

ADOPTING VARIOUS STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG YOUNG EFL/ESL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT



In the twenty-first century, there are tremendous changes in the field of communication. Since language plays a major role in communication, people need to learn a language that is widely spoken all around the world. As English is spoken in all the regions and countries of the world, it has attained the status of an international language or global language. The English language learners learn English in order to fulfill their life ambitions, desires and goals. So, they have to learn all the four skills of the English language viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Since there is more demand for communication skills in the global market, the teachers have started teaching communication skills in the regular English classrooms. Moreover, the learners have also realized that they have to acquire effective communication skills to sustain in their professions once they finish their studies. As speaking and writing skills are the part of communication skills, having proficiency in speaking is more needed in the modern world. Most of the business organizations and software companies are doing their businesses well by appointing the candidates those who are good at oral communication skills. In this regard, there is a need to start teaching speaking skills to the learners when they are at very young age. Since the young learners grasp the language very quickly, it will be easier for the teachers to develop speaking skills among them. Therefore, the teachers have to adopt several new strategies and techniques while they teach speaking skills to the young EFL/ESL learners.

In this regard, this paper highlights the importance of speaking skills in the English language learning context. This paper also discusses the importance of teaching speaking skills to the young EFL/ESL learners.

Keywords: *EFL/ESL, Oral Communication, Speaking Skills, Strategies, Young Learners.*

INTRODUCTION**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ENGLISH IN THE GLOBAL WORLD**

In the modern and globalized phenomenon, English has been used as the language for communication all over the world since it has been accepted as a global language. It is the language used to maintain international relationships and continue higher education. Most of the books in higher education such as medicine, engineering and technology, law, computers, education and so are in English. More than 85% of the international scientific and research journals are published in English and a lot of research is done in English. Even in the field of travel and tourism, English is the major language used for international communication. English is the language used for the internet purposes and most of the software programmes are also written in English. Many countries are using English as their official language and it is also the language used for business communications. Also, most of the newspapers are published in English and many TV and radio programmes are in English. Many Hollywood movies are made in English. The world trade and commerce has been continued in English and most of the websites are created in English. Since English is used as a global language for many purposes, it still occupies the first position among all the languages that exist in the present world. In view of the above reasons, English is taught in all educational institutions of the world from primary level to the university level. Therefore, there is a need to concentrate more on the teaching of English in all the educational institutions not only to the native speakers but also to the foreign or second language learners throughout the world.

The importance of speaking skills**Fig: The Basic Language Skills of English**

In acquiring the English language, the learners must be proficient in all the four language skills and it is the same case with the young EFL/ESL learners. The four language skills in English are: listening, speaking, reading and writing; reading. Then, these four skills are categorized into two groups such as receptive or passive skills and productive or active skills. Listening and reading come under receptive skills, whereas, speaking and writing come under productive skills. Listening and reading are called receptive or passive skills; as to perform these skills, there is no need for the learners to produce language, but they just receive and understand the language. While learning a new language, the learners often start practising with receptive understanding of new items and then only they proceed further to the other skills. On the other hand, speaking and writing are considered the productive skills where the learners need to produce these in order to communicate in the form of either spoken or written form. The ability of the learners' oral as well as written skills is tested through productive skills. To improve the productive skills of the learners, first of all, the teachers should improve their receptive skills because the ELLs who spend a lot of time on listening will surely improve their speaking skills and those who spend more time on reading will improve their writing skills immensely. Furthermore, reading more is essential for the ELLs since it improves not only writing skills but also all aspects of the learners' English. Since grammar and vocabulary are more important in producing sentences, learners learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures through listening and reading. Hence, learning listening and reading will be more helpful for the ELLs in producing grammatical sentences when they speak or write in English. Therefore, all the four skills are important to develop the learners' English.

