TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS AT TERTIARY LEVEL: PROBLEMS AND DECISIONS

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It is a widely spread notion among educators that teaching speaking requires only the knowledge of grammatical and semantic rules. We consider it is not enough. This article aims to prove that in order to provide effective guidance in developing competent speakers in English it is necessary to examine the factors effecting students' communicative competence and find decisions to solve them.

If we want to make our students communicatively competent in English as a second language, it seems wise to assume that speaking skills will play a vital role in achieving the overall competence. It is rather hard not only for students at secondary school but also by students of colleges and universities to speak the target language fluently and appropriately. Therefore it is necessary to provide effective guidance in developing competent speakers of English.

It has now become a dire need for students at tertiary level to speak and interact in a multiplicity of situations through English. Even in many contexts, speaking skills are the basis on which a person's language competence is judged. But it is a matter of great concern that most tertiary learners can hardly speak a foreign language fluently even when they have learned the language for minimum 14-15 years of their lives – from juniour classes to higher educational establishments.

Making a literature review we may assume that most scholars generally consider speaking as one of the major productive skills. An acknowledged Ukranian methodologist S. Nikolajeva assumes that "speaking proficiency involves language activities for developing individual's communicative competence. Thus communicative competence is qualified as purposeful, productive, independent, dynamic and integrated"[4, p.143].

Another famous Ukranian scholar O. Vishnevsky points out that "speaking is an integrated process that combines the habits of sounds, vocabulary and grammar [5,p.113]. Many methodologists claim that speaking is a skill which enables us to produce utterances, when really communicating; it is also a desire and purpose driven. In other words we genuinely want to communicate something to achieve a particular end.

Besides a famous British scholar J. Harmer states that "good speaking activities can and should be extremely engaging for the students. If they are all participating fully – and if the teacher has set up the activity properly and can then give sympathetic and useful feedback – they will get tremendous satisfaction from it [2,p.123].

Consequently, due to minimal exposure to the target language and contact with the native speakers, educators attitude towards teaching speaking skills, university learners in second language in general are relatively poor at spoken English, especially regarding fluency, control of idiomatic expressions and understanding the cultural distinctions.

It has been suggested by most scholars that target language learners need explicit instructions in speaking, which as any other language skills has been learned and practiced. It is too often assumed that spoken language skills can be developed simply by assigning students general topics to discuss or by getting them to talk on certain subjects.

Evidently less attention is paid to the factors that inhibit or facilitate the production of spoken language. Among these factors the central role is devoted to listening. It plays an extremely vital role in the development of speaking activities. Speaking feeds on listening, which precedes it. It should be noted that when one person speaks, the other responds through attending by means of the listening process. In fact, during interaction, every speaker plays a double role – both as a listener and a speaker. If a person doesn't understand what is said he/ she can hardly respond. So, speaking is closely connected with listening, which is the basic mechanism through which the rules of language are internalized.

The second important factor is sociocultural. In order to speak the language fluently, one must know how the language is used in a special context. It is well-known that each language has its own rules of usage as to when, how, and to what degree a speaking may impose a given verbal behaviour on his/ her conversational partner. It is our sociolinguistic competence that allows us to be polite according to the situation we are in and to be able to infer the intentions of others. In our everyday life we vary the kind of language we use according to the level of formality and familiarity. We usually express solidarity with the representatives of other cultures in chat or at a party, conference etc. We are to express a great amount of respect towards representatives of other nations not to hurt them. Thus, we can make a conclusion that a sociocultural factor is another important aspect that effects speaking greatly.

The other effective factors related to second language learning are emotions, self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude and motivation. Educators should take into account that students at universities like any other learners are concerned with how they are judged by the others. They are very cautious about making errors in what they say. Thus they should be motivated by the educators explaining that errors are learning steps and they never "lose face" if they make mistakes or fear to speak English.

The objective we put forward at the beginning of this article can not be fulfilled without paying special attention to activities that stimulate communication. Since most target language learners learn the language in their own culture, practice is mostly available in the class.

So the key factor in learning English as a second language is the opportunity given to learners to speak. For this a lot of practice is needed. The lecturers role in this process is prior. They must arose in the learners a willingness and need to speak. On the other hand they can be involved with their students during a speaking activity provided they don't start to dominate. Sometimes educators may intervene in some way if the activity is not going smoothly. From the point of view of J. Harmer "prompting is often necessary but, as with correction, teachers should do it sympathetically and sensitively [2, p.132].

A possible way of stimulating learners to talk might be to provide them with extensive exposure to authentic language through audio-visual stimuli and with

opportunities to use the language fluently. Professors should design activities considering all the skills integrated because any task involves more than one macro skill. Effective interactive activities should be manipulative, meaningful and communicative, entailing learners in using English for a variety of communicative purpose. More specifically these activities should be based on:

* authentic material or real-life situations;
* the ability of learners to manipulate and practice specific features of language;
* the possibility to rehearse communicative skills they need in real life;
* the activation of the psycholinguistic process of learning.

