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GRADUATION WORK:

"THE MOST EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES TO DEVELOP FLUENCY IN THE

SPEAKING SKILL"

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This work deals with one particular aspect of the teaching of English as a foreign language: To reach a high level of fluency in the speaking skill, it suggests some of the most effective techniques for teachers of this language to use in order to lead their students to talk in the classroom using the language in a creative, purposeful and individual way. Furthermore, it makes a brief summary of some of the techniques that are less effective than the ones described before.

In addition, it will be shown the process that the researchers are going to follow in order to carry out this study, including the different activities that will be developed and the resources that will be used during the research. Besides, each of the steps that plays an important part of the whole research paper will be systematically explained.

At the end of the work can be found a classified bibliography whose purpose is to suggest further reading that may assist the teacher in the planning, preparation and implementation of the different techniques in the classroom.

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL

- ✓ To study the most effective techniques to develop a high level of fluency in the speaking skill in the students learning English as a second language.

SPECIFIC

- ✓ To demonstrate the different effective techniques that help students to reach a high level of fluency in the English language.

- ✓ To point out the advantages that these techniques carry out for the students when they are used appropriately.

- ✓ To contrast some of the techniques that are not as effective as the ones described beforehand.

JUSTIFICATION

At the time of learning English as a second language, the students need to develop the four main skills which are listening, speaking, reading and writing; being the biggest challenge for the students to accomplish a good level of fluency, since the speaking skill is the one they need to communicate with other English speakers. There is a selective group of techniques that help students to have a better domain in their communicative competences.

Knowing the importance of the development of this skill, it is essential that teachers select the appropriate communicative techniques in order to be applied in the classroom so that the students can accomplish the goals of communicating their feelings and thoughts in the target language. The improvement of the speaking skill is one of the most significant needs that students of a foreign language face during the process, being frustrated when they cannot express their point of view.

The importance of this project is to let people know some of the most effective techniques that help not only the students to develop the level of fluency in the speaking skill, but also the teachers to have an idea about what the possible results at the time of using these techniques in the classroom are, and also to know beforehand some of the benefits based on the theory as well as on the real experiences.

The most effective techniques to develop fluency in the speaking skill

In recent years the English language has become one of the most studied languages throughout the world. The teaching process of English as a language is emphasized in the development of the four macro skills which are: Listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, the first priority should be focused on the purposes that this language brings, that is to say communication, which is achieved through the development of the speaking skill. And since foreign language teaching should help students achieve some kind of communicative skill in the foreign language, it is important for learners who are studying English in a non-English speaking setting to experience real communicative situations in which they learn to express their own ideas in a fluent way. Although accuracy is required for improving fluency, the purpose of this work is focused on how to help the students to be encouraged to practice the language as much as possible, since accuracy is a more complex and slower process that the students have to experience in the learning field. So, learning is more effective if the learners are actively involved in the process, and this does not have anything to do with the speed in which the students use the target language. Therefore, in order to accomplish this goal, teachers must provide students from the very beginning with opportunities for both: to get the skill and to use the skill in the foreign language. Teachers can be supported by the different techniques that exist to help this matter, but out of the many techniques that help students learning English as a second language to develop a high level of fluency in the speaking skill, the most

effective are: Interviews, guessing games, discussion, role-plays, conversations, and debates.

One of the techniques that help students reach a high level of fluency is interview. According to Kay (1995) the very nature of an interview makes it an excellent effective activity because we watch, read and listen to interviews every day. The success of the interview depends on the purposes that teachers give to the activities that will be developed, taking into consideration the way in which they plan to carry out such activities. Teachers have the opportunity to select among some of the most common types of interviews such as personal interview, guided interview and group interview.

Personal interview is an effective technique of language learning in the classroom. According to Johnson (1995) its outstanding features are: 1- It is student-oriented. 2- It eases the learning of the target language in a meaningful and communicative way. 3- It gives the students much-needed practice in the listening and speaking skills. 4- It creates good rapport between the teacher and the students. So the aim of this type of interview is to help the students develop their language skill rather than to test their ability or lack of it in spoken English. David Ramirez, teachers' supervisor of the Centro Cultural Salvadoreño (CCS), said that the kind of interview he uses the most is the personal interview because he likes students to feel comfortable speaking about themselves. He feels these kinds of activities encourage the students to use the language more often. But he

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thinks that the most   important thing is that teachers must not pay much attention on the students´ areas of weakness; rather, to highlight their strengths so that the students can be encouraged to continue to speak in English.