In the recent years, due to drastic changes that take place around the world, there is a need to enhance the communication skills of English. The present generation of learners has understood the prerequisite of these communication skills and put more efforts in attaining better results in order to overcome the competition that exists in this present



world. It is a fact that both the productive skills are very important in communication, but speaking skills are used more than that of writing skills. In this fast and progressive world, the overall personality of a candidate is estimated by the performance of his or her speaking skills. Moreover, most of the international business communication and trade and commerce are also done in English and they prefer the candidates with effective communication skills. This is because these businesses depend on how the clients influence or attract their customers in selling their products. Speaking skills play a major role in getting good success not only in business field but also in almost all the fields. Therefore, the teachers of English should concentrate more on developing the speaking skills of the young EFL/ESL learners so that they will attain the desired goals and continue in their professions with utmost satisfaction.

In order to teach speaking skills to the young EFL/ESL learners, the teachers have to apply different strategies in their teaching. Since the young learners grasp very fast, it will be an added advantage for the teachers to teach them in a systematic way. Thus, the teachers should think of the methods and materials that they are going to use in the classrooms. While thinking about the materials, the teachers should design or adopt materials that are more suitable to the levels of the learners. Also, these materials should create interest among the learners and involve them more to understand the content taught in the classroom. Moreover, the teachers should use various methods, techniques and approaches while teaching speaking skills rather than sticking on to a particular one. Therefore, the teachers have to take the moods and interests of the learners into consideration and adopt certain techniques, methods and approaches that are more appropriate to the situation. Furthermore, the teachers should encourage the learners to participate in speaking activities that take place in the English classrooms. When these speaking activities are conducted in groups or pairs, the learners also get interested to participate in them. In this regard, the teachers should introduce these speaking activities in the form of language games that encourage the learners to participate actively. Therefore, the EFL/ESL teachers should try to design or adopt relevant teaching

materials and implement innovative and suitable teaching strategies in their classrooms. At this juncture, some benefits of teaching speaking skills to the young EFL/ESL learners are also discussed elaborately.

THE BENEFITS OF TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS TO THE YOUNG EFL/ESL LEARNERS

Since teaching speaking skills systematically develop a majority of EFL/ESL young learners' oral communications skills, the teachers should always continue their teaching in learner-centered approach by motivating the learners from time to time by involving them more in the classroom activities. Consequently, the learners participate with more enthusiasm and interest so that the young EFL/ESL learners will develop their speaking skills enormously. The benefits of teaching speaking skills benefit the young EFL/ESL learners in many ways.

Teaching speaking skills benefit the young EFL/ESL learners:

- ✚ To help the learners speak fluently with their peers, teachers, friends, parents and strangers.
- ✚ To help the learners to participate actively in the classroom discussions and debates.
- ✚ To boost up the learners' confidence levels.
- ✚ To develop the learners' critical thinking.
- ✚ To improve the learners' oral communication skills useful for all purposes.
- ✚ To prepare the learners to participate well in classroom interaction.
- ✚ To enhance the learners' vocabulary items and grammatical structures.
- ✚ To develop the learners' interview skills.
- ✚ To prepare the learners to give extempore speeches.
- ✚ To encourage the learners in giving presentations in seminars and workshops.
- ✚ To make the learners to be confident in delivering lectures.
- ✚ To prepare the learners to participate actively in speaking activities that take in the form of group work or pair work.
- ✚ To prepare the learners to share their ideas freely with the members of their groups.

- ✚ To develop the learners to motivate the customers while selling the products successfully.
- ✚ To make the learners to inspire the listeners with their speech.
- ✚ To prepare the learners to change their pitch and tone according to the context.
- ✚ To develop the learners to train their co-workers in developing their communication skills.
- ✚ To prepare the learners to solve any kind of problems in a smooth way.
- ✚ To develop the learners to use new vocabulary items and vivid grammatical structures in their speeches.
- ✚ To prepare the learners to continue their higher education in foreign universities.
- ✚ To develop the learners to speak fluently with foreigners.
- ✚ To help the learners maintain good international relationship.
- ✚ To help the learners get better employment in multi-national companies.

As there are many benefits of learning speaking skills, the teachers of English should teach the young EFL/ESL learners entirely in a novel way.

