

ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE SPEAKING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts. Speaking is a key of communication. By considering what good speakers do, what speaking task can be used in class, and what specific needs learners report, teachers can help learners improve their speaking and overall oral competency.

Key words: Speaking, Learners, Activities

1. Introduction

Everywhere you go you find language. Shop names, street names, advertisements, notices on buses and trains... Even if you are not in an English-speaking country, there are often a lot of English words you can see when walking in the street, especially in big cities. And there are always numbers. Car numbers, telephone numbers, house numbers... How can this help you? When you walk down the street, practice reading the words and numbers that you see. Say them to yourself. It's not exactly a conversation, but it will help you to "think" in English. For example, if you walk along a line of parked cars, say the number on each car quickly as you pass it. Test yourself, to see how fast you can walk and still say each number. But don't speak too loud!

There are four language skills when we learn a language, they are; listening, reading, writing and speaking. You can listen to the radio alone. You can read a book alone. You can write a letter alone. But you can't really speak alone! Speaking to yourself can be "dangerous" because men in white coats may come and take you away! Speaking English is the main goal of many adult learners. Their personalities play a large role in determining how quickly and how correctly they will accomplish this goal. Those who are risk-takers unafraid of making mistakes will generally be more talkative, but with many errors that could become hard-to-break habits. Conservative, shy students may take a long time to speak confidently, but when they do, their English often contains fewer errors and they will be proud of their English ability. However, if

the aim of speaking is communication and that does not require perfect English, then it makes sense to encourage quantity in your classroom. Break the silence and get students communicating with whatever English they can use, correct or not, and selectively address errors that block communication.

Speaking lessons often tie in pronunciation and grammar which are necessary for effective oral communication. On a grammar or reading lesson may incorporate a speaking activity. Either way, your students will need some preparation before the speaking task. This includes introducing the topic and providing a model of the speech they are to produce. A model may not apply to discussion-type activities, in which case students will need clear and specific instructions about the task to be accomplished. Then the students will practice with the actual speaking activity.

From the explanation above, we can conclude that speaking skills consists of linguistic performance and linguistic competence. In other words, we can say that speaking skills is a mental motor skill, it consist of the coordination of sounds, mechanism, which is produce by our muscles and it is also has a mental aspect. Tarigan (1990:15) says that speaking is the competence to express explain and convey thinking, feeling, and idea.

Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Burns & Joyce, 1997). Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking. Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. Speaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary (linguistic competence), but also that they understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language (sociolinguistic competence). The examples of various types of speaking in real life situations are;

- Chatting to a friends in a canteen
- A students chatting to his or her teacher while waiting for an class
- Classroom group discussions and problem – solving activities
- Discussing needed computer repairs with a technician
- Giving a speech welcome
- Buying something in a shop

- Ordering food from a menu in a restaurant
- Giving a class report about a group/individual assignment

Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogue. However, today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills, because only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance. In order to teach second language learners how to speak in the best way possible, some speaking activities are provided below, that can be applied to ESL and EFL classroom settings, together with suggestion for teachers who teach oral language.

What is “Teaching Speaking”?

What is meant by “teaching speaking” is to teach ESL learners to:

1. Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns
2. Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.
3. Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
4. Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
5. Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
6. Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. (Nunan, 2003)

So, teaching speaking is about training students how to integrate skills to deliver oral “presentation” without articulation difficulties.

Reason For Teaching Speaking

1. Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching
2. The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second language or foreign – language learners.

3. The learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they felt they have improved in their spoken language proficiency.

How to Teach Speaking

Now many linguistics and ESL teachers agree on that students learn to speak in the second language by “interacting”. Communicative language teaching and collaborative learning serve best for this aim. Communicative language teaching is based on real – life situations that require communication. By using this method in ESL classes, students will have the opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language. In brief, ESL teacher should create a classroom and environment where students have real – life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language. This can occur when students collaborate in groups to achieve a goal or to complete a task.

