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TEACHING SPEAKING: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In the reality of our fast-moving world, where nations tend to integrate and cooperate to accomplish common business goals, it is necessary to master foreign languages which facilitate the process of communication and eliminates socio-cultural misunderstanding between parties involved in it. Speaking is one of the most essential elements of language learning and doubtless is one of the most difficult to master.

The aim of the thesis is to look into the main obstacles which prevent students from expressing their views in a foreign language and methods which help to tackle the problem.

In the process of learning speaking the following stages can be defined:

- **Pre-Production Stage.** This stage doesn't involve actual speaking as students have only scarce receptive vocabulary. They are only able to imitate, repeat and reproduce separate phrases with fixed vocabulary and simple clichés;
- **Early Production Stage.** Learners are able to reproduce simple constructions making grammar and vocabulary mistakes. The main assignment at this stage is to deliver the humble message and be understood;
- **Speech Emergency Stage.** Learners have certain command of vocabulary and grammar structures which is still limited. On the other hand, they are able to perceive new information which involves socio-linguistic differences from their native tongue if the information is adjusted to their specific needs;
- **Intermediate Fluency Stage.** Students are able to use more complex structures and compound sentences in the process of expressing their opinions. They have obtained the capability to participate in more abstract and hypothetical discussions;

- **Advanced Fluency Stage.** Learners at this stage have near-native ability to maintain the conversation, react, initiate, contemplate and speak their mind regarding a wide variety of topics.[1, p.36]

Learners tend to have difficulties while speaking at all stages. The most common of them are: lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, nervousness, lack of motivation, personal factors such as shyness, lack of ideas, inappropriate atmosphere in group.

There are activities that are widely used to boost students' speaking skills:

Discussions are probably the most commonly used activity in the oral skills class. It helps the students to think critically and make quick decisions, and learn how to express and justify themselves in polite ways while disagreeing with the others. However, this type of activities can be suggested to learners who are at least at intermediate-fluency stage.

Role-play. Another way of getting students to develop speaking. Role-play appeals to students because it gives them the opportunity to be creative and to put themselves in another person's shoes for a while.

Information Gap. Information gap activities have such objectives as problem solving and information collecting. Furthermore, each participant plays an important role because the task cannot be completed if the partners do not provide the information the others need. These activities are effective because everybody has the opportunity to talk extensively in the target language. [2, p.122]

Brainstorming. The good characteristics of brainstorming are that the students are not criticized for their ideas so they will be open to sharing new ideas.

Story-telling boosts creative thinking. It also helps students express ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have.

Interviews. Students can carry out interviews on chosen topics. It gives them the chance to practice their speaking skills not only in classroom but also out of it and facilitates their socialization.

Story Completion. This task is aimed at revealing and motivating the students' creativity as well as practicing the language.

Picture Narrating. This activity has a certain number of sequential pictures. Students are supposed to tell the story which is suggested in the pictures paying attention to the criteria provided by the teacher as a rubric. Rubrics can involve the vocabulary or structures, they need to use while narrating.

Picture Describing. Another way to make use of pictures in a speaking activity is to give students only one picture and ask them to describe what there is in the picture. This activity can initiate learners' creativity and imagination as well as their public speaking. Speaking tasks connected with pictures are helpful for students who lack abstract thinking as the images give them clear idea on the subject of speaking.[3]

In conclusion, it can be said that speaking is one of the essential components of language learning. However, many students find it difficult to speak a foreign language regardless of their level because of a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. And the success of this process depends on the teachers, the type of assignments they give to their students for boosting their skills, and the atmosphere they create in their classes.

References:

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