

Issues on the Enhancement and Evaluation of Oral Communication in the Foreign Language Class

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Abstract

The mission of most university English departments is to make students attain the most advanced levels of proficiency in the target language. Considering the fact that the skill of oral communication has become a passport to social and professional success during these last decades, it needs to become a central component in our curriculum. Empirical research as well as teacher experience in the Algerian university reveal that many students (and teachers, for that matter) have a limited oral communication competence. The present paper raises the following questions: What is involved in oral communication? What are the most frequently encountered difficulties in respect to teaching/learning how to communicate? What are teachers' wrong assumptions about this task? And what aspects of communication ought to be privileged in evaluating this competence: correct language, naturalness, fluency, pronunciation and intonation, or cultural appropriacy? The present paper addresses the above issues and attempts to set pedagogical principles that are likely to make of the EFL class an environment where genuine and targeted exchanges are possible. The questions raised in the present paper may open the space for fruitful discussions among language professionals whose primary concern remains the continuous progression of the student both as a language learner and as a citizen of this global world where efficient communication is highly desirable.

Key words: Cultural awareness, evaluation, fluency, oral communication