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TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH

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Abstract :

The English language has become an international language. Among nations it serves as a lingua franca. The English language has become an international language. Among nations it serves as a lingua franca. Without speech we cannot communicate with one another. The importance of speaking skills hence is enormous for the learners of any language. The capacity to put words together in a meaningful way to reflect thoughts, opinions, and feelings provides the speaker with these important advantages. There are six broad types of oral communication activities that might be incorporated into curricula in many fields of study. ESL teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. Effective instructors teach students speaking strategies develop speaking skills. It is suggested that teachers be creative in selecting techniques and media that their students will find interesting for the teaching-learning process.

Key words

International language, importance, speaking skills, oral communication activities, strategies, selecting techniques

The English language has become an international language. Among nations it serves as a lingua franca. It is spoken, learnt and understood even in those countries where it is not a native's language. English is playing a major role in many sectors including medicine, engineering, education, advanced studies, business, technology, banking, computing, tourism etc. All our software development today, the communication facilities available to us through internet, our access to a variety of websites, are all being carried out in English. Most of the research works are conducted and compiled in English. Anything written and recorded in this language is read and listened to, in wider circles. As a result, English is being taught and learned around the world as a second language today.

Language is a tool for communication. We communicate with others, to express our ideas, and to know others' ideas as well. Communication takes place, where there is speech. Without speech we cannot communicate with one another. The importance of speaking skills hence is enormous for the learners of any language. Without speech, a language is reduced to a mere script. The use of language is an activity which takes place within the confines of our community. We use language in a variety of situations. People at their work places, i.e. researchers working either in a medical laboratory or in a language laboratory, are supposed to speak correctly and effectively in-order to communicate well with one another. Any gap in communication results in misunderstandings and problems. For a smooth running of any system, the speakers of a language need to be especially and purposefully trained in the skill of speaking.

In-order to become a well rounded communicator one needs to be proficient in each of the four language skills viz., listening, speaking, reading and writing, but the ability to speak skillfully, provides the speaker with several distinct advantages. The capacity to express one's thoughts, opinions and feelings, in the form of words put together in a meaningful way, provides the speaker with these advantages. The joy of sharing one's ideas with others is immense. When we speak to others we come to have a better understanding of our own selves, the clarity in speech reflects clear thinking. An effective speaker can gain the attention of the audience and hold it till the completion of his message. Speaking skills are important for career success, but certainly not limited to one's professional aspirations. Speaking skills can also enhance one's personal life. While a picture may be worth a thousand words, those words will no doubt come in handy if the picture is distorted or poorly understood. After all, the most effective way to communicate is through speech. Thus, speaking skills are a vitally important method of communication. Speaking is the productive skill in the oral mode. It, like the other skills, is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words. Interactive speaking situations include face-to-face conversations and telephone calls, in which we are alternately listening and speaking, and in which we have a chance to ask for clarification, repetition, or slower speech from our conversation partner. Some speaking situations are partially interactive, such as when giving a speech to a live audience, where the convention is that the audience does not interrupt the speech. The

speaker nevertheless can see the audience and judge from the expressions on their faces and body language whether or not he or she is being understood.

Career enhancement: Employers have always valued the ability to speak well. It is, and always will be, an important skill, and well worth the effort in fully developing. Speaking skills are important for career success, but certainly not limited to one's professional aspirations. Speaking skills can enhance one's personal life, thereby bringing about the well-rounded growth we should all seek.

Oral communication activities

There are six broad types of oral communication activities that might be incorporated into curricula in many fields of study. Most are conducive to either formal or informal assignments. Some are realistically possible only in smaller classes or recitation sections, while others are appropriate for large lectures as well. On their own, any of them can help students learn course materials or ways of thinking (speaking to learn). Incorporated more systematically into a broader curriculum or major, they can together help move students to become more proficient speakers by the time they graduate (learning to speak).

One-on-one speaking (Student-student or Student-teacher): Activities can range from moments punctuating a lecture, where students are asked to discuss or explain some question or problem with the person next to them, in formal student conferences with their instructor.

