

ПРОБЛЕМИ ТЕОРІЇ І МЕТОДИКИ НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ

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ENGLISH TEACHING OUTCOMES

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The article is devoted to the questions connected with English teaching outcomes that promote the students' conversational practice in language classroom.

Language education, English teaching outcomes, students, teacher, curriculum.

Often teachers of English as a foreign or second language still face a situation where students are interested only in learning to read and write the new language and directed conversational practice has little relevance. But it is rare for people who study another language not to have a desire to speak it. Most students are eager to converse in the new language and conversational practice therefore assumes primary importance in their learning experience.

Within the field of education over the last few decades a gradual but significant shift has taken place, resulting in less emphasis on teachers and teaching and greater stress on learners and learning. This change has been reflected in various ways in language education and applied linguistics, ranging from the Northeast Conference (1990) entitled «Shifting the Instructional Focus to the Learner» and annual «Learners' Conferences» held in conjunction with the TESL Canada convention since 1991, to key works on «the learner-centred curriculum» [15] and «learner-centredness as language education» [20].

Analysis of the latest research studies and publications

The diversity of theoretical approaches in the area to be analyzed might suggest its importance (D.E. Alvermann [1], D. Ary, L.C. Jacobs, A. Razavieh [2], A.F. Ball, M. Farr [3], T. Bongaerts, N. Poulishie [4], M. Canale, M. Swain [5], R. Davis [6], Julia M. Dobson [7], C. Ely, L. Pease-Alvarez [8], D. Fuchs, L. Fuchs, P. Mathes, D. Simmons [9], P. Gu [10], R. Kidd, B. Marquardson [11], T. Kral [12], M. Lessard-Clouston [13], K. Matsumoto [14], D. Nunan [15], R. Oxford [16], E. Pearson [17], J. Rubin [18], J. Sharkey [19], I. Tudor [20], R. Vann, R. Abraham [21], C. Weinstein, R. Mayer [22], L. Yu [23].

The aim of the research is to review English teaching outcomes that normally prepare the students for conversational practice in language classroom.

Presentation of basic material of the research. In directing conversation sessions for students of English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL), the teacher, will help the students move from pseudo-communication, in which their use of English is fictitiously predictable, to communication where they express their personal ideas and needs in the context of reality.

1. Setting the Stage for Conversational Practice. Before students embark on conversational practice, obviously they must be familiar with some grammar patterns and vocabulary words – how these are pronounced and how they are combined to form meaningful utterances. If students have learned the basic patterns of English in a formal classroom context, these were probably taught through one of two major methods or a combination of both: the audio-lingual approach (sometimes called the aural-oral method)

and cognitive-code learning. There are, of course, other language teaching methods in use today but they incorporate modified forms of the audio-lingual or cognitive-code techniques [7].

2. Conversational Practice at Various Proficiency Levels. A few EFL/ESL teachers, particularly those who use the audio-lingual approach, feel that conversational practice should be introduced only when students have reached the intermediate or advanced level. Students must master all of the major patterns first, these teachers contend. Then they can begin to use the language creatively. The problem with such a procedure is that pronunciation drills, oral or written grammar exercises, questions on reading selections, dictation exercises, vocabulary drills -all of the necessary manipulative activities that give the students mastery of English patterns – also tend to condition them to regard English as classroom mental gymnastics, rather than as a means of communication.

As a result, the students may reach the intermediate or advanced stage performing satisfactorily in the most intricate exercises but actually dreading situations where they must carry on an elementary conversation. The fact is that language drill has rendered them psychologically unprepared to use their English as a means of expression. To avoid this distressing situation, it is essential to schedule conversational practice at the earliest possible stage of language learning. As soon as students have mastered a given pattern through manipulative drills or exercises, teachers can use this pattern in carefully controlled conversation format so that a process approaching conversation may take place.

By the time the students reach the intermediate or advanced level, they will be accustomed to exchanging ideas through classroom conversation. This, of course, will facilitate the application of their English in conversational abilities to situations outside the class [7].

3. Kinds of conversation groups. Directed conversational practice for students learning English may occur in regular classroom surroundings or in non-academic environments such as conversation clubs at one's home.

Native language factors in conversation groups.

a) Groups with the Same Native Language Background. Most English conversation groups are formed of students who have the same native language and cultural background. Sometimes the teacher is a fluent speaker of the students' native language and is well acquainted with the culture. In other cases the teacher knows only English and the culture(s) associated with English.

If teacher and students speak the same language, teacher may find it helpful to use it occasionally for certain explanations. On the other hand, if teacher does not know the students' native language, the teacher makes the conversation period more productive because the students and the teacher must use English to communicate.

b) Groups with Different Language Backgrounds. Some English conversation groups consist of students with different native languages. While the teacher may speak fluently one or two of the languages represented in the group, it is unlikely that teacher will know all of them. Therefore, teacher conducts the class much as the monolingual teacher does. Although the teacher may not know much about the language and culture of each student, he knows how to stimulate the students to talk about their respective backgrounds, adding variety and interest to the conversation session [7].

4. Qualities that make teacher a successful conversation group leader. A teacher, who speaks English fluently and who is reasonably inventive, interested in students, friendly, firm and patient should make a fine conversation leader. A teacher with these qualities can serve as a conversation group leader [7].