In conclusion to these criteria, particular attention should be attached to relevant speaking suggestions. They provide learners with opportunities to learn from auditory and visual experience, which enable students to develop flexibility and make them much more confident speakers if activation is a regular feature of lessons. In different types of activities provided as examples further students can demonstrate the optimal use of different learning strategies and behaviours for different tasks.

1. An aural stimulus: oral activities. Carefully selected and well-prepared activities such as listening to news reports, dialogues or short passages can serve as an input for further interaction. In practice students are listening to news, dialogues or short passages and afterwards act them out in different ways. Students are stimulated to listen to the whole information or a segment and then they can be provided with a work sheet of comprehension questions based on the heard information. Then students are divided into pairs or groups and work on an information gap activity. They complete the whole picture by sharing that information, negotiate the meaning of the material heard, answer questions which motivate students to speak.

We can also practice retelling stories, which they heard encouraging their communicative language ability. It is better if they do not only retell the story but comment events provided in it.

On this account we can conclude that listening always precedes speaking. If someone fails to understand what is said, he/she will not be able to respond correctly. That is why it is imperative to find out whether students understood the listening material and are ready to comprehend. So speaking is closely intertwined with listening or the aural medium through which the rules of language are basically internalized.

2. Visual perception: oral activities. It seems to be particularly important to expose students attention to many kinds of scenes, situations. They also need to meet audiovisual materials such as appropriate films, video tapes etc. Despite the best verdict the educator puts forward listening material is usually hard for students to understand. The main reason, we suppose, is that our students are lack of opportunity to interact with the native speakers.

Watching videos or films students can easier except the information as they can notice the nonverbal behaviour and types of exclamations and fill in expressions that are used.

Succeeding practice of dialogues, interviewing, role-playing, jigsaw listening, playing the listening in chunks, vocabulary prediction, dramatization will lead to deeper

learning and can be helpful in getting students to practice speaking. Visual stimuli can serve a good starting material for interaction. Short segments of films or videos let students predict what is coming next. What is more while watching students can focus on the content and imitate the verbal or nonverbal messages and communicate naturally.

3.Text discourse: oral activities. "The output of the process of language production is a text, which once it is uttered or written becomes an artifact carried by a particular medium and independent of its producer. The text then functions as the input to the process of language reception" [1,p. 97].

Thus it proves that appropriate reading material facilitated by the educator and structured with comprehension questions can lead to creative production. Oral reports, story-telling can be produced from newspaper or magazine articles or any other additional sources linked with the topic learned. Some additional input such as hotel brochures can be used for making reservations, menus for ordering meals or searching for products in the supermarkets. We dare to conclude that language input and output for oral activities can be derived from a wide range of sources that form the basis for communicative tasks of different sorts, which can help learners deal with real situations that they are likely encounter in the future.

4. Sociolinguistic dimension: oral activities. It is generally noted that no one can learn the language of other nation without knowing its culture, which is related to the appropriate use of language (f.ex. how native speakers are used to greet each other, make an apology and what form the apology is to take). For sure this is defined by the shared social and cultural conventions of a particular group of speakers.

A Common European Framework of Reference emphasizes the fact that knowledge of the society and culture of the community in which a language is spoken is one aspect of the knowledge of the world.

Cultural learning is illustrated by a serious of activities and strengthened through physical enactment can motivate students.

Educators should present situations that make students think about cultural aspects of the country the language is learned to avoid cultural misunderstanding.

Essentially, thought-provoking information and questions can follow each description or anecdote for in-class discussion. Students are determined to analyze and decide what went wrong and why, which will force students to think about how people in the target culture act and perceive things, and which will inevitable provide a deeper insight into that culture. This kind of exercise can hit a healthy balance between the necessity of teaching a target culture and validating the students native culture, which will gradually reflect students national heritage.

Summing up it should be mentioned that speaking plays an important role in language learning. In order to provide effective instructions, it is necessary for the educators of English as foreign language carefully examine the factors, conditions and components that underlie speaking effectiveness. In order to manage useful communicative competence it is necessary to acquire skills, experience and focus on success.

References

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Резюме

Ця стаття покликана розглянути проблеми навчання говоріння іноземною мовою студентів у вишах, а також пропонує варіанти їх вирішення. Говоріння відіграє важливу роль у навчанні мови, адже в більшості студентів виникають труднощі у вільному спілкуванні іноземною мовою. Цей вид мовленнєвої діяльності має практичне спрямування і цілком інтегрується із читанням, письмом та аудіюванням. Запропоновані в статті вправи слугують мотивованим чинником для вдосконалення навичок говоріння. Для того, щоб цей вид мовленнєвої діяльності був ефективним, необхідно враховувати всі перелічені в статті компоненти.