The measure students speaking ability, has five competence as follows are;

- a) Pronunciation

Hornby defines pronunciation as the way in which a language is spoken, way in which a word is pronounced (Hornby, 1974:669) it means that pronunciation is an important of language, including its aspect like accent, stress, and intonation.

- b) Grammar

Grammar and pronunciation has a close relationship. In addition to the sound system learners must be taught by using structure system of language. Learners must be given insight into word order, inflection and derivation into the other meaningful features of the English language. It will help students to speak fluently.

- c) Vocabulary

Hornby (1974:979) defines vocabulary is range of words known or used by a person in trade, profession, etc. if students have many vocabularies, it will be easier for him to express his idea.

- d) Fluently

Hornby (1974:330) defines fluency as the quality of being able to speak smoothly and easily. It means that someone can speak without any hesitation. Someone can speak fluently even though he makes errors in pronunciation and grammar.

e) Self – confidence

Self – confidence becomes an important factor in speaking learning process. A students with good grammatical and vocabulary master usually has a big confidence to express idea, suggestion or answer the question. He feels like that, so he thinks he knows what will he say and how to express.

Example of a speaking lesson

1. *Preparation*, show the learners a picture of two people conversing in a familiar casual setting. Ask them to brainstorm what the people might be discussing (i.e., what topics, what the vocabulary, typical phrases).
2. *Presentation*, present several video clips of small talk in casual situations. Have learners complete a worksheet in which they describe or list the topics discussed, the context in which the speech is occurring, and any phrases that seem to typify small talk. Follow up with a discussions of the kinds of topics that are appropriate for small talk, the factors in the specific situations that affect selection, and typical phrases used in small talk.
3. *Practice*, give the learners specific information about the participants and the setting of a scenario where small talk will take place. In pairs, have them list topics that might be discussed by the participants and simple phrases they might use. Learners then engage in improvised dialogues based on these simple phrases.
4. *Evaluation*, give the learners teacher – prepared dialogue based on their scenario from. Ask them to compare their improvised dialogues with the prepared dialogue, analyzing the similarities, differences, and reasons for both.
5. *Extension*, have the learners go individually or in small group into various contexts in the community (work, school, church, and bus stop) and record the conversations they hear.

Ask them to report their findings back to the class, and then have the class discuss these findings.

Activities To Promote Speaking

Discussion

After a content – based lesson, a discussion can be held for various reasons. The students may aim to arrive at a conclusion, share ideas about an event, or find solution in their discussion group. Before the discussion, it is essential that the purpose of the discussion activity is set by the teacher. In this way, the discussion points are relevant to this purpose, so that students do not spend their time chatting with each other about irrelevant things. For example, students can become involved in agree/disagree discussion. In this type of discussions, the teacher can form groups of students, preferably 4 or 5 in each group, and provide controversial sentences like “people learn best when they read vs. people learn best when they travel”. Then each group works on their topic for a given time period, and presents their opinions to the class. It is essential that the speaking should be equally divided among group members. At the end, the class decides on the winning group who defend the idea in the best way. This activity fosters critical thinking and quick decision making, and students learn to express and justify themselves in polite ways while disagreeing with the others. For efficient group discussions, it is always better not to form large groups, because quite students may avoid contributing in large group. The group members can be either assigned by the teacher or the students may determine it by themselves, but group should be rearranged in every discussion activity so that students can work with various people and learn to be open to different ideas. Lastly, in class or group discussions, whatever the aim is, the students should always be encourage to ask questions, paraphrase ideas, express support, check for clarification, and so on.

Role Play

One other way of getting students to speak is role – playing. Students pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. In role – play activities, the teacher give information to the learners such as who they are and what they think or feel. Thus, the teacher can tell the student that “You are David, you go to the doctor and tell him what happened last night, and....” (Harmer, 1984).

