The professional reaffirmation in students of the livestock and agronomy sciences majors through tasks for the oral communication in English

Accepted 16th October 2020

ABSTRACT

Cuban professionals are very competent and they contribute to the development of the society; nevertheless, it is a real fact that their English communicative competence level is poor. As a result, the Cuban Government and the Ministry of Higher Education have established a new criteria for the university graduates, that is to say, in this area of learning: the university students have to demonstrate their English language competence when passing a certification exam according to the European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFRL (2001,9), as one of the criteria to culminate their studies at these institutions, consequently with this, the action-oriented approach is used as the teaching method. That is why Languages Centers have been created in every Cuban university, new researches are being carried out to foster the learning of this language by scholars. In this study, a group of learning tasks for the English oral communication of the students about their future profession was presented. Demanding from the students to communicate about topics related to their future profession will help lecturers of these centers to cascade the rest of the lecturers of other majors to strengthen the process of professional orientation, particularly, its maximum level: their professional reaffirmation.

Key words: Professional reaffirmation, action-oriented approach, oral communication, work-integrated education, professional orientation.

INTRODUCTION

In Cuban universities, at present, English language is no longer a curricular subject; nevertheless, centers to learn these Languages have been created in each university to enable the students learn this international language in order to reach the language level B1+ according to the standards of the European Framework of Reference for Languages and be able to graduate from these higher education institutions. This is due to the necessity to graduate professionals who will fit into the international work market, not only for their work competences, proper values of their profession and their personality, but also for a level of communicative competence in English permitting them to interact in international professional contexts.

The recently created Languages Centers in Cuban universities and their lecturers need to have learning tasks to contribute to developing the basic competences of a target foreign language and that, in a particular way, allows to pay attention to the diversity of students due to the variety of professional profiles they are studying to attain, in such a way that every contribution in this aspect
becomes of great importance. It is being thought about proposals that, based on the autonomous learning, it permits the development of competences previously worked and by means of the learning of the English as a foreign language allows the students to prepare themselves for the communication on specific topics of their future professions.

One of the key competences to foster when learning a foreign language is the oral communication. In this study, a group of learning tasks for the oral communication in English is presented on the contents of the future field of action of the university student majoring in livestock and agronomy sciences.

Notwithstanding, when choosing and proposing the tasks in this study, the objective is not only to develop the oral communication in English, but also to contribute to fostering the motivation and particularly the professional reaffirmation of the students in the majors related to livestock and agronomy sciences, since, according to Hernández (2017, 2018), the work of professional orientation does not finish when the students start studying their major at the university. In his opinion, this process should be continued with every endeavor in these Languages Centers by the lecturers (from the very content of the subject) as well as all the social actors that have educative influence on the youth.

The English language lecturers form the Languages Centers, make their educative influence on these students; thus, when including in their courses, these learning tasks for the oral communication about contents of the future professional field of action of the students, the English lecturer helps to develop their professional intentions, holding on the knowledge they have on their specialty, the emotional ties with the content of the profession, the personal qualities for the performance at work, among other aspects of interest.

DEVELOPMENT

This study is based, as earlier stated, on the CEFRL (2001, 2009) which uses the action-oriented approach as the teaching method and, this "views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', that is, members of a society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to complete in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of "action", where communication is understood as a social activity designed to accomplish specific tasks. According to other authors, following this approach, the language is acquired by performing a set of meaningful tasks in a real-social environment by (L. Conseil¹, E. Garcia¹, B. Strotmann² ¹Universidad Europea de Valencia (SPAIN).

The tasks for the oral communication offered in this study are: oral reports, min-lectures, presentations of research results, simulations, role-plays, round tables, debates. These tasks demand that students be faithful to the topic in each socio-professional profile, the use of a lexicon according to the specific communicative function of each profile, grammatical correctness, oral communication of texts of each communicative situation in the socio-professional profiles (with fluency and accuracy) and the use of communicative strategies when necessary (Ramírez et al, 2017).

The tasks for the oral communication presented here can be implemented in the lessons with the students majoring in Agronomy, Livestock and Agro-industry Majors as well as others related ones in the languages centers at university level.

Agronomy major

Oral report: Based on the knowledge you have on the latest technologies used in agriculture, make a small report where you explain how these scientific methods are environmentally implemented in our country. Take into account the preservation and development of crops and animal husbandry.

