Chapter 15

Academic ESP Oral Production: Moving Forward Towards Local and Global Awareness

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ABSTRACT

Current higher education students are frequently engaged to 24/7 interconnectedness, which should contribute towards their careful awareness of other languages and cultures at the time of receiving or communicating information. English remains the international language higher education learners and professional citizens in general need to perform to access the most competent job vacancies. This chapter is based on assessing oral production tasks that pursue to enhance speaking skills, team-work competences, and problem-solving in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses in the Degrees of History and Social Work. The results compare not only the oral outcomes of these two ESP groups but what evaluation procedures and assessment criteria have been considered to promote successful communication in English. Equally, this ESP content would be analysed to observe if teams succeeded in building not only local needs but also a conscious global education that is responsibly engaged with other cultures, as promoted by the global competence.

INTRODUCTION

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart. - Nelson Mandela

Globally interconnected awareness should make societies and educational institutions remain more culturally diverse than ever before. Present citizens are offered to extend their knowledge and competences to an international level that promotes both a local and a global consciousness, which, as Mandela says
in the introductory quote, entails understanding the same language so that equality, social and cultural awareness become part of present citizens’ moralities (Berns, 2013).

This global perception has positive implications when living in a foreign country during a semester or an academic year (Jackson, 2015), and when accessing and delivering multimodal information (printed or digital), often, in different languages. Receiving input and giving output are two steps required to express the communicative competence. Although learning a foreign language implies the acquisition of the language by means of different skills such as vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading and writing, for instance, Bygate (1998) considers speaking the ability that has been less researched by academics. Speaking rather than writing is essential when communicating natural messages with people either face-to-face or online. Speaking a foreign language implies information exchanges and interconnection.

This link between a second language (L2) and culture has been an area of interest for many researchers (Belz, 2002; Clouet, 2012; Saine, 2015). The process of transformation and conscious changes that the foreign language learner encounters when reconstructing their identity coincide with the evolution of the learner’s L2 language and identity (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Lázár, 2015). Present education encourages active learning methodologies supported by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) that aim to measure not only the knowledge but the performance of abilities, attitudes and competences. Nowadays, this transformation is supported by ICT-based activities and tasks that allow the foreign language student to access not only regional and closed-related contexts but global content. The internet provides English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) participants with the expansion of their knowledge, abilities and skills to an international level, which should improve not only their understanding of the world but their values and their global sensitivity (Caligiuri & Di Santo, 2001).

This study, therefore, explores the oral competence as a worldwide ability pursued by EFL learners in higher education specific programmes (ESP) in the Degrees of History and Social Work. The relationship between global awareness, interconnection and oral production is necessary to respond to the research questions of this investigation:

1. What taxonomy is being followed to classify the oral presentations as excellent, satisfactory and unsatisfactory?
2. How has collaboration been measured during the elaboration of the ESP oral presentation?
3. Is the oral ESP content created addressing interconnection and local and global awareness?

LITERATURE FRAMEWORK

Among others, globalisation is “characterised by a compression of time and space, rapid technological change [and] population mobility” (Kennedy, 2012, p. 45). Nowadays, people around the world connect with each other by means of various multimedia devices and the internet. The internet has made the world an interconnected mobile system that can be closer and more culturally useful to everybody by means of identifying the global competence. Students are more frequently used to connecting with other pieces of news from international media in order to contrast information. Knowledge is not just offered by local instructors or libraries, but it is extended to the international spheres through the web. Mansilla and Jackson (2011) have acknowledged four steps to perform the global competence that involves investigating the world, recognising perspectives, taking action and communicating ideas. Furthermore,