

Developing the Speaking Skill of the First Year Students of Computer University, Taunggyi

Khin May Zin, Tin Soe (U)

Abstract— This research paper is intended to develop the speaking skill of the first year students of Computer University at Taunggyi. The ability to speak English appropriately and effectively plays an important role for a person who wants to be a good speaker. In order to perform more effectively in higher education, the first-year undergraduate students need to learn more intensive and advanced ways of speaking. So as to develop their speaking not only competencies and knowledge they should have but also approaches are provided in this paper. It is also hoped that this research report will meet to the students' need and will enhance their speaking skill at intermediated level.

Keywords— Approaches, Competencies, Knowledge, Speaking Skill

1. INTRODUCTION

THIS paper focuses on developing the speaking skill of the first year students of Computer University at Taunggyi. In our country, English is taught as a Second Language and the language of the instruction. At present, among the four-skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking, the ability to speak fluently is one of the fundamental needs for our students. The capability to communicate effectively is noticeably related to be successful in many fields of occupation.

Effective communication is one of the great helps to meet educational needs of the students. To develop their speaking skill, there are hundreds of different ways for different learners. Most learners assume that the necessity to speak fluently in English is to consolidate lexical items, fundamental grammatical elements and using a wide range of vocabulary with an acceptable pronunciation as well. In practice, speaking is inevitably involved with both a command of certain oral skill to some extent and appropriate knowledge in current affairs. Though, sometimes, learners know much knowledge and abilities they should have, they usually have difficulty in expressing what they know and how to express accurately them because they are not getting used to spoken English in their daily life situation.

This report explores these aspects so that teacher can help learners more effectively to promote their abilities to communicate in the target language. If the teachers give the students much more exposure by arousing their existing knowledge in that language, they will achieve in exercising their oral skill. The main purpose of this paper is to build up learners' confidence, providing every factor what they need. And the goal of this paper is that of the students to be able to communicate in and/or out of the classroom.

Ma Khin May Zin is with the Department of English, Mandalay Technological University, Myanmar F. (g-mail: mayzin.tgi007@gmail.com).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Generally, it is said that 'Speech is primary' in linguistics. Speaking is an essential skill for every learner not only for academic purposes but for higher positions of occupation. One of the principal aims of a learner in studying English is to be able to speak competently. The best way to learn speaking is to practise both in the classroom and in real life situations.

In the modern age, the learners usually meet by chance such different types of exposure as listening to English songs, watching English movies and chatting on the internet as a way of recreation. They can give the users pleasure and interest as well as exposure. Moreover, in school or university, multimedia classroom, language lab, using projector and the solitary use of electronic appliances such as mobile phones organizers, palmtop computer, MP3, MP4, and so on, can be achieved to promote the students' functional efficiency. But they may not be able to apply their experiences well and have little ability to express their knowledge if they fail to pursue what they are ushered.

Generally, the learners' need is to be well-equipped with effective guidelines to become proficient speaker. Speaking is a means of interaction and so requires the ability to co-operate in the mutual event of speaking in turn. The learners also need to assemble their fluency in the speaking skill required in such contexts. Being practised in an effective and elaborate ways, students will overcome the difficulties encountered in the target language and will achieve their goal.

2.1. Four Competencies for Effective Speakers

In order to be an effective speaker, communicative language abilities are required for the students. They are linguistic competence, pragmatic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence.

2.1.1. Linguistic competence

Linguistic knowledge is ranged along a cline from "the big picture," e.g. knowledge of the way anecdote typically unfolds, to the 'fine print', e.g. knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. In fact, the boundaries between categories are blurred, and they work interdependently, such that in reality it is difficult to account for particular features of a speech event by reference to any single knowledge system.

2.1.1.1. Genre

There are two main purposes for speaking. Speaking serves either a transactional function, its primary purpose is to convey information and facilitate the exchange of goods or services, or it serves an interpersonal function, its primary purpose is to establish and maintain social relations. A typical transactional speech event is phoning to book a table at a restaurant. A typical interpersonal speech event is the conversation between friends that takes place at the restaurant.