Small-group or team-based oral work: Smaller-scale settings for discussion, deliberation, and problem solving. Appropriate for both large lectures and

smaller classes and allows levels of participation not possible in larger groups.

Full-class discussions (Teacher- or Student-Led): Typically less agonistic, argument-based, and competitive than debate and deliberation but still dialogic in character. Often times has the quality of creating an atmosphere of collective, out-loud thinking about some question, idea, problem, text, event, or artifact. Like deliberation and debate, a good way to encourage active learning.

In-class debates and deliberations: A structured consideration of some issue from two or more points of view. Debates typically involve participants who argue one side throughout, while deliberation allows for movement by individuals within the process. Both feature reason-giving argument. It can be applied to issues of many kinds, from disputed scientific facts to theories, policy questions, the meaning of a text, or the quality of an artistic production which can range from two participants to a lecture hall. **Speeches and presentations:** Classically, the stand-up, podium speech delivered by an individual from an outline or script. Also includes group presentations or impromptu speaking. A strong element of monologue, but dialogue can be built in with question and answer or discussion with the audience afterward.

Oral examinations: Can take place in the instructor's office, in small groups, or before a whole class. Range from one oral question on an otherwise written exam to an oral defense of a written answer or paper to an entirely oral quiz or examination. They are difficult with very large groups, but an excellent way to determine the depth and range of student knowledge and to stimulate

high levels of preparation.

Methods adapted to improve spoken skills

Group discussions: Now due to the world wide growing trends in English, teachers give more emphasis to communicative approach rather than the lecture mode. Their main goal is to make the students effective communicators in English both inside and outside the class room. To achieve this, they involve the students to participate more in classroom activities so that they will acquire adequate command over speaking skills. To create this environment, teachers can conduct group discussions, where students are supposed to speak only in English. Here, they can give their views, ideas and thoughts in English due to which they develop the habit of speaking fluently in English like they do in their mother tongue. Various types of discussions also help students to improve their general awareness and understanding about current affairs. It gives a lot of scope for good imagination and deep thoughts. This type of discussions helps the students to listen to the views of fellow students which in turn help them to gain knowledge and enrich the vocabulary also.

Developing group discussion skills is useful for everyday life as we regularly find ourselves having discussions amongst friends, family and colleagues. These may vary from very informal chats about day-to-day things, to more serious topics, for example a discussion about a recent news story or a problem that needs to be solved.

Additionally, group discussions are increasingly being used in the job market during interviews and selection procedures. These can take a variety of formats, but the key skills remain very similar. Last but not

least, group discussions offer an opportunity for extended speaking (and listening!) practice by all of the contributors. Group discussion practice and skill development is therefore useful for all students.

Debates: Debates too play an important role to improve the speaking ability of the students both at school and at higher level. Debates not only make the students to speak boldly and fluently but also help them to take one stand and be firm and consistent on that. Along with this advantage of reasoning, it gives students some experience to control their emotions without losing their temper. This also helps them to organize their thoughts and ideas in a specific way while speaking.

Role-plays: Role-plays are another important task that can improve the basic colloquial English of the learners. In role plays, the students assume themselves as one of the characters and behave and speak accordingly involving in the given character completely. In these types of activities teachers have to play a vital role as instructors and guide the students properly so that they can act appropriately to meet the situation. They should help the students now and then to understand and take up the role given to get a grip on the tone of voice. Computer assisted Language Learning (CALL) Now-a-days computer has become a part and parcel of our day to day life. It plays a vital role in the process of teaching and learning. It can be used to learn a foreign language like English. Computers have made language learning easy and also made the language learning process interesting and enjoyable for both teacher and student throughout the world. CALL has reduced the burden of the teacher whose teaching

methods will be out dated to teach language to present day generation of the world. It is described as one of the interactive methods that can help a learner according to their own ability to learn, which enriches their language skills. CALL enables the learner to look beyond the conventional mode of learning and encourages self learning.

Story telling: Telling stories is a good way to combine instruction and entertainment. Stories are an effective tool for teaching languages (Malkina, 1995:1, as cited in Fitria, 2000). Children usually love stories. While listening to stories, children develop a sense of structure that will later help them to understand the more complex stories of literature. Through storytelling the teacher can create an atmosphere in which the students can learn English whilst being entertained.

