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# MICELT 2008

The 7th Malaysia International Conference on English Language Teaching

## NEGOTIATING CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN ELT: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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## DAY THREE (14<sup>th</sup> MAY 2008, Wednesday)

**No: 91-PK1**

**Venue: Ampangan**

**Title of Presentation:** Effective Methods and Techniques for Teaching Speaking and Listening Skills in EFL and ESL Classes.

**Presenter:** Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh

Teachers are still confronting various problems for teaching listening and speaking skills in EFL and ESL classes. While there are effective techniques for teaching these skills, many teachers are still practicing traditional methods. Students in EFL and ESL classes, show greater interest in learning speaking and listening skills and then in reading and writing. This article that is based on a research and teaching EFL/ESL classes for finding and practicing effective techniques in teaching listening and speaking skills, will present the most effective methods for teaching these skills. In EFL and ESL classes, students should be directed towards a correct way of learning speaking and listening skills so that they are easily able to express their thoughts, needs and feelings. To achieve this goal, we need several methods and techniques from the beginning stages of learning these skills to the last level that is called "real communication." The writer of the article has been practicing these methods in two sample classes for three continuous semesters at the University. Comparing the students' abilities in speaking and listening skills in these sample classes with the other classes that were not benefiting these methods, the students in sample classes were much more fluent in their speaking and listening skills and had a better understanding of English culture, traditional circumstances and situations. For a better presentation of the subject matter, the paper is divided into three parts. In the first part of the article, an introduction will be presented along with a brief look at the traditional methods in teaching speaking and listening skills. The second part of the article is devoted to the new methods and techniques used and practiced in teaching these skills; and the last part of the paper will conclude the findings of the research.

**No: 92-PK2**

**Venue: Ampangan**

**Title of Presentation:** Excuse Me! Are You Free?

**Presenter:** Noorhayati Saharuddin, Nurizlin Azizuddin & Sa'adiyah Hussin

English is widely used in higher learning institutions (HLI). Or is it really? If it is, then students in HLI would have no problem communicating in the language. However, many students in HLI have problems using English to communicate (The Star Online, November 2007). A contributing factor might be the lack of usage in everyday speech among students. To encourage students to use English not only in but outside the classroom, the English Department of Malaysian Institute of Chemical & Bioengineering Technology (MICET), a branch of Universiti Kuala Lumpur, has launched 'Speak English Campaign' where students need to record their conversations (in English) with lecturers. This paper aims to look at the students' perception about the effectiveness of the campaign in helping them to become better communicators. This is done via a survey where students would comment on the plus and minus of this campaign, that is by stating the benefits that they obtain other than being able to speak in English, and also the challenges that they meet during the campaign. This paper also aims to measure students' motivation in carrying out the campaign and whether the students feel that this campaign should be continued in the future.

**DAY THREE: 14 MAY 2008**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>VENUE</b>	<b>PRESENTER (S)</b>	<b>TITLE OF PRESENTATION</b>
<b>8.30 – 9.30</b>		<b>KEYNOTE ADDRESS 3</b>	
KYN3	Ballroom	LIZ HAMP-LYONS	ETHICAL EXPECTATION WHEN CHOOSING AND USING TESTS FOR LEARNERS
<b>9.30 – 10.00</b>		<b>TEA</b>	
<b>10.00 – 10.45</b>		<b>PARALLEL SESSIONS K</b>	
91-PK 1	Ampangan I	RAJABALI ASKARZADEH TORGHABEH	EFFECTIVE METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS IN EFL AND ESL CLASSES
92-PK 2	Ampangan II	NOORHAYATI SAHARUDDIN, NUR IZLIN AZIZUDDIN, & SAADIAH HUSSIN	EXCUSE ME! ARE YOU FREE?
93-PK 3	Ampangan III	MANOOOCHEHR JAFARIGO HAR & MEHRI ALIZADEH	TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT VS. ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION
94-PK 4	Boardroom I	JASMINE SELVARANI EMMANUEL	TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING VIA THE OPEN DISTANCE LEARNING MODE: THE WOU EXPERIENCE
95-PK 5	Rasah I	SHARIFAH SHEHA SYED AZIZ BAFTIM & GHAZALI MUSTAPHA	THE TEACHING OF THINKING SKILLS AMONG ESL LEARNERS
96-PK 6	Rasah II	MOHAMMAD ZOHRABI	THE BORDERLINE BETWEEN EGP AND ESP COURSES
97-PK 7	Boardroom II	AINUL AZMIN HU MD. ZAMIN	MEETING THE NEEDS OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS: AN INSIGHT TO READING STRATEGIES

# MICELT 2008

## The 7<sup>th</sup> Malaysia International Conference on English Language Teaching

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### **Abstract**

#### **Effective methods and techniques for teaching speaking and listening skills in EFL and ESL classes**

English teachers in EFL and ESL classes are still confronting various problems in teaching listening and speaking skills. While there are many effective techniques in teaching these skills, many teachers are still practicing traditional methods that comparing to the new and creative methods, prove to be a great loss. English learners in EFL and ESL classes, first show a great interest in learning speaking and listening skills and then in reading and writing. In this way, students should be directed toward a correct way of learning these skills so that they are easily able to express their thoughts, needs and feelings. To achieve the goal, this needs several methods and techniques from the beginning stages of learning these skills to the last level that is called “real communication.” This article that is based on a research and teaching EFL/ESL classes for finding and practicing effective techniques in teaching listening and speaking skills, will present the most effective methods for teaching these skills. The writer of the article has been practicing these methods in two sample classes for three continuous semesters at the University. Comparing the students’ abilities in speaking and listening skills in these sample classes with the other classes that were not benefiting these methods, the students in sample classes were much more fluent in their speaking and listening skills and had a better understanding of English culture,

tradition, circumstances and situations. This paper is divided into three parts. In the first part of the article, an introduction will be presented along with a brief look at the traditional methods in teaching speaking and listening skills. The second part of the article is devoted to the new methods and techniques in teaching these skills; and the last part of the paper will conclude the findings of the research.