These two basic purposes for speaking generate a host of different types of speech events. These, in turn, will be sequenced and

structured in accordance with the kinds of social and mental processes that they accompany. Over time and within particular speech communities, certain ways of realizing these speech events have become conventionalized to the point that they have evolved into specific genres. Genre is an elusive term, a type of speech event, especially in terms of how that speech event be labeled by its participants. There is a difference between saying 'I had a chat with the boss' and 'I had a job interview with the boss' or I did a presentation to the boss'. Knowledge of how specific genres such as chatting, job, interviews, or business presentations are realized is part of the linguistic knowledge.

2.1.1.2. Vocabulary

Language students need to learn the lexis of the language. They need to learn what words mean and how they are used. Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the word we teach in the foreign language. However, a new item of vocabulary may be more than a single word: for example, post office and mother-in-law, which are made up of two or three words but express a single idea. There are also multi-word idioms such as *call it a day*, where the meaning of the phrase cannot be deduced from an analysis of the component words. A useful convention is to cover such cases by talking about vocabulary "items" rather than "words". Teachers help learners with vocabulary directly or 'explicitly' by means of word lists.

A lot of conversation does consist of a very large extent of common words and short phrases as "well, yeah, but, I know" etc. Speakers employ a lot of words and expressions that express positive or negative appraisal. This is due to the fact that a lot of speech has an interpersonal function, and by identifying what is they like or do not like. It is necessary to distinguish between the words that speakers use (their productive vocabulary) and the words that they recognize (their receptive vocabulary).

2.1.1.3. Grammar

Knowledge of grammar is essential for competent users of a language. Grammar is theoretically possible to have short conversations where each utterance consists of nothing, the lack of formality makes the use of complex language unnecessary. In order to generate much more sophisticated range of meanings, the resources of the language's grammar is necessary to learn. There are a number of features of spoken grammar that are the audible effect of real time processing difficulties what we call *performance effects*. The demand of producing speech in real-time with minimal planning opportunities places considerable constraints on the kind of complexity. The sentence of written language is much more typical than of spontaneous spoken language.

2.1.1.4. Phonology

The 'lowest level' of knowledge a student draws on is that of pronunciation. Normally, the way pronouncing individual words, and the sounds that they are composed of, is not something that involves conscious choices. Words are stored along with their pronunciation and do not need to be reconstituted from scratch each time. Occasionally, however, learners will adjust pronunciation to take account of social context, so as not to sound too "posh". Or they will adopt an accent or a quality of voice for a particular dramatic effect. For example, when Kath told her kedgerie story, she adopted and exaggerated her mother's accent, to the amusement of her friends.

One area of pronunciation, however, where significant choices are available to students is in intonation. Intonation serves both to separate the stream of speech into blocks of information (called *tone units*) and to mark information within these units as being significant. In English, there is a fundamental association between high pitch and new information. So, within each tone unit, information that is being added to the discourse is made prominent through the use of a step

up in pitch. Intonation also serves to signal the connection between tone units. Typically, a rise in pitch at the end of the tone unit (that is, after the last stressed word) implies some kind of continuation; a fall in pitch suggests completion.

2.1.2. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatics describes the relation between language and its contexts of use, including the purposes for which language is being used. The way that specific speech acts (also called functions), such as complementing, suggesting, requesting, offering, and so on, are typically realized comprises part of a speaker's pragmatic knowledge. Pragmatic knowledge is knowing how to do things with language, taking into account its context of use. Knowing that one way of framing a request is "would you mind if ...", as in "would you mind if I turn the volume down?", is competent part of pragmatic knowledge. Speech acts can be realized indirectly that the statement 'the music is very loud' has the force of a request (to turn the music down). Because speaking often has an *instrumental function*, in that it involves getting people to do things, it typically forms one part of a reciprocal exchange. Languages employ an elaborate armoury of means to avoid threats to face. The use of politeness markers, such as *please* and *thank you* (or their equivalents), are universal. In English, as in many languages, the use of distancing devices, such as past tense forms and modal verbs, helps softening the potential threat to face of requests or commands. Knowing of how politeness is encoded in the language is obviously a crucial component of knowing how to speak.

