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Didyk Olena

Senior Teacher of the Department of Pedagogics,

Translation and Foreign Philology

Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics

Дідик Олена Олександрівна

старший викладач кафедри педагогіки,

перекладу і іноземної філології

Харківський національний економічний університет імені Семена Кузнеця

Дидык Елена Александровна

старший преподаватель кафедры педагогики,

перевода и иностранной филологии

Харьковский национальный экономический университет имени Семена Кузнеця

TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING TO ADULTS: PROBLEMATIC

AREAS AND USEFUL METHODS

НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОМУ ГОВОРІННЮ ДОРΟΣЛИХ: ДЕЯКІ

ПРОБЛЕМИ ТА КОРИСНІ МЕТОДИ

ОБУЧЕНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ГОВОРЕНИЮ ВЗРОСЛЫХ:

ПРОБЛЕМНЫЕ ВОПРОСЫ И ПОЛЕЗНЫЕ МЕТОДЫ

***Summary.** Teaching speaking to adult students reveals some problems of internal and external origin. It's tremendously important to take those problems into account when choosing speaking activities for the class. The article addresses the main problematic areas of teaching speaking to adults and*

***Key words:** speaking, adults, ESL, speaking activities, teaching speaking.*

***Анотація.** Навчання дорослих навичкам англійського говоріння виявляє низку проблем, як внутрішнього, так і зовнішнього характеру.*

Дуже важливо брати це до уваги, готуючи завдання для групи. Ця стаття адресована головним проблемам навчання дорослих англійському говорінню та пропонує низку завдань.

Ключові слова: *навички говоріння, дорослі, завдання для розвитку навичок говоріння, навчання навичкам говоріння.*

Анотація. *Обучение английскому говорению взрослых раскрывает проблемы как внутреннего, так и внешнего происхождения. Крайне важно принимать в расчет данные проблемные вопросы, подбирая задания для говорения для группы. Данная статья адресована главным проблемным вопросам в обучении взрослых английскому говорению, а также предлагает ряд заданий.*

Ключевые слова: *говорение, взрослые, задания для развития навыков говорения, обучение навыкам говорения.*

A language is an important tool of communication. People all over the world use language to communicate, provide information, teach knowledge, to express thoughts and ideas. The world’s international language is English and the importance to learn it is obvious. In Ukraine English is taught from kindergarten then through school and up to university. Despite so many years of English classes, at universities, we still have students of low levels in English. There are four main skills in English to be mastered: listening, speaking, reading, writing. Mastering speaking in English is extremely important as the ability to express your thoughts and ideas in English is often considered as language success itself. The topic of this article is students’ problems in speaking English, possible ways of overcoming these problems and the teachers’ strategy in teaching and encouraging speaking.

Speech acquisition is the most natural process for a kid along with walking. Then why it becomes an extremely difficult task when we deal with an

adult group and mean speaking a foreign language? In this article main difficulties that adults encounter while learning English will be identified as well as given practical recommendations for overcoming them. The main function of a language is communication, therefore speaking skills in learning English as a second language can't be underestimated. From my personal teaching experience of about 16 years, I may confidently say that listening and speaking are among the most difficult English skills listed by students while reading and writing are considered less complicated. There are some explanations for these answers. When reading, there is visual support and students can refer back to what they've read. When writing, students have time to organize their ideas and draft out their answers. When listening, concentration is required to catch everything, or at least the gist of what is being said. If the essential information is being given out, for example, the time of a train, extra effort is required. Speaking is difficult as a lot of skills are involved: pronunciation, grammar, register, vocabulary; not to mention thinking about what you want to say. Lado mentioned the following components that are components of the speech process: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency [13, p. 59]. Pronunciation is the way students produce clear sounds and combine those sounds. Grammar is necessary to organize words into a correct sentence. Without sufficient vocabulary, one will struggle to express his/her ideas and thoughts. Fluency means good speed and minimum pauses, using *hmm*, *um*, etc. It means the students do not need a lot of time to search for the needed language units to express themselves.

Norman Doidge, a psychiatrist and an author of *The Brain That Changes Itself* once stated that "Learning a second language, after the critical period for language learning has ended, is more difficult because, as we age, the longer we use our native language, the further it comes to dominating our linguistic map space. Because plasticity is competitive, it is so hard to learn a new language and end the tyranny of the mother tongue" [1].

It is indeed more difficult for adults to learn a foreign language. Adults are more aware of their mistakes, they are less willing to share opinions and ideas, with mother-tongue dominating, and they tend to translate in their heads and added up with lack of motivation, this all influence speaking a lot. Among the main reasons that can sabotage speaking we identify the following:

1) Fear of making mistakes

Students worry about making mistakes, feel shy speaking English. This fear is often influenced by evaluation negativity or overcorrection. Students are afraid to be laughed at by their peers, criticized by teachers. There are rare cases when teacher evaluates students' intelligence by their level of English that is not acceptable at all. At this point, it's very important to convince students that making mistakes is natural in the learning process, to encourage them to speak, even with short phrases (drills prepared by the teacher) because one can learn to speak only by speaking. A teacher can create a relaxed atmosphere of trustfulness by making a mistake and showing that we all make them from time to time;

2) Lack of motivation

As we know motivation is important in any business and learning a foreign language is not an exception. Without an inner motivation, an understanding of why you need to learn a language, what are the benefits for you the further progress is impossible? Motivation helps to fight inner reluctance to speak English and fear of making mistakes as well.

3) Natural shyness

Some people are introvert, others – extrovert, we are all of different nature and character. But in English class, natural shyness may become an undefeatable obstacle. The fear to express ideas and though in a foreign language and public terrifies shy students;

4) Mother tongue usage

At the initial stage of language learning, students tend to translate in their heads from their native language to a foreign one. This delays speech acquisition a lot and produces sentences with incorrect grammatical structure. During pair or group work students, especially with a low level of English or unmotivated one use their mother tongue and this slows down the progress as well [10, p. 32];

5) Little English immersion

Usually, university students in Ukraine (if it's not their major) have 2-4 academic hours of English per week. We see this as a common problem when students use English in the classroom and forget it as soon as they leave the class.

Teaching English speaking is not limited to the above-mentioned problems, as we can see these problems are both of internal and external origin. And when a teacher chooses a strategy or activities for his/her students, it's good to consider real students' difficulties. As we know, a strategy is a specific method of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end or planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information. An important aspect of teaching is to promote learners' awareness and control of effective learning strategies and discourage the use of ineffective ones [4, p. 47].

While teaching English to non-English speaking adults, the following methods might be used quite effectively:

1) Do not use approaches and most of the techniques that worked with kids.

Though adult learners might have basic or no previous experience in studying English, it's wrong to assume that the same methods that you used with kids will work. Avoid using large print, phrases appropriate for kids, etc.

2) Do not introduce words in isolation. You should always give new words in context, demonstrate correct pronunciation and explain the meaning of the words. The least a combination or a phrase should accompany a new word.

3) Provide detailed feedback.

Encouragement means a lot to adults. Correct mistakes carefully, trying to use minimum words or phrases: You wanted to say (put it correctly).

After analyzing the researched material, the writer managed to find the most frequent problems that adult students faced in speaking English. They are fear of making mistakes, poor pronunciation, lack of understanding simple grammar patterns, limited vocabulary, lack of motivation and interest, mother tongue use, few opportunities to practice daily. From all the problems that students faced, the writer outlined some important factors that students encounter such as a lack of an English-speaking environment that do not support English usage in daily communication.

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