Instructional Strategies to Develop the Speaking Skill

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	We are living in the age of globalization where everything seems to be digitalized. Although, every year a university produces high number of graduates, yet many students remain stagnant in spite of excelling academically. The primary reason being "Inability to communicate effectively". Interestingly, most of the examination patterns evaluates the writing skills which seems to be the by-product of rote-learning/memorization etc.. In this regard, little or no attention is given to the Speaking Skill in the present scenario of cut-throat competition. This is a serious situation and it needs to be countered with all the possible solutions. This paper attempts to focus on the probable solutions to enhance the speaking skill with emphasis on developing communicative competence.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is considered to be one of the core skills in language learning as it represents one's awareness about the known language. In spite of the fact that the first year graduates are acquainted with the English language since their School days, yet they're reluctant to speak in English accurately and fluently which may be due to numerous factors. The question arises then "why this inability"? Is it due to our approach to education, our expectations of institutions, Instructional procedures or are curriculums flawed? Or because of the sheer imbalance in testing the four skills of language.

Learners by nature are inquisitive yet their abilities are underestimated rather unnoticed. A good teacher provides a perfect platform for the students to make use of their inherent innate abilities with the help of diverse teaching strategies. The major goal of all English language teaching process should give the learners the ability to use English effectively, accurately in communication (Davies & Pears,1998).

It is undoubtedly a herculean task to speak in a language other than the mother tongue, it requires good IQ levels, great patience, immense effort and understanding on the part of the learner. A child acquires a mother-tongue with ease-first the child is habituated to listening and then imitates, then practices---a sub-conscious way of language acquisition but when it comes to ESL or EFL there seems a lot of ambiguity because they're trained in one language and their brains need to code it in the target language (for which little practice is carried out) –it being the conscious way of learning. The

learners therefore need to hone their skills to become 'capable employable individuals'. Possessing good communication skills is often seen by employers as an indicator of potential success (Harvey, 2000).

There are numerous definitions for the term Speaking. Thornburry (2005:8) states that "Speaking is a speech production that becomes a part of our daily activities. Most of the speaking activities are in the form of face-to-face dialogs, therefore speaking involves Interaction. According to Widdowson (1978:59), Speaking has two meanings. First, it refers to the manner in which language is manifested. Second, it refers to the language in which language is realized as communication. Brown (2001) states that 'Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving & processing of sounds as main Instruments'.

Creating communicative competence in the students is a crucial objective of the English language teacher. The teacher must inculcate the interest of learning in the minds of the vernacular medium students to improve their proficiency in the speaking skill. The ultimate goal of ELT is therefore to develop the learners' communicative competence. It is usually seen that in an ESL/EFL class-room the teacher is the only predominant speaker and the students hence remain passive. William and Burden (1994) portray that teachers' beliefs also play great roles in the teaching-learning process. Richards& Rodgers (2001) also hold the idea that teachers have to make their decisions about their class-room teaching according to their theoretical beliefs about the whole process of teaching learning. Teachers perceptions are related to

students learning through something that the teacher does in the class-room.

Although Speaking is one of the fundamental skill in learning a language, it is incredibly the most neglected one. Some of the reasons why learners fail to communicate are:

1. Lack of knowledge of vocabulary in the target language: Vocabulary is defined as "all words known". In middle-eastern countries student exposure to the vocabulary is very limited. However, in Asian countries learners are well-acquainted because English seems to be bombarding all the languages and hence an environment is created where the commonly used words are known to everybody but the drawback here is in spite of the knowledge of vocabulary, it hasn't been used. The practical part seems to be missing with emphasis only on theoretical learning.

2. Lack of proper opportunities to speak: In a typical educational institution, usually the teacher is the only one who talks and the learners play no role. The teachers use the traditional teaching method and the instinct to learn by doing is lost. There is no one to one correspondence between teaching and learning. In such type of classes, learning doesn't take place.

3. Fear of being mocked: Many students do not open up because they feel a wrong answer on their part may result in making them a laughing stock in front of their peers. Teachers fail to create a conducive atmosphere to learning where they are in fact expected and welcomed to commit errors which are undoubtedly the signs of learning.

4. Learners lack of motivation: Most of the times learners show absolutely no inclination to learn the language. They themselves are not sure as to why they're studying the language-the purpose is either misunderstood or rather missing. Mechanically, everyone is studying without the urge or desire just to pass out an exam to obtain a certificate or degree.

5. Lack of Grammar knowledge: Though the learners are evidently studying grammar since school, it is almost confined to memorizing the structures to reproduce in the examinations. Practically, there are little opportunities for them to speak hence they fail to construct meaningful sentences with spontaneity.

Thus, in the light of the above mentioned reasons, Teaching Speaking becomes extremely challenging and the teacher faces a daunting task to teach such students. Unless, the teacher infuses creativity in the

class-room, it is inconceivable to achieve the desired results. The teachers need to plan activities in the class-room and see to it that the activity is objective-based. Learning outcomes to be achieved in terms of testing their knowledge, cognition, Interpretational and communication skills by balancing all.

Some of the Instructional strategies to improvise the Speaking skill are:

- Role-Plays: Everyday, a human being switches to different roles depending on the profession they're into. In Schools, there is usually something called "Fancy-dress" competition where children play different roles – a policeman, a lawyer, a teacher, a doctor, principal and so on. When they perform these roles on stage they get into the shoes of the character. For instance, in a drama, if somebody is playing the role of a policeman, their understanding of the story from the policeman's perspective is deepened because they're actually living the character even if it is a moment or two by actually being a policeman and not merely one of the audiences. This kind of role-play in the class-room helps the students become more imaginative, creative, critical, analytic etc.

Harner (2007) believed that "Role-play can stimulate the students in real world and it gives learners the opportunity to practice communicating in different social context and different social roles". Budden (2006) reached a conclusion where he believes that Role-play is any speaking activity when you either put yourself into somebody else or put yourself into an imaginary situation. Bryne (1986) classified Role-plays in two forms:

Scripted Role-play: It involves interpreting either the text-book dialogue in the form of speech. The aim is to convey the meaning of the language items in a memorable way.

Unscripted Role-play: The situations of Un-Scripted role-play do not depend on text-books. The students themselves have to decide what language to use and how the conversation should develop.

It is thus feasible that role-plays are a blend of writing and speaking. Spoken is practiced only with help of the written. But in the class-room if the teacher is successful in introducing the thinking tongue they can be spontaneous otherwise the roles will be written first and then enacted in a structured way. The teacher should boost their imagination in such a way that they come out with splendid answers. Situational role-plays like for e g: You want to reach so and so place. This is the situation. How do you go about asking the address? now the learners play their part by using the language which they can use asking for directions by using "Prepositions of Direction"-

near, across from, next to, In front of, behind around the corner from-with the help of these they can frame some expressions to give directions –'Go straight, go past the high School continue 2 miles etc. Role-play therefore is to be conceived in terms of language practice, when the students are forced to speak, they commit mistakes which aids the learning process. Role-play thus advocates fluency over accuracy. It also encourages co-operation over competition.

- Task-based learning: Task based language teaching primarily refers to a student-centric approach to language instruction. It has its roots in the communicative approach wherein activities/tasks revolve around the students by making them use the target language in order to complete meaningful task. A pedagogical task is thus a classroom activity that involves learners in understanding, absorbing, producing or corresponding in the target language with their efforts being channelized in a proper direction to convey meaningful meaning.
Consider these ideas when creating the task:
The activity…
•   focuses on achieving communication.
•   focuses on meaningful use of language.
•   employs communication strategies.
•   does not use predictable language.
•   links language use to context.
•   does not dictate language structures

☐   Learners should be involved in the problem-solving task-which could be general like 'Pollution Hazards' or they can also be specific like Seeing a dentist, booking flight tickets, arranging for a party etc. This kind of an activity encourages students to be critical and to look at different sides of an issue. Hence, the teacher can create numerous real-life opportunities where in even the shy students are compelled to participate. The teacher can also give an incomplete phrase like 'One day on the way to our city, suddenly. Here every student will be required to use her own imagination and complete the sentence. This activity gives a boost to their learning besides enriching their vocabulary log.

☐   The teacher can also use Info graphics in making students comprehend the Information. The teacher can show a Venn diagram and ask the learners to reproduce in their own words what they've seen even if it takes five minutes to explain one little thing-so that they try and eventually come out of the fear of speaking in English. The teacher can also show them a picture and asks everybody's perception of the picture, so different answers she can elicit from her students. Classroom activities to be planned in such a way that it enhances the speaking

by giving the learner a broader spectrum in terms of understanding the language.

☐   Students should also be encouraged to share some unforgettable incidents of their lives. It could be a nightmare-Many a times it is difficult to describe a dream so with this kind of activity they really push up themselves to be better performers.

☐   Narrating stories told by the grand-mothers by going into the flash-back. An activity to be given wherein every student will narrate a story or an anecdote at the beginning of the session. They can share with a partner first and then speak to the entire class with an equal chance to everybody.

☐   Sometimes, the teacher may herself narrate a story or distribute hand-outs and give them five or ten minutes to understand the story from various perspectives and at the end all the participants to come out with their interpretation on how to deal with it. Speaking is the need of the hour which is built upon listening-the primary skill in language acquisition and reading the most important skill to master a language

Use of ICT: (Information and Communication Technology)
☐ Classroom lectures shouldn't be mechanic. It should involve active participation from the students too. In order to avoid monotony, various techniques can be adopted by the teacher. We're living in a modern era where we are constantly surrounded by e-gadgets. They've become indispensable in all streams of life. We often hear the term the world has become a global village –It means that it is easier to communicate now than it was in the past. Students are no exception to this phenomenal change. Youngsters in fact are more advanced in technology than the elders. So, an English teacher can grab this opportunity with both the hands and instill a love of learning and success by motivating them to use ICT which comes in handy and which also leaves an impact on the students learning in a much easier and amicable way. Students should be asked to make use in ICT in participating in various discussions inside the class-room, topics can be given in advance which requires them to browse the net. There are also various apps available nowadays where activities can be conducted with the help of software, thus providing incentive to slow or reluctant learners. Here, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator. More autonomy is infused with this strategy and certainly will result in improving the competence as students take charge of their own learning. If the teacher aids the supplementary instructional material then the

learners also find ease to collaborate on what exactly the teacher wants from them.

 Establishing a 'Speaking Corner': A provision to establish a Speaking Corner where it should be mandatory for all those who're studying English to come and speak on the topic of their choice like Cosmetics, Fashion etc. For instance, on cosmetics they can talk about a beauty routine and explain the ways in which different make-up items are used. It could be just five minutes in the beginning but later on the time can be increased.

 Separate Speaking Class: Usually in the universities it is seen that speaking is combined with listening instead of this, a separate hour to be dedicated for Speaking exclusively where the teacher every week   prepares a list of topics and asks all the students one by one to pick up at random and give an oral talk. Although it is bound to make many nervous, this could be overcome by having a different teacher every time who is not actually a formal teacher, where there's no restriction, she's not going to check the pronunciation, check the grammar, check vocabulary but will just give the learner the confidence to speak in the target language, just probing answers for the same questions. This Speaking activity will be fruitful as everybody is forced to speak rather than recite. Here, the teachers need to choose practical topics related to everyday life so that learners have a lot of ideas generated in their minds. It may not yield positive results instantly but soon learners will get accustomed to the "new speaking activity" and bring about a world of difference in their communicative competence.

CONCLUSION

As English has become the lingua-franca in today's world, it is inarguably an indispensable tool for success. Teachers should try their best by providing ample opportunities to the learners to speak in the class   and eventually guide them to become autonomous learners. She needs to plan her activities in a way where she proceeds from known to unknown. She has to create a learning environment in the class without switching to the mother- tongue. She needs to encourage them to make the use of language even outside the class-room. The teachers need to correct in an amicable way instead of criticizing. Having a degree is not enough for the teacher. It is incumbent upon the teacher to keep herself abreast of the latest developments in pedagogy &discover the right method applicable to diverse learners in an ELT classroom and to help learners find and hone their talents by becoming a counselor so that they can actively create their future. By the end of the day, if the students have learnt to speak a sentence or two correctly then you've achieved a milestone because they've already stepped the ladder.

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