

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

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**Abstract:** Speaking is one of the most important skills to be developed and enhanced as means of effective communication. Speaking skill is regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of language learning. Many language learners find it difficult to express themselves in spoken language. They are generally facing problems to use a foreign language to express their thoughts effectively. They stop talking because they face psychological obstacles or cannot find suitable words and expressions. The modern world of media and mass communication requires good knowledge of spoken English. This paper aims at establishing the need to focus on the factors affecting language learners' English speaking skills.

**Keywords:** speaking, importance, characteristics, problems, factors, activities, communication, English classrooms, EFL, EELs, speaking skills, strategies.

In this globalization era, there have been drastic changes taking place all over the world. These tremendous vicissitudes occur when people have a strong desire to achieve something. People's desires are fulfilled when they clearly express their ideas and opinions with others. Thus, they need to learn communication skills in order to fulfill their ambitions, desires, and goals. In this modern world, communication skills play a vital role and one must have mastery over these skills to get success in their respective fields. So, speaking is the most important skill among all the our language skills in order to communicate well in this global world.

Foreign language teaching and learning, speaking has always been considered as the most essential skill to be mastered for several reasons. First, approaches and methods for teaching speaking have long been major focuses of language teaching researches and conferences. Second, a huge number of conversation and other speaking course books, audios and videos are continuously published. In addition, many language learners regard speaking ability as the measure of knowing a language. They define fluency as the ability to converse with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. They regard speaking as the most important skill they can acquire.

At present, the need for speaking mastery in English has been dramatically increasing due to the strengthening position of English as a language for international communication. Its use as the working language in 85% of international organizations and its function as the main gate to get a better job, especially in multinational companies have motivated a great number of people around the world



to learn English as a second language (henceforward ESL) or and as a foreign language (henceforward EFL) in order to be able to speak in it. Graves accentuates “the purposes of learning a language in TL-removed contexts are varied, but the thrust is to learn language to communicate, to improve one’s economic prospects, to expand one’s horizon’s both literally and/or figuratively to be a global citizen” [1]. In relation to this, Richards and Renandya's assert: "A large percentage of the world's language learners study English in order to develop proficiency in speaking" [2]. The tendency to prioritize the mastery of speaking is also reflected in the tendency of society to make speaking skills as a measure of one's mastery of English. In fact, many students consider language fluency to communicate verbally with others is often considered more important than the ability to read or write. They argue that speaking is the most important language skills that need to be controlled, and they assess learning achievement based on mastery of speaking skills (Burnkart, 1998).

Speaking is also a multi-sensory activity because it involves paralinguistic features such as eye-contact, facial expressions, body language, tempo, pauses, voice quality changes, and pitch variation which affect conversational flow. It seems that culture is integral in how speaking is constructed which has implications for how English speaking is taught and learned [3].

The direct approach is based on information about a systematic program of micro skills, communication strategy, language input, and processes that lead to fluent speaking, which is informed by speaking analysis, second language acquisition and discourse analysis.

According to Brown, the direct approach could be very effective if the explicit teaching of aspects of speaking is combined with the opportunity to practice [4]. This approach includes recording speaking to recognize student deficiencies in observing real speaking transcripts, good speaker, and the differences between non-native and native speaking [6]. In Skehan’s view, however, this approach seems to over-rely on skills and strategies at the expense of linguistics and the teaching of unnecessary functional language in particular contexts. Cook adds that not everything about speaking can be taught because some mechanisms are only unconsciously accessible like pausing, overlapping, and pitch rise to signal turn-taking.

#### *Factors Affecting Speaking Skill*

If teachers want to help learners overcome their difficulties in learning speaking skill, they should identify some factors that influence their speaking performance. Learners’ speaking performance are influenced by factors like performance conditions, affective factors, listening skill, and feedback during speaking tasks [10].

The first factor is pertinent to performance conditions. Learners carry out a speaking activity under different conditions. Performance conditions impact speaking





performance and these conditions involve time pressure, planning, the quality of performance, and the amount of support [6].

