



HOW TO TEACH THE SPEAKING SKILL IN THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 20 th August 2021 Accepted: 11 th September 2021 Published: 10 th November 2021	Helping language learners to develop a satisfying language proficiency is considered one of the top priorities that the language teachers often concern themselves with. In relation to this, a great attention is given by both, teachers and learners to speaking proficiency because speaking is in fact a crucial part of the language learning process. Learners of English as a foreign language often encounter difficulty in learning English, especially when it comes to learning to speak which forms a great obstacle in communicating their messages and needs in English. The present paper tries to answer the question of how to teach speaking in English in doing so, it provides a detailed account of how this skill is addressed in the teaching material in the communicative approach which is currently followed in the Iraqi schools: primary, intermediate and secondary. It explains as well the roles of both, the teacher and the learner during the teaching process. It also shows that the learning process cannot be completed without the evaluation the learners through testing so as to measure the learners' achievement and understanding

Keywords: Language Learners, Speaking, Learning English, Listening, Speaking, Reading And Writing

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper tackles the speaking skill as a crucial part of the learning process of English. That's why it should be well addressed in the process of teaching. Learners of English often complain about the difficulty of gaining proficiency in speaking English. The present paper aims at answering the question of how the speaking skill is taught so as to gain speaking proficiency (communicative competence) in English. It is restricted to handling this matter within the framework of the communicative method approach. It is of a great value to teachers of English and those who are interested in the field of teaching English as foreign language. The paper first shows the importance of the speaking skill in language learning. Then it exhibits how it is taught according to the communicative method of teaching since it is the latest method in approaching the teaching of English as a foreign language in Iraq

2. THE MAIN GOAL OF TEACHING ENGLISH

Language teaching is mainly concerned with helping the language learners to develop an adequate language proficiency. In this respect, speaking received the greatest attention on the part of both, teachers and learners because speaking is a crucial part of the language learning process. It is one of the four skills that are targeted in teaching English as a foreign language. listening, speaking, reading and writing
These skills are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It can be said then that the major goal of teaching the speaking skill is to achieve communicative efficiency. (Bahrani and Soltani , 2012 : 25)

2.1 Communicative Approach in Language Teaching

The communicative approach aims to develop a communicative as well as a linguistic competence in learners of English. The first term is related to rules of use, i.e., the extralinguistic factors governing the use of language such as setting (place and time), purpose, mode, field, participants and their relationships; whereas the second concerns itself with the capacity for producing grammatical rules, lexis, cohesion items ...etc. (Hejal , Jabur , Sadeeq & Rodhan , 2012 :28)

In an attempt to achieve such a goal, we have to concentrate, in teaching, on the "Accuracy "and "Fluency "of the teaching strategies and techniques that are used in the classroom. "Fluency" refers to the activities which encourage the use of language habitually; and these activities should concentrate on developing a language interaction which is very close to that used by native speakers. "Accuracy", on the hand, means "the accuracy of the activities in which the learners discuss certain aspects of language due to the pedagogical situation organized by the teacher ". (ibid)

2.2 Spoken Language Skills

When dealing with the skills related to the spoken language, one has to remember that people in real life situation usually spend more time in listening and speaking than in reading and writing. Nevertheless, this does not mean that reading and writing are not important. (Bygate, 1987:1)

Actually, the spoken language skills consist of two important abilities which are:

a. "understanding the spoken language (listening); and

b. communicating an idea orally to others (speaking)" (Fawzi, Hashim, & El-Shayib, 1997:25, 26). The first one is receptive, while the second is productive. Both of these skills are active ones because communication takes place internally in the first one and in the second one communication is realized in the spoken utterances uttered by the speaker. So, speaking is a productive oral skill in which learning other elements of language (such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) is also achieved. Teachers should take into account, when teaching the speaking skill, that these elements are not the main purpose of teaching speaking. Therefore, teachers shouldn't treat them as end targets. (Muklas, 2017:58)

2.3 The Instructional Material

The instructional materials which are used as an input for the communicative tasks can be taken from a wide range of sources such as: news-paper texts, picture stories, business cards, shopping lists, maps, post cards, drawings, letters (formal and informal), reports, short stories, poems, plays, etc. Exposing the learners to authentic material is highly important because it represents the reality for which learners are being prepared to deal with. (Hejal et.al., 2012: 28)

2.4 Instructional Sequence: Pre-task, Task, and Follow-up Cycle

The communicative method in teaching adopts a three-phased procedure (in teaching English in general, and in teaching speaking in particular), as Nunan (1999, 11) explains, as follows:

A) The pre-task stage in which the learners are prepared and warmed up to deal with the task. It helps to make the learners interested in the coming task. So, matters like the purpose of the task and the roles of the learners are explained. New vocabulary and new language items which the learners may need, when doing the task itself, are also explained in this stage. Here are some examples of the things that learners can do at this stage:

1. Look at a list of comprehension questions and try to predict the answers before carrying out a listening task.
2. Classify a set of words describing emotions into "positive", "negative" and "neutral" before reading a magazine article about emotions.
3. Practise a model conversation and provide their own variations before doing a role-play.
4. Study a picture of a group of people at a party and try to guess which people are married or going out with each other before hearing a conversation about the couples.
5. Brainstorm the ways of how cities of the future can be different from cities now before writing a newspaper article.
6. Match newspaper headlines and photos before reading articles.
7. Check off words in a vocabulary list that are associated with living in a foreign culture before listening to persons telling their experiences of living abroad.
8. Rank a list of factors from most to least important anticipating if a relationship is going to last before listening to a small lecture on the subject.
9. Talk about the best year they ever have before participating in an information gap exercise.
10. Look at pictures extracted from advertisements and guess what they sell before listening to them.

