

DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR STUDENTS STRATEGIC COMPETENCE IN SPEAKING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Kaharova Shahlo Shaydilloevna
Lecturer at Bukhara State University

ANNOTATION

The problem of assessing the strategic competence of students in the English language speaking. The components of the strategic competence of students, a number of factors, which influences the speaker's strategic behavior. The scales that are widely are used to assess speech competence in speaking in accordance with its strategic aspect. The key features of the assessment of strategic speaking are indicated, suggested cognitive, communicative, expedient and educational-compensatory assessment, criteria, strategic competence with their corresponding indicators.

Keywords: strategic competence, speaking assessment, speaking features, cognitive, communicative, expedient and educational-compensatory criteria.

On-going globalization processes, integration of Uzbekistan and countries of the world are constantly intensifying the necessity of communicative interaction on the planetary level, as well as increasing demand for the complexity of such communication. This defines the *importance* of teaching students to speak English strategically competently and hence, evaluate strategic competency in speaking English.

The aim of this article is to analyze different speaking assessment scales and to develop based on them criteria for testing strategic competence in speaking. Elaborating criteria for evaluation of strategic competence in speaking English involves considering:

- the content of strategic competence;
- peculiarities of oral speech production;
- speaking criteria in English examinations.

According to the interactive approach students' strategic competence in speaking is interpreted as their ability to maximize the effective usage of all available language means to realize one's personal aim and the overall purpose of communication process with consideration of all its pragmatic factors.

Four main constituents which frame strategic competence can be recognized: cognitive, communicative, goal-seeking, educational. A cognitive component exhibits how strategies are realized in the thinking processes: evoking one's motives and communicative intentions to speak, prediction of interlocutor's communicative reaction and speech production, prognostication of the whole of communicative process, keeping in mind and tracking one's personal aim throughout interaction. It demonstrates communicative function of thinking which is activated via a chain of mechanisms:

- orientation and evaluation of one's own verbal and non-verbal behavior, feedback and situation as a system of interlocutors interrelations;
- goal-seeking that is manifested in the concentration on the main communicative task;
- prognostication of interlocutor's reaction, content of their and one's own utterances;

- choice of facts, thoughts and semantic blocks;
- combination of facts, thoughts and ideas;
- construction of the content part of the utterance and concentration on it;
- self-regulation that is responsible for the tactics in utterance production [2].

A communicative constituent represents a correlation of strategies with the main types of communicative activities: speaking, listening, writing and reading. The usage of each strategy presumes realization of a particular communicative purpose and is conditional on various factors, such as communicative context of a situation, communicative intentions of a speaker, communicative experience and communicative statuses of interlocutors.

All these factors influence the choice of strategies and define ways of their realization. A goal-seeking constituent is responsible for an aim-oriented communication. Without purpose a strategy would not be brought to life and the conversation would be devoid of meaning.

It is necessary to make a statement that a didactic (educational) element of students' strategic competence signifies the process of learning communicative strategies according to their individual learning styles in the context of their university studies.

Distinctive features of a monologue are: structural completeness; composition defined by the topic; particular language means of linking sentences; logical structure; little dependence on extra-linguistic situation; possible preparedness.

Main characteristics of a dialogue are: high level of interlocutors' activity and interactivity; motivated utterance production; spontaneity; usage of clichés and etiquette formulas; possible change of topics.

Peculiarities of a polylogue include: high level activity of communicators; spontaneity; structural complexity conditioned by participants' 'inserted' monologues; broad usage of clichés; concentration on one topic; complexity of turn-taking process; a speaker not necessarily reacts to the previous speaker's words; each speaker's utterances are logically connected with the general context of a conversation; tendency for unpreparedness; possibility of shorter duration of speakers' utterances due to greater number of conversation participants.

Strategic competency in speaking should be developing throughout the four-year program starting from students' first year of studies. This comes as a logical conclusion from the demands stated in the national curriculum draft, according to which senior graduates should operate English language at C1 level (according to CEFR descriptors).

Therefore, the strategic level of operating spoken English must be corresponding. To establish evaluative criteria of strategic competency in speaking it is of utmost importance to first examine the most successful modern widely-recognized tests, determine their assessment criteria and assessment format, 'extract' strategic aspects that are recognizable in the general speaking criteria.

