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Enhancing Speaking Skills in EFL Learners: A Case Study

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Most of the students are perfect in learning structural language but they are very poor in communicative language. It has been proved many a times in the research. This paper focuses on the problems faced in English speaking by non native English speakers. The researcher followed a communicative approach in increasing the speaking skills of her students with different methods. Actually, the students are structurally competent but they are not so competent enough in speaking. Thus the researcher here throws light on the processes involved in the conversational interaction of the students involving them in various activities in the class. As a result the researcher found a positive result in enhancing communicative skills in English.

1. Survey of Literature:

English language is treated as Global Lingua Franca. It plays a dominant role in the present context in various situations everywhere. Its role is critical many fields like medicine, engineering, education, business, technology, banking, computing, and tourism and so on. The revolution in communication technology, software development, smart programme and all others are available in English only. The communication facility through internet, website and other ways facilitates all sectors with innovative and different directions. So far most of the research works are organized and consolidated in English. In all most of the countries in the world English, thus, became second language.

2. Methods adopted for the strengthening Speaking Skills:

While acquiring Foreign Language Learning, there are so many problems involved which most of the teachers are aware for a long time. The problem found by the researcher is that the students are structurally competent enough but not so perfect in speaking. In order to overcome the problems, the teachers adopt their convenient methods to enhance the speaking skills of the students.

“Newmark’s insight that ‘being appropriate’ is something different

from 'being structurally correct', finds its place within a mode of thinking, Predominant in linguistics today....." (Keith Johnson: 1981)

(Communicative approaches and communicative processes, Psycholinguistics and Language Teaching Methodology)

Now days, language learning is more focused on task based than acquiring the structural or subject knowledge. The teaching of English language in relation to this situation is also more on task based only. This method of thinking which have given new direction to foreign language teaching led to a new emphasis on syllabus design and teaching methods. These methodological implications give rise to new directions in foreign language acquisition. At this juncture, Keith Johnson's idea of 'knowing a language is not the ability of language' is quite appropriate. Those who are communicatively incompetent are unaware of the use of language appropriately. Newmark expresses:

The structures that linguist teaches can not know that the way to get his
His cigarette lit by a stranger when he has no matches" (1981)

There are two things to be kept in mind while evaluating the methodologies adopted for improving communicative language teaching for the development of the communicative competence in the learners. They are linguistic insights as to the nature of the language and psychological in sights as to processes involved in its use.

3. Experiment:

The researcher therefore adopts such methods and techniques which provide an opportunity to the learners to enhance their communicative competence. But the question remains, how to provide learners with 'the communicative mind' to make them learn the actual meaning of the expression, as well as the correctness of expression. An interaction actually occurs, when there is a 'communication' on a certain subject. In order to find out the problems in speaking skills the researcher conducted the activities like;

- i. the Scramble Sentences
- ii. the Language Game
- iii. the Picture Description
- iv. the role play

The researcher conducts such activities in the class which aims to develop communicative competence in her students. The instructions, related to these activities, are passed to the students in English. The activities are based on the use of authentic materials. The researcher provides authentic materials to the learners. A newspaper can be one of the best forms of this kind of material. It contains write-ups which are based on reality. In this way the students can apply to the outside world whatever they have learnt in the classroom. This also provides an opportunity to 'expose students to natural language in a variety of situations. As, for example, the students

are asked by the researcher to read in the sports section, an article on the performance of Bangladesh Cricket Team in the match. The students are asked by the researcher to reproduce in their own words, what they read in the first paragraph.



The researcher then asks them to make the evaluation on the team's performance in the match. The whole activity encourages students to put their own thoughts into words. They share ideas amongst each other. They constantly receive a feedback from their listeners. The learners act, both as speakers and listeners simultaneously. The teacher acts as a co-communicator during the activity. A real communication takes place in this activity. The communicative intent is provided by the urge to know. Sharing of ideas provides an opportunity to make a real use of language as each person is unaware of what the other will say.

- i. **The Jumbled Sentences:** The researcher gives the students a short story with jumbled sentences. The students are asked to make them in order. Putting sentences in the right sequence gives them a real understanding of the language. Every individual comes to know about his own shortcomings. It gives the ability to identify and check one's own mistakes and paves a way to know how to correct them in communication.



- ii. **The language games.** The researcher uses the technique of language games. The language games that are truly helpful to the learners in improving their communicative competency. The researcher divides the class into two groups: A & B. The students of group A teach the students of group B topics, already assigned to them. The topics may be tasks like preparing reports on weather, living conditions in rural areas, current problems faced by citizens in urban areas etc. The students of group B later on give feedback. This game allows the students to use vocabulary which is of wide range. They learn how to mould their ideas into words.



- iii. **The Picture Description:** In this technique one of students holds the picture-strip and shows the first picture to the rest of the students and asked them to predict what the second picture will be like. The students are then shown the second picture, they compare it with their own prediction and on the basis of the second picture they develop the story further. They are then asked about how the third picture will be like,

so on. This game allows the students to have a choice of words as well as of ideas, as they make prediction from their own minds. As the strip unfolds, they proceed towards the end of story.

SPEAKING TEST TIPS


EXAMPLE:

In this worksheet there are two pictures. They both show different ways of going shopping. The picture at the top of the worksheet shows a small clothes shop.

ON THE OTHER HAND, the picture at the bottom shows a modern shopping centre.

SHOPPING

DESCRIBE, COMPARE AND CONTRAST THESE PICTURES



iv. Role play: In this technique the role of the researcher is that of a co-communicator. The researcher divides the students into different groups. In each group two students are selected for two different roles. Rest of the students watch their performance and listen to their dialogues. Later on the spectator students give them their feedback. This helps improve not only their inter personal relations, but also they learn to work together. When the learners are given feedback by their co-learners, they do not lose confidence rather they feel motivated to do better and learn more .The students may be assigned roles from different professions ,viz., doctor-patient , teacher-student, parent – teacher (in a school meeting), boss and his subordinate in a meeting etc.

4. Findings:

1. The researcher provides a congenial environment to the students. The teacher has to sometimes, completely withdraw from the learning intimation. The psychological state of the learners be plays a very important role. In a class of foreign language learning it is very natural for the learners to remain constantly aware of their own state of ignorance. They remain conscious and do not give a keen participation as each and every act is scrutinized in detail. In such circumstances the learners find little opportunity to assert themselves. “They are unlikely to feel drawn out to communicate with those around them or to develop positive attitudes towards their learning environment. On the contrary many learners will prefer to keep a ‘low profile’ in

the hope that they will not be called upon to participate openly.” (Little Wood D.A Communicative Language teaching)

2. The environment hence plays a very important role in the learning of a foreign language. It is the teacher who has to provide an opportunity the learners to express themselves as well as to motivate them for their open participation. Learners will not be constantly corrected.

Conclusion:

This experiment has given a good result. Actually the researcher expected only 50% of change in the speaking skills of the select students. But the constant practice and application of the method has given more than the expected outcome. The researcher provides the learners with as many opportunities as possible to learn different linguistic forms, their meanings and their functions in different social contexts. He also tries to bring them as close to reality as possible. The different activities suggested by the researcher serve the purpose of providing the learners, opportunities where he can directly apply, what he has learnt in the class. The enhancement of speaking skills gives confidence to the learners. They also come to have a better understanding of the functional aspect of the target language.

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