

## ***Oral Expression: a Constructive Tool in EFL Classroom***

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### ***Abstract***

*The dream of any EFL student is to master the linguistic structures of English and communicate it fluently. However, this dream seems to fade away in front of the students' inability to carry on a spontaneous conversation either in the classroom or in any other setting. Oral Expression course; based on its four main constituents: teachers, learners, activities and pedagogical materials; is suggested in this paper, as a remedy to enhance the student' speaking skill and a way to communicative proficiency. This paper aims at investigating the role of the four main effective components of Oral Expression course for developing the learners' speaking ability and improving their poor communicative proficiency in EFL classrooms.*

### ***Keywords***

*Communicative proficiency; oral expression; teachers; learners; activities; pedagogical materials.*

### **1. Introduction**

Lately, it is believed that, how someone masters a foreign language is measured through the ability she/he communicates effectively in the oral language. For this reason, foreign language teaching techniques put more emphasis on instructing language as means of communicative process rather than teaching its linguistic structures and phonology. Realizing communicative proficiency requires the combination and the presence of teacher, learner, selected activities, and pedagogical materials. According to Doff "teaching is a three- way relationship between the teacher, the materials he/she is using, and the students."<sup>1</sup>

A brief definition of communicative proficiency demonstrates that in addition to oral practice, achieving the ability to communicate fluently requires the grammatical and the phonological accuracy of the target language, too. Alas, most EFL teachers focus on teaching the written form and neglect the spoken form of the language.

Practice makes perfect. Practicing the language outside and mainly inside the classroom on a regular basis seems to be the best method to develop the student's communicative proficiency. Bronvillain stated that "speaking practice is appropriate for different

levels of proficiency.”<sup>2</sup> Practice is an important tool and a significant method for teaching the target language in general and developing the learners’ communicative proficiency skills in particular. Oral expression course remains the setting which gives the EFL students the chance to practice, communicate, and produce structures in the target language. So how to set an oral expression classroom and what are the main components of the course?

In keeping with Doff “teaching is a three- way relationship between the teacher, the materials he/she is using, and the students.”<sup>3</sup> Doff underlined the three fundamental elements of the teaching process in general which are the teacher, the student, and the pedagogical material. Accordingly, instructing oral expression requires the main components listed above, in addition to selected activities to fulfil the target objectives to communicative proficiency.

## 2. Teacher

Learning a foreign language is a very sensitive matter and the presence of the teacher is very compulsory as the latter is deemed as the main component and the engine of the learning process. Realizing communicative proficiency is based on the important role of the teacher. Teachers should act as psychologists in the first place to have a complete knowledge of their students’ pedagogical and psychological background and subsequently be closer to the learner’s psyche to diagnose his/her difficulties and deficiencies in order suggest the appropriate remedies. Leaver and Shekhtman state that:

*“In EFL classrooms, we need teachers who have much experience in teaching students at the proficient level, and having the ability to develop their speaking ability. Teachers whose main role is to know the background knowledge of their students, as well as their specific goals towards the target language, mainly their target goal is reaching highly proficiency.”*<sup>4</sup>

Basically, to enable the learner to approach communicative proficiency requires an experienced teacher who has already discovered his student’s needs and weaknesses. A teacher whose prime objective is to encourage the learners to speak regardless of the mistakes they make. Through my experience As an EFL teacher, I have always encouraged my students to speak ignoring the mistakes. I used to spot every grammatical or phonological mistake my students make. What I have noticed is that each time I interrupt the student’s speaking process with the intention to correct his/her mistake, the student loses his/her words and ideas and becomes unable to speak and psychologically disturbed and weak. Murphy claims that teachers

should always encourage learners to ‘get the language out.’ Mistakes that occur can be noted and discussed once the communicative exercise has been completed if, however, students are encouraged to speak.”<sup>5</sup> Acting like a correction machine will just hinder the speaking process of the learners and make them feel shy and embarrassed; as a result they lose the ability to carry on talking.

To reach the learners’ communicative proficiency, teacher should accept the different views of his/her learners about the discussed issues no matter how contradictory they may be. The teacher should always remember that the core objective of the oral expression course is to enable the learner to speak and not to impose one’s point of view in the discussion.

Moreover, the EFL teacher should be very cautious from letting boredom and dullness creep into his/her Classroom as this will affect the feedback of the learners. The teacher is supposed to generate a suitable environment in the oral expression classroom to motivate the learners and make the learning process an enjoyable experience full of excitement and dynamism. Nunan states that, “the teachers are the main source of facilitating meaningful and enjoyable learning.”<sup>6</sup> Such an atmosphere will help the learners make efforts to express themselves freely and perform tasks in the target language which will help them grow their communicative proficiency.

