

## WAYS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SPEAKING IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

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### Abstract

The majority of learners of English as Foreign Language (EFL) find it challenging to manage English's productive skills—speaking and writing—in an efficient manner. Due to the inadequate level of speech and writing ability, students struggle to use the English language in an efficient manner. Because they are worried about making mistakes, some language learners feel embarrassed or bashful when speaking in English. Additionally, the paper will demonstrate some funny and interesting speaking activities related to daily life communication as well as classroom activities. That will be helpful for both learners and teachers of English as Foreign Language.

**Keywords:** productive skills, fun, stimulating, speaking activities.

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Speaking is a productive talent that requires students or learners to create language or words or to verbally express thoughts. Speaking or talking is used to communicate amongst individuals. Speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts," according to Chaney, 1998. The investigation of the development of speaking ability: The viewpoint of the students is crucial since we live in an era of media, propaganda, and mass communication. Anyone who wants to fully benefit from current education, library use, research information, science, commerce, and trade, among other things. Speech is the prime means of communication and the structure of the society itself would be substantially different if we had failed to develop communication through speech (John Laver, 1994). To develop oral communication, information gap activities are suggested. Information gap activities have the scope of integrating all the four skills (Venkateswaren, S., 1995). If all the language production of the student is controlled from outside, he will hardly be able to transfer his knowledge from a language learning situation to a language using situation (Bygate, M. 2003). Students who repeated two tasks, having first performed them ten weeks earlier completed them more fluently and with greater complexity on the second occasion because of a shift from conceptualization towards that of formulation (Carter, R. & Numan, D., 2005). The teacher can facilitate language acquisition through problem solving activities and tasks which ensure learner participation and interaction naturally (Aslam, M. 2003). But for this purpose the knowledge of Phonetics is necessary for a teacher of English to correct students' mistakes and to help them in differentiation of English sounds and the mother tongue (Saif-ul-Haq, M. 2003). A person of recognized taste and culture can make us differentiate among stress, rhythm, intonation and pitch (Swan, M., 2006). Now certain teachers are alien to the notion of recently developed language techniques. This situation is prevalent in almost 60 Govt. colleges in N.W.F.P., Pakistan (Aurangzeb, 1992). The teachers who have completed courses such as TOEFL and DIPTEIL can better decide whether a certain activity/exercise is appropriate or not (Fayyaz, M., 1992). It is a fact that it is impossible to conceive of a person being communicatively competent without being linguistically competent. In order for communication to be successful, learners need to know the appropriate social conventions (Hedge, T.,

2008). Working in groups is important but many students comment that they find working in groups difficult because they can never think of intelligent things to say, they can never contribute idea to the group (Singh, M.S, 2007). Apart from that some stage fright is useful to meet the challenges. But the chief cause of fear to speak in public simply is that one is not accustomed to speak in public (Carnegie, D.1962). Most importantly, how teachers work with boys and girls, how they motivate speech activities, and relate them to their personal interests and on-going life of the school day, are vital factors for the improvement of speech (The Commission on English Curriculum, 2009).

The study in hand is very much significant for the improvement of speaking ability in English. The students and teachers will be able to know about the strategies and activities for the promotion of speaking ability from different aspects and angles should have strong communication abilities and a solid command of the English language. In this competitive age, those who lack effective communication skills will suffer significantly compared to those who do, as they will be more likely to be noticed by a higher-up and given a position or responsibility that will boost their reputation and self-esteem.

There are four main language skills in English: speaking, reading, and writing. Speaking and writing are considered productive skills, whereas listening and reading are referred to as receptive skills. In contrast to writing, speaking is produced in real time without editing. Some Issues with Learners' English Speaking Ability. I have observed certain difficulties in my classroom when trying to teach and master speaking skills based on my prior teaching experience. Some due to their fear of making mistakes, pupils are reluctant to speak in English.

When working in pairs and groups, people speak their native tongue rather than English more often. Some of them find it difficult to participate in conversations or to answer, but they can understand the messages.

These issues affect ESL students because they have a low level of the language (vocabulary, skills, and grammar), lack motivation, are discouraged by their learning environment, have less student-talking time (STT), are uninterested in the lessons, and their teachers do not either use appropriate techniques or do so in a manner that is effective.

- ✓ Plan the classroom activities to get students more active in either pair work or group work
- ✓ Pair work and group work should be changed
- ✓ Get students practice in fluency and accuracy
- ✓ Increase student-talking time and reduce teacher-talking time
- ✓ Encourage student to use their own words in English
- ✓ Monitor and motivate students while they are working
- ✓ Give constructive feedback to students

### **Preparing lesson plan in teaching skills**

#### **a. PPP Lesson:**

One effective way used in teaching speaking is *PPP* (*Presentation, Practice and Product*) lesson plan.