The English teachers have to know the standards of the young EFL/ESL learners and then teach speaking skills to them by selecting the material from simple to complex level. At this juncture, Rao, S.P. (2018) aptly says, "In order to develop the speaking skills of the learners, the English language teachers have to put their focus mainly on vocabulary and grammar and then on speech sounds, stress, intonation patterns and finally on patterns of sentences". Hence, the teachers of English have to adopt various novel approaches, methods and techniques to improve the young learners speaking skills enormously.

STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES TO IMPLEMENT TO DEVELOP SPEAKING SKILLS AMONG YOUNG EFL/ESL LEARNERS

While teaching the young EFL/ESL learners, the teachers of English adopt different strategies in their classrooms as it depends on their needs, interests and learning levels. Hence, the teachers should try to understand what type of materials they are going to use in the classroom and also think whether the students are benefitted from the materials that are used for this purpose. At this juncture Linse (2005) points out, "Speaking activities are an important part of any young learners' ESL and EFL classroom and are often considered the focal point of instruction". While teaching speaking skills to the young learners, the teachers should select certain activities that match the objectives of the lesson or task. Moreover, the teachers should also understand whether these materials create interest among the learners or not and whether these materials are suitable for them to involve in the classroom activities. Furthermore, the teachers should try to create convenient environment in the classroom to give more practice for the speaking activities. Also, the teachers should motivate the young learners positively to encourage the learners to participate in the speaking activities that take place in the classroom. The teachers have to adopt materials from various sources for this purpose such as printed, digital and online materials that are useful for the learners to develop their speaking skills. Moreover, the teachers are also advised to use audio and video materials, attractive pictures and flash cards to develop the young learners' speaking skills as well as their critical thinking skills. According to Agullo (2006), Nikolor and Mihaljevic Djigunovic (2006), "Teachers should use tasks in the classroom to develop motivation and positive attitudes for the learners that would be suitable for all sorts of learners". Let us discuss the various techniques involved in teaching speaking skills to the young EFL/ESL learners.