**Keywords:** Teaching English, listening and speaking skills, EFL and ESL classes.

**Bio Data:**

Rajabali Askarzadeh Torghabeh, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. He teaches English (ESL/EFL) and drama. He has published and presented numerous articles in the area of English language teaching and literature. He is currently compiling a textbook of drama for university students.

**Effective methods and techniques for teaching speaking and listening skills  
in EFL and ESL classes**

**Part one: Introduction**

**I. English Language**

English language is widely distributed around the world and is currently the primary language of a number of countries. It is widely spoken and taught in the world and is considered by many to be the universal and the international language; and this is the reason we find a great tendency for learning this language. When we think of English language skills, the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing come to mind. The amount of attention our students in EFL/ESL classes give to each skill area will depend both on the level of the learners as well as their situational needs. Students in EFL/ESL classes generally benefit most from listening and speaking instruction with relatively little work on reading and writing. As fluency increases, the amount of reading and writing may also increase and in some classes up to half of the lesson time can be spent on written skills. Although, when the learners in EFL/ESL classes feel it is a greater need, they wish to keep their focus weighted toward oral communication.

Listening and speaking skills are central at every level of instruction. The teaching reputations of many faculty members depend largely on their speaking ability. For students, too, effective listening and speaking is an important measure of academic success. The curriculum demands that students express their ideas, whether in open discussion or in formal presentation, through convincing and persuasive speech. It is obvious that whatever our students may do after the university, they will do it better if they possess effective listening and speaking skills.

**II. The importance of speaking**

Speaking is the skill by which EFL/ESL learners are most frequently judged and through which they make and lose friends. It is the vehicle of social solidarity, social ranking, professional advancement and business. It is also the medium through which

much language is learnt. Speaking is the main goal of many adult learners. Their personalities play a large role in determining how quickly and how correctly they will accomplish this goal.

The students who are unafraid of making mistakes will generally be more talkative, but with many errors that could become hard-to-break habits. On the other hand, conservative, shy students may take a long time to speak confidently, but when they do, their English often contains fewer errors and they will be proud of their English ability. It's a matter of quantity vs. quality. However, if the aim of speaking is communication and that does not require quality of perfect English, then it makes sense to encourage quantity in our classroom. Speaking skill is important not only for communication and performing basic transactions, but also for establishing and maintaining social relationships.

### **III. The importance of listening**

The other side of speaking is listening. Without effective listening, there can be no effective speaking, no communication; and without communication, no learning. No matter how much speaking a student may do in any given class; he or she will obviously spend much more time as a listener. All of us want to help our students become better speakers and better listeners. But in most courses both of these goals, especially listening skill, remain implicit.

Conversation is actually listening and speaking. If students in EFL/ESL classes listen very carefully to what is said, they can surely understand that and can provide complete answers. Most of the students in conversation classes are actually weak in listening, and their silence in the class is a proof of this. The teacher should recognize these students and help them to participate in conversation and class activities and persuade them to speak more in the class. If it is done, their listening can improve more and more.

The best situations for improving the student's listening in EFL/ESL classes are as follows:

- a) The teacher should use more interesting subjects and exercises in the class that can attract the students to listen more carefully.
- b) Students should speak loud enough to be heard.
- c) The teacher should give equal opportunities to the students to speak, and ask and answer questions; this makes them to listen to each other better.

Listening and speaking skills are vital for EFL/ESL learners. Listening and speaking are often taught together, but beginners, should be given more listening than speaking practice. It's important to speak as close to natural speed as possible, although with beginners some slowing is usually necessary. With reducing his/her speaking speed, by simplifying his/her vocabulary, using shorter sentences, and increasing the number and length of pauses in his/her speech, the teacher can make his/her language easier to comprehend. As Brown & Yule believe, "listening and speaking are the two different kinds of conversational interaction. The former is the exchange of information. The latter is the interactional function of conversation." (qtd. in Stern, 1991).

## **Part Two: Discussion**

### **I. Directing Conversation Classes**

Teachers are still confronting problems in teaching listening and speaking skills in EFL/ESL classes. Richard Sitller (1964) believes that many teachers in conversation classes lead the students to a way which has no ending, and the students confront a

big failure. This failure is because of the teacher's lack of clear methods and techniques for teaching listening and speaking skills. Students may feel that there is no need for a teacher in learning reading and writing skills, but for listening and speaking skills a teacher should be there to help them. The teacher in EFL/ESL conversation classes should guide the students toward a correct way of learning and helps them to express themselves and their ideas.

Unfortunately some teachers just waste their time, doing exercises and drills of the books and neglect practicing listening and speaking skills or conversation. In this way, the students lose their interests in learning and do not attempt to participate actively in the class. In the first step of teaching listening and speaking skills, the teacher should create a homely situation in which the worried and embarrassed students react to what the teacher says and what they hear. Then, through careful observation of the teacher, the students feel relax and take part in conversation and class activities.

Clifford Prator (1965) presents four main stages in the process of learning a language. In the first stage, he says, the students just repeat the sentences after the teacher. In the second stage, the students are asked to put elements in a sentence like "my father is a farmer." In the third stage, called Semi- Communicative Stage, asking and answering exercises are involved and in the final stage called Communicative Stage, comes free conversation. According to Prator, learning a foreign or a second language is a gradual advance from stage one to stage four.

