

Freshmen's Handicaps for Learning English Oral Communication: A Solution for an Immersed University Context

Dificultades en el aprendizaje de la comunicación oral del inglés por principiantes: Una solución para un contexto universitario en inmersión

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Abstract

The English language is a means of instruction in the Ethiopian University of Madawalabu, where the students speak different mother tongues. However, some freshmen still enroll the university with difficulties in English oral communication, disturbing their academic success in the immersion learning process that takes place during the whole years of study. This research attempted not only to determine the main factors affecting these basic language users with English oral communication learning difficulties, but also to provide general methodological guidelines to assist this teaching-learning process taking into account the characteristics of this university. This study makes a dialectic integration of qualitative and quantitative research analyses incorporating the triangulation process for comparing and contrasting information in order to enrich its validity and feasibility. A combination of theoretical and empirical research methods were used like the analytical-synthetic and inductive-deductive methods including dialectic hermeneutics accompanied by lesson observation, a questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, participatory observation and

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achievement tests. The final research report includes not only outstanding linguistic, psychological and didactic theoretical backgrounds about oral communication in foreign languages, but also the research methodology specification, the data collection and their analysis concerning freshmen's learning difficulties accompanied by the communicative methodology of oral language teaching, conclusion and recommendation. These research results were very useful to guide both students with learning difficulties and teachers about a productive way of enhancing the acquisition of oral English as a lingua franca.

Keywords: oral communication, communicative language teaching, learning difficulties, language teaching methodology, didactics of foreign languages

Resumen

La lengua inglesa constituye un medio de instrucción en la universidad etíope de Madawalabu donde los estudiantes hablan diferentes lenguas maternas. Sin embargo, determinados principiantes matriculan la universidad con dificultades en la comunicación oral del inglés comprometiendo su éxito académico en el proceso de inmersión durante la carrera. La presente investigación pretendió no sólo determinar los factores que provocaban dificultades en el aprendizaje de la comunicación oral del inglés, sino que también aportó orientaciones metodológicas para guiar este proceso a partir del contexto educativo. Este estudio integra dialécticamente los análisis de datos cualitativos y cuantitativos de investigación incorporando la triangulación para comparar y contrastar información haciendo posible enriquecer su validez y factibilidad. Se utilizó una combinación de métodos teóricos y empíricos activando los métodos analítico-sintético e inductivo-deductivo, la hermenéutica dialéctica, la observación a clases, la encuesta, dos entrevistas semi-estructuradas, la observación participante y los tests de rendimiento. El informe investigativo final aborda los fundamentos teóricos de perfil lingüístico,

psicológico y didáctico de la comunicación oral en lenguas extranjeras, así como la metodología de la investigación, los procesos de recolección y análisis de datos inherentes a las dificultades de aprendizaje seguidas por la metodología de la enseñanza comunicativa oral propuesta como solución, las conclusiones y recomendaciones. Estos resultados fueron muy útiles para guiar a profesores y estudiantes de una forma productiva en la adquisición del inglés oral como lengua franca.

Palabras clave: comunicación oral, enseñanza comunicativa de lenguas, dificultades de aprendizaje, metodología de la enseñanza de lenguas, didáctica de lenguas extranjeras.

Introduction

Communication is central to life. Effective communication not only paves the way for professional affairs, but also facilitates peoples' education. Poor communication is a root of many problems that affect different today's human fields. Only an effective communication among people can overcome their differences caused by specific cultures, behaviors, viewpoints, beliefs and barriers that hinder the normal development of human relationships.

In the Ethiopian System of Education, the English language is considered a language of instruction. It is mainly based on the need to provide a common language or lingua franca for the diversity of mother tongue speakers coming from the different nations and nationalities of the Federation. This foreign language (FL) is taught from primary school to the university. From secondary school education to the university the students are organized in immersion programs where almost all the subjects are taught in the English language (except for native tongues and history of motherlands). According to this decision, the Ethiopian universities include the subjects of Communicative English Skills and Basic Writing English Skills in the first year from

all different majors. The purposes of these subjects are to enhance the newcomer's communicative competence in the FL, and assure success in his/her major immersion program.

