

CONCEPTS FOR TEACHING SPEAKING IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Abstract. to be able to communicate fluently in a foreign language is the number one goal for many language learners. However, it seems that the teaching of oral skills in language classrooms does not have an important role. There are many reasons: the higher status of written language, teaching to the tests (of written language), teaching the textbook (with emphasis on written language), and lack of knowledge of how to teach speaking. The purpose of the article is to discuss the issue of how foreign language (FL) speaking can be taught based on 1) how speaking is learned and 2) how speaking proficiency is defined. More specifically, 1) How do learning theories translate into teaching speaking at classroom level? And 2) What is the significance of the current understanding of language proficiency as reflected in the models of communicative competence and the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001) and its Companion Volume with New Descriptors (Council of Europe, 2018) to the teaching of speaking in formal foreign language contexts? On the basis of the theoretical and research reviews, some pedagogical implications and suggestions for research are provided. The pedagogical implications concern the teaching of fluency and formulaic sequences, the teaching of spoken grammar, the teaching of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. Classroom applications of the sociocultural theory include pair and group work, communicative activities with opportunities for the negotiation of meaning, and creative spoken production. It is suggested that teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) be applied as a means to integrate theory with classroom applications. Suggestions for related research are provided.

Keywords: *teaching speaking, second language speaking competence, English language classroom.*

Introduction

The teaching and learning of speaking are a vital part of any language education classroom; not only does the spoken language offer 'affordances' for learning as the main communicative medium of the classroom, but it is also an important component of syllabus content and learning outcomes. However, teaching speaking remains challenging for many English teachers. A key issue here is whether what happens in a speaking classroom is concerned with 'doing' teaching or 'teaching' speaking. In this paper, I consider some of the essential elements that comprise speaking competence and present a teaching-speaking cycle designed to address the teaching of speaking systematically. The paper finishes with a brief analysis of the key aspects of the teaching-speaking cycle identifying how it covers areas that are central to planning a holistic and sequenced approach to the teaching of speaking.

The blend of content and pedagogy that is offered in the present article consists of a theoretically informed account of speaking and some applications that have been shown successful in teaching oral skills in classroom contexts. The two frameworks that the discussion draws on are learning theories and the notion of speaking proficiency (communicative competence). In other words, the purpose of the article is to discuss the What and How of teaching speaking. The question what should we teach when we teach speaking? Refers to the speaking competences that are part of an individual language proficiency and communicative competence, as defined in the Common European Framework (Council of Europe, 2001) and its recent update, the Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2018). Some answers to the question How should we teach speaking? Are searched for in the two major theoretical strands, the psycholinguistic and sociocultural theories, and related research. It should be noted that the discussion does not attempt to be a comprehensive account of teaching speaking but rather a discussion of selected issues, which will lead to a fruitful interaction of theory and practice for the teacher-researchers who are teaching speaking in their ecological context. The structure of the remaining article is as follows. Section 2 begins with a discussion of speaking in the framework of the two major strands of language learning theories, the cognitivist-psycholinguistic and the sociocultural theories. In

each section, the first part is an introduction to the theory and the latter part provides implications for teaching speaking.

Methods

This study involves students of secondary school. Comprising quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Quantitative data analysis was done applying speaking test which was appropriate for intermediate level language learners, qualitative data analysis – applying discourse analysis. The current study presents the results of the research conducted within B1 level language learners focusing on speaking skills in the English language classroom. The results depict students' opinion on teaching speaking to students in the English language classroom during three months and their improvements during this time. In order to evaluate the efficiency of the courses created summative evaluation research was conducted applying a students' survey and analyzing students' test results. The course piloting lasted for 3 months. Students had an introductory workshop to get familiar with the interactive learning platform, then they did speaking tasks independently, in parallel they had regular group meetings to do tasks and case studies. After the course piloting the students filled in evaluation questionnaires and wrote feedback essays. Moreover, I used a test based on 2 types of questions: two-minute speech about event description; picture description. They are an individual work. In both pre and posttests I used these types of questions.

The research aim is by conducting summative evaluation research to evaluate the efficiency of the methods and methodologies applied in the courses and their application to develop students' speaking comprehension as well as enhance relevant 21st century skills required in their field in the future. The research problem is associated with developing learners' speaking skills – how to select appropriate tools and methodologies that could develop learners' language competence at the same time enhancing the development of their 21st century skills.

Results and discussion

30 students were involved in the evaluation research. Students' profile: 15 students 10 A grade and other 15 students 10 B grades of school 21. 14 of them were B1 level students, 16 of them were A2 level students and questionnaire comprised 100 Likert scale type opinion variables. Additionally, the questionnaire also included several questions on respondents' profile (country, languages spoken, language levels, age group, field of studies and the number of years they have studied the target language). It covered the evaluation of the speaking comprehension. The questionnaire was applied during the post course piloting session. Students were encouraged to record their experience while piloting the courses, their overall impression, positive and negative aspects, their commentary and others. All these researches have been done in the English language classroom. The research implies a mixed-model design involving a quantitative tool - a students' questionnaire and a qualitative tool - students' essays. Quantitative data analysis was done applying descriptive and inferential statistics tests by SPSS: means (61%-75%), modes (69%-83%), medians (63%-76%), ranges (51%-39%); Students' essay results showed noticeable difference during the three months: means - 52%-76%, modes - 61%-85%, medians - 65%-74%, range- 53%- 40%.

Conclusion

Students highly showed wide range of topic related vocabulary and grammar range in their speeches. They found learning speaking comprehension during classes very useful, visually appealing, interesting, interactive and creative, well-structured and it was easy for them to understand how to describe events and pictures. Students acknowledged that learning speaking skills had enabled them to develop their knowledge of professional lexis, pronunciation and grammar habits and gain certain useful field knowledge. It favored the development of students' oral language, the relevant 21st century skills and according to their self-evaluation motivated them to become autonomous learners. It also helped students to acquire some specific subject-related knowledge, especially developing language competence and enhance students' field knowledge.

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