

PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING SPEAKING TO INTERMEDIATE LEARNERS

Sergey Lavrentev

Belarusian State University, Minsk, Republic of Belarus, bsu@bsu.by

All of the principles for teaching English speaking to students are useful, to varying degrees, across all proficiency levels. However, in this article we consider those principles that are most relevant to teaching speaking to intermediate students. For this reason, the following four principles are discussed.

Key words: plan speaking tasks; transactional and interpersonal speaking activities; personalized language lessons; to notice the gap; linguistic self-awareness.

ПРИНЦИПЫ ОБУЧЕНИЯ ГОВОРЕНИЮ УЧАЩИХСЯ СРЕДНЕГО УРОВНЯ ВЛАДЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКИМ ЯЗЫКОМ

С.Г. Лаврентьев

*Белорусский государственный университет, Минск, Республика Беларусь,
bsu@bsu.by*

Все существующие принципы обучения говорению студентов полезны в разной степени на всех уровнях владения английским языком. Однако в данной статье рассматриваются основные принципы, которые наиболее актуальны для обучения говорению студентов среднего уровня владения языком.

Ключевые слова: планирование речевых заданий; говорение; направленное на передачу информации и межличностная речевая деятельность; персонализированные языковые уроки; выявление пробелов; языковое самосознание.

- Plan speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning.
- Design both transactional and interpersonal speaking activities.
- Personalize the speaking activities whenever possible.
- Provide opportunities for learners to notice the gap.

Plan speaking tasks that involve negotiation for meaning

It appears that in the process of negotiating for meaning, the language addressed to learners gets adjusted to their level and becomes comprehensible to them. And as learners work to make themselves understood either in speech or in writing, they must attend to accuracy. That is, they must select the right vocabulary, apply grammar rules, pronounce words carefully, and so on. In doing so, they may “notice the gap” [5] between what they want to say and

what they can say, or between what they say and what other people say. By planning speaking tasks that require learners to negotiate for meaning, teachers can give students valuable chances for practice and language development.

For students at the intermediate level, information gap and jigsaw activities can provide many opportunities for learners to negotiate for meaning. This is especially true if the pair work or group work is supposed to lead to a conclusion or solution.

Design both transactional and interpersonal speaking activities

When we talk with someone outside the classroom, we usually do so for interpersonal or transactional purposes. What do these terms mean? Interpersonal speech is communication for social purposes, including establishing and maintaining social relationships. Transactional speech involves communicating to get something done, such as the exchange of goods and/or services.

Most spoken interactions “can be placed on a continuum from relatively predictable to relatively unpredictable” [2]. Casual conversations - an example of interpersonal speech - are relatively unpredictable and can range over many topics, with the participants taking turns and commenting freely. In contrast, Nunan says that “transactional encounters of a fairly restricted kind will usually contain highly predictable patterns”, and he gives the example of telephoning for a taxi. In contrast, interactional speech is more fluid and unpredictable. Our students will need to use English in both transactional and interactional settings, so it is important that classroom speaking activities embody both purposes.

Personalize the content of speaking activities whenever possible

Some very early language classroom research revealed that personalization is important. Personalization is the process of making activities match the learners’ own circumstances, interests, and goals. Omaggio showed that teachers who personalized language lessons were judged to be effective, by both their supervisors and their students.

Personalizing an exercise can be as simple as using students’ names, academic majors, cities, or jobs in speaking activities. Or you can build role-plays around situations suggested by the learners. You can also use song lyrics or reading passages selected by the students or based on their interests as the basis of logic puzzles and picture-based activities. Personalizing language lessons is partly a matter of careful planning and partly of responding creatively to students’ questions and comments during activities.

Provide opportunities for learners to notice the gap

What does it mean to say that learners should be given opportunities to “notice the gap” [5]? This phrase describes an experience that people have when they are interacting in a second or foreign language. It refers to the learner realizing that the way he is saying something in the target language

differs from the way native or proficient speakers say it. Sometimes such awareness occurs when we are trying to be both accurate and fluent, or when we are taking risks in the target language. This awareness can be about individual words, grammar rules, idioms, appropriate phrases, pronunciation - any component of the language they are learning. Some researchers (e.g., Schmidt and Frota) believe that this awareness must occur before a learner can make the necessary adjustments in his developing competence.

The idea of noticing the gap is not the same as monitoring one's own output [1]. The concept of monitoring refers to learners checking what they say or write, based on rules they've already learned. Monitoring may lead learners to notice the gap, but this experience can happen in the absence of known rules. Noticing the gap can involve the learner's realization that he doesn't know the word or the structure he is trying to say. In fact, the phrase "notice the gap" has also been used with the idea of learners realizing that there is a difference between what they want to say and what they can say. This process involves the development of linguistic self-awareness on the learner's part. And there are many things that language teachers can do to help learners become more self-aware.

Библиографический список

1. *Krashen, S.D.* 2005. *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.
2. *Nunan, D.* 2011. *Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers*. New York, NY: Prentice Hall.
3. *Nunan, D.* 2005. *Practical English Language Teaching Grammar*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill ESL/ELT.
4. *Omaggio, A.C.* 2012. The Relationship Between Personalized Classroom Talk and Teacher Effectiveness Ratings: Some Research Results. *Foreign Language Annals*, 14(4): 255-269.
5. *Schmidt, R. and S.N. Frota.* 2016. Developing Basic Conversational Ability in a Second Language: A Case Study of an Adult Learner of Portuguese. In R.R. Day (ed.), *Talking to Learn: Conversation in Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 237-326.