Although the English language was carefully taught to all the Ethiopian university students, the main researcher found there were some amounts of freshmen with an insufficient oral communicative achievement in this FL. Then it was evident these handicaps could definitely hinder the students' success in learning the rest of the major subjects.

Taking into account this unsatisfactory initial situation the main author decided to undertake this research topic in Madawalabu University where he was working as an Invited Professor of English for two academic years. The research problem leading this study was formulated as: What are the factors affecting low achievement freshmen's learning difficulties in English oral communication? Its main research aim was to determine the general learning difficulties affecting slow students' English oral communication achievement according to today's outstanding psychological, linguistic and didactic theoretical references supporting the adequate teaching of FL oral communication.

This decision was connected to the idea that this research project should be focused on the students with general learning difficulties; not on those with learning disabilities. Carlson (2005) suggests there is a huge difference between a learning difficulty and a learning disability; the former can be achieved using conventional teaching techniques while the latter requires a specialized professional intervention. This research project assumed the definition provided by the Queensland Studies Authority (2007, p. 1), when saying that learning difficulties refer to barriers that limit access to, participation in, and outcomes from the curriculum.

According to Westwood (2008) learning difficulties are generally caused by environmental factors like social handicaps, improper curriculum, insufficient teaching, or lack

of adequate support for learning. This author also reminds that some 16 to 20 per cent of the school population nowadays faces general learning difficulties. This fact provides further support to carry out this research project in order to solve a necessary usual educational problem.

Development

Defining the category of communication

The word communication comes from the Latin word *communicare* which means to make common or to share. Communication is an interdisciplinary category which has been defined by authors from different fields of study. In general terms this category is understood as a social interaction by means of symbols and systems of messages produced within the human behavior (González, 1989). From a more specific viewpoint, the following definition is very useful for its practical application to the FL teaching-learning process.

Communication is a bilateral interactive intentional process taking place between two or more participants adopting different roles characterized not only by codification, emission, and transmission of oral and written expressions, but also by the reception and decodification of these symbols in order to monitor, feedback and negotiate the sender's message or meaning expressed. (Faedo, 2003, p. 3)

Communication can be verbal and non-verbal in its nature. Non-verbal communication is achieved by gestures and body language. Verbal communication may be either oral or written. Oral communication is a two-way process engaging a speaker and one or more listeners, and includes both the productive skills of speaking and the receptive skills of listening comprehension (Byrne, 1989). This research focused its attention on oral communication in English as an FL and the problems related to its teaching-learning process in first year students with learning difficulties from Madawalabu University.

Psychological, linguistic and didactic foundations of communication

The psychological, linguistic and didactic foundations of communication in the FL in general, and of oral communication specifically, are supported by a critical analysis about the categories of communication and dynamic developing learning. Both concepts are deeply included in the theoretical background of this research, not only as necessary linguo-didactic premises of the teaching-learning process, but also as active methodological guidelines for the students' communicative competence learning development.

Psychologically speaking, this research has followed the sociocultural approach created by Vigotsky (2014). Under this conception education determines the students' psychological development and learning acquires its significance with social activities, sharing experiences among the individuals. In this way the psychical functions are developed by means of practice, with the support of interaction and cooperation. The student should learn to think with the use of the target language as there is a close dialectic relationship between language and thought. This statement is supported by this author when explaining that language is the wrapping material of thought.

According to the further development of the previous psychological approach this research project assumed the Theory of Verbal Activity developed by Leontiev, (1999) within the field of psycholinguistics. This theory is a way to understand the students' verbal activity as a conscious active planned act in opposition to the unconscious, repetitive mechanism supported by Behaviorism.