Guided interview has as the main aim to gather information about a specific person (an expert, a representative member of a group) or about a student in any case. Klippel (1984) suggests that this helps students put English into practice in order to talk about their personal life according to the questions that have been prepared by the teacher, having as a final result a spontaneous usage of the English language.

A group interview, sometimes known as a panel interview, is different than a one-on-one interview because it is conducted by a whole group of people. Here the students are provided with a set of questions about a specific topic and each member of the group has the opportunity to give their own answers or opinions of such topic. A good thing of this type of interview is that it encourages students to share opinions and to correct each other mistakes in a more comfortable environment in order to get a final decision or answer, Littlewood (1981). Therefore, interviews are designed to see how students handle a problem in the classroom. Their answers should highlight their ability to deal immediately with a potential issue in a calm and controlled manner that will lead the students having an appropriate behaviour in a future real situation.

Students also can improve their fluency in the speaking skill by making use of guessing games. Everybody knows guessing games, which are not only liked by children but also adults, because the outcome of the game tends to be uncertain until the last moment, and so it is full of suspense. "Games are generally liked by students of all ages because they combine language practice with fun and excitement." Krashen (1983). The major rule of guessing games is very simple: one person knows something that another one wants to find out and that makes games stimulating and entertaining activity for students.

Furthermore, games tend to reduce inhibition if the competitive element is eliminated; the shy or linguistically weak student will feel more comfortable and will participate freely if the object is just to have fun, and not to score points and win or lose. Professor Juan Zavaleta, coordinator of ITEXSAL language school, thinks that this is a very effective technique to use with the students because they participate actively during the class. He also said that he uses guessing games to explain some topics that are difficult to understand because through games they are able to get the new knowledge easily in order to use it in a real context. In addition, According to L. Allington (1979) most of the time when developing a speaking activity some students tend to be afraid of participating because they worry about what people may say if they make a mistake, but with guessing games this fear is reduced, because they have the opportunity to use their knowledge of the target language in a creative way from the very beginning of their study; and

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this makes guessing games a true communicative situation, which is very important for foreign language learning.

Discussion is an effective communicative technique that induces students to practice English in the classroom. According to Heyworth (1978) the purpose of discussion, whether solving a problem, exploring an idea, constructing proposal or whatever, the main aim of a discussion in a foreign language course may be efficient fluency practice because the exercises intend to get the students to talk and to stimulate their interest and imagination so that they can give their point of view. Lic. Rolando Guzmán, teacher of English of the University of El Salvador, said that he often implements discussion in his classes because it helps the students use their knowledge for purposeful verbal communication. He also thinks that exercises of oral practice should be included in English lessons right from the beginning of the course so that the students can reach a high level of fluency in the speaking skill.

A further characteristic of a successful discussion is the apparent motivation of the participants. Some people may argue that discussion activities do not work because most of the time discussion is dominated by a few fluent speakers, and the rest either listen or get bored by being passive students, lose interest completely and turn to some other occupation. But the obvious answer to the problem is to divide the class into discussion groups ranging between two and eight participants, because the first advantage of group work is the increased

participation, since participation is not limited to those who are usually expressive, "students who are shy of saying something in front of the whole class, or to the teacher, often find it much easier to express themselves in front of a small group of their peers." Ur (2001).

In addition, for a discussion to be successful, the first thing to do is to bring interesting subject of conversation to the classroom. When a group is given a task to perform through verbal interaction, all speech becomes purposeful, and therefore more interesting and thus improving the atmosphere in the class and helping students cooperate better with each other. "Giving students a suitable topic provides interest and subject-matter for discussion, dividing them into groups improves the amount and quality of the verbal interaction." Ur (2001).

Another technique that encourages students to develop fluency in their speaking skill is role-play. Livingstone (1983) comments that the use of role-play has added a tremendous number of possibilities for communication practice. In role-playing, students perform roles to interact convincingly in English, and the exercise is so satisfying to them that they ask for more, this helps them improve their ability to converse in English. Since the purpose of role-play is to put the students into realistic communication situation without non pre-established language sample for this technique, only a set of instructions that initiates a conversation; this helps the students develop their fast thinking ability at the time they are acting out an every day situation and they are able to use the language

spontaneously. Lic. Matthew Alvarado, teacher of English of the University of El Salvador, considers role-play a significant technique to develop fluency in the students. He sometimes uses role-play in his classes because students enjoy participating in the situations in any exercise which immerses students so quickly and happily plays a role in English as a Foreign Language class. He also considers role-play as a natural way to communicate effectively as much as it is a good model of the way we talk.

