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TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS IN COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM

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Abstract: Language is first and foremost a spoken and not a written entity. Human beings talked and listened ages before there was anything for them to read. This is why it is said that in the long history of the human race, the invention of writing was an event of yesterday. Speaking is a major skill in communication. This review article highlights how the skill of speaking is taught in communication classroom; what are the prominent beliefs about the speaking skill; what are the principles of learning and teaching speaking skills; the different activities and tasks associated to enhance the communication skill and finally, how to teach pronunciation to the learners of communication.

Keywords: Journalism and communication, classroom, speaking skill, pronunciation, Oral skill.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is primarily speech. A very large number of languages in the world are only spoken with no writing script. Majority of languages even with writing scripts use their spoken forms more than the written ones. It is an agreed fact that language is learnt by speaking it first after a lot of listening to the sounds, words, phrases and sentences from the surroundings (Anuradha, Raman & Hemamalini 2014). Listening and speaking are the fundamental skills, and if only the foundation is firm, the edifice built on it will be durable. In mother tongue, children get a very natural opportunity of listening and speaking in their surroundings. Thereafter, they are sent to the school to learn reading and writing skills. But, in the case of communication classroom, the available environment of the learner is mother tongue in his surroundings; therefore, the teaching learning strategy should differ greatly. Hence, there is a dire need of paradigm shift on teaching and learning speaking skill through focus deviation towards oral orientation, training the teachers, and developing suitable curriculum

(Suchdeva 2011).

2. BELIEFS ABOUT DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

According to Rao (2012), the experts believe about developing skills that:

- Of the four skills, listening and speaking are taught and learnt in quick succession.

The teacher introduces the language item in the class and the learners situationalize it;

- Speech is the best introduction to other language learning skills. Learning through speaking is a natural way of learning a foreign language;
- Speech is important because it provides the opportunity for the practical usage of a foreign language;



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- Speech brings fluency, correction then accuracy among EFL learners; and
- It enables the teacher to use the class time economically.

3. PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS

According to Anuradha et al (2014), following are the principles of teaching speaking skills:

- Encourage students to speak right from the first day. If not, as early as possible and not to wait till she teaches them a stock of words, phrases or sentences.
- Tolerate the students if some of them simply repeat what they say.
- If a student gives one word answer to any question, bear it for the time being.
- Let the learners speak actively with whatever English knowledge they have.
- Propose structures/phrases/words and let the learners use it in different situation and drill as much as possible.
- Encourage back-chaining or tail-forwarding technique to make long sentences by combining more than ten sentences.
- Organize role play and pair-work as much as possible and supervise the learners to correct the active ones and activate the passive ones.
- Be well prepared in advance in terms of lesson planning, activities and tasks.
- Let the learners commit errors and mistakes at the primary stage. Interruption and correction hinder fluency and discourage the learner.

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4. CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND TASKS FOR PRACTICING SPEAKING SKILLS

Repetition of rhymes, look and say, oral composition, pronunciation drills, read aloud, open ended stories, narration, description (festivals, celebrations, occasions) are important practices to improve speaking skills (Jyothsna&Rao 2009). Moreover, according to Kumari (2014), a variety of function based activities and tasks can be used to develop speaking skills which are given as under:

4.1. Dialogue Dialogue is a classroom technique used for practicing functions of language like greeting, agreeing, disagreeing, apologizing, suggesting, asking information etc.

Example

A: Hello Workenish!	B: HellowAsanti!
A: How are you doing?	B: Fine, thank you
A: Where are you going?	B: To the library, will you come with me?
A: I am sorry; I am going to submit my assignment.	B: Okay, no problem. Can you come my home this evening?

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A: Anything special?	B: Yes, today is my birth day.
A: Oh really, Happy birthday to you!	B: Thank you. Don't forget to come.
A: Okay, bye!	B: See you.

Task1 : *Form a pair in the class and make a dialogue with your friend with the help of clues given under:*

Place : Home

People : You and your friend

Your Friend : Greet

You : Return greeting

Your Friend : Apologies for being late

You : Accept apology, ask for reason

Your Friend : Reason given

You : Suggest to join a party

Your Friend : Agrees

You : Offer cookies

Your Friend : Thanking

You : Responds

4.2.Role play

Role play is a popular technique used in the classes to practice speaking skills in the class. There are three types of role plays – with clues, totally guided and free type.