Simulation

Simulations are very similar to role – plays but what makes simulations different than role plays is that they are more elaborate. In simulation, students can bring items to the class to create a realistic environment. For instance, if a student is acting as a singer, she brings a microphone to sing and so on. Role plays and simulations have many advantages. First, since they are entertaining, they motivate the students. Second, as Harmer (1984) suggest, they increase the self – confidence of hesitant students, because in role play and simulation activities, they will have a different role and do not have to speak for themselves, which means they do not have to take the same responsibility.

Information Gap

In this activity, students are supposed to be working in pairs. One student will have the information that other partner does not have and the partners will share their information. Information gap activities serve many purposes such as solving a problem or collecting information. Also, each partner plays an important role because the task cannot be completed if the partner if the partners do not provide the information the others need. These activities are effective because everybody has the opportunity to talk extensively in the target language.

Brainstorming

On a given topic, students can produce ideas in a limited time. Depending on the context, either individual or group brainstorming is effective and learners generate ideas quickly and freely. The good characteristics of brainstorming is that the students are not criticized for their ideas so students will be open to sharing new ideas.

Storytelling

Students can briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Story telling fosters creative thinking. It also helps students express ideas in the format of beginning, development and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have. Students also can tell riddles or jokes. For instance, at

the very beginning of each class session, the teacher may call a few students to tell short riddles or jokes as an opening. In this way, not only will the teacher address students' speaking ability, but also get the attention of the class.

Interviews

Students can conduct interviews on selected topics with various people. It is a good idea that the teacher provides a rubric to students so that they know what type of questions they can ask or what path to follow, but students should prepare their own interview questions. Conducting interviews with people gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps them becoming socialized. After interviews, each student can present his or her study to the class. Moreover, students can interview each other and "introduce" his or her partner to the class.

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.

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.

Playing Cards

In this game, students should form groups of four. Each suit will represent a topic. For instance:

1. **Diamonds** : Earning money
2. **Hearts** : Love and relationships
3. **Spades** : An unforgettable memory
4. **Clubs** : Best teacher

Each student in a group will choose a card. Then, each student will write 4-5 questions about that topic to ask the other people in the group. For example:

If the topic “*Diamonds: Earning Money*” is selected, here are some possible questions:

5. Is money important in your life? Why?
6. What is the easiest way of earning money?
7. What do you think about lottery? Etc.

However, the teacher should state at the very beginning of the activity that students are not allowed to prepare yes – no questions, because by saying yes or no students get little practice in spoken language production. Rather, students ask open – ended questions to each other so that they reply in complete sentences.

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, 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.

Find the Difference

For this activity students can work in pairs and each couple is given two different pictures, for example, picture of boys playing football and another picture of girls playing tennis. Students in pairs discuss the similarities and/or differences in the pictures.

Suggestion For Teachers in Teaching Speaking

Here are some suggestions for English language teachers while teaching oral language:

1. 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.
2. Try to involve each student in every speaking activity; for this aim, practice different ways of student participant.
3. Reduce teacher speaking time in class while increasing student speaking time. Step back and observe students.
4. Indicate positive signs when commenting on a student's response.
5. Ask eliciting questions such as "What do you mean? How did you reach that conclusion?" in order to prompt students to speak more.
6. 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..."
7. Do not correct students' pronunciation mistakes very often while they are speaking. Correction should not distract student from his or her speech.
8. Involve speaking activities not only in class but also out of class; contact parents and other people who can help.
9. Circulate around classroom to ensure that students are on the right track and see whether they need your help while they work in group or pairs.
10. Provide the vocabulary beforehand that students need in speaking activities.
11. Diagnose problems faced by students who have difficulty in expressing themselves in the target language and provide more opportunities to practice the spoken language.

Conclusion

Teaching speaking is a very important part of second language learning. The ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiency contributes to the success of the learner in school and success later in every phase of life. Therefore, it is essential that language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking. Rather than leading students to pure memorization, providing a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place in desired. With this aim, various speaking activities such as those listed above can contribute a great deal to students in developing basic interactive skills necessary for life. These activities make students more

active in the learning process and at the same time make their learning more meaningful and fun for them.

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