Besides, role-play helps many shy students by providing them with a mask. "They gradually acquire almost a new personality; thus, role-playing and language learning may be very intimately connected, and role-playing exercises should be given the importance they deserve." Dobson (1983). Another important reason for using role-play is that it is fun and help students to use their imagination. The idea of role-play is to get the students to reply as natural as possible to a common situation as it is in real life; they should say the first thing that comes into their heads. By saying the first thing that comes into their heads, they are actually behaving naturally for a particular activity and they use the language spontaneously because there is no formal preparation when people's personal interpretations are involved. This induces students to use the language fluently because "Any language activity that focuses on the language of the native speaker is called a fluency work." Oller (1983).

Conversation is another technique that has as a purpose to exchange information and to help the students improve their fluency. Conversation can be defined as the informal interchange of thoughts and information by spoken words, in which people get into it without knowing whether how this conversation can start or finish; therefore, since conversation is a spontaneous creation of words, it is an effective way that provides the students the necessary practice to develop their fluency. According to Ryckman (1990) there are two major approaches that must be taken into account when using conversation: indirect approach and direct approach.

The indirect approach is the one in which students acquire conversational competence by engaging themselves in meaningful task. A direct approach explicitly calls students` attention to conversational rules conventions, and strategies. Whichever of these types of approaches teachers use with the students is a good way to improve their fluency, because the purpose of both approaches is to practice the language, Morgenstern (1976). Lic. Miguel Angel Visal, teacher of English of the American Christian School (ECA), thinks that the students should feel free to discuss personal and academic problems, projects, books, television programs, films, people and world problems; that is why he uses conversation activities in his classes because it is a good way to develop fluency. He also said that conversation plays an important part for the entire spoken language program.

Also, we use conversation in different social settings and for different kinds of social encounters, such as on the telephone and in formal or informal social settings. Everybody uses conversation in many different ways to strengthen their self-esteem, to make initial contact with others, to build relationships; in a few words, to structure their world and to compare it to the world of others. Another important aspect of conversation is that it includes some activities that lead students to practice the foreign language in a comfortable environment in order to turn students into fluent speakers of English. Some students find speaking in the classroom a threatening situation because there is always an audience and they feel afraid of making mistakes; for that reason, the teacher should put himself in the place of the students. According to Jackson (1980) "Confidence, necessary in any encounter of the students, is especially important in a conversation class." Thus, these activities help students develop confidence by building up personal security and promote trust as well as the ability to participate in the conversation in a safe and undemanding environment.

Debate technique is a useful vehicle for fluency practice. Getting prepared for debates can promote proficiency in language development in ways that are challenging and exciting for students because it is taken as a way for developing language fluency and academic study skills. By using debates, teachers can help the students create a good performance in the reading, writing, speaking, listening and research skills, demanded by this technique. According to Frank (1982) a good

thing of debate is that students enjoy this kind of discussion because they can talk about a topic they like.

Teachers must be aware of bringing subjects that are likely to provoke an arguable reaction on the students so that they can give their point of view in a free way whether they may be in or against the chosen topic, in order for students to enjoy the debate. In any case, it is not a good idea to choose a topic which encourages students having a violent position because instead of fulfilling the purpose mentioned before, the debate will become disorganized and students will be likely to use their mother tongue. Lic. Tom Stanton, teacher of English at ITEXSAL, believes that students like getting involved in these kinds of activities because the skills of oratory are learned and exercised in a debate better than anywhere else.

Besides, one of the advantages of the debate technique is that all students participate and give their point of view. In order for students to reach a high level of fluency, the most important thing is to practice the language as much as possible so with debates they are able to express their true feelings on a specific issue and will feel comfortable by defending   their actual feelings, using English in a fluent way and making debates more satisfying. Another important thing is that with debates it is hoped that all the students participate, since everybody wants to have a saying when it comes to an interesting topic that calls their attention, and

because each student is provided with some minutes to express what they feel or think about the topic being discussed, Frank (1982).

