

TED SPEECHES AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS OF STUDENTS MAJORING IN PSYCHOLOGY

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TED ПРОМОВИ ЯК ІНСТРУМЕНТ ДЛЯ УДОСКОНАЛЕННЯ НАВИЧОК АУДІЮВАННЯ У СТУДЕНТІВ ПСИХОЛОГІЧНИХ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТЕЙ

This article deals with the issue to use TED speeches as materials for listening comprehension classes for students of non-linguistic specialties. It grounded the notion why the speeches can be used for educational purposes at universities.

Key words: *frame, cognition, TED, speech, view, comprehension, listening, purpose, summary writing.*

У статті розглядається питання використання промов, які були представлені на конференції TED, у якості матеріалів для навчання аудіюванню студентів нелінгвістичних спеціальностей. Стаття обґрунтовує доцільність використання промов для навчальних цілей в університетах.

Ключові слова: *фрейм, пізнання, промова, TED, перегляд, прослуховування, розуміння, мета, написання анотації*

Introduction. Nowadays English teachers may enjoy witnessing a paradise for their language teaching process. The environment is a great efficient motivator for people of various ages, occupations, interests, nationalities and origin to study English. English is commonly considered to become a key to many doors, and we are looking for ways to obtain the key. So the English teachers can save their breaths and forget about motivation part at their classes because the world motivates people to study this all-mighty language. And nonetheless it's not the time to relax. The urgent issue on the agenda is teaching efficiency (Никитин, 2004; Стратегії іншомовної комунікації, 2011; Modern Languages, 1998).

People who have decided to acquire the language knowledge and skills are ardently striving for achieving tangible, appreciable and perceptible results. As a rule, the criterion for success is a learner's ability to effectively communicate in the foreign language. And the sooner the better.

The aim of the study. As the professional practice proves, strategically correct selection of studying materials may significantly intensifies the teaching process and helps to obtain the desirable results within limited period of time. So, in our investigation we aim at finding an efficient tool to improve students listening comprehension skills.

Framework and research methods. Teaching speaking skills to students of non-linguistic educational establishments has its own peculiarities. The general tendency is teaching professional English which is quite reasonable because this approach allows preparing learners to use the foreign language at the level of their professional activity. So students graduating from the university are to be able to use at least one foreign language in their professional sphere. The listening comprehension skill is considered to be one of the most significant one, a lot of scientists and language practitioners have been working on creating efficient teaching approaches and systems (2–10). In our article, we are discussing the issue of materials that can be used to increase teaching efficiency and making system of practice more effective when incorporated into the work with this particular material. Our analysis of scientific researches on the given problem allows maintaining that TED speeches haven't been considered as materials to teach listening comprehension yet.

The issue of an appropriate textbook or material for a particular major is always a challenge. Foreign textbooks being excellent from the language point of view can't satisfy us considering our curricula and specialization. A textbook for psychologists published by Oxford or Cambridge and the like doesn't exist so far. Our textbooks are good in general but contain outdated materials. Modern challenges of ESL teaching have formulated the requirements towards educational materials that must comply with the following characteristics "interestingness, ability to lead to a

discussion, logical and cohesive connection with other subjects studied in parallel... (Стратегії іншомовної комунікації, 2011)". In this respect TED speeches are considered to be a resourceful, informative, upgrading source of materials and an efficient tool to improve students speaking skills.

TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design), as Wikipedia says, got started in 1984. It was a one-off event at the very beginning. "The TED main conference is held annually in Long Beach... TED events are also held throughout the US and in Europe and Asia, offering live streaming of the talks. They address a wide range of topics within the research and practice of science and culture, often through story telling. The speakers are given a maximum of 18 minutes to present their ideas in the most innovative and engaging ways they can. Past presenters include Bill Clinton, Jane Goodall, Malcolm Gladwell, Al Gore, Gordon Brown, Richard Dawkins, Bill Gates, Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, and many Nobel Prize winners (TED,11)." Its slogan "ideas worth spreading" explains that initially the main aim of the conference was to exchange ideas on technology, entertainment, and design. But this format of communicating your idea to people turned out to be very popular and now this event has already become widely spread in the whole world and its popularity is growing (TED,11).