B) The task stage in which the learners deal with the task itself (in pairs or small groups), while the teacher goes around them providing them with guidance and help whenever needed. The techniques used in this stage enable the learners to listen and respond to spoken language and also to communicate efficiently. Here are some of these techniques:

1. Role-play: the learners are asked to perform in the others' shoes using the English language pretending that they are someone else. The ultimate goal, here, is to give the learners the opportunity to practice communicating in different social roles.
2. Dialogue: a brief dialogue or several mini-dialogues are presented followed by an oral practice of each utterance in the dialogues. Questions based on the topic of the dialogue can be asked.
3. Scrambled sentences: the learners are given a passage (a text) in which the sentences are scrambled and not properly ordered. Then, they are told to re-order them correctly. (Hejal, 2012: 29)
4. Language games: developed games can have an incredible effect on learners in that they make learning "more interesting and energizing" and help to keep high spirit during the learning process (Amrullah, 2015: 31).

C) The post-task or follow-up stage: the teacher checks and evaluates the outcome then assigns further work to the learners as homework. In this stage, the teacher can give feedback to the learners; debrief them on some aspect of the preceding task; or encourage them to reflect on what they have learned and how well they are doing. One way to achieve this stage is done through the evaluation obtained from carrying out tests. With regard to speaking, oral tests are used to measure oral comprehension (listening) and production of language (speaking). Listening represents the recognition of language, whereas speaking indicates the production of language. (Nunan, 1999:13)

2.5 Testing the Speaking skill

The following test formats can be used to test the speaking skill:

- a) Free interviews : e.g., talking to learners individually or collectively on any topic .
- b) Describing pictures : e.g., asking about the content of a picture or a drawing .
- c) Information transfer : presenting gap information through notes or pictures .
- d) Role –play : e.g. ,learners assume roles with or without cued information.
- e) Oral presentations : e.g., learners prepare and give short talks .(ibid : 36 -7)

However , Darwesh and Al – Jarah (1997 :74-77) say that in order to be as fair as possible in testing speaking , it is necessary to use the tests of dialogues and conversations to test the learners' ability to use language at the recognition and production levels .

In testing dialogues at the recognition level, the teacher may present the learners with a text based on the functions and notions found in their textbooks, then gives three or four sentences one of which will either paraphrase, explain, or give an answer to that text. The learner has to select the most suitable alternative.

In testing dialogues at the production level, on the other hand, the teacher offers the learners a situation based on one of the situations presented in the textbook and ask the learner to give an appropriate response to that situation . The teacher should encourage the learners to give more responses by continuing to talk with them.

The evaluation of the learners' performance in testing dialogues at the two levels is based on the following:

- a) "Relevance "which shows the learners' ability to produce a suitable response for the required situation.
- b) " Fluency" which refers to the learners' ability to give responses with no hesitation.
- c) " Pronunciation" which considers the way the learners handle the production of sounds, stress, intonation and rhythm.
- d) "Grammar" which means the ability to produce grammatically and contextually acceptable responses.

In testing conversations, the teacher has to prepare a list of directed general questions based on pictures, general knowledge, personal information or commands, and then asks the learners some of these questions. The evaluation also depends on relevance, fluency, pronunciation and grammar. (Ibid:78-82)

2.6 The Teacher's and Learner's Roles

Within the framework of the communicative method, the teacher's roles can be summarized, as Hejal et.al, (2012: 30-1) specify, as follows:

- 1) Controller: the teacher controls the behavior of the learners concerning their actions, speaking or writing.
- 2) Organizer: the teacher organizes the resources in order to facilitate the interaction process inside the classroom.
- 3) Participant: the teacher must be involved in the interaction; yet, he must be capable of disassociating himself from the interaction so as to monitor it.
- 4) Prompter: the teacher needs to encourage the learners to participate by asking one another. Furthermore, he can prompt the learners with the information they have forgotten.
- 5) Resourcer: when learners are engaged in the activities, the teacher has to be aware of what is going on in the classroom. He should be able to offer help whenever needed.
- 6) Assessor: it is a major task of the teacher that he assesses the learners' work to see how and how well it is performed. He can show the learners' errors and help them realize such errors before correcting them.

The learner's role in the communicative method can be summarized in the following:

- 1) Participating in the activities carried out in the classroom.
- 2) A negotiator within the group members stating his point of view while dealing with the exercises he is exposed to.
- 3) A language user when he tries to interact with other members of his group and also with the teacher.
- 4) Seeking knowledge from his teacher and asking about the language problems he is facing during the learning process. (Ibid: 30)

3. CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that the speaking skill, along with the other learning skills, is best to be taught through the communicative method which adopts a three –phased procedure for teaching English as a foreign language as follows: 1) pre-task stage which prepares the learner for the task. 2) task stage which contains the material that the learners should acquire and master. 3) follow –up task which involves evaluating and testing to measure how far the learners go in understanding and acquiring the given material. With such process, we can have better results in teaching the speaking skill in addition to the other language skills.

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