According to Mahripah, EFL learners' speaking skill is affected by some linguistic components of language like phonology, syntax, vocabulary, and semantics and psychological factors such as motivation and personality [7]. Phonology is a difficult aspect of language learning for EFL learners. As we know, English is not a phonetic language. That is, pronunciation of English words are not similar to their spellings. Words with similar spellings are sometimes pronounced differently because of their surrounding contexts like tenses and phonemes that come after them. This can cause a lot of problems for non-native speakers of English and they sometimes get confused in producing the English words.

EFL learners should have the knowledge of words and sentences. They should comprehend how words are divided into different sounds and how sentences are stressed in specific ways. Grammatical competence can help speakers apply and perceive the structure of English language correctly that leads to their fluency [8]. Native speakers say what they want without having any problems because they are familiar with the language. If they have problems in expressing some concepts, they try to use other ways of telling those things. They may make certain mistakes syntactically but these mistakes do not change the meaning of the sentences they want to express and this doesn't create serious problems for the listeners to comprehend them. But the mistakes non-native speakers commit are those that change the meaning of utterances they want to convey and can create some problems for their understanding [7].

### *Why are Speaking Skills taught in English classrooms?*

In this global world, there is a need to share our ideas and thoughts with the people who live around the world in order to fulfill our desires and deeds. This is a competitive world and each and every English language learner wants to improve his/her speaking skills to sustain in this global market. Moreover, most of the selections in getting jobs depend on the communication skills of the individuals, especially, their speaking skills. The interviewers also recognize the talent of the individuals in the form of speaking skills within a short period of time. The job seekers those who can prove their skills at that particular moment will be occupying the best places in their career. Moreover, these speaking skills are also useful for professionals to develop their career. In addition to this, these speaking skills are more useful for the employees those who are working in business organizations to promote their businesses. It is also a known fact that excellent, outstanding and inspiring speakers highly motivate and win the hearts of the audience. As speaking skills play a vital role in many aspects, there is a need for EFL/ESL learners to concentrate more on them. Furthermore, the teachers are advised to implement



several useful strategies in their classrooms in order to involve the learners more on learning speaking skills in their English classrooms.

Even if there are four other skills in the English language, speaking skills are the most effective one among them as a majority of communication is done through speech. Therefore, speaking skills are the most important method of communication. There is no doubt that proficiency in each skill is necessary to become a well-rounded communicator, but the ability to speak skillfully provides the speakers with several distinct advantages. The main advantages of speaking skills are:

To participate actively in pair or group activities in the classrooms.

To give a maiden and impressive speech on different occasions.

To participate actively in debates and group discussions.

To develop critical thinking among the learners.

To pursue higher studies in foreign countries.

To interact with people all around the globe.

To promote the sale of products in the business.

To make living abroad simpler and easier.

To get better employment opportunities.

To make use of the internet effectively.

To perform well in job interviews.

To acquire more knowledge.

To travel to a foreign country.

To do good international business.

To earn high respect in the society.

To give presentations for all purposes.

To communicate effectively with others.

To increase the income of the individual.

To boost up the speakers' self-confidence.

To know the different cultures of the world.

To interact with people all around the globe.

To keep over cognition and reasoning very sharp.

To get better employment opportunities all over the world.

To increase the ability of problem-solving and critical thinking.

To improve the overall development of the speaker's personality.

To highly motivate and attract the customers in buying the products.

Since there are many advantages of speaking skills, the English teachers should concentrate more on these skills and give the best priority to them as they are very useful for the overall development of the ELLs' performance. Thus, the teachers have to think of various techniques and approaches of speaking skills to develop the





learners' oral communication which is the most essential one in this contemporary world [9].

