

Several techniques motivating learners' speaking performance in efl classrooms

Võ Thị Anh Thu*

*ThS. Trường Đại học Đồng Tháp

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Abstract: *Motivating learners is an important process in teaching language speaking skills. Based on research results, there have been many articles providing useful techniques for increasing learners' motivation. This article is another attempt to analyze different factors influencing learners' speaking performance, thereby suggesting various techniques for motivating learners' speaking performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. It is withdrawn that language classrooms should be as much relaxing as possible in order to maximize students' exposure to the target language.*

Keywords: *Motivation, speaking performance, influence, exposure*

1. Introduction

English teaching and learning have undergone considerable changes. Speaking is a crucial part of second language and teaching. Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued in the context of English teaching in Vietnam. In this paper, we attempt to identify several factors affecting learners' speaking performance as well as implement the techniques to motivate learners' speaking performance in EFL classroom.

2. Literature review

2.1. The definition of motivation: "Motivation is the extent to which you make choices about goals to pursue and the effort you will devote to that pursuit" (Brown, 1994, p.72). Sprat, Pulverness & Williams (1995, p.38) define "motivation is the thoughts and feelings we have which make us want to do something, continue to want to do it and turn our wishes into action."

2.2. The definition of speaking: Speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p.13). Brown (1994), Burns and Joyce (1997, cited in Florez, 1999) refer speaking to an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information.

2.3. The importance of motivation in speaking skill: Learning to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. As a result, it is difficult for English as foreign language (EFL) learners to speak the target language fluently and appropriately. Motivation makes

language learners positive about their own learning. It also creates the drive in them to acquire the target language, enjoy the learning process, and experience real communication.

3. Content

3.1. Factors affecting learners' motivation in speaking in EFL classroom

3.1.1. Learners' factors

a. Learners' proficiency

The learners with lower proficiency are often afraid of making mistakes and losing face in front of their teacher and classmates. As a result, they commonly stop participating in the speaking activity (Hieu, 2001). Because of lacking exposure to a variety of vocabulary, learners can fail in communicating fluently in English language, for instance. Hence, learners can lose their confidence and motivation to speak.

b. Learners' interest and need

Learners' interest and need play an important role in learners' speaking motivation. Learners with high interest always put the aims for learning and always try their best to achieve them.

c. Learners' personalities

Shyness and lack of self-confidence hinders learners from participating speaking activities in the classroom. Baldwin (2011) explains that feeling of shyness makes learners' mind go blank and they will forget what to say. On the other hand, Park & Lee (2005) states that self-confidence affects significantly on second language learners' oral performance.

d. Learners' learning styles

Mary S., Alan P. and Melanie W. (2005) consider

that learning styles are the ways in which learner naturally refers to take in, process, and remember information and skills. For example, the speaking class with more reflective learners seem to be quieter and more boring than the one with more impulsive ones. Hence, the learning style partially prevents students from getting actively involved in classroom activities as well as have more opportunities to speak English

3.1.2 Teachers' factors

a. Teacher knowledge

Underwood (1987) states that a successful teacher requires not only to be fluent and accurate English speaker but also to recognize the difficulties learners face during the speaking time. On the other hand, learners must know who they are communicating with, where people come from, what values people have; therefore, the knowledge of intercultural communication should be brought into classroom.

b. Teacher behavior

Appropriate teacher behavior in classroom is considered a powerful motivational tool. Thus, according to Tanveer (2007), teachers should have friendly, helpful behaviors to make learners feel comfortable when participating in speaking activities in classroom. In addition, teachers should establish a good relationship with the learners, which is a key element of motivation in learners' learning.

c. Teacher roles

Teachers need to manage the activities and the learners in the classroom in different ways. According to Mary S., et al., (2005:145) teachers can have different roles such as planners, informers, managers, monitors, involvers, parents or friends etc... This aims at encouraging more learners' participation in learning and enabling them to decrease their dependence on their teacher and they will be more autonomously responsible for their own learning.

d. Teacher feedback

Feedback is an important factor (either positive or negative) that affects learners' motivation (Schmidt, Boraie & Kassabgy, 1996). Positive feedback helps learners identify what they have done well as well as what they should improve without demotivating them. "The positive feedback that learners perceive as a boost to their feelings of competence and self-determination (Brown, 1994, p.77)".

3.1.3. Learning environment

Pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere creates motivation and it encourages learners to

express opinions and thinking. Dornyei (2001) further adds that a tense classroom atmosphere would increase students' anxiety, shyness and unselfconfidence. Physical conditions are important, too. Learning environment has great impacts on learning as well (Hammer, 1992).

3.2. Several techniques motivating learners' speaking performance in EFL classroom

ornyei Z. and Csizer K. (1998) offer several commandments for motivating language learners.

3.2.1. Creating a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom

The Classroom should be an environment where learners are motivated to enthusiastically take part in the lesson in a non-threatening atmosphere. It should be filled with ample exciting and useful activities such as: role-play, information gap, storytelling, etc.

3.2.2. Presenting tasks in an interesting way

According to Nation (2000) teacher can create the opportunities for learners to activate their background knowledge in doing the task. Secondly, presenting tasks suitable for learners' needs and ability is considerably important, too. Tasks should be achievable to the learners.

3.2.3. Developing a good relationship with the learners

It is essential to build a good relationship with the learners (Kabilan, 2000). Teachers need to understand learners, who are from different backgrounds, have different interests, future goals, aim for English learning, and most importantly, different personalities. Hence, they are able to apply specific teaching and communicating strategies to each learner so that the learners can feel free to express their views and enable to shed their shyness and inhibitions.

3.2.4. Increasing the learners' self-confidence about language learning

Most of learners are afraid of losing faces when they make mistakes, which hinder their speaking performance. Errors or mistakes should be seen as a natural part of learning which show that learners are learning and experimenting with language. Hence, teacher should take into great consideration about whether, when and how to correct learners.

3.2.5. Increasing the learners' awareness of their goals

Learners should be more aware of the significance of studying English speaking for future communication, finding jobs, getting on to course of studies; therefore, learners need to invest more time on studying it.

In addition, promoting learners' motivation to speak English, teachers should familiarize the learners with the target language culture so that students are more confident to communicate with native speakers and enhance their intercultural communication competence. Furthermore, teacher can also make the language classes interesting as well as boost learner autonomy. In classroom, teacher should personalize the learning process. In other words, the course should be made relevant to the learners' life.

4. Implication

Here are some suggestions for English language teachers:

(1) Provide maximum opportunity to learners to speak the second language.

(2) Try to involve each student in every speaking activity.

(3) Provide positive feedback as well as ample compliment to build learner's self confidence

(4) Provide the vocabulary beforehand that learners need in speaking activities.

(5) Diagnose problems that learners face in expressing in the target language.

(6) Fill the class with meaningful and fun activities. Here are some communication games that teachers can use in classroom: discussion, role play, simulations, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, interview, story completion, reporting, playing cards, picture narrating, picture describing, find the difference, describe and arrangement, story reconstruction, problem solving, talking about yourself...etc.

5. Conclusion

The ability to communicate in the target language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school as well as in their life later. Hence, proper considering the factors affecting learners' speaking performance and discover suitable activities to promote learner's motivation to participate in speaking lesson are important and essential. English speaking class should be relaxing and comfortable where learners can get involved in a great number of meaningful and fun speaking activities.

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