gives further details and explanations or stops talking. In this sense listeners have a direct influence or effect on interaction through what they express by means of signals of approval, astonishment, comprehension, impatience or manifested boredom.

The signals that indicate to a speaker that he/she is being “followed” and understood include nods of the head, gaze, and facial expressions and so on. If

\textsuperscript{40} Bygate, op. cit,1987,p.27

\textsuperscript{41} R., Nolasco, & L., Arthu.,\textit{Conversation}, 1987,p.7
these cease, the speaker assumes that his message is not getting across. This is why if/when speakers do not get sufficient feedback, they tend to check their listener(s) “state of mind” using such expressions as: are you following me?, Ok?, do you see what I mean?, are you listening to me?. Therefore *apart from instances when listeners are unable or not expected to respond overtly (e.g. news broadcasts, lectures) speakers have to take the listeners’ feedback into consideration, for instance they will have to rephrase their message or answer to questions.*

It is clear then that feedback has an important communicative value in that it indicates whether interlocutors share a “common ground”, and that the message gets across successfully. Yet, sometimes if/when understanding is not attained, (this time taking a speaker’s turn), the listener may ask for the message to be repeated, or restated hence requesting the interlocutor to be more explicit or precise. The communicative dimension of feedback also lies in its capacity to help attain understanding and maintain the flow of communication.

It is important that foreign language learners cooperate in oral communication exchanges by showing whether or not they receive their interlocutor’s message and how well they interpret it. This is of course something they do naturally in their mother tongue. Nevertheless, communicating in the FL is more likely – for most learners – to generate misunderstandings or misinterpretations due to the later’s limited communicative competence. This is why the use of feedback in FL communication becomes even more relevant.

Successful communication requires a level of explicitness sufficient enough to make the message clear but not excessive nor superfluous! The concept of explicitness is used here to relate to both the content and the form of the message, i.e. it is seen in terms of the nature of the language (general, approximative, specific) as well as the content (detailed, redundant) that we may

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43 Note that the use of feedback is part of FL learners’ strategic competence discussed earlier (chapter 2,4)
choose. Part of being cooperative in communication is being explicit since obscure messages often divert attention from meaning. In fact, lack of explicitness may even be interpreted as an uncooperative, selfish attitude. Being too explicit on the other hand is not desired neither as this implies giving too much detail and unnecessary information which in its turn is very likely to irritate the listener and divert his attention.

What is needed then is to remain at the” right level of explicitness”, which is what is required in a cooperative attitude. In order to achieve this, speakers need to predict and take into account what their interlocutors already know, then complete with whatever they feel is necessary to make the message comprehensible, but not redundant.

Speakers generally vary their level of explicitness according to the person they are addressing, and most importantly according to their assumptions on how much the person already knows about what is being talked about. So the amount of common knowledge on a given topic, situation, context; determine the degree of explicitness messages may have. It is such criteria that the speaker decides what he will say and what he will leave unsaid.

Some FL learners may seem uncooperative as they tend to be not explicit enough in terms of the language they use. This is however, not necessary due to their attitude as such, but rather to the nature of their interlanguage which is usually characterised by the use of a general, non-specific vocabulary (see chapt.4, 4-2). Their lack of precision may be mistakenly felt as an uncooperative behaviour when in fact what is at stake is simply a matter of limited choice! Compared to native speakers, FL learners do not have a wide range of alternative vocabulary and subtle meanings.

Negotiation of meaning in interaction refers to those queries, adjustments, requests for clarification, comprehension checks, correction of misunderstandings and misinterpretations that interactants make in order to explore meaning and reach agreement. Thus successful and purposeful communication entails searching for meaning through the use of negotiation.
skills such as the above. The use of negotiation skills determines the success of communication in many respects:

- They ensure understanding, as they require the participants to adjust the message whenever a misunderstanding or conflict is felt by the speaker himself or expressed by the listener. In this sense negotiation skills consist of the use of devices that prevent communication breakdown.

- The use of negotiation skills also indicates that the participants are interested or involved in what is going on in the interaction. In other words, by using negotiation skills the participants clearly show their concern about putting and getting messages right, i.e. as they have been originally meant.

Language users are so used to negotiating meaning when communicating in their native language that they do it very naturally and most of the time unconsciously. However, this phenomenon may not be automatically transferred when it comes to using a FL. This is probably because of the link that might exist between one’s level of fluency and his skills in negotiating meaning. In fact, whenever the aim of FLT is the development of learners’ fluency in the TL, negotiation of meaning in oral communication becomes a central element that should not only be encouraged but even provoked in the classroom. This may be achieved through the provision of appropriate tasks. Besides, negotiation skills should be given due consideration both because of their effect on an ongoing communication process and capacity to prevent communication breakdown, but also because they are likely to help develop learners’ oral fluency.

It may be worth pointing out at this stage that what has been postulated so far concerning the concept of oral communication in terms of its definition and the processes it involves, relates to the mature competent speaker. Because most FL learners are not as competent in the target language, it may be assumed that they would not be able to communicate successfully according to all the communicative aspects or criteria of the foreign language. Having said that, it is important to note that foreign language
learners bring to the communication act at least some appropriate communicative principles or criteria that are going to work in the target context. These are generally the ones which do not differ from those of their native language communication, and which in fact seem to be somehow universal.

The point is, therefore, that foreign language learners communicating in the target language usually apply the communication rules and principles of their mother tongues. Yet, since such rules- or at least some of them- vary from one cultural group to another (this time not being universal). These foreign language learners are bound to violate some target communication rules and processes. Following this, we might assume that the Algerian student, suffering from such “communication interference” is likely, for instance, to:

- Seem uncooperative in terms of his non-explicit language use as a reflection of his limited interlanguage,

- Communicate inappropriately in terms of the sociocultural rules of English which are quite different from Algerian ones,

- Use inadequate non-verbal devices\(^4\)

- Yet manage turn-taking quite successfully as the one at a time rule applies to both the English and Algerian-Arabic code.

The above example suggests that if learners are to function socially in the target language, special attention should be paid to those communicative principles that are not the same in the two systems of communication.

\(^4\) See culture in oral communication(chapt2,4)
2- Oral communication processes in the classroom: some implications

Relating what has been argued so far about the concept of oral communication to the FL classroom, two major implications seem to become evident:

A- The oral class should reflect as much as possible target communicative processes:
There seems to be a naïve assumption in many classes which are supposed to develop learners’ oral skills that as long as an activity is oral, it is communicative. In fact it is often believed that learners will become fluent if/when they engage on oral work. The point is that it may be quite easy to get students to “talk” to each other or to the teacher, but how much of that is genuine communication? How much of that is said spontaneously? naturally? How much of it emerged out of learners’ own need to express something?

The previous sections of this chapter attempted to explain that oral communication involves much more than the mere production of verbal messages. It is a rather complex mechanism that requires different and complex skills most of which are used without even the language user being conscious of that. The ultimate aim of the foreign language classroom would be:

- To provide learners with valuable insights and extended practice in how to communicate successfully in the target language according to the target communicative system and norms.
- To introduce them to and illustrate the various target language functions and sociocultural rules.
- To provide them with opportunities to manage turn taking.
- To help them detect key words and expressions in interaction
- To show them how to interpret messages in their contexts
- To tell them to “dare” signal disagreement and misunderstanding
- To teach them and encourage them to use conversational routines
• To show them whenever they are being redundant or obscure, and so on.

Surely teachers and learners should be made aware that random talk with little meaningful communicative potential has limited effect on the enhancement of oral fluency.

B- The oral class is not a mere relaxation and chat session:
Some teachers—and students—tend to take the oral class too lightly! They see it no more as a class where relaxation and fun combine with some chat. The moderately experienced teacher feels that a conversation class is a soft option in that he will have no trouble filling an hour with chat and talk. Yet if the oral class is to serve a purpose, such a limited—and limiting—view needs definitely to be changed. It is important to stress that compared to the traditional language class, the oral communication class might be more informal in character: it often gives more freedom to students, allows personal relationships to be manifested, and humour or fun to take place. However, this by no means suggests that it is not a purposeful, organized class with specific goals to be achieved.

45 ) Note that it is the teacher and not the learners who is expected to talk in this ‘conversation class’

46 G., Broughton, et al., Teaching English as a Foreign Language, 1978, p. 84
Conclusion

The present chapter has attempted to explore the process of oral communication as an area of competence where fluency in foreign language use finds a wide scope for development. If the ultimate aim of foreign language education is to enable learners to function socially in the target language, then it becomes crucial to start by understanding what the basic concept(s) underlying this objective (namely fluency and communication) involves. Without such understanding, it remains difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of our actual practice or for that matter set any reasonable guidelines for eventual improvements.

The argument behind this chapter is that being a fluent communicator (and interlocutor) involves the use of several different communication skills. These are generally acquired- with varying degrees- in a highly natural way as part of a person’s overall native communicative competence. Native speakers use them spontaneously and to a large extent unconsciously. Some of these processes however, are culture specific and one of the major roles of the foreign language oral communication class is to make learners aware of the difference between the way they communicate in their mother tongue, and the way they are supposed to communicate in the target language if they are to become fluent foreign language users.

Finally, further research is still needed in the area of communication studies. It is hoped that advances in this field would enable language professionals in general and applied linguists in particular to be in a better position that allows narrowing the gap between genuine communication progresses and communication in the foreign language classroom.
CHAPTER THREE

INFLUENTIAL APPROACHES TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING
Introduction

Research in foreign language methodology is continuously concerned about finding out the most suitable and effective approaches to FL teaching. Its aim is to provide language professionals with efficient teaching methods and classroom techniques. Applied linguists and language professionals always seek out “new” or different ways to respond to teachers and learners needs, and to make of their mutual experience in the foreign language classroom an enjoyable and rewarding one.

The present chapter does not mean to offer an exhaustive description of the history of foreign language methodology (See Richards, J.C. and Rodgers, T.S., 2003 for example)\textsuperscript{47}. It is not the concern of this work to trace the historical background of FL pedagogy; rather it attempts to examine in some detail some of the approaches that put communication at the premise of the language classroom. However, before examining some influential approaches to foreign language teaching and some methods, it may be worth defining these concepts briefly.

The three concepts: approach, method and technique are sometimes used interchangeably by many researchers, so that it becomes sometimes difficult for the reader to make a clear distinction between them thus making serious confusions leading to misunderstanding and misuse of the concepts.

An approach is a set of assumptions, ideas about the nature of language and language learning. It is a philosophy, a questioning about what language is and the process through which people acquire/learn it. Such assumptions influence the type of approach researchers come up with. An approach describes the nature of the subject to be taught. (E.g. The structural approach, the notional-functional approach, the communicative approach). An approach can 'give birth' to more than one method.

\textsuperscript{47}JC.Richards,& Rodgers,T.S., Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, 2003
A method is the stage where theory and practice meet. It is at the level of method that decisions concerning what skill(s) need to be taught, what content needs to be presented and in what order, are taken. Method is concerned with content of instruction. It is procedural in the sense that it indicates the procedures and steps to follow in order to make the teaching/learning of the selected material most efficient. In short, it may be defined as a general framework or plan that is based on the underlying approach from which it has emerged. Deciding which teaching method to adopt depends on several factors such as the age of the learners, their previous TL experience, their cultural/linguistic background, teachers' competence, the time allocated to FLT, the material available, etc.

It may be defined as a stratagem used in the actual process of teaching in order to attain an objective. The choice and use of techniques rely heavily on the awareness and proficiency of teachers. Different techniques may be used at different stages of a class session in order to help achieve different aims. Also a technique may be successful with a group of learners and not another as criteria like age, motivation, sex, etc…may be influential factors. A technique is a 'consequence' of the method adopted. Audio visual aids such as the tape recorder, pictures, the language lab, internet, etc…may constitute a technique.
The following diagram shows the hierarchy and relationship between the three concepts:

Approach, method and technique: the hierarchy

Many different approaches and methods have been proposed in different parts of the world with each time the hope of doing better than the previous ones. Sometimes researches have proposed extremely opposing views leading in this way foreign language teaching methodology to shift from one pole to another. Simply, by reviewing briefly some of the approaches and methods that have influenced FLT methodology, the chapter aims at providing a background for discussing the issues and principles supporting the extra oral class we propose in this work.

There are approaches in foreign language pedagogy, which although have their own specificities hold similar principles as those of CLT. Like CLT they place communication at the centre of foreign language pedagogy and propose various views on the way the latter may be maximised in the classroom. Two of
these approaches namely cooperative language learning (CLL) and task-based teaching (TBT), will be discussed in some detail in the following sections as they seem to fit best with the additional oral class proposed in this work. In other words, we believe they provide an interesting framework for setting the extra class and hold principles which are compatible with the essence of this class. Yet it is interesting to refer to the other following approaches in order to have a more general picture of the evolution of approaches to foreign language teaching and attempt to understand their influencial rationales.
1- The lexical approach

The lexical approach was first introduced by Willis, D. (1990)\textsuperscript{48} and developed by Lewis, M. (1993)\textsuperscript{49}. Basically, it claims “language consists not of traditional grammar and vocabulary but often of multi-word prefabricated chunks” (Lewis, 1997:3)\textsuperscript{50}. These chunks, archetypical or prefabricated utterances consist of ready made language that is used as such (without much thinking) when needed. Examples of such chunks are:

Yes, please
How old are you?
I’ll give you a ring
I’m a bit late

Lewis argues that it is around these chunks that FL teaching should be based since “language consists of grammaticalised lexis-not lexicalised grammar” (1997). Therefore, instead of teaching a grammatical structure in isolation, the lexical approach uses these new structures when they appear in conversational expressions. An example of this will be teaching the subject/verb inversion in questions via some chunks like:

Are you sure?
Are they coming?
Is it true?
Will you do it?

Teachers using the lexical approach will not analyse the target language in the classroom, but will be more inclined to concentrate learners’ attention upon these chunks. This new approach is understood as a serious attempt at reevaluation for the individual teacher and the profession as it develops many of

\textsuperscript{48} Willis,D., 1990

\textsuperscript{49} M., Lewis,\textit{The Lexical Approach}, 1993

\textsuperscript{50} M., Lewis,”implementing the Lexical Approach”,1997
the fundamental principles advanced by proponents of communicative approaches. The most important difference is the increased understanding of the nature of lexis in naturally occurring language, and its potential contribution to language pedagogy. Lewis argues that sufficient exposure to language ensure the gradual learning of vocabulary and that in a way vocabulary is not to be taught as such; rather opportunities for the natural communication should be fostered and this will allow new vocabulary to be “picked up”.

The lexical approach has nevertheless been criticised on the basis of some weaknesses. There is no evidence to contend how lexical phrases can be used as a basis to understand and thus learn the structure of a language. The stronger position is to claim for the opposite view namely that lexical phrases or chunks may come to be fixed on already learned grammatical structures. This will make learners able to use whatever vocabulary they have learned in a coherent way, otherwise they simply produce lists or sequences of ready made phrases which do not mean much. Finally, the lexical approach does not offer a sound theory of learning to explain how students develop complex communicative skills via lexis. This is what Harmer, J., also disputes when he writes, *we need to ask in what way a lexical approach differs from other accounts of language teaching since there are as yet no sets of procedures to exemplify an approach to language learning.*

Yet, unlike the lexical approach which stresses the impact of input on language acquisition/learning; the competency-based approach highlights the process through which learning takes place.

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2- The competency-based approach

The competency-based approach (CBA) to language teaching as part of the more general (CBE) standing for competency-based education emerged in the 1970s in the United States of America and Australia; it then had been implemented worldwide in the 1980s. Broadly speaking CBE refers to an educational movement that advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors students should possess at the end of a course study,\(^\text{52}\). With CBA there is a clear shift from a purely product or content-based approach to a more process approach to foreign language teaching/learning. CBA takes into account the social, educational and political environment in which learning/teaching is undertaken. There is therefore, necessarily a study of context together with an analysis of the learners’ requirements and needs of the target language before teaching processes are set. The analysis which is made before implementing CBA allows language professionals to:

- Set the tasks that need to be performed outside the classroom
- ‘Convert’ these tasks into components of functional competencies
- Evaluate these competencies in terms of performance or behaviour
- Identify performance and make it assessable, in other words able to be measured by teachers.

CBA and foreign language teaching:

When CBA is adapted to foreign language teaching/learning it is commonly referred to as CBLT (competency based language teaching). It has been widely used by the end of the 1970s for teaching adults with special communicative needs. This approach, which is based on the functional and interactional aspects of the target language, is often centred on the teaching of the language functions that learners are most likely to need in their communicative contexts. In this sense CBLT designers work on predictable terms to determine what a given

group of language users may need both in terms of language functions and the language appropriate to such functions.

...designers of CBLT competencies can accurately predict the vocabulary and structures likely to be encountered in those particular situations that are central to the life of the learner and can state these in ways that can be used to organize teaching / learning units. 53

In order to achieve this, CBLT assumes that language can be functionally analyzed and divided into functions made possible to be mastered as such and used in communication.

Because CBA is based on clearly set standards to be reached by the learner (or trainee), and because it states what competences and levels ought to be attained; this method is said to be quite simple to assess. C.A. Brown (2008) explains that competency based assessment

...is a form of assessment where evidence of work performed is compared to relevant workplace performance criteria. The assessor then decides whether the performance criteria have been met or not.

Assessment in CBA may take different forms as many techniques are available to the assessor. These can range from the oral interview to the written test, the group activity or the actual observation of the trainee or learner. Assessment can also be based on individual projects to be submitted at the end of the programme as well as simulations and role plays.

In spite of the fact that CBA has attracted many proponents all over the world mainly because of its accountability for performance and behaviour, it is criticised as lacking a sound theory of how to develop competencies in different socio educational contexts. Besides, it has been advocated that CBA concentrates more on learners’ behaviour and outcome than on their thinking,

reasoning and synthesising skills which are all important facets of any individual learning experience.

Besides it seems difficult to consider how classifying and analysing social communication situations can lead to setting predetermined communication tasks. Language and for that matter communication is so unpredictable in nature that it is not easy to think of them in terms of lists of functions to be taught successively. Also language use is to a large extent a creative activity that the language user as an individual (with his / her specificities) makes it unique and anew each time he/ she engages in communication.

As for CBLT, it may be argued that this approach is difficult to apply in relation to something as abstract as language. In other words, although it may be quite possible to measure skill or competence in training people for certain jobs, and activities; it is quite difficult to do so with learning a language. Also, there is no evidence that the competence that CBA is based on is similar to the language competence. To put it differently, further research may be needed to find out whether ‘communicative competence’ as we come to know it the type of competence that CBLT will take as a model to teach and evaluate language functions or does this approach cover a wider competence?
3- The natural approach

Another approach to foreign language teaching/learning which found an important echo in the profession is the natural approach (Terrell, T. 1982⁵⁴, Krashen 1983)⁵⁵. This approach which basically matches up with successful second language acquisition situations claims that the process of picking up a language does not stop after first language acquisition, and that in fact adults can still pick up a second, third language and more. Basically, the Natural approach is set on the following hypotheses:

- The acquisition vs learning hypothesis: The term language acquisition usually refers to the process where a language is acquired as a result of natural and largely random exposure to language. ‘Acquisition’ is used to refer to picking up a language through exposure, whereas the term ‘learning’ usually involves the conscious study of language. Thus, the difference between the language-acquisition and language-learning situations is in the amount of exposure to language as well as its route of development.

There are two types of language development, or rather two different routes that lead individuals to develop new languages:

a- Language is picked-up during prolonged contact with people using it.

b- Language is learnt within a framework of deliberate and organized instruction.

Language development is a more general term; it is used in those situations where we do not want to be specific. Language development thus refers to either an acquisition or learning context.

- The natural order hypothesis: grammatical structures are not learned at random but rather follow a certain order which is predictable. According to this hypothesis, there is a parallel between the order under which children acquire some grammatical morphemes and the one followed by adults learning the


grammar of a second or foreign language. This link made Krashen claim that there seems to be a natural order in the acquisition/learning of the grammar of a language.

However, the hypothesis does not specify whether the order relates to language production or comprehension, i.e. do children and adults understand structure following a certain order, or do they simply start producing language according to a predetermined logical order? Or does the natural order relate to the two processes namely both comprehension and production.

- The input hypothesis: Krashen explains that input consists of the language that the learner is exposed to, and that language acquisition takes place when this input is a little beyond the learner’s present competence. Thus for successful acquisition to be possible, the new input (which Krashen refers to as i+1) should be beyond the learner’s present input (refer to as i). The evidence underlying the input hypothesis stems on studies on first language acquisition conducted with mothers (or rather caretakers) and children, which brought up a new register known as ‘motherese’. Similar investigations were made in foreign language classrooms and came up with ‘teacher talk’. Finally native speakers ‘speech when they address non-native speakers was analysed giving the so called ‘foreigner talk’.

A close look at the above registers has shown that they share common characteristics, namely the use of short sentences, simple syntax and vocabulary, repetition, expansion, etc. These simplifications are believed to make input comprehensible and thus “assimilable” by the learner. Criticising the input hypothesis Ken, R. (2000) argues that

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56 The input hypothesis is discussed in more details in the next chapter(sections 1-1 &1-2)

57 See modified input and modified interaction ( chapt. 4, section 1-2)
This hypothesis is perhaps the most appealing part of Krashen’s model for the language learner as well as the teacher. He makes use of the gap between comprehension and production that everyone feels, enticing us with the hope of instant benefits if we just get input tuned at the right level...but the disappointment is that he never gives any convincing idea as to how it works.\(^{58}\)

Therefore, further investigation is needed so as to explain the relationship or impact of simplified input on language acquisition as well as to the level or degree of simplifications that are needed at different stages of acquisition.

- The affective filter hypothesis\(^{59}\): The natural approach gives a predominant role to the language that learners are exposed to (input), and explains that such input is very likely to be beneficial for them when/if their affective state is positive. To put it differently, foreign language learners ‘pick up’ the target language when they are in a non-threatening environment in which the target language is extensively present and is needed for genuine communication purposes. Kiymazarslan,V.(1995) explains the relationship between the “affect” of the learner and the process of language acquisition/learning following Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis:

> The learner’s emotional state, according to Krashen, is just like an adjustable filter which freely passes or hinders input necessary to acquisition...Input must be achieved in low-anxiety contexts since acquirers with a low affective filter receive more input and interact with confidence.\(^{60}\)

The affective filter is variable as it is subject to emotional factors and states related to motivation, self-esteem, anxiety, etc

\(^{58}\) R., Ken,” Krashen and Terrell’s ‘Natural Approach’”,2000

\(^{59}\) See the affective filter, (chapt. 4, section 1-2)

\(^{60}\) V., Kiymazarslan, “What is the Natural Approach”, 1995
1- Communicative language teaching

Communicative language teaching or the communicative approach to language teaching, or as some researchers refer to it, began in Britain in the 1960's as a replacement of the earlier situational language teaching. CLT is best seen as an approach rather than a method. Broadly speaking, the approach is based on the following theories:

A- Theory of language: language is communication, it is a tool to 'accomplish' social and communication functions.

B- Theory of learning: activities which involve communication promote learning, and embarking in meaningful tasks promotes facilitates learning.

The scope of communicative language teaching (CLT) continued to expand in different places of the globe since the mid-1970s. Indeed CLT has been welcome by many language professionals in various and varied educational context over the world, and this widespread in itself made it almost inevitably, subject to different interpretations and implementations. CLT has been adopted and adapted in many language classrooms and this helped in making many teachers and learners identify with it.

Mainstream language teaching on both sides of the Atlantic, ..., opted for Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the recommended basis for language teaching methodology in the 1980s and it continues to be considered the most plausible basis for language teaching today, although,.... CLT is today understood to mean little than a set of very general principles that can be applied and interpreted in a variety of ways. 61

Although a lot has been written on the communicative dimension of language, little is known on the learning theory (ies) behind CLT. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that the underlying basic learning principles at the basis of this approach are:

• Activities that involve communication promote learning
• Activities that involve the real language in communication promote learning
• Activities which use meaningful language promote learning.