The Theory of Verbal Activity provides a deep clear explanation of the interrelations among speaking, listening, reading and writing by means of inner speech as a psycholinguistic process where each verbal aspect paves the way for the successful development of them all. So

combining different aspects of verbal activities in the foreign language lesson benefits the students' English learning process, especially in initial stages.

The present research project made use of text linguistics (Dijk, 2012). The former assumes the text as the most comprehensive linguistic unit having a complete meaning so the learners were asked to convey meaningful oral language in the English teaching-learning process. The current research followed the conception of communicative competences made by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CERFL, 2017) with three important aspects: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. This conception, opposed to structural language teaching, influenced the present researchers to emphasize the essential function of language: communication. In this way the previously mentioned competences are intertwined and should be learnt in context; not in isolation.

From the didactic viewpoint this research followed the communicative approach (Richards & Rogers, 2014) together with the didactic theoretical trend called Developing Didactics (Silvestre y Zilberstein, 2000). The communicative approach supports the teaching-learning of English as a communicative process where linguistic forms and communicative functions are closely interrelated.

To the communicative conception of the teacher as a facilitator this research project added his/her managing role consisting of its leading actions of diagnosing, planning, organizing, performing and controlling the FL teaching-learning process. Developing Didactics leads teachers to use active teaching methods and techniques paving the way for the students to be the center of their own learning as part of a cooperative, creative and transformational process producing and reinforcing new knowledge, skills and personal educational values.

Research methodology description

This research project is based on a transformational action research conception (Machado, 2006) enhancing the dialectic relationship between theory and practice in order to positively modify the educational process. Consequently this research makes a dialectic integration of qualitative and quantitative research analyses and includes the triangulation process for comparing and contrasting information. This study was guided by the analytical way of approaching the scientific knowledge that according to Campistrous et al., (1999), an educational research project is feasible with the use of different research questions in place of scientific hypotheses.

In this way, the following three research questions guided this study:

a) What are the outstanding psychological, linguistic and didactic theoretical supports of teaching-learning English oral communication as an FL?

b) What are the main teaching-learning factors that hinder freshmen's development of English oral communication in Madawalabu University?

c) What are the general methodological guidelines for the teaching-learning of FL oral communication that could assist freshmen's common learning difficulties?

In order to provide scientific answers to the previous questions the following research tasks were undertaken:

a) Determining the psychological, linguistic and didactic theoretical supports of the teaching-learning process of English oral communication as an FL.

b) Discovering the main teaching-learning factors that hinder freshmen's development of English oral communication in Madawalabu University.

c) Providing a set of general methodological guidelines for the teaching-learning of FL oral communication according to freshmen's common learning difficulties.

With the aim of carrying out this investigation the researchers put into practice the following theoretical research methods while making a critical analysis of the scientific related literature:

a) Analytical-synthetic method: It was used not only in the process of finding out the main theoretical trends necessary to support the teaching-learning process of English oral communication, but also while defining the necessary scientific terms for this research project.

b) Inductive-deductive method: It was used in the process of diagnosing and assessing the main teaching-learning factors that hindered freshmen's development of English oral communication.

c) Dialectic hermeneutics: It was put into practice in the process of understanding the theoretical sources of information and finding out the most outstanding trends supporting the teaching-learning of oral communication in foreign languages.

While performing this research project the following empirical methods were carried out:

a) Lesson observation: The author observed twenty English oral communication lessons taking place in 100 % of the first year academic groups and majors from Madawalabu University during two academic years. These lessons were focused on oral communication rehearsal and they included students with learning difficulties speaking different mother tongues and coming from all the nations of the Ethiopian Federation.

b) Questionnaire: A questionnaire was applied to 72 first year low English achievers selected as a sample in the first and second semesters for two different academic courses. There was a representation from all freshmen's academic groups, majors and their students speaking different mother tongues.