## **II. Incentives for Learning Speaking and Listening Skills**

Problems in learning grammatical rules may weaken the incentives for learning English language skills; so it is the teacher's job to strengthen these incentives. Without the teacher's efforts, the students can not gain and achieve their goals. Earl Stevic (1965) believes that the main sources of incentives are the followings:

- a) The pleasure of finding and discovering something in a new language.
- b) The pleasure of learning and mastering a new language.
- c) The pleasure of referring to native language for remembering something in a new language.
- d) The pleasure of using a new language.

Incentives are very important in learning a new language. Wilga Rivers (1972) believes that we can not bring a group of learners together and want them to speak a new language when there is no incentive and interest. The two big problems in EFL/ESL conversation classes are large number of students and the students who do not know each other. But an experienced teacher knows how to deal with the problem. The teacher should be interested in his/her class and make the students interested in the discussions of the class. To do this, the teacher should be a part of the class and not a separate part. The students sit in circular way or semi-circular, and the teacher sits as apart of them. The students should change their seats every other time, to know each other better, and have better chances to talk together.

## **III. The Role of the Teacher**

Teachers play an important role in making the class active by their guide and arrangement. Students' initiatives should be encouraged and respected, but it does not mean there is no guide or assessment. The teacher can try to do these steps to have an active role in the class:

- a) Always act as an actor as well as a conductor.
- b) Give the students enough time to prepare what they want to speak.

- c) Let the students know the day before what they will be expected to participate in the next day.
  - d) Try first to call those students who speak and act better, to serve as examples. Then call those students who are poorer in English speaking.
  - e) Slow down when necessary and speak at a natural pace.
  - f) Stay on one topic for sometimes.
  - g) Constant correction slows down conversation and hinders the development of fluency. Correct only those errors that block communication.
- Teachers should invent more ways to let their students practice. This will arouse their interest to listen and speak and help them more easily to master these skills.

#### **IV. Friendly Environment**

Generally speaking, there are two factors that affect the students' speaking in EFL/ESL classes. One is they fail to find suitable words to express themselves and the other is, they are afraid of making mistakes. Sometimes they make mistakes when they are speaking, because they are shy and nervous. So, friendly environment helps the students to speak actively and try to be correct. On one hand, the teacher should try to ease his/her students' nervousness, and remove their fear and anxiety with encouraging words and on the other, he can also try the following ways to build a free and friendly environment. The teacher can:

- a) Let the students speak English sitting in their seats, not standing. They will not feel uneasy this way.
- b) Try to arrange the seats of the classroom in a circle or in groups, with the students facing each other.
- c) Try to divide the students into pairs and groups according to different topics he/she brings to the class.
- d) Let the class have 5-10 minutes free talk at the beginning of every class.

It is essential to try to build a friendly environment and an atmosphere where the students no longer feel shy, where they will voluntarily raise their hands to ask questions and freely express their own opinions.

#### **V. Planning for Conversation**

Some teachers in EFL/ESL classes believe that practical exercises in conversation classes should start with the intermediate and advanced students. These teachers oppose with the way that says: "students should learn all patterns of language from the beginning stages of learning." These teachers believe that students will later learn those patterns, using their creativity.

It is seen that students do not consider dictation or lexical exercises as a means of communication. These students, when entering intermediate or even advanced levels, are able to do all kinds of complex drills and exercises but are not able to speak. This is just because there has not been an effective method for teaching language skills. We need a practical way to solve the problem and that is controlling each pattern that the students learn, by practicing it in an oral way in the class. As the students move to intermediate and advanced levels, they would be able to communicate freely.

Mastering listening and speaking skills or communication, is best achieved through simple lesson planning and control.

To ensure an efficient and effective conversation, there are three considerations:

- a) The teacher must make his/her message understood.
- b) The teacher must receive/understand the intended message sent to him/her.
- c) The teacher should exert some control over the flow of the communication.

Thus students will learn to listen as well as to speak.



## **VI. Lesson Planning in Conversation Classes**

Lesson planning will help the teacher to teach with confidence.

Let's consider the following steps:

- a) Decide which communication skills you wish to develop.
- b) It's often a good idea to begin with some kind of warm-up activity to help the learners focus on English and block out the distractions of daily life.
- c) Most of the teacher's meeting time will probably be spent focused on one or two themes. Present new material and give learners a chance to practice it thoroughly.
- d) If the content is challenging, the teacher should choose activities that are relatively easy to do, like fill-in-the-blank exercises or guided discussion questions. If the content is fairly simple, he/she tries more challenging activities like role plays or problem-solving.
- e) The teacher keeps the focus on the learners and minimizes the time he/she spends talking as a teacher. In other words, the teacher makes the lesson as interactive as possible and focuses on communication.
- f) After each class, the teacher writes a brief summary of what he/she did. The teacher can include notes about what worked or didn't with ideas for improvement. The teacher can write down specific page numbers he/she covered in a textbook. He/she can also keep his/her lesson plans collected together, making sure to write notes on them about the success of various activities and whether he/she modified the lesson during class.

## **VII. Presentations and Class Management**

The teacher's presentation should have three parts: an introduction, body, and conclusion. Let's look at these three parts and see what the teacher should include in each.

The purpose of the introduction is not only to introduce our topic, but also to interest our audience in the topic. To do this better, the teacher can do the followings:

- a) Grab the audience's attention by somehow involving them in his/her topic.
- b) The teacher should preview the content of his/her presentation by offering a brief outline of what he/she will be discussing.

The body of the teacher's presentation should support his/her introduction. The teacher offers facts, opinions, and reasons to support his/her topic as well. The teacher should keep in mind that:

- a) The more organized and focused his/her presentation is, the more relaxed he/she will feel.
- b) He/she does not try to cover too much material.
- c) He/she speaks clearly, slowly and at an appropriate level for the students.
- d) He uses vocabulary that is appropriate for the students. If he/she uses new vocabulary, make sure to explain it and write it on the board.
- e) He/she makes eye contact with all the students.