5. The challenges of conducting conversational practice. Simply getting conversational practice scheduled in an academic English teaching program can, in itself, be a challenge. EFL/ESL courses are in some instances so concerned with the «pacing» of a class schedule that they expect the teacher to cover an unrealistic number of pages in the text or other material, allowing little or no time for conversational practice. Once conversation sessions have been scheduled, whether in classes or social gatherings, new challenges confront the conversation leader.

The following is a list of major ones, along with suggestions on how to handle them.

The students have adjusted to a passive role during the manipulative phase of language learning and are unprepared for the active role demanded in conversational practice. (Even though the students may participate conscientiously in oral repetition practice, they are using canned phrases that illustrate abstract situations – not thoughts or ideas of their own. A teacher must guide them out of their dependence on pre-fabricated language material, impressing on them the importance of associating words with thought and action, to create sentences that convey relationship with reality).

The students (especially if they are adults) are frustrated by having to channel their mind into new, elementary language forms that are so different from those they are accustomed to. (Sometimes this inhibits the students, making them unwilling to express themselves altogether. As a conversation leader, a teacher must be sympathetic to their frustrations and make them feel that what he is saying is a worthwhile step toward fuller expression, even if it must be couched in the simplest forms of English).

The students do not have sufficient command of English to engage in conversation. They simply are not prepared for this kind of activity and if pushed into it, they will make so many errors that the experience will be counter-productive. (A teacher should never program conversation sessions unless the group is ready for them. It is far preferable to postpone conversation until the students can truly benefit from it).

The students would like to express themselves in English but are afraid to deviate from the safety of the sentences they have practiced and the words they have memorized. (In this case a teacher helps students by pointing out that with the words and structures they already know, they should be able to think of a way to put them together to express their thoughts. Teacher's evaluation of the situation will increase their self-confidence and encourage them to solve the problem on their own).

Students are too shy and afraid to take part in the conversation session. By remaining silent, they may develop excellent listening comprehension but little ability to express themselves orally. (These students should be helped to overcome their fears to speak. Quite often they are afraid of «losing face» by making mistakes in English. If teacher explains that they learn by their mistakes and that everyone in the class is apt to make mistakes, the shy students may become more willing to join in the conversation).

The students are at different proficiency levels. The more advanced students do most of the talking or are bored, while the less advanced students fail to participate. (In these

situations it is advisable to divide the class into smaller groups. Assign one advanced student to each group and have him serve as a leader. Leaders should develop conversation according to teacher's instructions and under teacher's constant supervision) [7].

6. Motivational factors. Most students study English because they believe it will benefit them in one way or another. They see English as a means to earn more money, to fulfill certain education requirements, to travel abroad, to gain access to the culture of English-speaking nations, or simply to meet more people. A primary responsibility of the teacher is to revive motivation. Without strong motivation students will fail in their attempt to bridge the gap between the manipulative and the communicative phase of language learning and their hopes of speaking English fluently will never be realized. English language teachers are always looking for better ways to help students. This implies that teachers are involved in educational research [7].

The research process is typically described as composed of «stages» (D. Ary, L.C. Jacobs, A. Razavieh, 1979 [2]): defining a problem, analyzing previous studies related to it, selecting a research strategy, selecting or developing appropriate instruments, collecting data, interpreting them and writing the research report. In doing research, teachers should not only work on each of these stages but should also develop a systematic research attitude of students.

The conceptual idea of research follows a model of professional competence and action proposed by Paez-Urdaneta [12]. Paez-Urdaneta based his model on Newell and Simon's model of human problem solving (G.B. Davis and M.H. Olson, *Sistemas de informacion gerencial*, Chapter 8: Los seres humanos como procesadores de informacion, Bogota: McGraw-Hill, 1987) [12].

In the field of language teaching, the researcher may be a teacher of any educational level, a student-teacher, a teacher trainer, or an educational administrator or exactly a student. The events that he/she confronts in the language space constitute what we would call «real-life» problem. The researcher examines these events and then approaches them from a professional point of view (so-called problem space,) and defines a special research problem in operational terms and selects a strategy to study the problem as a research task [12].

Conclusions and recommendations for further research. So, teaching students who have a limited understanding of English language can be a daunting task. Since ESL students speak a different language at home, some of them do not know the meanings of English words and phrases and it can be difficult for teachers to communicate with them. Nevertheless, teachers can exercise more patience and try to find the right ways to help to their students become more proficient in the language. Here are a number of effective teacher's strategies for teaching ESL in language classroom which can be recommended for further research: the importance and impact of teacher/learner interaction in creating a supportive environment for purposeful learning; identification of common problems or concerns for each category of teacher talk; identification of classroom strategies that encourage effective, meaningful interactions; regular practice of identified strategies in at least three application activities; reflection on personal teacher talk to acknowledge strengths and identify areas of needed improvement and etc.

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Присвячено питанням, що пов'язані з висвітленням результатів викладацької діяльності, які сприяють підвищенню рівня розмовної практики студентів на практичних заняттях з англійської мови.

Мовна освіта, результати викладацької діяльності, студенти, вчитель, навчальна програма.

Представлены результаты преподавательской деятельности, которые способствуют повышению уровня разговорной практики студентов на практических занятиях по английскому языку.

Лингвистическое образование, результаты преподавательской деятельности, студенты, учитель, учебная программа.