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Activities to Promote Speaking in Communication and Soft Skills

Dr. John Wesly

Associate Professor of English,
Dept of Science & Humanities,
Loyola Institute of Technology and Management,
Dhullipalla, Sattenapalli,
Guntur, AP India.

This paper deals with how interactive a classroom should be. Few teaching strategies are to be followed to make the students involve themselves and be active in the classroom. There is larger role of the teacher these days to bring up the spirit of students, to encourage, counsel and boost their morale towards spoken English and develop enough communicative skills and soft skills. To support the teachers in teaching skills for the students activities are compulsory to involve the student. Activities make student and people interest to put themselves into so that they develop a sense of belonging to the class.

To speak and understand spoken English there are several reasons, such can be those who come from other countries need English for daily life to communicate with people, doctor, driver, school, college, community and work place. Where there is a strong classroom community that supports natural language production, students can actively participate in interactive, communicative activities in all facets of the classes, like icebreaking activities, goal-setting, life-skills, phonics, and spelling.

Activities include any other activities that encourage and require a learner to speak, listen to other learners. They have real purposes: to bring information, break down barriers, talk about self, and learn about the culture. Teachers should focus on activity based teaching when they are developing reading and writing skills according to Moss & Feldman “more learning takes place when students are engaged in relevant tasks within dynamic learning environment.” (Moss & Feldman: 2003)

Activities benefit students, teachers, elders, people who work in isolated environments. Offering well-designed and well-executed activities can turn the English classroom into an active, safe and enjoyable place where learners can learn what they need and want to learn. Most English language learners have some access to some schooling, it can be mainly teacher centred only. That is the reason for students failing to learn the language. According to study students learn more with activity based lessons rather than lecture in the classroom. A teacher should follow the following steps to maximize student activity in classroom:

Communicative activities those described below can raise learners towards independent and confident learning:

- Teacher should talk little
- Explain as much as possible by demonstrating the process, explaining in different ways, and repeating.
- Don't worry if every learn doesn't understand every part of an activity.
- Move on when majority of the learners get the idea of the activity.
- The teacher should observe and notice how much the students are dependent on the teacher and how much on themselves.
- The teacher should motivate and emphasize students to work independently, in pairs, small groups, then the more successful the class.

- The teacher should allow having some fun, communicative activities are designed to be lively, interactive, and jovial.
- The teacher should understand that when the students are active, cooperative in the class there is a great deal of learning.
- The teacher should ask the students to put these questions as an when activities are given, such as what, when, where, why, how, describe, examine.

Everyone communicates only few connect, said John Maxwell. If you want to make the right impact at your workplace, school, college, society and other places you have to follow certain rules mentioned in this paper to improve your communication skills. Communicating is something that we can't stop doing it. We are always doing it; even if we are not talking we are looking at each other it is another form of communication. Focus should be emphasized on student and his needs, wishes, feelings, interests, feeling of security, respect, curiosity, cheerfulness etc. Most of the students learn through participation. Each activity in this paper provides student opportunity to deepen their learning by applying concepts and articulating thoughts.

Bad communication starts when the communicator will not make eye contact. It shows anxiety, disinterest, and dishonesty. Eye contact is looking at another person in the eyes when, you are communicating. This can be interpreted as sincere, confidence and attentive. Focusing on the tone of your voice shows you are positive and energetic. In communication we consider tone as an additive in good communication. If your tone is good and clear it means you do not reflect fear and boredom. We should avoid using long and elated jargons. Jargons are not necessary especially when the information, which we pass, is simple and clear statements. Using jargons may sometimes mislead the receiver, so it is suggested that people should avoid lengthy jargons in their speeches.

Challenges and benefits in communication skills

- Your goal is to communicate well, clearly through written, oral and non-verbal communication.
- Make eye contact.
- Acknowledge someone's presence by looking them in the eye, especially if they just walked into the room or pass them in the hall.
- Looking at someone when they are talking to you.
- Don't let your eyes wander around the room.
- Monitor your body language. Show interest by sitting up and lean forward.
- Do not tap your foot or hands.
- Practice speaking.
- Be conscious of your pace and volume while taking.
- Practice with your close friend or family member if you are uneasy with personal relationships.
- Don't be nervous to speak in public, volunteer to give presentations within a smaller group and work your way to a larger one.
- Seek to build friendship with peers, supervisors, clients and business partners. Befriend colleagues and draw them into conversation. This let's you learn the language and mode of communication.