The variety of topics is pretty wide which makes its materials ideal for educational purposes. Any topics can be found due to specialization of the students, syllabus' goals, students' language level and a theme of a class. Totally, there are 338 topics. Such topics as education, learning, life, personal growth, psychology, society, work, and writing are most frequently used in classroom activities. The other critical peculiarity of these speeches is timing. Some speeches last for about 20 minutes, the others – 5 – 7 minutes; which allows the teacher to select and adjust speeches for class purposes. More than that, ideas usually presented are really exciting and worth being thought, discussed and spread that by no means contribute into resourcefulness of the classroom environment making it vivid, creative and productive.

Moreover, the essential elements of TED presentations include an array of lingual and paralingual peculiarities: comprehensive vocabulary, neutral language, natural speech flow, outstanding speaking skills of most presenters, wide range of topics and various angles of views. The speakers may focus on purely scientific issues using valid data and proofs or talk about life-urgent matters of personal value combined with passion and humor.

Results. As our investigation proves, the most effective teaching format using TED speeches consists of the five stages: 1) pre-view discussion; 2) vocabulary work; 3) listening to the speech; 4) post-view discussion; 5) writing a summary. In order to make listening comprehension activity efficient for students, we need to go through all the five stages. In our article we consider the functional feasibility and input into the overall process of all the stages.

Pre-view discussion prepares students for listening to a text on a specific topic.

As we understand, our life experience shapes our cognition's work. If the teacher sets up a certain environment for students with the help of discussion on issues closely connected with the text to be listened to, then she or he tries to facilitate the information processing by providing their cognition with 'phrases' (Стратегії іншомовної комунікації, 2011) or 'schemata' (Стратегії іншомовної комунікації, 2011). Let's analyze the use of the speech of Amy Cuddy "Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are" as an example of a class listening activity. The speech is devoted to interdependence of our physical body and our mind. It touches the issue of academic progress and ways to achieve it among other things. So, we discuss the following issues: What is a body language? Do you know how your body influences your mind and life? What roles are played by hormones testosterone and cortisol? Would you like to achieve personal progress at university? What may help to achieve successful outcomes at your study? This discussion helps to tune students' minds on succeeding listening comprehension activity. While discussing, students remember vocabulary and expressions, imagine environment natural within the specific topic, plunging into the speaking topic which greatly facilitates further comprehension and memorization. Making the students contextualize the topic to be listened to, the teacher stimulates them to feel familiar with it, and, hence, more comprehensive, more comfortable.

Gradually, students are getting involved into vocabulary learning. The teacher always differentiates the vocabulary that can be unknown or forgotten by the fosterlings. The difficulties the students may face dealing with a particular text can be predictable. So the vocabulary work fulfills, at least, the three functions. Firstly, it provides better understanding of the speech. Secondly, it helps to accumulate new vocabulary. Thirdly, this practice activates the forgotten one. As a rule, the vocabulary exercises include matching words with their definitions, synonyms, antonyms or images, guessing the meaning of a word from the context. The students really enjoy association game with new words, especially if humor and creativeness accompany the process of reproducing the meaning of a new word.

For instance, working with the speech of Amy Cuddy 'Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are', the matching exercises were used with students specializing in practical psychology. The words (testosterone, hormone, cortisol, traumatic, primate, outcome) should be properly defined through given definitions and synonyms (an animal, a result, a steroid hormone essential for health and well-being, a chemical of human blood, a steroid hormone released in response to stress, shocking).

Also, the listeners are given sentences to read and understand the meaning of some new words due to the general context of the text. For instance, 'So obviously, what we think about *non-verbal* or body language, we call it a non-verbal in social sciences, it's a language.' This sentence explains the term 'non-verbal' as a body language. In other example we can guess the essence of the word 'fraud': 'And I still feel like a *fraud*. I don't like to fake it. It's not me. I'm not suppose to be here'' that denotes a person who is cheating or pretending.

