

IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES

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Abstract.

The main problem underlying this article is that many students are unable to carry on a spontaneous communication using the target language. The main cause behind this problem is the traditional methods that are followed by many teachers to teach speaking skill which focus on teaching a set of grammatical rules. The information gathered for this study demonstrates that teaching communicative languages to students is a highly successful way to improve their speaking abilities. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to offer some tactics, methods, and approaches that could aid instructors in imparting speaking skills.

Key words: speaking skill, communicative approach, productive ability, discussion and debate.

English is the most important language in the world. People from many nations can engage and communicate with one another more easily with English because it is widely used as a communication tool. Furthermore, English is increasingly important in a variety of fields in the age of globalization, including business, politics, culture, communication and education.

Speaking is a type of active or productive ability. Even while all four communication skills are crucial, speaking is by far the most crucial task to complete. When a person speaks, they engage in conversation with another person and use language to convey their thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

There are four skills in teaching and learning a language: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Speaking skill is considered to be one major skill to be developed by FL learners; both teachers of foreign language and learners give much more importance to speaking skill as it's the essential pillar to build up the competence of learner in foreign language since it's based on communication and interaction.

We should know what does the term speaking mean? According to the Oxford (2009) pocket dictionary speaking is "the action of conveying information or expressing one's thought and feeling in spoken language" Another definition of speaking skill is "using language for

purpose”. (Baker, Watsrup, 2003:7). According to Chaney defines speaking skill as “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of context”. In the whole, speaking is to express, every day, occurrence for most of us, and it’s usually requires little thoughts, efforts or preparation[3].

In many cases, listening should lead naturally into speaking; there is “a natural link between speaking and listening”. That teacher should pay attention to and not hesitate to incorporate these two skills in the teaching process. In fact; both skills listening and speaking happen to gather the link is so clear in almost all the activities used to teach speaking they both strengthen each other[1].

Speaking and writing are productive skills while they are completely different from each other. Spoken language is more spontaneous, chaos, and disorder form. It may be informal, short and clear sentence, whereas writing is more ordered and coherent structures[2]. According to Brown he pointed out that speaking and writing are different in many levels. First of all, performance. The oral production is ephemeral; it disappears as one finishes speaking[1]. Although the written language is enduring, one can read what was written centuries ago. The other difference is orthography; the spoken language contains phonemes, stress, rhythm, intonation and “verbal cues”. Whereas; writing contains only graphemes (punctuation, pictures charts). Another difference is complexity, speaking is less complicated than writing. However; they are both complicated, the difference lies in the degree of their complexity, in the spoken language, people produce short sentences with many conjunctions while in writing people produce longer subordinating sentences. The last difference is vocabulary; speakers tend to use simple and clear vocabulary while they are speaking because it is easy to be understood by the hearer; in the other hand, writers tend to use a more complicated vocabulary because they have time to think about what to write.

What Makes Speaking Difficult

Learning how to speak is very difficult for second language learners, Brown identified some problem that May students face in their learning process: According to Brown the fluent speech is phrasal not word by word, students tends to divide their speech into words phrases; for that reason teachers have to help their students to produce fluent speech[1].

Activities to Teach Speaking Skill

The main purpose of foreign language teachers, More precisely, teachers of oral expression, is to increase the performance of their students in speaking skill. Many activities

can be used by teachers to enhance students speaking skill. According to Thornburg, (2008) theorists proposed three different stages that learner pass through when they are learning how to speak, the first stage is Awareness; which is meant that students are in need to be aware of the characteristics of the language understudy, the second stage is Appropriation, the integration of the language characteristics into the students existing knowledge, the last stage is autonomy, when the learners are able to use the new language on their own. Many activities are designed by theorists for all the previous stages mentioned above to achieve affective teaching; and all these activities motivate students to participate and interact in the classroom.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is considered to be “useful tool for the appropriation of language: 70 and it’s classified between speaking and writing. Moreover; it helps students to focus on pronunciation without feeling stressed of what to say next. According to Thornbury, Mark Powell suggested techniques for reading aloud which he called “sound scripting” first teacher give the learners a text and ask them to indicate where pauses fall the second is students highlight the stressed words the third is students come to a decision about the sequences of words that are slower or deliberate and the last one is practice reading the text they have been through[10].

Autonomy

Automaticity is defined by Thornbury (2008) as being “the capacity to self regulate performance as a consequence of gaining control over skills that were formally other-regulated.” In other words automaticity is the state or quality of being spontaneous, involuntary or self- regulating. The activities that are used to enhance automaticity in the learners are described as follow

Show and tell (or show and share) is usually the first opportunity young children have to stand up in front of a small group and speak. The opportunity to do a show and tell might come up in kindergarten, or once they start primary school. It is a wonderful introduction to public speaking as children are often given the option of speaking about a topic they know well and are interested in. Speaking about something you love always makes you love it even more! Importance of show and tell in holistic child development.

- ✓ Building Confidence and Communication Skills Through Interactive Learning
- ✓ Boosts Self-Esteem and Articulation Skills
- ✓ Enhances Oral Skills

- ✓ Promotes Social Skills

Role Play

As we have seen in the first chapter, role play is a very good technique to be used in the classroom. It engages the learners in real life communication and reduces their fears because the students, even the weak ones, they would be working in groups and will have the chance to choose the role that they feel comfortable with. Simply, role plays can encourage students to practice their speaking skills and develop their communication skills.

Discussion and Debate

Discussion and debate are, usually, the most used activities in oral classes. Actually, "Panel discussion" is what teachers prefer. Usually used in pairs or in groups; students on the panel give their arguments about a given issue, and those students (from the audience) either agree or disagree. This activity is very effective, in the sense that it helps learners focus more on what they say rather than how to say it.

Conclusion

So, that we have attempted to provide an overview about speaking process in EFL classes, which is considered as the most difficult skill among the others (listening, reading and writing). Also, we have tackled the main challenges faced by EFL students in learning speaking skill which stand as an obstacle in their learning process. Speaking skill goes through three main stages: awareness; appropriateness and autonomy. We have also suggested various activities to the previous stages such as, using records, drilling activities, show and tell to enhance students' speaking skill.

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