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E-Journal of Research

ISSN NO: 2395-339X

Teaching Speaking Skills: Problems and Remedies

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Abstract

Speaking Skill is a productive skill and one of the important parts of second language learning. The ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the students in school/colleges and later in every phase of their life. It is very important out of four language skills i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing because it helps to interact with others. During this era of technology and globalization, exchanging ideas is important. Indian culture must be transmitted to the world. This type of exchange of culture is possible only when we interact with people of varying cultures. In order to interact with them, we need a common language and English is the largest spoken language in the world. We, in our nation learn English as a second language. Learners find it very difficult to communicate in English, though they learn it for years together, as it is taught as a knowledge Subject and not as a skill subject. Hence enhancing communication skills in English becomes the need of the hour. This paper aims to study problems the teachers are facing during classroom teaching at college level. The researcher has brought out the problems and has suggested the methods to train the teachers while teaching English Speaking skill.

Key-words: Speaking Skill, Culture, Second Language, Skill, Problems and remedies.

Introduction:

Speech is the natural form of a language. In speech, we make use of oral signs that are addressed to the ear. A child acquires the power of speech by responding to the sounds made by people around him and by imitating them out of his need for communication. In the teaching of English as a second language, after having given the learner a chance to listen to the language, the learners must feel the need for communication. This paper focuses on the aspects of developing the speaking skills. This research was done among teachers of college level.

Techniques of Teaching Speaking Skill

1. The learners may be introduced to the sound system of English. Phonetics script may be introduced to them. Their attention may be drawn to the difference between the phonemes in their mother tongue and the target language. Most of the Indians make mistakes in English pronunciation because most of the Indian languages have a consistent relationship between the sounds and the letters used to represent them. This is not always the case with English. So, the use of phonetic script may be very useful to help learners overcome this difficulty.

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ISSN NO: 2395-339X

2. The second language learning situation in India does not provide the learners with situations to speak the language. So, the teachers must create situations in the class. Group activity may be used effectively. The class may be divided into groups consisting of eight or ten in each group. Each group may elect a leader who is to control the group activity. A topic is given for discussion by the group. Each member may be encouraged to contribute his share in the discussion.
3. The use of composition can give the learners a chance to speak. This is very useful in lower classes. For example, the students may be taken to a garden. They may be initiated into a conversation through properly framed questions. Then they continue this conversation. At the end they may be asked to write what they have said.
4. Dramatization may be used to train the learners in the art of speaking. This makes the students active and the class interesting. Each student may be assigned to play the role of a character.
5. Dialogue pattern drill approach can be used to give the second language learners experience in listening and practice in speaking. Properly prepared dialogues based on an interesting story or incident is prepared. The difficult words are explained to the students. Then the dialogue is read. It is better to present it, acting out the various roles. It is repeated a number of times so that the second language learners memorize the dialogue. After this, speaking practice begins.

Problem of Teaching Speaking Skills

When I posed a question among teachers: what goes wrong when you speak. They come out with the following answers:

- They do not have enough confidence.
- They are afraid of speaking.
- They fear that they might go wrong and make mistakes.
- They become nervous while using English.
- They grope for words.
- They are not able to distinguish between the minimal pairs.
- They are able to perform well in the classroom of their vernacular and when it comes to the English classes, they minimize the speech as they are not clear about the English speech system.

The answers that they brought out can be grouped as attitudinal, phonological and vocabulary problems. The attitudinal problems can be overcome by reduction of stress in mind; they may be asked to concentrate on what they listen to, whether it is a group discussion or a news item on radio or TV, by developing confidence in them and by thinking in English. While speaking English, many of them think in their vernacular and translate into the target language i.e. English and this causes stress and fear, because of which they lack confidence.

