

Individual Paper Session 4
Classroom
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2:15-2:45pm

The oral production of university EFL students: an analysis of tasks, format and quality in foreign language development

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This paper deals with issues related to the teaching and learning processes of oral production in English as a foreign language, as well as to some aspects of the assessment of such production.

We report on a study conducted among undergraduate students of English Language and Literature (henceforth Letters students) in a state university located in the metropolitan area of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which was based on studies conducted by Gass (1997), Long (1996) and Pica (1994) about interaction; studies by Swain (1993, 1995) about oral production (the Output Hypothesis), and studies by Brown (2001), Harmer (2001), Swain (2001) and Willis (1996) about the use of tasks in the process of language teaching and their implications for SL/FL acquisition.

The study started in 2003 and data has been collected in lessons of a course subject called “Oral and Written Expression in English Language”, in which students engage in classroom tasks in pairs or small groups. Results reveal that the students’ involvement in pair work and small-group activities contributes for (a) the enhancement of their confidence to speak in the foreign language, (b) a considerable degree of autonomy and less dependence of the class teacher to accomplish the proposed tasks and (c) an improvement of both quality and quantity of students’ oral production.

Data has been collected by means of the following instruments: a written questionnaire combined with an interview; reflexive diaries produced by the class teacher and by some students; audio and video recordings of the oral tasks conducted in class, and an oral proficiency test, the TEPOLI (Consolo, 2004), a test under development within a larger project (Consolo, ongoing research) on the assessment of oral proficiency in EFL for Letters students in Brazil.