DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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У статті розглядається проблема формування комунікативної компетенції студентів та її складової частини – говоріння. З урахуванням програмних вимог, автор визначає практичні цілі навчання студентів говоріння, пропонує стратегії, наводить приклади мовленнєвих завдань для розвитку вмінь діалогічного та монологічного мовлення, розроблених з урахуванням принципів комунікативно-орієнтованої методики навчання іншомовного спілкування. Розглядається можливість навчання студентів говоріння з використанням текстів різних жанрів із спеціально розробленими до них комунікативними завданнями, мовленнєвими ситуаціями та вправами для розвитку навичок і вмінь говоріння.

***Ключові слова**: комунікативна компетенція, мовленнєві навички та вміння, діалогічне та монологічне мовлення.*

В статье рассматривается проблема формирования коммуникативной компетенции студентов и обучения говорению как составной части коммуникативной компетенции. Учитывая требования программы, автор предлагает определенные стратегии, приводит примеры речевых заданий для развития умений студентов в диалогической и монологической речи, которые разработаны на основе

Studies in the field of developing students' communicative competence have always attracted researchers' attention and remain actual as the problem might hardly be considered solved. The problem has been studied by a lot of outstanding methodologists such as W. Littlewood [11], Austin S [9], Brown G [10], Passov E [2], Skalkin V [7,8], and there have been offered some approaches and strategies which are worth attention. We are going to consider the problem and offer some strategies for developing students' speaking skills, which are part of communicative competence along with listening, reading, and writing skills.

Communicative competence incorporates linguistic skills – grammar, vocabulary and phonetic, which provide the necessary basis for developing communicative skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. We are focusing on developing speaking skills, so the strategies we are going to consider offer a variety of activities aimed at developing grammar and vocabulary skills first with further developing speaking skills.

Fluent spontaneous dialogical and monological speaking are methodologically defined as the main objective of teaching second year students speaking skills. If to consider the essence of monological and dialogical speech, the differences in their production can be clearly seen and these differences result in different approachesin teaching them.

Dialogical speech is the process of interaction of two or more communicants and is supposed to realize some communicative function:

• Asking for information and providing information.

• Offering something and accepting or refusing.

• Exchanging ideas or opinions.

• Persuading and grounding ideas or opinions etc [5].

Specific communicative functions of dialogical speech require that students have skills in its structuring keeping in mind peculiarities of producing dialogues. Characteristics of dialogical speech is that it combines two kinds of communication – listening and speaking which requires specific strategies for developing students' linguistic and communicative skills to develop their abilities in producing dialogues.

To produce a dialogue students are expected to acquire such listening skills:

• Identifying the communicative purpose of the utterance.

• Identifying functions in a conversation.

• Deducing the meaning of unknown vocabulary.

• Tracing the development of an argument.

• Understanding thematic shifts in a conversation.

• Distinguishing facts and opinions.

• Comparing information etc [5]

Speaking skills necessary for a good conversation are:

• Maintaining an extended conversation.

• Interacting with a sufficient degree of fluency and spontaneity.

• Providing relevant explanations and arguments.

• Taking initiatives in interviews.

• Expanding and developing ideas with little help or without it.

• Seeking and giving information, suggesting, originating ideas, supporting the conversation etc [5]

Considering the aims and objectives of the Year Two Syllabus [5] we have defined the communicative types of dialogues the students are to acquire – exchanging ideas and opinions and making agreements and arrangements. We have also defined the length of a students' conversation in the terms of time and the number of replies of each communicant. In our opinion, students are to produce a fluent conversation on a suggested situation lasting 3 minutes and involving 6-7 replies of each communicant. The reply may consist of two-three sentences and contain a respond and an initiation to keep the conversation going on.

We offer to consider a few techniques which can help students acquire and develop their skills in dialogical speech.

It has been already mentioned that linguistic skills make the basis for developing communicative skills. So, first we offer to focus on developing vocabulary and grammar skills. The activities may include:

• Making a glossary necessary to speak on the suggested situation.

• Giving synonyms to some key words and phrases.

• Interpreting words and phrases.

• Giving descriptive adjectives.

• Offering vocabulary to start, keep on and finish the conversation.

Considering the communicative type of the dialogue, which is to be produced on suggested situations, students are expected to demonstrate specific vocabulary skills. For instance, if the students are offered to produce a conversation exchanging opinions, they are supposed to describe the subject, express preferences and wishes, exemplify, make speculations, compare and contrast, agree or disagree, approve or disapprove, persuade etc.

