# USE OF YOUTUBE-BASED VIDEOS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

**Jose Humberto Baesa Estrada**

*turbo_kuroneko@hotmail.com*

иностранный преподаватель кафедры теории и практики иностранных языков ЕНУ им. Л.Н. Гумилева, магистр педагогических наук

**Бейсембаева Ж.А.**

*beisembayeva_zha@enu.kz*

заведующая кафедрой теории и практики иностранных языков ЕНУ им. Л.Н. Гумилева, кандидат филологических наук

**Abstract.** New ICTs have proven to be useful tools for implementing innovating didactic and pedagogical formulas oriented to enhance students' and teachers' creativity. The massive e-learning and blended learning projects are clear examples of such a phenomenon. The teaching of oral communication offers a perfect scenario to experiment with these formulas. Since the traditional face to face approach for teaching 'speech techniques' does not keep up with the new digital environment that surrounds students, it is necessary to move towards an 'Online oratory' model focused on using technology-enhanced learning to improve oral skills.

**Keywords:** online speaking, communication skills, public speaking, communication competence, digital literacy.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 1982 Grunwald Declaration [1] delivered at the UNESCO International Symposium on Media Education, expressed the importance of gradually acquiring the new information and communication technologies in society. The Grunwald Declaration was intended to show the need for an "education in communication" and to teach citizens to have a critical vision and actions in a responsible society. On one side, it refers to the value of educating people to be capable of interpreting the new audiovisual languages and codes and on the other hand, to understand how new communication technologies work. "Audiovisual Literacy" was defined as the ability to identify, understand, comprehend, create and communicate through new technological ways so that individuals can achieve their goals, and these goals should develop their potential and participate in

a more open society. The same definition could be used for what we know now as digital literacy 2.0; the only difference is the evolution of technology.

"Responsible educators will not ignore this development and will work hand by hand with their students to understand and make sense of the consequences of it."

Grunwald Declaration, UNESCO International Symposium on Media Education

In this context, Pedro Salinas [2] points out that the institutions that used to monopolize the transmission of information and knowledge, such as universities, must readjust to the new situation in which they end up being yet another node in the ICT universe. Today's students increasingly deny traditional teaching processes and choose a more transversal education supported by technological advances. The new mentality of the students requires the reconversion of spaces and methodologies of conventional learning processes towards others based on flexibility and interconnection. These new technologies require new ways of understanding the concept of "literacy". In a context in which the vast majority of teachers are not "digital natives", The problem is that some teachers do not continue their training in new media and this directly affects their level of digital literacy. As Vilches [3] suggests, these changes require the training of teachers who are not yet familiar with ICTs. If the educators of the future want to effectively motivate their students, they must perfectly manage the resources provided by these new technologies.

To adapt to the new demands, it seems essential that the university community use and develop online systems that allow the exchange of knowledge and cooperative learning. The CMTube project proposed by the Advanced Center for Learning through New Technologies [4] is a good example of innovation. This system is committed to stimulating any type of online interaction such as the use of social networks, interactive games and audiovisual material. According to the authors, CMTube generates three different types of values: the "connection value" that refers to the ties established between the users, the "learning-action value" that has to do with the acquisition of new competencies, and the "reward value" that reflects the emotional attachment to the learning process. If we assume the premise that any educational process brings with its emotional responses, information sharing and knowledge through new technologies must be emotionally rewarding to become effective.

Other research sources related to the future of e-learning and blended learning [5], [6], [7] point out the importance of social networks and the horizontal exchange of knowledge. Of all the forms of communication on the web such as e-mail, Wikipedia, blogs, chats, discussion groups, electronic magazines, etc., social networks are the ones that have grown the most because they function as channels for the dissemination of content generated and distributed by the users themselves. Following in the wake of Grunwald, the university community must be aware of the great impact that social networks have by building a horizontal virtual space where the greatest exchange of information and knowledge occurs today.

1.1. Online Public Speaking vs Oral Expression Techniques

Unlike web 2.0, public speaking is not a new trend. Humans have been communicating orally for thousands of years but it was not until 2500 BC, in ancient Greece, that the art of informing, influencing and entertaining an audience was systematized into a set of rules. Since then the reality has evolved substantially but nevertheless, many of the techniques developed then can be perfectly applied today.

