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SOME DIFFICULTIES OF TEACHING SPEAKING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

When teaching a foreign language, teachers deal with the four skills with much emphasize on productive skills, mainly speaking in order to make the task of communication possible by using the English language in a target situation. Most EFL students face difficulties in learning speaking and have a weak speaking performance. This research discusses the problems and causes perceived by learners of English language in speaking. The prevalent problem faced by students is lack of vocabulary, while being afraid of making mistakes was the prime cause of problem which hinders them to speak.

KEYWORDS: *Productive Skills, Oral Communication, Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary, Fluency.*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most important skills in learning a foreign language as it allows us to communicate with others. It is a productive skill that enables the person express his thoughts, feelings and opinion. However, for most foreign language learners speaking in target language is not easy to undertake because learning to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. Furthermore, language learners must also acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use the language in the context of structured interpersonal exchange owing to the fact that effective oral communication is called for the speakers to use the language appropriately in various social interactions. This involves not only verbal communication, but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as, pitch, stress, and intonation. In addition, non-linguistic elements of speech such as gestures and body language/posture, facial expression, and so on, may accompany speech to convey messages directly. In other words,

speaking is the most complex and difficult skill to master. There are four components that are generally recognized in analysis of speech process. According to Lado they are as follows: [4:65]

1. *Pronunciation* – the way for students to produce clearer language when they speak. It deals with the phonological process that refers to the component of a grammar made up of the elements and principles that determine how sound vary and pattern in a language.
2. *Grammar* – it is needed for students to arrange a correct sentence in conversation. It is in line with explanation suggested by Heaton that student's ability to manipulate structure and to distinguish appropriate grammatical from in appropriate ones. The unity of grammar also learns the correct way to gain expertise in a language in oral and written form. [2:28]
3. *Vocabulary* – one cannot conduct communication or express their ideas both oral and in written form if they do not have sufficient vocabulary. So, vocabulary means the appropriate diction which is used in communication.
4. *Fluency* – can be defined as the ability to speak fluently and accurately. Fluency includes a reasonably fast speed of speaking and only a small number of pauses and “ums” or “errs”. These signs indicate that speakers do not have spent a lot of time searching for the language items needed to express the message.

MAIN PART

In learning English speaking, some students will make problems or errors when they try to uttered words, phrases or sentences. Problems or errors in speaking cannot correct themselves, therefore, it is needed explanation. According to Ur [8:121] there are some problems faced by the students in speaking. The problems of speaking include student inhibition, nothing to say, the low of participation, the theme to be spoken, and the use of mother tongue.

1. **Inhibition.** When the students want to say something in the classroom, they are sometimes inhibited. Because, they are worried about making mistakes, fearful of making mistakes and simply shy in speaking English language. Usually, students make mistakes in tenses, active and passive, and vocabulary during speaking. They use the wrong tenses.
2. **Nothing to say.** The students cannot think of anything to say, because learners complain that they cannot remember anything to say and they have no motivation to express themselves in speaking. Learners often have nothing to say, this is probably because their teacher had selected a topic that is not appropriate for them or they do not have enough information about it. Actually, it is very difficult for the students to answer when their teacher asks them to tell things in a foreign language, because they often lack of opinion about what to say and less of vocabulary in their speaking ability.
3. **Low participation.** The participation of the students is low when they speak. In a class with a large numbers of students, each student has very little talking time, because just one student talks at a time and the other students try to hear him/her. This problem is compounded by the tendency of some learners to dominate, while others speak very little or not at all.
4. **More mother tongue use.** The last problem related to the speaking ability is that students usually use mother tongue in speaking activities, because it is easier, and also they feel

exposed if they are speaking their mother tongue. If they are talking in small groups, it can be quite difficult to get some classes – particularly the less disciplined or motivated ones to keep to the target language. There are some reasons why learners use mother tongue in their speaking classes. The first reason is that when teachers ask their learners to talk about a topic that they do not have enough knowledge, they will try to use their language. The second reason is that the application of mother tongue is natural for learners.

