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## THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

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### Abstract

In this globalization era, there have been drastic changes taking place all over the world. These tremendous vicissitudes occur when people have a strong desire to achieve something. People's desires are fulfilled when they clearly express their ideas and opinions with others. Thus, they need to learn communication skills in order to fulfill their ambitions, desires, and goals. In this modern world, communication skills play a vital role and one must have mastery over these skills to get success in their respective fields. So, speaking is the most important skill among all the four language skills in order to communicate well in this global world. As English is widely used all over the world, there is a need for learners to acquire the communication skills of it to get success in their respective fields. Thus, the classroom is the ideal platform to acquire good communication skills, especially, speaking skills. The teachers have to understand the problems of the ELLs (English language learners) and try to implement various teaching strategies in their classrooms in order to develop their learners' speaking skills in English classrooms. This is possible for the teachers when they change their methods and materials and by using the latest techniques of teaching speaking skills. Therefore, the teachers should introduce some group and pair activities in their regular English classrooms that the ELLs can develop their speaking skills enormously. This paper sheds light on the importance of speaking skills in English classrooms. First of all, this paper discloses the significance of the basic language skills of English. Later, this paper also explains the importance of speaking skills in English classrooms in a comprehensive way. It also explains the need to teach speaking skills. Then the kinds of speaking situations and the main advantages of speaking skills are explained elaborately. Furthermore, this paper also supplies several techniques to develop speaking skills among the EFL/ESL learners in the English classrooms. Finally, this paper suggests some useful tips for the teachers to introduce various activities that involve the ELLs more on practicing their speaking skills in English classrooms. Moreover, it also suggests the ELLs improve their speaking skills as these are very useful for them to build their future career in a perfect way.

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Keywords: activities; communication; English classrooms; ELLs; speaking skills; strategies.

## Introduction

### The Importance of the English Language

In these modern days, the whole world has become a global village and people communicate with each other in a common language, i.e. English. The English language is spoken all over the world and it has attained the status of the global language. English is the language widely used in the field of scientific research, education, business, the internet, travel and tourism, media and newspapers, software, medicine, engineering, information and technology, entertainment, banking and so on. English is the language that is used mostly for business correspondence and internet purposes. It is the only major language used in writing scientific research articles as more than 85% of the research publications are in English. It is the international language used for trade and commerce. Even in the IT field also, most of the programmes are written in English and even they communicate with their colleagues or other software professionals those who work around the world in English. Furthermore, most of the books related to higher education are published in English. Due to several advantages of English, many people are learning the English language to attain fruitful results in their respective fields.

### The Basic Language Skills of English

As English serves the purpose of international communication, most of the foreign language learners try to learn it. In this process, they have to acquire all the four basic skills of the language, viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are passive skills or receptive skills, whereas, speaking and writing are active skills or productive skills.

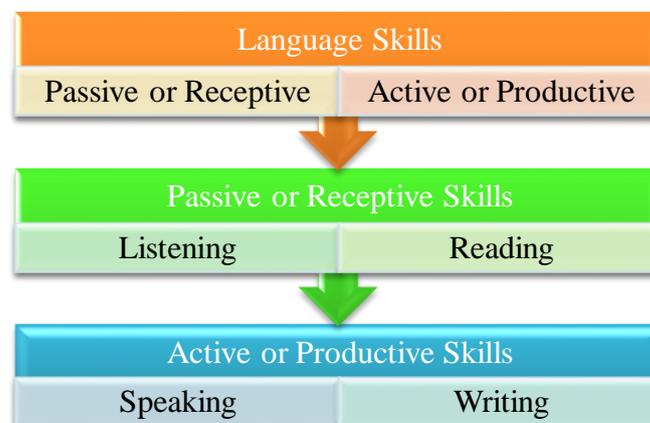


Fig: The Basic Language Skills of English

Listening and reading are considered to be passive or receptive skills as the learners do not show their talent in exhibiting these skills. They just listen to the language or read it without producing anything. Whereas, the learners have to produce sentences on their own and they need a lot of practice and learn many things related to grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure and usage. Therefore, speaking and writing are considered to be active or productive skills.

### The Importance of Speaking Skills

In the present global world, communication plays a vital role in getting success in all fields. Language is used as a tool for communication. Perfect communication is not possible for people without using a language. Moreover, people cannot achieve their aims, objectives, and goals without using proper language to communicate. Therefore, there is a need for a language to communicate with others those who live all around the globe. As English is considered the international language and it is spoken all over the world, it serves the purpose of communicating with the people who live in different regions, states, countries, and continents of the world.

Speaking skill is the most important skill to acquire foreign or second language learning. Among the four key language skills, speaking is deemed to be the most important skill in learning a foreign or second language. Brown and Yuke (1983) say, "Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations". Regardless of its importance, teaching speaking skills have been undervalued and most of the EFL/ESL teachers have been continuing their teaching of speaking skills just as memorization of dialogues or repetition of drills. Nevertheless, the modern world demands for the requirement of communication skills for the learners and the English teachers have to teach the ELLs the needed skills so that they will improve their abilities in speaking and perform well in real-life situations. In the present EFL/ESL teaching environment, oral skills are completely neglected whereas employability depends more on communication than technology. As very less priority has been given to the important elements of language such as phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic aspects, it has become a major impediment for the ELLs to acquire the speaking skills among the learners of English. So far, more concentration has been given to reading and writing skills. After realizing the importance of oral communication skills, more emphasis is now laid on developing the speaking skills of the learners to pursue their studies successfully and excel in their fields once they finish their education. Moreover, English is the language of getting opportunities for employment and getting success to achieve the desired goals in life.

According to Bueno, Madrid, and McLaren (2006: 321), "Speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face. Speaking is considered the most important of the four language skills of English. Even the learners learn the language for so many years;

they find it difficult to speak in real time situations when it is demanded. There are many reasons to overcome this. First of all, the ELLs should understand the importance of speaking skills and try to acquire them as they need them to compete in this competitive world.

Among the four basic skills of the English language, speaking seems to be difficult because the speakers have to produce sentences on the spur of the moment. It is quite difficult for foreign or second language learners to produce sentences without learning the grammatical structures and having proper knowledge of adequate vocabulary. Therefore, the English language learners of EFL/ESL face many problems in speaking grammatical sentences in English. Since speaking skills play a dominant role in communication, people try to learn these skills in order to communicate well with the entire community all around the world.

Moreover, these speaking skills are also useful for learners when they have to settle down well in their professions. In the modern world, it has become quite common to prove the candidates' talents at the time of their job interviews and many of the selections are based on the performance of the interview. The job aspirants have to participate and prove themselves in debates and group discussions where the performance or oral communication skills of the candidates are primarily measured. Besides, the professionals have to give oral presentations as they have to promote the products or their companies or give training to the other colleagues. Furthermore, an effective speaker can inspire the audience a lot and gain the complete attention of the audience and maintain the same tempo until the end of his/her speech. So the audience involves completely in the speaker's speech and they sometimes forget the real world and put their complete concentration on the speech. So, speaking skills play a vital role as everything depends on the way how people communicate their messages with others.



Fig: The Importance of Speaking Skills

Speaking skills are the most essential skills for all the learners who wish to learn English to enhance their career, improve business, build confidence levels, get better job opportunities, make public speeches, attend interviews, participate in debates and group

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discussions, give presentations and so on. In the present modern world, everything is linked with speaking skills. One who has good talent in speaking can conquer the whole world. Having good communication is the passport to get better employment opportunities. In the modern interviews, the real talent of the job aspirants is tested through their performance in group discussions, debates, presentation skills and so on. Therefore, job seekers have to acquire good oral communication skills in order to grab better opportunities. Once the learners practice these speaking skills in their EFL/ESL classrooms, they get the mastery of these skills and perform well in the activities in and outside their classrooms. Let us discuss the purpose of teaching speaking skills in English classrooms.

Why are Speaking Skills taught in English classrooms?

In this global world, there is a need to share our ideas and thoughts with the people who live around the world in order to fulfill our desires and deeds. This is a competitive world and each and every English language learner wants to improve his/her speaking skills to sustain in this global market. Moreover, most of the selections in getting jobs depend on the communication skills of the individuals, especially, their speaking skills. The interviewers also recognize the talent of the individuals in the form of speaking skills within a short period of time. The job seekers those who can prove their skills at that particular moment will be occupying the best places in their career. Moreover, these speaking skills are also useful for professionals to develop their career. In addition to this, these speaking skills are more useful for the employees those who are working in business organizations to promote their businesses. It is also a known fact that excellent, outstanding and inspiring speakers highly motivate and win the hearts of the audience. As speaking skills play a vital role in many aspects, there is a need for EFL/ESL learners to concentrate more on them. Furthermore, the teachers are advised to implement several useful strategies in their classrooms in order to involve the learners more on learning speaking skills in their English classrooms.

