GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHING SPEAKING IN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the main language skills. One of the basic language skill is speaking. In this article we try to explain teaching speaking in literature.

Keywords: literature, principle, language, speaking, performance, main, basic.

Language learning which must be at the heart of any methodology one decides to implement in the MFL classroom, is that – as posited by Cognitive Skill Theory – the four main language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) are learnt exactly in the same way as any other cognitive skill, through lots of practice and formative feedback on performance. Many years of teaching, in the majority of lessons I have seen speaking and listening skills are practised insufficiently and definitely not to the same extent as reading and writing are. When speaking occurs, it is usually within the context of teacher-to-student rather than student-to-student interaction. Teachers still recall vividly the uproar that every lesson should include at least 15 minutes of student-to-student oral communication (through surveys, find someone who, simulations, role plays, card games, etc.). Frankly, I was shocked by that reaction. Isn't it why people learn languages? To be able to converse in the target language to other fellow humans? Shouldn't it be our primary pedagogic and even ethical imperative to encourage face-to-face oral communication, especially in this age of hiding-behind-the-screen chronic digital chatting? What is ironic is that some of those reluctant teachers have become passionate advocates of personalized learning and the 'flipped classroom' through the digital medium. But when students chat with each other in the target language, making up their own questions and answers, using language spontaneously and creatively – isn't this truly personalised learning? We truly flip the classroom, when our learners carry over this learning habit to the outside world or even simply to the corridors or play areas of our schools – a possible scenario in an International school like the one I work in, for example, where people from lots of different nationalities play and work side by side. This is why I

personally make sure that every single one of my lessons includes lots of learner-to-learner interaction in the target language.

Is this tendency to refrain from lots of speaking and listening practice exacerbated by teachers' use of the Tablet or other other digital devices in the MFL classroom? The answer is, I am afraid, a resounding 'YES'. Of the over 1,000 tweets about Apple Apps, Tech tips on various teacher networks, digital based learning activities and forum posts I have reviewed as part of a study I am carrying out on digital learning, only a dismal 2 % concerned themselves with oral fluency enhancement. In fact, it should be pointed out that most of the teaching tips that make up that 2 % were of questionable pedagogic values. Here is why. Firstly, some of the 'techy' advice I reviewed related to the use of Telegram, Chatterpix and similar Apps as oral-fluency enhancing activities. Although, there is a place for this kind of activities as catalysts for (younger) student motivation to talk by means of the visual and sound effects, their enhancing effect on fluency is not massive. Moreover, in my experience, students usually tend to read scripts when they record with these Apps as they are often use to 'show off' students' work or as homework to post on school blogs. Similarly, videoing students or recording their dialogues through apps like Voice Recorder Pro, can indeed be useful for AFL activities such as self-/peer-assessment but do they really significantly impact oral fluency? Other tips reviewed related to using apps like Explaining everything where teachers/students record feedback on a student/peer's performance. Besides being very time consuming for teachers to make and students to listen to, all language learning models and research, whether nativist or cognitive, show that this kind of activities have little or no significant impact on student's oral proficiency as they work on declarative rather than procedural knowledge and for them to really impact learning their formative content needs to be recycled constantly to be internalized effectively I will write more on this in my next post explaining why. Finally, using Aurasma to hear a passage being read aloud so as to model good pronunciation/intonation is great at the imitative stages to work on the prosodic levels of language production but does not really develop spontaneous speech. Ultimately, what some language educators seem to forget or ignore, is that for language learners to acquire all the oral micro-skills, each of them needs to be automat zed. In other words, the learner needs to practice each and every one of those skills along the Declarative to Procedural route; a route, that is, that goes from a slow, conscious stage where the learner needs to think about what he/she says with lots of hesitation and mistakes, to a faster,

'automatic' stage where the language performance is fluid and 'spontaneous' and accurate. This requires a sustained, constant and time-consuming effort supported by regular, well-dosed and selective on only a few crucial issues at a time formative feedback, lots of grammar practice, vocabulary learning and pronunciation/intonation modeling through masses of listening: a) to prepare the students for communicative practice;

b) to consolidate learning;

c) to personalize expansion of the target material. These colleagues use recording apps mostly at the end of each learning cycle, when the students are developmentally ready for spontaneous interaction or to learn from richer formative feedback. In conclusion, digital tools can be powerful and effective catalysts of learning, but their use must be informed by sound principled teaching and lots of cognitive and affective empathy with the learners. Oracy or social communication must be fostered on a day-to-day basis and developing spontaneous speakers/writers should always be our primary objective as MFL teachers. This is the framework that I advocate for the integration of digital learning in the promotion of oral fluency in the 21st century MFL classroom. Short and long focus, oral and written performance, vocabulary and grammar building are integrated. The principles behind Content and Language Integrated Learning include global statements such as '*all teachers are teachers of language*' to the wide-ranging advantages of cross-curricular bilingual teaching in statements from the Content and Language Integrated Project. The benefits of CLIL may be seen in terms of cultural awareness, internationalization, language competence, preparation for both study and working life, and increased motivation.

While CLIL may be the best-fit methodology for language teaching and learning in a multilingual world, the literature suggests that there remains a dearth of CLIL-type materials, and a lack of teacher training programmers to prepare both language and subject teachers for CLIL teaching in literature. The theory may be sold, but questions remain about how theory translates into classroom practice. Concrete goals and behavioral objectives are the corner stones of an effective writing program, as they will provide the teacher with valid evaluative and diagnostic tools and permit the pupil achieve success. Prior writing experiences for many of our pupils have resulted in failure primarily due to poor objectives, which failed to allow the pupils to succeed. We must first tap the abundant resources our pupils have brought with them to class. All of our pupils have mastered the syntactical

complexities of their mother tongue. When the child first learned to speak, he did so through imitation. He learned words, imitated sentence patterns, and later created original sentences according to the many patterns he had internalized. In essence, he has learned the patterns of verbal communication. Unfortunately, when teaching writing, teachers fail to recognize this innate phenomenon. We are so concerned with grammatical rhetoric, standard English and proper usage, that the pupil is no longer confident about his ability to use language. Such a pupil will never be motivated to write. Management of a writing program is also crucial.

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