c) Semi-structured interviews: Two semi-structured interviews were applied during two different academic courses, one to a sample of 24 students having serious difficulties in English oral speech, and another to a representative sample of 10 first year English instructors having different teaching hierarchy degrees. In the first interview there were low achievers from all the academic groups and having different mother languages.

d) Participatory observation: The main research author observed freshmen's oral performances in his own English lessons in the university. He paid special attention to students with learning difficulties in oral communication. He worked as a teacher for two years (4 terms) with 10 first year academic groups from different majors and faculties. He also interacted orally to the students out of class about different topics in English.

e) Achievement tests: The results obtained in English oral partial and final achievement tests applied to the subject called Communicative English Skills, under the control and supervision of the English Department, were taken as a reference to classify the students' English oral achievement into low achievers. These tests were commonly conceived in terms of fluency and accuracy and they asked for both dialogues and monologues in communicative situations.

Results from the empirical research methods application

This section provides an answer to the research question: What are the main teaching-learning factors that hinder freshmen's development of English oral communication in Madawalabu University?

The results from the empirical research methods application included the analyses of classroom observation, students' questionnaire, students' semi-structure interview, teachers' semi-structure interview and participatory observation. The checklists or specific questions guiding each research method application and analysis are included in each case.

The classroom observation checklist included the following items to be observed: (a) teacher's support to his/her students' oral communication engagement; (b) oral communication teaching-learning arrangement used; (c) students' interests towards English oral interaction in the classroom; (d) students' effectiveness to communicate orally in the target language (in terms of fluency and accuracy); and (e) teaching-learning strategy to encourage the students' English oral communication outside the classroom.

It was observed that teachers usually incited the students to participate in the oral communication process by means of different communicative techniques; however this engagement was based on the motivated students or those raising their hands to participate. In these overcrowded classrooms, with an average of 60 students, there were some shy learners remaining without encouragement to communicate. Small groups and pair arrangements were not usually put into practice and the frontal arrangement was organized in a traditional teacher-centered way limiting the students to communicate freely.

The communication process was usually based on the students' individual frontal participation making this process tense and stressing for the shy and insecure speaker. This fact reduced the learners' interest to interaction, so their effectiveness to communicate in the target language was generally low in terms of both: fluency and accuracy. Finally it was evidenced there was not any clear preconceived strategy to encourage the students' English oral communication outside the classroom, usually only individual tasks without addressing interaction to their peers were assigned as homework. The slow students' talking time was generally reduced and insufficient for training.

The questionnaire included seven items or specific questions directly related to the topic of investigation. The data analysis of each question is now presented:

a) Do you have confidence in the English oral communication process in the classroom?

If you say "no", explain.

Most of the respondents i.e. 75% (54 of them) showed to have no confidence in the English oral communication process adding that they "had not experience", "were not enriched in words" and they "feared of mistakes".

b) Do you fear when you communicate in English orally in the classroom? If you say "yes", explain.

The majority of the respondents, i.e. 80.5 % (58) of them, said they were afraid and stressed to communicate orally in the classroom. However 19.4 % (14 students from the sample) answered they did not fear, but most of them (10 from 14) "had no experience to communicate in English orally".

c) Do you pay attention to your classmates and teacher in the classroom when they communicate orally in the English language? How often?

Most of the respondents 66.6 % (48 of them) answered that they "paid attention to their classmates and teachers in the oral communication process in the English language classroom". However when asked "how often" they answered they did it "sometimes". Only 33.3 % (24 students) of the respondents did not pay attention to such an important process, so it was obvious to conclude that most of the students did not always pay attention to the oral communication teaching-learning process and interaction with their classmates.

d) How often do you reflect your views and opinions orally in the classroom?

With this question it was evidenced that 75 % (54 respondents) of the sample sometimes reflected their views and opinions in English orally in the classroom, while only 25 % (18 students) always did it.

e) How often do you communicate and share your views with other people outside rather than being quiet and alone?

