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HOW TO TEACH TO SPEAK AS A NATIVE SPEAKER IN ESP CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

The demand for changing the conceptions of teaching and learning has brought peer- and self-assessment into the classroom. This paper presents the challenges teachers have to face while preparing the assessment process for the ESP classroom, with a special emphasis on developing ESP students' speaking skills. It is of primary importance that teachers know how to prepare the assessment criteria, how to instruct students on this topic and provide them with adequate feedback while avoiding possible barriers and misunderstandings along the process.

KEYWORDS

peer-assessment, self-assessment, speaking skills, teacher training, assessment criteria.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching assessment is essential in helping students gain the strategies necessary for developing their speaking and oral presentation skills. The importance of enabling students to deliver a good oral presentation as a part of a number of essential workplace tasks, such as presenting engineering solutions and project proposals, selling products and conducting professional seminars and meetings, is well documented in the literature and includes the need to develop effective oral communication skills. Furthermore, oral presentation skills are not only

useful in the professional setting, but also in the academic setting and at the interpersonal level. The ability to offer a good presentation will improve students' confidence, enhance their future study options and help them share what they have learned with others.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Assessment should be regarded as an integral part of the teaching and learning process, meaning that teaching methods and assessment practices have to be

in accordance with the learning objectives (Brown, et al., 1997; Heywood, 2000). Likewise, learners should be actively involved and play an active role in the process of learning and assessment. In order for the assessment tasks to be meaningful and authentic, students should also participate in their development, as well as document their learning through reflections.

In developing speaking skills, formative or continuous assessment can assist students in identifying their weaknesses and strengths. In contrast to summative assessment in which the teacher or institution judge the achievement in its totality, formative assessment allows the learner to judge their own learning achievement. Formative assessment is administered throughout the learning process as an effort to continually inform both teacher and student during the learning process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One type of formative assessment involves self-assessment by individual learners. It is not commonly used in schools and at universities, but with new technologies being available, computer-based self-assessment in which students can compare their performance to the responses of others, ideally native speakers, is today another viable option. It can be helpful in assisting the student to gain insights to their own progress or the lack of progress, and can increase learning outcomes (Butler & Jiyoon, 2010). Apart from these benefits, one of the advantages of self-assessment in general is that, unlike other assessment-oriented communication activities such as group discussions, role play, oral presentations, etc., it does not consume class time, since the student can go through the process of self-assessment at home. Self-assessment develops students' responsibility for learning and their judgement skills. Correctly implemented, self-assessment can promote intrinsic

motivation, internally controlled effort, mastery goal orientation and more meaningful learning (McMillan & Hearn, 2008). In self-assessment, students identify actions and elements needed for their personal improvement, and they plan their next step, i.e. they define their short- and long- term individual goals.

TEACHERS' WORKLOAD AND CONSIDERATIONS

The role of the teacher in the process of self- and peer-assessment includes many considerations and the changing role in teachers' perspectives, which has been argued about in a number of studies (Rolheiser & Ross, 2001; Andrade, 2010; Hyland, 2013). Teachers have to learn more about the pedagogy and implement it in classes. They need to do a lot of research and then put it in practice, needing a variety of examples of implementation. They have to give up control in their classrooms disregarding their own fear (Rolheiser & Ross, 2001) and need to start getting involved in a different relationship with students. The changes also imply moderating the classroom dialogue and using feedback to a greater extent.

There are a number of very important considerations for the teacher to be aware of if one decides to ask students to peer- and self-assess. Teachers need to implement strategies that encourage and foster honest self-reflection. Brown and Harris (2014, p. 26) argue that teachers need to permit some self-assessment to remain private from the teacher, without forcing students to display their negative assessment in front of the class. They should also encourage students to share their self-evaluations with trusted people, like best friends or a family member. This is in accordance with Andrade (2010, p. 12) who believes that teachers should focus on the self-regulatory effects of self- and peer-assessment, supporting students in articulating subsequent learning in their own words and information they want

to share. Since teachers know that reacting negatively to student self-assessment would be counterproductive, it is desirable for them to comment on the realism and objectivity of the assessment as an important learning objective. It will provide an environment where students' opinions are prioritized and protected, and a classroom with a supportive interpersonal climate. Therefore, it is clear that teachers, as well as students, should undergo training before being engaged with peer- and self-assessment as a taught and learned competence (Brown & Harris, 2014, p. 27), as well as be prepared for certain changes and corrections being undergone within the process itself (Min, 2013).