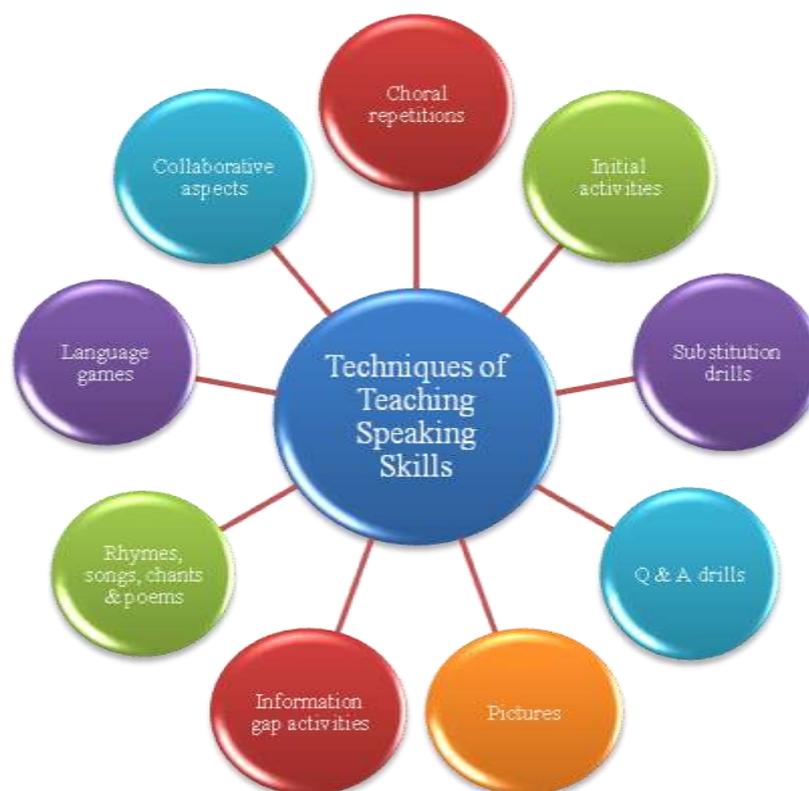


Fig: Techniques of Teaching Speaking Skills

CHORAL REPETITION

Since the young EFL/ESL learners grasp everything very fast, the teachers of English should try to implement various techniques to develop the speaking skills of the learners. In this connection, the teachers have to begin their teaching from word level since pronunciation of words play a vital role in speaking. Therefore, the teachers should start teaching for the young learners from word level and they have to make practice of these words through repetition drills. In Choral repetition drills, the teachers have to just ask the learners to repeat the words or phrases after them. This will benefit the young learners a lot as they receive the model pronunciation from their teachers instantaneously before they are going to respond. But this kind of practice should not become like parrot out sounds and words without realizing what the young learners are practising. This practice is more suitable to implement in EFL/ESL classrooms and repetition of words or phrases of a foreign language accurately will help the young learners get mastery of the language.

The learners also learn both pronunciation and stress of the given words. There is no doubt that language should be learned in a natural way, but drilling is a very useful technique for young learners to pronounce words correctly when it is used appropriately by the teachers.

SOME INITIAL SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

In order to use English effectively in communication, the EFL/ESL learners need to learn the essential vocabulary and grammatical structures of the English language. While teaching speaking skills to the EFL/ESL learners, first of all, the teachers have to present new vocabulary items with the help of blackboard drawings, matchstick drawings, pictures, videos, facial expressions, gestures, acting out, realia, puppets, mime and so on. The teachers sometimes can teach some vocabulary items just by using the technique of miming. For example, the teachers can mime painting a house and then immediately followed by presenting a picture of it helps the learners grasp the meaning of 'paint' and 'a house' very quickly. Then the teachers may ask the



learners to replace 'a house' with 'a mansion', 'an apartment', 'a picture', 'a doll', 'a car', 'a door', 'a cabinet', 'the ceiling', 'a statue', 'the monument', 'the Statue of Liberty', 'The Great Wall of China', etc. Furthermore, the teachers can also supply the verbs like 'repair', 'decorate', 'fix', 'admire', 'look at', 'observe' and so on and ask the learners to say sentences based on the given structure. Then the learners go on speaking as many sentences as possible. At this juncture, the teachers should ask the learners to think on their own to produce more sentences with the structure that has been taught. So the learners take this opportunity and speak more sentences related to the same structure. In this way, the EFL/ESL teaches can motivate their learners to produce sentences based on the same structure by changing the subject and verb. This type of activity enhances the learners' vocabulary and grammatical structure of the English language.

SUBSTITUTION DRILLS

Once the learners practice choral repetition of words, the teachers should then implement substitution drills. Substitution drills are used to practice different vocabulary items or grammatical structures where the students have to replace one word initially, then two words and so on during the drill. For example, the teacher prompts: "He likes music. He likes"; and the learners respond like: "He likes songs/games/movies...". So, the young learners produce more and more sentences and it improves their speaking skills enormously. Then the teachers should ask them to change the two words like: "He watches football. He"; and the learners' may be like: "He plays hockey". Later the teachers can also ask the learners to change the subject where the learners will come to know the concord of the sentence. Hence, this is a very useful technique especially for the young EFL/ESL learners to develop their speaking skills initially in the classrooms.

QUESTION AND ANSWER (Q & A) DRILLS

Then the teachers introduce Question and Answer drills where the question is a prompt and the response is the answer. At the initial stages, the teachers supply question to the class and the young learners give the correct response to the question. The teachers should implement this technique in pair

work or group work since it needs two speakers to participate in the given task. So the teaches have to initially encourage the young learners by giving some pairs of sentences such as 'What's the matter?', and the response should be 'I've got a (headache/stomachache/....)'. Then the teachers can also introduce some another structure such as 'Can I have a (pencil) please?', and the response for that question should be 'Yes, here you are'. The young learners can supply alternate words for those that are given in the parentheses during the drill. Even these drills are a form of very controlled practice and provide very little choice for the learners in producing sentences, they are very useful for the young learners to focus more on accuracy. Since accuracy demands in speaking skills, these types of activities will provide the learners an opportunity to speak grammatical sentences correctly and accurately. While conducting drills, initially, the teachers have to introduce them chorally where the whole class repeats the drills and later on they should focus on individually. Also, the teachers have to introduce these drills in the form of groups or pairs so that there will be more interaction among the young learners to improve their speaking skills.