The conclusion should restate the main points without giving examples. The closing statement of the teacher's presentation should pull his/her presentation together. Finally, the teacher should allow the students to ask questions at the end of his/her presentation.

The teacher should provide the necessary support to coordinate the contributions of the students. The degree of control the teacher exercises over the class, will vary throughout; if he/she gets the structure right at the beginning, a meeting can effectively run itself especially if the participants know each other well.

### **VIII. Conversation, Methods and Techniques**

The teacher should talk to his/her students about their views on different subjects. Ask them questions and simply try to fill their silence in the class.

In EFL/ESL classes, students actually try to speak and the teacher should be aware of this. He/she should not try to correct the students the same moment they make a mistake. The following ways can be useful in conversation classes where speaking and listening skills are practiced. The teacher:

- a) Calls his/her students by their first names, to make it more natural.
- b) Writes a dialogue on the board and asks the students to substitute words and make acceptable changes.
- c) Asks the students to make similar sentences to the ones on the board.
- d) Asks the students to perform the dialogue in front of other students in the class.
- e) Asks the students to write a conversation similar to the one on the board.
- f) Divide the class into different groups and asks them to write a dialogue and perform it in the class.

Other methods and techniques are the followings:

#### **1-Asking and Answering Questions**

Asking and answering questions is considered the main element in a conversation class. Asking and answering questions should be correctly planned to be fruitful. Exercises related to questions and answers are divided into four groups:

- a) Questions requiring one single answer.

In some conversation classes, EFL/ESL students are asked to provide long answers to questions, this is perhaps because of promoting them to speak more; but the students' general tendency is toward short answers, because of the least effort. The teacher in EFL/ESL conversation classes should promote the students to produce short declarative sentences and different forms of short answers. The point is that the students should avoid similar short answers and try to provide the answers not already given by others.

- b) Questions requiring several answers.

A teacher should practice more on this part of the exercise. Since the students in EFL/ESL classes tend to provide short answers, the teacher should use a technique called "multiple answers" to a question. If the students tend to make short answers, the teacher asks them to explain more about their answers.

- c) Questions made from the answers.

Students are asked to make questions for a statement or a sentence that seems to be an answer to something (she was wearing a red dress; for example, and they ask; who was wearing a red dress? What was she wearing? And so on).

- d) Questions having several parts taken from a simple sentence

EFL/ESL students tend more to answer than ask questions, then, making a question for a statement that seems to be an answer, can help them to be more creative. This kind of exercise also helps the students to practice grammatical structures more and more and be more creative. The teacher can write a sentence on the board and ask the students to make as many questions as possible. The other method is to ask the students to make imaginary interview situations and make as many questions as possible and then answer them.

## **2- Topics**

When EFL/ESL students reach to intermediate and advanced levels, they can speak without previous practice. This is exactly like what the actors sometimes do on a stage. To do this, the teacher, writes various topics and puts each of them in a separate envelop and does the following processes.

- a) Asks a student to choose an envelop.
- b) Asks him/her to read the topic for the class.
- c) Asks him/her to call another student and start speaking about the topic.

While the students are talking, the teacher does not interrupt them and writes down the mistakes if there is any; and let them come to a conclusion. When the dialogue is finished the teacher corrects the mistakes and asks other students what they would do if they were taking part in the dialogue.

## **3- Texts and Stories.**

In higher levels of English conversation classes, the teacher can use various short stories and texts.

- a) The teacher reads a text or a short story in the class and then asks the students some questions related to the text.
- b) A student reads a text or a short story in the class and then the teacher or other students ask him/her some questions related to the text.
- c) All the students read a text or a short story at home and then bring it to the class and ask and answer questions or they are asked to write some questions at home.
- d) All the students read a text or a short story at home and then they are asked to tell the summary of the story in the class.
- e) All the students read a text or a short story in the class and then discuss it.

## **4- Compositions**

In conversation classes, the teacher can use the students' compositions which they have written in their writing classes, so that the teacher:

- a) Can ask the students to talk about the title of their compositions in the class.
- b) The teacher can ask the students to bring their writings to the class. Each student will read his/her writing and other students ask questions related to the text.
- c) The teacher reads a composition in the class and asks the students to note down; then wants them to give a summary of what he has read.

## **5- Oral Presentations**

Oral presentations are a great way for EFL/ESL students to practice their listening and speaking skills. The extra pressure of knowing they're going to be in front of the classroom provides students with some great motivation for staying on task.

Presentations are not good for all levels and conversation classes. Instead, university students and those who can speak fluently and for a long time are good for this purpose. The teacher should consider some steps as the followings:

- a) Help the students in finding a topic.
- b) The students should be given enough time to prepare their presentations.
- c) The teacher should devote a short time for a short presentation and a longer time for a longer presentation.

- d) The teacher asks the students to write their presentations first and if they have any mistakes, correct them.
- e) The teacher should let the student feel relax in his/her presentation (does not ask him/her to stand in a specific place for example).
- f) The teacher informs the students that they are supposed to ask some questions from the presenter. This will motivate the students to listen to the presentation more carefully.
- g) When the student finishes his/her presentation, the teacher asks some questions from the student and lets the presenter relax for sometime. Then, the teacher wants the students to ask the presenter some questions.