On the other hand, there are some techniques that are less effective than the ones mentioned before. Generally, when planning, teachers have some notions of goals and objectives they are seeking in a good comprehension of their subject matter and the available materials. A technique includes these important elements, but it also asks the teacher to include learning activities and appropriate teaching techniques that fulfill all these aspects. Effective teachers have learned to use a variety of teaching techniques to allow all students to acquire what they want them to learn, since teachers recognize that students learn differently. All the techniques mentioned before are designed to accomplish certain learner outcomes, but there are some techniques that cannot fulfill all these objectives because the priority of these techniques, as the speech for example, is the writing skill rather than the oral skill.

At the time of performing speech, the students never do it in a spontaneous way because they first write it down in order to pay close attention to the grammar structure and organization of the whole speech; and second, they make an effort to memorize it because they are worried about not making mistakes in front of an audience. Professor David Ramirez said that he almost never uses this technique in his classes because when you use speech, you are not making emphasis on the importance of the students' ability to communicate but in their skill of constructing

correct sentences and in their pronunciation. He also said that the only advantage he can find is that at the end of the speech students are going to have some time to answer some questions that the audience may ask, but the bad thing is that the time they have for questions and answers is really short, and when they prepare a speech, they also prepare possible answers for the possible questions they think they are going to be asked.

That is why speech is known as spoken writing. Ryckman (1983) comments that we tend to be critical about people who "speak like a book" , This is partly because books are not generally addressed to individual people or written in the way that people talk and so the style of written language may often sound odd when spoken. Vocabulary may be formal or elaborated, sentences long and complex, it may also seem as though the speaker was not in fact speaking to you, but to a public gathering. Moreover, a strong disadvantage of these techniques is that students learn things by heart without using the English language spontaneously. When using dialogues in the classroom, for example, with the purpose of letting the students develop their fluency in the speaking skill, conversations that come spontaneously should be used.

Nolasco (1987) suggests that students should be given any topic or real situation to make a performance without having any kind of written material, so that the students can use the English language in a natural way. In contrast, if teachers let students prepare the dialogue in a written way, and eventually perform the

same dialogue learned by heart, students will not produce any kind of English language naturally, and at the end they will not be able to reach a good fluency in the speaking skill; Lic. Rolando Guzmán said that one disadvantage of dialogue is that students emphasize in reading and pronunciation instead of using the language spontaneously. He says that students can not improve fluency when reading a dialogue. In addition, some teachers recommend the students not to use slangs in their dialogues, but in real life, most of the native speakers of English use slangs in their talk in order to simplify their conversation. Also, some books recomend to always read a conversation aloud to yourself until it sounds natural, before you use it in class; but if teachers put this into practice, they are not helping their students to develop fluency but rather to practice the pronunciation of the words in a conversation.

Also, this happens with some other techniques as for example, presentations, in which students only have to memorize the information of the topic they are going to talk about. According to Klippel (1984) this may help students to read fast and have a good pronunciation for not making mistakes while they are presenting the topic before an audience, but it does not help them in the development of the fluency because in this way they do not use the language spontaneously. Lic. Matthew Alvarado, teacher of English at University of El Salvador, considers presentation is not effective enough to develop fluency because students are afraid to express their ideas without a previous preparation of the topic they will present. This affects the students because while they are presenting their topic they feel so

worried about forgetting what they have memorized because if they forget something, they feel frustrated and they can not continue developing the presentation. He also says that it is good to carry out these activities but with other purposes rather than developing students' oral fluency.

Another example is singing song activities. This is another technique that helps students just to have a good pronunciation of the language and help teachers to build a relaxing environment in order to make the class amusing, but it can not help them improve their fluency ability; most of the time songs include structure of words that are rarely used in real life context because the language in songs is arranged in a poetic way, which is not the form everybody talks in every day conversations. Lic. Miguel Angel Visal, teacher of English at the American Christian School (ECA), considers that singing can be fun because it makes the students awake from a direct enrolment with language study and songs can also be used to reinforce recently taught structures, so singing and listening to songs can serve as practice for both pronunciation and comprehension, but not for fluency purposes. "I myself do not like to use songs very often because students like different types of music, and while some students may be enjoying the activity, some others are not and are likely to get bored because of the various types of likes they have." He comments.