CLT aims at developing learner’s capacities in using the target language as a means of communication, a means of expressing values and judgements. Teachers are expected to help learners create meaning rather than help them develop perfectly grammatical structures. Successful language learning is assessed in terms of learners' general communicative competence.

Nunan, D. (2005)\(^{62}\) lists 5 features of CLT which are stated as:
1- An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2- The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.
3- The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself.
4- An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5- An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

Besides, CLT stresses the fact that:
• Fluency is an important aspect of communication.
• Learners errors are to be seen as normal manifestations in their learning process, and that consequently our attitude towards their treatment should be different (no systematic correction).

CLT ‘welcomes’ any activity which helps promote real communication in the classroom, e.g. conversation sessions, role plays, games. Deciding which activity students will enroll in is not simply a matter of teachers’ preferences, but rather a careful step towards the organisation of classroom communication work. In fact, it is often the communication task that will dictate which activity the teacher ends up proposing.

1-1- **Arguments supporting group work**

One activity which is quite recommended by CLT proponents (such as Long, M. & Porter, P., 1985)\(^{63}\) is group work. In so doing methodologists set a series of arguments in favour of this type of activity:

- **Group work increases chances for communication:** Many language teachers as well as language professionals confess that a major reason for FL learners’ limited communication skills is their small chances to practise the TL in their classrooms. To put it simply, students do not speak the language well enough because they do not have enough opportunity to use it inside their classrooms (both with their teachers and their peers). By putting students in small groups, teachers allow several individuals to speak at the same time. In a lockstep class of 50 for example one student may speak at a time; if this same class is divided into groups of 5, 10 students will then get the possibility to speak simultaneously!

- **Group work allows the use of natural language:** The lockstep class with its teacher-centred communication rarely fosters the natural type of language encountered outside. This particular situation necessarily ‘push’ learners to use an artificial language, a language that may be quite correct, but most of the time not conversational. In small groups though, students are in a more natural conversational environment and this in itself is sufficient to make them use a different type of language, a language which is more natural and spontaneous. Besides in group work, learners can adopt various roles which make them use the language appropriate to those new positions they will rarely take in teacher-fronted classes. This is why group work is said to influence both the quantity and quality of students’ talk.

- **Group work helps create a positive affective atmosphere:** Many students do not dare open their mouths during oral classes simply because they do not dare exhibit their limited performance in front of the judging teacher and the

\(^{63}\) M., Long, & Porter, P.,” Group work, interlanguage, and second language acquisition”, 1985
numorous classmates. (See the strategy of “avoidance” in chapter 2, 5-3). Psycholinguists stress the impact of affect (the world of emotions) on the learning of a foreign language, and explain that a positive psychological attitude is needed for successful achievement in the TL. So many FL learners are made to go through this frustrating and conflicting situation in which they wish to express their thoughts, but at the same time are nearly paralysed by the fear of making mistakes or simply not finding the right words. Group work with its smaller communication context and smaller audience helps a great deal here. Students feel freer to speak, say what they need to say with the language they know. Most importantly, in this situation, they will gradually develop a more personalised, creative type of language suitable for spontaneous oral communication.

- Group work may help individualize instruction: As will be argued later (chapter 5, 10-2) students generally show different language abilities as well as personality traits. Some, for example, show better comprehension than production skills and vice versa. Others though fluent, make many mistakes, while others are correct but speak haltingly. At a psychological level, learners may also show considerable differences: while some are introvert, shy and do not dare taking risks; others are always the first ones to volunteer, propose, try new activities, play diverse roles, etc… these are the extrovert, self-confident learners for whom language learning is a positive challenging adventure. Because of such differences, some individualised instruction and tutoring is sometimes needed in order to respond to the needs and learning/working styles of individual learners. Group work is a better place than the lockstep class for such work.

- Group work creates competition between groups: When learners engage in the same type of tasks, they may be encouraged by the teacher to show their production and this in itself will make them want to produce the best work. They may combine their energy in order to make of their group the winner, the best. Positive competition has always be advocated by applied linguists who have highlighted and explained its constructive character. As such, competition
among groups of learners may constitute a drive in the process of enhancing further skills in oral communication.

- Group work helps build a close learner/teacher relationship: It is widely recognised in foreign language pedagogy that the teacher does not play one single role in his classroom. He keeps changing positions, and attitudes as work progresses; he also changes roles according to whom he is teaching and the objective of that. He subsequently is a monitor, a guide, a source of information and input, an instructor, a prompter, or simply another member of the group. Because of the character of group work with its wider scope of learners’ autonomy, the teacher is often required to take quite flexible, ‘laissez-faire’ attitudes which in turn reveal him (to the students) as a pleasant person. Besides, as the teacher is often called upon by the groups for help and advice and is thus entailed to join them, he becomes physically close to them: this physical proximity is most likely bound to break the distance and hence helps creating a psychological proximity.

- Group work helps break routine: Nobody denies that routine participates in killing the most exciting matters in life, and the endeavour of learning a foreign language is no exception! If / when learners are asked to perform the same tasks, via the same activities, with the same partner(s), in the same seating position, they will undoubtedly become sick and tired of their oral communication class. The popular saying “variety is a spice of life” should become the premise of the oral class if we want the latter to be a place of innovation and thrill.

- Group work increases motivation: For the reasons given above, it seems reasonable to assume that group work motivates the learners. There is more enjoyment and even fun in working in groups than with the whole class and sometimes even than individually. Empirical evidence (see questionnaire, p..;) also reported that students felt less inhibited and freer to speak and make mistakes in the small group than in the teacher-fronted or led classes, and that this fact made them feel more motivated “to do more and do better”.

Finally, it may be interesting to note at this point that the popularity of CLT and its acceptance as the approach that triggers classroom communication and facilitates language learning does not make it the least easy to be implemented by all. In practice this approach has proved to be:

1- Demanding on teachers, it requires a good deal of expertise and 'know how'.
2- Difficult to determine its teaching procedure because of the variety of activities used.
3- Difficult to evaluate.
1- Task-based language teaching

Task-based language teaching is an approach which uses the “task” as the central teaching unit of language planning and instruction. It is considered as a logical continuation of communicative language teaching since it is based on similar learning principles:

1- Activities that involve communication promote learning.
2- Activities that involve real language in communicative tasks promote learning.
3- Activities which use meaningful language promote learning.

Adepts of TBLT (e.g. Prabhu 1987) basically claim that engaging learners in task work provides a better context for the activation of learning process than form focus activities, and hence ultimately provides better opportunities for language learning to take place.

Approaches to language syllabuses have generally been concerned with the provision of content to be taught, be it structural or notional-functional; such structured syllabuses are constructed around language and language use. They thus include functions, lexis, grammar and so on. In so doing, they fail to present language as a living instrument, and language learning as a creative, dynamic process which entails unpredictibility. Prabhu explains that

…both kinds of syllabus (structural and functional) have the fundamental similarity that they look on language acquisition as a planned process of input-assimilation. They both rely on the validity of the equation: what is taught=what is (or ought to be) learnt.

Such an approach to syllabus design has been widely criticised on the basis of theoretical claims concerning the nature of language (communicative competence: chapter 2, part 1) and language learning (through negotiation of

64 N.S.,Prabhu, Second Language Pedagogy, 1987
66 N.S.,Prabhu,”Communicative teaching:‘communicative’in what sense?”, in Das,B.K.,1984,p.273
input: chapt.1, 1). Consequently, the task-based syllabus evolved as an alternative.

Basically, a task-based syllabus is built around the argument that language develops when students are given something to do through the target language, i.e. a task to perform. Tasks not only enable students to activate their already acquired target language competence, but also enhances it thanks to the negotiation of interaction (and hence the comprehensible input it generates) that the performance of tasks require. Accordingly, a task-based syllabus is concerned with setting an efficient methodology which relates language to its process of use, thus learning; following Breen’s (1987)\(^{67}\) interpretation of it, a task-based syllabus is planned according to two task types: Communication tasks and learning tasks.

A- Communication tasks concentrate on purposeful exchanges of meaning through natural communication – both oral and written- in the target language.

B- Learning tasks however, focus on the system of language and the way it functions and thus can be learnt.

We may well assume therefore that communication tasks and learning tasks are complementary and support each other. Breen explains this complementary character in the following:

\[\ldots \text{once the tasks are actually worked upon during learning ... a communicative task may well facilitate the learning of something new or uncover a problem which has to be worked on in a subsequent learning task. Conversely, a learning task can generate genuine communication between learners or between learners and the teacher.}\]^{68}

One major assumption of task-based syllabus is that both learning tasks and communication tasks trigger communication processes. Taking the above argument into account what follows will concentrate on ‘communication tasks’

\(^{67}\) M.P., Breen, "Contemporary paradigms in Syllabus Design", Language Teaching, 1987, p 161

\(^{68}\) M.P., Breen, Ibid, p.166
as the present work is concerned with the development of fluency in oral communication. Nevertheless, before embarking on this, it may be useful to define the concept of “task”, and examine its place and relevance in communicative methodology.

1-1- **The communication task**

Following the above idea, it may be useful to suggest now a working definition for the concept of task: a task is a cooperative, purposeful, goal oriented endeavour which may be communicatively and cognitively graded and selected. It is essentially interesting, challenging and has a communicative potential. The communication task also requires certain elements that may be illustrated as follows:

**The communication task**

It is hoped at this stage that the concepts of task and activity have been made “distinguishable”, without having been divorced from each other. Although the two terms have been quite used in the literature of foreign language teaching and by so doing became quite familiar to those who read this literature; they have sometimes been used interchangeably bearing the same connotation.
In a study aiming to examine the impact of task types on input and interaction among Mandarin and Chinese speakers of English as a second language; Duff selected two ‘types of pedagogical tasks’:

1- problem-solving tasks
2- debates

Yet, in our view whereas problem solving is indeed a task, the debate is an activity.

Later, Somerville-Ryan(1987) even talks about ‘problem-solving activities’ and ‘information gap activities’ in a procedural syllabus, when in fact it seems more appropriate to refer to them as ‘problem-solving or information gap tasks’ that may be achieved via a given set of activities.

People continuously perform tasks as they engage in communication; they talk in order to do something, i.e with the intention of achieving a task-complimenting, solving a problem, convincing, etc.

Communication tasks derive from an analysis of the actual tasks which a person may undertake when communicating through the target language, indeed, communicating through any language.

Building classroom communication around communication tasks in fact means no more than reflecting what takes place in natural, spontaneous exchanges in the outside world.

Communication tasks, or rather the attempt to meet their demands, is the means through which oral fluency in communication may develop, and this is why they need to become the core of Djilali Liabès oral class (and foreign language

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70 R.,B.,Somerville-Ryan,”Taking slow learners to task”, in Candlin & Murphy,1987
71 The need for precisions like these goes beyond the desire of being fastidious: language professionals need to agree on the meaning of certain concepts in order to become able to use the same language in the very different places of the world where similar terminology is used.
72 Breen,C.,Op.Cit.,1987,p162, his emphasis
classes in general). They should be regarded as ways to trigger communication and as learning channels, and this is because:

- Communication tasks give students a purpose to communicate with each other and with the teacher through the target language
- They give them something to achieve through communication
- They encourage them to use all their communicative capacities and strategies to meet the demands of the task
- They push them to negotiate meaning among each other in the process of sorting out a problem, disputing an idea or defending an argument. Having said that, it may be worth looking closer at the nature of communication tasks that are likely to promote communication in the classroom and students levels of oral fluency. Attempting to discuss the following issues may be interesting at this stage:
- What are the criteria for designing or selecting communication tasks that help develop oral fluency?
- What are the characteristics of effective communication tasks?

1-2- **The task and its position in communication methodology**

Research in methodology related to target language communication has often been centred on classroom activities and grouping techniques as means of developing learners’ communication skills. Hence activities such as role plays, simulation games, language games and dialogues have been suggested and adopted by many teachers in different parts of the world. Adding to this, grouping techniques such as pairs and small groups have been strongly encouraged as more interaction and negotiation of input have been found to take place in reduced groups than in lockstep classes. Inspite of the fact that the roles of activities and grouping techniques are important elements for the success/failure of classroom communication; it is at the level of tasks that the most influential impact occurs. Compared to activities however, tasks have wrongly been neglected.

In fact, tasks are central to classroom interaction and, to a greater extent than activities or grouping techniques, determine its evolution or breakdown. Putting students in small groups and asking them to perform a role play for example,
does not guarantee communication, unless they are being given something to do, i.e. a task to perform. The organization of communication activities needs to be regarded as a setting or framework in which a task will be achieved through the target language. It is therefore, clear that the point we reach here is that communicative methodology ought to focus more on tasks than on activities and grouping techniques. Activities are the means, or the vehicle that allow the task to be undertaken. Following this, a problem-solving task for example may be performed via various activities such as a role play or a game, depending on criteria like students’ preference, teacher’s option, or the task’s procedural demands. The following framework may help illustrate the place of the three components of classroom communicative interaction-grouping technique, activity and task- and the relationship between them.

Components of classroom communication
1-3 - Designing and selecting effective communication tasks

Many researches such as Candlin73 have adressed the above questions and consequently suggest various design criteria. In the previous section some task criteria and characteristics have evolved naturally in the course of the discussion; in the following they will mainly be made more explicit:

1- Communication tasks should enable students to experience the foreign language as a tool of communication,

2- They should match both the communicative and cognitive capacities of individual students,

3- They should be based on students’ communicative needs in the target language

4- They should put communicative and cognitive demands on students, i.e. they should make them need to face a challenge through the target language,

5- They should promote negotiation of interaction among participants, thus producing comprehensible input,

6- They should develop interdependence among classroom members (students and teachers).

It may be worth observing that not any tasks have a communicative value for students. Tasks which are believed to enhance students’ fluency in oral communication, i.e. effective communication tasks have the following characteristics: They are,

- Motivating in the sense that they interest the students and make them enjoy what they are undertaking.
- Meaning-focused so as to make students use language as a means to reach an end and thus be concerned by both meaning expression and interpretation (see principle 2.4)
- Flexible, in that they allow freedom of expression and do not inhibit learners’ own pace and preferred styles of working.
- Goal-oriented, i.e. require students to solve a problem, cope with new information and so on.

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73 C.N., Candlin,”Towards task-based language learning”, in Candlin & Murphy, 1987
• Self-confidence building in the sense that they allow students to become aware of their increasing communicative capacities.

• Multi-levelled so as to enable students develop communication skills and strategies needed for the undertaking of tasks as well as genuine communication processes required for everyday use.

• Socio-culturally oriented so as to expose the learners to different models of target language use.

It goes without saying that the task design criteria listed above are not meant to be exhaustive. These can be extended and developed further to fit different educational situations. The characteristics set above are basic ones meant for the development of oral fluency through a task-based approach at Djilali Liabès University.

Based on the arguments put forward in this chapter, the following concluding section will attempt to suggest the way communication tasks may be designed and used in the context this work proposed namely the additional oral communication class at the English department of DLU.
Introduction

Central to any discussion on language development (or for that matter any aspect of it) is the **context** or **environment** in which this takes place. This chapter attempts to examine communicative competence in relation to its context of development. It tries to examine how social and geographical factors affect the enhancement of students’ communicative abilities. However, before embarking on this discussion it may be important to provide first a clear definition of the concept of environment in a language development perspective.

*The language environment encompasses everything the language learner hears or sees in the new language. It may include variety of situations- exchanges in restaurants and stores, conversations with friends, watching television, reading street signs and newspaper, as well as classroom activities- or it may be very sparse, including only Classroom activities and a few books and records.*

Thus when dealing with the development of communicative competence, it is important to emphasize where this is taking place: is it in the country where the target language is spoken natively? As a variety of the target language? or not spoken at all except in the classroom? The difference between such contexts is relevant both in terms of quality and quantity of input available in each case.

This chapter relates to development of communicative competence in English in the context of an Algerian university (Djilali Liabès). English is a foreign language in Algeria, and its use is mostly confined to the classroom. The aim of this chapter is to examine the amount and nature of input most foreign language learners- such as D.L. University ones- are exposed to and its impact on the development of their communicative competence. It goes without saying that learners develop only the language or variety of language they are exposed to. Most foreign language learners are exposed to a 'classroom variety of the target language' and not the target language as it is used outside in everyday situation.

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1- Input and language development

It has been hypothesised (E.G., Krashen, 1982\textsuperscript{75}; White, L., 1995\textsuperscript{76}; Gass S.,\textsuperscript{77} 1997) that language development depends on receiving 'comprehensible input'. One way in which this can be achieved in the FL classroom is by means of teacher talk (usually the teacher himself being a non-native speaker of the target language), and by learners' interlanguage. It is these’ types of input’ that the present chapter attempts to address. However, before embarking on this, it may be important to note at this stage that what is being suggested in this chapter by no means implies that input on its own is sufficient for the development of communicative competence. The latter develops as a result of the amount of comprehensible input learners receive plus the internal processes that this input may activate. In other words, input alone cannot account for acquisition unless it is negotiated and processed within the learner's innate, internal mechanisms, i.e. his language device. O’Neil explains that input...is the fuel, not the engine of language acquisition. But this still means it is essential- and not just in the early stages. \textsuperscript{78}


\textsuperscript{76} White,Op;Cit,1995

\textsuperscript{77} Gass, Op;Cit.,1997

\textsuperscript{78} O Neil,” Teacher talk in the language class:the mith of the silent teacher, IATEFL,1994,p.,59
The development of communicative competence in relation to input may be represented simply as

**The role of input in the development of communicative competence**

Expressing the need to “tighten up” Krashen’s view of the role of input, (which she believes is overestimated); White, L. claims that... *by concentrating on meaning and context, he (Krashen) misses the fact that certain aspects of grammar development in the learner are largely internally driven, and independent of context or meaning.*

As mentioned above, the main concern of this chapter is to examine input in relation to the development of communicative competence in a foreign language. However, because input is to be associated with the context in which it occurs, we wish to define first sociolinguistic and cultural environment of most foreign languages.

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This is because differences among teachers, students, and classroom contexts will inevitably influence how, when, where, and why teachers and students communicate and what students learn from their classroom experiences.\(^{80}\)

To get a clear image, we will draw a parallel between foreign and second language settings. A second language is a second tool that a language user uses to communicate in his community. It thus has a social function and is used in the community in which it is learnt. In a second language environment therefore, the learner has generally two available environments to provide him with input: the classroom and the outside world. In other words, besides the classroom, the second language learner can get additional natural input through exposure to the target language outside the classroom.

A foreign language on the other hand, learnt and used in a formal context (usually educational) and is mainly meant to be used outside the learner's community or with foreigners inside the community. In such a case the only source of input for the target language is the classroom.

However, this second/foreign language input distinction is not systematic. Some second language learners may have limited contact with native speakers of the target language, whereas some foreign language learners may quite often be exposed to the target language at least at certain stages of their language learning experience.

In fact the learners, whether engaged in a second or foreign language learning experience, who are likely to get most input are those called "high input generators". These are learners who seek communication in the target language be it with native speakers, foreign/second language teachers or simply peers. Beside communication, such learners may get additional input through watching TV programmes or reading in the

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\(^{80}\) R.J., Richards, *Understanding Communication in the Second Language Classroom*, 1998, 169
target language. The point then is not to be classified as a second or foreign language learner, but rather as an input generator or not regardless of the environment.

However, because not all foreign language learners are high input generators, it still seems reasonable to maintain the second / foreign language environments distinction. After Hatch examined the influence of settings (foreign language classroom, immersion) she concluded that, a review of the settings and the prognosis for learning in each shows us that both quantity and quality of input are important.\(^{81}\)

1-1- Quantity of input and the development of communicative competence

It is widely agreed that language is acquired / learned under the influence of the learner's environment. There is no doubt, for example, that a normal child develops language because he is directly exposed to it in his environment. … *Children learn language through talking and attending to the talk and behaviour of others.* As Garvey emphasizes. Similarly, in order for foreign language learners to develop their communicative competence in the classroom, they need to be sufficiently exposed to the target language. This is because less exposure (with the FL social groups) means fewer opportunities for second language students to acquire the range of competencies necessary to participate successfully in that culture.\(^{82}\)

The development of communicative competence is a lengthy process that requires a great deal of reception (input) and production (output). Learners then need to have enough opportunities to get into contact with the target language. Unfortunately, as the language teaching pedagogy has not given importance to the amount of input that language acquisition

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\(^{81}\) E., Hatch, « Simplified input and second language acquisition », 1983a, p.84.

necessitates. Therefore, quantity of exposure to the foreign language is an important condition to take into account.

The input / intake distinction was first introduced by Corder (1981)\textsuperscript{83}. It has been elaborated by Krashen (1980, a, b)\textsuperscript{84} and later by Gass (1997)\textsuperscript{85}. This distinction is basically concerned with the target language available to the learner (input), and the part of it that he takes in or acquires. Not all input serves as data for language development; it has to be ‘comprehensible’. In his “Input Hypothesis”, Krashen (1981, 1982, 1986) explains that we acquire language “in an amazingly simple way- when we understand messages” (1986: vii).

Besides “the affective filter” which is defined by Krashen (1986:3) as… a mental block that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they received for language acquisition\textsuperscript{86} influences intake (see Dulay & Burt (1977), Krashen (1986) for example ).We acquire language when the affective filter is low enough to enable the new input to ‘get in’. However, Schutz (2005) poits out that ‘affective variables’ (motivation, self-confidence and anxiety) play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition\textsuperscript{87}

Drawing a distinction between Krashen’s “comprehensible input” and what she calls “comprehended input”; Gass, S.explains that the latter which is perceived as such by the learner...goes one step beyond recognition. It may be analyzed and has the potential of being assimilated through the process of intake.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{83}S..P., Corder, \textit{Error Analysis and Interlanguage}, 1981
\textsuperscript{87} R.,Schutz, “Stephan Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition,.2005,p.59
\textsuperscript{88} Gass,Ibid.,1995
Furthermore, in order that input may become intake it needs to be generated out of the learners' interest and negotiation. In other words, they need to be both receptive and willing to acquire. Intake then is the input (or part of it) in which the learner has actually been involved via negotiation and hence has processed.

1-2- Quality of input: modified input and modified interaction

Recent research in first, second and to a lesser degree foreign language acquisition, has been involved in the analysis of the nature and role of the language available in the learner's environment. Different labellings emerged in the literature following research on such registers: motherese, caretaker speech, teacher talk, foreigner talk. The people who use such registers have been found to modify their input and interaction pattern when addressing language learners.

Modified input consists of those linguistic adjustments such as the use of simple vocabulary and syntax, short sentences and so on that highly competent speakers (natives or others) make when addressing a less competent interlocutor be it a child acquiring his first language, or an adult learning a second / foreign language.

Modified interaction on the other hand refers to the frequent use of certain interaction moves by native speakers and language teachers when they address language learners. These are used to ensure comprehension, and include comprehension checks, repetitions, expansions, clarification requests, reformulations as well as the selection of salient topics in interaction.

Research in first language acquisition (e.g. Gleitman, Newport & Gleitman (1984); Ochs89; and Hatch (1980a) has identified in motherese some specific characteristics such as the use of short sentences, simple

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89 E., Ochs,“ Talking to children in Western Samoa”, 1982.
syntax, simple vocabulary and topic incorporation devices such as repetition, paraphrase and expansion. At a content level, motherese is usually described as being concerned with the 'here and now'. However, cross-cultural analyses of motherese such as those carried out by Faltis (1984) and Ochs\textsuperscript{90} reported that this register is characterized in other cultures by different properties than the ones mentioned by most researchers of the Anglo middle class.