Most of the respondents, i.e. 44.4 %, (32 of them), answered that they rarely communicated and shared their views with other people. 36.1 % (26 individuals) of them responded that they “sometimes” did it, while 8.3 % (6 students) of the sample were in the opinion they “always participated in this activity”. Finally 11.1 % (8 respondents) of the participants decided to use “never” in their answers. From the above results the researcher understood that many students did not exchange their views in English with other people outside the classroom, although sometimes they did.

f) Do your English lessons facilitate group discussion in the classroom?

The majority of the respondents 66.6 % (48 students) answered that their “teachers organized them to facilitate group discussion in the target language. However 33.3 % (24 individuals) of them responded “their teachers only used a frontal speech without facilitating group interaction”. From these answers the researcher could infer that although the students are involved in group discussions the interaction among the students is still not properly activated in class.

g) Do you find it useful to learn during pair work and small groups activities? Support your answer.

All the students agreed pair and group work discussion activities were very useful for learning oral communication in the FL. They said these activities were helpful for sharing ideas, organizing words and pronunciation as well as for building confidence in the target language, but the academic groups were too big. Finally the researchers concluded the students were very conscious about the benefits of learning in pair and small groups activities although the academic

groups were generally overcrowded having from fifty to sixty students in the classroom. This in the researchers' opinions is not an obstacle, but a supporting argument for introducing the use of these arrangements in class.

The students' semi-structured interview included the following main questions without disregarding the use of some alternative ones to be understood and assure the accurate seek of information: (a) Are you interested in learning English oral communication in the classroom? Explain. (b) Could you explain the handicaps you face while communicating orally or learning to communicate in the English language? (c) Do you have equal and enough opportunities to take part while communicating orally in the English lesson? Please explain the way you are arranged while training English oral communication in the classroom.

All the interviewed students said they were interested in learning English oral communication in the classroom, but they feared to share their ideas with their classmates as they were insecure due to the lack of systematic practice and interactive activities. These respondents recognized they faced the handicap of vocabulary scarcity and poor word arrangement and pronunciation interfering from their different mother tongues.

They also said they were not given equal and enough opportunities for oral interaction in class due to both a shortage of time and overcrowded classrooms. Some other participants said they were usually involved in frontal lecture lessons most of the time in which only those students who raised their hands were given chance to communicate. However some respondents said they were sometimes involved in interesting role-playing activities which demanded them to take part in the activity and practice the oral language.

The teachers' semi-structured interview included the following main questions without disregarding some alternative ones to seek for information. (a) Could you tell us about the main

handicaps your students face during the oral communication process in the classroom? (b) How do you arrange your students to communicate orally in the English language? (c) What type of oral interaction do you usually prefer in the classroom, either student to student or teacher to students interaction? If you say both, please explain. (d) Please make a comment about your strategy to enhance the students' English oral communication in the classroom and outside of it.

The teachers responded their students had many problems like shyness to speak among themselves and accuracy mistakes in both pronunciation and grammar in the target language. They also recognized not to use any small class (pair and small group work) arrangement to communicate due to both overcrowded classrooms (an average of 60 students) and a short time allotted (4 hours a week).

The interviewees stated they used both student to student and teacher to students interactions giving emphasis to the traditional teacher-centered arrangement most of the time. Finally they said that "monitored oral language practice took place in the lesson", while "real uncontrolled communication occurred outside the classroom" without expressing any clear strategy to support this process.

The participatory observation process took into consideration the following checklist: a) Low achievement freshmen's general interaction characteristics in the oral English communication process in and out of class, (b) Emotional reactions of freshmen with oral English learning difficulties, (d) low achievers' motivation to the oral English interaction process in and out of class, (e) Low achievers' social interrelation patterns in and out of class, and (f) main usual oral English learning difficulties faced by slow freshmen and their possible reasons.

The data analysis related to the previous items reflected that the low achievement freshmen generally had short incomplete oral English interactions among their peers in and out

of the classroom. They often used the English language orally when addressing listeners whose English was the only possible common means of communication, usually when talking to foreigners or instructors of some other different subjects.

