A REVIEW OF SPEAKING ACTIVITIES IN
PROFILE BUSINESS COURSE

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Abstrakt Cilj ovog rada je da predstavi govorne vežbe unutar Profile kursa engleskog poslovnog jezika i da prikaže na primerima kako ovaj kurs može da pomogne studentima da razviju njihovo znanje pružajuci im autentičnu vežbu koja priprema studente za komunikaciju u konkretnim poslovnim situacijama

Ključne reči: Poslovni kurs, govorne vežbe, Profile

Abstract: The aim of this article is to present speaking activities of the Profile business course and to show that this course helps students develop their knowledge by providing authentic practice that prepares students for real-life business communication situations.

Key words: Business course, speaking activities, Profile

Introduction

Many language learners regard speaking ability as the measure of knowing a language. These learners define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most important skill they can acquire, and they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication. However, certain aspects characterize business communication:

Sense of purpose-language is used to achieve an end and its successful use is seen in terms of a successful outcome of the business transaction or event.

Social aspect-there is a need for an internationally accepted way of doing things so that people from different cultures can quickly feel comfortable with one another.

Clear communication-has to be conveyed with minimum risk of misunderstanding. There is a preference for clear, logical thought.

Profile is a three-level course for people who want to discuss different areas of business and improve their business English at the same time. Profile has the right combination of specialist language and business content to help students communicate in English with greater knowledge and confidence. There are a number of speaking activities which are designed to build up student's confidence in expressing their views in English and to improve their fluency. *Profile* helps learners to develop their communication skills in the key business areas of presentations, meetings, negotiations, telephoning English.

Speaking process

The speaking process includes activities that occur prior to, during, and after the actual speaking event. For example, before speaking, the speaker might determine the actual content of the message, how it should be presented, and what kind of audience will be hearing the message. While speaking, the speaker must attend to such things as presenting a clear message, tone of voice, suitable vocabulary, possible responses, the

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environment, and nonverbal gestures. Following speaking, the speaker might accept comments, answer questions, explain concepts not understood, and assess the process.

Pre-speaking: Planning and Organizing

Pre-speaking begins before students actually speak. Students' experiences, observations, and interactions inside and outside of the classroom have an impact upon what they say and how they say it. Pre-speaking activities involve thought and reflection, and provide opportunities for students to plan and organize for speaking. Some purposes for pre-speaking are that students generate and explore ideas for speaking topics through activities. Profile course offers a number of pre speaking activities such as constructing thought webs and graphic organizer, reading something relevant to the topic, listening to a speaker, jotting down ideas reflecting upon personal experience and reviewing vocabulary necessary for the topic.

What I liked the most in the first place is a great number of visual stimuli such as photographs, pictures, cartoons which are used simply as discussion starters, or as the material for a short talk, or as the first step to producing role-play situations or dialogues based on them. For instance, students first look at the picture of a supermarket which wants to become upmarket. On the picture they can see spilled cereals and wine, shop assistants who are chatting while customers are waiting in a queue, broken shelves. They have to think about the way supermarket looks, prices, quality of service, quality of goods and suggest changes supermarket could make to improve its business.

Another type of stimulus my students found useful is the written word. Magazines, pamphlets, and newspapers extracts led them to animated discussion or even to set speeches and debates. For example, the text from the Guardian about CV fraud serves as a starter for debate "How dishonest is it for candidates to exaggerate on a CV".

Next point I would like to praise are selected sound effects, put on a cassette and CD which challenge students to build up a story from what they hear. Students listen to four types of interviews: one to one, panel, group, serial and then discussed which method is the most stressful and which one gives the most accurate impression of a candidate and were asked to prepare interview questions for certain type of placements.

Finally, I would highly recommend "Language For" section. It is a key element of each unit which serves students to brainstorm necessary vocabulary for the following speaking topic. Due to phrases which are useful to state aims, tell about different stages of a presentation, thanks audience for cooperation student can make a presentation with less effort.

While - speaking

The purpose of real communication is to accomplish a task, such as conveying a telephone message, obtaining information, or expressing an opinion. Authentic communication involves an information gap; each participant has information that the other does not have. In addition, to achieve their purpose, participants may have to clarify their meaning or ask for confirmation of their own understanding. To create classroom speaking activities that will develop communicative competence, instructors need to incorporate a purpose and an information gap and allow for multiple forms of expression. Instructors need to combine structured output activities, which allow for error correction and increased accuracy, with communicative output activities that give students opportunities to practice language use more freely.

Structured output activities

Two common kinds of structured output activities are information gap activities. In these types of activities, students complete a task by obtaining missing information, a feature the activities have in common with real communication. The following information gap activity can be found in Profile course. Student A is an executive manager for a multinational household product company. Student B has to find out the information to complete the table about type of business, places where the company exports, how the company began exporting, about domestic and overseas sales. Another useful activity of this kind is when student B has asked you to meet someone at the airport. Some of information is wrong, so student A needs to call student B to check whom he needs to meet, flight number, arrival time, which terminal, where to meet, what he will be wearing.

Next, one of the most versatile techniques for the presentation and practice of phonological, lexical and grammatical items is the dialogue. It has the further advantages that a dialogue is by its very nature language interaction between people, which fulfils the communicative criterion. At an early stage, guided dialogues may have words blanked out, or whole phrases when they are highly predictable from the context. At higher levels, even complete responses by one of the parties may be omitted.

