



The Art Of Teaching Speaking: Activities Recommended To Prop Up Speaking In L2

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Introduction

'To speak' connotes ability to talk, to deliver a speech or lecture or to make use of one's voice to utter something. Speaking is an interactive mechanism to share information by use of verbal and nonverbal symbols. Speaking is said to be the most complicated fraction of Second Language (L2) teaching & learning. Instead of its significance, down the years, to teach speaking to the second language learners has become more challenging and English Language educators continue to teach speaking through drilling or mere memorization of conversational dialogues. Nevertheless, the world today needs that the target language of teaching speaking ought to eke out the communicative skills of the pupils, as, only through this way, the learners can express themselves and acquire the maximum skills to track the cultural and social rules relevant in all type of the communicative situations or circumstances. Teaching L2 learners as to how to speak in an effective way, discussed below are some of the graded activities, which can willy-nilly be employed in ESL classrooms along with some suggestions for the teachers who help approximate the oral skills of the students.

Teaching Speaking: The Concept

English is a stressed timed rhythm language. Therefore, the Method, Approach & Technique of Teaching Speaking to the ESL learners should basically focus to

- Verbalize English sound and its pattern
- Use words and sentence stress, intonation pattern and rhythm of L2
- Screen pertinent words and sentences at the par with appropriate social setting, audience, subject matter and content
- Assemble the opinion of the learners in a significant & rational order or sequence
- Make use of the target language with regard to expressing judgments and values
- Use L2 quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. (Nunan , 2003)

Techniques of 'Teaching Speaking'

This article aims at juxtaposing various techniques which can be employed by the ESL teachers teaching students at different levels.

Now-a-days so many ESL educators and modern linguists have started believing that students of L2 can learn to speak by 'interaction'. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) & collaborative learning techniques be proved best for this goal. CLT is based upon real-life situation which needs communication. Thereby employing this technique in second language classes, the learners can have ample of opportunities to communicate or interact with one another in the language targeted. In a nutshell, the ESL teachers should blend the classroom environment in such a way that learners will have real life interaction, selected activities and graded tasks that can encourage oral language skills. This is possible only if the learners collaborate in groups to help achieve a goal or to finish a task.

Activities Proposed for Teaching Speaking

Discussion

'Language is caught, it can never be taught'. Hence, after the deliberation of a lesson based on content, a discussion in the class may be carried out for various issues and reasons. Through this, learners might come to the conclusion, think and carve up their ideas on any issue or event or draw a conclusion in their group discussion. Before the discussion or churning begins, the teacher must instruct the students on the modality and purpose of discussion. In lieu of this approach, the points related to the discussion, can be relevant to the purpose or modality and there won't be left any room for the students to spend their time on gossiping or chatting with their peers on unwanted things. To conduct this type of activities, the teacher will be at his/her liberty to form groups preferably four to five members in each of the groups and give ambiguous and contentious sentences like 'pupils learn better when they do write vs students learn better when they tour.' Then, pupils in each group will work on their topic on stipulated time duration and will present their opinions to the entire class. It is necessary that the speaking has to be divided equally amongst all members of the group. At last the class will decide the winning group who placidly defined the idea in the best possible way. This type of activity can further the critical thinking skills corresponding to quick decision making, and the students can learn the ways to articulate and substantiate themselves in a gentle manner while refuting the ideas of others. For effective group discussion, forming large groups is not at all recommended because introvert students shall avoid any contribution in large groups. The member of any group can also be nominated by either the teacher or can be selected by the students themselves. Every time the group members should be rearranged for different group activities so that students will have opportunities to work with various people. By doing so, it can help the learners to be open to any ideas discussed. To sum up, whether the class or group discussion, whatsoever be the target or goal, the focus should always be on the encouragement to trigger asking questions, rewording the ideas, put across support, test out for clarifications and so on.

Information Gap

Any form of education rests on a basic element: the gap between what students already know and what they are trying to know. This essential precinct between the known and the unknown can be the broad spectrum or definition of an 'information gap'. Literally "the gap in information" means that somebody has information about something that another doesn't have in a communication situation.

It is an activity where students miss the information they need to finish a task and need to interact with one another to find it. For an example: Student A has the memoirs of a famous personality with all the place names missing, whilst student B has the same text with all the dates missing.

This is an activity where learners are expected to work in pairs. As stated earlier, one learner will have the information that his/her partner doesn't have and the partners will share their information. The Information Gap activities dish up many purposes such as problem solving or information gathering, etc. Furthermore,

each of the partners plays a key role because the said task cannot be accomplished if the partners do not share the information needed by others. Such activities are very vital to teach speaking in an ESL classroom as every student will have the equal opportunity to speak broadly in the target language.

Information gap activities are greatly helpful in teaching speaking more communicatively, and compelling students to verbalize to bridge the chasm or gap. It should be made sure that the information gap is well stated through clear instructions, and the tasks given need to be highly graded to enable the students to find out the other half of the information, and to make sure of active participation of the students at all levels.

Simulations

A simulation is a model that mocks the process of an existing or proposed system, giving data for decision-making by being able to detect different scenarios or process changes. This can be coined with virtual reality technologies for a more alluring experience.

Simulation-based learning works like an experiential learning program for students. It revolves around the student-centric and constructivist approach in education. Online education programs integrate variety of simulations such as games, role-playing, and other sorts of interactive activities.

What is simulation in teaching and learning?