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The second problem is related to phonological factors. English is a foreign language. When we want to articulate the language, we may have an impact of the sound systems of our own vernacular. It can be overcome by following some techniques. The techniques are:

- Exposure to the target language. Try to speak in English whenever and wherever possible. Exploit the situation fully whenever you get a chance to speak in English.
- Listen to the native speakers of English, using recorded audio tapes. Nowadays, we have the facility of recording our voice in the same audio tape and comparing it with the previous one, the way native speaker has done.

The problems connected with vocabulary and grammar can be overcome by reading and listening. Listen to as many programmes as possible on the radio and T.V.

In a multilingual society like India the mixing of the vernacular with the target language is unavoidable. That becomes a major problem to the speaker while articulating the language. Nowadays English has imbibed many words from our Indian languages like catamaran and decoction, which find a place in the modern Oxford dictionaries.

Remember learning a language is a skill; within this frame work, there are many aspects. Let us consider some of them. Learners have to become aware of the key features of the target language so that they can create mental plans, which are impeccably necessary for production.

They should convert these plans into actual behaviour. The cognitive dimensions is transformed into the behavioural dimension. There are so many sub skills which are included in this conversation. They are pronouncing new sounds, selecting vocabulary items, producing grammatical structures, expressing the specified communicative functions and using devices managing the conversation.

As there is a saying, "Practice makes a man perfect" which is a golden rule as far as speaking English is concerned. So, all the problems, that are faced by the students can be successfully handled by practice.

Materials for teaching speaking in ESL Classrooms

In India, English is taught as a second language. The students may not have got the maximum or even adequate exposure outside their classrooms. So, it is necessary for the teacher to teach speaking in English with the help of these tasks. Task is a meaningful and viable unit of analysis which will have a bearing on all steps of programme design. Before selecting a task the teacher has to keep in mind the needs of the learners, syllabus or content. Tasks may contain some input data which may be a verbal clue like a dialogue, questionnaire, schedule, or a passage or else a non-verbal clue like picture sequence. The task will also have a goal and role for the teacher and learners.

While selecting materials for a classroom task we need keep in mind relevance, authenticity, focus on the processing, feasibility in classroom particularly the level of the learners. The

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following activities may be carried out by the teachers as remedies of their problems. They are:

1. Simulation and Role Play:

Simulation and role-play are forms of experiential learning. It is not easy to differentiate between simulation and role play. The participants are given an imaginary situation that requires some discussions to arrive at a conclusion. In a sense simulation may include role play. For example, in your street, there are no electric lights. There are many problems and the corporation is not taking any remedial measures. Decide what facilities you would like to provide to light your street. Role play on the other hand involves a conversation among many people. They imagine that they are the roles. For example

- a) One student imagines that he/she is a farmer. Other students ask her/him questions about her/his daily routine.
- b) A group of students imagine they are friends planning a holiday together. They try to decide where to go and what to do.
- c) We can ask the students to play the role of a interviewer and interviewee or a doctor and a patient.

2. Information Gap Activity:

An information gap activity is an activity where learners are missing the information they need to complete a task and need to talk to each other to find it. Thus, when one person knows the information that another person needs, an information gap is created. These are the basic activities for teaching communication skills. Participants were divided into two groups. Each group is provided with a card. The information should be transferred from one to another by means of question and answer.

3. Back Chaining Activity

Back Chaining is a drilling technique intended to help learners pronounce difficult sound groups, words or phrases. The teacher begins with the last sound, which the learners repeat, and then gradually builds up the word or phrase by going 'back' to the beginning. For the participants who are not able to manage even a short unit of discourse, the back chaining technique may be used.

Teacher: A book

Learner: A book

Teacher: Reading a book

Learner: Reading a book

Teacher: Is reading a book

Learner: is reading a book

Teacher: The Man is reading a book

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This activity was used to teach sentence stress to the participants. In India people don't have knowledge on native English accent. They give prominence to all the syllables. So this type of activity may be fruitful.

Conclusion:

There may be many other techniques and materials to teach the speaking skill to learners of ESL. These are only sample activities. There may not be any restriction in the methods of teaching. The teacher should have the autonomy of choosing the method on the basis of the needs of the learners.

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