#### *Presentation:*

In this stage, it aims to present new target item of language to students before getting students practice it. Make sure that *Form, Meaning, and Use* of the language are briefly introduced to students so that they know how to use it. Teacher should prepare the tasks to fit the level of the students. There are many techniques to introduce the new language item. We can do it through reading, listening, picture, real situation and other context.

### *Practice:*

In the practice stage, it is good to get students practice the new language item immediately so that they can picture it in mind. Usually, it have aim to improve accuracy and fluency. It enables students from controlled practice to less-controlled practice and then to freer practice.

### *Product:*

Product stage gives students extra tasks to improve their fluency. Students are asked to do it freely so that they can talk any topic, they are familiar with, but it should be based on the new language item they have just learnt.

### **b. SP Lesson:**

To provide students more opportunity to fluently use language skill taught so far, Skill-Practice Lesson should be employed. It includes Pre-speaking tasks, Main-speaking tasks, and Post-speaking tasks. In this lesson format, all the four skills are used to interact with each other so that students have chance to practice all skills, not only speaking. Receptive skills (listening and reading) are used to improve Productive skills (speaking and writing).

#### Pre-speaking tasks (Before):

Before the speaking tasks, it is to make sure that students are ready first. It can start from listening tasks or reading tasks. Thus, students have ideas or feel focused on the topics from the listening or reading.

#### Main-speaking tasks (During):

During the speaking tasks, students are encouraged to actively involve in the speaking activities. They will speak or do tasks related to what they hear or read in the first stage.

#### Post-speaking tasks (After):

It is also called following-up tasks with aim to produce their language in another skill such as writing. Students will be asked to do other activities which are not speaking.

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

Teaching productive skills aim to enable students/learners to create communicative language in effective way. Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations that require communication. This way enables students to have the opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language. Therefore, ESL/ EFL teachers should create a classroom environment which students are interested in and are given more chance to practice real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. The interaction among students is important to make them more active and to build cooperative learning environment for them. Students should be strongly encouraged to work in pair, small group, and large group.

To create an effective learning environment in the classroom, we need to provide three essential conditions: the provision of *exposure to the target language*; the provision of *opportunities for learners* to use the target language for *real communication*; and the promotion of *motivation* for learners to engage in the learning process. (Willis, 1996)

### **4. Suggestions For Teachers in Teaching Speaking**

Here are some suggestions (from Channey, 1998) for English language teachers while teaching oral language: Provide maximum opportunity to students to speak the target language by providing a rich environment that contains collaborative work, authentic materials and tasks, and shared knowledge. Try to involve each student in every speaking activity; for this aim, practice different ways of student participation. Reduce teacher speaking time in class while increasing student speaking time. Step back and observe students. Indicate positive signs when commenting on a student's response.

Ask eliciting questions such as "What do you mean? How did you reach that conclusion?" in order to prompt students to speak more.

Provide written feedback like "Your presentation was really great. It was a good job. I really appreciated your efforts in preparing the materials and efficient use of your voice..."

Do not correct students' pronunciation mistakes very often while they are speaking. Correction should not distract student from his or her speech.

Involve speaking activities not only in class but also out of class; contact parents and other people who can help.

Circulate around classroom to ensure that students are on the right track and see whether they need your help while they work in groups or pairs.

Provide the vocabulary beforehand that students need in speaking activities.

Diagnose problems faced by students who have difficulty in expressing themselves in the target language and provide more opportunities to practice the spoken language.

### **Ways to Improve Speaking Skill**

Are there any ways to help students learn better in speaking skill? Sure, there are. It needs the involvement of teachers and learners/ students to actively build the communicative environment in and out of classroom.

Students/ learners should be aware that speaking skill needs the knowledge of:

- ✓ Vocabulary (words, collocation and their meaning)
- ✓ Parts of speech (noun, verb, adverb ...)
- ✓ Pronunciation (tone of voice, stress, intonation)
- ✓ Expression and sentence structures
- ✓ Tense (past, present and future)
- ✓ Other skills- listening, reading and writing

#### *1. Drills*

Drilling is a controlled practice activity. It is useful in the early stages of a lesson when presenting or practicing new language, when preparing for an impending exam or to hammer out bad habits. By repeating set patterns, input-response becomes automatic. The drills can be picture drill, choral drills, interactive drills, substitution drills, transformation drills and drilling using flash cards. Usually, they are most appropriate for beginner or elementary level of students.

#### *2. Songs and Chants*

Songs and chants are speaking activities for young students. They are used to give the children a chance to listen to songs and reproduce the language they hear. They are working on the sounds, rhythm and intonation. The children can learn to pronounce words and to speak out in controlled ways. The language in the songs should be simple enough and natural.