Psychological Factors. According to Juhana [3:101], there are some psychological factors that are faced by the students in speaking English. They are as follows:

1. *Lack of Motivation.* Motivation is important to notice as it can affect students' reluctance to speak in English. In this sense, motivation is a key consideration in determining the preparedness of learners to communicate. Motivation can be driven by the teachers, other students, and also their parents. But they usually do not motivate them very well to speak the English language.
2. *Fear of Mistake.* Fear of mistakes in speaking the English language is also one of the big problems that usually students face in speaking. This fear is linked to the issue of correction and negative evaluation. In addition, this is also much influenced by the students' fear of being laughed at by other students or being criticized by the teacher. As a result, students commonly stop participating in the speaking activity. Therefore, it is important for teachers to convince their students that making mistakes is not a wrong or bad thing because students can learn from their mistakes.
3. *Anxiety.* Generally, anxiety refers to a transitory emotional state or condition characterized by feeling tension and apprehension and heightened autonomic nervous system activity, a state that can have negative and positive effects, and which motivates and facilitates as well as disrupting cognitive action such as learning. Students may end up with nothing to say towards their interlocutors or the audiences. They may confront certain feelings such as nervous, anxious, worry, shy, feeling afraid or fear of something worse happen whether they are trying to speak better. Students themselves have to realize their own psychological problems and they also have to deal with own anxiety states.
4. *Lack of Confidence.* Self-confidence plays a very important role in speaking the English language, if the students do not believe in themselves then they cannot speak the English language. Over a quarter of a million people in the world have problems towards their confidence. Self-confidence is knowing that we have the capacity to something good and being positive thinking. Concept of self-confidence relates to self-assuredness in one's personal judgment, ability, power, etc. sometimes manifested excessively. Good self-confidence comes from a focus on the self-consciousness. Lack of self-confidence can be made-up of several different aspects such as feeling guilty, shy, turned inward, unrealistic expectations of perfection, false sense of humility, fear of change or making mistakes, depression, etc. Depression can actually be a result of a lack of self-confidence. Here are some characteristics of lack of self-confidence:
 - a. A major confidence crisis;
 - b. A lack of faith in themselves to take on new challenges;

- c. Difficulty of being assertive;
- d. Fear of confrontation;
- e. An extremely low opinion on themselves;
- f. Difficulty in one area such as speaking in social group;
- g. Social phobia.

Lack of self-confidence may bring students into a threat of believing that they are not going to be a good English speaker. It also becomes a great problem which affect students' speaking performance. In shyness, students are not confident of themselves to speak, they are not able to remember the grammar rules and correct vocabulary in speaking the English language.

Linguistic problems. Other problems that may become a barrier for the students to become a good English speaker is the linguistic problems. Linguistics is a scientific study of language such as the study of language structure (grammar), words, and phonology. Generally, linguistics comprises the detailed of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Linguistic problems are those problems which make students' speaking ability become poor. There are some linguistic problems that affect someone in speaking. Those problems are:

- a) Lack of vocabulary needed to talk
- b) Poor in grammar
- c) Poor in pronunciation.

A. **Vocabulary.** Vocabulary is an individual word or a set of words which have specific meaning. Vocabulary is the knowledge of meanings of words. The words come in at least two forms: oral and print. Oral vocabulary is the set of words for which we know the meanings when we speak or read orally. While print vocabulary consists of those words for which the meaning is known when we write or read silently. The problems of vocabulary occur when someone is lack of vocabulary needs to talk and does not know how to combine the words into a good sentence. A great number of students who learn English as a foreign language have difficulties to use word and expression to speak. In addition, in real communication most people do not pay much attention to the correct grammar expression, but emphasize the content and how to reply. Students clearly know their mother tongue, but when they have to switch the language itself into target language such as English, they often get confused to combine and use proper vocabularies needed.

B. **Grammar.** Grammar is a study in which sentences are structured and formatted, so that it may be considered a bit boring to study correct grammar since it really is worth the time and effort. If learners do not know the rules of grammar, they will never be able to communicate using English effectively. Grammar becomes difficult because learners do not learn structures one in a time. Even the learners appear to have mastered a particular structure, it is not uncommon to find backsliding occurring with the introduction of new form to the learners' interlanguage. For example, the learner who has mastered the third singular person marker on the present tense verb is likely to overgeneralize the rule and apply it to newly emerging modal verb, thus producing errors such as "She cans speak English". These errors may appear when the students speak since they have not mastered the English grammar.