### **6- Groups and Conversation Classes**

To get better results from teaching listening and speaking skills, the teacher can do the followings:

- a) Divide his/her class into small groups of three or four students.
- b) Give a separate topic to each group and ask a member of each group to write the discussed points.
- c) Give ten minutes to each group for their discussion and when the discussion is finished; ask each group to select a speaker and inform the class of the points they have discussed.
- d) Want your class to ask some questions from the speaker of each group or other members of the group.
- e) To motivate the class more and more, the teacher also participates in this class activity.

### **7- Panel Discussion**

Since EFL/ESL students can discuss in their mother language, panel discussion is very helpful in conversation classes. To help the students speak English more fluently, they need to practice more and more. In panel discussion sessions, the teacher can do the followings:

- a) Give a topic to the class.
- b) Let the students decide if they agree with the topic or no.
- c) Choose two groups for the discussion of the topic.
- d) Let the groups sit in front of the class to be seen by other students.
- e) When the discussion is finished; let other students ask questions from the members of each groups.

### **8- Pictures**

In teaching listening and speaking skills in EFL/ESL classes, pictures are very important.

- a) The teacher brings some pictures to the class and asks the students to look at each picture very carefully and explain it.
- b) The teacher can ask some questions from the students or want them to ask each other some questions.
- c) Each student is asked to bring a picture to the class and talk about it in the class or ask and answer questions related to the picture.
- d) A picture is shown to the students and they are asked to come and explain it. Other students can explain the details that were not already covered.
- e) Show similar and different pictures and ask the students to explain the similarities and differences of the pictures.

f) Show a picture to the students and ask them to make a story related to the items in the picture.

### **9- Films, Television and Radio Programs**

Films, television and radio programs are very helpful in teaching listening and speaking skills. Silent films are also of great importance. These films can be about art, history, literature and social issues. The teacher can do the followings:

- a) The teacher watches the films first and writes some questions for discussion in the class.
- b) The teacher lets the students watch the film and write down some questions and ask each other.
- c) The teacher lets the students watch the film and discuss some related issues the teacher presents.
- d) The teacher can ask the students to watch a specific television program or listen to a radio program at home, write down some questions and bring them to the class for discussion.

### **10- Proverbs**

Proverbs are very interesting for EFL/ESL students. In intermediate and advanced levels and also university classes, proverbs are of a great help and sustain the nature of English language. The teacher can write a proverb on the board and explain its structure and words and ask the students to make a similar one. Then the teacher can ask the students to talk about it in the class. In this way, the students can be familiar with the cultural aspect of English language as well.

### **11- E-mails and Letter Writing**

When I received my first letter from England twenty years ago, that was really pleasing and English language appeared really alive for me. In EFL/ESL classes the teacher can ask the students to refer to appropriate sites for finding new friends. In this way they will be very happy to use English language. The teacher can ask the students:

- a) To bring the e-mails and letters they have written in their letter writing class, or the letters and mails they have received from different parts of the world; read them for the class and talk about them.
- b) To write a short letter and read it in the class and others can talk about the contents of the letter.
- c) The teacher can divide the class into smaller groups and discuss the content of an e-mail or a letter they are going to write.

### **12- Group Works**

Group work is also another method for helping EFL/ESL students to learn listening and speaking skills. Team works such as sports, entertainment, cooking and painting are some group works that are really interesting for the students and can help them to learn these skills better and better.

### **13- Extracurricular activities**

Sports, going to parks, zoos, concerts and museums are really helpful in practicing listening and speaking skills. This is not only fun but also a great activity. This is because the students are asked to:

- a) Talk about each of these issues in the class.
- b) Ask and answer questions about each of them.
- c) Write about them and read it in the class so that other students can comment on the details that are not mentioned.
- d) The teacher can also let the students have an English class out of classroom with such activities as a class barbecue, picnic and party.

#### **14- Games**

Games in EFL/ESL conversation classes make the students not to get tired; and make the class an interesting place for the learners.

- a) The teacher asks the students to wear masks and play roles. Wearing a mask also protects the students from embarrassment.
- b) One student is given a simple drawing and sits behind another student, facing away. The first must give instructions to the second to reproduce the drawing. The second student asks questions to clarify unclear instructions, and neither can look at each other's page during the activity.

#### **15-Poetry**

This is also another way for better learning listening and speaking skills. Plutarch believes: "poetry is an image that speaks to us." (qtd. in Edward Allen). The teacher can bring poems to class and

- a) Read them for the students.
- b) Talk about the theme of the poems.
- c) Ask the students to search for the biography of the poets and present them in the class.
- d) Ask the students to comment on each poem.
- e) Ask the students to learn them by their hearts, since memorizing is a good way to learn English language.

#### **16- Songs**

Students in EFL/ESL classes enjoy singing songs. The teacher asks the students to listen to a song very carefully, and then sing it together. This brings a live atmosphere to the class, especially when the students sing it together. The teacher can divide the class into groups and sing a song; then asks each group to repeat it.

#### **17- Short plays**

This is also a good method for intermediate and advanced levels and also university students. Since plays are consists of dialogues,

- a) Students can practice short dialogues and perform it in the class.
- b) Students can practice short plays and perform it in the class and in this way act different roles.
- c) The teacher writes some topics on the board and asks the students to write short dialogues for each topic and then perform them in the class.
- d) The teacher can divide the class into different groups and give some topics to work together and write a very short play for performance in the class.
- e) The teacher can ask other students to comment on the performance or give their suggestions on the dialogues.

Since this is a very helpful way and makes the students creative, it can help them to practice listening and speaking skills more and more.

After students finish their speaking in class, the teacher should encourage them and let the students feel they have made some progress. The teacher tries to do these steps:

- a) Be firm in a gentle way and give them praise whenever they are doing anything close to a good job.
- b) Be sincere and look for opportunities to find them doing something right. Never get frustrated, angry and impatient.
- c) Be a nice, sensitive, and approachable person at all times. Never single students out or put them on the spot.
- d) Treat them with kindness and respect. Smile a lot and value their opinions. Never embarrass anyone for a laugh.