2.1.3. Discourse competence

Knowing how to organize and connect individual utterances, as well as how to map this knowledge on to the turn-taking structures of interactive talk, is called *discourse competence*. Within the structure of a specific genre, its individual elements need to be connected so as to form coherent stretches of discourse. Discourse knowledge involves using grammar and vocabulary in order to connect speaking turns and to signal speaker's intention. The students are drawing on their lexical and grammatical knowledge to make connection between utterances and across turns, within the strict constraints of the rules of turn taking. The use of discourse markers such as 'well' is particularly important in terms of the fluid management of interactive talk. Discourse markers are used to signal one's intentions, to hold the conversational turn, and to mark boundaries in the talk.

Here are some common discourse markers and their meanings:

- Right, now, anyway: these mark the beginning or closing of a segment of talk
- Well: this is a very common way of initiating a turn and linking it to the preceding turn, often to mark the onset of a contrast, e.g. a difference of opinion.
- Oh: this is typically used either to launch an utterance or to respond to the previous speaker's utterance, often with implications of surprise or unexpectedness.
- You know, I mean: these markers serve to gain and maintain attention on speaker – the first by appealing to the hearer's shared knowledge, and the second by signaling that some kind of clarification is going to follow.

2.1.4. Strategic competence

Some learners seem to become dependent on their strategic competence at the expense of their overall linguistic competence. Strategic competence is achieved by means of what are called communication strategies. These strategies come into play when learners are unable to express what they want to say because they lack the resources to do so successfully. They compensate for this by changing their original intention or by searching for other means of expression. For example,

Speaker 1: The taxi driver gets angry, he loses his, erm, how you say?
Speaker 2: temper
Speaker 1: he loses his temper and he shouts me.

Of course, the speaker might decide that the message is simply not achievable, by whatever means, and adopt what is called an *avoidance strategy*, such as abandoning the message altogether or replacing the original message with one that is less ambitious.

Another type of strategy, called a *discourse strategy*, is the wholesale borrowing by the speaker of segments of other speakers' utterances, often in the form of unanalyzed units, as in this instance:

Speaker 1: When did you last see your brother?

Speaker 2: Last see *your brother* six years ago ...

A related discourse strategy is the repetition of one's own previous utterance:

Speaker 1: The woman hears a noise ...

Speaker 2: What kind of noise?

Speaker 1: The woman hears a noise, loud one ...

Such strategies are similar to the production strategies used by proficient speakers. In order to give the illusion of fluency and to compensate for the attentional demands involved in speech production, speakers use a number of 'tricks', or production strategies.

2.2 Extralinguistic knowledge

The kinds of extralinguistic knowledge include such things as topic and cultural knowledge, knowledge of the context, and familiarity with the other speakers. In the dinner-party conversation about kedgeree, the speakers share considerable background knowledge at all these levels and this is reflected in the assumptions they are able to make. This constitutes topic and cultural knowledge.

Context knowledge allows speakers to make reference to the immediate context, as in Hilda's mention of this Rioja (referring to the wine they are drinking). The use of mild oaths, such as *I mean for God's sake* suggests that, in this conversation, there is a level of interpersonal familiarity between the speakers that permits a degree of informality that would not be the case with total strangers.

Of course not all speaking events can rely on quite such a degree of shared knowledge. Explaining street directions to a total stranger or giving a lecture on quantum theory are both uses of speech that will require a considerable degree of explicitness. But because most speaking takes place face to face, and in a shared context, there is generally less need to be as explicit as one might normally be in writing. The 'situated' nature of speech means that it is characteristically *elliptic*: i.e. words, phrases, whole clauses are left because they are redundant.

2.2.1. Sociocultural knowledge

Sociocultural knowledge can be both extralinguistic and linguistic. This is knowledge about social values and the norms of behaviour in a given society, including the way these values and norms are realized through language. Knowing whether people in a given culture shake hands on meeting, or embrace is extralinguistic; knowing what they say when they greet each other is closely linguistic.