C. **Pronunciation.** English has become a language which connects people all over the world. The second or foreign language learners are also demanded to speak English naturally like native-speaker. A second language learner needs to master the individual characteristic of the sound of a new language. Furthermore, it will be good for the students to be able to speak naturally like the native speaker itself. According to Burns [1:37] it is more important that the English speakers can achieve:

1. Intelligibility (the speakers produce sound patterns that are recognizable as English).
2. Comprehensibility (the listener is able to understand the meaning of what is said).
3. Interpretability (the listener is able to understand the purpose of what is said).

For example, a speaker might say “It’s hot today!” as “Is ho day!”. This is unlikely to be intelligible because of inaccurate sounds, stress, and patterns. As a result, a listener would not find the speaker comprehensible, because the meaning is not available. Clear communication is essential in communication. The various features that make up the production of sounds in English are:

1. Suprasegmental features: linking, intonation, and word stress;
2. Segmental features: phonemes, consonant, and vowel sounds.

Pronunciation is as important as any other aspects of foreign language learning like syntax or vocabulary. Correct pronunciation is very necessary to develop speaking skill. It also has close connection to the other fields such as listening and even grammar. Once a person can pronounce correctly the endings of the words, for example, he can at the same time give grammatical information.

Apart from the problems faced by learners of foreign language, teachers are also one of the main contributors to this condition. In most high schools, English classes are teacher-centered and exam-oriented, speaking is usually ignored or abandoned. Students feel frustrated when required to communicate in English, even if they had studied English at upper-intermediate level. This frustration is exacerbated by a majority of teachers who do not take these issues into consideration in the course of their teaching, and this results in increased aggravation, anxiety and frustration among the students. The teacher must know the subject matter well and have a high level of English proficiency in order to successfully teach their students. The English of the teacher must of a high level than the students in the classroom. They need to make the class enjoyable as students generally learn better in a positive learning environment. Teachers cause anxiety because their input in the classroom is only in English, which make students worried and anxious. Moreover, when the teacher corrects language errors in the classroom, it causes some students to feel humiliated or as if they were being punished for their errors.

The attitudes and the likes and dislikes of students are crucial factors in the development of foreign language learning. Rubin & Thompson [9:9] defined attitude as the key to success in language learning. A learner’s attitude can also be defined as how they feel about other aspects of the target language, such as the culture and people associated with it. A student who admires the culture and wants to learn about may become more familiar with the target language as a result. There is a clear relationship between attitude and success and a positive attitude will help learners to achieve their goals. Language learners can benefit from a positive attitude, while a

negative attitude may lead to decreased motivation. Teachers also need to be aware of the fact that everyone has both positive and negative attitudes can be changed. Attitudes are internal factors that affect spoken language. An attitude or a set of attitudes can be described as a feeling about somebody or something based on individual experience. A student with positive experiences tends to have a more positive attitude. On the other hand, a student with a negative attitude seems unlikely to study English, which can be related to a failure of learning. Besides, students with positive attitudes can achieve higher scores than those who have negative attitudes. Bad attitude towards learning could create a cycle of demotivation in which the learner experiences difficulty in applying their English skills for the purpose of their communication. A negative attitude could lead to not wanting to practice speaking English. As a result, they become afraid of speaking English, and their ability to communicate in English in real-life situations is limited. Furthermore, students are afraid to consult with their teachers, as they have too much homework and not enough time to practice English in class. If students do not have good attitudes toward language learning, it would be difficult for them to improve their language skills.

CONCLUSION

The productive skills play a vital role in the learning operation since they form an essential part of the communication process in any language. Based on the investigations that have been conducted, the aspects that influence the students' difficulty in speaking are: first language (mother tongue), having no idea, lacking grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence. To overcome above mentioned difficulties some efforts can be made such as: taking additional English lessons, listening English songs, practicing reading, writing and speaking English, communicating with foreign citizens via social media, joining English club activities, watching western movies, participating in the conversation competition, replying to short messages in English and posting used English. Hopefully, engaging in these activities may help those who have problems in speaking.

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