

ORAL WORK IN CLASSROOM

Oral work in classroom includes both listening and speaking. Communication cannot be made without listening comprehension. It has been said that listening and speaking go hand in hand. Thus a discussion on use of language through oral activities should include discussion of both listening and speaking activities.

Listening:

The term listening, in language teaching, refers to a complex process that allows an individual to understand spoken language. As a linguistic skill listening is related to the other skills of speaking, reading and writing. The skill of listening is of great importance because it is a critical means of acquiring the second language. It is a highly goal-oriented activity and involves both **bottom-up processing** (listeners attend to the data in the incoming speech signals) and **top-down processing** (listeners utilize their prior knowledge and expectations to create meaning). Both these processes take place at various levels of cognitive organization, namely, phonological, grammatical, lexical and propositional. Listening is thus a complex process which is often described as a ‘parallel processing model of language understanding’ (Cowan, 1995).

The skill of listening may be said to possess the following features:

- i. Recognize the characteristic English speech sounds, in isolation as well as in combination.
- ii. Distinguish such sounds from similar sounds in his mother tongue.
- iii. Understand the lexical meanings of words in context and grammatical meanings of structures.
- iv. Grasp the mood and attitude of the speaker and the theme of the discourse.
- v. Anticipate words and structures from the context for understanding speech at normal conversational speed.
- vi. Guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word from the context.

Speaking

Speaking in a second language involves the development of a particular type of verbal communication skill. Oral language tends to differ from written language in grammatical, lexical and discursive patterns. Some of the skills needed in speaking are essentially different

from those needed for reading or writing. The learning of spoken language involves the mastery of not only vocabulary and syntax, but also the phonological and phonetic pattern. In other words, sounds of a language, their arrangement in specific structures, prosodic features like stress, pitch etc. enjoy position of central significance in spoken English. Spoken English also serve as an index to the speaker's personality, his physical and mental state and the regional or social influences. In second language teaching learning reading and writing are ideally preceded by listening and speaking exercises. Effectiveness of a language lesson is often judged by the ratio of the Learner Speaking Time (PST) to the Teacher's Speaking Time (TST) in a given period. Greater PST denotes greater effectiveness.

Components:

An individual usually possess the following abilities for speaking correctly in English. These have been called specific components of the skill:

- i. The learner can produce the characteristic English speech sounds and sound patterns, both in isolation and in combination.
- ii. The learner can use appropriate stress and intonation patterns
- iii. The learner is able to use appropriate words and structures to express the intended meaning
- iv. The learner can recall words and structures quickly
- v. The learner can organize his thoughts and ideas in logical sequence
- vi. The learner is able to adjust his speech according to his audience, situation and subject matter.