What seems most important to note however, is that regardless of motherese manifestations across cultures, it is a comprehensible code. In other words, whether adults use long or short sentences, whether they talk to or about the children, whether they talk or sing to them; they nonetheless provide them directly or indirectly, in one way or another with comprehensible input. This is what Krashen claims in answer to Faltis\textsuperscript{91} who criticized the universal character of his input hypothesis:

\begin{quote}
In my view, the cross-cultural data does not supply counter-evidence to the input hypothesis. It is, in fact, valuable data in that it focuses attention on what is essential for language acquisition: not simplified input but comprehensible input containing I + 1 structures 'slightly beyond' the acquirer's current state of competence.\textsuperscript{92}
\end{quote}

This leads us to say that the child develops his communicative competence through his negotiation and interaction with his caretaker. Enright explains that

\textsuperscript{90} E., Ochs, Op. Cit, 1982

\textsuperscript{91} C., Faltis, “A commentary on Krashen’s input hypothesis”, 1984

\textsuperscript{92} S.D., Krashen ,Op. Cit., 1986,p.6
Children's language development is a strongly interactive process, one which relies not only on specific (and innate) cognitive and linguistic mechanism, but also on the child's active participation in a linguistic environment attuned to the child's communicative needs.\textsuperscript{93}

Because this work is concerned with the learning of a foreign language in a formal context (the classroom), it will be limited to the examination of teacher talk rather than foreigner talk which is mainly related to naturalistic second language acquisition.

Research on teacher talk parallels that of foreigner talk in second language acquisition, and motherese in first language acquisition. B., Rowan, R., Correnti, & R., Miller stress the importance of investigating the relationship between learners' achievement and teachers' performance. They conclude that \textit{various characteristics of teachers and their teaching account for these effects.}\textsuperscript{94}

Many researchers such as Ellis (1985), O’Neil (1994), Takakubo (2000) have been interested in finding out teacher talk's characteristics with respect to learner's language development. At a linguistic level, teacher talk has been found to contain short utterances, syntactically simple language, simple and accessible vocabulary. Teacher talk however, is generally grammatical. Ellis has related this to the fact that \textit{the conditions that permit deviations from the standard language do not arise in the classroom}\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{93} I.S., Enright, & McColsky, M.L.,”yes talking! Organizing the classroom to promote second language acquisition”,1985,433

\textsuperscript{94} B., Rowan, Correnti, R., & Miller, R.,”What large-scale survey research tell us about teacher effect on student achievement”, 2002.

\textsuperscript{95} R.Ellis., \textit{Understanding Second Language Acquisition},1985,p.145
Furthermore, in order that input can become intake it needs to be generated out of learners’ interest and negotiation. In other words, they need to be both receptive and willing to acquire. Intake then is the input (or part of it) in which the learner has actually been involved via negotiation and hence has processed.

At an interactional level, teachers have been found to ask many ‘display questions’, i.e. questions to which they already know the answer rather than ‘referential questions’, i.e. questions seeking genuine information. Teachers also tend to use discourse strategies such as expansions, explanations, topic development, and repetition. Observing and analyzing an English class in Japan, Takakubo reports that the teacher used “modification techniques”: When questions are not understood she repeats them at a lower speaking rate...If the student still does not understand them, she changes the questions into the easier questions with similar meanings...⁹⁶. O’Neil lists some characteristics of what he calls “good interactive teacher talk”:

- It is simplified, but natural
- It is broken into small units within sentences
- The teacher gets feedback through questions
- He regularly makes pauses which allow students to interrupt and invite them for talk.

He thus explains that the teacher does not simply ‘talk’, but talks in such a way to encourage the class to interrupt, to ask questions and to initiate topic change and further talk ⁹⁷. An important thing to note about teacher talk, however, that is it varies according to learners’ level of proficiency in the foreign language. In other words, teachers tend to adjust their level of simplification according to the abilities of the group they are

communicating with. Consequently, teacher talk would be expected to be more simplified in beginner classes than in advanced ones.

Bearing this in mind, a final important comment needs to be made. Modified input and modified interaction are not to be seen simply as the result of teacher's adjustments to their learners' communicative capacities, but rather as a product of a negotiation process, i.e. interaction between teacher and learners. In such interaction the teacher makes some linguistic and discourse adjustments to ensure comprehension, while the learner uses communicative strategies (see chapter 1, 1-3) to make himself understood.
1- Interlanguage in the communicative foreign language classroom

With the help of modified input and negotiation of interaction, the learner's interlanguage develops. The term 'interlanguage' was introduced by Selinker in 1969 and elaborated in 1972. It refers to the language system the language learner constructs on the basis of the input he is exposed to. Selinker views interlanguage as the result of a psycholinguistic process of interaction between both the mother tongue and the target language. Thus interlanguage shares common features between the mother tongue and the target language. Interlanguage is seen as a dynamic language system as it shows different levels of complexity. In other words, a learner's interlanguage is sometimes simple and sometimes more complex depending on factors such as the type of the interlocutor and the communicative task. Interlanguage is also believed to be goal oriented, i.e. it has a function. Corder argues that one of the motivations for developing an interlanguage must be that the speaker finds his strategies of communication inadequate for his communicative needs.

Corder adds that a learner may create his interlanguage on the basis of others' simplified language systems such as motherese, teacher talk and foreigner talk. That is to say that an interlanguage may be created through 'imitation' of other simple codes.

Besides, interlanguage is found to bear some similar characteristics to pidgins in the sense that it is simplified for the sake of communication. This is why such a process has been named "pidginazation" (Selinker, 1972).

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98 Selinker, “Interlanguage”, 1972

99 S., P., Corder, ” Language continua and interlanguage hypothesis”, 1977, p12
Pidginization produces interlanguage which is simplified and reduced. When the function of the language of a second language learner is restricted to communication..., we can expect a learner's interlanguage to reflect some of the simplifications and reductions that are found in pidgins.  

Pidginization is believed to characterise all early second/foreign language learning. However, when there is an important social and/or psychological distance between the language learner and the target language, pidginization has proved to persist. In other words, if learners' attitudes towards the target language and target language community are rather negative, if there is an important cultural distance between their society and the target one, or if their contact with the target language and its community is limited, they are then likely to keep using a pidginized form of the target language. Accordingly, we may assume that foreign as opposed to second language learners are more likely to persist in using pidginized language as they are the ones who have little social contact with the target language.

Valdman\(^\text{101}\) established three models for the development of interlanguage according to different contexts:

1. Informal second language
2. Traditional foreign language classroom, and
3. Informal second language context with unfavourable interactional, attitudinal conditions.

He notes that learners under category 2, i.e. foreign language learners, develop an interlanguage which is highly marked with accuracy, but not so much with appropriateness. Discussing Valdman's categories, Kasper writes the following about category 2, *IL evidences a highly degree of well-formedness even at the initial stages, whereas its functional use is low; there is an asymmetric development at the two levels with dominance of well-formedness.*  

\(^{100}\) J.,H.,Schumann,” The implications of interlanguage, pidginization and creolization for the study of adult acquisition”,1974,p.147


As a result, foreign language learners' pidgin will show certain features that can be traced back to their communicative environment, i.e. the classroom. Kasper (1982) reports several of these features among which are the following:

1. Inappropriate formal register, i.e. the use of a formal register in informal situations.
2. Inappropriate use of modal verbs such as may and must.
3. Rising intonation with non-interrogative function.
4. Complete sentence responses

She then adds that the extent and nature of pidginization highly depends on such limited function as well as distance. When pidginization persists however, the learner's interlanguage "fossilizes", i.e. it stops at least temporarily from developing.

According to Selinker fossilization is evidence for interlanguage. Fossilizations are phonological, semantic, syntactic and lexical forms that appear and persist in learners' performance whatever the amount and nature of instruction and/or exposure to the target language. Pazvant, O. (2005) explains that fossilization (is) a phenomenon which occurs despite continuous exposure to the target language input, sufficient motivation to improve, and ample opportunity to practice.

Fossilization however, is not to be associated with erroneous forms, in fact even correct and appropriate language can fossilize. The concept therefore, simply means that the student 'stops' learning and develops no further abilities in the target language.

On fossilized errors for example, Timm explains,

\[\text{O., Pazvant,"Fossilization in adult second language acquisition",2005}\]
PUPILS PERFORMANCE CONTAINS A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF ERRORS WHICH HAVE 'FOSSILIZED' AND WHICH, ACCORDINGLY HAVE BECOME PERMANENT FEATURES OF LEARNERS SPEECH\textsuperscript{104}.

Researchers (e.g. Towell & Hawkins, 1994)\textsuperscript{105} in an attempt to explain the phenomenon of fossilization acknowledge that it is "a central characteristic of SLA". Pazvant, O.(2005) further explains that there is so far no single approach to explain fossilization, that it is multi-dimensional and that besides, it strikes individuals differently.\textsuperscript{106}

Selinker further talks about a phenomenon related to fossilization which he called "backsliding". Bialystock and Smith define the latter as the process (1985) whereby forms reappear after they seemed to have disappeared. Backsliding then shows that interlanguage is a dynamic system since IL speakers show instances of regression or backsliding to the original interlanguage norm.

The process of fossilization may have internal reasons on the part of the IL user. Language learners tend to fossilize when they feel the IL they have developed enables them to communicate enough in the TL. IN simple terms, learners fossilize when they are 'happy' with what they already know about the S/FL, and when they realize they can get their message across. Talking about fossilized pronunciation, Acton writes that it is common that…

Once adult second language learners have achieved that level of competence in the target language at which they are functionally as bilingual as they need to be, their pronunciation becomes inevitably and irrevocably "fossilized".\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{104} J.P., Timm, »The consistency of interlanguage in task-bound second language production", 1986, p.88, his emphasis.

\textsuperscript{105} R.,Towell & R.,Hawkins, Approaches to Second Language Acquisition,1994

\textsuperscript{106} O.,Pazvant, Ibid.,2005

\textsuperscript{107} W.,Acton,"Changing fossilized pronunciation" Tesol Quaterly,1984,p.71
Simplified interlanguage: an “obstacle” to communication

Interlanguage simplifications occur at different levels of the target language, i.e. semantic, syntactic, phonological, and lexical. At a phonological level for example, IL users would generally tend to use the words they find most easy to pronounce. Similarly, they would prefer to use most common lexical items. Most IL users would accordingly use 'happy' as a general term instead of an equivalent (that may be more appropriate in certain contexts) such as glad, delighted, pleased, joyful, cheerful, satisfied, etc/ Part of learners' simplifications of the TL is also the use of general rather than specific vocabulary. An example of this would be the use of 'transport' when a more precise world such as car, bike, coach, underground, etc may be needed. On this point, Levenston (1977) argues that an early learned general world is considered as a 'hypernym' and is used in context requiring more specific vocabulary. However, it may be important to examine the effects of learners' simplified IL on native speakers of the TL or for that matter on highly proficient S/FL speakers.

1-1- Some negative effects of simplified interlanguage on communication

Because of the use of a simplified and general IL, learners may fail to achieve correctly and appropriately their communicative intentions. A chosen word may seem appropriate to the learner, but not so to the other interlocutor as each one’s conception of it might be different. In other words, he/she may use a word-based on his/her IL- thinking it appropriate while it is not according to the TL use norms. This may result in the distortion of the speaker's intended meaning. The learner's message may as well remain obscure or unclear especially through the use of general rather than precise terms that some communicative tasks –such as descriptions and explanations- require.

Another impact of interlanguage on communication may be ambiguity whereby the listener or receiver may not truly understand what the IL user intends to express as is the case with obscurity. Ambiguity may also be the result of lacking the knowledge of the fact that a given word may have different semantic connotations for the native or highly competent receiver. Ambiguity in this sense may lead to misunderstanding and for that matter to communication breakdown. Therefore, IL while it enables its user to communicate in the TL may not always enable him to express his exact intended meaning.

In most FL situations, the only input available to the learner is teacher talk and peers interlanguage. Such interlanguage is very likely to contain ill-formed and inappropriate forms as well as L1 influenced errors. Nevertheless, it is this interlanguage the FL learner will develop instead of the “real” target language. On this point, Krashen argues that if this (foreign classroom) interlanguage is the only input available, and if the student hears enough of it..., his language acquisition device will consider it to be “real language” and will acquire it in the technical sense.

In addition, two main points related to what has been stated and which are significant to the present issue need to be kept in mind:

1-Part of learner’s interlanguage is the development of pidginization, i.e. a simplified communication code.

2-Pidginization tends to fossilize as the learner “succeeds” in getting his message across.

The implications of these two phenomena on the development of communicative competence tend to be rather negative. As Valdman convincingly claims

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109 Krashen, S.D., 1986, op. cit
Il est évident que le SL (langage simplifié), tout comme diverses tentative de structure ou de simplifier les données de la LC (langue cible), peut avoir un effet négative sur l’acquisition d’une compétence communicative de la part de l’apprenant\textsuperscript{10}.

The development and use of pidginized language does not encourage—and may even prevent—the learner from developing a genuine native-like competence. In other words, when the focus is primarily and almost exclusively on meaning, learners may end up developing a fluent pidgin (rather than the target communicative competence). This classroom pidgin might be understood among classroom members but not so much when used outside. Pidginization in this respect may constitute a barrier to further development of native-like communication abilities.

The other problem resulting from interlanguage is the process of fossilization. As already mentioned, learners tend to fossilize once they are satisfied with what they can achieve with the foreign language. Working on an immersion programme of French in Canada, Riva, N. warns us that the dangers of overuse of interlanguage and eventually fossilization obviously threatens the language development\textsuperscript{111}. Not feeling the need nor the reasons for further development, learners’ communicative competence will remain “static” at a certain level.

The question that arises through what has been examined is whether learners should be encouraged to develop fluent pidgins at the expense of a high level native-like competence. Most language professionals may favour fluent pidgins over limited communicative abilities, but it is reasonable to argue that such an issue remains questionable and deserves serious investigation. Besides, we believe that experience has proved that many FL learners have attained native-like communicative competence, a more positive and optimistic view towards the issue is needed today. Thus, a new

\textsuperscript{10} A., Valdman,"L’effet de modèles culturels sur l’élaboration du langage simplifié (foreigner talk), 1977, P.115

\textsuperscript{111} Riva,N., Perceptions of Learning French: A case Study in French Immersion, 1996,p.19
perspective regarding interlanguage is to be taken as it seems possible to develop seemingly fossilized speech to the next step if enough motivation and appropriate communicative tasks are provided. It seems that learners can improve their receptive and expressive interlanguage when they feel the need to understand new input or when they are required to produce comprehensible output in order to achieve mutual comprehensible discourse. Another way of “depidginizing or defossilizing” learners’ interlanguage (at least to a certain extent) may be achieved through providing genuine TL in the classroom. This can be provided by tapes, films, records, the language lab or internet.

One final and important point we wish to raise is that whereas interlanguage as input may have some negative effects on further communicative development, the negotiation of interlanguage is believed to help rather than hinder such a development. Although learners do not necessarily provide each other with correct linguistic and sociolinguistic input, compared to a native speaker, they do offer the opportunity for genuine communicative practice. Such practice involves some negotiation of meaning which is believed to aid language development.

I-2- **Negotiated interlanguage and the development of communicative competence**

Researchers such as Chaudron (1983), Gass (1997), and Han (2004) examined target language input in relation to learners’ language development in formal settings. Such research suggests that modified input and modified interaction influence language in the following ways:

- Linguistic and interactional modifications promote perception and comprehension. Chaudron found out that learners’ comprehension skill improved due to speech modifications.
- They also provide meaningful use of the TL.
- They manifest frequency of certain structures that are first and best acquired by learners.
Ellis explains that modified input controls the forms of language that the
learner processes and allows him to use new structures. Research around the
relationship between modified input/interaction concluded then that since
modifications enhance comprehension, and since comprehension promotes
acquisition, therefore, the logical conclusion should be that modifications
influence acquisition.

Besides it seems to be agreed on that modified interaction is more
important to learners’ language development than modified input only.
Hence it has been noted that two-way-interaction promotes more
comprehension checks, clarification requests and confirmation checks than
one-way-interaction (e.g. teacher giving a lecture or student presenting an
exposé). Similarly, in children/caretaker interaction, it is negotiation of
interaction that seems to be a crucial factor in the development of the child’s
communication skills.
Conclusion

In this chapter an attempt has been made to examine the quantity and quality of input in a FL learning environment. As opposed to naturalistic language learning contexts, the only input available to the FL learner is the classroom’s teacher’s talk and peers’ interlanguage.

First, it has been noted that due to FL learners’ exposure to a restricted input, they tend to develop a pidgin variety of limited communicative use outside the classroom. Second, although the restricted input of the FL classroom may not influence the process of learners’ communicative competence development, it is very likely to be responsible for its rate. In other words, the development of communicative competence may be slowed down in the FL classroom if input is insufficient or /and inadequate. Finally, we believe that the setting or context of learning influences both how much and what type of input is more available, and input influences the development of communicative competence. Therefore, the development of communicative competence should be thought of in relation to the environment in which it is being developed.

The most important implication of what has been said to the development of oral fluency in communication in the context of Djilali Liabès University is to provide FL learners with input that encourages functional and fluent use of the TL. Students should be provided with sufficient, comprehensible, interesting and motivating input. They should also be provided with opportunities for negotiation of meaning as input is more important to the development of oral fluency when it is actively negotiated by learners themselves. The amount of practice, the amount of teacher’s accurate feedback as well as quality of interaction is a crucial condition for oral fluency to improve.
CHAPTER FIVE

DJILALI LIABES UNIVERSITY ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT: FROM THE CURRICULUM TO THE ORAL CLASS
The present chapter first examines the educational and social roles of university foreign language departments in general. It then introduces and describes the educational context to which this work relates i.e Djilali Liabès university English language department (Algeria). Finally, the oral expression class as it is referred to in our university will be visited and described in terms of the prevailing activities which take place in it as well as the general patterns and procedures of “teaching” this skill. But, before embarking on that, it may be useful first to explain the role of a language department both as an educational and social institution.

1- The educational and social roles of university language departments

University language departments throughout the world have a crucial role in developing second/foreign language education. The extent to which such departments recognize or realize this responsibility is of course variable. Nevertheless, it still stands to reason that university language departments highly determine the success or failure of language teaching at different stages of education, i.e. high school, middle school and even primary school. The central aim of most university language departments is to develop students’ foreign language proficiency to the highest level possible. Accordingly, D.L. university English department consists (or rather should consist) of providing students with the most advanced and specialized proficiency in English. It is at the university that most students ‘complete’ their English language learning process in the sense that the university language department represents, for the majority, the final stage of education.

Although D.L. university language department attracts students with variable professional perspectives and ambitions (teaching in high and middle schools, working in foreign companies, or undertaking postgraduate research), and although it is not primarily meant to train teachers, most of its students will become teachers of English at high and middle school level. Stern raises the point about language departments
I recognize that ULDs (university language departments) are not intended to be narrowly career-oriented. In particular, they're not meant to train teachers, although many of their students will become language teachers.\textsuperscript{112}

Taking this fact into account, it becomes clear that D. L. university English department’s educational role and responsibility lies beyond the boundaries of the department itself. It thus relates to or affects the teaching of English in high school as well; since it is there that the majority of its trainees will go. The following diagram may illustrate the above idea:

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{diagram.png}
\end{figure}

\textbf{University English department’s dual educational role}

The above then shows a double-standard educational role, which puts on D.L. University English department a great responsibility. As far as its role as a social institution is concerned, we believe that the quality of education the department provides, and by extension the way it affects high school education may determine the way people look at, or judge English language teaching in Algeria and thus influence its status in society. To put it another way, if English language teaching is successful in a society, this is likely to attract people to it, hence contributing towards language spread.\textsuperscript{113}


\textsuperscript{113} Although we are aware that this on its own does not determine language spread, the latter being also subject to government policy
The following diagram attempts to illustrate this relationship:

Good quality of education at university

Increased of number of people attracted by English

Possible spread of English in society

Good quality of education at high school

The social influence of English language departments

What has been argued so far shows that the role of a language department lies beyond the boundaries of the university itself, and this responsibility surely suggests that a serious attention should be paid to the way English is taught/learned in such an institution.
2- Djilali Liabès English language department

The nature of foreign language pedagogy is context related, thus differing from one educational environment to another because of varying socio-economic and political factors. This is why...during the last few decades we have become far more environment-conscious than ever before. Consequently, in any context related research, questions such as which the learners/teachers are, where the foreign language is learnt, the nature of teaching goals and the learners’ social and professional needs of the TL become of paramount importance.

As mentioned earlier, the context of this work is a language department in an Algerian university (Djilali Liabes). This department offers a four year degree course in English as a foreign language. Throughout the course, English is the medium of instruction. Most students have had at least five years of formal instruction of English as a subject of their middle and high school curricula. Most teachers in this department are Algerian themselves who hold postgraduate degrees from Algerian universities.

Until the beginning of the academic year 2007/2008 English has been taught at Djilali Liabès University on the basis of the four year course which was meant to dispense learners, at the end of their course of study, with a degree called a ‘licence’. As a following diagram will show, this degree enables students to teach at high scool level (which so far has been their major destination).

The four year course in D.L. English language department includes three major components, namely language development, linguistics, and literature. It is beyond the scope of this work to provide a full description of each

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114 E., Oskaar, ”Creativity and interactional competence in foreign language learning”, 1986, 34.

115 Students’ and teachers’ profiles are described in more detail in chapter four.
component; however, a brief account of each may help providing a general idea about the curriculum.116

The language development component is conventionally divided into skills. It is thus taught/learnt as sub-components whereby grammar, listening comprehension, written expression and oral expression— as they are referred to in the department— are treated in isolation. Thus typically, in the grammar class, the teacher provides structural rules of English. Students learn them and practise them formally via grammatical exercises. The teacher of written expression, on the other hand, teaches students how to write correct English; they thus get practice in writing essays and letters for example. A separate class concentrates on developing students' listening comprehension capacities.

This is generally done through making learners listen to texts, answer related comprehension questions, read texts and do a series of written exercises bases on the text under study. Concerned with developing students' conversational skills, the oral class offers them the ability to speak in the foreign language.117

Finally, the language laboratory provides learners with practice in various aspects of the language namely, listening comprehension and phonetics. It may be worth noting at this stage that as students move from one year to another, more emphasis is placed on academic (content) teaching than on language development. In other words, whereas the first and second years

116 We are aware that the new educational system LMD is under discussion in many Algerian universities, and already applied in some. A section will then be devoted to LMD in relation to the different components it offers and mostly to the way oral communication is understood and meant to be taught.

117 The main concern of this work is the development of fluency in oral communication, and as the oral expression class is the place allocated to it; the latter will be examined in more detail in chapter four
concentrate on developing students' language proficiency; the third and especially fourth years are more concerned with academic development.

Another component which is an important part of DLU English curriculum is the linguistic one. We have used the term linguistic here in a very wide sense to cover linguistics with its sub-branches such as phonetics and phonology as well as other areas of linguistics such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and applied linguistics. Thus, this large component consists of what we have referred to earlier as academic teaching. It seems as a matter of fact, that it is towards this component that most attention is concentrated in our department. The main concern here is to provide learners with theories of language, language learning and acquisition, language in use and finally- during the last year of the course- language teaching. As can be noted, this component is quite diverse; it is highly theoretical too.

Finally, the literature component is one which includes different areas of literary studies such as British literature, Third World literature and American literature. These courses are directed towards linking language and literature. The literature component introduces students to some outstanding literary works written in English, and initiates them to literary criticism.