The subject Oral Expression Techniques (OET) was introduced for the first time in the curriculum of the Bachelor's Degree on Advertising and Public Relations in Spain in 1995 and has not evolved a lot since then. The same knowledge that Cicero provided in his book "De Oratoria" is still used [8]. With this I do not imply that the principles of oratory and rhetoric do not work –in fact, their effectiveness is more than proven –, but that they were developed taking into account the spaces and technologies of the time. In the last 20 years, technologies have evolved more than two millennia and have radically changed the way we communicate. For this reason, it is necessary to reinvent the way of teaching oral expression techniques, and for this reason I believe that the Online Public Speaking proposal can serve to improve the communication skills of students in the new digital context.

The framework in which any subject is inserted is defined by the space in which students and teachers interact. The more open that space is, the more possibilities for interaction there are. The Internet symbolizes a place where the possibilities are endless. The traditional paradigm of a one-way channel of offline information is no longer operational in this context. On the contrary, Online Public Speaking proposes a model of multiple channels and sources of information. In OET, the student must attend class to carry out the oral exercises and be evaluated, while in Online Public Speaking, half of the activities can be carried out and evaluated outside the classroom. All you need is a video camera (or Webcam, or computer or smartphone), and Internet connection.

However, the innovation of this new model is based on the absence of face-to-face classes. To master the art of public speaking it is necessary to hold exhibitions with real audiences. The classroom is an ideal space for this purpose. Recordings made at home only complement the work done in class. In this sense, Online Public Speaking is not a standard model of learning [9] in which half of the learning process is carried out independently, but all the audiovisual content that is generated on the network is exposed and analyzed in face-to-face classes. The role of students is more active in Online Public Speaking than in OET. The reason is that in addition to the traditional oral presentations, they exercise their speeches in front of the camera and provide audiovisual content that is easily accessible to the teacher and the rest of the students.

Some years ago, the work and evaluation system carried out in OET allowed students to perform 3 oral exercises in class (due to schedules and number of students per group). Three attempts in four months are not enough to develop the skills necessary to defend a speech in front of a large audience. The art of public speaking relies heavily on Self-Perception of Communicative Competence [10]. Self-confidence is crucial for being a good communicator. According to Cicero, confidence is an attribute that is achieved through hard work and repetition. The video recording of the practices gives the student the possibility to exercise their skills repeatedly and to see and analyze themselves to see what aspects they should improve.

If the presence of the camera adds a higher degree of difficulty on the students, thinking that the exercise is going to be posted on the net, then it is even more stressful. During the school period the videos are uploaded so that anyone can access them. 16 years ago, it was unthinkable that anyone could have a worldwide video channel at their disposal to upload content. In February 2005, YouTube changed the way of generating and consuming audiovisual products and with this the media paradigm. When students are aware that they are "speaking to the world" and that they can have an impact on others in the same way that they can also be more criticized, it increases their "sense of responsibility" and effort to do well. Likewise, in order to carry out all these operations, it

is necessary to develop a series of competencies related to digital literacy that students must undoubtedly demonstrate.

The pedagogical meaning of this practice is that the more virtual stress situations the students experience, the better they will react in the future to similar real circumstances. Also, all audiovisual content generated in the subject is channeled through a blog that includes critical comments from the teacher and the rest of the students. That capacity for dissemination and interrelation that digital media provides is what gives Online Public Speaking meaning. Although oral (audiovisual) communication is only part of the spectrum offered by the Internet, little by little it is imposing itself through written communication. For this reason, it is essential that we adapt and understand the new protocols. As in almost everything, the future of Public Speaking as the art of persuading, influencing or delighting the public through a speech is on the Internet.

I would like to stress again the fact that all this has been possible with the current technology. 15 years ago, the internet connection speed did not allow it, mobile phones were not so versatile and digital publishing programs were more inaccessible and complex to use. Another one of the innovations developed during these last 10 years is that all face-to-face classes are recorded in some universities around the world. For this it is used a mini Full HD camera and an external microphone. Students are also allowed to record with their own smartphones as long as they collaborate with the captured material. This time in class, the camera gives an additional element of stress that undoubtedly enriching learning. Not only because its presence imposes, but because it allows seeing, analyzing and constructively criticize the material in successive lessons. The ultimate purpose of all this is to cooperatively perform several documentary pieces that integrate and discover the secrets of the entire process of learning. Online Public Speaking proposes a didactic methodology "low-cost" that uses new technologies to develop skills and abilities, communication skills of the students as well as to spread collaborative values throughout the world.

"New technologies have allowed educators to share information in very interesting new ways, even in times of economic crisis. More and more teachers are seen using this type of low-cost strategies" [11].