Profile uses a dialogue at the most elementary level as in the following extract .two students take in turns to be A and B and make a dialogue according to the given pattern.

A- call B

B -answer the phone

A-say who you are. Ask to speak to C

B-C is not there. Ask if A has a message.

A -you can call later

More importantly, as the pre-speaking activity students were introduced to telephoning expressions which are used by the person calling and ones used by the person receiving the call such as: Could I speak to, I'm calling about, Would you like to leave a message, Hold the line ,please..

Communicative Output Activities

Communicative output activities allow students to practice using all of the language they know in situations that resemble real settings. In these activities, students must work together to develop a plan, resolve a problem, or complete a task. The most common types of communicative output activity are role plays and discussions.

In role plays, students are assigned roles and put into situations that they may eventually encounter outside the classroom. Because role plays imitate life, the range of language functions that may be used expands considerably. Also, the role relationships call for them to practice and develop their sociolinguistic competence. They have to use language that is appropriate to the situation and to the characters.

Students usually find role playing enjoyable, but students who lack self-confidence or have lower proficiency levels may find them intimidating at first. As in the case of the dialogue, role-playing is a flexible technique which can be used in a much more structured and predictable way at the controlled stage or with less guidance at a later stage continued practice is turning into active production. The next role play from *Profile* is amazing. They work in group as members of quality control team. Students take the roles of team leader, inspector, coordinator, idea person and hold the meeting to discuss the problem with breakages and losses. Moreover, students are prepared for role -playing carefully. The activity is introduced by describing the situation so that the students understand what the goal of the role play should be. Each student is given a fact file that describes the role to be played. Before students start the role play, they brainstorm to predict what vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions they might use.

Discussions, like role plays, succeed when students are prepared first. *Profile* gives students the input, both topical information and language forms, so that they will have something to say and the language with which to say it. For example, before students have a discussion on the topic "In the long term, globalization will benefit everyone' they brainstorm arguments they can use to put the case as well as the phrases they will use to present their arguments.

Group talk is a generally active tool, but particularly so at the stage of freer production since there must be automatically less teacher control and more pupil-centredness in any work done in groups. Most of the suggested techniques in this and previous sections can be prepared in groups first of all and then brought

back to the class as a whole. Students were very much in favor of the group talk when they were asked to design a set of rules for a company. They had to think about rules for: salaries, working hours, holiday entitlement, sickness, benefits, using telephone and the Internet, dress codes. Before the group talk student revise forms which are used for expressing obligation and necessity and try to use them in their group talk.

Most presentations are given for one of five reasons: to entertain, inform, inspire, convince, or persuade. Once the purpose is determined, a talk should be organized around three main parts:

Introduction- which entices people to listen and previews what is to come.

Body- is the subject and should be simple and easy to understand. The speaker should stick to three—no more than four—main points, relying on facts, figures, illustrations, specific examples, and comparisons to support these main points.

Conclusion- is the final section which should highlight key points that the audience should remember. The content of the message should be structured in an orderly and logical manner. This makes it easier for people to follow, digest, and retain the information.

To practice the previously mentioned theory *Profile* offers following speaking activity. Students work in group of three and each of them gives the different stage of the presentation. They are management consultants who have carried out a study for a company which makes quality coffee makers and whose sales have fallen dramatically. Equally important, students have to make presentation based on the graphs and diagrams.

All in all, through well-prepared communicative output activities such as role plays and discussions, presentations students are encouraged to experiment and innovate with the language, and create a supportive atmosphere that allows them to make mistakes without fear of embarrassment. This will contribute to their self-confidence as speakers and to their motivation to learn more.

Post-speaking: A Time for Reflection and Setting Goals

Following speaking experiences, both formal and informal, it is important to have students reflect upon their performance because students who have opportunities to reflect upon their speaking experience grow in their abilities to speak effectively. Additionally, post-speaking activities serve to set goals for improvement. When students reflect upon their performance, they begin to recognize what they have done well and where they require improvement.

In discussing or developing criteria for assessing a variety of speaking experiences, both teachers and peers may be invited to comment. Peers may comment through a structure similar to a writing conference and may give oral feedback, written feedback, or a combination of the two. Conferences may be guided by specific questions determined by the teacher or may take the form of conversation between peers.

Conclusion

On reflection, I would have no hesitation in recommending *Profile* as a useful language course which provides students with the support they need to carry out the business tasks. The reason I believe that is that in order to help students develop communicative efficiency in speaking, *Profile* courses uses a balanced activities approach that combines language input, structured output, and communicative output. Language input comes in the form of pre-speaking activities and it gives learners the material they need to begin producing language themselves. Structured output focuses on correct form. Structured output requires them to use the specific form or structure and is designed to make learners comfortable producing specific language items. In communicative output, the learners' main purpose is to complete a task, such as obtaining information, developing a plan, or creating a video. To complete the task, they may use the language that the instructor has just presented, but they also may draw on any other strategies that they know.

In a balanced activities approach, like this one, the course offers a variety of activities from these different categories of input and output. Learners at all proficiency levels, including beginners, benefit from this variety; it is more motivating, and it is also more likely to result in effective language learning.

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