#### *3. Information gaps*

Information gap activities are the controlled practice that serves many purposes such as solving a problem or collecting information. Students are asked to work in pairs. Student A have information which student B do not. Then they ask some questions to get information to complete the gaps. Keep them talking and teacher should monitor carefully because they may copy from each other without talking.

#### *4. Stimulations*

In simulations, students can bring items to the class to create a realistic environment. A student can act as a teacher, dancer, singer, news reader and so on. They also need to bring what they will use to make

the activity more interesting. The activity is entertaining, motivates the students, and increase self-confidence. Students may find it more interesting than role play activities.

#### 5. *Describing things (pictures/ real situation)*

In this activity, students are given pictures which teacher prepare what to get students practice. Students can work pair or group with different pictures. They are supposed to take turn to describe about the picture with language they have already learned. Finally, one student representing the pair or group describes it to the class.

#### 6. *Brainstorming*

At first, the topic is set by the teacher. Then teacher asks students express their ideas on the topic. There should be judgment on what they say, but encourage them to say it again or help them with leading questions so that they will openly talk.

#### 7. *Jigsaw activities*

These activities are like a jigsaw puzzle with the pieces of information fit together to make one picture in the end. Before starting, the students should be given reasons to communicate. Teacher can prepare two similar copies of a text whose information is missing.

#### 8. *Find someone who...*

It is good to practice language use with “find someone who...” through speaking. Teacher can prepare sentences with language item, for example, to practice (to have ...). Teacher gets students to move around and to ask others in the class to find someone who matches the description. The first one who can complete the all sentences with name of their friends is the winner.

#### 9. *Role-plays*

The teacher sets the situation for students and asks them to pretend to be actors or actresses or someone who acts in the story. Students are not given any script for speaking, but they use their own language. If the scene is about hospital, actors are doctor, nurse, patient, and others. They can set their own topic about which they can talk.

#### 10. Story telling/ story retelling (Narration)

After listening to a story, the students are asked to summarize the story in their own word. Otherwise, they can also create their own stories. Then ask them to tell their group or classmates. Story telling also helps students with creative thinking skill.

#### 11. Reporting

Teacher can give a task to students to do at home such as reading news, watching TV, or writing about an event they may see. In class, they are asked to report to their group or classmate. It is most appropriate for intermediate or advanced level.

#### 12. Discussion

Students work in small or large group and teacher gives some topics for students to select. In each group, there can be positive side and negative

### **Conclusions**

Most of the students complained that enough time was not given for the improvement of speaking ability in the classroom. It can be safely concluded that English is being taught as a subject and not as a language, due to which limited time is available and the habit of rote memory is promoted. Different exercises were not given to them regarding speaking ability; most of the students agreed in this respect. Some students agreed that they could speak on a given topic for a limited duration, while more than half did not agree in this connection. Some students were scolded by their teachers for speaking incorrectly in English but more than half did not think so. Some of the students could not speak in the classrooms of



English because of the fears of their teachers. Another important point to be added over here was that maximum number of the students was shy because of the fear that their class fellows would laugh at them. According to the data, half of the students knew how to speak correctly. More than half the students responded that their teachers did not speak English most of the time in the classes of English. Students and teachers were equally responsible regarding one of the question asked from the students in connection with poor speaking ability, most of them said “yes” but the teachers are more responsible by having the professional knowledge and skills. Different activities such as seminars, group discussions and debates competitions were not regularly arranged as told by maximum number of the students.

**Suggestions.** More stress on the books and speaking ability should be paid at the basic level, for it is a step-by-step process and such competencies cannot be improved abruptly. English should be taught as language as well as a subject so, that more time may be available for the students in performing various activities/exercises and in a natural way. Some individual activities, such as to speak on a certain topic should be assigned to students as already given to them for a minute or so in the beginning speaking stages. Students should be given motivation, encouragement, some psychological training, reassurance and counselling for removing their shyness due to laughing of their class fellows and scolding by their teachers. Teachers should also be given training for not to discourage the students. They should also be taught for controlling other students in a positive way in order to provide a friendly and conducive environment in the classroom while the other student(s) is/are speaking.

Linguistic skills such as grammatical structures, vocabulary, and phonetics should be emphasized by the teachers in the classroom so that the students should know how to speak correctly. The students should develop the habits of listening to BBC, CNN and other such programs for the improvement of their speaking skills. To check the language competency of students at various levels viva-voce as a compulsory part of the examination system may be included. There should be a balance in the books regarding literature and language as presently the books are more literature-oriented, lacking language competency activities.

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