The English teachers have to adopt several techniques to develop the speaking skills of their learners because some EFL/ESL learners have a deep fear of making mistakes and some others have just plain shy and this is observed even in the native learners. At this juncture, English teachers can introduce some fun activities in the form of language games to get the learners to speak in English classrooms. Generally, most of the learners are interested in playing games in the classrooms and it is quite common that they ask for more and more games as they make them happy. When the learners practice these games in a fun environment, it is sure that they really improve their speaking skills enormously. At the preliminary stage, the teachers have to introduce fun games like guessing the item that is held in their wrists. In this connection, the teachers hold something in their wrists and keep the item as a secret one and the learners have to go on guessing it. Indeed, such types of activities certainly improve ELLs' speaking skills. As the learners have to just guess the unseen object and they have their own choice and freedom to express their opinions, they come out with more options and produce innumerable sentences in a learner-friendly environment.

Therefore, the teachers should introduce such activities in their regular classrooms in order to involve the ELLS more and improve their speaking skills.

Then the teachers can introduce some activities such as "Speaking about themselves" by giving their own examples to the classroom. Thus, with the motivation they get from their teachers, the learners go on speaking about themselves since everything they speak is a fact that has been already stored in their memory. Then the teachers may extend this activity by asking the learners to say something about their parents, best books or best friends. Hence, these activities certainly give a chance to the learners to acquire speaking skills in a pleasant way.

Activities such as pair or group work also enhance the learners' speaking skills enormously since the learners get an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas in a congenial atmosphere. The English teachers have to think of the needs and interests of the learners while selecting topics for these activities. At this juncture, it is wise to quote Rao S. P. who asserts, "While selecting the topics, the teachers have to take into consideration of the learners' needs and interests that lead the learners to work more on the given topics with interest and enthusiasm" [9]. Therefore, the teachers have to think more positively towards learner-centered methods to involve the learners by concentrating more on the activities related to speaking skills. When learners work in pairs or groups, they work independently and try to speak more and produce many sentences. This will certainly be helpful for the ELLs to boost up their confidence levels and inspire them to practice these speaking skills whenever and



wherever they get the opportunity to speak. Therefore, the teachers have to provide more opportunities for learners to participate actively in pairs or groups to enhance their speaking skills.

Speaking skills are very important for learners to sustain in this globally competitive world. Therefore, the English teachers have to introduce a variety of techniques in their classrooms by selecting simple and useful material that creates more interest and attentiveness among the ELLs towards learning speaking skills.

**Conclusion.** In this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight the importance of speaking skills in English classrooms. First of all, the significance of the basic language skills of English has been discussed elaborately. Then, the importance of speaking skills in the EFL/ESL classrooms has been comprehensively explained. Furthermore, the need to teach speaking skills in the classrooms has been illustrated. Later on, the kinds of speaking situations and the main advantages of speaking skills have been explained sumptuously. Moreover, some techniques to develop speaking skills among the EFL/ESL learners in the classrooms have been thoroughly explained. Finally, the teachers are given some suggestions to improve speaking skills among the ELLs in the English classrooms. Also, the ELLs are also advised to follow the guidance of their teachers in order to enhance their speaking skills. Speaking skills are the most important skills for ELLs as they are very useful for them in exhibiting their communication skills for various purposes. Hence, the teachers have to take a special interest in improving the speaking skills of the ELLs. For this purpose, the teachers have to refer to the latest material related to and try to adopt several techniques and approaches to develop the speaking skills of the learners in the English classrooms. The teachers should also choose appropriate material suitable for the level of the learners. Moreover, the teachers should encourage the learners to participate in the classroom discussions where the learners improve their speaking skills tremendously. Also, the learners have to create situations themselves to speak not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Furthermore, the learners have to follow the instructions of their teachers in improving their speaking skills. Since the tips given by the teachers benefit the learners, they have to implement them sincerely to communicate well at all circumstances. Therefore, the EFL/ESL teachers have to implement different strategies and techniques in their teaching in order to make their learners proficient in their speaking skills. In this regard, the ELLs have to put their whole efforts to practice speaking skills and allot more time to such activities in order to prove themselves in the contemporary world.

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