Procedures of teaching speaking with storytelling technique: There are some procedures that can be followed by teachers in applying storytelling in teaching speaking.

They are as the following (Scott, 1985:263): a. Teaching divides the teaching material into two parts. b. Before the lesson material is given, the teachers give an introduction to the topics to be discussed. Teachers should write the topic on the white board and ask the students what they know pertaining to the topic. This brainstorming activity is aimed to activate their schemata in order to be more ready for the new learning materials. In this activity, teachers need to emphasize that providing correct guesses is not the point. The important thing is students' readiness in anticipating the instruction that will be given. c. Teacher put the student into pairs. d. The first part of the material is given to the first students, while

the second material will be given to the second students. e. Then, the students are ordered to read or listen to their respective parts. f. While reading or listening, students are asked to take notes and enlist some key words or phrases in their respective parts. The number of words or phrases can be adjusted in accordance with the length of reading text. g. While remembering or paying attention to parts that have been read or heard. h. The students own version of the composition is, of course, not necessarily the same with the actual material. When students complete their writing, some students may be given the opportunity to read their essay result. i. This activity can be ended with a discussion on the topic of the instruction material. Discussions can be carried out between a couple (a pair) or with the whole class.

Interview: An interview can often be an effective technique of obtaining information. Interview is a teaching technique that encourages the students to express their ideas, emotions or feeling, and problem. The teacher found that it is of suitable ways in improving students' speaking skills. They are given the opportunity to speak freely and communicatively, although it isn't like the native speaker. In this research, the writer wants to describe the interview as teacher's technique in teaching speaking. Interview is a teaching technique in teaching speaking. On the other hand, placing too much performance pressure on learners too soon may have the risk-taking that is necessary if their competence is to be extended, one way to ease pressure on learners is to give them sufficient time to rehearse before asking them to perform in front of class (Thornbury,

2005:73). Hook and Evan (2001:97) said that an interview can be often an effective technique of obtaining information. In using interview technique, the student has a responsibility for making approach to his informant and bringing back the information in a form that can be used for class discussion. This removes the passive element from the student involvement and sends him actively into confrontation with the subject matter. The use of interview in class is inseparably linked to a discussion methodology. It emphasizes however, that the input for the class time can be brought to class by the students rather than the teacher. The objective of the interview is to know information about a specific topic so that the class may have the opportunity of responding to this information. The interview provides the students with the opportunity to demonstrate that they can communicate freely in English exactly like native speaker, it is expected that their proficiency level of spoken English will not hinder undergruated student's comprehension of any given subject. It is done to create real communication experiences. Interview encourage the students speak English more than their teacher. The teacher is only guide to make conversation run smoothly. Haley James and Hobson (1999:131) describe the benefits of doing interview: (1) The drive to communicate is uncourageous, as students ask questions and answer questions. (2) Students are in control of their own language and learning. (3) Every student can succeed. (4) Interviewing unifies all the language process. (5) Students discover language rules and conversations about language based on their own experiences and observation.

Reporting

Before coming to class, students are asked to read a newspaper or magazine and, in class, they report to their friends what they find as the most interesting news. Students can also talk about whether they have experienced anything worth telling their friends in their daily lives before class.

Simulations

The most common view of simulations is that they provide a way of creating a rich communicative environment (a representation of reality) where students actively become a part of some real-world system and function according to predetermined roles as members of that group. More important, however, is the notion that a simulation becomes reality and the "feeling of representivity fades" (Crookall & Oxford, 1990: 15), so much so that the world outside the simulation becomes, paradoxically, imaginary (Jones 1982) for a more detailed explanation of the mechanics of simulations).

The innate benefits of simulations include:

(a) fulfill students' need for realism—a desire to "relate to life 'out there' beyond the classroom's box-like walls" (b) increase student (and teacher) motivation, especially for those in EFL situations who might see English as a deferred need at best (Jones, 1982; Stern, 1980); (c) dismantle the normal teacher-student relationship so that students take control of their own destiny within the simulation, leading towards "declassrooming" the classroom help the learner confront and identify with the target culture (e) reduce anxiety levels which is essential to language development (Krashen, 1982 and (f) allow teachers to monitor the

participants progress unobtrusively.