Task1 (with clues): *A traveller wants to reserve a ticket from Robe to Addis Ababa and he is at the bus station counter.*

Place : Bus station

People : Traveller and the clerk

Role Play : As a traveller you ask for the fare, time of departure, time of arrival, the place of boarding etc.

Language:

Could you tell me.....

What time.....

Where does it.....

Will itetc.

Task 2 (Totally guided): *To practice how to report 'wh' questions. Students will be guided to think that he had just returned from an interview and his father is asking how the interview was. The pair will play the role of father and son:*

Father : Hi Dawit!

Son : Hi dad!

Father : How did the interview go?

Son : It was not bad



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Father : Well, what did they ask you?

Son : They started with what my name was.

Father : Didn't they see your application?

Son : Yes they did. They wanted to know why i had applied for a job. They wondered why I wanted to give up the present job. The director asked how long I had been working at my present job.

Father : What did you say?

Son : I tried to satisfy them.....

Task 3 (Free type): *The teacher would instruct to play the following roles:*

- Doctor and a patient in the hospital (in pair)
- Police inspector inquiring the neighbours of the burglary (4 people).

4.3.Opinion/Ideas

When we ask for opinions on controversial topics or situations, a lot of discussion can be generated. The learners may be divided into groups who discuss and come out with their opinions. Here, students have a lot of language to communicate their ideas.

Task: *Discuss in your groups and come out with your opinions on the following statement: "The present day youths are completely distracted from studies due to the internet."*

4.4.Problems (group work)

Problems are good sources for making the learners speak. While engaged in gripping the problem, they have to use the language to solve it.

Task: *Find out what it is:*

- It has three eyes. It cannot see. It has food and water inside. The water is very sweet. It is very difficult to break it. What is it?
- It has a lot of teeth. It does not bite. It is made of plastic or wood. You stand in front of the mirror and use it every day. What is it?

4.5.Surveys and Interviews

This is also an interesting function based technique in which an interviewer or surveyor try to find out a person's test, preferences, attitudes, information etc.

Task (information activity): *Students will be given census work. Now, develop a conversation with the people to get the information.*

People : Surveyor, family head

Place : A house

Function :wh-questions and how

4.6.Songs

The learners enjoy songs and it can be used for developing EFL speaking skill. For instance to practice simple question forms this may be beautifully used.



Tasks: Songs

Songs

1. Who is Meena? What is she?

Is she a white little mouse?

Her teeth are white, her blouse is white,

But she is not a white little mouse.

2. Who is Meena? What is she?

Is she a black little bird?

Her eyes are black, Her hair is black

But she is not a black little bird.

3. Who is Meena? What is she?

Is she a red little flower?

Her skirt is red, Her ribbons are red

But she is not a red little flower.

4. Who is Meena? What is she?

Meena is a girl, a pretty little girl

Meena is a pretty little girl.

Hence, a number of activities may be provided to the students to develop their speaking skills.

5. TEACHERS' AND LEARNERS' ROLE

5.1. Teachers' Role

According to Anuradha et al (2014), teachers play significant role in stimulating interaction and developing speaking skills. The roles are as follows:

- The teacher must be fluent and accurate in spoken elements of language so as to be a role model for the learners.

- The teacher asks questions to stimulate learners to practice the target language. Throwing questions and compelling them to answer something is one of the types of oral drills. Further, encouraging students to ask questions to the teacher and peers is also a good technique to propel discussion and involve learners to speak.

Examples

How was your day? (Answer)

Was yesterday Monday? (Answer)

When will she come here? (Answer)

Whose book is this? (Answer)

Have you ever.....? (Answer)

- The teacher brings chart containing pictures in the classroom. Teaching aids like charts containing pictures are good stimulators of interaction in the classroom. The teacher highlights that part of the chart which breeds discussion in the class.