Thus a close look at the nature and process of English language teaching at D.L. university language department suggests that these have hardly ever been altered or updated. Consequently, teaching is still based on traditional grounds: language is presented and taught in terms of isolated skills, and the focus with every skill is mainly on correct language use. In particular, oral communication skills are neglected. They are both insufficiently and inadequately taught (see chapt.5, 5-1)
1- The ‘oral expression’ class: general patterns and practices

The foreign language classroom has been the principal ‘space’ investigated by language professionals. It has served to observe many and different aspects of teaching (learning) that are believed to influence the outcome the learning/teaching experience. Classroom observation, as a basic and widely used research tool has allowed the understanding and explanation often takes place in many second/ foreign language classes all over the world. In this way some communication patterns and classroom dynamics have been found to be specific to language classrooms. No matter which language is under study, in the second/foreign language classroom, the target language is the means through which communication takes (or at least is supposed to) place. It is also this language that most teachers want their learners to develop.

*In second language classrooms, the language, whether it is English or another language, is the medium through which teachers teach, and students demonstrate what they have learned.*

The extent to which such aim is reached depends on several different factors. Some of them are of a purely pedagogical nature such as the teaching methods, the evaluation procedures, the choice of curricula or the time allocated to the subject.

Some influential factors have, on the other hand, a more material and physical nature. These may consist of for example, the pedagogical material that is available and put at the disposal of learners in a given institution. This can range from books and magazines to computers and internet facilities. Material conditions may also include the seating arrangement of classrooms such as whether there are fixed tables or individual desks, small classes or amphitheatres, etc…

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Finally, the success or failure of a foreign language class heavily lies on the human dimension which it is composed of, i.e. the teacher and the learners. Questions such as: is the teacher newly enrolled in teaching? Does he/she have previous teaching experience? Is he/she 'open' to new teaching methods and techniques? Or is he/she an adept of 'teach as you have been taught'?

Learners are the other important partners of the classroom experience. Their number per class, their age, their level of proficiency in the target language, their cognitive abilities and general knowledge, their gender, relationship to the target language and its culture as well as to their teacher may all have an impact on their overall learning experience.

The previous chapter suggests that genuine fluent oral communication involves the use of different devices that ensure understanding between interlocutors and prevent communication breakdown. Such devices include the ability to use language fluently and appropriately in terms of sociocultural rules, to interpret messages, to use and interpret non-verbal symbols, to manage turn taking, to be explicit, to give feedback and negotiate meaning.

Research in second/foreign language acquisition (R.L., Allright119, M., Long, Gass and varonis,120 and Porter121) views a causal relationship between a major aspect of oral communication, namely negotiation skills, and learners’ language development. This is because negotiation for meaning has proved to provide comprehensible input which is an element of paramount importance (See chapter 4, 4-2).


Whether or not such features are manifested in the classroom indicate therefore, the extent to which classroom communication fosters genuine target communication. Most importantly, this indicates the potential of the classroom in developing learners’ fluent communication skills as an aspect of their overall communicative competence.

The present chapter attempts to provide a qualitative description of some prevailing communication processes at DLU conversation class. Thus, the aim of the chapter is to estimate the way oral fluency is ‘taught’ there through an examination of the regular patterns governing the organization of the oral communication class. Throughout, a particular attention will be paid to the type of communication activities that generally take place in this class. Activities will be examined on the basis of the following criteria:

A- The extent to which students communicate authentically in terms of the communicative processes discussed previously.

B- The extent to which the activities undertaken in the class allow the opportunity to negotiate interaction.

The assumption underlying our evaluation is that it is through communicating in the target language and negotiating meaning, that students may ultimately develop further oral fluency. In other words, students may improve their ease in communicating in English when, through classroom activities; meaning becomes the focal point of their attention, and language a tool to express and interpret this meaning.
2 - Method of investigation

A sample of 252 students from three different levels-first, second and third year have been observed on a regular basis over a period of three academic years. The age range of the students who participated in the present study varied between 18 to 36. First, Second year and third year classes only have been observed. As for fourth year students, they simply are not dispensed any oral expression teaching, they do not have any oral class as such any more. All of them are native speakers of Algerian Arabic and can also use French (with varying degrees of fluency) as a second language. Yet, unlike the case of French the students have little or no opportunity to speak and hear English outside the boundaries of their classrooms. They are, therefore; learning this language in a non-English speaking environment.

All students have had an average of five years formal instruction in English as a subject of their school curricula: two years and three years at middle school and high school respectively. Most students came to the university straight from high school although a minority as noted earlier are previous middle school teachers who by reading for the English degree, seek to become high school teachers. The mastery of English, and for that matter the mastery of its oral communication skills, is therefore a crucial condition for these trainees. It is the medium of instruction in their learning context, and it will become their major instrument of work as future teachers of English. This is what they expressed in relation to the following question: “does the job you plan to do require the ability to speak English?

122 Those students who are over 21/22 of age are few; they are mainly ex-middle school teachers who generally come to university in order to become later teachers at secondary school level.
The students’ needs for English as an instrument of work

The level of proficiency of students may be characterised as high-intermediate, although in terms of the Algerian educational scale, it remains the most advanced level these students may attain in English.\textsuperscript{123}

The following table shows the proportions of students according to their level and number in the observed classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First year G 1</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year G2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year G1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year G2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third year G1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third year G2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of students per class (or group)

\textsuperscript{123} Apart from a minority of students who will carry on post-graduate studies in English
All the teachers in this study are Algerian, native speakers of Algerian Arabic. They too use French fluently thus sharing the same L1 and L2 as their students. All teachers hold postgraduate degrees in either general or applied linguistics. All teachers reported that they have never had any training in the teaching of the oral skill as such. They have nevertheless an experience (between four to 16 years) in teaching this skill.

Teachers’ experience in teaching the oral skill

They also all suggested that their objective in the oral class is to enable students communicate adequately and fluently in English (see teachers’ questionnaire, appendix).
The following table shows teachers profiles in the observed classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>L1&amp;L2</th>
<th>Experience in teaching Oral expression</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Algerian arabic+French</td>
<td>8years</td>
<td>Magister in English (M.A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>A.A.+Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Magister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A.A.+Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>magister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>A.A.+Fr+Spanish</td>
<td></td>
<td>Magister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doctorat (Ph.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>A.A.+Fr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Magister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers in the observed classes
3-Data collection

The author attended and observed eight oral expression classes over a period of two academic years: four second year, and four third years as indicated in the previous table. All were tape recorded, and a selected corpus of the recordings was then transcribed. The transcribed data was selected for closer examination. The selection of the material was mainly made on the basis of the variety of classroom activities as well as on the acoustic clarity of the recording.

As the conversation class was going on and being recorded, the author was sitting among students either at the back of the class when the class was organised in raws, or within the circle when the class was organised as such. All along, the author kept taking notes on such contextual and behavioural details as the physical arrangement of the classroom, the number of students per class/per group, the use of non-verbal communication signals, apparent signs of interest, enthusiasm, boredom. A lot of information concerning the teacher was also reported. Criteria such as the gender, age of the teacher; his/her attitude towards students, the physical space he occupies in the classroom, the non-verbal signals he/she sends, and his command of oral English were all taken into account and noted by the author.

Making recordings in the context under study did not prove to be a simple task: first the English department does not put any sophisticated audio-recording material equipment at the desposal of teachers or researchers. A simple small tape recorder with an incorporated microphone was therefore used which undoubtedly affected the quality of the recording. Besides, the classrooms where the recordings were undertaken were rather large but not well insulated so that even some noise from outside were captured by the recorder. This of course was added to all the usual noise students generally make inside any classroom such as coughing, laughing, pushing chairs, opening or closing the class, etc all contributed in reducing the quality of the recordings.
Furthermore a difficulty inherent to the effect of being recorded of any population was noticed and felt by the author. In other words, the author was conscious of the fact that recording the students’ communication was most likely to have an impact on both their outcome and attitude. This is what is referred to as the ‘observer’s paradox’ which is the fact of not knowing how far the observation of a conversation influences what is being said and how it is said. It is our belief however that any clandestine recording would consist of a sort of intrusion or abuse of the participants’ trust, and that consequently, it essential to have their consent before attempting any recording, and that is what has been done in the case of this research. Yet, by doing this the author was aware of the subsequent communicative and behavioural changes that this might have on the participants and more particularly on the students, who for the majority have never experienced the fact of being recorded.

It is a well known fact that most peoples’ behavioural and verbal performance becomes affected by the very fact of having to speak directly into a microphone or simply being aware that one is being recorded. Recording effects may consist of abrupt interruptions of speech, excessive politeness or on the contrary aggressiveness, lack of fluency, or exaggerated articulation.

Another characteristic which may affect the interpretation of the data is the familiarity of the author with the context under study. In fact, the author has been teaching in this university for nearly 20 years and as such is familiar with both this educational environment and the teaching practices prevailing in it. This may, of course, be advantageous in respect of having enough information related to the conversation class there. However, what might be gained by familiarity with the context may be counter-balanced by the fact that there is the risk of being subjective in the process of interpreting

\[\text{124}\] Although in other respects the familiarity of the researcher with the context under investigation may constitute an advantage.
the data. It may be argued that data evaluation or analysis always includes a margin of subjectivity (at least as far as human sciences are concerned) on the part of the investigator. Nevertheless, levels of objectivity may be lowered when the data interpreter is very familiar with his field of study, as it may be difficult in this case to keep a detached, outsider look or attitude towards what is being observed.
1- A close look at the “oral expression” class activities

In the classrooms that have been observed, the author has recorded samples of oral communication work. Of course such short term data is certainly not representative of all that goes on in DLU English oral classes. A more longitudinal study would have probably offered a more extensive and comprehensive corpus of data thus allowing a better evaluation of such classes. Still, it is hoped that the information that has been gathered will be significant enough to enable us to visualize what generally takes place in the oral communication class of DLU English department.

Most observed classes were frontal with the students sitting in rows facing the teacher. In some classes though, (04) students were sitting in a big circle or in small groups of 05 to 08 students. The classrooms spacial arrangement was obviously organised according to the activities student were engaged in. Thus the activity type vs seating arrangement was generally as follows:

- Frontal (with small groups of students sitting at the front) : for “exposés”, i.e oral reports
- One big circle: class debates
- Small circles: role plays work, or preparation of exposés
- Rows of dual desks: for pair work such as dialogues

It was noted that in these classes English remain the dominant language of communication between teacher and students. Algerian dialect was sometimes used mainly among learners in group and pair work. As for classical Arabic, it has been used occasionally to cite verses of the Coran or to ask for an equivalent word in English, i.e as a “seeking help” strategy. French was also occasionally used as a communication strategy when the corresponding vocabulary was unknown in English.

What is worth noting is that although Algerian Arabic, classical Arabic and French are not banned from the classroom, English remains by far the medium of communication between all the members of the oral class. Yet, it was noticed that as soon as the class was over, students and even teachers
would switch to Algerian Arabic (and to a lesser extent to French) which are the two languages used naturally by most Algerian people for daily communication. This is probably why as students and their teachers share the same L1 and L2 they find it more natural and certainly easier to speak in either one.

From a first look at the turn distribution system in most oral activities clearly reveals that it is the teacher who takes most speaking turns. There is indisputably an unequal share of participation rights between teacher and learners. Although to the question: “is it you or the students who do the most of the talking in the oral class?” 68% of the teachers answered that it was the students as the above chart shows:

![Chart showing teacher and student participation](chart.png)

**Students’ and teachers’ share of talking in the oral class**

The teacher does not only do most of the talking, but also take the longest turns. He also almost automatically takes every other turn. In short, teachers’ roles are different from those of students both in terms of quality and quantity and length of turns. This very fact obviously suggests that it is the teacher who has influence over directing and shaping the communication. The finding related to the above question is in accordance with that of the
next question addressed to students: “Do you have enough opportunities to speak in the class?” The following chart illustrates their answer.

![Pie chart showing students' appreciation about speaking opportunities in class]

**Students’ appreciation about speaking opportunities in class**

The transcripts of the observed classes show that the prevailing type of oral activities involve the whole class whereby the students (and most of the time a few of them) engage in one single activity. This diagram shows the type of activities used in the observed classes as well as their frequency:
Classroom activities in DLU oral classes

While some get actively involved and participate to the class discussion or debate, many keep silent and simply listen to what is being said constituting in this way” the audience of the oral class”. The data also that activities involving small groups or pairs of students are less frequently used.

The following table illustrates classroom activity type as well as their occurrences in the observed classes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF ACTIVITY</th>
<th>OCCURRENCE IN THE DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reports(exposés)</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class debates</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role plays</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogues</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language games</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activities in the observed classes
1-1- **Reports (exposés)**

A quite frequently used activity which is referred to as “the exposé” by teachers and learners consists of a small group of students choosing a theme and working on it in the classroom. The preparation stage which is done orally consists of gathering information on the subject from books, magazines (which may be written in English, French and mainly classical Arabic) and discussing the ideas. Following that, learners write a report that they will “expose” to the whole classes. It is worth noting that it is quite usual that the report is read rather than discussed; at the end few students as well as the teacher often ask questions to the students who have presented their exposé.

It is important to explain here that most of the time learners need to work outside the classroom (in the university library for example) to complete their “research” on the selected topic. In such a case any negotiation they might do far from the teacher is most probably done in either L1 and/or L2. The other predicament is that the students have usually discussed their topic so extensively, decided who was going to say what and when, written all the necessary details about it that they end up learning every single word by heart: at the end, when they come to the classes, they start rehearsing rather than speaking spontaneously! Several features or characteristics of students’ performance in such activities seem to strengthen the idea above:

- The language used is that of a writing medium: long and complete sentences, grammaticality. Example from transcripts which obviously suggest that S. was trying to recite complete sentences he has learned by heart.

- Turns are very long and can easily be identified with the sections of an outline of a written work.

- There are no instances of overlap, and no interruptions which clearly show that the turn distribution was decided beforehand. It was evident that each student knew in advance when and where his/her turn would start and finish.
The talk of most students lack fillers and gambits such as well, I see, hmm, etc which are so frequent in natural communication.

The following is an extract from a report of a planned activity in which two students chose a “for and against” topic, and took each one a position to defend. When they finished, discussing the ideas and writing them down, they presented the report to the class:

**S1:** today the internet is one of the most powerful tools through the world+ I think that the children who euh use the internet can get in touch with their friends and can get to know a lot of people+ + In the internet+ they can make their work and research easier because the students are among the top people who use it for research++ on the internet+ people can acquire files+ films+ hobbies+ music and more can be found+ and another popular thing to do on the net is to check out the news+ because it is easy and fact source pos information+ + when people need to make shopping+ they can do without leaving their homes and save time

**S2:** Nowadays+ I think that the children who use the internet had become a big concern and euh the most parents do not realize that the internet is a danger+ + when children are on line+ they can easily be(...).something dangerous+ when children talk to others on line + they do_ not realize + they could actually be talking to a harmful person+ + the use of the internet is euh harmful to your eyesight and spine+ and children spend too much time in front of instead to it+viruses can destroy your computer.

What may be said about these exposes (or more precisely, about the way they are undertaken) is that although they are largely considered as spoken discourse, they nonetheless offer limited chances for interactive communication in the DLU English classroom. Students here do not use in a spontaneous, creative manner as they would normally do in their mother tongues; but rather manipulate it in a planned, artificial way: most of all, these students do not negotiate meaning to achieve understanding necessary
for interactive exchange\textsuperscript{125}. Finally, extensive oral production of this sort may undoubtedly lead learners to develop skills in producing lengthy formal prepared oral discourse, but will certainly not prepare them for immediate, unplanned communication.

1-2- **Class debates**

The seating organisation of most observed class debates is either a circle or a U-shape with the teacher either sitting inside the group or kept his place at his own desk.

Class debates are activities in which all the members of the class are supposed to take part to a discussion around a topic either proposed by the teacher or chosen by the students themselves. Class debates are frequently related to stereotyped and roemote subjects that have accompanied students in their high school experiences, and that are not necessarily of concern to all of them: example of such topics are juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, emigration, divorce. Yet, teachers’ questionnaire reveals that it is most frequently the students who propose “the topic of the day”.

![Pie chart showing students and teachers proposing the topics of debates](chart.png)

**Students and teachers proposing the topics of debates**

\textsuperscript{125} Which without doubt is needed in certain formal communicative contexts, and as such are by no means devaluated.
In the classes we have attended for observation, the debates were around these subjects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC OF THE DEBATE</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;ST&lt;/sup&gt; YEAR</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;ST&lt;/sup&gt; YEAR</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;ND&lt;/sup&gt; YEAR</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;ND&lt;/sup&gt; YEAR</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;RD&lt;/sup&gt; YEAR</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;RD&lt;/sup&gt; YEAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROPOSED BY TEACHER</td>
<td>Mixed marriages</td>
<td></td>
<td>Travelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPOSED BY STUDENTS</td>
<td>Unemployment in Algeria</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>Overpopulation</td>
<td>Women and work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A close look at the transcripts related to this activity suggest that the latter usually involves the teacher, few students who have something to say about the subject of the day or simply the most daring ones. Many students just kept silent<sup>126</sup>, listening to the others. Yet looking at students' faces and general behaviour, it clearly appeared that some of them were really “outside the debate” and showed signs of boredom and this in itself is one of the limitations or difficulties with class debates. Although they are initially meant to get all the students participate actively, they in fact manage to give a chance to a limited number of students to speak: the most competent and fluent in the TL and the extrovert ones. Unfortunately, the majority of students in most foreign language classes (such as DLU ones) are far from being so confident.

<sup>126</sup> Almost during all the session which lasts around an hour.
A further difficulty noticed in class debates is that some of them may reach such a “heated stage”\textsuperscript{127}, some students get passionate and the most emotional ones tend to get deeply involved thus monopolizing the discussion.

Following what has been observed and reported concerning class debates and the way they are run in DLU English department clearly indicate that such activities are highly uncontrolled in character; but may have a potential in allowing learners communicate in unstructured situations. Also compared to reports or exposés, class debates appeared –at least in our data- to generate more cooperation and genuine interaction among participants. Having said this, it may be worth stressing that not all debates may involve learners, and in fact some of them hardly resembled natural interaction. A major differentiating feature between the two situations seem to be the ‘topic of the day’: it seems quite reasonable to assume that a bigger number of students take part in class debates when they are interested by the subject, and consequently tend to naturally use a more conversational type of English with all the features of spoken discourse such as in the following extracts from DLU class debates.

\textsuperscript{127} As happened between some male and female students in the debate around “should women go out to work or should they stay at home?” for example.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expansion</strong></td>
<td>S2: he became tired+ very tired euh + he could not do anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repetition</strong></td>
<td>S1: we can see that she + euh we can see that she became pregnant++ she may be euh + euh she maybe slept with a man for one night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readjustment</strong></td>
<td>S6: yes that was when my father was +euh unemployed + euh when he was retired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Comprehension check** | S4: health?  
S2: health yes health |
| **Self/other repair** | S1: To use the mobile phone is more easier  
T : easier  
S1: more easier+ the mobile is easier |
| **Disagreement**  | S2: No no + I’m sorry I don’t think it’s euh a good idea to let children take decisions++ because they euh they’re still young |
| **Agreement**     | S11: Yes Miss me too euh I think euh also that euh+ women should never stop working+ yes she’s right+ I will always take a job |
| **Providing feedback** | S9: I don’t believe in witchcraft I can’t  
S8: but there are some people who do it  
S9: yes I know but euh it’s not my point of view  
S8: I understand |
| **Gambits**       | S18: I don’t know I’m always late  
S3: because you don’t do your best (laugh)  
S18: No euh it’s not my fault  
S3: I know I know (laugh)+ I’m just joking |
1-3- **Role plays**

A role play as its name indicates consists of putting students in imaginary situations and asking them to take on the roles that fit the situation(s) of their play and perform them. The theme and context of the role plays may be suggested by the teacher as they may be the students’ pure products of imagination or inspiration from real life social events, historical events, literary masterpieces, etc. In DLU all the role plays that have been observed were chosen by the students who formed small groups which sizes were determined by the number of characters needed for the role play. Yet surprisingly enough the questionnaire revealed that when it came to the roles distribution, it was the teacher who most of the time decided who was going to take which role as the following shows:

![The distribution of roles in role plays](image)
Once they decided and agreed on the theme and context of their play, students started preparing the script of their work. The teacher kept moving from one group to the other to provide help and advice and also to correct the parts of the script as it progressed. After a few weeks (which included between 10 to12 sessions one and half an hour each), students were called upon to perform (play or act) in front of the teacher and the rest of the classmates. It was noted that students were rehearsing what they had previously written in their scripts, but without using the papers. They have worked and repeated their plays so extensively that they ended up knowing them by heart. Most of them looked confident and happy to show the result of several sessions of work.

What was noted is that some role plays were based on an Algerian social context with Algerian realities, situations and problems; and others were based on a British context with the characters holding foreign names and dealing with foreign social realities. The following extracts are examples of the two situations.

A- **Role play based on an Algerian context:**

(Imène is talking on the phone, suddenly she heard someone coming and hang up)

*Imène*: *You have frighten me+ I thought you were Mum*

*Nadia*: *Why were you afraid? ++ What were you doing?*

*Imène*: *Look+++I’m going to tell you + a secret*

*Nadia*: *I don’t have to tell it to Mum+ right?*

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128 At this stage, the writing skill became important and was practiced along the oral preparation of the role play.
Imène: That’s why we call this a secret++you don’t have to + to tell it to anyone +or anybody++++It was Nabil on the phone++that’s why + i+I was afraid+++ I thought you were Mum

Nadia: Nabil? ++ what? +++do you mean our neighbour? + Who gave him your phone number?

Imène: Simply because + because+ he’s my boyfriend

Nadia: Oh that’s why he always staying at the balcony

Imène: not a single word to Mum+ OK?

Nadia: OK+ no problem

(The mother Aicha enter to Imène’s bedroom, she found her daughters laughing).
B- Role play based on a British context

(Inspector Hooker and sergeant Assa are standing at the door of a large house in the southern part of Manchester. It is raining heavily)

**Hooker:** Knock please sergeant

**Assa:** (knoking at the door) Come on++open the door++++Sir I think there’s nobody here

**Hooker:** I don’t know++There’s a car parked there++let me try (they both knock)

**Catherine:** Allright+allright+ I’m coming

**Hooker:** are you Mrs Adams Catherine?

**Catherine:** Yes+ but who are you anyway?

**Hooker:** Police Madam+ here is my card++inspector HOOker+ this is sergeant Assa

**Catherine:** police+what’s the matter?

**Assa:** Madam+ can we enter? + + we will not stay much time

**Catherine:** Oh sorry+ come on please++honey+ visitors for us

(They go into the living room where Sylvia is watching television)

The above extracts clearly show that the students vary the contexts as well as situations and themes of their role plays which is interesting in itself as it offers participants chances to practise various registers with the type of English they demand. It is also a rich experience for the audience (those students watching the role play) as they get exposed to a variety of contexts with a wide range of linguistic and cultural input.
Dialogues

As the table above shows, dialogues are mostly used with the first year students as a means to show them how to use the foreign language as a social tool. Also they are mostly guided as the teacher provides both the vocabulary and idiomatic expressions on the basis of which learners (usually in pairs) will later construct and perform their dialogues.

It was noticeable that there was little creativity on the part of the students and the outcome of their work was quite similar with minor modifications or additions. Besides, students performed them by taking the roles of A and B simply. They might not even have an idea of who was supposed to speak to whom in the dialogue they were asked to build and in which context, under what circumstances, etc. The following extract is a typical dialogue produced by students after the teacher has given examples of the use of certain conversational expressions:

*Teacher:* OK++ you two + can you start please?

*S1:* It's time we're off

*S2:* So soon? ++ Shall you stay a little bit longer?