Picture narrating

This activity is based on several sequential pictures. Students are asked to tell the story taking place in the sequential pictures by paying attention to the criteria provided by the teacher as a rubric. Rubrics can include the vocabulary or structures they need to use while narrating.

Picture describing

Another way to make use of pictures in a speaking activity is to give students just one picture and having them describe what it is in the picture. For this activity students can form groups and each group is given a different picture. Students discuss the picture with their groups, and then a spokesperson for each group describes the picture to the whole class. This activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.

Story completion

This is a very enjoyable, whole-class, free-speaking activities for which students sit in a circle. For this activity, a teacher starts to tell a story, but after a few sentences he or she stops narrating. Then, each student starts to narrate from the point where the previous one stopped. Each student is supposed to add from four to ten sentences. Students can add new characters, events, descriptions and so on

Brainstorming :

One of the best ways to generate a number of ideas in a short amount of time is through the brainstorming strategy. Brainstorming helps to stretch a student's imagination, encourages group cooperation, and leads to creative thinking through spontaneous contributions by all group

members. Key principles of brainstorming include the following: Select a problem or topic and react to it quickly. Designate one person in the group as the recorder of ideas. Accept and record all ideas or suggestions. Build on other people's ideas. Do not criticize anyone else's ideas. Remember that, initially, quantity of ideas is more important than quality.

Many teachers are familiar with brainstorming but do not utilize it effectively or frequently enough. Plan to make the brainstorming strategy part of your teaching practices. Model the process for students: Begin with a whole-class brainstorming session where each student records his or her own ideas. Provide a problem question as a stimulus and a time limit to eliminate frivolous ideas and daydreaming. When time is called, let each student share his or her list. Second, open up the brainstorming session to everyone. The teacher records the ideas for the whole class at the chalkboard to model the role of the recorder.

Strategies for Developing speaking skills

Students often think that the ability to speak a language is the product of language learning, but speaking is also a crucial part of the language learning process. Effective instructors teach students speaking strategies -- using minimal responses, recognizing scripts, and using language to talk about language -- which they can use to help themselves expand their knowledge of the language and their confidence in using it. These instructors' help students learn to speak so that the students can use speaking to learn.

Using minimal responses

Language learners who lack

confidence in their ability to participate successfully in oral interaction often listen in silence while others do the talking. One way to encourage such learners to begin to participate is to help them build up a stock of minimal responses that they can use in different types of exchanges. Such responses can be especially useful for beginners.

Minimal responses are predictable, often idiomatic phrases that conversation participants use to indicate understanding, agreement, doubt, and other responses to what another speaker is saying. Having a stock of such responses enables a learner to focus on what the other participant is saying, without having to simultaneously plan a response.

Recognizing scripts

Some communication situations are associated with a predictable set of spoken exchanges -- a script. Greetings, apologies, compliments, invitations, and other functions that are influenced by social and cultural norms often follow patterns or scripts. So do the transactional exchanges involved in activities such as obtaining information and making a purchase. In these scripts, the relationship between a speaker's turn and the one that follows it can often be anticipated.

Instructors can help students develop speaking ability by making them aware of the scripts for different situations so that they can predict what they will hear and what they will need to say in response. Through interactive activities, instructors can give students practice in managing and varying the language that different scripts contain. Using language to talk about language
Language learners are often too embarrassed

or shy to say anything when they do not understand another speaker or when they realize that a conversation partner has not understood them. Instructors can help students overcome this reticence by assuring them that misunderstanding and the need for clarification can occur in any type of interaction, whatever the participants' language skill levels. Instructors can also give students strategies and phrases to use for clarification and comprehension check. By encouraging students to use clarification phrases in class when misunderstanding occurs, and by responding positively when they do, instructors can create an authentic practice environment within the classroom itself. As they develop control of various clarification strategies, students will gain confidence in their ability to manage the various communication situations that they may encounter outside the classroom.

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