Out of class, they had few English interactions; not enough for the learning purpose. The most common emotional reactions of freshmen with oral English learning difficulties were classified as shy, fearful, stressful and insecure, very frequent characteristics of learners with low self-esteem. They were reluctant to public performance and preferred to accomplish small group tasks and activities with their closest peers.

Usually these types of students had low motivation to FL oral communication in and out of class and their social relationships were limited, generally to their closest friends. Their main learning difficulties were related to oral hesitations, staccato productions, incomplete language interactions and low oral communication achievements in both: fluency and accuracy.

The English oral communication tests applied included two main task types, one based on language interaction and another eliciting monologue in problem solving communicative situations. These tests showed that 16 % of the whole learners were classified as low achievers. It meant an average of 10 students, from each academic group of 60 or more members, evidenced oral learning difficulties.

Remembering Westwood (2008) this teaching-learning situation is within the lowest common limits (from 16 % to 20% of the students' population have learning difficulties nowadays). According to this idea the current research admitted this was not an unusual educational problem, so it could be successfully achieved by putting into practice the following up-to-date general methodological guidelines.

Methodological guidelines for teaching FL oral communication

This section provides an answer to the research question: what are the general methodological guidelines for the teaching-learning of FL oral communication that could assist freshmen's common learning difficulties?

Numerous contemporary language teaching studies (Morrow, 1983; Byrne, 1989; Faedo, 2003; Ramírez, 2004; Ur, 2011; Richards and Rogers, 2014; Brumfit and Johnson, 2020) suggest the use of a communicative methodology for teaching FL oral communication successfully. This conception is crucial for the following methodological guidelines provided as a reference to be followed by teachers and learners in a participatory process.

First of all, learners should be active and they should accomplish interesting stimulating communicative tasks in the target language. Communication should be taught through communication in the FL. The English lesson should be a student-centered class and it may be achieved by working simultaneously with the use of small group-work techniques in which the students are arranged according to the communicative situation in pairs, trios, etc.

The teaching strategy should finally encourage the use of real situations to enhance real oral communication. The English teacher should provide his or her lesson with communicative techniques to encourage the speakers' interactive learning process. The main communicative techniques are generally known as games, role-plays, simulations, discussions, talking-on-your-own and problem solving situations, among others.

Games are excellent techniques for teaching-learning FL oral communication because the students enjoy their active participation in tasks. There are two types of games: accuracy and fluency games. Accuracy or code-control games aim at the linguistic system development (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation). Consequently there are competitions, guessing games, pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary games.

Fluency or cooperative games are characterized by interacting ideas, viewpoints and opinions, for example, finding the differences between pictures, characters, and other things. Role-plays consist of providing the students with motivating roles to be rehearsed in communicative situations. It is advisable to assign these roles individually so as to ensure an information gap for the participants in the FL communicative process.

In simulations a given setting or situation is simulated, so the halls and classrooms of the school may be taken as an alternative to simulate a city for giving directions practice. Discussions encourage the speakers to debate about polemic topics, like Living in the countryside is better than living in the city. In talking-on-your-own technique the speakers use their own experiences and act as real life participants, for example, talking about a trip to the beach or something really done. In problem solving situations the speakers are asked to provide solutions, e.g., determining if someone is guilty or not by interchanging ideas about facts.

The FL teacher should not forget the functional character of oral communication. It means the supremacy of the communicative functions in learning the language over its linguistic system (vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation). The teacher should depart from the presentation, analysis and understanding of communicative functions from texts (or audiotexts) up to their linguistic forms as a teaching strategy. Generally the linguistic system is to be trained in a communicative context. It does not exclude the use of explicit knowledge for the understanding and analysis of a new language form. So the linguistic material should be learnt both implicitly and explicitly. The FL teacher should teach real language coming from real language situations.