Scales aiming at assessment of speaking English as a foreign language proved their recognition throughout English-speaking countries and worldwide; they comprise descriptors and criteria for evaluating speaking competency, integrating strategic ability as well. According to the criteria used in Spoken English Examination by Trinity College in London students' oral language production can be evaluated on strategic level on the basis of the following:

- descriptor of fulfillment includes such measures as control of the organization of the content of utterances during communication, communicative goal achievement, aim-oriented conversation;
- descriptor of readiness signifies the connection and interdependence of utterance production from listening comprehension and therefore on strategic level incorporates understanding main content, confident and appropriate cues in the context of conversation, understanding conclusions and changes in style, support off language fluency, taking initiative;
- pronunciation descriptor on strategic level describes correlation of stresses and intonation with the context of conversation and their understandability;
- descriptor of usage includes correspondence of language usage to the context of communicative situation, to the function or functional role of a speaker, and to the communicative intention of a speaker [4].

IELTS speaking band descriptors (score 8 or above corresponding to C1 level) include criteria reflecting the level of strategic language operations [3]:

Fluency and Coherence

- speaks coherently with fully appropriate cohesive features;
- develops topics coherently/fully and appropriately;

Lexical Resource

- uses vocabulary resource readily and flexibly to convey precise meaning or with full flexibility and precision in all topics;
- uses paraphrase effectively as required;

Lexical Resource

- uses a wide/full range of structures naturally, flexibly and appropriately;

Pronunciation

- uses a wide/full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety;
- throughout or with only occasional lapses;
- is easy/effortless to understand.

The CAE (Certificate of Advanced English) examination is an advanced level examination which prioritize candidates' strategic competency in speaking, who are expected to have a good operational command of the spoken language and be able to handle communication in most situations [3].

Assessment Criteria used in CAE examination to assess candidates are: grammar resource, vocabulary resource, discourse management, pronunciation and interactive communication [3]. Strategic ability is evaluated mainly under the discourse management and interactive communication categories.

Grammar Resource and Vocabulary Resource refer to the appropriate and accurate use of a range of grammatical forms and vocabulary.

Discourse Management correlates with the candidate's ability to use an appropriate range of linguistic resources to organize sentences. The CAE tasks require candidates to construct sentences and produce utterances in order to convey information and to express or justify opinions. Whether the contribution of short or a more lengthy utterance is required, the candidate's ability to maintain a coherent flow of language over several utterances is assessed.

Therefore, in this criterion justification of opinions, conveying information, which represents specific types of strategies, evaluates effective strategic communicative behavior of candidates. Pronunciation refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfill the task requirements. Strategic aspects of pronunciation criterion deal with appropriate linking of words, stress timing, highlighting of words to indicate information or to enforce a message, and the use of contrasting pitch levels to convey the intended meaning.

Interactive Communication refers to the candidate's ability to interact in the discourse by initiating and responding appropriately, at the required speed and rhythm. It includes the ability to use functional language and strategies to maintain or repair interaction. The ability of the candidate to display sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking is also assessed here. Candidates should extend their contributions without dominating or excluding their partner. Willingness and an ability to develop the task and move it towards a conclusion, rather than supplying minimal responses, are also rewarded here. Hence, particularly compensatory and turn-taking strategies are evaluated via this criterion in CAE speaking examination.

Global Achievement criterion also presumes evaluating the level of candidate's strategic competency. It refers to the candidate's overall effectiveness in dealing with the tasks in the CAE speaking test and reflects an independent impression assessment of the candidate's performance from the interlocutor's perspective – that is how the candidate (interlocutor) developed their strategic communicative line throughout the interaction process. Having modern descriptors and assessment criteria analyzed in detail the principal peculiarities of strategic competence measure in speaking can be outlined:

- adequateness of a communicative situation;
- compliance of strategies with communicative purposes;
- compliance of communicative skills with communicative aims on a tactical level;
- adequate regulation of communicative interaction;
- taking into account the previous utterance production of an interlocutor and predicting their next one;
- effective realization of strategies by means of the most correct formulation of the utterance on the tactical level: appropriate grammatical, lexical and stylistic accomplishment.

Based on all above mentioned it is proposed to adopt the author's scheme of assessing students' strategic competence in speaking English presented in the table.

CONCLUSIONS

The article proposes criteria for testing university students' strategic competency in speaking. Criteria and indicators derivation takes root from the demands for the future specialists – university students, the essence and distinctive peculiarities of strategic competence, the specificity of speaking as a skill and as an activity, the modern tendencies in evaluation processes. Hence, such criteria with the corresponding indicators for evaluation were established: cognitive, communicative, goal-seeking, educational-compensatory. Studying specific tasks for assessment and developing tools of evaluating strategic competence in writing and interaction activities open new prospects for further educational research.

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