These have been a lot of debate as to the extent to which cultural differences cause misunderstandings or even breakdowns in communication. Unfortunately, the topic gives rise to a great deal of "folk theorizing" and cultural stereotyping, of the type. In fact, studies of conversational style suggest that there may be as many differences within a particular culture or between cultures. In any group of talkers anywhere, there is always someone who will dominate the conversation and someone else who won't say very much at all.

Nevertheless, there are certain speech events, such as greetings, requests, or apologies, where the risk of causing offence has meant

that these events have become ritualized in different ways across social groups. Part of a speaker's knowledge, is knowing what these sociocultural rules are and how they are codified.

2.3. Speech conditions

A number of speech conditions are divided into three categories: cognitive factors, affective (that is, emotional) factors, and performance factors.

2.3.1. Cognitive factors

- Familiarity with the topic: the greater the familiarity, the easier the speaking task; that is why it is generally easier to talk about your job, or your family, than it is to talk about something very removed from day-to-day life.
- Familiarity with the genre: giving a lecture or a speech will be harder of you're unfamiliar with those particular genre.

2.3.2. Affective factors

- Feeling towards the topic or the participants: generally, if the learners are well disposed to the topic they are talking about, or to the other participants, the easier it is likely to be.
- Self-consciousness: being 'put on the spot' can cause anxiety which will have negative effect on performance; likewise, knowing (or believing) that the learners are being evaluated can be prejudicial.

2.3.3. Performance factor

- Mode: speaking face-to-face, where the students can closely monitor themselves interlocutor's response and where they can use gesture and eye-contact, is generally easier than speaking over the telephone.
- Degree of collaboration: Giving a presentation solitary generally harder than doing it with colleagues because in the former case they can't count on peer support.

2.4. Approaches to Developing the Speaking Skill

There are many approaches to improving the speaking skill for the students. The teachers should give the students some exposure which can encourage and motivate their interest.

2.4.1. Using the language laboratory

Language laboratory has audiotape machines, videos, and computer. Students can listen to laboratory tapes through headphones. The students can get the following several advantages by using the language laboratory.

The double track allows students to compare the way they say things with the correct pronunciation on a source tape. In this way they can monitor and get feedback on their own performance, even without intervention of a teacher. Students can talk to each other through their microphones, record onto the tape and rewind tape without disturbing their colleagues.

When teachers want to speak to individual students in a laboratory, they can do so from the console. Unlike the situation, in the classroom, this is often difficult because it stops them from working away on their own. The attention the teachers give to one student does not distract the others. The language laboratory helps to train some students to really listen to what they say and how they say it. When they compare their pronunciation with the correct version on the tape, they begin to notice the differences, and this awareness helps them to hear and pronounce English better.

2.4.2. Using audio-lingual method

The Audio-lingual Method is also known as the Aural-Oral Function skills. Teachers can use some of these ways to improve the students' language acquisition.

2.4.2.1. Backward build-up (expansion) drill

This drill is used when a long line of a dialog is giving students trouble. The teacher breaks down the line into several parts. The students repeat a part of the sentence, usually the last phrase of the line. Then, following the teacher's cue, the students expand what they are repeating part by part until they are able to repeat the entire line. The teachers begin with the part at the end of the sentence (and works backward from these) to keep the intonation of the line as natural as possible.

2.4.2.2. Chain drill

A chain drill gets its name from the chain of conversation that forms around the room as students, one by one, ask and answer questions of each other. The teacher begins the chain by greeting a particular student, or asking him a question. That student responds, then turns to the student sitting next to him. The first student greets or asks a question of a second student and the chain continues. A chain drill allows some controlled communication, even though it is limited. A chain drill also gives the teacher an opportunity to check each student's speech.

2.4.2.3. Use of minimal pairs

The teachers work with pairs of words which differ in only one sound; for example, 'ship/sheep'. Students are first asked to perceive the difference between the two words and later to be able to say the two words. The teacher selects the sounds to work on after she has done a constructive analysis, a comparison between the students' native language and the language they are studying.