With an ounce of regular practice, it is sure that the ELLs can immensely develop their speaking skills. Then they can perform well in the classroom discussions and debates and gradually develop their speaking skills. They will be in a position to give presentations on their own by leaving all the fears that they had in their minds. With regular practice of these skills, they can deliver short speeches also in the classrooms. Moreover, they build self-confidence among themselves and become stronger in decision-making and problem-solving. The learners can also develop sound business relationships with the other business partners and promote their businesses well. Furthermore, the ELLs show better performance in their job interviews so that they will get the best opportunities to settle down well in their career. They can also work well with their colleagues and try to develop their own career. Therefore, speaking skills play a pivotal role in developing the ELLs' overall performance.

### Three Kinds of Speaking Situations

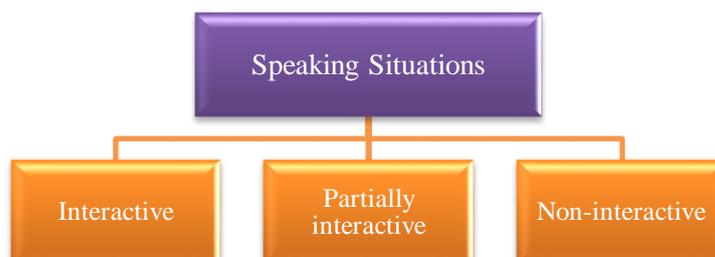


Fig: Three Kinds of Speaking Situations

The speakers expressed their opinion in a thoughtful, convincing and passionate way through speaking skills. There are three kinds of speaking situations such as interactive, partially-interactive and non-interactive. Telephone calls and face-to-face conversations are included in interactive speaking situations where speaking and listening are alternatives in English. In the interactive speaking situations, there will be a chance to ask for repetition, clarification or request for a slower speech from the conversation partner. Therefore, interactive speaking situations are more useful situations both for the speaker and the listener as they can understand the matter without having any further doubts. Whereas in partially interactive situations, a speech is given to the live audience and the audience does not interrupt the speaker's speech. In partially interactive conversations, the speaker can directly see the audience and also judge from their facial expressions and gestures whether the participants have understood his/her speech or not. Here the audience can clarify their doubts through the question and answer (Q & A) session that generally takes place at the end of the speech presentation. On contrary to these two, in non-interactive speaking situations, there will not be any interaction of the audience where speakers have to just record their speech for a radio broadcast. In all these situations, speaking is a major problem for the ELLs as it involves many things and it is not so simple to acquire good speaking skills in a day or two. Moreover, the ELLs have to do continuous practice and allot more time on speaking skills as they are quite difficult to acquire without proper practice. Therefore, the best way to improve the ELLs' speaking skills is by giving more emphasis on practicing the speaking skills both in and outside the classrooms.

### The Advantages of Speaking Skills

Even if there are four other skills in the English language, speaking skills are the most effective one among them as a majority of communication is done through speech. Therefore, speaking skills are the most important method of communication. There is no doubt that

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proficiency in each skill is necessary to become a well-rounded communicator, but the ability to speak skillfully provides the speakers with several distinct advantages. The main advantages of speaking skills are:

- To participate actively in pair or group activities in the classrooms.
- To give a maiden and impressive speech on different occasions.
- To participate actively in debates and group discussions.
- To develop critical thinking among the learners.
- To pursue higher studies in foreign countries.
- To interact with people all around the globe.
- To promote the sale of products in the business.
- To make living abroad simpler and easier.
- To get better employment opportunities.
- To make use of the internet effectively.
- To perform well in job interviews.
- To acquire more knowledge.
- To travel to a foreign country.
- To do good international business.
- To earn high respect in the society.
- To give presentations for all purposes.
- To communicate effectively with others.
- To increase the income of the individual.
- To boost up the speakers' self-confidence.
- To know the different cultures of the world.
- To interact with people all around the globe.
- To keep over cognition and reasoning very sharp.
- To get better employment opportunities all over the world.
- To increase the ability of problem-solving and critical thinking.
- To improve the overall development of the speaker's personality.
- To highly motivate and attract the customers in buying the products.

Since there are many advantages of speaking skills, the English teachers should concentrate more on these skills and give the best priority to them as they are very useful for the overall development of the ELLs' performance. Thus, the teachers have to think of various techniques and approaches of speaking skills to develop the learners' oral communication which is the most essential one in this contemporary world.

How to develop Speaking Skills among the ELLs?