The teaching-learning process of FL oral communication should take into account its situational characteristics. The linguistic material should be selected according to the

communicative function to be taught and not just the other way around. Then these communicative functions should be taught by means of language situations. The teaching-learning contextualization of FL oral communication is provided by the use of adequate communicative situations.

According to Faedo, (2003), a communicative situation for teaching oral communication should include the following six items:

a) the speakers and their social relationships, (it means if they are husband and wife, customer and clerk, father and child, etc.). This fact, with the influence from the topic of interaction, determines the language register to be used which can be formal, less formal or informal;

(b) The communicative task;

(c) The setting or place where the communicative action takes place;

(d) The time when the communicative act occurs;

(e) The topic to be dealt with; and finally

(f) The performing purpose. It means the learner should know what he or she accomplishes the communicative task for, not simply for the sake of speaking or listening, but because she or he has got to do something with the information or communicative message sent or received.

The teaching-learning of oral communication should be consistent with the innovative character of verbal activity which always has a purpose (Leontiev, 1999). It means the students should be encouraged to exchange ideas or messages with clear preconceived communicative purposes, but communicative teachers should recognize the value of repetition in FL teaching but they should not usually encourage mechanical repetition.

Communicative language repetition assumes the unity of meaning with its linguistic form; the utterance repetition by the student should be anteceded by its meaning and purpose recognition. This idea may be achieved by means of changing the different communicative situation components in the rehearsing practice: communicative tasks, settings, partners, topics, and others, after each oral interaction. In this way the learning communicative situation may be renewed and attractive for the student (Faedo, 2003).

The linguistic system is best learnt when the speaker's attention is focused on the communicative purpose of the utterance. This statement involves learning the linguistic material without stressing the students, that is to say the form of language may be grasped involuntarily or subconsciously, when the speaker's attention is on meaning. The innovative character of teaching FL oral communication is also achieved by taking into account the following requirements conceived by Morrow (1983) as (a) information gap, (b) choice and (c) feedback:

a) The information gap is connected to the fact that real communication takes place between two or more people, one of whom knows something that is unknown to the other. In this way the communicative teacher should give his or her students the possibility to say something their partners do not know. It may be achieved by providing the speakers with pictures, objects, information charts, and their teaching aids, which are different in a given feature (or features).

b) The learners' choice is connected to the fact that any communicative task, technique or exercise should provide the speaker with the possibility to choose the ideas and the linguistic forms to be used as it happens in a real communicative process. In this respect the student's oral performance is not restricted to a single linguistic structure or grammatical phenomenon studied in a single lesson or course period. The student must be free to make use of the language contents necessary to express his/her ideas in a given communicative situation.

c) The feedback requirement is accomplished when in a real communicative process the speaker adjusts and readjusts his or her message to accomplish a given communicative purpose. No matter how many utterances the addresser uses till he or she is satisfied with the aim he or she has in mind.

That is why the FL teacher should provide his or her students with the possibility to establish feedback in order to negotiate meaning. This is achieved by means of pair and small group work techniques and by providing the learner with a given communicative purpose (what he or she should communicate for).

The FL oral communication process should be consistent with individualization. It is connected to the idea of taking into account the student's psychological individualities, aptitude and learning characteristics and purposes. The learners' personal characteristics should be revealed and respected while communicating in the FL.

In this way the speaker should be motivated to express his or her own likes and dislikes, viewpoints, preferences, etc. The teaching-learning process should involve the learner in interesting tasks and must be judged in terms of their effects on him/her. In this sense the oral tasks, activities and exercises included should be flexible and should allow any adaptation to suit the learners' needs, characteristics, interests and language levels.

