ENHANCING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract : Speaking English is a challenge for Gujarati medium students who learn English as a Second Language. In schools, it is taught in a traditional way of translation. However, if we change the method of teaching speaking, it can be beneficial to students. 'Collaborative Learning Techniques' is a method which can be implemented to overcome speaking barriers. This paper presents how collaborative learning techniques can be useful to overcome the few barriers of speaking English.

IndexTerms – **Collaborative Learning Techniques, Speaking Skills**
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INTRODUCTION

Language has four skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, And Writing. Out of these four skills child learns speaking as a first productive skill. Child absorbs mother tongue by listening. Speaking is not merely uttering words through mouth. It involves conveying or transferring the message through the words. If we talk about English language, it is taught as a second language in Gujarati medium schools. With more emphasis on Grammar, speaking English is neglected in the schools. Though students can read the lessons aloud in English, they cannot convey their thoughts in English. One of the reasons for the inadequate competence in speaking English could be lack of opportunity to practice speaking with authentic purpose. Also, learners are not interested to practice continuously or motivated to speak.

SPEAKING SKILL

Sometimes speaking ability becomes the measure of knowing language. Rechards and Renandya (2002) state that speaking is the ability to use the language appropriately in social communications which involves not only verbal communication but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as pitch, stress, and intonation. Moreover, non-linguistic elements such as gestures, body language, and expressions are needed in conveying messages directly (p.204).

TEACHING SPEAKING

It is very necessary to focus on teaching speaking as learners will not survive in today's world if they don't communicate effectively in English. Oral communication is very crucial as it is primary skill to express thoughts, knowledge and feelings.

Harmer (2007) gives three reasons for teaching speaking (p.123), those are as follow:
- Speaking activities provide rehearsal opportunities, chances to practice real life speaking in the safety of classroom.
- The more students have opportunities to activate the various elements of language they have saved in their brain, they can use it automatically. As a result, students gradually become good language users. (cited in Harmer, 2007, p. 123)

According to Harmer (2007: 275) there are three roles of the lecturer in speaking activities, they are:
a. Prompter:
   The students sometime get lost, cannot think of what to say next. The teacher can help them by offering suggestions of English words and giving them idea about what to speak next. This will help to stop frustration that some students feel when they come to 'dead end' of language or idea.
b. Participant:
   Teacher can participate in discussion or role plays with students. This will ensure students' continuous engagement and generally maintain creative atmosphere. However, in such circumstances teachers have to be careful that they do not participate too much, thus dominating the speaker and drawing all the attention to themselves.
c. Feedback provider:
   When student is doing activity, over- correction may inhibit them and take the communicativeness out of the activity. On the other hand, helpful and gentle correction may get students out of difficult misunderstanding and hesitation. When students complete the activity it is vital that we tell them what, in our opinion, went well.

Nunan (2003) states that teaching speaking is to make the students do as follows:

- Produce the English speech sounds and sounds patterns.
- Use words and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second or foreign language.
- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.

- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence, use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called fluency.

THE PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING SPEAKING

Brown (2001) states that there are five principles for designing teaching speaking that should be known by the teacher in order to help the students to achieve the target language. They are as follows:
- Use techniques that cover learner needs, from language based focus on accuracy to message-based on interaction, meaning, and fluency.
- Provide the intrinsic motivation.
- Provide appropriate feedback and correction.
- Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication.
- Encourage the development of speaking strategies.
   (Cited in Brown, 2001, p. 275).

SPEAKING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT GUJARATI MEDIUM SCHOOLS

When it comes to real life speaking i.e. expressing thoughts and knowledge in English, students often find some problems. The major problem is their native language, Gujarati, interferes to speak English. Besides that, there is a motivational lack to practice the language in daily conversation. They are also too shy and afraid to take part in the conversation. In Gujarati medium schools, teachers do not give much weightage to speaking skills. Teacher himself does not speak in English in the classroom. He communicates with students in Gujarati. The role of teachers in Gujarati medium schools is to translate lessons of English and to teach grammar topics in Guajarati. Students are asked to repeat sentences and recite memorised dialogue of textbooks. There are no parameters which assess speaking. Exams are also based on writing skills. Students talk with each other in Gujarati for completing English exercises. However due to web tools and technology like mobile and television students are able speak and comprehend many English words. Students do not speak completely in their mother tongue. There are many English words which they produce in day to day speaking naturally. In fact they don't know Gujarati of such words like table, pen, and tube light etc. Despite of this, they are not able to speak complete sentences in English.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

Over the past twenty-five years, the use of small-group learning has greatly increased (However not in Gujarati medium school). Interactive group learning has received wide attention and usage in higher education for decades. "Collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students and teachers together. In most collaborative learning situations students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solution, or meanings, or creating a product." Smith and MacGregor (1992).

TEACHING SPEAKING USING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

Collaborative learning technique is a way which gives freedom to full fill the principles (given by Brown, 2001) of teaching speaking. Teacher can use various types of activities to teach speaking English like:

Interaction with others: Teacher can ask students to talk with each other in English. Teacher can monitor them and can give feedback. Here, students are not supposed to speak before the class. Instead they will talk internally about very natural topics like daily life or explaining their favourite game or discussing the character which they like most in movie or daily soap. Hence they will not feel shy and stage fear.

Role Play: This activity can build up confidence of learner. Teacher can divide the class in group or pair and give them situations. Situation can be based on real life ex. Booking movie ticket, inquiry about savings account in bank or asking for train time. Her learners need to play a role of given character in the situation. Firstly student will draft dialogue of his character and then he will do a role play with his partner/s among the class.

Description: Teacher can show a picture to students and ask them to describe it. By this, they do not need to look foe content of speaking. They can see and speak what they are observing in the picture.

Heterogeneous Group: While using collaborative learning techniques, teacher needs to divide the class in pair or group. Teacher should form heterogeneous group while dividing the class so that weak speakers in English learns from good speakers of English. However teachers need to look that weak speakers do not feel inferiority complex and good speakers do not dominate the group.

Question-Answer: This activity can be done in group or pair. Teacher can give list of questions to students. Students can be divided in group or pair and they give answer of the question to each other. Ex. Question: What you want to become in future? Why? Students will tell each other about their choice of field and why they want have chosen that particular field.

Role of Teacher:
While teaching speaking using collaborative learning techniques, a teacher should become:

- Facilitator: Teacher should provide such environment in which students feel comfortable to speak. Teacher needs to provide situation as well for speaking.
- Monitor: Teacher needs monitor the class. He needs to keep track whether students are doing given task or not.
- Motivator: Teacher needs to motive students constantly for speaking. He needs to be a friend of students so they students do not feel fear or be afraid of punishment if they speak wrong.
- Feedback provider: Teacher should give feedback to students on their task. Teacher can give reinforcement to good speaker and some ideas to improve speaking to weak speakers.
- Patience: Teaching speaking is not a one day job. Teacher needs to keep patience as time of learning can vary from learner to learner.

CONCLUSION

Learning speaking needs practice and comfortable environment and motivation. Speaking is a skill which can be learned easily if practiced in natural way in a group. Collaborative Learning Techniques is a effective method as it fulfil requirements of teaching speaking skill in a natural way.

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