*S1:* I wish I could But +euh+ I am late already

*S2:* Oh + it’s a shame+ what a shame

*S1:* Thanks very much for your+ euh+for the party

*S2:* I’m pleased you enjoyed it

*Teacher:* Ok+ that was good+ next+ who would like to try?
Obviously (and as their teacher reacted) these two students have learned their dialogue well, they knew the expressions and how to use them. Yet, what they did not necessarily know is that such expressions are most probably related to a formal context, and that there was a certain distance between the interlocutors. A and B are being conventional, polite and rather distant. In short, such dialogues belong to a specific sociocultural context, a fact that students definitely needed to be made aware of.

Finally, it may be safe to state that these dialogues and the way they are managed have a potential to introduce students to a range of structures, vocabulary and expressions, etc but they do not necessarily the opportunity to use them freely according to the contexts they may be appropriate to.
1-5- Games

It seems that games do not have an important place in DLU English department. As the table on activities show, as the table above shows, they are mostly used with the first year students. Games were used only twice in our data. In the first one the students were asked to write the name of one of their classmates on a small piece of paper. After that all the papers were gathered by a student and mixed. One paper was picked up and opened, and the student read the name on it: all students were required to say two predictions about the student personal and professional life. Students seemed to enjoy the activity as some of them made quite unexpected or funny predictions about their friend such as:

S2: I think that in ++10 years Rafik will be + getting married for the second time

S6: I think I’m Sure in 10 years + He will still be ++ he will be looking for a job

S12: For me he will die (laugh) ++ no no Im’ joking + I just think he will live abroad

The second game consisted of the students sitting in a big circle with the teacher and playing “my last letter is your first” game. The teacher started saying a word and asked the student next to her to give a word which starts with the last one in the word she herself has given. Students were designated one after the other in the circle, and the game kept turning in this way:

Teacher: OK + so I’ll start With a Word+then+ Miss...listen to the last letter of my word+ ok? And you strat a your word with it+ OK= Did you understand the principle of the Game?++I give you an example+++For example if I say table+ then e is my last letter+ you for example can say+euh+ euh+education+ Is that right?
S1: yes Madam

S2: Yes

S3: Mrs. can we use proper nouns?

Teacher: No it’s better to use

S2: for example names of countries

Teacher: Ok you can + no problem + but please pay attention to what your neighbour says ++ OK? Shall we start?

S5: yes

S1 yes

Teacher: Right ++ so I say ++ Teacher (laugh) ++ now you?

S1: Euh ++ euh Rain

T: good = rain + yes + next?

S2: n + night

T: Good + Next?

S3: Good? Euh ++ euh +

T: come on quick + let’s do it quickly

S3: euh + doctor
T: yes+ doctor

S4: River

T: Good +quick

S5: River (laugh)

T: (laugh) you’re cheating+ no+ That’s too easy

S5: (laughing) but Mrs it starts with r

T: Ok + I accept

And so on until all the students in the circle gave their words. After that a second “round” was done, but this time with more speed as the teacher insisted on that. Finally, what may be said here is that this game managed to involve all the learners created a relaxed atmosphere and probably made them a moment of communicative work in laughter.

2- Discussion

A close look at the transcripts of the observed classes reveals that the oral expression class at DLU generally fosters little genuine communication processes: it does not provide the students with sufficient opportunities to use English as a tool for exchanging and negotiating meaning. It was generally noted that in such a class learners showed limited cooperative attitude requiring modifications, comprehension checks, and clarification requests. This state of facts may be related to various reasons:
C- Communication is not equally shared among participants, it is the teacher who controls classroom discourse and makes the most important contributions to its processes. In short, it was found that in most classes it was him/her who does most of the talking. This is most probably the consequence of the particular status/role the teacher has in these classes.\textsuperscript{129}

D- The data also indicates that classroom interaction is most directed towards a two way exchange of meaning among students; rather it is directed from teacher to student.

E- This is also influenced by the predominance of whole class activities and enhanced by the frontal seating arrangement of the oral expression class.

F- Finally the limited cooperation attitude is most probably due to the type of activities suggested in the oral class as well as the tasks they are asked to achieve, and this is exactly what Pica argues when she points out that

\begin{quote}
\textit{Opportunities to modify and restructure interaction towards mutual comprehension seldom arise in language classrooms, because a necessary precondition for interactional modification is often lacking in the design and organization of classroom activities.}\textsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

It seems clear therefore that the type of activities undertaken in the class as well as the roles teachers and learners take, all influence the outcome of the oral class experience and determine to a large extent its communicative dimension.

The transcripts further show that the reference to the “foreign culture” is practically absent. Teachers do not make students aware of target cultural insights nor do they try to “influence “them in this sense in choosing debate

\textsuperscript{129} As it is the case in most classes in DLU English department

\textsuperscript{130} Pica, T., ”Second language acquisition, social interaction, and the classroom”, 1987, p11
topics or themes for role plays for example. Thus we may assume that the oral expression class plays a rather limited role in offering an environment where both foreign language and culture relate, and in this sense it fails to incorporate an important parameter into the communication experience of students.

Finally, what has been highlighted above suggest that the oral class, although it might have an interesting potential in triggering target intercultural communication; remains in fact with a small aptitude to help learners attain the advanced levels of fluency in oral communication they need both as general FL students and as future English teachers.

What is at stake at this level, is an attempt to revise the way oral fluency is “taught” at DLU English department together with an adaptation of a more targeted methodology which is most likely to help us—both students and teachers—progress towards this aim. Our task is both clear and pressing: changes need to take place in our classes: new attitudes, ways of doing things and simply a different way of looking at our responsibility as partners in this learning/teaching experience are definitely desired.
CHAPTER SIX

THE ADDITIONAL ORAL CLASS: A FRAMEWORK FOR
EXTENDING STUDENTS’ COMMUNICATIVE ENVIRONMENT
Introduction

The present chapter first attempts to highlight the relevance of oral communication skills for foreign language learners in general and D.L.University students in particular. It has been argued that the latter are learning English in a typical foreign language context where they have very little chance to use it outside the boundaries of their classroom. To the question:”Do you speak English outside the classroom?” the majority of DLU English department answered “No” as the shows:

![Pie chart showing the percentage of students who speak English outside the classroom: 72.80% No, 27.50% Yes.]

Students ‘opportunities to speak English outside the classroom

Opportunities for natural communication are further restricted given the fact that English is taught on a skill division basis\(^{131}\) making “the oral expression class” the major space for communication. In this class, however, little interaction involving meaningful exchange and negotiation generally takes

\(^{131}\) This is the case in both the classical and LMD programs.
place, and as such it has a restricted potential for helping students develop fluency to an advanced level.

To teach the complexities of fluency may seem ambitious, but it is manageable. It is first and foremost about the inculcation of an attitude...It is to think beyond narrow vocational concerns and measures of output in quantifiable givens. It is to bear in mind that the language students of today are the language teachers and professionals of tomorrow, those whom we trust to keep foreign languages alive and well.¹³²

Consequently, what is postulated in this chapter is that a first evolutionary step towards improving the above situation may be to:

1- integrate the different language skills into one single language class

2- Set a supplementary oral class, as an extension of students’ communicative environment, which aim is to enable the development of fluency at an advanced level.

1- The need of DLU students to be fluent

First it may be worth answering first the following question which in fact explains or rather justifies the propositions made in this chapter: To what extent is the development of oral fluency relevant\textsuperscript{133} to D.L.university students?

First of all, we wish to point out that this work is not based on a restricted need-oriented approach. Thus, unlike the case in most ESP research, we believe that it is useful to help learners develop a general oral competence that they will shape according to the context they need to use the TL in. It ensues that the relevance of oral communication skills should relate both to students' future professional requirements, and to their personal and social demands as general, ordinary users of the target language.

As already mentioned (chapt.5, 5-2) the majority of D.L. university learners of English will become English teachers themselves (mainly at high school level). It goes without saying that the ability to communicate fluently in the target language is of paramount importance for such learners as they will not only have to teach pupils to speak, but they will be the only model for them. And as Wilkins simply puts it: a teacher who himself has difficulty in speaking the language he teaches is not going to succeed in giving his pupils a command of the spoken language.\textsuperscript{134}

Due to the special status they hold, most teachers are models for their students, and this is especially true for foreign language teachers in foreign language contexts where the classroom remains the major source of input, and the only highly competent speakers such learners have ever met are their teachers.

\textsuperscript{133} The term 'relevant' here implies the importance of the skill in relation to the communicative needs of a group of learners.

\textsuperscript{134} Wilkins, Op. Cit., 1974, p54
Using English fluently is important for FL learners simply because it will be at the same time a target and a tool or instrument of work: the first thing for example any teacher will probably need to do the very first time he/she steps into his/her classroom as a teacher is greet his pupils, introduce himself, and so on. Such seemingly trivial tasks do require fluent communication capacities.

A language teacher also needs to use the TL fluently because part of his/her work is to socialize with learners: he frequently engages in genuine communication such as asking who is absent, talking about real events, inquiring about exams, etc. This requires the use of language for different social actions, and how can a teacher manage all this if he/she does not use the target language with ease and naturalness?

Another good reason in favour of developing students’ oral fluency is that although the classroom is the major place where they are exposed to the target language; it is by no means the only possible context they may have to communicate in. In other words, we can never know where nor when FL learners may need to use the TL for genuine communication purposes!

Some may often come into contact with speakers of the TL (both natives and non-natives) through travelling abroad, meeting foreigners inside the learners’ own community or simply through contacts via today’s various technological communication means. In this respect it may be worth keeping in mind that we are teaching a generation which is more and more bound to be open to the outside world and in this world English is widely used!

Finally, a quite convincing reason for adding this class is simply the fact that the learners themselves recognise their unsufficient practice time, their communication difficulties and express their desire to get more chances for speaking. To the question:” Would you like to have more time to speak English in the classroom?” they largely answered “Yes” as the chart indicates.
Students’ desire to get more talking time in the classroom

2- Communicative difficulties of DLU students

As a result of the above, most students leave the university with an important deficiency in using English for communication purposes. This is because students in the observed oral classes

Classroom conversation..., is structured in a completely different way from the normal relaxed chat between friends. Both student and teacher, respecting the learning purpose behind talk in the classroom, know the conversational role they should play and structure the conversation accordingly. 135

Consequently, such students may have a fairly good command of the linguistic aspect of English, but when it comes to using this language spontaneously and appropriately as a tool of communication, most students have problems. As Roberts points out …where language as a social tool is concerned advanced learners are in a sense at their most vulnerable 136

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135 Pridham,F.,The Language of Conversation,,2001,p.6

Besides, most students are unable to use English smoothly or fluently, hence their output is generally marked by many instances of hesitations, lengthy pauses and repetitions. In addition, these learners will most probably encounter other problems when communicating with native speakers. In fact most advanced foreign language learners can only understand and use the T.L. within the limits of their classroom. (See chapt.6, 2). In most cases, the only type of English the learners have been exposed to is their teachers' and their fellow students'. As Brown and Yule put it,

_Most foreign learners will not acquire a comfortable ability to listen and understand the foreign language as spoken by native speakers if they only listen to their teacher and classmates and feedback from their own production._137

Such a limitation makes it difficult for them to understand conversational English and thus contribute efficiently to oral communication with native speakers. Most of such difficulties lie in the fact that students fail to recognize and understand unstressed words and contracted forms, which are frequent in everyday casual English. They also often complain about the speed of native speakers' speech as they only been used to their teachers' slow, clear and fully pronounced linguistic forms.

Finally, foreign students..._seem to process spoken discourse sentence-by- sentence or even phrase-by- phrase and have difficulty relating one sentence to another and to the discourse as a whole._138. This makes it difficult for them to keep up with the pace of natural, spontaneous communication.

It has been argued so far that the development of oral fluency in communication at D.L.U is neglected as a reflection of the latter's traditional approach to English teaching. The first step towards improving this situation is to realize and admit that language teaching is subject to change, and thus requires reassessment and implementation.

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138 D., Godfrey, “Listening instruction and practice for advanced second language students”, 1979, p.110
3- Impediments around the development of oral fluency in DLU English department

As in many other language departments of developing countries, the teaching of English in D.L. is undertaken in somehow unfavourable conditions. What follows however, is mainly an account of those problems that are believed to influence in one way or another development of oral fluency in communication.

1- Most teaching in the English department is lecture or seminar oriented whereby the teacher provides information while students listen and take notes. Such practice restricts learner's opportunities to communicate in their classroom.

2- Language is neatly divided into isolated skills and taught accordingly. This probably makes students see such skills as separate, independent curriculum subjects rather than different aspects of the same communication system.

3- Teachers rely heavily on their intuition and feel in teaching and testing oral communication competence. This mainly because they have not been trained to teach it. As Ur, P. put it …if communication practice is one of the most important components of the language learning/teaching process; it is also one of the most problematical.\(^{139}\) Many teachers do not know what to include or what to give priority to in their oral classes: should they focus on language correctness (in terms of grammar)? Should they rather teach how to use language appropriately (in terms of sociocultural rules of use)? What place should they to fluency? Intonation? Pronunciation? Naturalness? Accent?

4- Most classrooms are organized in a traditional way whereby students sit in rows facing the teacher with all the implications this has on the natural aspect of oral interaction.

\(^{139}\) P. Ur, *Teaching Listening Comprehension*, 1984, p. 2
5- Within the same group students may have varying communicative abilities in the TL.

6- There is a lack of teaching material, and it is generally recognized that even a motivated, qualified teacher cannot do without some material.

7- A final difficulty inherent to the 'teaching' of oral communication is that there seems to be a belief that compared to other skills; the latter is easier to teach. Also it may be assumed that if a teacher has a good command of the target language, he can 'teach' others how to speak it.

If oral communication is the goal of foreign language teaching, these problems should seven not be regarded as insurmountable obstacles. If a positive attitude is taken instead, the above problems will become challenging issues as chapter (5) attempts to show.

3-1- The need of university language departments to update their pedagogy

Foreign language teaching is a dynamic process that responds to a continuous evolution of theories about the nature of language knowledge and education. During the last few decades for example, research in foreign language pedagogy has shifted from structural to communicative approaches to language teaching/learning. Behind the structural-formal approach is the belief that learning a language means learning its grammatical rules and structures. This view has been widely criticized, and researchers started to become increasingly interested in language in use. Accordingly, language learning/teaching started to be considered not only in linguistic terms, but in terms of socio-cultural rules of use as well. This gave birth to the communicative approach.

The evolutionary character of language education suggests that in order to offer effective teaching, university language departments need to revise their programmes and methodology, and adapt them to current related research. Thus evolution in the field of foreign language education cannot take place in a vacuum. It has to be based...
on an understanding of basic issues as the nature of language knowledge and the 
process of foreign language learning.

3-2- Language skills integrated

Skills are generally interrelated in everyday communication: we thus usually listen 
and speak, speak and write or listen and write. One step towards developing oral 
communication in the context of D.L. University is to integrate the language skills 
into one major language component, and to teach it as such. Recent research in 
foreign language teaching suggests the need of an integrated model of language 
instruction. Listening, speaking, writing and reading should be taught 
simultaneously as different, but interrelated tools of communication.

In favour of bringing the language skills into one integrated course, Xiaoju 
explains that her Chinese students

...are supposed not only to use and develop all the four skills-...but also 
constantly to combine and integrate them in use, and therefore to develop not 
four separate skills, but rather composite skills involving sometimes two or 
more of the conventional four skills."\(^{140}\)

The teaching of language in the classroom should therefore, reflect this interrelation. 
Byrne\(^ {141}\) already suggested three main reasons to integrate skills in language 
teaching:

1- Integrating skills enables learners to use rather than simply practise the language.

2- Different skills are required simultaneously in many group work activities.

3- Learners seem to benefit or learn better from activities requiring the use of more 
than one skill.

\(^{140}\) L., Xiaoju,"In defence of the communicative approach",1995,p.66

\(^{141}\) Byrne, Op. Cit., 1976
These arguments clearly urge us to change our attitudes towards language as well as our teaching procedures. Students at D.L. University should experience the target language as a whole, incorporated in one class the aim of which is to help them build up an overall communicative competence. In such framework they will hopefully use the language they are learning in a meaningful and purposeful way, and in this way the skills required for oral communication, namely listening and speaking will develop more naturally.

The following diagram illustrates an integrated approach to FL learning/teaching and its impact on the enhancement of communicative competence:

**Present divided language teaching**

In a communicative language classroom that integrates various skills, learners may develop further, and to a more natural way, their oral fluency in communication. Nevertheless, having said that, we believe that if the need arises in a given educational context to develop a specific skill to an advanced level; a class devoted to it may be required.
4- **The additional oral class: an extention of learners’ environment**

There is no doubt that oral communication skills have a place in the general language class. A great deal of oral exchange and work is done by teachers and learners alike in the classroom, and as such the latter is therefore as much concerned with the teaching of oral skills as it is with other areas of communicative competence such as the linguistic one. In this sense the development of oral communication competence is not meant to be confined to the additional oral class suggested here. Rather, the organization of the latter emerges out of recognizing a problem and attempting to improve a situation.

As mentioned earlier, and like many foreign language learners in various contexts, D.L. university students generally face difficulty when it comes to use the TL for spontaneous, natural and fluent communication. Because of its multidimensional concern, i.e. concern with different areas of competence, the language classroom may fail to assist the learner with whatever he needs to attain an advanced level of fluency. This is again why it may not be sufficient in itself for the fulfillment of this task. Talking about the maximizing students’ potential of the foreign language experience, Klippel, F. rightly claims that

> since foreign language teaching should help students achieve some kind of communicative skill in the foreign language, all situations in which real communication occurs naturally have to be taken advantage of and many more suitable ones have to be created.\(^{142}\)

To sum up the above argument, it may be claimed that one possible way of enabling D.L. university students to attain the standards of communication fluency they will most probably need for their future professional requirements as well as possible social contacts; is to set for them an extra class which focuses precisely on this aspect of the target language.

\(^{142}\) F., Klippel, *Talking: Communicative Fluency Activities for Language Teaching*, 2002, p.4
The following may illustrate the idea:

### Development of a general communicative competence

Oral communication classroom

#### Integrated language classroom

The extent of FL learners’ environment

The additional oral class, we believe, is fundamental in foreign language contexts especially. Reaching high standards of oral fluency is a lengthy process that requires continual exposure to the TL communication as well as practice. And although this additional class can by no means pretend to substitute for the genuine outside world of the TL, nor can it replace the culturally rich and varied TL natural environment, it still has a potential for extending students’ restricted communication situation.

#### 4-1- The chief aspiration of the additional class

Unlike the general language classroom which provides practice in the different language skills, the oral one focusses mainly on speaking. The major concern of the oral communication class in the context of D.L. University is to develop students’ fluency in English. This may be achieved through providing them with opportunities to communicate informally in the target language in a relaxed social atmosphere. By engaging students in different purposeful communication tasks, they may gradually move from simply correct language use to the not less important fluent one.

The extra oral communication classroom may also be the place where students can develop social skills related to foreign language use. In other words, students may
gradually be made aware of how to use the target language in appropriate sociocultural terms. The role of the oral communication, class in this sense is- in addition to improve fluency – to provide students with social and cultural insights that ensure appropriate language.

Finally, this additional oral class may be a place where specialised language use may be triggered. It has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that the majority of D.L. university English department students will become language teachers themselves. These future teachers will naturally need, beside the ability to use English fluently as a social tool of communication, the ability to use the special language of teaching, or pedagogical language (see teacher talk).

If the extra oral communication class concentrates on the aspects discussed above, it may contribute to solving D.L. university students major and most common language weakness, namely their limited fluency in oral communication which they themselves concede. Asked “Do you have difficulties communicating in English?” they largely proved a negative answer as the chart shows.

Students’ appreciation of their communication difficulties
Furthermore, the additional oral class may help students foster the most advanced and specialised language use that the university is supposed to supply.

Although the principal concern of the oral communication class is to teach students to speak the target language, it does contribute in improving their overall communicative competence to a higher level. The major aim of this class is to enable the learner to express himself in the target language. By attempting to put across meaning, learners need to make use of all their communicative resources as well as acquire new ones for which the communicative need emerges. In other words, the communicative task puts demands on the language user: in order to transmit his/her message, he/she not only has to use and activate his already acquired resources, but also builds up new ones because of the immediate need to communicate. In this sense the oral communication class contribution to the enhancement of communicative competence consists of activating the latent competence of learners, and raising it to a higher level, or enlarging it by making them need to acquire new additional competence.

It may be worth noting at this stage that further development is not to be associated to linguistic knowledge only. It also occurs at the sociolinguistic and strategic level depending on immediate requirement of the language user. Also, this growth is not the result of formal teaching and practice; rather it is incidental and emerges out of a genuine communicative necessity. Thus new sociocultural, semantic, strategic, syntactic means for example, are acquired because of students’ anxiety to say or understand something. This in itself may make new forms more easily acquired than the ones taught formally. In a sense, the motivation and route through which something is learnt is important and determines the extent to which that thing is learnt. And it is on the basis of this principle that the oral communication class is believed to help and contribute to the improvement of students’ communicative competence.

Oral fluency also has a place in the oral communication class which has a real potential for triggering such a skill. Through frequent and continuous use, the oral communication class is meant to offer learners further exposure and extended opportunities for interaction. When attempting to express an idea, a view, make a comment, suggest a solution to a given problem; learners are concerned with putting
across the force of their meaning no matter what communicative resources they bring into play.

When students feel that their contribution is acknowledged and welcomed as long as it makes sense, they start worrying less i.e. concern with different areas of competence; about the formal side of language, hence moving gradually towards spontaneous fluent language use. It is therefore, the necessity to communicate something through the target language, in a non-judgemental environment, that affects the increase of fluency. The oral communication class also encourages learners to negotiate meaning in order to attain better understanding and reach agreement. Such a process helps them develop further fluency.

This chapter suggests that rising D.L. university students’ oral fluency in English to an advanced level is significant both in relation to their general future professional aspirations, and in relation to their social communicative needs as ordinary foreign language learners. The chief interest of this chapter so far has been to set a methodological framework for the enhancement of students’ oral fluency in English. This consists of integrating the different language skills and teaching them in a general language skill, and setting an additional one concerned principally with improving D.L. university students’ oral fluency in English. On the basis of the argument above, the following section of the present chapter will look at this class in terms of its underlying methodological principles and practices. It will take us inside this classroom in order to describe what it may look like as well as what may take place in it and in what way.
Rising levels of oral fluency: methodological principles and communication tasks

So far a methodological layout for improving D.L. university students’ oral fluency in English has been set. This consists of including an additional oral communication class in the curriculum. What follows attempts to present some methodological principles underlying this class. It also asserted that in order to allow the improvement of oral fluency, the oral communication class ought to be concerned with the provision of effective communication tasks. Accordingly some of their characteristics and design criteria are proposed.

Some practical steps for designing communication tasks for D.L. university English students are examined and exemplified following this. Finally, the last section of the chapter discusses the adoption and use of these tasks in terms of actual classroom procedures.

Methodology in foreign language teaching consists of the mid-way process that makes the link between research in applied linguistics and classroom practice. Put simply; methodology is the necessary meeting point between theory and practice. It follows from this that what goes on in the foreign language classroom in terms of tasks and activities should reflect methodological principles derived from research in applied linguistics. This relation may thus be represented as follows:

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Research in Applied Linguistics  Methodological Principles  Classroom Practice
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The place of methodology in foreign language education

It follows from the above that foreign language methodology ought to be based on explicit theories and conceptions about the nature of language as well as the process of language learning. Consequently, if the oral communication class is to be efficient, it has to be based on sound and explicit methodological principles.
What follows is meant to present some methodological principles underlying the additional oral class. It is hoped they will provide a layout of how communication might be woven in among learners and teachers.