## 2. OBSERVATIONS

During the Spring Semester of this year (2020) at Eurasian National University, in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, the faculty was forced to employ online teaching of all subjects because of the Covid19 pandemical situation. Therefore, this brought a unique opportunity to realize some observations applying the approach before mentioned using ICTs, Youtube videos, and classical Aristotelian and Ciceronian methodologies of teaching blended with the virtual classroom. This study could not follow a rigorous scientific study because of the way the circumstances and events were developing, nevertheless provided interesting results according to the following framework: An effective didactic plan for the improvement of the oral communication skills of university students and their skills in the use of ICTs. A weekly assessment of the effectiveness of the methodology through group analysis and discussion of videos shared. There were 6 groups of English language majors, with 10 Junior students each, all of them from the Bachelor's Degree program of "Foreign Philology: Two Foreign Languages" from the School of Foreign Languages, English department. This is not a comparative study between groups, this is a collection of observed results obtained and retelling of the progress of the subjects who attended to class from that period, and the possible contribution to future scientific articles related to teaching English online.

2.1. Didactic program

Subject title: Online Public Speaking.

General objectives: to develop the oral communicative competence of students in traditional contexts and in the digital environment.

Specific objectives: increase self-esteem, foster critical and creative thinking, master basic concepts of public speaking and rhetoric and improve students' digital literacy.

Location: Any place with an Internet connection.

Duration and dedication: 17 hours, 2 ECTS credits.

Teaching material: Youtube videos of Public Speaking related content, a video camera with an external one-way microphone or laptop or smartphone, a WhatsApp chatting platform account.

Theoretical content: (1) Fundamentals of communication, (2) Fundamentals of digital literacy, (3) History of rhetoric and oratory and (4) Keys to rhetoric.

Practical content: (1) Quotes and aphorisms: how to refer to the thought of others, (2) Storytelling: how to tell a story, (3) The ironic thematic discourse: how to tell a monologue and (4) the reverse dissertation: how to defend a thesis contrary to yours.

Protocol: (1) At the beginning of the semester the professor explains to the students the guidelines and the evaluation system of the subject.

Before the lesson period: (1) The student records and uploads a video according to the subject guidelines. (2) The professor receives the links to the videos over WhatsApp and embeds them with their respective critical comments. (3) The videos uploaded to Youtube are analyzed in class. (4) The professor evaluates the students' progress. (5) After, the professor analyzes and discusses with the students about their performance in the videos, debates are established, (6) and then the professor provides guidelines for the nest lesson's task,

After finishing the semester: (1) The teacher asks the students to optionally record and upload a final video to the WhatsApp group chat so that they can express their impressions about the learning process resulting from their experience through the subject, and thus they can contribute with ideas for future exercises, discussions, materials, etc. (2) The teacher reviews all the material recorded in class to find interesting clips to show in class the following year.

Assessment: Students must show that their communication skills have improved and that they have mastered aspects of their digital literacy. In the event of not achieving sufficient mastery in each of the tasks, students will be invited to do them again until significant progress is made. Students should actively participate in class discussions in which they will demonstrate their mastery of the basics of rhetoric and public speaking. Since most students have different communication skills, their final grade will depend on their evolution. In this sense, there may be people with more communication skills who obtain less qualification if they do not show a significant evolution in their learning.

## 3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results indicate that there are significant differences regarding the auto-perception of the communicative competence of the students enrolled at the beginning of the course and at the end. Therefore, we can conclude that the Online Public Speaking didactic proposal is effective and that it could be replicated in other universities and educational centers with success. Although, we can attribute the result to the fact that the effect of a priori non-stressful communicative circumstances (talking to an acquaintance, talk with a friend, talk in a small group of acquaintances, and speak in a

small group of friends). We can justify the progress that students show in terms of their digital literacy in relation to their communication skills. Thus, this increases students' confidence when dealing with stressful situations, and justifies the presence of Online Public Speaking subject in most of the curricula of universities.

The traditional methodology used to teach oral expression techniques has remained obsolete. Online Public Speaking is a learning system based on the use of new technologies that recover the advances provided by classical oratory and rhetoric. Rescues all the concepts and techniques that worked then and brings them closer to the students through the formats they use in their everyday life according to the Grunwald Declaration in 1892. The success of this didactic program resides in having managed to emotionally link students with the entire critical and creative process. The results provided by the students are viewed also supported by opinions on the subject voluntarily recorded by the students.

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