It's also necessary that students acquire grammar skills to express their ideas. The Year Two Syllabus defines that students are expected to use modal verbs, understand and differentiate the shades of their meanings; use verbals and predicative constructions in different registers and communicative situations; know the system of moods and express attitudes to the content of utterances using appropriate mood forms [5, p. 69-70].

Considering the syllabus requirements students are to be able to express their ideas not only using topical vocabulary but using appropriate grammar structures either. Teaching students to use grammar structures accurately and appropriately may be provided by a set of specific activities.

Here we will focus on the activities to develop students' listening skills and the skills to produce appropriate responses. The students may be offered to listen to a range of recorded initiations and respond to them using topical vocabulary and an appropriate grammar structure. For example, students hear an offer – *Why not turn to a travel agency? (Expected responses: I wish we turned; We could really do it; Turning to the agency could make the choice easier etc.); wish – We could stay in London for a few days more (expected responses: I like the idea of staying here so much! I don't mind staying here and doing the sights; It's desirable that we visit some art museum etc.).*

Another grammar-focusing activity aims at developing students' skills in choosing the appropriate grammar structure. Students are given charts with a number of utterances expressing various ideas – suggestions, criticism, desire, reproach, supposition etc. They are offered to work in twos and take turns in responding to them by choosing an appropriate utterance from another chart. A more advanced level – students respond without using any prompts.

The next step in developing students' speaking skills is teaching them to produce properly structured dialogues. Here we can offer scheme-based activities when students are instructed what meanings to express speaking on the suggested situation. For example, the students are given a task to exchange their opinions of going on a vacation by train. They may be instructed to follow the scheme – *inform and express satisfaction → support the idea and give the reason → say what could be better arranged → disagree and give reasons → say what could be changed next time → agree and give your vision.*

The schemes may be useful in developing vocabulary and grammar skills as well as in enabling students to properly structure their conversation. Nevertheless, the schemes may be used as helping means mainly at the primary stage of teaching students speaking. With the students' skills developing there should be more rational instructions which will provide the choice to use grammar structures. In these terms, students may only be offered to convey ideas expressing definite meanings which are listed in the suggested situation.

Actually, we consider it desirable that students should be suggested a communicative situation with clearly specified tasks. Considering the time limit and the number of utterances of each communicant the suggested situation should include: the body (the general description of the situation) and three terms (the subject to speak about, discuss or exchange opinions on). The general description and the terms may involve prompts as for the meanings that are to be expressed – suggest some idea, doubt or hesitate, emphasize, warn etc. Depending on the terms of the situation students may choose the means to express the meaning – topical vocabulary and grammar structures (moods, modal verbs, verbals etc.).

There may be a wide variety of activities for developing students' linguistic and communicative skills which actually depends on the students' individual peculiarities, their level of skills acquisition and their communicability. Besides, it is up to the teacher to decide which of the activities might prove effective to improve students' performance in and out of the class.

One more important aspect of teaching students speaking is developing students' skills in monological speech. Monologue is an organized kind of oral performance directed straight to the listener/interlocutor or to the audience and supposes definite speaker's utterances. Monologue is characterized by certain communicative, linguistic and psychological peculiarities, which are to be considered in teaching this kind of communicative activity.

Here we will consider teaching such types of monological speech as description, narration and speculation. The activities aimed at developing students' skills in describing (people, objects, places, events etc.), narrating and speculating may be effective if they are composed according to the main principles of communicatively-oriented methodology of teaching foreign language communication – situational factor and communicative functions, such as:

• *Informative* – giving information about subjects, objects, places, events etc.

• *Influential* – encouraging to or discouraging from activities, persuading, preventing etc.

• *Emotionally expressive* – using communication for describing a state, condition or emotions.

Considering these characteristics of monological speech teaching is aimed at enabling students to:

• Use communication strategies to carry on describing, narrating and speculating.

• Use fillers as a means of giving an impression of fluency.

• Convey degrees of emotion and highlight personal significance of events and experiences.

• Account for and sustain views clearly providing explanations and arguments.

• Outline an issue or a problem clearly.

• Speculate about causes and consequences, possible advantages and disadvantages.

• Synthesize and report information and arguments from a number of resources.

• Expand and support ideas with examples.

• Take follow-up questions [5].

Teaching monological speech starts with students acquiring vocabulary and grammar skills basic for this kind of communicative activity. These do not differ sufficiently from the ones necessary for developing dialogical speaking so we will pass on to developing speaking skills.

The resources for both dialogical and monological performances may be rather varied. The activities we are going to consider in this research are mainly based on supporting texts that students read or listen. These are fiction, educational materials, informative, entertaining texts, stories, newspaper or internet articles etc. presented in the form of a dialogue or monologue.