In doing each of these methods, the teacher should point out apparent mistakes in the students' speaking, for example, the incorrect words in pronunciation or some serious mistakes in grammar, but it is better to mention that after the students have finished their speech; and when the conversation is actually finished, the teacher should give students, a clear understanding of the outcome.

### **Part Three: Conclusion**

Students need to communicate to coordinate their own work and that of others. Without explicit effort their conversation will lack communication and so the teachers' work too will collapse. The key to success is to treat a conversation as we would do any other managed activity; by establishing an aim, planning what to do, and checking afterwards that we have achieved that aim. Only in this way we can work effectively with others in building through common effort.

In classes where students are practicing speaking and listening skills, they must be given opportunities to produce meaningful spoken messages with real communicative purposes; and they must be given opportunities to improve fluency. In conversation classes there must be some attention to the formal aspects of speaking such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and the appropriate use of the spoken language. There must be opportunity and encouragement for learners to produce meaningful spoken messages where the messages have real communicative goals. At elementary levels, emphasis should be placed on form-focused activities; at higher levels, a correspondingly greater emphasis should be placed on fluency activities. All of these parts, however, should be present at each stage of an effective speaking program.

When our students are encouraged to participate in conversations, they learn to use spoken language for a variety of purposes, follow and give simple directions and instructions. Ask and answer questions, use appropriate speed when they speak, follow the rules of polite conversation, such as staying on a topic and taking turns, use language to express and describe their feelings and ideas, and listen carefully for different purposes, such as to get information or for enjoyment.

Students actually have a strong desire to listen and speak English. They are reluctant to listen and speak, because they are afraid of making mistakes and failing to find suitable words to express themselves well. If the teacher try to encourage them to speak by using as many ways as possible and creating a good language speaking environment, students will speak actively, willingly and naturally. Listening and speaking as two of the four skills of English language can be mastered only through practice. Practice makes perfect.

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# **MICELT 2008**

## **The 7<sup>th</sup> Malaysia**

### **International Conference**

#### **on English Language**

##### **Teaching**

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#### **Abstract**

##### **Effective methods and techniques for teaching speaking and listening skills in EFL and ESL classes**

English teachers in EFL and ESL classes are still confronting various problems in teaching listening and speaking skills. While there are many effective techniques in teaching these skills, many teachers are still practicing traditional methods that comparing to the new and creative methods, prove to be a great loss. English learners in EFL and ESL classes, first show a great interest in learning speaking and listening skills and then in reading and writing. In this way, students should be directed toward a correct way of learning these skills so that they are easily able to express their thoughts, needs and feelings. To achieve the goal, this needs several methods and techniques from the beginning stages of learning these skills to the last level that is called "real communication." This article that is based on a research and teaching EFL/ESL classes for finding and practicing effective techniques in teaching listening and speaking skills, will present the most effective methods for teaching these skills. The writer of the article has been practicing these methods in two sample classes for three continuous semesters at the University. Comparing the students' abilities in speaking and listening skills in these sample classes with the other classes that were not benefiting these methods, the students in sample classes were much more fluent in their speaking and listening skills and had a better understanding of English culture, tradition, circumstances and situations. This paper is divided into three parts. In the first part of the article, an introduction will be presented along with a brief look at the traditional methods in teaching speaking and listening skills. The second part of the

article is devoted to the new methods and techniques in teaching these skills; and the last part of the paper will conclude the findings of the research.

**Keywords:** Teaching English, listening and speaking skills, EFL and ESL classes.

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## **Effective methods and techniques for teaching speaking and listening skills in EFL and ESL classes**

### **Part one: Introduction**

#### **I. English Language**

English language is widely distributed around the world and is currently the primary language of a number of countries. It is widely spoken and taught in the world and is considered by many to be the universal and the international language; and this is the reason we find a great tendency for learning this language. When we think of English language skills, the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing come to mind. The amount of attention our students in EFL/ESL classes give to each skill area will depend both on the level of the learners as well as their situational needs. Students in EFL/ESL classes generally benefit most from listening and speaking instruction with relatively little work on reading and writing. As fluency increases, the amount of reading and writing may also increase and in some classes up to half of the lesson time can be spent on written skills. Although, when the learners in EFL/ESL classes feel it is a greater need, they wish to keep their focus weighted toward oral communication.

Listening and speaking skills are central at every level of instruction. The teaching reputations of many faculty members depend largely on their speaking ability. For students, too, effective listening and speaking is an important measure of academic success. The curriculum demands that students express their ideas, whether in open discussion or in formal presentation, through convincing and persuasive speech. It is obvious that whatever our students may do after the university, they will do it better if they possess effective listening and speaking skills.

#### **II. The importance of speaking**

Speaking is the skill by which EFL/ESL learners are most frequently judged and through which they make and lose friends. It is the vehicle of social solidarity, social ranking, professional advancement and business. It is also the medium through which much language is learnt. Speaking is the main goal of many adult learners. Their personalities play a large role in determining how quickly and how correctly they will accomplish this goal.

The students who are unafraid of making mistakes will generally be more talkative, but with many errors that could become hard-to-break habits. On the other hand, conservative, shy students may take a long time to speak confidently, but when they do, their English often contains fewer errors and they will be proud of their English ability. It's a matter of quantity vs. quality. However, if the aim of speaking is communication and that does not require quality of perfect English, then it makes sense to encourage quantity in our classroom. Speaking skill is important not only for communication and performing basic transactions, but also for establishing and maintaining social relationships.