Soft skills are very much critical for the future development and success. Soft skills are nothing but personal attributes that allow us to effectively work out ourselves and relate to others. They enhance an individual's interactions, career prospects and job performance,

ability to interact with others. IT organizations aim to employ individuals possessing both communication and soft skills. However, now-a-days the demand for the later is increasing especially those in IT companies. There is a huge demand for soft skills trainers for training the students for the right job. Applying soft skills help us build stronger work relationships, work more productively, and maximize our career prospects. Often we place the focus of our career development efforts on hard skills – technology skills, knowledge, and other skills that specifically relate to our ability to get work-related tasks done. This means we neglect to develop our soft skills. However, soft skills are directly transferrable to any job, organization, or industry. As a result, they are an investment worth making.

Soft skills include:

- Communication
- Listening
- Showing Empathy
- Networking
- Self-confidence
- Giving and receiving feedback

Skills, particularly facilitates familiar ideas and activities that we already know them, which are simple, but they are effective when put into practical activities. There are also new approaches and support for the content to teach and also more comprehensible for English learners. The activities are selected in the following manner:

- The focus is provided that English learners get to practice the application of key content and language concepts.
- Promoting interaction of students with teachers and classmates.
- To provide opportunity to every student to use English while reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Teachers are emphasized on implementing LSRW skills in any subject area or grade level.
- To provide teacher the information necessary to use review and assessment of content and language objective the student uses.
- The teacher removes persisting fear and shyness and initiates learning experiences, concentrates the student on activities and tasks.
- Paves the way for learning and explore new things; ask questions and know rules.
- Learning to cooperate with other children, try to follow simple instructions with simple chores. Using the key of self control.
- Teaches the ability to use variety of materials and show interest in creative activity, express positive look, curiosity, eagerness to learn, showing independence in self learn, self-help skills, needs and engaging in imaginative self play and peers.

Arends (1998) stressed on the practice of interacting with others as a way of making teachers teaching style lively. It can prevent teaching from being stale and routine. When trying new techniques, they are not necessarily entertaining new principles. Most of them shared a common theme of emphasizing verbal tasks that focussed on meaning rather than language structure.(Breen, 1984).

The following are some of the activities which can be performed by the students to communicate well.

Storytelling: Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of entertainment. It was the television and radio of long ago. Today the art of storytelling has been revitalized in the United States.

Professional storytellers are appearing at festivals, concerts, and in elementary and secondary classrooms to share their art form. Teaching students to tell stories to their classmates is one of the most effective ways to develop speaking skills in young children.

To teach storytelling to students, it is not necessary to be a great storyteller yourself. It is helpful, however, if you can demonstrate to students some of the characteristics of an effective storyteller. A good storyteller should do the following things:

- Select a story that he or she really enjoys and that is appropriate for the audience.
- Be thoroughly familiar with the story; memorize only key phrases, not the entire story.
- Be imaginative and include gestures and facial expressions to convey meaning.
- Speak with expression, feeling, and emotion.
- Look directly at the audience; gaze about so that everyone feels involved in the story.

Students can briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Story telling fosters creative thinking. It also helps students express ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have. Students also can tell riddles or jokes. For instance, at the very beginning of each class session, the teacher may call a few students to tell short riddles or jokes as an opening. In this way, not only will the teacher address students' speaking ability, but also get the attention of the class.

After you have demonstrated storytelling techniques, divide your class into small groups and have students practice telling stories to one another. Storytelling is an art form that develops through practice. When ready, the students can share their stories with the entire class. Here are some activities to involve students in the art of storytelling. Activities like talk boxes, story boxes, wordless books, liar's goblet, serial stories, chalk or draw-along stories, new versions and new endings, puppetry and storytelling, sock puppets, finger puppets, paper-bag puppets, stick-and-ball puppets, shadow puppets, improvisation, reader's theatre, theatre acting.