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

In order to be able to deliver a good oral presentation, students need to become aware of the assessment criteria, or significant oral presentation factors, that, if fulfilled, will lead to a wanted outcome. One of the problems teachers and educators are faced with is which significant factors to choose out of a relatively wide range offered by different authors and researchers. Since most teachers use criterion-referenced assessment rather than just give a single grade for a presentation as a whole, their first task is to find available criteria, test them in classes, and establish the best possible one for their students. The difficulty of criteria selection is further expanded by knowing that each generation of students is different and that they all have to find the criteria suitable for self- and peer- assessment. Only then should the teacher focus their training on different competencies that comprise the assessment tasks at hand.

In addition to the separately graded competences, there is also a global achievement grade for the candidates' overall performance. However, neither one of the sets of criteria listed above pays due

attention to nonverbal presentation factors, i.e. involving the audience and using visual aids and prompts. On the other hand, teachers try to strike a balance between the content and delivery focused factors, as well as between the linguistic expression and nonverbal aspects of any presentation. Therefore, a list of eight most significant presentation factors was devised to facilitate both the training and assessment processes. These are: content, structure, grammar, coherence, vocabulary, speaking skills, involving the audience and self-presentation. The use of visual aids was not listed as a separated category, since their use should not be made mandatory when considering the quality of a presentation. However, it could be placed within the „involving the audience' category under which it was presented to the students.

THE INSTRUCTION AND APPLICATION OF CRITERIA

Instruction or training on the relevant speaking skills' criteria has been proved to be the most important phase of the process, since it fulfils the most relevant goal of the teacher, that is, it actually teaches the students how to speak effectively in front of an audience. In classroom, one of the possibilities is to have classes focused on each speaking skill and oral presentation factor separately, asking students to rehearse parts of their own short presentations at home and delivering them in the following class, paying special attention to that one presentation factor discussed in the previous class. Volunteers can then give their short speeches as examples of the previous week tutorial and the quality of their work can be discussed and extensive feedback offered, so that both the speakers and the audience become aware of how they could improve their speeches in the future and how they can peer- and self- assess them along the way.

For example, concerning the speech content, the instructions may note that a person giving an oral presentation should talk about a single topic without digressing to other subjects/topics. The topic should be discussed in more detail and interesting examples should be offered. To be able to present the content successfully, students are advised to use notes rather than a full script, since their use allows the speaker to be prepared, yet still appear spontaneous. Likewise, students should learn the basic introduction-body-conclusion organizational pattern. They have to be familiarized with thesis/topic sentences, introduction and supporting sentences, as well as coherence. As it has already been pointed out, one of the main problems speakers encounter is a lack of coherence, or the inability to make a presentation sound right as a whole. Therefore, a well ordered and logical flow of ideas presented should also be brought to students' attention, as well as the need for the repetition, rewording and summarization in individual organization units.

CONCLUSION

Assessment plays an important role in the classroom. With a number of benefits and a number of challenges, it has been embraced in classes where students are intellectually challenged, where groups are large and teachers need a shift in grading and perspective on students' outcomes. The paper has tried to present the benefits of peer- and self-assessment in ESP classes, stressing the important issues to be considered throughout the process of introducing, training and delivering assessments.

Special attention has been attributed to the teachers' workload. Even though the grading burden has been diversified and removed from the classroom, the teacher is left with a lot of tasks to be considered and fulfilled. Beginning with the idea of self- and peer-

assessment, teachers need training in the change of their perspectives on grading and their perspective on students and their obligations. They need knowledge of psychology to be able to cope with parents and all the possible situations with students' private observations. They need to know how to encourage students to share their beliefs and opinions, and present their progress in learning. After that being learnt, teachers need to prepare criteria for assessment, teach students, evaluate their deliveries and provide adequate and positive feedbacks. In the end, assessment proves to be a time-consuming process, though rewarding both for the teacher and, what is really important, for the student as well.

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