

DEVELOPING PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH TEACHERS' PROFESSIONALLY-ORIENTED SPEAKING SKILLS IN ELT METHODOLOGY CLASSES

Inna Samoylyukevych

Abstract

The article deals with the issues of professionally-oriented foreign-language teaching of future English teachers in the ELT Methodology course in order to develop their professional communicative competence. The author analyses the main communicative characteristics of professionally-oriented speaking and identifies types of communicative contacts of English teachers. Professionally-oriented speaking skills to be targeted in the process of teaching professionally-oriented spoken production and interaction are specified, and samples of classroom activities are provided.

Keywords: professionally-oriented speaking, English teachers, foreign language, ELT Methodology.

Introduction

Modernising teacher preparation has been of vital importance in the 21st-century language education in response to major change-generating challenges of the Information Age. The leading role of pre-service foreign language teacher training is appreciated as it addresses the issues of technology integration, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity, and the promotion of international cooperation and understanding across borders. There is a widespread agreement that prospective language teachers have to be equipped with key competences in accordance with the contemporary educational paradigm.

In the Ukrainian educational context, these expectations have led to a sequence of reforms aimed at the reconceptualisation of the curriculum and instruction throughout the education system. The introduction of the new State Standards for primary education in 2018 requires foreign language teachers to be change agents possessing high levels of communicative and methodological competences, essential life skills as well as capacity for continuing professional development and incorporation of teaching and learning innovations in their professional activity.

The initial foreign language teacher training community in Ukraine is currently involved in piloting the new ELT Methodology curriculum in 10 universities within the joint project of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the British Council Ukraine “The New Generation School Teacher” [5]. The new curriculum, which intends to provide students with important professional skills, also emphasizes opportunities for developing professionally-oriented communicative skills, in particular, professionally-oriented speaking. To develop these professionally-oriented communicative skills, modern techniques and activities for learning and teaching such as project work, task-based learning, case study and problem solving are recommended.

The aim of the article is to substantiate the need for designing activities for developing prospective English teachers' professionally-oriented speaking skills with due regard for the communicative features of professionally-oriented spoken production and interaction.

1. Professionally-oriented speaking in theory

Research on professionally-oriented language education practices was carried out by quite a few scholars in the following aspects: the formation of linguistic-methodological competence (A. L. Berdychevsky, Yu. V. Korobova.), methods of teaching professionally-oriented speaking (I. V. Samoilyukevych), modeling a specialist's professional activity in the English language classes (M. Slattery, J. Willis) [1, 2, 4, 6]. Special literature review has given enough evidence to state that developing professionally-oriented speaking skills should be considered an important objective of teaching prospective English teachers both in the English language classes and in the ELT Methodology course.

Professionally-oriented speaking as a complex communicative phenomenon requires studying in terms of spheres of communication, typical communicative situations and types of communicative contacts of foreign language teachers.

1.1. Spheres of communication of English teachers

In theory of communication, professionally-oriented speaking can be viewed as a variety of communicative activity that performs a certain social interaction. In linguistic pragmatics by social interaction they mean the communicative partners' activity aimed at regulating and coordinating their collaboration process. In professionally-oriented speaking, such a collaboration process is supported by spoken production (which conveys professionally relevant information and its evaluation), and spoken interaction (which presupposes an exchange of ideas and opinions).

It may also be accounted for from the point of view of the theory of information which studies, in particular, directions of information stream: depending on the difference between the information potentials of the speaker and the listener(s), the information stream can be one-directional (if there is an information gap) and result in professionally-oriented spoken production, or bidirectional (if the information potentials are approximately the same in both partners), thus bringing to life professionally-oriented spoken interaction.

In the socio-communicative aspect, the concept of professionally-oriented speaking is characterized by belonging to two major spheres of communication (domains) of an English-language teacher: the *pedagogical* domain (conducting English lessons in the classroom, organizing extra-curricular work in the English language, developing professionally autonomously and at CPD events) and the *socio-cultural* domain (a language teacher's activity beyond pedagogical interaction, for instance, communicating with native speakers and language users, acting as a cultural intermediary, or mediation).

The analysis of 167 typical communicative situations of English teachers enables us to state the qualitative and quantitative diversity of real-life professional communication in the target language in which professionally-oriented speaking occurs under the following conditions: 1) professional/pedagogical setting; 2) relationships of professional/pedagogical collaboration between communicative partners; 3) professionally-oriented communicative intentions; 4) professional knowledge on the topic of communication; 5) English-language communicative competence of communicative partners; 6) a varied number of participants, which provides opportunity for pair- and group communication.

1.2. Types of communicative contacts of English teachers

Having analysed typical communicative situations embraced by the above-mentioned domains, we distinguish four types of communicative contacts of English teachers.

Type I contacts include pedagogical situations of educational communication in and outside of the classroom in which an English teacher's verbal and non-verbal behavior is actualized. G. V. Rogova et al emphasise, in particular, such features of an English teacher's verbal behavior as adherence to language norm, adaptiveness, and laconism. Verbal behavior is closely related to non-verbal behavior with the help of which an English teacher demonstrates meaning by using gestures, actions, pictures etc. [3, c. 204]. Summarising their scientific observations, researchers M. Slattery and J. Willis state that an effective primary teacher of English extensively speaks English with learners, especially about what they see, tells simple stories, using drama, recasts in English what the learners have said in L1, and answers the learners' questions put in L1 [6, c. 4].

