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## **ENHANCING EFFECTIVE ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG THE EFL/ESL LEARNERS**

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### **Abstract**

Due to technological changes that have been taking place in the twenty-first century, the whole world has turned to be a global village. As a result, people have to communicate well with the others who live all around the globe in order to achieve their aims and goals. Hence, there is a need for the people to learn effective communication skills. Since classroom is the right place to develop communication skills, the teachers play a vital role in enhancing the communication skills of the learners. Even to develop the communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners, the teachers of English embrace innovative techniques such as project-based learning, Table Talk, role-plays, group discussions, PechaKucha, presentations, group work, pair work and so on. To enhance their communication skills, the ESL/EFL learners should utilize the opportunities and participate in the classrooms activities with more interest and enthusiasm to develop their communication skills. Furthermore, the teachers should always encourage the learners by giving the topics of their interest to involve more in collaborative activities and also engage the learners in tasks by implementing game-based learning technique. Also, the teachers

should motivate and encourage the learners with higher motivation and encouragement to perform the given tasks. As a result, the ESL/EFL learners will surely enhance their communication skills enormously.

This paper brings to light the ways of enhancing effective oral communication skills among the ESL/EFL learners. First, this paper discusses the importance of English in the modern world and then the importance of language skills in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, this paper confers the importance of communication skills in general and then in ESL/EFL environment. Later, this paper mainly presents various strategies of enhancing effective oral communication skills among the ESL/EFL learners that are more useful for them to showcase these skills throughout their future career. Finally, this paper also proposes some important suggestions to both the teachers as well as the learners of English.

**Key words:** communication skills, ESL/EFL learners, innovative techniques, strategies, teachers.

### **Introduction:**

**The Role of English in the Modern World**

Due to globalization, the whole world has become a global village and there are many revolutionary changes in the field of communication. As a result, the people of one part can communicate with the people of the other part. In this regard, there is a need for a common language to for people communicate with others all over the world. Since English is spoken all around the globe, it is widely used in almost all the fields. English is extensively used in the fields of science and technology, engineering, travel and tourism, software, information technology, business, employment, banking, education, entertainment, the internet, travel and tourism and so on. Learning the English language is more essential for getting better employment, doing international business, writing scientific research papers, using the internet, etc. English is useful not only for students who wish to go abroad for their higher education but also for those who want to continue their further studies. Furthermore, most of the higher education books are available in English. Therefore, it is crystal clear that English plays a dominant role in the field of education.

### **The Importance of Language Skills in the Twenty-first Century**

Due to the latest technological advances in the modern world, human beings need to learn the language skills in order to maintain their relationship with their friends, relatives and others who live around or at distant places. Language skills help them to communicate well with them. So, people learn all the language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing. These language skills are interlinked and people have to learn them

systematically. As more prominence is given to spoken and written communication in the modern world, there is a need for people to learn the language skills, especially, speaking and writing skills. In fact, listening helps a lot to improve their speaking skills and reading promotes their writing skills. Therefore, the learners should learn all the language skills in order to convey their messages either in spoken or in written form.

### **The importance of Communication Skills in ESL/EFL Environment**

The twenty-first century has unfastened newfangled avenues for people to have regular contact with the other people who live all around the world. In order to communicate well, people have to develop their communication skills. Without learning communication skills, people cannot fulfill their aims and ambitions of their lives and even they cannot achieve anything. At this juncture, English plays a vital role in developing the relationships among the people all over the world as it is widely spoken all over the world. Therefore, there is a need for people to learn English since it is used as a global language.

People of the modern world should learn all the skills of the English language in order to develop their relationships in several fields. At the same time, the learners should also know the importance of the communication skills and learn all the language skills of English and it is more important for the learners who learn the language in the ESL/EFL environment. As having a good command over the communication skills in English will be useful for them in getting good success in

each and every field such as employment, career development, higher education, personality development, developing international relationship and so on, the learners of ESL/EFL have to make more efforts and attain success in their desired fields. Since communication skills are more important for the learners to shape their career, the teachers of English should try to incorporate various strategies, techniques and approaches that improve these skills among them effectively.

### Various Activities for the Enhancement of ESL/EFL learners' Oral Communication Skills

In order to enhance the oral communication skills among the ESL/EFL learners, the teachers of English should incorporate several innovative techniques and approaches in the classrooms. The teachers should always introduce various activities by adopting the materials that create more interest among the learners. As a result, the learners will surely be attracted by the activities since they fulfill their needs and interests. Moreover, the learners' active participation promotes their learning skills, especially their oral communication skills, and leads them to be dynamic learners in the classroom. Hence, the ESL/EFL teachers should carefully select the materials and use them by motivating the learners towards the topic so that the learners develop their oral communication skills immensely. Furthermore, the teachers are advised to implement several innovative strategies, techniques and approaches that involve the learners more on the activities to enhance the oral communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners. So, some useful strategies, techniques and approaches have

been discussed that are more useful for teachers to enhance their learners' oral communication skills in the classrooms.



**Fig. Strategies to Enhance Oral Communication Skills of the ESL/EFL Learners**

**Introductory Activities:** In order to improve the oral communication skills of the ELLs, the English teachers have to think of various techniques to implement in their English classrooms. One among them is 'guessing games'. While implementing such activities, the teachers have to hold something in their wrist where the learners cannot see it. Then the teachers have to ask the ELLs to guess the name of the object. Then they go on saying something like, "Is it a .....?" which encourages learners in producing some good sentences in the classroom so that it helps them learn new grammatical structure as well as pronunciation. Later on, the teachers can ask the learners to guess the place he had visited last week and also ask them to say something related to it. Moreover, the teachers can ask the learners to talk on topics such as "My family", "My best Friend". "My favourite Book/Movie/Sportstar/Game", "My Best Teacher", and so on. Later on, the teachers can introduce the topics such as

“How did they spend their time yesterday/last week/ last Sunday”, etc. in order to improve their oral communication skills in the English classrooms. When the teachers introduce activities in their classrooms, the ELLs will participate in those actively and develop their oral communication skills immensely.

**Icebreaking activities:**Icebreaking activities are more useful for the teachers of English to begin their classes or toward the beginning of a term or semester where the students don't know each other well. At this juncture, introduction and breaking-the-ice activities can be of a great help in transforming the dynamics of the classrooms dramatically. Since ice breakers are the most effective fun sessions that are useful to team-building event, start a training session or learn a new skill, they really motivate the ESL/EFL learners properly and involve their attention on the topic taught. When these activities are well-designed and well-facilitated by the teachers in the classrooms, they can really help get things off to a great start. Once the learners get to know each other, their facilitators and their learning objectives, learners automatically engage in the activities that take place later and try to contribute more effectively towards a successful outcome. These classroom icebreakers or icebreaking activities are the games or activities approved by the teachers which generally address the needs of the classroom. The ESL/EFL learners can feel a lot more comfortable and enthused about learning English by introducing many icebreaking activities just by spending simply for 10 to 15 minutes in the classroom. But, these activities should be low in social risk,

suitable to the proficiency of the learners and perhaps a little bit silly and create fun among the learners. Moreover, these activities should encourage the learners' motivation, active participation and also allow the learners to relax both physically and psychologically.

The teachers should introduce some useful icebreaking activities in the classrooms to develop the oral communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners in their classrooms such as Energy Game, Late Arrivals Game, Name Aerobics, Song Sync, Tall Tales, Blobs and lines, This and that, Signatures, Classmate bingo, Who is in your circle?, Two truths and a lie, Toilet paper role, Sit down if ..., Three things in common, Time bomb name game, Candy pass, Beach ball toss, Speed dating and so on. Undeniably, this will be an added advantage for the teachers to try them as speaking activities or warm ups during the year and the learners will certainly improve their oral communication skills in a fun-filled environment.

**Brainstorming Sessions:**In promoting the oral communication skills, brainstorming sessions are one of the best teaching techniques for the teachers to enhance the ELLs' speaking skills. Since the ELLs are free to express their ideas about the given topic, they think independently and try to produce as many points as possible. At this juncture, the teachers should also concentrate on the below average learners and encourage them to participate in the discussions as the advanced learners participate very actively and produce more sentences. As this is the right opportunity for the below average learners to add some points during

these brainstorming sessions, the role of teachers is very crucial to involve them dynamically in these sessions.

**The Picture-Strip Story-Telling Activity:** This picture-strip story telling activity is one of the most useful techniques for the teachers to adopt in their regular English classrooms to enhance the oral communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners. Through this technique, the teachers ask one of the ELLs to hold the given picture-strip and show the first picture to the class and the rest of the ELLs have to guess how the second picture appears. Then the second picture is shown to the ELLs and the ELLs compare the second picture with their own guesses. Later on, the ELLs go on developing their story further. After that, the ELLs are asked to predict how the third picture looks like and this activity goes on in the same way until the last picture is shown to the ELLs. Through this activity, the learners develop their both speaking skills as well as critical and logical thinking skills. In this game-based activity, the ELLs have a wider choice of vocabulary and great choice of ideas that they make prediction using their own intelligence. Furthermore, the ELLs get a continuous feedback. The ELLs proceed towards the end of the story as the strip discloses. It is sure that the ELLs develop their oral communication skills enormously with this picture-strip story-telling activity.

**Table Talk Activity:** The conversation that takes place in the English learning environment is more or less like an interrogation or an interview rather than a relaxed and free-flowing exchange of ideas, concepts, opinions and information. The main intention of

introducing Table Talk activity is to create a jubilant, enjoyable and pleasant space for the ESL/EFL learners to talk with their peers about all the questions related to their lives. Indeed, Table Talk is purely conversation-based learning activity that is useful for the teachers to create a suitable and conducive atmosphere for conversation by keeping the learners engaged in oral communication activities in the classroom. Moreover, these activities build more confidence in the learners in responding to the questions and make them understand spoken language comprehensible. These activities certainly give a chance for the learners to practice their oral communication skills without any fear of being on the stage. Also, these activities promote the learners to spend their valuable time in formulating their dialogues, realistic conversations, self-assess and self-respect. These activities help the learners build confidence in their speaking abilities and also give each and every learner a chance to practise their various speaking activities with their peers in a free and enjoyable milieu.

Table Talk is a strategy which provides the learners with an opportunity to engage collaboratively with their fellow learners in completing an activity, processing new information and solving a problem. In this activity, all learners are accountable and have a shared responsibility in finishing the given tasks. The teachers act as facilitators of the learners' learning to check the learners' progress and understanding and to motivate the learners who got discouraged. The teachers should provide them multiple opportunities to the learners to engage in the given Table Talk tasks not only to make them independent



and active learners but also to develop their dialogue skills more productive. The learners cultivate and hone social skills which allow them to ask exploratory questions, clarify their thinking, put their ideas on the table and consider multiple perspectives since the learners interact with their peers in productive dialogues. In order to make these Table Talk activities more productive ones, the teachers should make sure that whether their learners respond earnestly in exploring their ideas that are shared to develop their mutual understanding. Moreover, the learners should detect the logical and relevant evidence and also use more appropriate and accurate information in order to develop their critical and logical thinking skills to involve them deeply in the conversations. Generally speaking, the teachers have four purposes in introducing Table Talk activities in the classrooms such as introducing new material to engage the learners to know some information that they wish to learn before they start a collaborative investigation, developing leadership skills among the learners by involving them in collaborative activities, collecting learners' thinking by hearing the thoughts of the group members and form a comprehensive analysis of the data and concluding the activity after involving in a probe investigation or learning activity to resolve their misconceptions, elucidate their thinking, process the learning from the activity and get a conclusion to the given activity. To enhance the oral communication of the learners, the teachers should introduce some activities such as Fishbowl Table Talk, Turn and Talk, Chum check, Elbow partners and so on. Since Table Talk

activity promotes the ESL/EFL learners' oral skills efficaciously, the teachers should introduce these activities frequently in their classrooms.

**Project-based Learning:** Project-based learning (PBL) develops learners' both knowledge and skills by involving in the given project for a long period of time to examine critically and react to a more complex problem, challenge or question. Through PBL, the learners identify the problems of the real-world and finds solutions to those problems. The teachers guide the learners in identifying the real-world problems through research and encourage them to find the right solution to it by using the available evidence to support their claim and the learners present their project using the available set of the twenty-first century tools through multimedia approach. In PBL, the learners work collaboratively by sharing their ideas with each other and accomplish their task successfully. PBL also helps the teachers of English communicate and give feedback to the learners of those who work in a group or team.

Since the routine teaching in the classrooms teaches a skill that exactly fits into a unit based on a theme or atopic and each of this lesson works independently and don't have any connectivity to the remaining chapters of unity in the story they are learning. Moreover, PBL connects learners with the real world, demonstrates their abilities while working on their own and develops learners' ability to work with others in building group skills and teamwork. Furthermore, learners develop the spirit of group work in solving difficult problems by working together

collaboratively. In this process, the learners discuss with their peers and express their own ideas and also learn many things from them. As a result, they develop not only their critical and logical thinking skills but also oral communication skills effectively.

**PechaKucha:** PechaKucha is an activity in the format of presentation which is mainly created on using twenty presentation slides but the learners have to talk about for twenty seconds on each slide. In this PechaKucha format, presentations are kept concise and very short where each presentation takes 400 seconds time. It was initially designed in Japan (Tokyo) in February 2013 for the delivery of design presentations. But the teachers of English can adapt this activity as a speaking or public speaking activity in order to enhance the effective oral communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners. The teachers ask the learners to talk about the image or theme that is shown to them. To make it a successful talk in the classroom, the teachers have to follow collaborative approach where the learners can work in groups of four or five. The students distribute their work among themselves and by taking turns, each student takes his turn and talks about the slide. This not only encourages the learners in developing their speaking skills but also reduces the burden since the given task is shared by a group. Once the teachers find their learners are more comfortable with the format, then the learners are encouraged to give solo presentations so that the learners gradually develop their presentation skills and perform well in these activities with more interest and enthusiasm. The teachers

should also give enough time to prepare for this activity so that they will deliver a quality presentation with more creativity and improvised language. As each slide is only a still image and no text or video will be there and it stays on the screen for only twenty seconds, the learners should grasp the contents of the slide and prepare their presentation with a variation in vocabulary and grammatical structure. This activity is really encourages the learners who have problems speaking in the English classroom. Since this PechaKucha will be of immense use for the English classrooms to develop the oral communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners, the teachers are advised to introduce this activity in their regular teaching.

**Just a Minute Activities (JAMs):** As the main aspect of hosting JAM sessions in the classrooms is to enhance the oral communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners, the teachers should always introduce these activities frequently while presenting their lessons. As JAMs depend on three primary principles, 'No Hesitation, No Repetition and No Deviation', the learners surely develop their oral communication skills enormously. Furthermore, these are very short sessions to prove the talent of the learners and they try to present their speech with a wide range of vocabulary and a variety of grammatical structure and they are advised not to deviate from their given topic. Since the learners present all the necessary information in a minute, it gives them a good practice for them to prepare presentations and perform well in their interviews. Therefore, the teachers should always encourage the learners in presenting their speech in the given time,

i.e., one minute, so that it will become a good platform for them to face any kind of problems while giving any presentation in their future career.

**Role plays:** Roleplays are one of the best classroom activities in developing the oral communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners. Through role plays, learners not only improve their practice of speaking but also develop their fluency and confidence, evaluate their progress and put learning into action. Role plays are generally set up to target some particular grammatical points such as simple present tense, simple past tense, future with 'going to', infinitives and so on to assess the ESL/EFL learners' social interaction skills such as making a small talk, asking for help, interrupting, negotiating. The designing of role plays is in the hands of the language teachers so that they can design the activities according to the needs and levels of the learners. While introducing role plays into the ESL/EFL classrooms, gestures, secret messages, cue cards and verbal instructions are all quite common ways of setting a scene. As there are several types of role plays such the conflict role plays, the cooperative role plays, information gap role plays and task-based role plays, the teachers are advised to introduce them according to the situation or context. Since role plays improve the oral communication skills of the ESL/EFL learners colossally, the teachers should always encourage them in participating these activities enthusiastically.

**Group discussions:** Group discussions are effective ways of cooperative learning and they provide learners a good chance to present their

views, ideas, thoughts and opinions and also enhance their oral communication skills in the classroom. The teachers of English make use of the different formats of group discussions, i.e., from very informal one to highly structured and challenging ones. At the initial stages, the teachers have to start their group discussions with the topics more familiar and easy for the ESL/EFL learners and later they should proceed to more complex ones. Also, the selection of the topics for the discussions must be according to the interests of the learners so that the learners will participate in them very actively. The learners are provided right opportunities to participate in the group discussions and the teachers select the topics of some informal chats about the day-to-day things and then move on to some serious topics such as the system of education, the benefits of learning a foreign language, a recent movie they have seen, a burning topic in the country, a problem that needs to be solved and so on. Since group discussions are widely used in the present job market during the interviews and selection procedures, the ESL/EFL learners pay more attention on these classroom activities that take place in the form of group discussions in the collaborative approach to improve their oral communication skills enormously. Hence, the teachers should introduce these activities in their regular classrooms in order to improve their oral communication skills immensely.

