LING2035 Linguistics case study on Teaching Spoken Language

The important aspects of spoken language are phonetics, morphology, and grammar and these are essential to developing communicative competence. We shall take up the views of some educators and researchers in the discussion on the subject of teaching spoken English.

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Abstract

Leung and Street (eds) draw on the works of Halliday and Hymes who introduced entirely new perspectives in the field of ELT, explains how combining information from various sources and weaving it into the material used in Hands-on activities can enhance learning in any subject. She illustrates her method with the help of a recorded example (10 - 17).

David Graddol explores the influence of globalization on the English language. He envisages a new order of English teaching in which more non-native teachers will be involved and also an emergence of other languages in the world eventually overtaking the position of English.

Kumaravadivelu (Analysing,2012) elaborates why the L2 teacher must to consider the needs, autonomy, and motivation of the learners in order to teach in the best possible way within the restriction imposed by the demands of the government in the form of policies, society, institutions, and personal factors. In another article (Beyond Methods), he argues against the method-based approach, which, he says, is insufficient to address the needs of the learners in a multicultural context and suggests alternatives.

Jenkins (2012), in her article, says that English as lingua franca needs to be considered as a separate field of study. It is not a variety of language but even native English people have to learn it as it is different from core English. She also talks about how L1 influences learners of ELF.
Teaching Spoken Language – a Literature Review
The important aspects of spoken language are phonetics, morphology, and grammar and these are essential to developing communicative competence. We shall take up the views of some educators and researchers in the discussion on the subject of teaching spoken English, the importance of the context for the bilingual learner, how it is used inside and outside the classroom, approaches towards teaching English, the curriculum and materials and how the spoken language is used in various parts of the world.


All the writers have stressed the need to take socio-cultural and other external factors such as the first language of the learner in designing curriculum and teaching practices and placing greater emphasis on teaching communication. The authors’ views are briefly summarized here.

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For Edge J. (2011), teaching methodology is a craft which lies in copying tradition and adapting it according to the changes in the situation. He gives details of the implementation of his views in the article.

Kramsch (2009), discusses the relation between symbolic self, action, and competence in the context of learning a foreign language and emphasizes the need for participatory methods of teaching. He refers to the deeper desires of the learner related to his self-perception, identity, seeking fulfillment in social and emotional and cognitive spaces.

While Leung and Street (2012) discuss the necessity of curriculum communication in EAL, Burns and Joyce (1997) discuss spoken language in detail with examples of conversations, and the implications for teaching. They distinguish between written and spoken language and stress the importance of exposing learners to both real-life and simulated pre-determined examples of speech.
Over the last 30 years, ELT practices have focused on the communicative aspect of language, endorsed by in-depth research since the 90s. (Jennifer J., 2012, M, & Omoniyi, T (eds), 2010, Leung, C., and Street, B.V. (eds) 2012) Introduction: English in the curriculum-norms and practices p 3). According to Leung and Street, even though ELT adopted a fresh new approach, the aspect of the socially appropriate use of language was not developed by them. (p 8). Illustrating with an audio-taped classroom event, Leung and Street suggest the ways in which English content words used in a social and practical setting allow the students to make meaningful associations.

It was earlier thought that spoken language must try to be as close to native norms of speech as possible. Native speakers were held to be experts and looked upon as setting the standard for English language but now they are regarded as obstacles to the free growth of English used by bilingual speakers. The latter also have the advantage of the ability of translation and interpretation. Native speakers are losing importance as teachers as the spread of English has also created new groups of English teachers who are better situated culturally and socially to teach English. (Graddol 2006. p 115). The accent of teachers for whom English is a native language is often not intelligible to the L2 learners coming from other countries. In the context of inter-cultural and socio-linguistic interactions, Kumaravadivelu (2006, Beyond post methods), points out the distinction between theory and practice, saying that actual classroom situations are complex and involve a variety of factors that lead to a discrepancy between theory and practice. He suggests that no method should be followed and that teachers must do strategic thinking and reflection, be involved and keep up with the latest knowledge, improve their own skills and be proactive in increasing the potential of learners by designing various strategies and constantly evaluating themselves, based on their experience as both teachers and learners. However, there is a possibility that there may be a lack of regularity in the absence of a regular method of instruction.
Somewhat similar views are expressed by Edge J. (2011). He describes his method with an anecdote about his assignment in Turkey, teaching a class of teacher-learners. The significant aspect is that he took no recourse to abstract theories in the deciding the method. An important result of the method was a transformation in the self-perception of the learners that made them more confident and much ahead of their seniors in the course. He illustrates the use of translation combined with ESOL strategy of group-based task and micro-teaching to peers lifted the standard and confidence of the learners to high levels as well as teaching the language in an efficient manner.