The teacher should be tolerant of learners' errors as they indicate that the learner is building up his/her communicative competence (Richards and Rogers, 2014). This guideline is attached to the fact that in an FL learning it is vital to try to say something the speaker is not sure how to say. That is why it is quite obvious to accept that making a mistake is a normal step in learning. All this has to do with what the teacher considers to be a mistake. If a student has a mistake in a given linguistic phenomenon or communicative function she or he has not been told

or shown how to do, or which he or she has not yet mastered, it should not be considered as a mistake. Of course, it does not mean the teacher should disregard the mistakes of grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation as they may hamper (or even destroy) communication, but it is advisable to take into account the students' psychological characteristics in the process of correction.

The frontal continual oral correction of mistakes by the time the speakers are performing may interrupt the communicative process or even frustrate the students, mainly the shy ones. Then it is necessary to apply different correction techniques to avoid the previous handicap and this is precisely a challenging choice for the teacher's capacity.

In general, the communicative methodology of FL teaching is attached to flexibility in considering different things as mistakes at diverse stages from the learning process. It should also be said that the teacher's correction must be concentrated on both accuracy and fluency of the student's oral language performance, although it is possible, in certain cases and contexts, to ignore communication and focus on the forms of language.

The previous idea justifies the necessity to define the terms of accuracy and fluency for FL oral communication. The current research project followed the contributions made by Brumfit and Johnson (2020) in order to assume that fluency is the ability to produce oral significant appropriate continuous utterances with ease, and without evidencing a perfect command of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar.

Accuracy is understood as the ability to produce oral utterances with correct pronunciation, vocabulary and grammatical performances. It has been proved the convenience of combining the students' frontal oral communication, establishing the student-student-audience and teacher-students relationships, with pair and group work oral interactions in the FL teaching-

learning process. Frontal oral communication assists language accuracy development, while pair and group work oral interactions facilitate language fluency (Faedo, 2003)

Conclusions

The most outstanding contemporary psychological, linguistic and didactic theories concerned with the teaching-learning process of FL oral communication confirm that communication should be taught through communication so the learner should perform different active, creative and transformational communicative tasks in the FL while training.

The English lesson should be a student-centered class and it may be achieved by putting into practice pair and group-work techniques in order to encourage all the students' intensive oral participation.

The teaching-learning strategy to enhance the students' oral communication outside the classroom should be established and controlled by the teacher from the English lesson by means of oral communicative tasks, role-plays, simulations, language games, talking-on-your-own techniques, project work and cultural activities, among others. It means assigning the students tasks, activities and exercises to be accomplished in the oral English language in and outside the classroom.

It was evidenced there were some amounts of shy students in the university with a low motivation level who were stressful and unconfident to communicate in the target language. They seldom exchanged their ideas in English, neither in class nor outside of it.

They faced the handicap of vocabulary scarcity, poor word arrangement and pronunciation in English with interference from their different mother tongues. This could be a handicap for the teaching-learning of other subjects in the FL as conceived by the immersion program in the university.

It is clear the oral communication lessons usually took place with a traditional teacher-centered arrangement giving emphasis to a one-way communication pattern which was not efficient for the speakers' development of oral communication skills, confidence and encouragement in the FL.

The students' interactions were also limited due to overcrowded classrooms and a shortage of class time, so pair and small group arrangements were not usually put into practice in order to assist the speakers' simultaneous oral participation in the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, there was not a preconceived didactic strategy to encourage, put into practice and control the students' English oral communication training outside the classroom. All these factors hindered the students' oral communication development in the target language.

This research project recommended its general communicative methodological guidelines application in the teaching-learning process of English oral communication giving emphasis, not only to the use of pair and group work arrangements, but also to different communicative activating techniques in and out the classroom.

The strategy to enhance this process outside the classroom should be established in the university and it may be achieved by project work including different English activities like video and reading discussions, interviews, debates, play presentations, song learning, oral journalism and other language motivation techniques. It is also advisable to determine the newcomers' learning needs every year so that an initial teaching strategy should be planned at the very beginning of each academic course.

This research also recommended the English instructors to provide special tutorials to those students with oral English learning difficulties in order to avoid shyness and provide support to communicate.

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