Minilecture: Research and get prepared to talk to your class for an estimate of 5 minutes about organic agriculture and its development in our country. Consult different materials in the library and other sources, especially the most recent articles in magazines, newspapers, Internet, etc. on the field. Make sure you include and explain in your exposition the main concepts of the topic, as well as provide examples, etc.

Simulation: The recent hurricanes in your region caused damages to the main agricultural sources of food and there is scarcity of some vital types of food. Roles to play: an engineer in agronomy, a researcher on the introduction of new crops, agricultural worker 1, 2, 3.

Round table: Look for information about the development of agriculture through the last 60 years. Be prepared to talk
and compare the situation of agriculture with some other countries.

**Presentation of the results of a research work:** You have made a research on the condition of the soils, their productivity and fertility in your locality. Present the results of your report.

**Debate:** The current tendency to solve the lack of renewable energy resources in some countries is to use food to generate energy. This polemic issue has brought about serious debates around the world. Give your personal opinion on the topic and discuss it with your classmates.

**Solution to problems:** The newest species of bananas introduced in some areas of your country is being attacked by an unknown agent. Research on the possible suspects affecting these crops and propose some countermeasures to solve this situation. You may bring pictures, written materials, etc. to support your proposal. In the end, the group should arrive to an agreement and choose the best proposal.

**Agro-industry major**

**Oral report:** Look for information about the national and international policies whose main purpose is to reinforce the sustainability of the planet. You should be able to make a brief exposition of the current posture adopted in relation to this by your Government.

**Role play:** Student A: You are the chief of the Personnel Department of an enterprise and you have to inform your superiors on the work your department has been developing during the last three months. Make emphasis on the security, health care, salaries, etc. of your workers.
Student B: You are the head of the Quality Control Department of an enterprise. You are interviewing the chief of personnel in order to know about the measures that favor and protect your workers. Ask as many questions as the situation requires.

**Minilecture:** Research and get ready to talk to your classmates for an estimate of 5 minutes about the use of the renewable energy resources in our country. Provide examples of different parts of the country.

**Simulation:** There are environmental problems affecting the development of national economies all around the world. Discuss about this.
Roles to play: an environmentalist, an economist, a statesman, etc.

**Round table:** Get prepared to develop a round table in your class about the changes that occurred on a mountainous region and how they have favored the development of the rural areas where it has been implemented. You should arrive at a conclusion.

**Presentation of the results of a research work:** You have made a research on the current tendency of sustainable communities, their development and the advantages they provide. Make a brief presentation of the results of the work done.

**Debate:** Several international meetings have taken place to discuss environmental and social problems during the last years. The most advanced proposals regarding environmental sustainability in the 21st century was achieved in the Summit of Rio and the Conference of Kyoto. Debate with your classmates on the matter; make sure you give your personal opinion.

**Presentation of the results of a research work:** The current irrigation system in your province has proved to be insufficient, provoking a delay in some areas of agriculture that should provide the basic food products for the local people. Research on the different methods you could use to solve the problem. Be ready to discuss it with your classmates. You can bring pictures, written materials, etc. to support your proposal. The class should come to an agreement and select the most suitable method.

**Agricultural and livestock engineering**

**Presentation of the results of a research work:** In the last decade, molecular methods have permitted the deletion of genes or chromosomal regions bearing commercial
interest genes on several species of livestock. The development of genetic maps highly saturated with molecular markers, allows the identification of accurate position where genes affect quantitative traits, or where Qt are located. In the salmon species, the map development has been slower than on domestic animals, therefore the QTL identification has been slower too. You have been working on an up-dated revision of all genetic map published for salmon fishes until then. Present the result of this research.

Minilecture: You are going to participate in the Fourth International Congress of Animal Improvement. You have to deliver a lecture about the biotechnological methods to increase the efficiency of reproductive processes on cattle and feeding and reproductive management strategies to obtain better fertility results. Before delivering the lecture at the event, offer part of this to some members of the organizing committee of the congress.

Oral report: Some producers, technicians and professionals of animal production were missing in a meeting where the different sustainable strategies for the development of cattle production, digestive physiology and intermediate metabolism of ruminants were discussed. Present a report to those persons for them be aware.

