

## **ASSINGMENT - 2**

**Psycholinguistics (5655)**

# **THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING SKILLS FOR EFL LEARNERS**

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## 1. **Abstract**

This research paper brings to light, the importance of speaking skills. The researcher adopts a communicative approach for the enhancement of speaking skills of her students in the class. The researcher pays special attention on the problem of the students who are structurally competent but can not communicate appropriately. The researcher focuses on the processes involved in the conversational interaction of the students, thereby conducting such activities in the class which enable her students to be 'able to use the language appropriate to given social context'.

## 2. **Literature Review**

### 2.1. **Importance of English Language.**

**2.1.1** The English language has become an international language. Among nations it serves as a lingua franca. It is spoken, learnt and understood even in those countries where it is not a native's language. English is playing a major role in many sectors including medicine, engineering, education, advanced studies, business, technology, banking, computing, tourism etc. All our software development today, the communication facilities available to us through internet, our access to a variety of websites, are all being carried out in English. Most of the research works are conducted and compiled in English. Anything written and recorded in this language is read and listened to, in wider circles. As a result, English is being taught and learned around the world as a second language today.

### 2.2. **The Importance of Speaking Skills.**

**2.2.1** Language is a tool for communication. We communicate with others, to express our ideas, and to know others' ideas as well. Communication takes place, where there is speech. Without speech we cannot communicate with one another. The importance of

speaking skills, hence is enormous for the learners of any language. Without speech, a language is reduced to a mere script. The use of language is an activity which takes place within the confines of our community. We use language in a variety of situations. People at their work places, i.e. researchers working either in a medical laboratory or in a language laboratory, are supposed to speak correctly and effectively in-order to communicate well with one another. Any gap in communication results in misunderstandings and problems.

**2.2.2.** For a smooth running of any system, the speakers of a language need to be especially and purposefully trained in the skill of speaking.

**2.2.3.** In-order to become a well rounded communicator one needs to be proficient in each of the four language skills viz., listening , speaking, reading and writing, but the ability to speak skillfully, provides the speaker with several distinct advantages. The capacity to express one's thoughts, opinions and feelings, in the form of words put together in a meaningful way, provides the speaker with these advantages. The joy of sharing one's ideas with others is immense. When we speak to others we come to have a better understanding of our own selves, as **Robert Frost** once said: "I am a writer of books in retrospect, I talk in order to understand, I teach in order to learn." Undoubtedly, the clarity in speech reflects clear thinking.

**2.2.4** An effective speaker can gain the attention of the audience and hold it till the completion of his message. Speaking skills are important for career success, but certainly not limited to one's professional aspirations. Speaking skills can also enhance one's personal life.

## **2.3 The Activities for the Enhancement of Speaking Skills.**

**2.3.1** In the context of foreign language learning, however there is a problem which teachers have been aware of for a long time. It is the problem of the student who is structurally competent but who cannot communicate appropriately. In order to overcome this problem the processes involved in fluent conversational interaction need to be dealt with.

**2.3.2** As Keith Johnson quotes Newmark (Communicative approaches and communicative processes, Psycholinguistics and Language Teaching Methodology) ‘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.....’

**2.3.3** It is infact this new ‘mode of thinking’ which has given new directions to foreign language teaching. It has led to new emphases, not only in syllabus design but also in the teaching communicative use of the language. Language learning today is regarded less of an ‘acquisition of structure’ and more of a learning of items of use. The teaching of language in relation to categories of use is likely to have methodological implications.

**2.3.4** Before adoption any particular methods or techniques, it is important to ‘know’ a language. As regards what is entailed in knowing a language, Keith Johnson puts it this way, ‘.....‘knowing a language’ is not the same as ‘the ability to use language’.....’ The student who is communicatively incompetent is in fact, unaware of the use of language. As Newmark expresses it, this student may know ‘‘the structures that the linguist teaches, [Yet] cannot know that the way to get his cigarette lit by a stranger when he has no matches is to walk up to him and say one of the utterances ‘‘Do you have a light?’’ or

“Got a match?”.....” (Keith Johnson, Communicative approaches and communicative processes).

