UDC 372.881.111.1

TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO NON-LINGUISTIC STUDENTS: RESULTS OF EXPERIMENT

V. KARNEICHYK, M. SIROTKINA
Polotsk State University, Belarus

The article focuses on the problem of teaching communication skills to non-linguistic students. The assessment indicators are described and the results of experiment are analyzed.

Communication is an important part of human activity and it is mostly held orally. People interact with each other every day, that is why everyday communication is inevitably revealed in a dialogue form rather than in a monologue one. After leaving school, adults are to be ready for unprepared speech. They are to exchange information and ideas with young people and adults who speak a different language and to communicate their thoughts and feelings to them. They are to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life. In general school-leavers aren't ready for unpremeditated speech. They can't communicate in a foreign language fluently. In fact, they know a lot of words and collocations, can use them in their speech correctly, but they are afraid of making grammar mistakes and can't keep up the dialogue. Thus, today much attention is paid to the problem of teaching dialogue communication skills. To form communication skills one should use special exercises and tasks.

Thus, a hypothesis of our research presupposes that the process of acquiring dialogue skills will be more effective if teachers will:

(a) use a complex of exercises including their three types: non-communicative (drills), partially communicative and communicative exercises; and at the same time aimed at improving grammar skills.

(b) take into account the transition from the stage of improving grammar skills to the stage of development of speech skills in the process of teaching dialogue communication.

The students' book (Cutting Edge Starter) and workbook were analyzed to quantify the exercises aimed at the development of communication skills [1]. There are a lot of non-communicative exercises, but the number of exercises that are supposed to involve a communicative approach is not enough. Partially communicative and communicative exercises should give an opportunity to communicate because of their completion. One should pay special attention to such exercises that develop students' communication skills. It is important due to the fact that one of the main features of teaching a foreign language is a communicative approach. The examples of such exercises are as follows: a) React to your partner using the model, b) Ask your partner a question according to the situation as shown in the model, c) Start a conversation in the following situations, d) Discuss, e) Interview your partner, f) Work in pairs and take turns. Ask and answer questions about … and ect.

There are no activities that are aimed at introducing or providing practice for particular types of interactive exchanges. Teaching dialogue should be based on real-life situations that require communication. Using the book only, it is impossible to create real-life communication. In addition, it should be mentioned that there are no dialogue models that are specific for standardized situations, such as "At the doctor's", "In a shop", "In a café", "At the airport" etc. After analysis of the students' book, it was considered necessary to find and select the appropriate exercises for creating our own complex of exercises aimed at developing dialogue communication skills.

We worked with non-linguistic students having A1 level. Among them were both 'Absolute beginners' and 'False beginners'. To assess students' communication skills we used the basic criteria offered in CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment). According to CEFR, basic users can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type; can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has; can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help [2].

To check if our hypothesis is true, we offered the students in both groups to do a final test, i.e. a communicative task aimed at creating their own dialogue in a given situation. The material was selected according to the topics in the students' book and tested experimentally. The developed complex of exercises includes three types of exercises: non-communicative (drills), partially-communicative and communicative exercises.

To evaluate students' skills we have taken a set of indicators. It was suggested that the assessment should be focused on such indicators as a number of utterances, adequate utterances, a number of unfinished utterances, a number of grammar mistakes and a number of hesitation pauses.

For each indicator, we have calculated the average value for each students' group. The results of the experiment are presented in the figure 1.
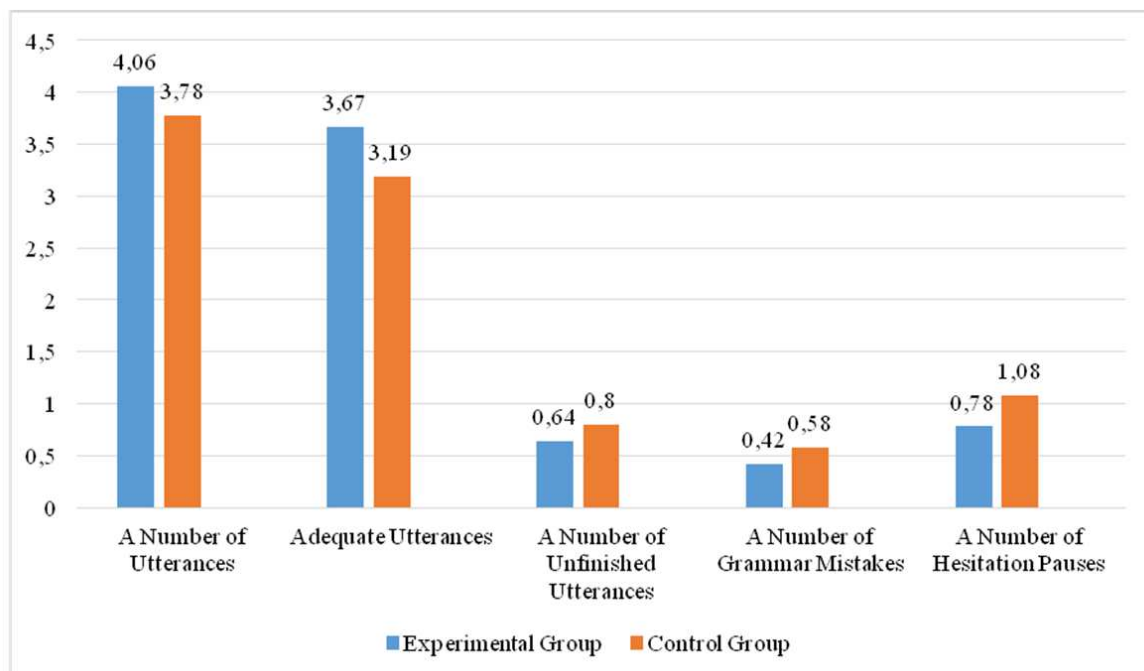

Figure 1. – The results of the experiment

As shown in the figure 1, the results of the experimental group are superior to the results of the control group for all indicators. The number of utterances in the experimental group is 4,06, while in the control group it is 3,78. The largest gap is observed in adequate utterances. This indicates that the students in the experimental group have learnt the given material better. Due to the greater number of exercises, students in the experimental group have made fewer grammar mistakes while speaking compared to the students in the control group. It is observed a certain improvement in all the indicators. We can say the communicative aim has mostly been fulfilled. The students have made up dialogues in a logical way, using sufficient number of adequate utterances. It should be noted that the offered complex of exercises with all three types of exercises is considered to be effective while developing dialogue communication skills.

REFERENCES

1. Cunningham, S. New Cutting Edge Starter / S. Cunningham, P. Moor. – UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2013 – 128 p.
2. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) [Electronic resource] / Language Policy Unit, Strasbourg. – Mode of access: https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages