TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract

The challenge of English Language Teaching has become one of the greatest tasks for the teachers today. Be it a school, college, university or any other organization. It is the most difficult task for the teachers of English in India. Everyone is interested in learning the language for educational and career purposes. English language learners should master the language skills such as Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing for best employment. Teaching speaking is one the most important part of second language learning. The ability to communicate in English language clearly contributes the success of the learner in school and later in every phase of life. Therefore, it is essential that English language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking. This paper deals with the role of teacher in developing speaking skills and different methods to be used in improving speaking skills through various activities, which can contribute a great deal to students in developing basic interactive skills necessary for life, at the same time they can make their learning more meaningful. It also throws light on the barriers of Speaking to and understanding English as a second language and how the learner of English should master the skill of speaking.

Key words: Communication Skills, Speaking Skills, barriers, activities

Introduction

English is a universal language which unifies all who speaks it. Language is a means of communication, which is the process of exchanging ideas. People can also communicate with kinesics but it is totally different from human language. It is completely based on the person's ability to speak. Communication in any language includes four major skills; they are: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Among the four skills speaking and listening are called oracy and reading and writing are called literacy. As English is the maximum mode of communication in the world student need to develop his/her oratory as well as literary skills. On the whole, the aim of teaching communication skills with respect to speaking English as a second language is a great task for the language teachers.

Teachers' role in developing speaking skills

Many linguistics and ESL teachers accept that students learn to speak effective English by "interacting". Collaborative learning and communicative language teaching serve best for this aim. A teacher can develop the communicative leaning among the students based on the real-life situations which requires communication. If the teacher adopts the communicative language teaching based on real life situations, students will have the opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language. So ESL teachers should create a classroom environment where

students have real life communication, authentic activities and meaningful tasks which promotes the oral language. With this a teacher can evaluate the students' fluency and accuracy of the language.

Different activities to promote speaking skills:

Group Discussions

After a content-based lesson, a group discussion can be held for various reasons. The students may aim to arrive at a conclusion, share ideas about the content, or find solutions in their group discussion. Before the discussion, the teacher needs to set the purpose of the discussion. At the same time the teacher should monitor the students whether they are discussing the relevant topic or spending their time chatting with each other. Then every student work on their topic for a given time period and presents their opinion to the other group mates. In this process it is essential that the speaking should be equally divided among the group members. At the end the class decides the winning group who defended the idea in the best way. With this activity a student can fosters critical thinking and quick decision making, and they can learn how to express and justify themselves in different polite ways while disagreeing with others. In order to get best results in group discussions it is always better to form small groups preferably 4 or 5 in each group, because some students can avoid their contribution if the teacher forms a large group. Finally in group discussion whatever the aim is, the students should always be encouraged to express their ideas, ask questions, paraphrase ideas, check for the clarification and so on.

Role Plays

Role play is another way of getting students to speak. In this activity the teacher provides the information with respect to various social contexts and assigns different roles to the students. The students need to converse according to the role assigned to them. The conversation filled with questions, answers, views, expressions, statements and information always turns out to be an interesting one. Good ideas from the various participants are often helpful to make the conversation interesting.

Simulations

Simulations are very similar to role-plays, but the difference is that these are more elaborate than the role-plays. Here a student can use different things to create the realistic situation. For instance, if a student is acting as a doctor, he can bring a thermometer, stethoscope and disposal needle and so on. The role-plays and simulation activities creates more interest and fun among Students because these are entertaining and they will have a different real life situations and roles to perform. On the other hand Harmer(1984) suggests, they increase the self-confidence of the student.

Information Gap

Students are supposed to be work in group for this activity. Set of students will be considered for this task. One student will be provided with information, he/she has to share the information to the other students who are in his/her group. Also, each partner plays an important role because the task cannot be completed if the partners do not provide the information to other who are in need. In this process a student will get an opportunity to talk extensively in the target language. With this activity a student can develop the information collection process and problem solving skills effectively.

Storytelling

This is one of the effective ways of improving speaking skills in English. Students can briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Story telling fosters creative thinking. This activity helps the students to express their ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have. Students also can tell riddles or jokes. For instance, at the very beginning of each class session, the teacher may call a few students to tell short riddles or jokes as an ice breaking activity. In this way, not only will the teacher address students' speaking ability, but also get the attention of the class.

Narrations and Descriptions

If the teacher provides the details, using descriptive activity the student can visualize the characters and events in his mind's eye. That may be description of a person, place or a thing. Narration is a bit of different activity, it is the act of giving an account of a story or an incident. The narration can be done in two ways. One is first person and the other is third person, under first person narration the story can be narrated from the viewpoint of one of the characters, as well as the third person narration allows the speaker to comment on characters and events to the listeners. Both the activities improve the creative thinking and imagination power of a speaker.

Interviews

An interview is a psychological and sociological instrument. It is interaction between two or more persons for a specific talk. It is a good idea that the teacher provides a rubric to students so that they know what type of questions they can ask or what path to follow, but students should prepare their own interview questions. Conducting interviews with people in the society gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps them becoming socialized and confident.

Reporting

In order to improve the speaking skills, the teacher can use reporting activity also. In this a teacher can ask the students to read the newspaper or magazine before coming to class, as soon as the student comes to the class he/she can give the details of the news what they find interesting. Such activities can develop the oral skills grammatically, with that the learner can improve self confidence levels in speaking without any hesitation.

Barriers in communication

Before going to introduce all the activities to the students, the teacher needs to identify whether the students have any language barrier, because every step in the communication process is necessary for effective and good communication. Blocked steps become barriers. Barriers to communication are classified as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational. Intra-personal barriers occur because of individual attributes, such as wrong assumptions, varied perceptions, differing backgrounds, wrong inferences, blocked categories, and categorical thinking. Interpersonal barriers occur due to inappropriate transactions of verbal and non-verbal messages, emotional outburst, communication selectivity, cultural variations, poor listening skills, ad noise in the channel. Organizational barriers stem from organizational attributes such as too many transfer stations, fear of superiors, negative tendencies, use of inappropriate media, media and information overload.

Conclusion

Once the teacher diagnoses the problems faced by the learner in communication with respect to speaking English as a second language, the teacher should take necessary measures to practice the spoken language by using different activities specified above, definitely the learners will be on right track and they can definitely achieve success in improving their speaking skills.

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