Thus, these kinds of techniques will not be effective enough for developing the fluency in the students´ speaking skill, because most of the times in any of

these techniques the students are likely to learn the lines by heart, instead of producing their English in a natural way. So "the important concept to remember here, is that the wider a repertoire of teaching skills and techniques a teacher has at his or her commands, the greater the chance of more students achieving the intended learning goals are." Stevick (1963).

By not doing the techniques classified as effective before, the students will not be able to reach a high level of fluency in the speaking skill. These techniques have been viewed first and foremost as techniques for improving the students´ domain of the spoken language. Therefore, fluent speaking skill is the principal objective of these techniques. However, if the students for example, do not develop the interview, whichever of the three types studied here, the students will not be able to form spontaneous answers to specific questions since interviews force the students to listen carefully and react using the target language in a meaningful and communicative way.

Besides, if the students do not make use of the guessing games technique, whose purpose is to stimulate the students to use the language in a funny and relaxing environment, the students will not be able to use their creativity and imagination in a true communicative situation because the students are involved quicklier in an activity presented with a game format. If the students do not develop the discussion technique, which encourages the students to give their point of view, they will not be able to formulate reasonable, tactful and helpful answers to a

specific situation, because discussions "Force the participants to search deeply and carefully into the problems involved." Ur (2001). The students have as a final result the discussion of general values and sources of conflict.

Additionally if the students do not develop the role- play technique, they will not be able to take a place into a realistic situation, sharpen their listening comprehension skill, bring them in contact with new language, and discover areas where they need additional practice, because role-play helps them perform different personalities and roles in several situations in which the target language is involved. Furthermore, if the students do not develop the conversation technique, they will not be able to establish a natural communication with other English speakers, because conversation provides the students plenty of opportunities to expand their language learning for using it in a real context. The main characteristic of conversation is that it engages two or more people, so they can have the chance to talk or listen without having to follow a fixed schedule, such as an agenda. In conversation, everyone can have something to say and everyone can speak at any time. Finally, if the students do not develop the debate technique, they will not be able to defend their point of view in a spontaneous way, because debate encourages the students to reply as naturally as possible to a different comment or statement given by another student.

As a conclusion, English seems to have become the universal language. Therefore, if you want to get ahead, you have to have a domain of the English

language; but to know a language is to be able to speak it fluently. Fluency is taken as a mark of excellence and a personal competitive advantage. Lack of fluency reflects a kind of weakness in the speaker's speaking skill, and knowing a good grammar or thousands of words is not enough to be able to speak fluently. Fluency is something you master naturally with constant creative and functional exposure to the language. So students need to move from knowing about the language to know the language. In order to successfully achieve this goal, teachers need to select the appropriate technique carefully, in order to lead their students to use language effectively so that they can reach a high level of fluency in the speaking skill.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, the English language has become one of the most spoken languages throughout the world. That is why many people want to learn and get involved with the language so that they can communicate with other English speakers. Students who are studying English as a second language need to master the skills required by this language, and since the speaking skill is considered one of the most important for communication purposes, students need to be provided with different techniques that help them achieve a good level of fluency in the speaking skill. Therefore, all of the techniques discussed here are an excellent way to fulfill this purpose.

METHODOLOGY

In order to elaborate the final report of the graduation process six essential steps will be followed. The first step is the selection of the topic which was chosen through the answers that were given to some research questions about English education. The second step is to search the literature. To collect the necessary information related to the different purposes of this research, a bibliographical search will be done, consulting different books from different libraries in order not only to gather some of the most effective techniques for the development of the fluency of the speaking skill but also to support the selective techniques. The third step is the development of the argument, the researchers are going to form and then present the case. To form the case, the researchers are going to arrange the claims logically. To present the case they are going to organize the relevant data into a body of evidence that will explains what is known about the topic. Fourth step is survey the literature. In this step the researchers are going to select the most important information that will support the topic development in the whole paper. The fifth step is critique the literature. Here the researchers are going to interpret the current understanding of the topic. And the last step is the writing of the review. In this step the researchers are going to carry out the thesis writing that will transform the research project into a document for others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

✓   The different techniques classified as the most effective in this work should be implemented accurately in the classroom.

✓   Techniques to develop fluency in the speaking skill should be selected by teachers since the students are beginning the study of the language.

✓   Teacher should take an advantage of students' strengths in the language learning process in order to develop the communication competence effectively.

✓   A course in which the students can applied these techniques should be available in the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador.

✓   Students should be prepared to speak the language in a natural way to have a good reaction in a future real situation.

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