Neil Murray (2012), states the paucity of materials that take into account the features of CLT like presupposition, politeness, conversational implicature and others. He suggests that in the context of interactions in multicultural settings, where English is the lingua franca, the participants can be blunt and sound brusque in their aim to communicate effectively. He also discusses the condition of speakers who may find some socio-pragmatic aspect of the target language not in consonance with his beliefs. In such cases, he suggests that the participants will have to mutually agree to let go of some norms and adopt some others to have a mutually beneficial conversation. The teacher can encourage a. code-switching and b. resorting to L1 strategies in order to communicate effectively. Observing their first language and its functional use as well as noticing and analyzing other languages can lead to a greater understanding of the general principles on which socio-cultural appropriateness of the target-language is based. The first language of an individual is a valuable resource, but this approach may lead to fossilization. On this topic, Jenkins (2006), in contrast, found, that communication can break down if the speaker used a phrase of idiom in his native language (TESOL Quarterly, 2006, p170). However, identity issues and the reluctance to let go of L1 by non-native speakers of English is closely related to issues of self-esteem and confidence.
Speaking involves risk-taking abilities and motivation. Kramsch (2009), discusses the relation between symbolic self, action, and competence in the context of learning a foreign language. Among other issues, Kramsch discusses the need for motivating the learners from multicultural backgrounds using participatory methods of teaching. It involves engaging the students in discussions of their cultures and backgrounds. He is of the opinion that a lot of research has been conducted into the reasons for learning English as a foreign language by students of all communities, yet, more research is needed to look into why the students desire to learn a totally new language and culture rejecting what they already have. He refers to the deeper desires of the learner related to his self-perception, identity, and trying to seek fulfillment in social, emotional and cognitive spaces.

Jenkins (2006) found that some learners were not willing, or able to use native English forms even if they were capable of it and the situation called for it. Jenkins suggests that according to researches, there were several reasons: this was a way of protecting and maintaining their native, bilingual identity. Sometimes it signified solidarity with the other participants or indicated a cultural function, or it made sound sense in terms of communicative efficiency.

As Kumaravadivelu (2012, *Analysing*) says, the L2 teacher is expected to consider the needs, autonomy, and motivation of the learners in order to teach in the best possible way. But the process is not simple as the three factors mentioned are subject to the demands of the government in the form of policies, society, institutions and personal factors. In order to cope with the changing demands, educators draw up curriculum after careful analysis and the teachers must be aware of it and try to adapt it to their particular situations. He emphasizes the changed scenario of teaching and learning in which the needs, motivation and the independence or autonomy of the learner have to be reassessed to assist in fulfilling the learner’s potential. A learner’s needs and wants may not be the same as prescribed by the
educators or policymakers and others. The teacher’s role is to identify the differences between the two and address the issues suitably. (Kumaravadivelu, Analysing, p 39).

In this context, Gabriel Kasper and Makoto Omori (Horneberger N.H. and MacKay S.L. (eds), 2010, ch.17) give an example of a multicultural classroom and the difficulty of maintaining that balance suggested by Kumaravadivelu. In the example where the teacher is making the class work on a culture related topic. She has the best of intentions but requires the learner to relate only to the culture she comes from, invoking institutional authority. This leads to a situation of mild conflict that could have a negative effect on the learning process. This corroborates Kumaravadivelu’s reference to Brindley’s (1984) suggestion that the teacher has to identify the objective and subjective needs of the learners. (Analysing, p. 39).

It led Kasper and Omori (2010) to suggest that a lot of close research is needed in the aspect of multicultural pedagogy in classrooms. A similar approach is suggested by Burns and Joyce who recommend the following factors to be taken considered while teaching spoken language:

1. The situation determines the linguistic choices for spoken language
2. Contexts and interactions that the learners face should be taken into account when selecting the matter to be taught.
3. Scripted language may not always be appropriate, in which case the teacher will have to expose the learner to real life samples.
4. Critical judgment must be taken as to whether the materials available for teaching spoken language are authentic.

Teaching to speak also involves helping the learner to negotiate meanings and arrive at a comfortable level with the other participant/s, distinguish between the skills used for interaction and transaction in speech, and be able to identify the way the conversation is structured.

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When a new language is learned, a certain amount of values is also imbibed resulting in a change in the individual. This can manifest itself in his/her identifying himself as a part of a group different than that to which he belonged. Even so, people tend to preserve their national and local identity while trying to acquire a global one (Graddol, 2006, p 117).

According to Graddol, it leads to the appropriation of the foreign language with a local touch – the accent. Graddol may be only partially right because the accent is not put on but occurs naturally most of the time as the first language of the learner has a strong influence on his speech.

The views of the writers clearly indicate the importance given to the various Englishes and show that the hegemony of the Native Speaker of English is fading fast. Even though few writers mention the psychological and affective issues it is important, especially in contexts where the difference between the target language culture and the native culture is very wide or there is a strong reluctance to learn the second language for social reasons. The implications that these views have for teaching and learning English are immense.
References:

Burns and Joyce, 1997, *Focus on Speaking*, NCELTR.


Graddol David (2006), ‘*English Next’* web britishcouncil.org-learning/research


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<th>Criterion</th>
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<td><strong>Exemplary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Introductory statement clearly indicates the main purpose of the contribution and suggests the plan of organization, so the reader can anticipate the text that will follow.</td>
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<td><strong>Main Body</strong></td>
<td>Main body of contribution makes connected points that clearly build the argument so the text flows from introduction to conclusion in a logical manner, thereby helping the reader to follow the thinking behind the text.</td>
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<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
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<td>Grammar, spelling and punctuation are flawless, which allows the reader to focus on the message.</td>
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Tutor Comments: The work is well formulated. Other than few minor errors in presentation, referencing and sentence construction major aspects have been considered well.