Example

- The teacher brings a chart containing picture of a bakery. The model sentence is 'He wants to buy some bread.' If the teacher points to biscuits, students will say, 'He wants to buy some biscuits.' and so on.

- The teacher uses language laboratory (if available) for students speech practice through repetition whatever they listen with earphone.

Example

Learners sit at the booths that have one cassette player. The teacher plays the cassette and the learner listen the same. Afterwards, learners are asked to respond-repeating a word/phrase/sentence, answering a question and so on. The responses are recorded, the teacher listens it and notes down the weaknesses and strengths of the students and shows them directions.

- The teacher narrates a story or a joke in the classroom and evokes the learners to do the same. The narration is corrected by the students and the teacher if mistake is done. This way the interest to speak may be kindled among students.

- The teacher uses minimal pairs (pairs of words differing by one single sound) to teach some difficult sounds in the classroom with the help of familiar sounds of the students.

Example

The familiar sound / I /	Sound to be learnt / 3: /
<i>Bid</i>	<i>Bird</i>
<i>Kid</i>	<i>Curd</i>
<i>Tin</i>	<i>Turn</i>
<i>Fist</i>	<i>First</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Learnt</i>

- The teacher focuses more on oral drills. He introduces a language item and the learners situationalize it.

Example

Students listen and understand a language item (word, phrase or sentence) proposed by the teacher. An order is followed for oral practice – first in chorus, then in groups and then individually.

5.2.Learners' Role

Speaking is an art and to achieve it, students should:

- Be conversational and courteous in conventional greetings and other expressions.
- Ask questions and answer them too to maintain dialogue with other classmates and the teacher.
- Strive for building vocabulary, acquiring fluency and achieving accuracy.
- Make an attempt for better pronunciation, appropriate intonation and stress in the expressions of ideas and feelings.



6. TEACHING PRONUNCIATION

Pronunciation refers to speaking a language with appropriate stress, rhythm and intonation and it should be taught scientifically. Good pronunciation in a speech is an ornament of a person and a passport to the cultured society. The reasons of defective pronunciation of the learners of EFL are – pronunciation discarded curriculum, absence of well pronounced teachers, and dearth of audio video aids, least listening environment and few difficult sounds (Sachdeva 2011).

6.1.Principles of Teaching Pronunciation

According to Sachdeva (2011), the principles of teaching pronunciation are as under:

- Pronunciation is learnt through imitation; therefore, the teacher should be a role model in pronunciation. He should be well versed in stress, rhythm and intonation practically.
- The teacher should have the ability to compare the mother tongue of the learners with the sounds of English so that she can handle the peculiarities of ELT.
- The style of ELT should be natural.
- The speed of teacher's pronunciation should be moderate in ELT class.

6.2.Activities to Improve Pronunciation

Drills, minimal pairs, and reading aloud are some of the activities to improve the pronunciation.

6.2.1.Pronunciation Drills

There are two types of pronunciation drills – recognition drills and reproduction drills. The learners are firstly given a chance to recognise the sound and then they are asked to produce the sounds. Audio aids like record player can also be used for this purpose.

6.2.2.Minimal pairs

A	B
Pen	Pin
Pin	Tin
tree	Three

6.2.3.Explanation of Position of Different Organs of Speech

Position of different organs of speech should be explained to the learners. Difference between mother tongue sounds and EFL sounds should be explained clearly.

6.2.4.Reading Aloud

It provides listening to the learners. The teacher selects such a text which is likely to be mispronounced by the learners. First students rectify the mistakes and if not, it will be done by the teacher. Good models of listening by L1 experts through tape record may be



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forwarded to students. Sufficient listening to good reading will help the students acquire excellent pronunciation (Suchdeva 2011).

7. CONCLUSION

Good pronunciation and fluency in speaking skill is the hallmark of culture and it is the duty of the teacher to accomplish this goal approximately as an Englishman does. Incessant effort is needed in this direction from the teachers and learners. The teachers should be given training in pronunciation. The syllabus should focus over the skill of speaking and pronunciation. The examinations should also tilt towards spoken abilities of the student. Then there is no reason that the students may fail to acquire good speaking skill and pronunciation.

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