In the existing international market, there is a need to showcase the abilities of people's oral communication skills as the real success of their talent depends on how they

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present their speaking skills and how they convince the others in persuading them. Since everything depends on motivating and satisfying the listeners, employers, colleagues, co-learners or customers, speaking skills occupy a major place in all aspects. Therefore, the EFL/ESL teachers have to understand the present situation in the society and try to impart these speaking skills among their ELLs by applying the available latest techniques of teaching speaking skills. In this connection, the teachers have to replace the old-fashioned methods and approaches with the latest and innovative ones that grab the complete attention of for the learners to participate actively in these activities that take place in the regular English classrooms. Moreover, the teachers' burden is reduced when they think positively about the needs and interests of the ELLs. It is also important that the teachers have to change their method of teaching i.e. from teacher-centered environment to learner-centered environment so that the ELLs can get plenty of opportunities to participate in the teaching-learning activities that go on in the English classrooms. It also leads them to think and work on their own to complete the given tasks magnificently.

The English teachers have to adopt several techniques to develop the speaking skills of their learners because some EFL/ESL learners have a deep fear of making mistakes and some others have just plain shy and this is observed even in the native learners. At this juncture, English teachers can introduce some fun activities in the form of language games to get the learners to speak in English classrooms. Generally, most of the learners are interested in playing games in the classrooms and it is quite common that they ask for more and more games as they make them happy. When the learners practice these games in a fun environment, it is sure that they really improve their speaking skills enormously. At the preliminary stage, the teachers have to introduce fun games like guessing the item that is held in their wrists. In this connection, the teachers hold something in their wrists and keep the item as a secret one and the learners have to go on guessing it. Indeed, such types of activities certainly improve ELLs' speaking skills. As the learners have to just guess the unseen object and they have their own choice and freedom to express their opinions, they come out with more options and produce innumerable sentences in a learner-friendly environment. Therefore, the teachers should introduce such activities in their regular classrooms in order to involve the ELLS more and improve their speaking skills.

Then the teachers can introduce some activities such as "Speaking about themselves" by giving their own examples to the classroom. Thus, with the motivation they get from their teachers, the learners go on speaking about themselves since everything they speak is a fact that has been already stored in their memory. Then the teachers may extend this activity by asking the learners to say something about their parents, best books or best friends. Hence, these activities certainly give a chance to the learners to acquire speaking skills in a pleasant way.

The EFL/ESL teachers can also introduce brainstorming technique in their classrooms as it encourages the ELLs to produce more sentences and also try to think of themselves for getting new ideas about the topic given to them. In this technique, the learners have complete freedom to express any point that is related to the topic. As there is no hard and fast rule in expressing their ideas, automatically the learners will be motivated a lot and try to produce as many ideas as possible. Therefore, the ESL/EFL teachers should implement this brainstorming technique in their classrooms in order to involve the ELLs more in the activities and to develop their speaking skills unconsciously.

Another activity that is more useful for the ELLs to improve their speaking skills is introducing role-play activities in the classrooms. Role-plays are the best activities to introduce in the English classrooms to improve the learners' speaking skills in English during the second stage. The teachers have to form the learners into pairs and give them different topics to perform in the classroom. The teachers give ten minutes time for preparation and later they can ask the learners to accomplish the task. The teachers have to motivate and inspire the learners while they are getting ready for the task. With proper motivation and constant encouragement, the learners try to perform the given task well and try to speak grammatical sentences. The English classrooms will be the best platforms for the ELLs to improve their speaking skills through role-plays as the learners play the roles related to their daily life situations that take place in contemporary society.

Activities such as pair or group work also enhance the learners' speaking skills enormously since the learners get an opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas in a congenial atmosphere. The English teachers have to think of the needs and interests of the learners while selecting topics for these activities. At this juncture, it is wise to quote Rao S. P. (2018) who asserts, "While selecting the topics, the teachers have to take into consideration of the learners' needs and interests that lead the learners to work more on the given topics with interest and enthusiasm". Therefore, the teachers have to think more positively towards learner-centered methods to involve the learners by concentrating more on the activities related to speaking skills. When learners work in pairs or groups, they work independently and try to speak more and produce many sentences. This will certainly be helpful for the ELLs to boost up their confidence levels and inspire them to practice these speaking skills whenever and wherever they get the opportunity to speak. Therefore, the teachers have to provide more opportunities for learners to participate actively in pairs or groups to enhance their speaking skills.