After the students have coped with the key vocabulary, we may move to the purpose of the activity. Then, the tasks for post-viewing discussion are to be looked through. Sometimes, students may clarify the meaning of the words used in the tasks. This activity stimulates the focus of their attention on the content of the speech and provides listeners with milestones or a plan. If we want to have more focused listeners, we should put up a purpose for the process (Brown, 2006). One of the ways to do that is to look through and briefly discuss the questions from the post-view section before beginning to listen to the text itself. The post-view discussion questions on Amy Cuddy's speech are: What postures can be considered powerful? For how long does Amy Cuddy advise practicing the posture? What kind of pupil was Amy in her childhood? What and how changed Amy's life? What is the main secret of her success at college and university? How did Amy help her friend? The questions may be offered just for quick scanning to keep them in mind while listening. If the students aren't able to understand the questions, the common discussion can help to clarify them.

After listening, students are ready to do offered assignments: to answer and discuss questions, to render the general idea in a sentence, to define true and false statements, and/or answer critical thinking questions to consolidate their knowledge.

What is an optimal frequency of listening to one and the same text in a group of students without specialized language training at university? It depends upon lots of factors, such as motivation, interest, language basis and the like. When this activity is only being introduced, the students need to listen to the speech twice or even three times, and texts should be chosen short and simple. The students of non-linguistic specialization don't have much time for English study at university. As a result, even students, excelled at English at school, may lose some of their listening skills because of lack of intensive speaking practice. That's why hearing the speech more than once is essential. During the first listening, they get adapted to sounding of the speech, to its delivery and understand its general content. They may also need the second listening when the text contains a lot of names, titles, and numbers, and the purpose of listening is not only to grasp the general meaning of the text. So they might want to find all the answers to the questions, to clarify some hard for understanding parts, to remember details and facts. That's why we face the necessity of the second listening. With practice we get rid of the second listening after students have gained critical skills to understand and operate the information they have listened to.

The fourth part is devoted to discussion which may have a variety of forms. Commenting on true or false statements, answering comprehension questions, making a plan, filling gaps, formulating

ideas of the speech are usual types of exercises used for post-view stage. At this stage the teacher easily notices the progress: at the very start students are not active or initiative, use simple and short “yes” or “no” replies, and give wrong answers. After approximately the fifth training, students are becoming more and more active, enthusiastic and initiative; they rarely make mistakes in understanding the context. Their answers turn into complete complex sentences. Their statements and opinions are grounded with argumentation and backed up with facts and details. Naturally, their interest in the activity is increasing.

The final stage is not very attractive for students. Partially, we can explain it by lack of solid knowledge of vocabulary and grammar rules. Moreover, most students have problems with expressing themselves in writing in their native language. No matter how, the final stage dealing with reproducing the content of the speech in a brief summary is obligatory and inevitable. The summary writing has got knowledge and skills consolidating function. Owing to this stage, students practice their writing skills while actively training their memory, speaking skills, critical thinking, and ability to creatively use their knowledge of the foreign language to express processed information.

Conclusions. The teaching experience proves the assumption that all people are different, and all people have different capacities to process data. The primary aim of an educator is to make both good and poor listeners better ones, good and poor data processors more efficient ones. Gradual step-by-step plunging into speaking environment diminishes the fear of a foreign speaker, enhances the desire to involve into speaking practice and facilitates understanding and memorization. Our research and experiments with 10 groups of students that were given assignments to listen to TED speeches have proved that regular listening comprehension exercises delivered due to the mentioned above order and procedure resulted in significant improvement of their speaking skills. Both students with excellent and satisfactory language levels demonstrated crucial progress, permanently increasing involvement and stable interest in this activity. Thus, our investigation of application of TED speeches as a tool to improve listening comprehension skills of students majoring in psychology has shown its great potential and usefulness in teaching process.

In the article, the preliminary conclusions about the use of TED speeches were given just to start the ball rolling. In fact, we find it feasible to research such issues as: the linguistic characteristic of these pieces of discourses, their cultural aspects, challenges students may face at listening classes and how to overcome them, verbal and non-verbal means to communicate messages to the audience and the like. In our further articles, all the mentioned above points may be covered after thorough investigation.

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