

The thesis deals with the development of speaking skill when teaching German as a foreign language. It tries to analyse all possible aspects of speaking skill in order to develop the best possible teaching approach that would enable students to use their (spoken) language effectively and reach their communicative goals. For this skill, which is defined mainly by the ability to perform the language functions that one needs to express, the term 'Functional competence' is used. An important feature of this term is the preference of success of communication to its correctness.

The theoretical part first explains the terms used in the thesis (ability / skill / competence, learning versus acquisition). Afterwards, speaking skill is analysed in the context of other communicative skills, i. e. listening, reading, and writing, so that it is clear that no particular skill can be dealt with in a completely isolated way and that the teaching process should always involve an appropriate combination of various communicative skills. A separate chapter describes the differences between monologues and dialogues / polylogues. After that, three stages of speaking skill are analysed (imitative speaking, guided non-imitative speaking, and autonomous speaking). For these stages, vast amount of concrete examples of speaking tasks are thoroughly described, so that it is clear that it is possible and important to reach diversity in speaking activities. Further problems are analysed that are closely connected with the development of speaking skill: social forms of learning / teaching that are more suitable for improving speaking skill than frontal teaching, learning techniques that might help students develop their speaking skill more easily (the most important one being the skill to compensate for the possible lack of vocabulary needed, grammar structures, etc.), approach to making mistakes that helps reduce stress, worries, etc., and evaluating and testing speaking. Conclusions of these chapters form a definition of an effective teaching method that should lead to a better development of students' speaking skills.

The method described in the theoretical part is compared to a method focused more on correct use of grammar and vocabulary than on communicative skills; this is carried out by means of an experiment in which two groups that had initially been comparable were taught by different teachers with different teaching methods for approximately eight months. After that, both groups were tested and the results compared. The test concentrated on fluency of speech, discourse logic, grammar, vocabulary, compensation skill, interaction, and reaching the communicative goal. Also, the overall impression was evaluated. The results of the experiment are presented in tables and graphs. A part of the experiment description is also warning on limited generalizability of its results due to small amount of participants and extraneous variables that were impossible to completely eliminate.