

## РОМАНСЬКІ, ГЕРМАНСЬКІ ТА ІНШІ МОВИ

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### THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

This article focuses attention on the issue of developing the cadets' English oral proficiency at the Universities of Internal Affairs from the communicative and pragmatic perspectives. First, English has become an international language. It is quite understandable that the goal of teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is to train the learners to master the four English language skills, i.e., *listening, speaking, reading and writing skills*. However, the cadets' speaking skill seems to be the weakest one because many of them cannot carry on a simple English conversation with native English speakers despite the fact that they have attended years of English courses.

It would be unfair to thrust all the responsibilities of the inability to talk in English on the cadets themselves. Almost the English language input comes only from the lecturers and the materials they used. Under such circumstances, the cadets find it's very difficult to gain opportunities to improve their speaking ability.

There are several factors that may cause the students' inability to speak English fluently. These factors can be briefly summarized as the following points: First, because speaking ability is not included either in the tests of the individual schools or in any of the joint entrance examinations, the teaching of speaking is often, if not intentionally, neglected by the teachers.

Second, the class size is often too large to give each cadet enough time to speak. Furthermore, the usual conversation lesson tends to be the situation as described as a random, unprogrammed affair over which the

teacher has little control. More often than not, time is needlessly wasted away and nothing effective is added to the cadets' knowledge and skill.

English conversation is the most practical and useful way to master the language. In improving oral ability to speak is utmost necessary to adopt a functional/pragmatic approach. Considering more recent findings in English language teaching and learning the author believes that they are some methods that are the most conducive for cultivating our cadets' oral proficiency. For example, I argue that the English native speakers should be invited to join in the cadets' English conversation class and that the lecturers should make more use of the English language resources in the community to facilitate the development of our cadets' English oral proficiency [1, p. 35-36].

To facilitate discussions selected for this study, a few special terms need to be clarified here. They are listed in the following:

(1) **Oral Proficiency:** The ability to conduct verbal exchange by transferring known grammatical forms and vocabulary to new combinations used to express meaning in new situations in a linguistically accurate and sociolinguistically appropriate way.

(2) **Conversation:** It is a rule-governed, interpersonal communication activity involving at least two interlocutors, a speaker and an addressee, engaging in a give-and-take transmission of message. To elaborate clearly, conversation is also a coherent, well-structured piece of discourse, which involves an opening, a proper topic shifting, interruption and topic termination, and is balanced by appropriate turn-takings. Thus, during the process, each speaker uses his grammatical competence and follows conversational rules to make him produce not only grammatical sentences but also utterances that are clear, relevant to the topic, and most importantly, socially acceptable as well as polite.

(3) **Linguistic Competence:** It is the linguistic knowledge that enables the speaker of a language to produce and understand an unlimited number of familiar and novel utterances.

(4) **Communicative Competence:** A language speaker's underlying knowledge of the linguistic system and the norms for the appropriate use of language in particular speech situations.

Unfortunately, there are some factors that cause the problem.

1. Teacher-centered teaching. Under traditional teaching method, cadets have very little time to speak English and to do interactive activities and to use the target language.

2. English oral ability is not tested in the joint entrance examination (at both high school and college levels.) As a result, particularly under the examination-oriented teaching, the training of speaking is unintentionally neglected by the teachers.

3. Cadets do not actually use English in daily life. It cause that English is learned only as a subject in the classroom and not as a practical tool to convey messages in a communicative way. In other words, what is learned in class is hardly ever applied to interpersonal communication [2, p. 22-23].

All these factors have led to a situation that cadets can not carry on a simple English conversation despite the fact that they have learned English for many years.

Now the author discusses some ways that can be used to develop English oral proficiency:

1. On learning aspect:

a. At first, the cadets must be highly interested and very active in learning to speak English. They can initiate an English conversation with English lecturers or classmates in class. Particularly, taking the initiative in carrying on a conversation with native English speakers whenever occasion arises.

b. Students should have strong motivation to learn English. To expose themselves to the target language by constantly listening to/watching English radio/TV programs or language tapes. They may use off time to attend language cramming schools where small conversation classes are offered by native English speakers.

c. They should associate themselves with target culture, such as making friends with native speakers and exchanging correspondence with foreign friends.

d. Cadets should cultivate a habit of «self-talking in English» because by this way, they have more time to practice speaking English and to describe things in English. Furthermore, they should try to think in English as often as possible.

e. They should not be afraid of making errors while speaking English. Also they seek opportunities to take part in English speech contests within or outside schools.

f. They try hard to imitate the pronunciation and intonation of native speakers and Pay close attention to how native speakers produce utterances, too.

g. The cadets should usually contact with English reading materials, such as newspapers, magazines, and other booklets of various sorts to broaden their vocabulary for speaking. Furthermore, after reading an article, briefly retell the story in English to increase impression and practice speaking are necessary.

h. They are suppose to consult English-English dictionaries as possible as they can. More English words, phrases, and sentences can be acquired through consulting those dictionaries.

2. On the aspect of teaching:

a. At first, the lecturers should improve their English speaking ability. It is hard to promote cadets' English oral proficiency without a lecturer with proficient English speaking.

b. Lecturers are supposed to read just the conversation class from teacher-dominance to student-centeredness. Through various interactive activities, cadets have more time to practice English.

c. Sociolinguistic component should be combined into English conversation course. Thus, cadets' utterances can be expected to be not only linguistically accurate and communicatively fluent but also sociolinguistically appropriate.

f. The role of language lab should be reestimated and reinforced. A language lab should be turned into functional use by enabling students to watch video-tapes or films showing how native speakers conduct both verbal and nonverbal communications. All these issues can be carried out in a language lab with all the modern facilities installed. No matter what, a functional/pragmatic teaching of English conversation will get nowhere without accompanying with the dynamic audio-visual presentation in class.

g. Lecturers should employ the resources in the community, such as exposing cadets to authentic listening materials so that they will be

sensitive to the differences between classroom English and daily-life English that English native speakers normally speak [3].

In conclusion we can tell that these are all useful techniques are presented and hopefully they can be beneficial to both the lecturers and cadets at the Universities of Internal Affairs on developing English speaking ability. English conversation is the most practical and useful way to master the language. Furthermore, oral proficiency, a reflection of communicative competence, presupposes that a learner should be able to speak out not only in a communicatively fluent way but also in a sociolinguistically appropriate way. Thus, a knowledge of how native English speakers initiate and terminate a conversation, which topics are to be selected or what conversational rules are to follow and what nonverbal features are involved in an oral communication, is argued to be indispensable for cultivating English oral proficiency.

### References:

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