

## Strategies for Developing Speaking Skill

Development of oral skill in second language teaching has received considerable scholarly attention since one of the ultimate objectives of any language lesson is to enable the learner to communicate effectively in the target language. Thus various oral tasks related to the real life situations of the learner have been systematically designed to enhance the speaking skill of the learners. All these tasks are centred around the practical needs of the learner and aimed at enabling the learner to interact competently and appropriately at different levels and different situations. Some of the common strategies or activities designed for this purpose are as follows:

- i. Chorus drills: These are often treated as effective techniques for providing oral practice in overcrowded classrooms and are effective in enhancing pronunciation through imitative repetition. Chorus drills also encourage shy learners and have been proved to be motivating for lower classes due to a ritualistic nature. In some cases bench-wise drills, followed by individual drills are also practiced.
- ii. Substitution drill: This may be of various types namely, single substitution drill, double and multiple substitution drills. This may be done individually or in groups.
- iii. Transformation drill: Learners are given a drill in transformation of sentences.
- iv. Integration drill: Learners are given a drill in integration of sentences.
- v. Contextualized drill: Appropriate contexts may be generated with the help of pictures and such contexts may be utilized for the drill of grammatical items. Such contexts may also be generated with the help of the learners' knowledge of current issues.
- vi. Pair work and group work: Pair work and group work constitute an important part of any communicative activity. Dialogues and conversations practiced by learners in pairs and groups in formal classroom settings enhance communicative competence.
- vii. Role play: Role play is a popular technique which can be of the following types,-
  - a. With clues given: Learners are urged to script and enact certain roles with basic clues supplied in the classroom.
  - b. Guided by the teacher: The teacher guides the learners in enacting and speaking like particular characters from within or outside the text.
  - c. Independent type: The learners are given complete freedom in selecting and enacting certain roles in the classroom. Such an exercise involves active communication.

- viii. Reaching consensus: The learners are urged to imagine situations and interact among themselves in the target language to come up with the final solution. For instance, they may be urged to imagine that they are going on an educational tour and are asked to make a list of the necessary items that they must carry. They are engaged in group discussions in the target language to come up with final list that they achieve by reaching a consensus. Such activities promote independent, motivated and spontaneous exercises in speaking skill.
- ix. Moral dilemma: Any topic may be selected from the given text or from current issues and the learners may be urged to express their independent views and critical reflections. They have to justify their views and this gives ample scope for speaking exercises. This may also be done in groups.
- x. Relaying instructions: The class may be divided into groups with one group possessing the complete information for completion of a task. This group is given the responsibility of replaying the instructions to the others and this may be done in turns.
- xi. Storytelling: It is “the most ancient and compelling of human activities” (Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 1983) and has a special role to play in developing speaking skills. Simple storytelling by the learners in the target language may be complemented by a host of related activities that enhance the communicative competence of the learners. Some of them are -
  - a. Use of theme pictures: The teacher may tell a story and then spreads related pictures on the table, urging the learners to choose any picture which they associate with the story. Each learner is then urged to justify his/her choice in the target language.
  - b. Skeleton stories: The learners may be given the skeleton form or the bare outlines of a story in simple English and then the learners may be asked to give their versions of the story in the target language. The skeletal form of the story must be such that it may be interpreted in more than one ways.
  - c. Incomplete stories: The teacher may begin a story but leave it half way for the learners to complete in their own ways in the target language. In some cases, only an intriguing open-ended first line is provided to the learners, who then narrate a story on their own, on the basis of the first line.
  - d. Use of sound sequences/sound scripts: In this activity the teacher plays a recorded sound sequence while the learners listen carefully. The learners then speak on their interpretation of the story. This may be done in groups where

each group member narrates his/her version with the group finally selecting the most interesting one and deputing one storyteller from the group to tell the story to the whole class. The teacher may help the learners by asking some questions after playing the audio clip. An interesting example from *Sounds Intriguing* by Alan Maley & Alan Duff (1975) projected a sound script of “cries – snapping – rustling – shouting – steps in water – barking – shot – silence – low whisper – silence”. Some of the possible questions as given in the book where “What is the first sound you hear? / Is all the action happening in the same place? / What is the explanation of the sudden loud noise at the end of the sequence?” etc.

- xii. Dictation: Dictation is integrated with an oral activity in many ways. A set of words may be dictated to the class and each learner may grasp a few of them. Now each learner is urged to develop and narrate a story based on the words they remember. The words dictated at a fast pace must ideally be rich in content and stimulate thinking.
- xiii. Telling anecdotes: Anecdotes are naturally appealing to the learners and help in breaking the drudgery of everyday learning experiences. Both the teacher and the learner can share anecdotes from their life in the target language. The teacher may also provide topics for anecdotes closely related to the daily life of the learners to be narrated in the target language.
- xiv. Picture composition: The teacher may draw an incomplete picture on the blackboard and urge the learners to instruct the teacher to add more details to the picture and then tell their version of the story to the rest of the class. Such an activity gives ample scope of exercise in the speaking skill and enhances the confidence levels of the learners.
- xv. Debate: Topics related to the learner’s life may be selected for a debate in the class. The learners argue in the target language and the teacher gives weightage for content, ideas, intonations, pronunciations and effective speech.
- xvi. Simulation of radio or TV shows: Learners may be urged to play the role of news readers and anchors. They may also be asked to coordinate a whole show, complete with music, interviews, advertisements etc. – all done in the target language. The teachers may show recorded samples to give them a basic idea and grant full autonomy to the learners to design and coordinate their show. This is an interesting way of enhancing critical thinking, organizing abilities and speaking skills.

All the strategies of enhancing speaking skills as discussed above must be centered around the following principles:

- i. Learners should speak the language in meaningful situations.

- ii. There should be sufficient repetition and variety to facilitate habit formation without creating boredom in the class.
- iii. Correction should be selective and should mainly be based on drilling in the correct form. Persistent crucial errors should be dealt with in a separate remedial lesson.
- iv. Speaking activities should be properly graded to suit the level of the learners.
- v. The ultimate aim of all oral drills is to enable the learners to make a free choice in an actual communication situation. Therefore, once the learners have mastered a structure, they should practice it in situations where their attention is focused on the thread of meaning rather than on the structure.