### **III. The importance of listening**

The other side of speaking is listening. Without effective listening, there can be no effective speaking, no communication; and without communication, no learning. No matter how much speaking a student may do in any given class; he or she will obviously spend much more time as a listener. All of us want to help our students become better speakers and better listeners. But in most courses both of these goals, especially listening skill, remain implicit.

Conversation is actually listening and speaking. If students in EFL/ESL classes listen very carefully to what is said, they can surely understand that and can provide complete answers. Most of the students in conversation classes are actually weak in listening, and their silence in the class is a proof of this. The teacher should recognize these students and help them to participate in conversation and class activities and persuade them to speak more in the class. If it is done, their listening can improve more and more.

The best situations for improving the student's listening in EFL/ESL classes are as follows:

- a) The teacher should use more interesting subjects and exercises in the class that can attract the students to listen more carefully.
- b) Students should speak loud enough to be heard.
- c) The teacher should give equal opportunities to the students to speak, and ask and answer questions; this makes them to listen to each other better.

Listening and speaking skills are vital for EFL/ESL learners. Listening and speaking are often taught together, but beginners, should be given more listening than speaking practice. It's important to speak as close to natural speed as possible, although with beginners some slowing is usually necessary. With reducing his/her speaking speed, by simplifying his/her vocabulary, using shorter sentences, and increasing the number and length of pauses in his/her speech, the teacher can make his/her language easier to comprehend. As Brown & Yule believe, "listening and speaking are the two different kinds of conversational interaction. The former is the exchange of information. The latter is the interactional function of conversation." (qtd. in Stern, 1991).

## **Part Two: Discussion**

### **I. Directing Conversation Classes**

Teachers are still confronting problems in teaching listening and speaking skills in EFL/ESL classes. Richard Sitller (1964) believes that many teachers in conversation classes lead the students to a way which has no ending, and the students confront a big failure. This failure is because of the teacher's lack of clear methods and techniques for teaching listening and speaking skills. Students may feel that there is no need for a teacher in learning reading and writing skills, but for listening and

speaking skills a teacher should be there to help them. The teacher in EFL/ESL conversation classes should guide the students toward a correct way of learning and helps them to express themselves and their ideas.

Unfortunately some teachers just waste their time, doing exercises and drills of the books and neglect practicing listening and speaking skills or conversation. In this way, the students lose their interests in learning and do not attempt to participate actively in the class. In the first step of teaching listening and speaking skills, the teacher should create a homely situation in which the worried and embarrassed students react to what the teacher says and what they hear. Then, through careful observation of the teacher, the students feel relax and take part in conversation and class activities.

Clifford Prator (1965) presents four main stages in the process of learning a language. In the first stage, he says, the students just repeat the sentences after the teacher. In the second stage, the students are asked to put elements in a sentence like “my father is a farmer.” In the third stage, called Semi- Communicative Stage, asking and answering exercises are involved and in the final stage called Communicative Stage, comes free conversation. According to Prator, learning a foreign or a second language is a gradual advance from stage one to stage four.

## **II. Incentives for Learning Speaking and Listening Skills**

Problems in learning grammatical rules may weaken the incentives for learning English language skills; so it is the teacher’s job to strengthen these incentives. Without the teacher’s efforts, the students can not gain and achieve their goals. Earl Stevic (1965) believes that the main sources of incentives are the followings:

- a) The pleasure of finding and discovering something in a new language.
- b) The pleasure of learning and mastering a new language.
- c) The pleasure of referring to native language for remembering something in a new language.
- d) The pleasure of using a new language.

Incentives are very important in learning a new language. Wilga Rivers (1972) believes that we can not bring a group of learners together and want them to speak a new language when there is no incentive and interest. The two big problems in EFL/ESL conversation classes are large number of students and the students who do not know each other. But an experienced teacher knows how to deal with the problem. The teacher should be interested in his/her class and make the students interested in the discussions of the class. To do this, the teacher should be a part of the class and not a separate part. The students sit in circular way or semi-circular, and the teacher sits as apart of them. The students should change their seats every other time, to know each other better, and have better chances to talk together.

## **III. The Role of the Teacher**

Teachers play an important role in making the class active by their guide and arrangement. Students' initiatives should be encouraged and respected, but it does not mean there is no guide or assessment. The teacher can try to do these steps to have an active role in the class:

- a) Always act as an actor as well as a conductor.
- b) Give the students enough time to prepare what they want to speak.
- c) Let the students know the day before what they will be expected to participate in the next day.

- d) Try first to call those students who speak and act better, to serve as examples. Then call those students who are poorer in English speaking.
  - e) Slow down when necessary and speak at a natural pace.
  - f) Stay on one topic for sometimes.
  - g) Constant correction slows down conversation and hinders the development of fluency. Correct only those errors that block communication.
- Teachers should invent more ways to let their students practice. This will arouse their interest to listen and speak and help them more easily to master these skills.

#### **IV. Friendly Environment**

Generally speaking, there are two factors that affect the students' speaking in EFL/ESL classes. One is they fail to find suitable words to express themselves and the other is, they are afraid of making mistakes. Sometimes they make mistakes when they are speaking, because they are shy and nervous. So, friendly environment helps the students to speak actively and try to be correct. On one hand, the teacher should try to ease his/her students' nervousness, and remove their fear and anxiety with encouraging words and on the other, he can also try the following ways to build a free and friendly environment. The teacher can:

- a) Let the students speak English sitting in their seats, not standing. They will not feel uneasy this way.
- b) Try to arrange the seats of the classroom in a circle or in groups, with the students facing each other.
- c) Try to divide the students into pairs and groups according to different topics he/she brings to the class.
- d) Let the class have 5-10 minutes free talk at the beginning of every class.