When pupils make use of a model of behavior to get placid understanding of that behavior, they are doing a simulation. For an instance: When learners are allocated roles as buyers and sellers of some articles and asked to bang deals to exchange the articles, they are learning about market behavior by simulating a market. In short, simulation is more like role-play but what makes it different is its precision and elaboration. In a classroom set up, students are permitted to bring items to fabricate a pragmatic environment. For an instance, if a pupil is acting like a dancer, s/he has to bring the costumes of a dancer. The self confidence and motivation of the hesitant students can be best increased through simulation activities.

To encapsulate:

- Simulation learning paves the way to the learners to carry out critical work skills in a proscribed situation.
- The students will hone their communication and technical abilities participating in simulation learning activities.
- Simulation learning can take hold of online games and virtual reality.

Storytelling

Storytelling can be delineated as a one of the procedures of teaching of L2 learners. It is being used by the educators as a perfect method to motivate a child to listen with interest. It enhances a learner's attention and retention capacity, broadens vocabulary skills and of introduces the learner to the world of language. All most all ESL educators promote storytelling in ESL classrooms and give vent to it as a good medium to integrate human values and language skills. Storytelling helps ESL learners' spoken-ability and enables them to get exposure to various forms of syntax, diction and rhetoric patterns in target language along with human experience. It stimulates creativity and gives room for problem solving, decision making and evaluation. Storytelling in ESL classrooms is frequently used informally by teachers to share cultural hegemony and delicate information on culture.

When children listen a story told by somebody, they feel it rather easy to summarize briefly. Of course, learners are at their liberty to frame their own story to tell their classmates. Telling story, directly or indirectly, fosters creative thinking skills of ESL learners. It also encourages learners to explore ideas in a set format of beginning, development of plot and ending, including the setting of the story. Learners can also share riddles and jokes to the whole class.

Interviews

To conduct interview also involves a kind of communication skill to put questions and get answers in response. It is effectively used by L2 teachers to teach speaking because it kindles the brain to imagine. During the process of interview, the interviewer asks the questions and the interviewee listens and then responds to it. Students can be taught how to conduct interview on selected topics. The teacher specific should give a rubric to the learners so that they can get firsthand knowledge on the types of questions they are supposed to ask as well as the sequence to follow. Students must be given freedom to prepare their own interview questions. Conducting interviews with people will not only give the students exposure to enhance their speaking ability but also it will trigger their cognitive domain to conduct more in their lives. As a follow up of the activity, each of the students should present his/her study to the entire class. Even, the students can be allowed to interview one another.

Interview is a good approach to learning speaking. Through interview technique, learners can socialize with others because of their interactions. This technique is, therefore, believed to increase students' confidence in speaking. Through this, students can be trained to the use of English in everyday life, for example when applying for a job.

Narrating Picture

Sequential pictures are used in this activity to teach speaking to the learners. Students are directed to describe the storyline happening in the sequential order paying attention to the instruction given by the L2 teacher as rubric. Simultaneously, the vocabulary power of the students too can be broaden through picture narrating.

Picture Describing

Describing picture is one of the strategies used by ESL teachers to perk up learners' speaking skills. In this activity students are just given one picture and direct them to describe it one after another. To carry out this activity, students can be divided into groups and each group can be served with a different picture. Then let the students to discuss the picture given with their peers in the group; after that the spokesperson of each of the groups will describe the picture to the whole class. This activity can promote the ingenuity and thinking skills of the learners and the public speaking skills too.

Spot the Difference

Spot the Difference activity is a fun way to practise classroom-related vocabulary with ESL students. They have to look at two pictures and then find the things that are different. Through this activity students can expand their problem-solving and teamwork skills, too, by working together to spot the differences between the two pictures.

In this activity learners can work in pairs. Each pair can be given two different pictures. Then the students will be instructed to find out the similarities and differences in the picture and present it to whole class.

Suggestions for ESL Teachers Teaching Speaking

Given below are some useful suggestions or tips for ESL teachers teaching oral language:

- Give ample of opportunities to pupils to prop the target language along with good environment that ensures two-way work, reliable materials and tasks and shared knowledge.
- Approximate the involvement of each student in all the speaking activities. Ensure varied ways of leaner involvement.
- Decrease teacher's speaking time in class and increase students' speaking time. Step back and monitor the students.
- Display positive signs while giving feedback on a learner's response.
- Try to elicit questions like "What do you mean" How come you arrive at such conclusion? to proximate the pupils to speak more and more.

- Give written feedback like “It was really a good try. Your response/presentation was extraordinary. I value your efforts to have prepared such beautiful materials and maximum use of your utterance and voice.”
- It is not advisable to correct always the syntactical errors while students are speaking. A student should not be disturbed in the flow of his/her speech due to the correction work.
- Administer activities on speaking not only in class but also beyond class. The parents and other persons who can help the students are to be contacted for guidance.
- Keep a watch over the classroom activities to make sure whether students are on right track and ascertain too whether they are on any need of teacher’s help at the time of group or pair work.
- Vocabulary should be given in advance to the students to approximate speaking activities.
- Serious difficulties are faced by the students who are less expressive or introvert in the target language. More rooms should be given to such students to have good practice of the speaking skills.

Conclusion

Speaking as one of the four skills is a very important part of second language learning. It is just a process of giving or receiving message or information. To communicate well in L2 largely depends upon the learning behaviours of students at school and then to transform the same skill in real life situation. It is, therefore, the role of ESL teacher to pay colossal attention to teach speaking, cannot be neglected. The students should always be given a friendly environment for transitional and interactional communications rather than motivating them for mere memorization of dialogues and expressions. Keeping this in mind, the aforesaid list of activities is suggested to ESL teachers to help enhance the speaking skills of students. These activities can make students proactive i.e. to make their process of learning a fun as well as to make their learning more meaningful and helpful.

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