Another activity that the teachers can use in their English classrooms to develop their ELLs' speaking skills is a story-telling technique. Through this technique, the teachers create situations and ask the ELLs to continue the story. Then the ELLs think logically and supply sentences that are relevant to the situation. As the learners have their own choice in giving responses and selecting the grammatical structures, they try to produce as many sentences as

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possible to complete the story. Moreover, there is no hard and fast rule to eliminate any points of the children since these stories are purely imaginative, not realistic ones. This technique encourages all the ELLs to contribute at least one sentence to finish the story successfully. Therefore, it is the duty of the teachers to encourage their learners to produce as many sentences as possible so that the learners' oral communication skills, as well as their power of imagination, will be immensely developed in a pleasant and enjoyable atmosphere.

Another technique to improve the speaking skills of the ELLs is to make them listen to music in English and sing along. Music is considered one of the best tools for learning intonation and pronunciation. When the song is easy to understand, then listening to and singing songs also help the learners remember the vocabulary and phrases. Moreover, music helps the learners learn to pronounce English rhythm in a more natural way. Just by imitating the singer unconsciously, the learners can learn to pronounce phrases the way the native speakers do. One of the best songs suitable for the EFL/ESL learners is the song "Tom's Diner" written by Suzanne Vega where everyday scenes and actions are described by using simple language. Furthermore, movies also seem to be a much better option for the ELLs to learn speaking skills in English. By watching movies, the learners get the opportunity to learn listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, idioms, and slang. Since songs and movies develop the speaking skills of the learners, the EFL/ESL teachers have to introduce this technique in their classrooms in order to improve the ELLs' speaking skills.

Speaking skills are very important for learners to sustain in this globally competitive world. Therefore, the English teachers have to introduce a variety of techniques in their classrooms by selecting simple and useful material that creates more interest and attentiveness among the ELLs towards learning speaking skills.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to highlight the importance of speaking skills in English classrooms. First of all, the significance of the basic language skills of English has been discussed elaborately. Then, the importance of speaking skills in the EFL/ESL classrooms has been comprehensively explained. Furthermore, the need to teach speaking skills in the classrooms has been illustrated. Later on, the kinds of speaking situations and the main advantages of speaking skills have been explained sumptuously. Moreover, some techniques to develop speaking skills among the EFL/ESL learners in the classrooms have been thoroughly explained. Finally, the teachers are given some suggestions to improve speaking skills among the ELLs in the English classrooms. Also, the ELLs are also advised to follow the guidance of their teachers in order to enhance their speaking skills.

Speaking skills are the most important skills for ELLs as they are very useful for them in exhibiting their communication skills for various purposes. Hence, the teachers have to take a special interest in improving the speaking skills of the ELLs. For this purpose, the teachers have to refer to the latest material related to and try to adopt several techniques and

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approaches to develop the speaking skills of the learners in the English classrooms. The teachers should also choose appropriate material suitable for the level of the learners. Moreover, the teachers should encourage the learners to participate in the classroom discussions where the learners improve their speaking skills tremendously. Also, the learners have to create situations themselves to speak not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Furthermore, the learners have to follow the instructions of their teachers in improving their speaking skills. Since the tips given by the teachers benefit the learners, they have to implement them sincerely to communicate well at all circumstances. Therefore, the EFL/ESL teachers have to implement different strategies and techniques in their teaching in order to make their learners proficient in their speaking skills. In this regard, the ELLs have to put their whole efforts to practice speaking skills and allot more time to such activities in order to prove themselves in the contemporary world.

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The author, Parupalli Srinivas Rao, has a vast experience of teaching English at various levels. He has been specialized in ELT and has authored 10 books and published several research papers related to ELT in various international journals. He has attended several national and international ELT conferences and also presented some papers in them. He has also attended many webinars.

He has been on the Editorial board for *fifteen* well-reputed international journals including *American Research Journal of English and Literature*, *Literary Endeavour*, *Research Journal of English (RJOE)*, *ELT Vibes*, *International Journal for Technological Research in Engineering (IJTRE)*, *South Asian Academic Research Journals (SAARJ): ACADEMICIA*, *Gyan may Pravah: International E-Journal for Research in Multidisciplinary Subject*, *Alford Council of International English and Literature Journal (ACIELJ)*, *Trans Asian Research Journal (TARJ)*, *Research Guru*, *International Journal of English and Studies (IJOES)*, *Shanlax International Journal of English*, *Journal of Medical Science and Clinical Research (JMSCR)*, *Journal of English Language and Literature (JOELL)* and *International Research Journal of Innovations in Engineering and Technology (IRJIET)*. He has also done several prestigious projects including a project done for the *National Council for Teacher Education*

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