In addition to the above listed requirements, the experience of teaching is very essential as a feature of a good teacher mainly if she/he will lead an EFL classroom. Leaver and Shekhtman claimed that, “In EFL classrooms, we need teachers who have much experience in teaching students at the proficient level, and having the ability to develop their speaking ability.”<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Selected Activities**

Teacher should know the needs of his/her students and act accordingly. Listening and speaking tasks are numerous such as conversations and debates, free discussions, quizzes, puzzles, role plays, listening to songs and videos presentations...etc. Basically, the communicative activities act as the bridge through which the learner reaches the communicative proficiency safely. The combination between the suitable speaking and listening activities facilitates the process of learning the target language and makes it easy for the EFL student to differentiate between the American and the British pronunciations while practicing the target language. Selecting the appropriate activities is deemed one of the fundamental factors in realizing the communicative proficiency.

EFL teacher should know that the type of the activity suggested can either grow or kill the joy and excitement of the studying process. To motivate the learners, teacher should base the selection of the activities on the students' like mainly topics and themes of discussion to trigger them express their opinions and communicate in the target language. Selecting the activity according to its communicative value and the student's like is like hitting two birds with one stone i.e. motivating the learners and achieving the activity's objectives. Teachers should avoid topics which may embarrass or anger the students otherwise, students will not feel at ease with the topic debated; subsequently, they will abstain from discussing it. Adrian Doff (1988) suggested the techniques and the procedures of presenting any communicative activity in the answer of the following questions<sup>8</sup>:

- what is the learning value of the activity.
- how much do students learn from it.
- how worth time is spending on it.
- what skills does it develop (listening or speaking).
- what stage of the activity is it suitable for (e.g. presentation, practice...etc.).
- what aids should be used and how to use them.
- what different kinds of interaction to apply? (e.g. pair work, individual work).

Selecting the appropriate activities, varying the tasks, and taking into consideration the student's psychological reaction towards the activities presented help the students achieve communicative proficiency.

#### **4. Pedagogical Materials**

Among the means to motivate the EFL student and facilitate the learning process is the use of authentic and pedagogical materials in the classroom. In the past, teaching aids were limited to tools such as textbooks, board, pictures, and drawings. Whereas today and with the introduction of the new technologies, computers, data show, language laboratories et cetera are used. The combination of the old and the new teaching aids in the EFL classroom will create and take the learner into a kind of real social life inside the classroom; a state that will make both the process of teaching for teachers the process of learning for learners a real joy. Carter and Nunan stated that, the notion of teaching-based authentic materials has developed in the 1980's as an effective way of helping teachers to achieve the communicative development, which aim at facilitating informal

acquisition of communicative competence through communication activities.<sup>9</sup>

Actually, the use of the visual aids in language teaching is meant to develop and stimulate the communicative ability of the learner. Once again the EFL teacher is invited to select the appropriate material that goes hand in hand with the selected activity to realize the already set objectives. Richards and Renandya believe that teacher should choose and decide which materials should be used in language classroom, because the quality of the material has an important impact on learners and their motivation for developing their second language growing proficiency in the language.<sup>10</sup>

EFL teachers should be aware of the paramount importance of the use of the pedagogical materials and tools and how they influence the quality of classroom interaction and language use for developing students' communicative abilities. They provide rich data input. They trigger interaction learning. They generate real context for learning and group work collaboration. To cut a long story short, the pedagogical material is one of the core elements of oral expression course. It plays a fundamental role in promoting student's communicative proficiency.

### **5. Learner**

If the EFL teacher struggles hard to provide and combine the above listed element to make his course successful and pushes the learner towards communicative proficiency; the latter should know that his/her presence and readiness to learn the target language will decide the success or the failure of the learning process. The learner's core objective in the oral expression course is to work on his/her oral expression skills and enhance his/ her speaking abilities. For this reason, learners are supposed to focus on the use of the linguistic structures in different settings. They should contribute in the learning process through their presence, interaction, and care. In keeping with John Merrby, "learners should interact with others, sharing experiences, and ideas, solving problems, handling conflicts, articulating beliefs and values, building trust and rapport between each other."<sup>11</sup>

Learners should take part in the different activities selected by their teacher and take advantage of the pedagogical aids used in the course. They should practice and listen to the target language as much as possible. They should try to participate in the classroom discussion no matter how difficult it may be even if they end up repeating the others' opinions. They should be creative and produce their own new

structures to defend their view points. Concisely, the learner is the engine of the learning process and his /her willingness to master the target language will promote the communicative proficiency.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has shed some light on how rewarding is the combination of the four elements -teacher, learner, activities, and pedagogical aids- in oral expression course to achieve communicative proficiency. Being the leader of the orchestra, the EFL teacher should encourage the learners to speak and generate the suitable atmosphere that triggers motivation. His presence is of a paramount importance in selecting the right pedagogical material that goes hand in hand with the selected activities to realize the course already set-objectives. The learner' zeal to learn the target language and speak it fluently, his participation, and interaction in the classroom decide the communicative proficiency.

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