5-1-  **The additional oral class belongs to students**

More than any other class, this typical extra class is the students’ class, it belongs to them, and it is a space that is created for them. It is meant to give them, not their teachers, extended exposure to target language use, and further opportunities for practice. Yet, it is no secret that teachers are generally characterized as controlling most of what is said and done in classrooms. Part of this control comes from the special status of teachers...In second language classrooms, the teachers’ status may be even more elevated, in that the teacher is the only native, or near-native, speaker of the language and therefore is seen as an invaluable source for second language students.143

In this class it is students who are expected to participate most and do most of the communicative work. The basic rule underneath this class is freedom to do what students want to do via the target language, things they enjoy and would have as well done in their native language. In the same line of thought, Byrne, D. addresses the teacher in the following:

...you can do in the classroom most of the things that people normally do with language in the real world. And don’t forget: you may be the only person who can do this the students. You may be their only contact with the living language.144 (His emphasis)

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144 D., Byrne, Techniques for Classroom Interaction, 1992
It is important that the learner gets a strong feeling that once he steps into this extra class, it becomes possible for him to undertake the activity of his choice, with the partners of his choice and at the pace which suits him.

Although this class is by no means compulsory, students are highly encouraged to attend it as frequently as they can. In order to allow them to organize their time, we may imagine that this class is allocated a schedule that may be displayed on the door. In this way, learners are free to decide when to go to their extra class and for how long.

5-2- **The additional oral class takes individual differences into account**

Within the same language environment, some learners acquire a target language better and faster than others. Students thus frequently show different mastery levels of the target language skills. Some are good at writing, but have difficulties to communicate orally in the foreign language. Some understand a good deal of messages they receive, but are unable to respond to them, etc. This is because some individual characteristics affect the learner in his/her process of developing this target language. The extra oral class which is based on learners’ initiative and autonomy, and in which the teacher is supposed to develop privileged relationships with the students, may be the place where individual learners’ differences have a chance to be handled. Among these influential features that affect the outcome of a learner’s experience with the target language we may state:

- **Personality:** Although the term 'personality' is not usually defined in a precise way, people often can refer to 'x' as being introvert / extrovert, authoritarian / submissive, charming / dull, etc… Personality may be defined as a set of traits characteristic of a particular individual.

- **Self-confidence:** It is believed that self confidence is highly linked with foreign language development. A self confident, secure person is very likely to be successful in second language achievement. Self confidence is associated with anxiety and extroversion.
Self confident people have the advantage of not fearing rejection as much as those with a high level of anxiety – they are therefore, more likely to put themselves in learning situations.

- **Age:** It is the variable that has been most frequently taken into account in discussions of individual differences as being an important influential parameter. Age in relation to foreign language development has been studied both in terms of rate and route of development. Rate relates to the "speed" with which L2 is learned compared to the length of study. In other words, the rate at which a given language is learnt refers to how fast a learner has developed language skills in a given amount of time. Route on the other hand, is concerned with the process through which L2 is learned. Language learners are usually found to use different processes to learn the target language, and this is largely determined by their individual differences.

- **Motivation:** Research in psycholinguistics and psychology has frequently demonstrated that learners who are motivated to learn a second or foreign language are likely to achieve a higher proficiency level in it than those with a lower degree of motivation. Motivation which may be defined as an internal drive towards achieving success is believed to be one of the most influential factors for the success or failure in SL / FL development.

There are in fact two types of motivation namely, integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation is the one that makes the learner seeks further opportunities of learning by putting most efforts in this task. It is a deep desire to succeed for one's own satisfaction. Instrumental motivation on the other hand, is the result of wanting to learn something in order to attain another objective which goes beyond that thing itself. A target language can be learnt by student A because he likes this language and is interested in it, whereas student B may need to learn this same language simply because he needs it for career purposes. It may be worth noting that integrative motivation is believed to be a stronger and longer lasting drive than instrumental motivation.
Differences in language environments: Learners who are exposed to a wide range of input, both in terms of quality and quantity, have proved to better performers in L2 and L3 than those who have limited input. The more exposure the learner has in the TL the better and faster he will develop further capacities. (See Krashen’s input theory). The communicative environment is therefore, an important factor in the development of a given language, and consequently for the enhancement of oral fluency in this language.

It is, of course, unrealistic to assert that the extra oral class may handle all such differences that are frequently found among learners, it rather may be able to direct its attention towards the various potentials and needs of different individual learners by involving them in different activities and tasks.

5-3- **The additional oral class requires a tutor with a flexible personality**

One of the difficulties and at the same time challenges of the teaching profession is the fact of recognising that **behind the teacher there is a person**. M., Jacquemart(2005) explains,

> Les enseignants de langue ne constituent pas un groupe plus homogène que n’importe quel autre groupe disciplinaire. Les qualités de chacun se révèlent devant la classe, indépendamment de la matière enseignée.

In the additional oral class there is at least one teacher to assist students in any possible way. He is the competent interlocutor who is always ready to provide the type of help or advice needed from him. In a sense he is best regarded in this class as a member of the group, a participant but definitely not a dominant figure. He may be required to structure tasks for students, and set them, but once these are in process, he should let them work according to their pace and preferred styles. In a way, the teacher’s involvement reduces as communication between learners flows.

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146 The concept of task is discussed in more detail (chapt.3,3-1,3-2)
In this special context, the teacher who may best be seen as a tutor or coach has no predetermined, specific role. In fact, it is the students who assign the different roles that this “teacher” will have to play depending on their immediate requirements. To put it differently, it is what the learners decide to do and how they do it that is going to dictate the task of this tutor.

On this basis, the teacher’s role may change from one class (session) to another and may even keep changing within the same session with different learners. It is also possible to envisage that at times the teacher may not be needed at all, and is “invited” to withdraw and adopt a “passive” role. As early as 1968 Rivers already reminded us that the oral communication … course must evolve in accordance with the interests and initiative of the students. This requires a flexible teacher who becomes in reality another member of the group- ready to help when needed, but willing to stand aside and let the ideas of the students blossom and mature.147

For the sake of allowing students to make the most of this non-traditional class, the tutor has to play the game by accepting the place given to him. This can only be possible with teachers who have a certain type of personality. These are teachers (persons) who possess certain traits of character such open mindedness, flexibility, adaptability, and extroversion.

5-4. The additional class is a space for English use

In choosing to step into the extra oral class, the students accept the overt agreement or condition that English is the language to be used there. They commit themselves to do whatever they want to do in English, and starting from the premise that necessity is the mother of invention; they will need to use whatever communication strategies they have ( or develop new ones) as they are forced to communicate in the target language.

147 W. RiversOp.Cit. 1968,p.244 (her emphasis)
By making the target language the exclusive medium of communication in the extra class, teachers in DLU should be aware that this may sound artificial to many learners who are used to switching from one language to another (from L1 to L2 or L3)\(^{148}\). However, with time this phenomenon is most likely to decrease and learners may find it quite natural to say what they need to say in English. This in itself may help the latter gain more confidence in their individual capacities in using the target language as an additional means of communication.

The teachers’ attitude and the arguments they may use to convince their learners also may help in making the target language THE language of the extra oral class: by reminding students that one way of speaking better English is to practise speaking; or that the more they speak, the more fluent they will become, etc may facilitate the “adoption” of the foreign language in the extra oral class.

5-5- **The additional class requires a non-threatening atmosphere**

If we want students to express themselves naturally, free from any inhibition, we should make them feel at ease in the extra class. This is because a stressful non-supportive environment is most likely to affect the outcome of communication both in terms of quantity and quality.

In most traditional frontal foreign language classrooms, having to communicate in front of a large audience in a language which is not one’s, is often a highly demanding endavour for many learners. Some –if not all- may feel very uncomfortable and anxious struggling with foreign words and structures to express their thoughts. They may also be so concentrated on the form of their message for fear of making mistakes that they end up sounding “artificial” and thus may become embarassed if not frustrated.

Teacher’s attitude is another factor that highly affects classroom communication. Learners engage more readily in communication with a cooperative, amicable teacher than with a dominant, authoritarian one.

\(^{148}\) Which coprresponds in our case to Algerian Arabic, French and English
More than any other one, it is important that the additional communication class offers a friendly relaxed atmosphere. This may be attained when both the teacher and the students take a tolerant, non-judgemental attitude towards each other. Richards, R.J. asserts that *successful classroom communication and learning is contingent upon the social relationships that are established between teachers and students*.

In short, the classroom can become a friendly space for communication if there is a shared feeling of trust and respect of each one’s opinions and feelings.

A negative classroom atmosphere with high levels of stress and anxiety also affects the nature of communication as mentioned earlier. This may be manifested in students’ performance as an increased level of non-fluency, inaccuracy and sometimes even stuttering (mainly with highly emotional or low self-esteem learners). This is because the performance of any activity, as it is well acknowledged in behavioural psychology; suffers when it is undertaken under stressful conditions.

Following the arguments above, we may rightly assert that, if due to psychological constraints learners engage less frequently in classroom communication, their chances for practice become reduced. This in itself, i.e. limited practice, affects the overall development of their oral fluency in communication since practice is a crucial parameter for the enhancement of this ability.

The logical conclusion of the above state of affairs is that emotional states such as anxiety, nervousness or frustration are likely to be –at least – reduced in a non-judgemental, friendly oral communication classroom atmosphere. Students are certainly less subject to such feelings when feeling at ease with each other as well as with their teacher. Being free from such inhibiting states, we may reasonably assume that learners will not only enjoy communicating in the additional class we have described, but they will be ready to take risks in interaction and gradually increase their fluency in communication.

\[149\text{R.J., Richards, op.cit., 1998, p.139}\]

\[150\text{Risk taking is a positive attitude in any learning endavour}\]
5-6- **The additional class fosters natural interaction**

A major concern of this class is to allow students move gradually from guided verbal exchange to the more spontaneous unplanned interaction that is found outside classroom boundaries. For the sake of fostering creative language use, the extra oral class welcomes all initiatives from learners. Any activity can be undertaken as long as it is freely imagined by them and as long as it gives them the chance to communicate genuinely in English, that is to say as freely and naturally as they would do it in their native language.

By pushing the learner to move progressively towards autonomy in interaction, the additional oral class aims at putting him in situations where he will have to cope with meaningful exchange of information and views.

It is through negotiating meaning that interlocutors end up reaching an agreement. It is such communicative “imperatives” that compel students to exploit all their communicative potential and strategies in order to understand each other and make themselves understood. By making the student rely on his own communicative capacities and exploiting them to the maximum, the tutor may enable him gradually engage in natural, autonomous interaction exchanges in the foreign language.

5-7- **The additional class promotes fluent language use**

A chief preoccupation of the additional oral class is to constantly make students direct their attention to meaning since it is this the route towards fluency: it is when the emphasis is on the sense we want to make that we are most likely to use language fluently. The less we “monitor” our speech, the more fluent it sounds.

What is important is the ability of students to get their message across as well as to decode addressed messages. By expecting them to produce or comprehend complete correct language forms only, teachers not only inhibit learners from making adventurous communicative attempts, but also prevent them from developing further fluency.
Johnson, K.E. rightly reminds us that the extent to which teachers choose to control student interaction will shape the roles that students assume, as well as the type of language they generate.\textsuperscript{151}

Making the learner concentrate his attention on content (meaning) rather than form may be encouraged by proposing carefully selected meaning-focused communication tasks.\textsuperscript{152}

\textbf{5-8- The additional oral class recommends a non-systematic error correction attitude}

Any experienced teacher will attest that most learners tend to give up speaking if/when being constantly interrupted and corrected. As mentioned earlier, the additional class attempts to make students overcome their fear or reluctance to express themselves in the target language. One way of attaining this is through overlooking some of the errors\textsuperscript{153} they might make, especially those which do not alter or obscure the meaning they wish to express.

The flow of interaction is far more important than correctness at all cost. This is what Prabhu\textsuperscript{154} argues when he draws a distinction between “systematic correction” and “incidental correction”. The former consists of the teacher—or another student—intervening and interrupting an ongoing activity and providing a corrective explanation of the error in the hope of eradicating it. Thus a systematic error correction attitude clearly indicates a focus on language form. Incidental correction on the other hand, is not the manifestation of a strong linguistic concern, but is simply meant to help learners better their communication in order to best complete their tasks. Prabhu sees incidental correction as part of getting on with the activity in hand, not as being more important than other aspects of the activity.\textsuperscript{155}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{151} K.E., Johnson, Op.Cit,1998,p.128
\textsuperscript{152} See task-based activities(chapt6,7)
\textsuperscript{153} It may be worth highliting the difference between the mistake (which is serious and may obscure the meaning), the error (which still keeps sense to the message) and the laps (which all speakers makeand which have no impact on the success of interaction).


\textsuperscript{155} N.S.,Prabhu, “There is no best method-why?”,1991,p.63
\end{flushright}
The criteria of judging the success of communication go beyond the correct language it is constituted of, they rather include such abilities as expressing and interpreting messages appropriately and the degree of cooperation. Therefore, as long as messages succeed to get across, as long as communication keeps flowing (does not break down); minor errors may be overlooked while learners are engaged in interaction. Errors may be discretely noted by the teacher for example, and discussed at a later stage when learners have accomplished their task, or at the end of the class.

5-9. **The additional oral class has a flexible seating arrangement**

It is widely acknowledged that spacial arrangement determines to a large extent social behaviour and hence communication. The way people use space, whether they sit or stand, the distance they keep between them; all influence whether they will interact and the way they will interact.

Until quite recently however, research in classroom interaction has neglected to consider the nature of the physical setting in which interaction takes place. In most traditional foreign language classrooms, the teacher sits in his/her elevated desk facing students who generally sit in rows turning their backs to each other. In many classes, the learners’ seats are fixed to the floor.

There is no doubt that such physical arrangement is doomed to affect interaction in many respects:

- It encourages the teacher’s superior position as he/she is physically (and most probably psychologically and affectively) separated from the students.
- It makes of the teacher the natural focus of attention making him at the centre of class communication.
- It tends to limit learners’ sense of involvement in classroom interaction.
- It does not encourage meaningful exchange with its interesting potential for negotiation of meaning.
When the teacher occupies a central space in the classroom, learners have often been observed to look at him even when they happen to address, or answer to one of their peers. It follows from the above observations that if learners are to see the teacher as a member of the group rather than a leader, if they are to become involved with each other, an imperative gets imposed: the classroom physical restructuration.

What is required consequently is adapting the classroom setting to students needs. The classroom that is proposed in this work is not a typical one with rows of tables and a desk. It is rather a classroom where furniture is moved, and rearranged according to the space, and the seating organization interlocutors need. In this sense, this classroom looks more like” a club, a social union.” Students may sit, or stay standing if they wish to. There are no fixed rules, the only rules are the ones dictated by the communication they are engaged in. Having said that, it seems that some seating arrangements are best fitted in this classroom as they because:

a- they reflect social settings outside the classroom
b- they facilitate face to face interaction

- Circles and semi-circles: One way of creating a flexible environment that may strengthen learners’ sense of involvement in classroom interaction is the circular or semi –circular (the u shape) arrangement. This organization is most suitable for whole class or large group activities such as debates, discussions and even some games requiring many participants.

When the teacher sits with the learners within the circle or semi-circle, he becomes a member of the group and not an isolated, distant authority. A circular arrangement therefore helps to break the barrier between teacher and learners and creates instead a shared and common space of communication. It also enables interaction to be multi-directed from teacher to student, student to teacher and student to student.

Another important impact the above seating arrangement has on communication is that it enables eye contact\textsuperscript{156} between interlocutors. By sitting in this way, students

\textsuperscript{156} Eye contact having an important and strong communicative dimension
can look at each other and while interacting thus making full use of the non-verbal dimension of their communication exchanges.

In the frontal classrooms we have observed, when one of the back row students would speak, those sitting in the front tend to turn their heads to look at him. However, it is certainly quite embarrassing for our student of the back to have dozens of pairs of eyes all turning to him at once! The circular seating arrangement therefore, saves learners from such trouble and enables them to at whoever is speaking without him being over-conscious about it.

- Small groups: Techniques for foreign language teaching increasingly support the organization of the classroom spatial context into small groups. The size of the group again is determined by the communication task itself as well as the desire of the learners. A small group then may consist of two students (in which case we talk of pair work) or more, four and five being the most common size.

In small groups, all learners are typically involved in their task, they have a shared responsibility. And unlike in frontal teaching where the teacher holds the power, in small groups the authority becomes the group. One obvious advantage of adopting a small group seating arrangement is simply because it is the natural way people gather when they talk. In real life we communicate much more often in small groups than in public! Besides taking part in a small group discussion certainly reduces the anxiety and stress which are increased by the “audience effect”. By preferring the small group sitting arrangement, the additional oral class hopes to put the student in similar communication conditions that he so often finds himself in outside.

157 This may be one reason why it is usually students sitting in the front of the class who take part in classroom conversations, they “dare” because they are less subject to the stress of being turned at.

158 In his input hypothesis, Krashen (1980-82) explains that the “affective filter” may be high when the language user is conscious that he is being listened to by a big audience, and calls this phenomenon the “audience effect”
6- **Expected challenges of the extra oral class**

There is no doubt that the extra oral class proposed in this work is bound to make teachers face certain difficulties that they will have to cope with and attempt to challenge with the learners. This is because although this new class does not (and is not meant to) revolutionize learning/teaching practices in DLU, it does nevertheless put teachers and learners in a different environment that requires some adaptability. By its ‘non-traditional’ nature and its high demands of learners’ commitment and initiative, this class in the sociolinguistic context of Djilali Liabès University and with learners and teachers profiles such as those described earlier will inevitably make teachers face and deal with the following difficulties:

- students are not autonomous
- classes are large and heterogeneous
- students don’t speak only in English
- students make too much noise

6-1- **Students are not autonomous**

Whenever a decision is taken some organization is necessary before this decision becomes truly functional or is implemented. Changes in ELT necessarily lead to taking positions (accepting or rejecting), and sometimes to creating divisions among syllabus designers and language teachers.

One pedagogical principle of the LMD programme implemented in the Algerian university for example is to give more freedom and responsibility to the learner. He/she is not only expected to be active, to participate in his learning experience; but also to take concrete decisions at different stages.

Learner autonomy may be seen as that responsible decision taking attitude the student has throughout his learning experience. Autonomy often carries the **connotation of freedom to act, to choose or in short to influence one’s own learning**. Autonomy in FL teaching pedagogy generally implies freedom from the
teacher control rather than from peers or teaching material and facilities. Sinclair, B. cites several aspects of autonomy in language learning such as:

- **Autonomy involves a learner’s capacity and willingness to take responsibility for making decisions about their own learning;**
- These capacities are not innate;
- There are degrees of autonomy
- Different teaching and learning contexts require different approaches to the promotion of learner autonomy.  

It is such capacity for independent commitment, and personal decision making that is required in the extra oral class.

It seems quite reasonable to relate the concept of autonomy to that of culture. There has been an argument that learner autonomy is a concept which is based on Western educational tradition and that as such it can only fit in the western educational context. Harmer, J., explains that attitudes to self-directed learning are frequently conditioned by the educational culture in which students have studied or are studying...autonomy of action is not always considered a desirable characteristic in such contexts.

However, relating autonomy to sociocultural contexts does in fact stress its ‘acquisitional’ dimension, and in terms of FL pedagogy this simply means that all learners can develop high levels of autonomy if they are encouraged to develop such behaviour. McCarthy, C.P. (1998) explains that autonomy is not any one specific thing - it is a capacity, it will grow with practice, or be lost through inactivity. Gaining in autonomy is undoubtedly a lengthy, progressive and continuous process that requires a revision of the traditional roles of both the learner and the teacher.

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Besides, it is widely acknowledged today that there are no two learners alike in terms of mode and rate of learning: some need lengthy and linear explanations; others prefer examples on the basis of which they will construct their hypotheses. There are also those who not only enjoy working with peers but benefit more and learn better in the group, and those for whom learning is an individual, solitary experience.

The teaching profession needs to take this aspect into account and push learners towards autonomy even when they are engaged in pair or group work: we can at the same time cooperate in a group activity and still keep autonomous attitudes concerning the decisions that may need to be taken individually.

6-2. **Classes are large and heterogeneous**

It is in fact frequently reported by teachers that their learners vary considerably in at least some aspects. They usually 'complain' that students have different linguistic backgrounds thus not always sharing the same L1 or L2. This obviously explains their different cultural heritage and most probable attitudes towards the target language and the people speaking it.

... *(The) classroom is filled with students from a wide variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds who possess a range of proficiency levels, then teachers cannot assume that their second language students will learn, talk, act, or interact in predictable ways.*

There is no doubt that most teachers find it easier to teach homogeneous classes where learners have more or less the same proficiency in the target language, a class where the difference or gap between the 'best' and 'poor' learner remains reasonable. It is also less demanding to teach students with similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds (common L1, and L2; common C1 and C2) as this may help the teacher shape his teaching accordingly knowing in advance what to focus on, what to explain and what to avoid teaching. He can also understand better the origins of

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learners’ mistakes, misunderstandings, and misinterpretations and provides appropriate information. However, in large classes, close monitoring by the teacher is not only difficult, but it can also be very taxing for the teacher who teaches at least three or four large classes a day.\textsuperscript{162}

Heterogeneousness or multilevelness is therefore a preoccupation for most language professionals who most of the time find themselves confronted to it rather than choose it. To put it another way, heterogeneous classes are rather often felt as a ‘penalty’, rather than a pedagogical challenge.

It is not uncommon however, to find heterogeneous classes which are also large ones. In fact, it seems that these two factors (heterogeneousness and large size) often combine putting teachers in an even more complex situation. There are too many students in my class!”, “my class is overcrowded!”, “I can’t cope with all the students”, “and it is too tiring to teach such a class!” These are some of the complaints many teachers from different places of the world desperately make. These are the situations so many teachers have to face and do with.

The number of learners per class may differ from one educational context to another within the same country. Primary school classes may be larger than secondary and advanced ones. Class size also varies according to whether the class is that of a private or public institution (private classes being most of the time smaller). In Algeria for example, whereas secondary school classes may reach 50 pupils; they do not exceed 12/15 in some private secondary schools in the capital (Algiers).

Class size of course also changes from one country to another. 20 may seem a ‘good’ number in some parts of the world, when in some others 70 or 80 is the norm. However, it seems that the overall size of a country’s population as well as its economical situation influence the size of school classes.

\textsuperscript{162} F.Shamin, in Bailey, K \& Nunan, D., \textit{Voices from the Language Classroom}, 1998, p.143
It is difficult therefore to determine an ideal class size as this relies very much on each teacher's perception of good teaching conditions. Besides, research in teaching methodology has barely examined this issue, leaving language teachers without a sound theoretical background to rely on.

Based solely on my own perception, language teaching experience as well as pedagogical principles, and taking into account the realities of our national and educational context, I consider that a foreign language class at an advanced level (namely university) should not exceed 20 students. I mean here classes where the focus is on the teaching of language skills, teacher fronted classes (lectures in amphitheatres) being often much larger including over 100 students.

Large ESL classes are a “hard reality” in developing countries such as Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Nigeria, where teachers face classes which are sometimes composed of a 100 or even 200 students.\textsuperscript{163}

Algeria, as a developing country with its high population increase is no exception, although the large class size is much smaller than reported here. Large classes in primary schools do not exceed 50 pupils, and as far as the DLU classes we have observed are concerned the largest class was composed of 36 students.\textsuperscript{164}

A class of 20 may of course not be the ideal one for many teachers however; it seems both reasonable and realistic given the demographical and economical context at the basis of this work. A class of 20 allows for group work (e.g. 5 groups of 4 students) that the teacher can help and supervise separately. Also 4 or 5 interlocutors is a frequent and natural Interactional group size outside the classroom between friends, members of a family, etc.

