



TEACHING COMMUNICATION AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL

Dildora Umidjon qizi Rakhimova
Student

National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek
Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Email: theprincessfirdaus@gmail.com

Abstract: The thesis describes distinctive methods and activities for teaching communication at a secondary school. Several suggestions are also stated by different authors for teaching speaking skills.

Key words: communication, speech, listener, fluency, form-focused instructions, meaning-focused instructions, visual stimuli, controlled oral work, free oral work.

Speaking is probably the language skill that most language learners wish to perfect as soon as possible. Speaking is more frequently used than writing. The main function of spoken language is to socialize individuals. On the contrary to writing, spoken language is produced and processed in real time, the speaker and listener have limited time to plan and produce what they want to say and understand what they listen to. Speech is generally used in face-to-face conversations; it is temporary, spontaneous and variable. Spoken language is supported by body language such as gestures or facial expressions or often called as a non-verbal communication. We teach speaking as learners consider this particular skill as one of the most important and also the most challenging skills. Communication is the most common way of building interpersonal relations. Learners often evaluate their success in language learning on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency.

Students having ability to translate their thoughts and ideas into words are found to be more successful in school. Without developing good speaking skills, students have to suffer lifelong consequences because of their inability. Ability of speaking English also plays an important role in developing reading and writing skills. As Rivers says, when we read and write, we use what we know of the language orally. Speaking skill is required everywhere, from simple conversation to formal public speaking [1]. Fluency in speaking English is needed for professional purpose a lot; like doing international business, diplomatic jobs or for higher studies. Whereas young generation aspires professional careers in English dominant communities where most required qualities of candidates are presentation skills and fluency in speaking. Also, after completing Higher Secondary education, at the tertiary level, especially at universities, students are encouraged to communicate in English and most of the lectures are delivered in English. Besides, students who are

going abroad for pursuing higher studies or for earning livelihood, ability to speaking fluently is considered most advanced facility for them.

Famous scholar I.S Nation claim that students should be offered form-focused instructions and meaning-focused instructions. Form-focused Speaking goes deeply into details of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. This stage is suitable for beginners. An effective way how to start teaching foreign languages is to base speaking on some simple, useful phrases and sentences e.g. greetings, simple questions and answers or personal descriptions which are easy to remember. These can be practiced by repetition drills. By repetition drills the teachers can change speed, the learner who is to repeat, the content of the sentence and the way of choosing the substitution. As it is stated that: "Drills play a useful part in a language course in helping learners to be formally accurate in their speech and in helping them to quickly learn a useful collection of phrases and sentences that allow them to start using the language as soon as possible." [2]

Meaning-focused Speaking is that stage of speaking where attention lays on the message being communicated. The activity develops learners' ability to speak. For this Nation suggests several ways:

A. The teacher presents new vocabulary or grammar (it is based on form-focused instruction) and then the students are given some practice.

B. Frequently, before students start to speak, they work in groups or pairs to prepare for the activity. The activity gives learners the opportunity to learn from each other.

C. Students are given topics to talk about. They may prepare it for homework, use dictionaries or a reference text and then they present what they have prepared.

D. Often, the activities are supported by pictures or written texts. They appear in a raking activity or a problem-solving activity where the text contains important data about the situation and so on.

E. Many speaking activities force students to ask each other. The pattern of these activities is that, each learner receives different information for completing the activity. In these kinds of activities students discover different names, two-way tasks or information gap.

Controlled oral work. Among controlled oral work the authors include the dialogue. The advantage of dialogue is that it can be used for controlled, guided or free work. It is also possible to use the dialogue for each level, starting with elementary level. The students prepare mini-dialogue in pairs even in the first lesson. Controlled oral work can be supported by drills (similar to R.S Brown's and Nation's opinion), especially substitution drills which are widely used. The advantage of drills is that the error is almost eliminated and the students feel more comfortable to speak, which is a very important point mainly at lower levels. G. Broughton says that substitution drills: "Demonstrate much more clearly to the class that this is not simply mechanical drill but language practice with a visually demonstrated communicative function in a real-life situation in which the student can find himself."

Free oral work. It is the last phase in which the students should be able to produce such an amount of language that they will be able to express themselves. This phase is typical for advanced students. The aim of the teacher in this phase is to create such situation and stimuli that all students will be actively involved in a communicative way. By the stimuli the authors mean: visual stimuli – pictures, maps, cartoon, films or photographs that are motivating for discussion starters.

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Another stimulus is written words – magazines, newspapers (excellent for developing skill of reporting), leaflets, book according to the level etc. and aural stimuli – sound on CDs or cassettes. Also, games or puzzles play an important role in teaching speaking skills.

Further, the authors suggest group work as a good tool of free oral production activities. Most of the techniques are prepared in groups at the beginning and then they are brought back to the class, of course, there is automatically less teacher control and more pupil-centeredness. [3]

Conclusion

There is no doubt that in the era of globalization speaking is more important than ever. As English is a foreign language in our country and our education system does not put much emphasis on teaching speaking, it is recommended that speaking should be properly taught by following the appropriate methods and techniques. We can notice that speaking competences are complex skills that need to be developed consciously. They can be developed with practice in classroom through activities, which promote interaction between students.

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