

# Exploring Strategies Use for Enhancing EFL Learners' Speaking Skills: A Meta-Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

This present study was conducted to explore the EFL learners' speaking skill through the implementation of valuable strategies. Consequently this study was intended to explore the valuable usefulness of strategies that can enhance the art of speaking in foreign language classrooms. By analysing the literature, teachers may help EFL learners by involving them in choosing some of the materials for the class, engaging them in setting their own goals for language learning as well as providing activities that allow using the language in and outside the class for practical and relevant academic purposes.

**Keywords:** *Teaching Strategies, EFL Learners, Speaking Skills*

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## 1. Introduction

In the acquisition of English language, in which four skills such as; listening, reading, speaking, and writing must be learned by students from school up to university level. Speaking, like other skills, is placed as one of the significant skills for students to learn (Mudra, 2016; Yustina, 2012). Teaching of speaking skill is fundamental point to prepare students to be able to enroll in conversational activities or to use the language in communication. The major part of language lecturers in teaching new language is to direct the class activity for developing, improving, and increasing students' speaking skill (Burns & Joyce et. all, 1997). Moreover, teaching of new language is considered successful when learners are able to use the target language and communicate effectively. Therefore, in teaching-learning process, English instructors must motivate students enough to practicing English speaking skill in EFL classroom.

In Afghanistan, curriculum for English department, it has been stated that the objective of teaching English as a foreign language in Afghan universities, is designed to make the students able to use the language fluently and accurately in communication. To realize the objectives, teaching speaking skill is considered as necessary point. "Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information," (Bailey, 2007; Harmer, 2006; Jack C. Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

A successful teaching-learning process can be achieved through good instructors' preparation, high students' motivation, and appropriate instructional materials. To fulfill these requirements, lecturers must have good competence and apply an appropriate technique to motivate student for engagement in teaching. The appropriate technique applied in teaching speaking can increase students' participation to speak as well as to make them interested to join the class. In fact, though several efforts have been done by English lecturers in teaching speaking to gain acceptable students speaking skill, the results still do not meet our expectation. Many students still get difficult in using English in communication. Another fact, many students still use their mother tongues or first languages more than English in English class. If the lecturers want their students to be able to speak English, speaking skill should be taught more than other

language skills. In reality, the English lecturers still spend the majority of time in teaching reading and writing skills setting and almost ignore speaking skill. This is not considered a good balance.

By realizing the importance of developing students' speaking skill, the English lecturers must concern that the time allocated for practicing English should be more provided in teaching-learning process. Then, students should have participated actively to practice English whether in classroom or outside of classroom and the instructional materials should be related to students' interest in order to provoke them to speak.

## 2. Literature Review

Brown (2007) revealed that speaking is the productive aural/ oral skill, and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. He stated that speaking involves auditory, temporary (immediate, stress intonation), immediate feedback and planning and editing limited by channel. Furthermore, he expressed that there are many linguistic elements involved in speaking: text, utterance, clause, phrase, word, morpheme, phoneme, distinct feature, syllable, stress, rhythm, intonation, phonology, morphology, syntax and discourse. He further states that all levels of language operate when we speak, and conversation is not simple at all; therefore, it is crucial for language teachers to understand these units of language and to know how they work together. As an instructors, teachers should understand different methods and units of language for achieving better result in his/her teaching.

Freeman (2000) described the background of teaching speaking in EFL classroom. He revealed that people taught speaking for many years by having students repeat sentences and recite memorized textbook dialogues (Audio lingual). The investigator also explained that students learned the language by repetition or habit formation to improve their speaking, but unfortunately their speaking could not improve because they learned the language to speak by habit formation; then, during the late twentieth century several studies indicated that people acquire the second language by interacting with each other. As the investigator explained the dilemma this is so true because people require language unconsciously in the environment.

### 2.2 Focusing on Fluency and Accuracy

Brown (2007) and Harmer (2009) expressed that accuracy and fluency are important principles of teaching speaking. They state that fluency means to speak a language as fast as possible, and accuracy is the correctness of students' speech. Usually a difference is made between fluency and accuracy. These differences are difficult to maintain; fluency and accuracy are both important goals of teaching speaking. Fluency may be in many communicative languages an initial goal in teaching speaking.

Nunn (2003) expressed that teachers should give a chance to students who newly start to learn a language to improve their accuracy and fluency because it is an accepted theory that exposure to the target language helps the learner a great deal. The study further revealed that students cannot develop fluency if the teacher stops them to correct their oral errors and the teachers should know that creating mistakes are one of the part of language errors.

### 2.3 Using Group Work / Pair Work

Richards (2001) suggested that language teachers should provide oral group work activities in the class to improve students' speaking skills and develop successful oral group activities as they can identify the major problems faced by their students. The study also revealed students learn with the help of others. This will increase learning, planning, and discussion skills, and eventually will improve their speaking capabilities. The students will be involved as participants and decision-makers in oral group activities. This adds to the students' oral self-reliance and speaking capabilities. Speaking as a fundament of the four skills of speaking, listening, writing, and reading can be improved a great deal by this method.

Thornberry (2001) on the other hand, described that pair work and group work give the students more chances to speak English in the classroom. It means that students participate in the lesson much more actively because they are involved in talking to their friends, exchanging opinions, and practicing new structures more than listening to their teacher talking. He further stated that by dividing the class into groups students get more opportunities to talk in full class organization, and each student can say something.