Yet instead of keeping a negative attitude towards this situation, it may be more challenging to take advantage of the large heterogeneous class. Most teachers will


\textsuperscript{164} see table on number of students per class (chapt.4)
confess that teaching a great number of students with varying levels of competences in the target language is not an easy task. It is highly demanding and at times surely discouraging. Many teachers will also see no advantage in teaching such classes, however, a close and more positive look at them will show that there are always some positive aspects we may find and exploit.

- **Diversity of interlocutors:** A large class provides the opportunity to interact with many different interlocutors. Students get the chance to work with different partners and each time experience new types of communication exchange. It is obvious that learners with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, learning styles, etc…may engage in different kinds of interactions; undertake classroom tasks in different ways. This gives learners the chance to work with the partners they feel most comfortable with; at the same time it allows them (if / when they wish) to try new and different ways of working with learners of varied profiles. I had a near experience to teach English to a class of six postgraduate students in the Biology Department (Djilali Liabès university), and although this was an interesting experience in many respects, such as the very friendly and close relationship I had with the group, the individualized tutorship I could give each student; I must admit that working with such a small class was at times 'limiting'. After some time, the students were so much used to working together that they ended up knowing so much about each other, and developed some 'working' habits in such a way that any element of newness or unexpectedness was absent.

- **Wealth of information and areas of interest:** In a large, multilevel class, each learner brings with him his personal experience, knowledge of the world, and culture. This makes of the class a real melting pot where so much information is passed on from one another and so much knowledge can be acquired. A large class is also made of many individuals who have different areas of interest that they can share with one another adding variety and newness to the classroom experience.

- **Variety of input:** The more learners we have in a class, the more varied their linguistic and sociolinguistic and sociocultural backgrounds, the more varied and interesting the classroom input will be. A large class means an important number of
'input providers' or sources. To put it another way, where input is concerned, variety and number of human resources seems to be a rather positive dimension.

- **Range of tasks and activities:** A big number of learners may allow the teacher to set different tasks that can be achieved through different activities. A large class for example, gives the possibility to try different activities by different learners and at different stages of their leaning experience.

- **Variety of grouping techniques:** Classroom activities may require groups of different sizes. Because of the important number of students available, the large class makes it possible for teachers to organize various grouping techniques such as small groups, semi-circles, small groups, bigger ones, etc... In the large class learners have the opportunity to work in pairs as well as in much bigger groups needed in some role plays or debates for example.

Finally, what has been argued suggests that the large heterogeneous class offers a real challenge; it is anything but dull. The motivated teacher takes advantage of the big size and multilevelness of his class as challenging aspects pushing him always to try new techniques, different teaching styles and attitudes as well as different roles. Instead of seeing it as an obstacle, the motivated teacher will find the large heterogeneous class a rich, rewarding teaching experience.

6-3- **Students do not speak only in English**

It is a quite common thing to have foreign language teachers complain that their students do not speak only in the Target language during classroom practice. *One thing that drives teachers wild is when their students are apparently unwilling to use English in the classroom, especially during communicative activities.*\(^\text{165}\) They often feel at loss when they see that leaners’ preferred instrument of class communication remains their native language, ad sometimes their second language.

Students tend to turn to their native language because of various reasons: they do so simply because what is more natural than speaking in one’s own tongue? Many learners, especially those with limited communication capacities, and thus a limited vocabulary; may feel it is quite artificial, unnatural to speak with their peers in the foreign language. They may also avoid doing that\textsuperscript{166} for fear of making mistakes and loosing face in front of the others. Besides, what makes them use their L1 is when they do not have something to achieve in the target language. As Lawtie, F. (2004) explains, if students do not have something to say or do, or don’t feel the need to speak, you can be sure it won’t be long before they are chatting in their L1.\textsuperscript{167} Another reason students tend to use L1 or L2 is when the task they are asked to perform require a communicative competence which is beyond the one they have. To put it differently, learners simply ‘refuse’ to speak a language which does not allow them to perform tasks they are not ready for. This is why teachers need to be careful as to what they assign to their students: communication tasks should be attuned to the general communicative capacities of the majority in order to become true vehicles for genuine interactive exchange. Finally, what may make students use their mother tongues is simply the fact of seing (or rather hearing) their own teachers do so. Amazingly enough, some foreign language teachers quite often do not speak in the target language, either as a “technique”\textsuperscript{168} to explain and ensure better understanding, or simply because they are not competent or fluent enough themselves and thus feel more comfortable in their L1. Although the use of L1 or/and L2 may have a place in the language class, it is difficult to have the same “permissive” attitude when it comes to the oral communication class, and as J., Harmer warns: If on the other hand, they (learners) are doing an oral fluency activity, the use of a language other than English makes the activity essentially pointless.\textsuperscript{169}

It is clear that what is at stake here is not to ban L1 or L2 from the classroom, but mainly to make of the target language the dominant language of interaction to render it the exclusive one at more advanced levels. Teachers need to explain and

\textsuperscript{166} See” avoid „communication” in strategic competence

\textsuperscript{167} Lawtie, F., Teaching speaking skills- overcoming classroom problems, Language Teaching, 2004

\textsuperscript{168} This in itself is not problematic when it is done occasionally and when it serves to achieve something

\textsuperscript{169} J. Harmer, Op.Cit., 2005
keep repeating to their students the necessity of speaking in the FL, as well as keep
an eye (or rather an ear!) on which language is being used mainly in oral group
work. This is what a teacher in our observed data did in the following extract:

**Teacher:** OK now you can start thinking about the theme you would like to deal
with

**S1:** Miss the topic?

**T:** yes + the topic + and then + you tell me what each group has decided +
agreed + shall we do that?

**Several students:** yes  

**T:** Ok + good + but but + but there is something + don’t forget you have to speak in
English

**Students:** yes

**T:** If you speak in Arabic + then we stop + ok? + I don’t want to hear a word of
Arabic + I know your Arabic ‘s fine + you don’t need to practise it + (laugh) + ok?
So let’s start

Therefore by simply having a positive attitude and explaining to students that
speaking in the TL is good for them, and convincing them about the importance of
practising speaking may contribute to gradually make them drop L1 and replace it in
a natural way by the foreign language.

6-4- **Students make too much noise**

The foreign language class is noisy: this is a fact, this is inevitable. Talking about
the impact of noise on the classroom as an educational context and thus questioning
the role the latter plays in learners success/failure; Bradley, J; (2007) asserts that
noise levels of students during a teaching activity can be 5 to 10 decibels louder than the noise levels found in the unoccupied room. Concerning noise in the oral foreign language classroom, Lawtie, F., warns teachers not to make confusion between lack of class control and “normal noise”.

First of all the two points a noisy classroom and an out of control classroom. A classroom full of students talking and interacting in English, even if it is noisy is exactly what you want, maybe you just feel like you are losing control because the class is suddenly student centered and not teacher centered.

More than in any other class, noise is part of the oral class is as the latter is a class where we ask students to speak, and we are satisfied when they do it. In fact in the oral class noise is not noise: it is work, it is communication. Besides, so often the oral class work is organised around group activities in which several students (each one in his/her group) speak at the same time, and this undoubtedly creates “noise” sometimes “very much noise”.

However, students are usually so busy doing their activities that they do not even realise they are making noise nor do they seem disturbed by the noise of the neighbouring groups in the classroom.

Any teacher who believes in the positive impact of oral communication on developing further communication skills will certainly be able to describe the pleasure and satisfaction he/she feels looking at learners leaning towards each other, their heads getting closer and sharing the experience of speaking in a language that they are progressively make theirs. This is worth all the noise they may make!

Having said that, teachers may pay attention to small details that may reduce the level of noise in the oral class: first, they simply need to remind students whenever necessary to speak quietly. Then they whenever possible –if the classroom is large enough- keep a distance between one group and the other so that groups of students

170 Bradley, J., « Does the classroom assist or impede the learning process? », Canadian Language and Literary Research, April 2004

do not disturb each other. Also, the classroom devoted to oral work is better the one at the end of the corridor, or round the corner, on the top floor, etc – of course depending on the context—in order to avoid disturbing neighbouring classes. Finally, it is certainly not a good idea to keep the door open when the oral class” is being fuzzy “with many students talking at the same time!
7- Task design for DLU students and classroom procedures

A task-based syllabus places a great responsibility on the teacher as he/she is concerned with the provision-selection from textbooks or design-of tasks for his/her group of learners according to their needs and interests. Designing communication tasks for Djilali Liabès University studentsought to be done in accordance with their need to develop their actually limited oral fluency in English. Thus they should promote opportunities for spontaneous fluent languaghe use whereby learners’ primary preoccupation is with meaning.

Furthermore, taking into account the general linguistic and cognitive capacities of DLU students, communication tasks need to be both intellectually and communicatively challenging. In other words, task designers (and teachers for that matter) should not lose sight of the fact that their ‘cientele’ are young adults who have an experience in the target language and who have an intellectual curiosity about various fields and subjects.

Taking the above into account, the following attempts to set the practical steps involved in the process of communication task design. For the sake of illustration an example will be presented. The task designer needs first of all to define both the general and specific aim(s) of the task he/she wishes students to achieve. Thus in our context the task should aim at developing students’ oral fluency in communication (general aim), and make them reach a decision through negotiation (specific aim).

It seems reasonable to state that the aims of the task determine its type: depending on what the designer wants learners to do, he will set a problem solving task, an information gap, or decision taking one.

The task designer needs to determine the context (situation and topic) on which the task will be based. An example of context may be choosing a country for the coming summer holidays after visiting a travel agency and gaining various information by inquiry.
The specific aim(s) of the task together with the topic help the teacher determine the type of activities which are most suitable for students to perform the task. Different tasks may require different activity types.

Students may constitute small groups of five and engage in group work. This may, for example, consist of each student selecting 3 countries which seem most attractive on the basis of the information gathered from his/her visit to the travel agency. Here they will need to explain the reason(s) of their selection. The next stage could be choosing one country among a list of 15 (or less as some students may select the same countries) in which the group as a whole decides to spend their holidays. This decision-making would naturally require students to suggest, agree, disagree, negotiate, try to convince, and give arguments to justify one’s preference and choice.

In our example, the first activity could be a role play involving pairs of students whereby one take the role of the travel agent while the second one plays the role of the person who plans to travel. The teacher may wish students to change roles and partners thus enabling each student to try both roles and also get the chance to work with different partners.

After each group has chosen the country of his destination, the whole class is brought together again in order to find out the result(s) of their activity. Each group representative informs the rest of the students about his group’s decision and gives the reason(s) of their choice. This phase consists of the task completion.

Students may be asked, as a follow up task, to gather as much information as possible related to the country they wish to visit. Such information may also be used to write collective essays on the topic. In order to achieve this, a great deal of cooperative work and interdependence among group members is expected. In addition some material may be provided to support this task and make it successful.

In order for tasks to be motivating and challenging some material should accompany their design. Some communication tasks, although having a high
communicative potential, require some simple and easy to find material. In the task illustrated above for instance, the teacher may provide some world maps or small globes to each group of students in order to help them localise the regions and countries they wish to travel to. If this is not possible, he/she may display a single big map that he/she will hang on the blackboard for the whole class. This will enable students situate different places and trace their itinerary. The teacher can also provide students with charts containing various details (flight and ship fares, reductions, destinations, etc…). Some encyclopedia, books, magazines, tour brochures may also be useful for students to find out information about the country of their choice.

An important stage of classroom practice is the application of the designed task in the classroom. After the task has been carefully designed, the teacher goes to actually try it in his classroom. He/she thus starts, in the pre-task phase, by introducing the task to his/her students and setting its context, topic and problematic. It is important at this level to provide clear instructions and ensure that the learners understand what they are required to do and what they need to achieve. They are consequently invited in the pre-task phase to ask questions, require clarifications and check comprehension. In this way the teacher can get feedback as to whether the task is accessible to most students or not. If not, he still has the possibility of breaking it down into smaller tasks or simply modifying it slightly so as to meet learners’ requirements.

The period of pre-task is also an opportunity for the teacher to dispense the appropriate input (both linguistic and content) that students are most likely to need for the completion of their task. The nature and amount of input will obviously be influenced by the task type as well as its topic and situation.

Following this, the teacher may suggest the different activities through which the task may be best achieved and performed. In addition to this he may propose different seating arrangement and classroom organisation according to varying group sizes as different activities often do entail different grouping
techniques. Groups may be formed by learners themselves on friendship grounds as well as common interests, or they may be designed by the teacher himself/herself who may wish to consider other criteria such as mixed communicative abilities and different personalities of individual students.

The next step after the task has been explained and made clear, and also after groups have been formed, students are ready and expected to start working. At this stage the teacher’s active involvement inevitably decreases, thus leaving the learners work according to their own pace and preferred styles. As the task is in progress, the teacher remains available ready to intervene if/when students ask him for help. If for example, he notices a ‘problem’ such as the apparent non-involvement of a student or on the contrary the monopoly of speech by another one, or the overuse of a language other than the target one; the teacher should react and remedy to whatever has deviated from the expected behaviour or attitude. The teacher may prefer (for various reasons) to note discretely serious and general mistakes students make with the intention of pointing them out after the task has been completed.

Ultimately, students are invited to perform their task in front of the whole class. It is however important to make sure before this that all students have been allocated enough time to finish what they had to do. Only then can they start reporting their work. Task performance may be followed by a general discussion whereby both the learners and the teacher get the opportunity to make comments and suggestions to each other. It is the time where the class is brought together again to share reactions and constructive feedback.

Following the performance of the task, it is important and fruitful that the students and the teacher expresses to students his/her appreciation of their outcome (as individual groups and as a class) telling them whether or not and to what extent they have met the demands of their task and consequently performed it successfully or not.

In order to allow the organization of different seating arrangements, the communication class at DLU is better take place in the classrooms with individual desks. These are small, light and easy to move and arrange in a flexible way. Classrooms with oral fixed rows are best suited for teacher-fronted lectures and seminars.
Finally, the choice of communication tasks to be designed is unlimited as long as they focus on meaning and promote fluent language use. Teachers may need to be trained to design their own tasks for their own students. In the meantime DLU teachers may design their tasks and implement them according to methodological principles and criteria similar to the ones suggested in this work. Teachers can also work in cooperation for designing tasks, they may also suggest to each other those tasks they have tried out and found successful. In other words, they may exchange impressions about tasks they have used in their respective classrooms and felt satisfied with.

Through continuous constructive discussions, positive criticism and cooperation, it is hoped that DLU teachers (and mainly teachers of oral communication) will gradually gather an increasingly effective corpus of communication tasks that are likely to facilitate the enhancement of students’ fluency in oral English.
8- Assessing oral fluency in communication

Language assessment is a general term used with different meanings ranging from testing learners skills and competencies via tests and examination to observed behaviour and achievement in the classroom. The language teaching profession has rightly recognised the limits of any teaching programme no matter how efficient it is, if there are no means to assess the achievement of the learners who are enrolled in it. Assessment subsequently began to be regarded as important as teaching itself and more and more researchers are proposing reliable and effective ways to find out about foreign language learners developed competence. Djigunovic, J.M. & Krajnovic, M.M., (2008) explain that assessment

...is an important field of FLT that has been developing fast in recent times. Good assessment needs to fulfill the requirements of validity and reliability. Assessment is carried out in order to diagnose learners’ competence status, to select and to inform learners of their current level of competence and to motivate them for further language learning.173

Unlike other language skills, assessing oral communication is a quite complex assignment, and this is due to the facts that:

- Oral communication is an interactive process: its interactive character in itself makes it difficult to determine the extent to which what an individual says is determined by what his/her interlocutor has previously said.
- Oral communication is unpredictable: even when given contextual clues, it is extremely difficult to know in advance what a speaker will say in a coming turn.
- Oral communication is subject to time constraints: unlike in writing, the speaker is limited by time to react to what others say.

Issues related to the process of assessing interaction include concepts such as rating scores, assigning evaluation tasks, rating checklists, validity and reliability of assessment techniques and procedures. Assessment of oral communication with its various facets (appropriate and correct language use, naturalness, fluency, etc.) may be done individually or by assessing pairs or even small groups of learners at the same time. On this idea S. Luoma (2005), writes,

*Speaking assessments are time-consuming to administer and rate. Sometimes the administration may be speeded up by using tape-based tests, but rating still takes time, as the raters have to listen to the performance second by second. One way of making efficient use of testing and scoring time in live testing is to have two or more examinees interact with each other...peer interaction makes communication in the test more realistic than the kind of interaction that is possible between an interlocutor and an examinee...*

Thus, a one-to-one approach to assessment may have as an objective to assess individual performance in private situations. The use of interviews and interpersonal relations is often used here. A one-to-many approach, on the other hand, aims at assessing the potential of a speaker to behave naturally when engaged in interaction with a group of interlocutors such as the case in public speaking or group talks and discussions.

There are basically two methods for assessing oral communication skills: the observational method focuses on and assessing the examinee’s attitude and behaviour as he/she speaks (and listens). The structural method, on the other hand, examines the speaker(s) performance in terms of the content they produce in specific tasks. In other words, examinees are given various types of tasks to perform either individually, in pairs or in groups, and a special attention is given to the information and content they bring to the task.

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The technique of assessment and the instruments it uses, undoubtedly depend on the purpose of the assessment, as well as the aspect(s) of oral communication that are to be looked at.

Assessing oral communication should be seen as an attempt to get feedback on learners overall capacities to interact and react in communicative situations.

Assessment of oral communication should view competence in oral communication as a gestalt of several interacting dimensions. At a minimum...it should include an assessment of knowledge, an assessment of skills, and an evaluation the individual’s attitude toward communication.175

Fluency as one particular aspect of oral communication, though it is not assessed in isolation of the other features, needs to be given special care as it constitutes a requirement of advanced levels of oral communication competence that university students should attain. To put it differently, at a supposedly advanced level, learners should be assessed in terms of how naturally, spontaneously and fluently they use the target language rather than on the number of structural mistakes they may make.

The present work holds the view that in order to assess oral communication with all its aspects (including fluency) a more comprehensive approach is needed, an approach which reflects the broad dimension of communication. In otherwords, it is more reasonable to adopt a comprehensive communicative approach to assessing oral communication if we want to include in our assessment the various aspects entailed in this process.

A communicative approach to assessing oral communication first start by examining the processes or mechanisms involved in aural/oral

exchanges\textsuperscript{176}. Once these have been identified the assessor may be more able to set the most appropriate techniques to assess them.

Making examenees engage in realistic communicative tasks such the ones they may accomplish in their L1 or L2, i.e. tasks in which they have to take on roles and accomplish functions and asking them to use the TL to do that will undoubtedly make them concentrate on what they will have to do. This is most likely a good opportunity for the examiner to note the oral communication skills they show as well as all the paralinguistic features they use in order to achieve their aim. Besides, by putting learners in such communication contexts, the assessor may detect any fluency problems examenees may have. He may also manage to rank various levels of fluency according to the general communicative profeciency of the learners, and assess their fluency accordingly. The criteria of assessing fluency are obviously not the same whether the examenee is a beginner or an advanced FL learner.

Because assessing fluency is particularly “sensitive”, training to do it may be necessary if we do not want assessors to base their work on intuition. Teachers all over the world are getting trained to teach foreign languages, so after all why shouldn’t they need to be formed and trained to assess the various aspects of these languages? S., Morreale & P., Backlund, stress the necessity of training assessers in order to ensure a reasonable level of reliability.

\textit{Individuals administering assessment procedures for oral communication should have received sufficient training by speech communication professionals to make their assessment reliable. Scoring of some standardized assessment instruments in speaking and listening may require specialized training in oral communication on the part of the assessor.\textsuperscript{177}}

\textsuperscript{176} See Oral communication: its process and dynamics, chapt 2

\textsuperscript{177} S., Morreale & P., Backlund, ibid, 1998.
Finally, it is hope that future research as well as training in assessing fluency in oral communication may give us better indications on how to assess our students as objectively as possible.
9- General conclusion

The chief assignment of research in foreign language pedagogy is to attempt to describe and analyse a teaching/learning situation, pointing out at the difficulties or problem(s) inherent to this particular context. The ultimate aim of this endeavour is to provide not ready-made solutions, but mostly ways (approaches, principles, attitudes, techniques, and procedures) in order to improve the state of affairs for both learners and teachers. Yet, some of the propositions that researchers make are sometimes not taken into account as they are considered idealistic or too difficult to be applied.

What is needed, therefore in order to be realistic is to adopt an attitude associated with well founded elements, an attitude that considers the realities and specificities of the context under study. It is hoped that such a standpoint may help influence the outcome of a teaching/learning experience. Consequently, not any new movement guarantees success and improvement, and in order to be realistic and efficient we need to:
- Inform learners about the new program(s)
- Prepare and eventually train teachers to this reform
- Adapt the material facilities available (libraries, internet, self-access centres -sacs-, etc…)
- Analyse the needs of the local (national) economical market
- Consider the political inclination of the country and its philosophy towards foreign languages in general and the target language in particular.

We cannot for example, reasonably and realistically expect our learners to move from a largely “spoon feeding” attitude (in the ‘traditional’ language) to a totally decision taking, responsible attitude necessary for the extra oral course. Teachers’ professionalism is needed here to guarantee the smooth and gradual transition between these two learners’ roles, and rather than advocating changes in our methodology, it seems more realistic to gradually lead learners to change their attitudes.
The present work expresses the need of DLU English department to revise its approach to English language teaching in general and oral communication in particular, and to adapt its methodology and classroom procedures accordingly. This is because the way classrooms are organised so far and the prevailing attitudes and activities in our institution offer limited chances to students to develop the level of target language proficiency that foreign language departments at university stage are supposed to dispense. The result is that many students unfortunately leave DLU English department without being able to engage successfully in a conversation in English. Moreover, although some of them may have developed a linguistic “knowledge” of English, many still show difficulties using it fluently for communication purposes. This state of facts is further made problematic when we know that the majority of students will become teachers of English themselves who will need to have a good command of spoken English as:

a- Spoken English will be a major instrument of work for them as their classrooms instruction will be conducted almost exclusively in this language.

b- They will be the major source of input for their students, and as such will constitute a model to be imitated.

Thus the work grew out of the concern with such a situation, and willingness to contribute to the improvement of objectives and pedagogical conditions of teaching/learning English at university level. It hence suggests that a first evolutionary step should be to teach English in an integrated model whereby different skills are interrelated. Nevertheless, as a supplement to this, an additional class is needed. This class may be seen as an expansion of learners’ communication environment, or to put it differently, it is meant to make up for the limited chances they have to use English outside the classroom. By focusing for the most part on the aural/oral skills, and providing effective communication tasks in a non-threatening classroom atmosphere; the extra class may help students attain more advanced levels of fluency in oral communication.