2.4.3. Utilizing task-based learning approach

An approach that foregrounds the performance of a task, and which only afterwards focused attention on the linguistic components of that task, is known as a task-based approach. It contrasts with the approach that is known as PPP (presentation-practice-production), in which the task is the culmination of an instructional sequence rather than its starting point. Task-based instruction was originally motivated by the belief that a language is best learned through using it. A task-based methodology is based on the belief that out of fluency comes accuracy and that learning is prompted refined by the need to communicate.

The aim of the students in language use is to create a meaning system which they can operate rapidly and efficiency in real time. In order to achieve this goal, they will use and develop language forms to which they have been recently exposed, but they will also adopt strategies to create form for themselves. The challenge for TBL is to devise a methodology which affords learners the freedom to engage natural learning process in the creation of a meaning system, but which also provides them with incentives to restrictive their system in the light of language input. The students can be reasonably confident that procedures of this kind will develop and sharpen learning strategies in a way which enhances language development.

3. NEEDS ANALYSIS

In order to find out the students' needs about the speaking skill, the questionnaires are given to the First Year Students and language teachers at the University of Computer Studies, Taunggyi. The questions are notable aspects of the information. The questionnaires reflect the students' lack of knowledge as well as exposure.

4. FINDINGS

According to data collected by questionnaires and activities, most of the students are fair and the rest are poor in their speaking skill. Although they are willing to learn speaking skill, they cannot do it because of time restrictions and different circumstances. On the

other hand, they can't use skills and strategies for developing speaking skill. Through interaction, learners have the chance to acquire the range of discourse skills they need in order to manage their own conversations, and to control the level and kinds of input they receive. Learners also need the experience of communication in a variety of situations, e.g in different size of groups and for different audiences, since different circumstances. Teachers can help by making students aware of such strategies, and encouraging their use. Previous educational experience may have resulted in students having a very limited range of strategies. In cases such as these, students may benefit from actual training in particular strategies. Certainly encouraging students to become self-reliant will rule the quality of their classroom learning.

If the teacher actually tried to correct every error, including those of pronunciation and stress, the lesson would come to a standstill and learners would become demotivated. Many students say they won't speak in or out of the class because they are afraid of making mistakes or being corrected in public. Few teachers correct students when they are doing an activity in pairs or small groups aimed at confidence building and fluency.

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers need to find ways to motivate students to interact more freely and more often in the target language. Learners need more chances to use the target language with each other, not only just to practise forms, but also to achieve results.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research paper is to assist students in their language development. The purpose of learning a language is to be able to communicate successfully in that language. It is essential therefore that every second language class is directed to equip students with the language skills they really need. Speech is primary. If the students want to express their ideas, opinions, desire and to establish social relationships and friendship, they need to speak. So, the speaking skill is important for every student. Most of the students are more proficient in writing than in speaking. In the process of speaking, actually, it is an integrated skill. But the students can't apply them in practice because of their lack of confidence. It is important to encourage the students not to be afraid of making mistake when they speak English. Students should be given time, space and enough exposure, and effective strategies can be provided, to develop their speaking skill. Therefore, the strategies presented in this paper will help the students to promote the speaking skill.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author's special thanks are due to Minister U Thaug, Ministry of Science and Technology, for initiation the postgraduate courses in English for Specific Purposes at the Mandalay Technological University.

The author would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of Professor Dr. Mya Mya Oo, Rector of Mandalay Technological University.

The author would like to express her respectful gratitude to her course co-ordinator, Daw Thidar Than, Associate Professor and Head of the English Department of MTU for her excellent advice and guidance.

The author wishes to describe her great gratitude to her supervisor U Tin Soe, Associate Professor from the English Department of the Mandalay Technological University for his invaluable supervision, patient guidance and kind help throughout her work without which this research paper would probably never have been completed.

The author is grateful to all her beloved teachers who have helped to improve the English efficiency in diploma and master courses.

REFERENCES

- [1] Scott Thornbury, 2005. How to Teach Speaking, Ocelot Publishing, Oxford
- [2] Ranold Curtar, David Nunun, The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language, Cambridge University Press.
- [3] Uenny Ur, 1996. A Course in Language Teaching, Cambridge the Teacher Training and Development.