

HOW TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LEARNERS

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Abstract *Speaking is one of the most crucial skills which most English as a foreign language (EFL) students lack. They come across a lot of difficulties while enhancing this ability. This paper explores problems that prevent learners from improving oral communication and also some beneficial strategies.*

Key words: *Oral communication, speaking, EFL, enhance ability, beneficial strategies.*

Introduction

Speaking as a verbal communication is a common way to converse with others. Ur (1996) claimed that mastering speaking skills is the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language. In addition, Nunan (1991) states that the ability to function in another language is generally characterized in terms of being able to speak that language and the success of which is measured in terms of the ability to carry on a conversation in that language. This means that a person who becomes a speaker should be able to communicate so they can be understood by another person as a listener. Therefore, students are expected to master speaking skills well to use as a system of communication to obtain and share information with others.

Why most English learners have trouble speaking orally ?

Anxiety is believed as one of the psychological factors influencing speaking skills. Because learners do not want to look as if they were a stupid when they make a mistake speaking as a foreign language. Also shyness is the domain character in some students personality, which makes it difficult for them to speak in front of the audience. Furthermore, a lack of confidence influences how to communicate in a

foreign language. According to linguistic factors , vocabulary size is also a reason for inability to speak in a foreign language .When students lack vocabulary , it becomes difficult to convey ideas and emotions effectively to others.Grammar knowledge and pronunciation can be also judged as key factors which influence speaking ability.The students who do not know how the sentence is structured , where the subject or verb comes or which word is stressed will definitely keep themselves from communicating orally and this also leads the listeners misunderstood the conversation. In terms of environmental factors , teachers play an important role in improving students oral skills.If the teacher is always ready to listen and give feedback to the student or their encouragement and strategies are perfect ,speaking as a second language does not become a problematic situation for learners

A project based learning technique

To overcome the problems stated above, many kinds of strategies, methods and approaches could be applied in teaching speaking. For these reasons, the researcher decided to try the Project Based Learning technique as an alternative for teaching speaking because many research findings say that this technique is effective for teaching speaking. The PBL technique refers to a method allowing to do the designing, planning and carrying out tasks in order to produce, publish and present a product (Patton, 2012). Through the PBL technique, learners are engaged in purposeful communication to complete authentic activities (project-work), so that they have the opportunity to use the language in a relatively natural context and participate in meaningful activities which require authentic use of EFL language skills. Moreover, in the PBL technique, the students sit together, face one another, and talk freely about the problem. They sit in a circle discussing the problem which needs to be solved. This situation creates free communication in which the students use the language freely in the classroom without feeling shy. The success of the PBL technique application has been reported by Gaer (1998) who taught EFL speaking

skills to a population of Southeast Asian refugees who were in beginners-level ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes. Their speaking skills improved by using PBL rather than by using any other traditional method.

Ways to improve speaking skills

The lack of interaction or the use of the language will negatively affect language learners in their communications. Therefore, language learners should be encouraged to participate in the acute interaction that takes place in the classroom so that they can be fluent and well-versed in spoken language (Mackey, 2007; Zucker, 2005). It has been shown that for language learners to improve in their speaking skills, practising the language they are learning, in particular engaging in interactions that take place between learners in the classroom environment is important. In this type of interaction, teachers play as observers and facilitators and students are the major participants of the interaction (Tuan & Nhu, 2010)

Shadowing technique

Shadowing is an effective way to improve speaking and listening skills English. It is a language-learning technique where the learner listens to audio recording or watch a short video in which native English speakers communicate and repeats what they hear at the same time. This aims to imitate the speakers pronunciation, intonation, rhythm and speed as closely as possible and also builds fluency.

Many researchers maintain that speaking is one of the four key and pivotal skills of language that should be developed since the ability to communicate effectively benefits L2 learners by gaining self-confidence and improve performance in the rest of the language skills (MacIntyre, 2007; Trent, 2009). In addition, the significance of mastering speaking skills of the target language arises when the language learners realize the impact it would have on the success of their future careers. Learners realize that they need to practise the target language regularly in the classroom in order to overcome shyness and hesitation (Taous, 2013)

In addition, learner-learner interaction can contribute to language development by the provision of interactive target language activities in the classroom that makes language learners use the language they are learning (Taous, 2013). In ISSN 1799-2591 Theory and Practice in Language Studies, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 235-241, February 2016 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0602.03> © 2016 ACADEMY PUBLICATION this sense, learning a second or a foreign language can be facilitated when language learners are actively involved in interactive communications (Nunan, 1991). If language learners, however, do not practise the language they are studying, they will not be able to be fluent speakers, and therefore, this will affect their future career. Considering this issue, the current study seeks to investigate the role of learner-learner interaction in the development of speaking skills of language learners.

Most students of English as a foreign language (EFL) lack sufficient opportunities to practice their English-speaking skills. However, the recent development of social-networking sites (SNSs) and mobile learning, and especially mobile-assisted language learning, represents new opportunities for these learners to practice speaking English in a meaningful way.

Conclusion

Improving speaking skills requires a lot of effort, real life practice along with consistency and determination. By speaking regularly, listening to native speakers and utilizing new vocabulary in daily conversation, learners can build confidence to speak in front of the audience. In addition, positive environment aspects such as being not afraid of making mistakes, giving correct feedback to the speakers speech and staying motivated are also vital which leads speaking ability to be clearer and more accurate.

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