PICTURES

It is quite common for everyone that they may forget what they have heard, but they can remember what they have seen. This is true in the case of using pictures in the EFL/ESL classrooms. Pictures are very much useful in engaging the young EFL/ESL learners who start learning a new language. Pictures are more useful prompts to help the young learners while they start practising speaking skills. Since pictures play a major role in making the learners to speak in the classrooms, the teachers can use pictures as their visual aids. By using pictures, the teachers can ask the learners to predict what the activity or the topic of the lesson will be about. Teachers can also use pictures as ice breaking activities and the young learners can produce numerous sentences on the picture or pictures they have seen. Even the learners can avoid repetition and add new information by using their other senses. When teachers use pictures to teach speaking skills, the learners actively participate in the discussions and try to utter some sentences related



to the pictures. Moreover, the learnerstry to contribute some sentences related to the pictures shown or displayed. Since using pictures in the classroom enhances the speaking skills of the young EFL/ESL learners, the teachers of English have to introduce this kind of activities to motivate and encourage the learners to speak more in the classrooms.

INFORMATION GAP ACTIVITIES

Information gap activities play a key role in making the young EFL/ESL learners to speak English in the classrooms. In information gap activities, the learners have to complete the given task or activity as the complete information is not given there. Here, the learners have to supply the missing information. While conducting such activities, the teachers should divide the classroom into pairs or groups or teams so that the young learners discuss among the partners of their pairs or groups or teams. Once the discussion is over, the young learners will be in a position to fill the gaps in the given tasks or activities. Then they will get success in filling the gaps by speaking the complete and meaningful sentences in the classroom. In fact, information gap activities provide the young leaners an opportunity to hone their real-world speaking skills and also give them a chance to become expert speakers. Introducing information gap activities in the EFL/ESL classrooms is one of the cleverest approaches of English teachers since they understand that the young learners can work together in groups or teams or pairs in order to complete the given task successfully. These information gap activities are the best activities to be introduced in the EFL/ESL classrooms because they are more flexible adaptable for any lesson or topic taught. Therefore, the teachers can use these activities to review and practice parts of speech, vocabulary and topic-based dialogues. The teachers of English can introduce some important information gap activities in their classrooms such as complete the text, fill in the dialogue between a customer and a salesperson, or a dialogue between an interviewer and an interviewee and so on. Thus, the teachers should create situations and adapt the innovative ideas that are more suitable for their classrooms, learners and cultures and involve the young learners

more in these activities to develop their speaking skills.

RHYMES, SONGS, CHANTS AND POEMS

In developing speaking skills among the young EFL/ESL learners, nursery rhymes are very useful at the initial stages. Also, songs, chants and poems help learners develop their speaking skills enormously. When the teachers introduce their teaching speaking skills in the form of rhymes, songs, chants and poems, the young learners sing or talk together in the class and they enjoy doing it. Simultaneously, they also work unconsciously at their pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. While introducing these activities, the teachers should select the material according to the levels of the learners and the activities should be introduced form simple to complex levels. The teachers can also create their own lyrics and then ask the young learners to create their own and also give them some home assignments so that the parents also involve in such activities and help their children in completing the given tasks. These activities develop not only the speaking skills of the young learners but also their critical thinking and creativity. Therefore, the teachers of English should introduce such activities in their EFL/ESL classrooms in order to develop the speaking skills of their young learners.