Debate: The Department of Animal Production of the University of Chile carried out a research in order to quantify the effects of soybean meal and wet corn gluten feed treated with formaldehyde and the effects of including them in daily cow diets. The studies show that the formaldehyde treatment reduces luminal protein degradability and the inclusion of these treated products increases milk yield and modifies milk composition. Will it be profitable to analyze the effects of including these products in daily cow diets in your country? Debate on the pros and cons of the application of this project in cow production.

Role-Playing

Student A: You are an American specialist on insemination techniques on cattle, buffalos, sheep, goats, swine, horse, rabbits, poultry, and dogs. You are interested in evaluating the proceedings for collection and conservation of semen and the proper act of insemination in Latin America Regions. You have to visit laboratories and agro ecological farms around the world.

Student B: You are a Jamaican producer of horses. Show the American specialist the methods and the procedure you use in your farm while putting into practice the different reproductive biotechnologies: artificial insemination, embryo transfer, in vitro fertilization, cloning and transgenesis, genetics, pastures and forages. Provide him/her with explanations.

Round table: A group of American producers, technicians, and professionals on Biotechnology for feed production and reproduction are invited to the Fifth Symposium on Biotechnological Processes, Reproduction and Utilization of Animal Feeding. Before participating in this event, they are going to visit different centers of animal production located in countries such as: Canada, Jamaica, United States of America, Venezuela, Cuba, Spain, and Italy among others. Present some of the experience and ideas they are going to deal with during the conference.

Solution to problems: Nowadays, thousands of pigs are dying because of the proliferation of the well-known swine fever around the world. It actually constitutes a big risk for animals. In the South part of a certain country, the swine production has been affected with this disease. Irresponsibly, the animal producers of this region continue exporting infected semen; they also continue breeding these animals who still suffer from this disease. What more is that they do not want to kill the infected animals or even have knowledge about the existence of Colvasan, an effective and new vaccine against this illness, they have not decided to vaccinate their pigs or put them under any other medical treatment.

1) What do you think about this disease?
2) Does it constitute a risk for swine producers in the world?
3) Could it be effective to vaccinate them?
4) What happens to the Animal Production’s managers of the country in question?
5) What is your opinion about the situation in the region?
6) What is your opinion about the situation in the region?
Simulation: The production of rabbits has increased in the last few years in the suburbs of a big city, John is a private producer who raises a great number of this animal. He even exports to other countries. The children hospital of the town is located near his farm. This producer does not have the necessary hygienic conditions for the raising of rabbits. Every day he disposes the residues into the river, he does not keep his animal well cleaned and has never vaccinated them and the animal shelter does not have the necessary conditions.

Last month, the principal of the children hospital and some of the patients made a complaint about the poor hygienic condition of the place. Last week, a specialist in animal production ordered John to shut down the farm but he still has not done that yet. How could this situation be managed?

Student A: You are the principal of the children hospital
Student B: You are John, the private producer of rabbits.
Student C: You are the specialist in animal production.

Statistical results

With the use of tasks for the oral communication in the lessons of English language in students majoring in Agronomy, Livestock and Agro-industry, encouraging results were obtained regarding the development of their oral communicative competence. The data in Table 1 illustrates it.

**Source:** 17 students majoring in Agronomy
**Level:** first-year students

**CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the results obtained with the implementation of similar learning tasks for oral communication related to other professional profiles used in previous researches, the authors of this study considered that the introduction of the learning tasks provided favored the development of the oral communicative competence in English language of the students about aspects related to their future professions on animal husbandry and agronomy, at the same time, the resulting data shows that the oral communicative competence was favored in 86.66%, and it was due to referred to motivation, which was also favored in 64.28%. It is the lecturers’ commitment of the major in questions to continue the process of orientation towards professionalism.

These learning tasks helped the students reach a higher level in the education of their professional interests, that is to say, the professional reaffirmation, because by using them the students could demonstrate a mastery of the content of their future profession and its emotional tie, expressed by means of their effectiveness of this professional motivation with their behavior and reach their future professional self-determination.

**REFERENCES**


---

Table 1: The development of student's oral communicative competence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communicative competence</th>
<th>Communicative competence</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial process</td>
<td>Final process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Cite this article as:

Submit your manuscript at
http://www.academiapublishing.org/ajmr