First, we are going to consider developing students' speaking skills by means of using fiction as a resource. Pre-text activities are aimed at developing phonetic, vocabulary and grammar skills, which enables students to polish these skills and produce correct utterances. Reading itself is done out of class as an independent activity when students focus on understanding the text using dictionaries and reference literature and commentaries to the text. Here we are considering the textbook *Skillmaster Intermediate,* which is the basic learning and teaching resource in our case [3, 4].

Text-based communicative activities provide speaking practice on a few levels. The first level – monological utterances of over phrasal level, which prepares students for producing monological speech of the second and third levels – mini-monologues and extended monologues. Mini-monologues may be prepared out of class or in the class and extended monologues are usually prepared out of class and performed in the class and, which is important, students are instructed to strictly arrange their speaking according to the suggested communicative tasks.

These involve:

• Outlining the story.

• Listing events.

• Describing and narrating events.

• Describing characters.

• Expressing personal attitudes (directly and indirectly).

• Summarizing the story (depending on helping materials like questions or without any).

• Narrating the story (depending on the previously made outline).

Narrating the story may have a few forms – narrating from the third person and simulating that is reproducing the story as if being one of the story characters or an imaginary observer.

The activities for developing speaking skills by means of using educational texts (informative, entertaining, newspaper or internet articles) may somehow differ from the ones mentioned above. These may involve:

• Defining the subject of the text.

• Defining its main idea.

• Outlining the text.

• Listing the most important information.

• Summarizing the information.

• Evaluating the information.

• Narrating the text.

All these activities are aimed at developing skills in producing monological speaking when students demonstrate accuracy, fluency and ability to express their personal attitudes.

Listening is another resource to develop students' speaking skills. Here we will provide examples of speaking activities based on the texts the students listen. *Listening and Speaking* is a resource book for teaching students' listening and speaking skills and provides a variety of audio texts, selected from authentic language learning materials by *Express Publishing, Longman and others,* and specially organized activities aimed at developing students' linguistic and communicative skills. The activities to develop students' linguistic skills are as follows:

• Explaining the meanings of words/word combinations from the text.

• Matching words/word combinations with explanations.

• Interpreting the meanings of words/word combinations.

• Using words/word combinations in students' own sentences or abstracts.

• Providing derivatives to words.

• Selecting synonyms.

• Rephrasing sentences using a different grammar structure similar in meaning to the one used in the sentence [6].

These activities are done before or while listening to texts.

Listening skills, that is students' skills in understanding audio texts of different genres and forms, are individually tested and evaluated. These skills are controlled by means of a number of tests provided as while- or post-listening activities and include such:

• Matching.

• Defining *True* or *False* statements/utterances.

• Filling in the gaps with missing words/word combinations.

• Filling in the gaps with missing information.

• Multiple choice tasks.

As for speaking text-based activities they may be rather varied. First, we offer to consider the ones, which aim at developing skills in producing over phrasal utterances. Here the students are offered to answer questions, agree or disagree with statements expressing suppositions, list or enumerate important events. A more advanced level – producing mini-monologues, which may also be answering questions, agreeing or disagreeing but with explanations, proofs, suppositions, giving personal attitudes etc.

Answering questions may be used as an activity to make a summary of the text. Summarizing in many cases seems to cause more difficulties than producing an extended monologue, so purposefully arranged questions may help students develop their skills in summarizing texts.

Producing an extended monologue is supported with preparatory activities – listing or enumerating events, outlining the information acquired, characterizing speakers or narrators. In this case students are instructed to stick to suggested situations or to narrate the text (monologue or dialogue) from the third person, simulate as if being one of the speakers or a third observer. Here the students are instructed to perform their monologues using the vocabulary given in the glossary. Depending on the size of the text the students listen to, on its form – either monological or dialogical, students are expected to produce up to two minutes' speaking of 10-15 sentences which are simple extended, compound or complex sentences.

In many cases the plot of texts and stories may lead to discussions which seems to be an effective way to develop students' speaking skills when they may display fluency and spontaneity.

In conclusion, we should admit that all activities we offer meet the Year Two Syllabus requirements and may be effectively used in developing students' speaking skills. The range and kind of activities may be varied and may be changed depending on students' individual abilities, their skills acquisition level, the objectives of the learning and teaching process and any other factors, which influence the development of students' communicative skills.

In our opinion, the problem of developing students' speaking skills remains actual and requires further researching, providing both students and teachers with all possible and available authentic materials that may help work effectively.

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ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

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