**Debates:** Debates are the activities that always engage the ESL/EFL learners in a wide range of linguistic and cognitive ways. Through debates, the learners will



develop not only speaking skills but also their listening skills and writing practice as well. According to Davidson (1996), "With practice, many students show obvious progress in their ability to express and defend ideas in debate". Nisbett (2003: 210) asserts, "Debate is an important educational tool for learning analytic thinking skills and for forcing self-conscious reflection on the validity of one's ideas". In a debate study conducted with Japanese students, Fukuda (2003) found, "Before the debates only 30.8% of the students were not afraid of expressing their opinions when they were not the same as others'. After the debate this figure rose to 56.7%". He further says, "The knowledge or skills which came from the practice in the debates led the students to become more accustomed to expressing opinions". This proposes that even though, debates are quite challenging ones for the ESL/EFL learners in the classrooms, they can improve their debating skills that promote their oral communication skills tremendously. So, the teachers should understand the importance of debates in the English classrooms and select the topics that create more interest among the learners and encourage them in involving the activities to improve their oral communication skills massively.

**Oral Presentations:** Oral presentations take place in the ESL/EFL classrooms once the learners get good command over the speaking skills. Once the teachers of English have got confidence in their learners that they can express their ideas freely with a continuous flow, they introduce oral presentations in the classrooms. Moreover, oral presentations, particularly group

presentations, let the learners to engage in collaborative or cooperative tasks which require them to use the English language to elaborate their thoughts and ideas to convince the audience. Since oral presentation skills promote the use of language for social and academic purposes, they are the most important skills for the overall development of the learners' personality as well as their oral communication skills. Teaching learners to design effective oral presentations finds found to support cognitive development, according to Živković (2014: 474), "The quality of presentation actually improves the quality of thought, and vice versa". In the English classrooms, oral presentations can take place in various forms like the learners giving their presentations in small groups to creating a multi-slide presentation for the whole class. While introducing oral presentations in the ESL/EFL classrooms, the teachers can extract the real talent of the learners. Since oral presentation skills are more useful for the learners to develop their career and enhance their oral communication skills as well as critical and/or logical thinking skills and presentation skills, the teachers should introduce many activities in their daily classrooms.

Since developing oral communication skills is essential for all learners, especially for ESL/EFL learners, the teachers should try out various activities in their classrooms in order to enhance their oral communication skills. When the teachers of English adopt the above discussed strategies in their regular classrooms, there is no doubt that the ESL/EFL learners will enhance their oral communication skills enormously and

attain good progress throughout their career.

### **Conclusion:**

This paper has discussed the ways of enhancing effective oral communication skills among the ESL/EFL learners. First, this paper has enlightened the importance of English in the modern world and then the importance of language skills in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, this paper has also brought out the importance of communication skills in general and then in ESL/EFL environment. Later, this paper has mainly explained in detail the various strategies of enhancing effective oral communication skills among the ESL/EFL learners that are more useful for them to showcase these skills throughout their future career. Finally, this paper has also proposed some important suggestions not only to the teachers to develop their teaching skills but also to the learners to improve their oral presentation skills in ESL/EFL environment.

Since oral communication skills play a vital role to develop the future career of the ESL/EFL learners, the teachers of English have to concentrate more on these skills in their classrooms. In order to develop the learners' oral communication skills, the teachers should always try to introduce some interesting activities that involve the learners more on their learning. Moreover, the teachers should select the materials according to the needs and interests of the learners so that the learners get motivated and involve in the classroom activities with utmost care and personal interest. Also, the teachers should always adopt some new strategies in their classrooms to make the learners fully engaged in the given speaking tasks and

finish them successfully. The teachers should always involve the learners in group activities by adopting collaborative or cooperative learning approaches so that the learners not only develop their knowledge by sharing their ideas among the members of the group but also improve their oral communication skills colossally. Furthermore, the teachers are advised to implement the activities of guessing games, icebreaking activities, brainstorming, picture-strip-story-telling activity, Table Talk, project-based learning, PechaKucha, JAMs, role plays, Group discussions, debates and oral presentations in their classrooms so as to provide the better opportunity for the learners to perform these activities dynamically in the classrooms. Also, the ESL/EFL learners should utilize their classroom time well and participate in all the classroom activities with more interest, commitment and involvement so that they will gradually improve their oral communication skills well.

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