This work has attempted to raise the question of the feasibility of the extra oral class in our institutions. It argues that the success of this reform depends on the
extent to which pedagogical principles are understood, accepted and rooted in our English departments. It is hoped that other language professionals and namely teachers will pursue in similar paths in order for the additional oral class to be truly efficient and not simply constitute a new pedagogical fashion! A major aspiration behind undertaking the present research is to stimulate further theoretical and classroom investigation in the context of DLU English department. Besides if the viewpoints expressed in this work are given a chance to be experimented, then further longitudinal empirical research will be needed to verify our hypothesis. Learners’ oral fluency will need to be assessed after they undergo the extra oral experience, as this will allow comparisons to be made between the latter and the current oral expression class in order to find out whether improvement in fact occurs within the methodological framework of this work. It goes without saying at this stage, that the method(s) and technique(s) of assessing oral communication in their turn need to be investigated and adjusted to the new pedagogical requirements of our educational institution, namely Djilali Liabès University. Furthermore, future research may contribute to answer the question that may be asked at this level: should teachers help foreign language learners use a fluent inter-communication with its local specificities or should they try to make them develop a near native skill of communication knowing that such learners are learning this TL in a foreign language environment in which they are most likely to be engaged in NNS/NNS rather than NS/NNS interaction?
APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE:

1- TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer briefly the following questions, and add any comment or information you feel relevant in the space provided. Thank you for your help and cooperation!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>TEACHER'S ANSWER</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For how long have you been teaching oral expression?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you have any training before teaching oral expression?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is your aim(s) when teaching oral expression?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What kind of English do you teach?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1- Formal</td>
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<td>2- Conversational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is it you or the students who do most of the talking in the oral expression class?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think the time allocated to oral expression in the curriculum is sufficient?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you tend to generalize or individualize your instruction(s)?</td>
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<td>If so, how often?</td>
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<td>1- Always</td>
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<td>2- Often</td>
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<td>3- Sometimes</td>
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<td>4- Rarely</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Options</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which of these activities do you most frequently propose in your class?</td>
<td>1- Debates</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2- Dialogues</td>
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<td>3- Role plays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4- Games</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5- Reports (exposés)</td>
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<tr>
<td>In debates, who proposes the topic?</td>
<td>1- You</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2- The students</td>
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<tr>
<td>In role plays, who distributes roles?</td>
<td>1- You</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2- The students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you correct students’ mistakes as they speak?</td>
<td>1- Always</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2- Sometimes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3- Never</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you make students work in small groups?</td>
<td>1- Frequently</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2- Rarely</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3- Never</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are students’ activities based on Algerian or British/American contexts?</td>
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<td>Do you teach students about English culture?</td>
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<td>Do you use the language laboratory for the teaching oral expression?</td>
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<td>If so, how often?</td>
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<tr>
<td>1- Frequently</td>
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<td>2- Sometimes</td>
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<td>3- Never</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you have difficulties assessing students' oral skills?</th>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>What activities do you use for assessing students?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Individual interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>2- Dialogues</td>
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<tr>
<td>3- Reading texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>4- Role plays</td>
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<tr>
<td>5- Exposés</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Mention any difficulty (ies) you often meet in the teaching of oral expression.
2 - STUDENTS’ QUESTIONNAIRE

Please put an –X- in the space that best corresponds to your answer. You may add any comment or information you feel relevant at the bottom of the page. Thank you for your cooperation!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>FREQUENTLY</th>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the job you plan to do require the ability to speak English?</td>
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<td>Do you speak English outside the classroom?</td>
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<td>Do you listen to English outside the classroom? (music, news, etc)</td>
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<td>Do you enjoy the oral expression class?</td>
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<td>Do you like working in small groups?</td>
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<td>Do you have enough Opportunities to speak in the class?</td>
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<td>Do you like your oral expression teacher?</td>
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<td>Do you find difficulties</td>
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<td>Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>Communicating in English?</td>
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<td>Do you tend to avoid speaking in order not to make mistakes?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you like your teacher to correct your mistakes when you speak?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you ever been to an English speaking country?</td>
<td>yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you like English, American people?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is a ‘pub’?</td>
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<td>What do British people eat for breakfast?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would you like to have more time to speak English in the classroom?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: TRANSCRIPTS

The present appendix consists of transcriptions of observed and recorded oral expression classes. Because of the important amount of recorded material, and the lengthy transcriptions resulting from it; only extracts are produced here as samples of the various activities that take place at DLU English department. The reproduction of such activities is also meant to highlight the dynamics of classroom interaction as well as teachers and students roles and contribution to the running of the activities. Transcripts are presented according to the activity type they relate to. Finally the following are the notational conventions used along the transcriptions:

- (…) inaudible or incomprehensible instance(s) in the recordings

- (    ) additional information supplied by the author, most of the time related to what has been observed.

- Overlap, i.e. two or more interlocutors speaking at the same time

- + hesitation timed up to 3 seconds

- ++ pause timed between 4 and 8 seconds

- +++ long pause timed over 8 seconds

- __ lengthened sound
• ROLE PLAYS
  
  EXAMPLE ONE (Based on an Algerian context)

  A TYPICAL FAMILY

  The following is a transcription of a role play performed by a group of second year students. It has been prepared over six weeks under the guidance of the teacher. The theme of the play was chosen by the students and the role distribution of the characters was decided by them too. A script was written by the learners few weeks before they started actually rehearsing it in front of the teacher who gave advice, corrected sometimes the language and the attitudes, body positions, etc. before the final performance of the play.

  SCENE 1

  Boualem: (shouting) where is the food?

  Kheira: what do you__ think you are? + a hotel+ in a hotel?+ besides did you bring anything to eat?

  Boualem: hey+ I just ask for food+ how you act like an old lady?

  Kheira: the whole week you__ had not been here+ and now+ now you talk about euh food+ did you leave me money?

  Boualem: how did you spend what euh what I gave to you?

  Kheira: (speaking angrily) for how many weeks your children did not see you? +you don’t know? +of course++ do you think your responsibility is just giving money? + did you ask for their health or studies?
**Boualem:** what do you want for me women+ stay at the house helping you in the kitchen? + Who’s gonna provide money for you? + your father+ annoying me about a few dinars borrowed from him?

**Kheira:** stop ++don’t bring my father on this

**Boualem:** I’m tired of you woman

**Kheira:** yes of course you are + of making us live in hell with you during 18 years

**Meriem:** what’s happening? + what the problem Mum?

**Boualem:** euh go to your room+ and stop talking

**SCENE 2**

**Kheira:** hey+ let her in peace+ she did n’t see___ you for weeks+ + + do you think it’s a fatherbehaviour?

**Meriem:** what’s going on? + I want to to know++ why you make this big noise?

**Boualem:** stop poising her mind with your crap+ and so what+ I gonna leave you+ big deal

**Kheira:** euh what is it new? + it is your obvious attitude euh in turning face

**Meriem** (walking away): I don’t believe this+ + I can’t live like that+ it’s enough

**Boualem:** see you in the court law

**Kheira:** what do you mean?

**Boualem** (leaving the house): I will divorce you
Kheira: *hum* it’s typical

Meriem (getting close to her Mum): does he... actually mean what he said?

Kheira: ther’s nothing we can do about it+ I’ll call my father and see what we sh shall do

Meriem: Mum+ do whatever takes

Kheira (talking on the phone): hello father+ how are you?+ + +no+ I’m not fine at all+he did it again++this time I really want to sew him+ + +what do you euh advise me+ + + + +Yes+ yes++ I’ll go with you tomorrow

SCENE 3
Kheira: please+please your honor let me__ speak for only two minutes++it’s my life which is in game

The judge: briefly+ I have no time to lose

Kheira: I know+ you’re tired+ and+ please+ be patient euh and listen to me for grace to God

The judge: carry on briefly

Kheira: + +your honor+ +during all these 18 years+ I did not receive any help from him+ like + like +in the education of his handicapped boy+ +he__ never asked for him+ for his health+ or studies of his children and its fees+ + + he left us for months without any income+ + and at the+ at the time he returned + he makes us living in hell+ of his violence+ his violent behaviour+ + + I spent my life waiting for him to__ wake up and euh return to his reason+ but it did not happen+ + so I am so confident on your justice and what you+ decide+ +I’m agree__ with it +your honor+ + + thank you very much.
EXAMPLE TWO : (Based on a foreign context)

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

The following is an extract from a role play based on a foreign context that a group of students chose prepared and performed after eight working sessions in the oral class, the teacher helped mainly at the acting part of the work (correcting attitudes, positions and spacial organization). As for English the teacher intervened mainly to correct pronunciation and intonation deviations.

Maria: Hello+ you must be the Stewarts+ won’t you please come in?

Philip: Thank you

Maria: Miss Stewart+ let me take your__ jacket

Ellen: Thank you+ but please+ call me Ellen

Maria: Of course+ I’m Maria+ my husband Alberto should be here soon+ I expect him any minute+ the girls went to a movie and he drove them there

Ellen: Alexandra speaks of you so often+ Philip and I feel we know you already

Maria: (hanging up Ellen’s Jacket) Alberto and I euh have the feeling about your__

Ellen: she’s a wonderful girl

Maria: yes+ she is+ Alberto and I__ have two daughters of your own+ and Alexandra is just like one of the family

Ellen: You are lucky

Maria: Yes we are
**Philip**: You have a beautiful house

**Maria**: Thank you+ may I hang up your jacket Philip?

**Philip**: it’s a big house+ and euh it’s nice to be__Alberto share it with someone from another coutry

**Maria**: We love having Alexandra here+and my daughters are becoming interested in foreign countries especially Rosa

**Ellen**: She’s the younger one?

**Maria**: That’s right + sees here + beside the coat closes+ this is a photo of our family+ here are two daughters Rosa and Teresa

**Ellen**: They have beautiful smiles

(The door opens, Alberto enters quietly)

**Alberto**: just like their mother+ she euh has a___ beautiful smile

**Maria**: oh Alberto+ we didn’t hear you+ come in Ellen+ Philil + please meet my husband Alberto Molina

**Alberto**: Alexandra’s American Dad

**Ellen**: Alexandra speaks of both of you and Maria so fondly

**Alberto**: Hello Ellen

**Philip**: Hello+ I’m Philip Stewart + we”re admiring you’re photos

**Alberto**: Ah__yes

**Maria**: Please excuse me+ let me go to__ the kitchen+ I made __for us to taste before dinner
**Alberto:** Ah+ her dish is delicious

**Ellen:** Alexandra said that your families came from Venezuela

**Alberto:** Oh + that’s true+ from Caracas+ but why are we standing and talking here? + in euh Spanish there ‘s an old saying+ mi casa es tu__ casa

**Ellen:** I know a little Spanish

**Alberto:** Well then+ you know it means my house is your house+ please let’s go into the living- room++ let’s all make ourselves at home (laugh)

**End of Act 1**
REPORTS

EXAMPLE ONE:

AIDS

This is a typical report on aids. Four third year students (L, M, F, and R) spent 5 class sessions preparing their work. They brought articles from internet and from Algerian newspapers, magazines and pictures and startd discussing the different ideas of the topic. The teacher joined the group on several occasions to check their written work, correcting mistakes and making propositions. When the day camo to report their work, the students wrote first the topic and its outline on the board, sat in the front of the class facing the rest of the class and starting talking each student knowing its turn in advance. At the end of the report the “debate was open” and few a students as well as the teacher made comments and asked questions related to the topic.

L: All the world is on the grasp of the dangerous deseases which spread quickly in the world+ now is a__ big tree which is menaced (...) on its roots because the extension of the deseases specially which doesn’t have a treatment to quench it+ exactly like aids++ the scientific research started when the virus was discovered by the French virologist Luc Montagnier with his scientific team+ They started their studies about the virus in Paris and they continued it in Englid at Pasteur Institute

M: The composition of the world AIDS means + acquired immune deficiency syndrome + it is a serious desease which attacks the human body and its interest is to destroy the body’s ability to fight infection+ + AIDS in our society+ is a_ hard and painful desease + it hasn’t an exact cure to protect the human body from its infection

F: the outword surface of the VIH is constituted by a lipidic enveloppe which the cell membrane of the preceding cell which is infected + that membrane keeps the kinds of preteins which permit the infection of the (...) marked cells

R: The virus of AIDS can spread quickly though the blood because of many reasons which help it to move from one person to__ another + therefore we offer the major
reasons which are + + sexual intercourse+ the handshake+ the brush of the teeth+ the injections+ the razors

L: The virus of AIDS makes many and different changes on the infected body+ which are negative and painful + therefore we can say that the patient is at the mercy of that virus+ + its major interest is to exterminate the white globules that represent the inaccessibility of the body+ so when the human loses that important appliance+ he__ will be exposed to keep any virus+ the virus of AIDS attacks the__ vital cells+ therefore the patient suffer from both sides external and internal

M: the widespread of the virus VIH causes to send out kind of panic over the world and it moves to our country because of the previous reasons

F: It is a death that in a slow way+ and we consider it as an enemy it enters the human body + it looks like the human enemy who__ wants to maka a specific area from his owners

R: To be able to decrease the major causes of the virus spreading+ we must have control in our relations and in our daily needs also by knowing from which place we take it+ so we can say the fighting of AIDS must be the first interest in our life to safe it and are all+ (...) intended for that hard mission
• PLANNED DIALOGUES

EXAMPLE ONE:
CHILDREN AND INTERNET

This is an extract from a small planned dialogue in which two students chose a “for and against” topic, and took each one a position to defend. When they finished, discussing the ideas and writing them down, they presented the report to the class.

S1: Today the internet is one of the most powerful tools through the world. I think that the children who use the internet can get in touch with their friends and can get to know a lot of people. In the internet they can make their work and research easier because the students are among the top people who use it for research. On the internet people can acquire files, films, hobbies, music, and more can be found. And another popular thing to do on the net is to check out the news because it is easy and fact source pos information + when people need to make shopping + they can do without leaving their homes and save time.

S2: Nowadays I think that the children who use the internet had become a big concern and the most parents do not realize that the internet is dangerous. When children are on line they can easily be something dangerous. When children talk to others on line + they do not realize + they could actually be talking to a harmful person + the use of the internet is harmful to your eyesight and spine + and children spend too much time in front of instead to it + viruses can destroy your computer.

EXAMPLE TWO:
THE PLASTIC SURGERY

Two second year students (S and A) chose to speak about plastic surgery. After having discussed the topic in the class and written down the ideas related to it (during two sessions), they were asked to present their dialogue to the class.
S: The plastic surgery is appeared very recently; it is modern and repairing surgery. The principle objectives of the plastic surgery are the suppression of the anomalies, the restoration of the lost functions, and the improvement of esthetics. This surgery is very useful today; I think that it became very important for all people; it is used to correct parts of the human bodies which are badly formed or damaged.

A: I am against the plastic surgery; I don’t think that it is necessary. There are some people who haven’t any physical problem like deformation happened by accident or defective creation as other people.

S: Yes; I agree with you; but the defects can appear in the children since their birth. I tell myself; why they would remain with these defects whereas they can be healed thanks to the plastic surgery; it is not their fault if they were born with these damage; therefore they don’t have to pay for that all their life. Other people use this surgery for other reasons; I agree; with this kind of practice; I think that is necessary to make it if a person feels unhappy in its skin; if it is the case; we would never live happy.

A: But the plastic surgery became a habit for some people; they could not stop and always searching for the best appearance; this kind of surgery could have negative aspects like paralysis or deformation and they will find a difficulty to remove it.

S: But I think that are exceptional cases; the majority of the operations happen with success and give good results.

A: There are dangerous substances used during this surgery that led to cancer.

S: Now; thanks to the modern techniques; accidents of this kind are rare; it is important to feel well in its skin; we have more trust in ourselves; that is seen in our behaviour; our way of reacting with other people; it helps to integrate well in the society.
FREE DIALOGUES

EXAMPLE:

THE FASHION OF CARS

The following is a dialogue that the students have chosen both in terms of the topic and the language used. They had to prepare for it and perform it before the end of the session. In this sense, and compared to the planned dialogues that will follow, these were more spontaneous in terms of the language used and more natural in terms of students’ attitudes.

The teacher did not intervene at all in the preparation phase of the dialogue leaving her comments at the end of the activity after the students have presented their dialogue in front of the whole class. The dialogue was not ‘acted’ and the two students remained seated in their places. The class was organised in rows with the teacher’s desk in the front facing the rest of the class. The students will simply be referred to by their initials as B and K.

B: euh+ what do you think of+ about the fashion of euh + buying cars nowadays?

K: what fashion?+ + by cash or by easy terms

B: I’m talking about easy terms

K: I+ I don’t think it’s euh + it’s a good__ idea

B: euh+ + Why don’t you?

K: I’m completely against+ because it Has euh+ bad cosequences

B: name one of them

K: the worst one + is that the buyer will be__ euh+ euh++ will be captured by his debt+++in addition + he will lose the power of euh + purchasing + euh especially for who has limited salary
**B:** cars become necessary nowadays + specially in the city because it make travelling easier and it + it + + safe time + and if those who have limit salaries can’t + euh + + euh + can’t afford to buy a car after + I don’t Know + + 15 to 20 years + euh + they won’t enjoy the driven of his car

**K:** euh + but most of them don’t know that buying cars + euh + by + by + by this system is not a __a garantied investment

**B:** it is a choice they must take

**K:** I’m not agree with you at all + because euh euh + you are neglecting the traffic jam which becomes euh becomes a euh a + a big problem in the large cities + if you go to Algiers you will notice that + + and euh euh surely you you will be (laughing) crazy by the euh the obstruction of roads besides don’t forget the accidents and its tragedy results + euh lately the number of death become horrible.

**B:** euh roads and the organisation are the problems of the state and the system of traffic which euh euh they (...) + extend (...) the highways and accidents happen in other countries more than us euh + and euh even they try + even they buy cars by cash so euh + it’s a + a matter of self responsibility

**K:** It’s not obvious for me euh + + if I have the + the authority I’ll change this system by promoting public transports + by providing buses + trains euh tramways in cities + and (...) underground railways if it’s possible and also planes + euh trains for euh long travels and by this way I’ll preserve our lives( laugh) and decrease the __ pollution at the same time

**B:** public transport (...) usually find (...) places (...) crowdy and most of the time we face the rush hours + + and euh the the effect of euh pollution of cars is smaller comparing with euh euh with the industrial companies

**K:** It euh still for me a + euh + a big problem + laugh) we need to solve it rapidly

**B:** I hope so (laugh)
GAMES:

MY LAST LETTER IS YOUR FIRST:

**Teacher:** OK + so I’ll start With a Word+then+ Miss...listen to the last letter of my word+ ok? And you strat a your word with it+ OK= Did you understand the principle of the Game?++I give you an example+++For example if I say table+ then e is my last letter+ you for example can say+euh+ euh+education+ Is that right?

**S1:** yes Madam

**S2:** Yes

**S3:** Mrs. can we use propre nouns?

**Teacher:** No+ it’s better to use

**S2:** for example names of countries

**Teacher:** Ok+ you can + no problem+ but please pay attention to what your neighbour says++ oK? Shall we start?

**S5:** yes

**S1**

**Teacher:** Right+ so I say++ Teacher (laugh) + now you?

**S1:** Euh++euh Rain

**T:** good=rain+yes+ next?

**S2:** n+ night
T: Good+Next?

S3: Good? Euh++eh+eh+

T: come on quick+ let’s do it quickly

S3: euh+ doctor

T: yes+ doctor

S4: River

T: Good +quick

S5: River (laugh)

T: (laugh) you’re cheating+ no+ That’s too easy

S5: (laughing) but Mrs it

starts with r

T: Ok + I accept
### Fiche Unités d'enseignements et organisation des enseignements

**PREMIER ET DEUXIEME SEMESTRE**
(400 heures par semestre)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unité d'enseignements</th>
<th>MATIERES</th>
<th>STC.</th>
<th>COEF.</th>
<th>VOL. HOR.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fondamentaux 1</td>
<td>Écrit : Compréhension et Expression</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3h</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oral : Compréhension et Expression</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3h</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Origine et Évolution de la Langue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1h</td>
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<td>Morphosyntaxe (Théorie et Pratique)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3h</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Courants et Concepts linguistiques</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.30h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phonétique (Théorie et Pratique)</td>
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**15 CREDITS « STC »**

| Coef. UE : 15          | Histoire des Idées et des Aires Culturelles | 1    | 2     | 1.30h     |

**UE de découverte 2**

| 3 h hebdo | Langues de Spécialité | 3    | 2     | 1.30h     |

**5 CREDITS « STC »**

<p>| Coef. UE : 4          | Histoire des Formes d'Expression Artistique et Genres Littéraires | 2    | 2     | 1.30h     |</p>
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| UE TRANSVERSALE 4 |
|                  |
| 3 h hebdo        |
| 5 CREDITS « STC »|
| Coef. UE : 4     |
|                  |
| Langue Etrangère 2 |
| (obligatoire)     |
| Espagnol          |
| 3                |
| 2                |
| 1.30h             |
|                  |
| Informatique      |
| 1                |
| 1                |
| 1.30h 1/15        |
|                  |
| Sciences de l'information et de la communication |
| 1                |
| 1                |
| 1.30h 1/15       |
# DEGREE COURSE

## ANNEXE I

### First Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Hours per Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module composed of (written expression + listening comprehension + reading comprehension)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Expression</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phonetics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Linguistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arabic Language and Literature</td>
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### Second Year

<table>
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<tr>
<td>General Linguistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phonetics</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Civilisation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Civilisation</td>
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<td>British Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arabic Language and Literature</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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### Third Year

<table>
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<td>Phonetics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Expression</td>
<td>1.30</td>
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<td>British Civilisation</td>
<td>3.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Civilisation</td>
<td>1.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Literature</td>
<td>1.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature of the Third World</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Literature</td>
<td>2.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistics</td>
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<td>Arabic Language and Literature</td>
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<td>Psychologie</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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### Fourth Year

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar in Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar in Civilization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar in Linguistics</td>
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<td>TEFL</td>
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<td>Psychopedagogy</td>
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<td>Extended Essay / Pedagogical Training</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
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ANNEXE II

Contents of the modules

COMPREHENSION AND ORAL EXPRESSION

This course is divided into two parts

A. Listening comprehension

This part is aimed to help the student improve and develop a comprehension of spoken English, and this by exposing him to different forms of speech: (expository, conversational, formal, colloquial, etc.)

B. Objectives

At the end of this course study, the student should be able to:

1. to follow and grasp large stretches of speech at natural speed.
2. to comprehend the structural arrangement of oral discourse.
3. to recognize and comprehend modern terminologies, idioms and contextual meanings.
4. to recognize style as indicated by stress and intonation patterns.
5. to perceive and interpret meaning expressed by intonation patterns such as the speaker's mood, attitude, feelings, intentions, etc.
6. to extract the literal meaning (basic information) from what is listened to, that is, to be able to identify, the topic, general meaning, and be able to summarize a passage.
7. to draw the inferential meaning from the literal meaning.
8. to evaluate critically the information according to various references, drawing on personal experience, opinions, etc.

Suggested exercises

ORAL EXPRESSION:

This part of the course will train the student to develop a certain degree of fluency and to hold an coherent conversation, while discussing various topics, expressing personal attitudes, and opinions.

Objectives

At the end of the course study, the student should be able to:

1. produce models of speech with accurate pronunciation, accuracy of sounds, intonation, stress, etc., in everyday modern spoken English.
2. correct grammatical structures and verbal expressions.
3. manipulate grammatical structures and verbal expressions in drills.
4. use current language functions appropriately: greetings, varying degrees of courtesy in social situations, evaluation, etc.
5. communicate original thought orally by means of such activities as discussions or debates on current issues, culture, education, etc. Special emphasis on Algerian realities. At this stage, correct verbal expression, including pronunciation and style, is an important performance criterion.
6. initiate free expression of personal attitudes and opinions in various speech situations, with appropriate style and refined choice of words. At this level, overall fluency and the manner of expression becomes of primary importance.

Suggested exercises
LISTENING COMPREHENSION

1. Discussions.
2. Interviews.

II. Situational and functional English (as opposed to structural English). B Emphasis on the grammatical points taught in grammar course.

1. Tenses, sentences, structure
2. Basic idioms.
3. Elements of phonetics (intonation)
4. Introduction to colloquial English.

Exercises:

1" year: guided dialogues, language games.
- pronunciation drills (practical grammar and phonetics)
- communication situation (guided)

Oral expression:
Exercises: Discussions
- Role selection

Lab: songs, listening with comprehension to authentic material, pronunciation drills

2nd year: Listening comprehension

Introduction to different registers
Exposure to different dialects

Oral expression:
- Free dialogues  Language games
- Technical language

3rd year: Listening comprehension

BBC programs, plays, American and English
TV programs

Oral expression
Public speaking
Correction of mistakes
Language games and interviews
WEBLIOGRAPHY


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http://ltr.sagepub.com

http://iteslej.org

http://pine.zero.ad.jp/

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