

DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS OF ESL AND EFL STUDENTS

Mukhtarova Mubina

Andijan State of Foreign Languages Institute

Student of English and Literature faculty Group 206

Annotation: This article brings to light the importance of communication skills, especially speaking skills of English, in all spheres of life. Moreover, the benefits or advantages of speaking skills in grabbing the opportunities in global market are discussed comprehensively. It also focuses on developing speaking skills among the learners in EFL/ESL classroom environment. The article emphasizes the role of a teacher in enhancing learners' speaking skills by applying various methods, techniques and approaches in English language classrooms since communication skills play a vital role in getting employment opportunities in any sector.

Key words: Career, classroom, interaction, communication skills, EFL/ESL, ELL, employment opportunities, learners, speaking skills, teachers.

In this modern, communicative and technological era, English plays a prominent role in the development of global education and business. In recent years, one of the major problems related to English language learning (ELL) is to develop learners to use the language effectively and proficiently. To overcome the hindrances in ELL, teachers have to make the classroom instruction strong and dynamic. Classroom interaction must be encouraged because it is a useful strategy to enhance learners' communicative competence since it plays a significant role in learning English as a foreign language or second language by giving ample opportunities to learners to be able to communicate with others without any hesitation or phobia. Undoubtedly, the learners can acquire the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary that is useful in improving speaking skills when they can interact with others in language learning activities in a dynamic way in English classrooms. Eventually, it leads them to improve their communication skills. It is a well-known fact that communication skills are highly useful getting jobs and developing the career of learners.

In the process of language learning, the main aim of the learner is to acquire the four language skills- listening, reading, speaking and writing. Among these, listening and reading are receptive skills whereas speaking and writing are productive skills. These skills must be focused in the classroom by teachers because the soul of the language learning lies in language skills. The main objective of all these four language skills is to develop the learners' learning abilities in producing oral discourses.

In the modern classroom, English teachers apply various methods and techniques in the classroom to teach speaking skills. Predominantly, they focus on communicative language teaching (CLT) and collaborative learning because CLT is based on real-life situations and it is more useful in developing communication skills among learners. Collaborative learning is also encouraged by teachers to involve the learners in various task-based activities. It is applicable to both EFL/ESL settings, while teaching speaking skills to the learners, teachers need to focus on speech sounds, sound patterns, stress and intonation patterns, the selection of appropriate words and sentences; according to the audience, social setting, subject matter and situations. The teachers help the learners organize their thoughts ideas logically meaningfully in order to use their language to express with values and judgments. Since speaking is considered one of the language productive skills, according to the intention of the speaker, Brown (2004) has classified them into five types: imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive and extensive. Imitative speaking is the learners' ability to parrot back or repeat the others' speech as a word, a phrase or a sentence. This type of repetition involves

grammar and lexis which are useful to interact in a conversation or to convey the meaning. Intensive speaking is the product of short discourses where the learners have to complete the tasks like reading aloud and completing sentences and dialogues. Responsive speaking involves two persons or two groups in short conversations, small talk and simple requests to make them authentic. Interactive speaking involves transactional language is meant for exchanging information whereas interpersonal language for social relationships. Extensive speaking is more deliberative and formal for extensive tasks and it involves speeches, oral presentations and story- telling.

The role of teachers in training the learners in speaking skills is crucial in English classrooms. According to Vilar (2003), “Teachers have two primary functions in education: the managerial and the instructional functions. The latter refers to the conditions that teachers create for learning to take place and the other is the knowledge that the teachers impart in the classrooms. Teachers should carry out these functions simultaneously for efficient language instruction because they cannot be separated”.

In order to develop the speaking skills of the learners, English language teachers have to put their focus mainly on vocabulary and grammar and then on speech, sound, stress intonation patterns and finally on patterns of sentences. To enable the learners to enrich good vocabulary and to have a good command over grammar, the teachers should concentrate more on speech sounds, stress and intonation patterns which are the fundamental elements required for speaking skills. After proper training in these areas teachers have to provide the learners with a number of opportunities to make use of them in their speaking practice sessions. Moreover the teachers are supposed to conduct some learner-focused activities like activity-based or task-based activities that involve the learners to develop their speaking skills in their real classroom environment. Here the teachers can implement innumerable activities such as JAM (Just a minute) sessions, role plays, group discussions, preparing for both interviews and presentations and preparing the learners to present papers in conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. the role of teachers is very crucial here to prepare the learners for their future career and prepare them to be competent in their speaking skills as the classroom is the main platform for learners to perform their tasks.

The need of teaching speaking skills in English classroom has been identified and stressed. More importance has to be given to speaking skills in order to make the learners to communicate effectively at all places. Moreover, the focus has been on the assessment of speaking skills in a systematic way.

As communication skills are playing a key role in the modern society, the responsibility is more on teachers to train the learners in those skills. Speaking or oral communication is important in personal and professional life. Therefore, English teachers have to give importance to speaking skills in classrooms and encourage the learners to communicate in English not only in the classrooms but also in social life as far as ELT is concerned.

Developing speaking skills constitutes the key stage for language learners. Considering the remarkable differences between ESL and EFL students, the likelihood for language learners in many EFL settings to face the barbed wires placed on the road to speaking proficiency is far greater compared with ESL learners. The primary reason behind this disadvantage is the lack of opportunities for authentic practice. Added the restriction of speaking lessons to the classroom walls and hours, this problem turns into an inextricable issue for language learners. Focusing on one of the thorniest dimensions in EFL context, this study concentrates on the development of speaking skills through Project-based Learning. This experimental study aims to investigate the efficacy of Project-based Learning in terms of students' attitudes towards and achievements in speaking lessons. In order to attain findings about this specific aim, the study employs both quantitative and qualitative data

gathered from the participants through data collection tools. This study was conducted in the Prep School at Ondokuz Mayıs University with the participation of two groups, one experimental and one control group, attending the preparatory education in 2013-14 academic year. These groups were formed randomly at the very beginning of the semester. They were included in the study throughout one semester (fall) under the framework of speaking lessons offered by the researcher. At the outset of the semester, both groups were administered a pre-treatment attitude inventory to explore their present attitudes towards speaking lessons. Then they were given a pre-test to find out their proficiency levels in terms of speaking skills. With the start given to the application phase of the study, the two groups were exposed to two different approaches to develop speaking skills. Throughout the semester, the experimental group received project-based speaking lessons while the control group received coursebook-based ones. The model adopted in the experimental group reflected an omnipresent learning perspective through projects; however, the lessons in the control group possessed a traditional understanding characterized by the existence and restriction of a coursebook.

At the end of the treatment, both groups were administered the attitude inventory again to explore their post-treatment attitudes towards speaking lessons. In addition, they attended a speaking post-test that was expected to yield findings as to the progress achieved by the students in terms of speaking proficiency. As a supporting dimension for these quantitative data sources, post-treatment interviews were conducted with each student in both groups. The quantitative data gathered through pre/post-treatment attitude inventories and pre/post-tests were statistically analyzed via SPSS using t-tests. As for the interviews, the students' answers to the questions were first transcribed and then categorized and coded for frequency analysis. The results of the study were shaped in accordance with the findings gathered through the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The results of the study demonstrate that Project-based Learning is an effective means to help learners develop speaking skills. The statistical analyses concerning both attitude and speaking proficiency dimensions reveal a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and control group. Furthermore, the analysis of the answers given during the post-treatment interviews yields supporting results in favor of Project-based Learning. In the light of these findings, it can be concluded that Project-based Learning is a potentially effective way of developing speaking skills in EFL context.

In the 21st century workplace, there has been an increasing demand for graduates to possess communicative competence particularly in speaking. Anchored on the 21st Century Learning Framework (Partnership for 21st Century Skills or P21, 2006) and the TPACK Framework (Koehler & Mishra, 2009), this study reports findings on the pedagogical viability of utilizing Pecha Kucha 20x20 Presentations in developing students' competence and confidence while presenting in the language classroom. Research participants include 43 English as Second Language (ESL) learners taking Speech Communication classes in a private university in Manila, the Philippines during the second semester of the academic year 2016-2017. Research data from students' reflections, interviews, survey, and focus group discussion (FGD) suggest that despite some format and technological limitations, delivering Pecha Kucha presentations may help students develop their English speaking and oral presentation skills, build their confidence in speaking before an audience, and practice their English macro skills such as listening and reading. In the light of these findings, pedagogical implications are provided for ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers, communication educators, and researchers.

One of the significant concerns in developing communicative competence among ESL/EFL learners is their reluctance to speak in the classroom – a pedagogical challenge that English language teachers face in the context of 21st Century Learning, which espouses the development of 4Cs among students to prepare them for success in life and in their profession: critical thinking skills, creativity,

collaboration, and communication (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006). Of these skills, many people put premium to communication, because in most cases, a person's ability and value to the organization is judged not so much on what he can do, but on how well he can explain what he does (Souter, 2007). However, no matter how much teachers work hard to develop their students' English public speaking skills, speech anxiety remains to be a hurdle to many students. Anxiety is defined as an unpleasant feeling similar to fear (Lader, 1975), or "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry..." (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 125). In the context of public speaking, anxiety is defined as "those situations when an individual reports that he or she is afraid to deliver a speech" (Ayers & Hopf, 1993, p.4) as cited in (Ciarrocca, 2015). McCroskey (1984) refers to this as Communication Apprehension (CA), an area of inquiry extensively researched since mid-1930s but remains to be relevant up to present. In the current curriculum where active oral language practices only take place for about 5% of daily class time in the typical English classroom (Milner, Milner, & Mitchell, 2012), there is a need to provide more opportunities to the students to engage in meaningful and effective oral communication activities and to help them develop competence and confidence in public speaking.

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