**2.3.5.** The methodologies for language teaching therefore are to be based on the linguistic insights as to the nature of the language and also on the psychological insights as to the processes involved in its use, for the development of communicative competence in the learners.

**2.3.6.** Keith Johnson lists three processes involved in the use of a language: scanning the pragmatic information; evaluation where by the utterance can be compared to the speaker’s aim and the identification of any discrepancy, and then the formulation of the next utterance. The formulation of utterances and the processes of scanning and evaluation must be made quickly within the real time. “The ability to do this is what we mean generally by fluency in a language ....” says Keith Johnson (Communicative approaches and communicative processes, Psycholinguistics and Language Teaching Methodology, pg 425).

**2.3.7** 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 intent’ 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 i.e. one of the interactants should be unaware and the other, aware. The one, who is aware, conveys some information to the unaware(s). As Lyons (1968: 413) says and Keith Johnson quotes **(Communicative approaches and communicative processes; Psycholinguistics & Language Teaching Methodology, pg. 426)**, Lyons (1968:413) “if the hearer knows in

advance that the speaker will inevitably produce a particular utterance in a particular context, then it is obvious that the utterance will give him no information when it occurs; no 'communication' will take place''.

**2.3.8.** 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 as follows:-

**2.3.8.1 The use of authentic materials.** The researcher provides authentic materials to the learners. A newspaper can be one of the best form of this kind of material. It contains write-ups which are based on reality. Reading a newspaper, 'provides them with an opportunity to study language, as it is used in a real context....'(Freeman D.L., **Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching, Psycholinguistics & Language Teaching Methodology**). 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....'(Freeman D.L **Techniques and Principles of Language Teaching**). As, for example, the students are asked by the researcher to read in the sports section, an article on the performance of Pakistani Cricket Team in the semi-final. 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 predictions on the team's performance in the final match. They also speculate on what will be the team strategy in the final 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, as there is an information gap, which the interactants cover. 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.

**2.3.8.2 The scrambled sentences.** The researcher gives the students a short story with scrambled sentences. The students are asked to unscramble them. Putting sentences in the right sequence gives them a real understanding of the language. Every individual comes to know about his own shortcomings. As it has been pointed out by Keith Johnson (**Communicative approaches and communicative processes; Psycholinguistics & Language Teaching Methodology, pg. 430**) that the ability to identify and check one's own mistakes is, according to Bartlett (1947) 'the best single measure of mental skill'.

**2.3.8.3 The language games.** The researcher uses the technique of language games. The language games that are truly communicative according to Morrow (Johnson and Morrow, 1981) have the three features of communication: information gap, choice and feedback. 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.

**2.3.8.4 The picture strip story.** 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 and so forth. This game allows the students to have a choice of words as well as of ideas, as they make prediction from their own minds. They also receive a constant feedback. As the strip unfolds, they proceed towards the end of story.

**2.3.8.5 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.

## **2.4 A Few points of significance**

**2.4.1** 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)**

**2.4.2** 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, ‘the teacher must be aware that excessive correction will encourage learners to shift their focus from meanings to forms.’ **(Little Word D.A. Communicative Language Teaching).**

### **3. Conclusion**

**3.1** 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.

**References:-**

1. Bartlett (1947)
2. Freeman D.L (Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching, Psycholinguistics and Language Teaching Methodology).
3. Frost Robert
4. Johnson Keith (Communicative approaches and communicative processes, Psycholinguistics and Language Teaching Methodology).
5. Johnson and Morrow (1981)
6. Lynos (1968 : 413), Johnson Keith Communicative approaches and communicative processes, pg. 426.
7. Littlewood D.A (Communicative Language Teaching, Psycholinguistics and Language Teaching Methodology)