### 2.4 Negotiation for Meaning

Harmer (2009) and Schiffrin (1994) suggested that teachers should provide some tasks for their students that involve negotiation for meaning and discussion. That is, students will be able to communicate in the target language and will develop their speaking as effectively as possible. The teacher should involve the students in a group to communicate with each other in order to improve their speaking skills.

## 2.5 Transactional and Interactional Speaking

Brown (2007) demonstrated that we are involved with transactional and interactional speech when we are speaking outside the classroom. He explained that interactional speech is based on social communication which is unpredictable, but transactional speech is based on something which has done. For instance, whenever we talk about assignment or any other project or shopping, so these are almost predictable. For the adult learners, being able to use both transactional and interactional speech are important because an adult learner having the metalinguistic awareness can easily take advantage of transactions and interactions outside the classroom. Outside of language classroom, people usually use speech for interactional and transactional purpose.

## 2.6 Classroom techniques and tasks

*Information gap:* It is a useful activity in which one person shares information on the target language and the other lacks (Nunan, 2003). According to him they are bidirectional or multidirectional information gaps in which a person in pair or group has some information that the other persons need. The task of teacher in these activities is to assign pair students to speak that they do not know each other. Furthermore; *role plays*, According to Nunan they are best activities where students are given particular roles in the target language.

On the other hand the author proves *Simulations* as well. He described that they are more complicated than role-plays because in simulation, props and documents provide a somewhat realistic environment for language practice. Harmer (2009) claims “Simulation and role-play can be used to encourage general oral fluency or to train students for specific situations especially where they are studying ESP” (p.274). According to Jones (1982), (cited in Harmer, 2009), simulation in order to work must, it has the following characteristics:

- Reality of function: The student must not think of themselves as students, but as real participants in the situation.
- A simulated environment: The teacher says that the classroom is an airport check-in area, for example.
- Structure: students must see how the activity is constructed and they must be given the necessary information to carry out the simulation effectively.

## 2.7 Classroom speaking activities

*Act from a script:* We can ask from our students to come to the front of the class and act out scenes from plays, their course-book, or from the dialogues they have written for themselves, and should sometimes filming the results (Harmer, 2009). He adds that we should select someone volunteer at the beginning but not the shyest one.

*Communication games:* Communication games (like puzzle, television and radio games, draw a picture, put things in the right order, or similarities and differences between pictures) are designed to enhance communication between students by talking with each other's (Harmer, 2009).

*Discussion:* As so some students are shamed whenever they discuss public or as a whole class, teacher should divide the class into small groups in order to solve such problem, and to reduce the stress level of that eventual whole-class performance (Harmer, 2009). One of the best ways of encouraging discussion (according to Harmer, 2009) is to provide activities which force students to reach a decision, often as a result of choosing between specific alternatives.

*Prepared talks:* Prepare talk is a popular kind of activity where students make a presentation on a topic of their own choice (Harmer, 2009). He says, as it represents a defined and useful speaking genre, and if properly organized, can be extremely interesting for both speaker and listener.

*Questionnaires:* Students can design questionnaires on any topics that is appropriate, but teacher should act as a resource, helping them in the design process (Harmer, 2009).

## 3. Result and Conclusion

By Reading and analyzing various literature, the investigator assumed several typical problems in the Afghan context that should be solved by English lecturers; students frequently get breakdown and demotivate while speaking, Students are encouraged to use more dominantly their mother tongues in speaking class activities, the communication created among them is frequently uncommunicative, and the lack of vocabulary needed to speak as students often get stagnating in speaking. In this case, the researcher also claims roughly that those problems are affected by the lack of curriculum emphasis on speaking skill, class conditions do not favor oral activities, and examination system does not emphasis oral skill.

Another part should be considered by the English lecturers is the criteria of instructional materials provided for teaching-learning process. Lecturers sometime do not realize in picking up material from textbooks which is not appropriate to students' level and

interest. The researcher argues that if the English lecturers use instructional material from textbooks, it should be used as a starting point. The lecturers need to redesign it to be more contextual in order to make students more interested in joining the class. Because, one of the unsatisfactory result of teaching speaking skill in university is the material learned by the students in classroom does not fulfill students' level and interest. The researcher further assumes that the inapplicable technique applied by the lecturers probably affected by the lack of students' vocabulary. Although the lecturer applies various techniques, the students' speaking skill will not be developed.

By analysing the literature, teachers may help EFL learners by involving them in choosing some of the materials for the class, engaging them in setting their own goals for language learning as well as providing activities that allow using the language in and outside the class for practical and relevant academic purposes. If motivating learners includes allowing them to being partially or totally in control of their learning, then it follows that the university's English courses should provide opportunities for students to participate in choice of the content, methods and evaluation that both enhance their learning or achieve program objectives. Consequently, instructors should revisit the English Program to meet students' needs. Motivating our students to learn the language should be priority as it is only through sharpening this 'tool' that they can be successful in both their academic and professional lives. Thus, I recommend that more field studies exploring strategies at the university level be carried out. Our students as others worldwide have proved to be effective in their work in any context. Let us join together, share our stories, and give our students the best opportunities to learn and make a difference.

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