Type II contacts of English teachers take place in situations of professionally-oriented communication with colleagues, methodologists, trainee teachers, which are aimed at the purposeful development of professional communicative skills and raising the professional mastery level. For example, when participating in methodological seminars and workshops, teachers reflect on their own lessons, discuss the observed lessons of their colleagues, give presentations on methodological innovations or review professional publications. Many years of experience of organizing and conducting professional development events (summer schools, PD days, long-term and short-term methodological seminars) gained by the author at Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University gives every reason to complement this type of contacts with teacher participation in conducting professional workshops, master classes, and creative projects.

Type III contacts presuppose an English teacher's research activity on psychological, pedagogical and methodological issues through participating in scientific and professional development conferences, round-table and panel discussions in the format of initiative, extended communication in the process of presenting the results of the in-depth study of theoretical and practical aspects of foreign language education. This type of contacts is also contributed to by teachers' experience of writing and defending course papers as a part of professional development in INSETT institutes, as well as of participating in face-to-face and computer-mediated meetings of special interest groups in between the annual conferences of professional organizations, such as IATEFL or TESOL Ukraine.

Type IV contacts ensure socio-professional communication of English teachers with representatives of international community during cross-cultural exchanges. They can also be realized through collaborative projects with international organizations (the British Council, the US Peace Corps, etc.). Success of any cross-cultural exchange depends, to a great extent, on whether its participants can understand their own reactions and responses, put aside their prejudices and biases, accept and embrace new ideas, practices and approaches. So, the desirable skills of an English teacher as an international communicator to be developed in the ELT Methodology classroom range from self-awareness and ability to reflect to open-mindedness and non-judgementalness.

It seems important to mention that in Types I-III contacts the socio-communicative role of an English teacher is directly interrelated with the English language as a school subject to be taught while in Type IV contacts English teachers tend to act, above all, as representatives of the educational community of their country, that is as professionals who are competent in the field of education as part of national culture [4, c. 173-174].

2. Professionally-oriented speaking in practice

The analysis of professionally-oriented speaking in context of the above-mentioned communicative contacts and domains allows us to suggest that professionally-oriented

speaking of prospective English teachers should be developed in two main forms: professionally-oriented spoken production and professionally-oriented spoken interaction.

In order to teach professionally-oriented speaking effectively, we find it necessary to take into consideration the methodologically relevant general professionally-oriented speaking skills and specific skills of professionally-oriented spoken production and professionally-oriented spoken interaction. The general skills include: a) skills of realizing the communicative intention according to the aims and conditions of communication; b) skills of building an utterance or a micro-dialogue of a certain communicative type; c) skills of combining utterances or micro-dialogues of different communicative types. The specific skills are distinguished on the basis of the structural components and communicative acts of a certain type of an utterance or a dialogue. Below are the samples of activities for developing professionally-oriented spoken production and interaction skills in the ELT Methodology classroom on the unit “Principles of Communicative Language Teaching”.

2.1. A sample activity for teaching professionally-oriented spoken production

Methodological

Purpose: to develop students’ analytical skills in relation to activities observed in school

Communicative

Skill: realizing the communicative intention according to the aims and conditions of communication;

Time: 20 minutes

Procedure:

- Ask students to choose one activity for analyzing whether it is really communicative.
- Tell them to give evidence to support their opinion.
- If it is not a communicative task, ask them to suggest ways to make it more communicative.

2.2. A sample activity for teaching professionally-oriented spoken interaction

Methodological

Purpose: to explore students’ class observation experience

Communicative

Skill: building a micro-dialogue of a certain communicative type

Time: 15 minutes

Procedure:

- Tell students to work in pairs.
- Ask students to share what they have learnt from school observation.
- Tell students to read the statements on the slide and say if they agree/disagree with them.
- Ask students to support their opinions with classroom evidence.
- Split students into groups of four and ask them to share their choices.

Statements on the PPT slide:

- 1 Grammar is central in CLT.
- 2 CLT leads to greater motivation of language learners.
- 3 CLT helps to develop learner autonomy.
- 4 CLT looks more like language learning than language acquisition.
- 5 CLT is more focused on meaning than on form.
- 6 CLT provides no opportunity for natural error correction.

7 All communicative activities can be regarded to be tasks.

Conclusion

The development of general and specific skills of professionally-oriented spoken production and spoken interaction can be effectively incorporated into the ELT Methodology classroom through productive activities in typical communicative situations in the pedagogical and socio-cultural domains, with due regard for the communicative features of four types of contacts. Further research will focus on the issues of content-and-language integrated learning in the foreign language teacher preparation in Ukrainian universities.

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Information about author:

Inna Samoylyukevych – Ph.D., Professor, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Zhytomyr, Ukraine. E-mail: innasamoylyukevych@gmail.com.