LANGUAGE GAMES

Language games are the best option for developing the speaking skills of the young EFL/ESL learners. Language games play a crucial part to kill the silence of the classrooms. So, the teachers of English should introduce various games to the young learners in order to involve them to improve their speaking skills in an enjoyable and fun-filled environment. The teachers should start with simple and fun games to get the young learners talking in the classrooms. Later, they can extend these games by adding some difficult ones according to the levels of the learners. Moreover, the teachers of English should introduce some creative games which the young learners can perform well in the given tasks. Since the activities performed in the form of games involve the young learners in real communication, achievement of the learners' communicative competence is mainly focused rather than their usage of the accuracy of language. So, it positively



motivates the young learners and creates learner-friendly atmosphere in the classroom. In this regard, Michael J. Wallace (1987) aptly says, Language games are used for increasing emphasis on the importance of motivation and the appropriate kind of positive effective atmosphere in the classroom". Harmer (2001) says, "It refers to the communicative approach in which teaching-learning activity avoids the concentration towards grammar and vocabulary but emphasizes on the significance of language function".

Since the main concentration of these games is on the function of the language rather than the form, most of the young learners will be highly motivated and try to produce as many sentences as possible. So, the learners' speaking skills will be developed in a congenial and effective environment and they become good speakers of the language. Moreover, games are one of the best and most appropriate teaching techniques of teaching the young learners. Therefore, the teachers should introduce various activities in the form of games such as guessing games, role-plays, memory games, board games, card games, information gap, exchanging, searching, collecting, arranging, match, scramble, scrabble, combining, simulation techniques, spelling bee, problems and puzzles and so on.

SOME OTHER TECHNIQUES AND ACTIVITIES

There are many more techniques that can be implemented in the classrooms to develop the speaking skills of the young EFL/ESL learners. The teachers of English can adopt various techniques in the classrooms in order to develop their learners' speaking skills. The teachers can introduce small talks, JAM sessions, group discussions, debates, story-telling, presentations and so on. Moreover, the teachers should understand that there is no such a thing as the best method to teach speaking skills to the young EFL/ESL learners. It all depends on the teachers how they implement the techniques of their teaching and how they determine the suitable method for their learners to create more interest and involve them in speaking activities in the learner-centered approach. Furthermore, the teachers should always involve the learners by adopting collaborative approach where the learners take part in the classroom activities very actively. Also, the

learners take this opportunity to share their ideas and opinions with their group or team members independently without any fear or hesitation. Since the teachers act as facilitators, the learners always get help from them and perform the given tasks efficaciously.

Improving speaking skills among the young EFL/ESL learners is quite a challenging task and the teachers should adopt a variety of techniques that are suitable for the learners. Moreover, the materials that the teachers use for this purpose should be appropriate to the levels of the learners. Furthermore, these materials should create more interest among the learners to perform their tasks well in the classroom. Therefore, the main role of the teachers is to motivate the young learners towards the teaching topics by implementing all the possible strategies, teaching techniques and methods so that the learning of speaking skills in English will be much easier for the learners.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shed light on the possible strategies and techniques of teaching speaking skills among the young EFL/ESL learners. First of all, the importance of speaking skills in the English language learning context has been highlighted. Later, the importance of teaching speaking skills to the young learners has also been discussed. Then the benefits of teaching speaking skills to the young EFL/ESL learners have been expounded elaborately. Furthermore, this paper has mainly brought out various strategies and techniques that are more useful to improve speaking skills among the young EFL/ESL learners. Finally, this paper has also given some useful suggestions to the teachers to improve their teaching skills and it has also given some guidance to the learners to improve their speaking skills in the EFL/ESL classroom environment.

Since teaching speaking skills is one of the major important topics of teaching English, the teachers of English should pay more interest towards the young EFL/ESL learners. Also, the teachers should think of various novel techniques, methods and approaches in their teaching. Simultaneously, the teachers should take the needs and interests of the learners while adopting materials for teaching speaking skills. Since most of the learners are



interested to participate in group or pair activities, the teachers should design their tasks related to those activities and the teaching and learning should go in a collaborative approach where the learners get an opportunity to share their ideas freely and frankly with their fellow-students. Also, the learners should try to follow their teachers in a systematic way so that they will grasp the subject taught very easily. Furthermore, the learners should make use of the opportunities whenever and wherever they occur. With proper motivation and encouragement from the teachers of English, there is no doubt that the young EFL/ESL learners will improve their speaking skills efficaciously.

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