Speaking Homework with VoiceThread

Angelos Bollas @ TESOL Italy Annual Convention
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“If communication practice is one of the most important components of the language learning/teaching practice, it is one of the most problematical. It is much more difficult to get learners to express themselves freely than it is to extract right answers in a controlled exercise.”

Ur (1981: 2)
“Few if any people achieve fluency in a foreign language solely within the confines of the classroom.”

(Brown, 2007:1)
“[For students to improve on their fluency, teachers] must be willing to let go of some of the control in [their] classrooms; ...[they] must be willing to set up situations in which fluency can develop, and then encourage the students to actually communicate.”

(Brown, 2003: 7)
Noticing

language features must be consciously attended to in order to be truly acquired by the language learner.

(See Schmidt, 1990)

This, in turn, “function[s] as a facilitator, helping learners to notice features in the input which they would otherwise miss and also to compare what they notice with what they produce.”

(Ellis, 1994: 362)
Speaking Homework is an ideal opportunity for learners to practice using the language in an EFL context (i.e. where English is NOT used in everyday life)

(see Barker, 2005; Schneider, 2001)
Characteristics of Speaking Homework:

• Low-stress,
• Low-stakes,
• NNEST – NNEST,
  → Lower SS anxiety
  → Lower affective filter
  → Progress towards fluency

(see Krashen, 1982)
Other characteristics of Speaking Homework:

• Out-of-class setting
  → allows learners to focus less on accuracy, leaving them free to concentrate on improving fluency

(Littlewood, 1984)
Long-term goal

• Oral interaction in English
• Self-selected topics
• Relevant to SS own interests
• On a regular basis

→ Confidence building, motivating language experience

(Bassano, 1986)
Students’ report that...

“The they no longer feel such anxiety about using the language and are able to give a much better account of themselves when the opportunity arises.”

(Barker, 2005: 83)
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Students act out the dialogue(s)/monologue(s) they were taught in class.

→ Students practice associating letters to sounds; accuracy in pronunciation and intonation patterns.
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Prediction tasks:
Upload the pictures/title of the text(s) you are about to use in following class and ask them to predict the content.

→ Fluency; Responding and Initiating
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Online Debate Club:
Assign different topics to different pairs/groups and ask SS to provide arguments for or against.

→ Fluency; Appropriacy; Turn-Taking; Repair and Repetition; Discourse Markers
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Summary:
Upload a situation and some characteristics relevant to it in bullet-point format. Ask SS to summarise the information.

- Fluency; Accuracy; Relevant Length; Repair and Repetition; Linguistic Range
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Role Plays:
Upload a text and give each SS a cue card with a specific characteristic (e.g. Read the lines as if you are a parent and you’ve realised your 16-year old is not at home and it’s almost midnight)

→ Intonation Patterns; Fluency; Functions
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Storytelling:
Depending on level, support them as much as you feel is necessary. The goal is for them to (re)tell a story.

→ Fluency, Accuracy and Range (both word choice, grammar, pronunciation, intonation, etc.), Relevant Length, Discourse Markers
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Reporter for a day:
Send your students out on a mission to explore a topic or interview people. Let them record their experience and present their findings.

→ Extended Speech, Fluency, Accuracy and Range, Functions
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Podcasts/Interviews:
Assign one umbrella topic to whole class and ask them to interview people (friends, relatives, teachers, etc.) about an aspect of the topic.

→ Turn Taking, Discourse Markers, Responding and Initiating, Fluency, Accuracy and Range
Ideas for Speaking Homework

Oral (Learning) Diary:
Ask them to keep a day-to-day diary, only not in writing but speaking.

⇒ Fluency; Accuracy; Relevant Length; Repair and Repetition; Linguistic Range
Text Can’t Replace You

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Sign in to VoiceThread

Email
angelos.boitas@gmail.com

Password

Sign in Need password?

Don't have an account? Register now
Describe a foreign country you have never been to

You should say:

1) Where is the country?
2) When will you go there?
3) Why would you like to go there?
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Take your career to the next level!
Thank you!

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See you in Glasgow @ IATEFL 2017 Annual Conference
References

Barker, David. (2005). Encouraging students to take their language learning outside the classroom. JALT Hokkaido Journal, 8, 79-86.