Discussions: A discussion can be held for various reasons after a content based lesson. The main aim of the discussion should be that to make the student to arrive at a conclusion, share ideas about an event, or find solutions in their discussion groups. Before the discussion, it is essential that the purpose of the discussion activity is set by the teacher. The discussion points must be relevant to the topic of the lesson, so that students do not spend their time chatting with each other about irrelevant things. At the end, the faculty decides on the winning group by deciding who defended the idea in the best way. This kind of activity fosters critical thinking and quick decision making, and students learn how to express and justify themselves in polite ways while disagreeing with the others.

In order of being efficient at making group discussions, it is always better not to form large groups, because quiet students may avoid contributing in large groups. The group members can be either assigned by the teacher or the students may determine it by themselves, but it is suggested that small groups should be arranged in discussion activity so that students can work with various people and learn to be open to different ideas.

Role Play: One other way of getting students to speak is role-playing. Students pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. In role-play activities, the

teacher gives information to the learners such as who they are and what they think or feel. Thus, the teacher can tell the student that "You are David, you go to the doctor and tell him what happened last night, and..." (Harmer, 1984)

Simulations: simulations are very similar to role-plays but what makes simulations different than role plays is that they are more elaborate. In simulations, students can bring items to the class to create a realistic environment. For instance, if a student is acting as a singer, she brings a microphone to sing and so on. Role plays and simulations have many advantages. First, since they are entertaining, they motivate the students. Second, as Harmer (1984) suggests, they increase the self-confidence of hesitant students, because in role play and simulation activities, they will have a different role and do not have to speak for themselves, which means they do not have to take the same responsibility.

Information Gap: In this activity, students are supposed to be working in pairs. One student will have the information that other partner does not have and the partners will share their information. Information gap activities serve many purposes such as solving a problem or collecting information. Also, each partner plays an important role because the task cannot be completed if the partners do not provide the information the others need. These activities are effective because everybody has the opportunity to talk extensively in the target language.

Brainstorming: On a given topic, students can produce ideas in a limited time. Depending on the context, either individual or group brainstorming is effective and learners generate ideas quickly and freely. The good characteristics of brainstorming are that the students are not criticized for their ideas so students will be open to sharing new ideas.

Interviews: Students can conduct interviews on selected topics with various people. It is a good idea that the teacher provides a rubric to students so that they know what type of questions they can ask or what path to follow, but students should prepare their own interview questions. Conducting interviews with people gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps them becoming socialized. After interviews, each student can present his or her study to the class. Moreover, students can interview each other and "introduce" his or her partner to the class.

Story Completion: This is a very enjoyable, whole-class, free-speaking activity for, which students sit in a circle. For this activity, a teacher starts to tell a story, but after a few sentences he or she stops narrating. Then, each student starts to narrate from the point where the previous one stopped. Each student is supposed to add from four to ten sentences. Students can add new characters, events, descriptions and so on.

Reporting: Before coming to class, students are asked to read a newspaper or magazine and, in class, they report to their friends what they find as the most interesting news. Students can also talk about whether they have experienced anything worth telling their friends in their daily lives before class.

Picture Narrating: This activity is based on several sequential pictures. Students are asked to tell the story taking place in the sequential pictures by paying attention to the criteria provided by the teacher as a rubric. Rubrics can include the vocabulary or structures they need to use while narrating.

Picture Describing: Another way to make use of pictures in a speaking activity is to give students just one picture and have them describe what is in the picture. For this activity students can form groups and each group is given a different picture. Students must discuss the picture with their groups; later a spokesperson for each group describes the picture to the whole class. This activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.

Conclusion

Making classes more interesting will help your students to want to come to the class and take part in it. When teachers give them more active roles will make them sensible. Students tend to learn more when they are involved rather than watching and listening. Active classrooms make the teacher's job less burdensome. Setting a couple of activities that focus communication skills by investing time will reap huge benefits to the teacher and raises the standard of English language speaking of the students. Few of the training activities are mentioned in the paper that emphasize on key communication skills learning points.

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