It is essential to try to build a friendly environment and an atmosphere where the students no longer feel shy, where they will voluntarily raise their hands to ask questions and freely express their own opinions.

#### **V. Planning for Conversation**

Some teachers in EFL/ESL classes believe that practical exercises in conversation classes should start with the intermediate and advanced students. These teachers oppose with the way that says: "students should learn all patterns of language from the beginning stages of learning." These teachers believe that students will later learn those patterns, using their creativity.

It is seen that students do not consider dictation or lexical exercises as a means of communication. These students, when entering intermediate or even advanced levels, are able to do all kinds of complex drills and exercises but are not able to speak. This is just because there has not been an effective method for teaching language skills. We need a practical way to solve the problem and that is controlling each pattern that the students learn, by practicing it in an oral way in the class. As the students move to intermediate and advanced levels, they would be able to communicate freely.

Mastering listening and speaking skills or communication, is best achieved through simple lesson planning and control.

To ensure an efficient and effective conversation, there are three considerations:

- a) The teacher must make his/her message understood.
- b) The teacher must receive/understand the intended message sent to him/her.
- c) The teacher should exert some control over the flow of the communication.

Thus students will learn to listen as well as to speak.

## **VI. Lesson Planning in Conversation Classes**

Lesson planning will help the teacher to teach with confidence.

Let's consider the following steps:

- a) Decide which communication skills you wish to develop.
- b) It's often a good idea to begin with some kind of warm-up activity to help the learners focus on English and block out the distractions of daily life.
- c) Most of the teacher's meeting time will probably be spent focused on one or two themes. Present new material and give learners a chance to practice it thoroughly.
- d) If the content is challenging, the teacher should choose activities that are relatively easy to do, like fill-in-the-blank exercises or guided discussion questions. If the content is fairly simple, he/she tries more challenging activities like role plays or problem-solving.
- e) The teacher keeps the focus on the learners and minimizes the time he/she spends talking as a teacher. In other words, the teacher makes the lesson as interactive as possible and focuses on communication.
- f) After each class, the teacher writes a brief summary of what he/she did. The teacher can include notes about what worked or didn't with ideas for improvement. The teacher can write down specific page numbers he/she covered in a textbook. He/she can also keep his/her lesson plans collected together, making sure to write notes on them about the success of various activities and whether he/she modified the lesson during class.

## **VII. Presentations and Class Management**

The teacher's presentation should have three parts: an introduction, body, and conclusion. Let's look at these three parts and see what the teacher should include in each.

The purpose of the introduction is not only to introduce our topic, but also to interest our audience in the topic. To do this better, the teacher can do the followings:

- a) Grab the audience's attention by somehow involving them in his/her topic.
- b) The teacher should preview the content of his/her presentation by offering a brief outline of what he/she will be discussing.

The body of the teacher's presentation should support his/her introduction. The teacher offers facts, opinions, and reasons to support his/her topic as well. The teacher should keep in mind that:

- a) The more organized and focused his/her presentation is, the more relaxed he/she will feel.
- b) He/she does not try to cover too much material.
- c) He/she speaks clearly, slowly and at an appropriate level for the students.
- d) He uses vocabulary that is appropriate for the students. If he/she uses new vocabulary, make sure to explain it and write it on the board.
- e) He/she makes eye contact with all the students.

The conclusion should restate the main points without giving examples. The closing statement of the teacher's presentation should pull his/her presentation together. Finally, the teacher should allow the students to ask questions at the end of his/her presentation.

The teacher should provide the necessary support to coordinate the contributions of the students. The degree of control the teacher exercises over the class, will vary throughout; if he/she gets the structure right at the beginning, a meeting can effectively run itself especially if the participants know each other well.



### **VIII. Conversation, Methods and Techniques**

The teacher should talk to his/her students about their views on different subjects. Ask them questions and simply try to fill their silence in the class.

In EFL/ESL classes, students actually try to speak and the teacher should be aware of this. He/she should not try to correct the students the same moment they make a mistake. The following ways can be useful in conversation classes where speaking and listening skills are practiced. The teacher:

- a) Calls his/her students by their first names, to make it more natural.
- b) Writes a dialogue on the board and asks the students to substitute words and make acceptable changes.
- c) Asks the students to make similar sentences to the ones on the board.
- d) Asks the students to perform the dialogue in front of other students in the class.
- e) Asks the students to write a conversation similar to the one on the board.
- f) Divide the class into different groups and asks them to write a dialogue and perform it in the class.

Other methods and techniques are the followings:

#### **1-Asking and Answering Questions**

Asking and answering questions is considered the main element in a conversation class. Asking and answering questions should be correctly planned to be fruitful. Exercises related to questions and answers are divided into four groups:

- a) Questions requiring one single answer.

In some conversation classes, EFL/ESL students are asked to provide long answers to questions, this is perhaps because of promoting them to speak more; but the students' general tendency is toward short answers, because of the least effort. The teacher in EFL/ESL conversation classes should promote the students to produce short declarative sentences and different forms of short answers. The point is that the students should avoid similar short answers and try to provide the answers not already given by others.

- b) Questions requiring several answers.

A teacher should practice more on this part of the exercise. Since the students in EFL/ESL classes tend to provide short answers, the teacher should use a technique called "multiple answers" to a question. If the students tend to make short answers, the teacher asks them to explain more about their answers.

- c) Questions made from the answers.

Students are asked to make questions for a statement or a sentence that seems to be an answer to something (she was wearing a red dress; for example, and they ask; who was wearing a red dress? What was she wearing? And so on).

- d) Questions having several parts taken from a simple sentence

EFL/ESL students tend more to answer than ask questions, then, making a question for a statement that seems to be an answer, can help them to be more creative. This kind of exercise also helps the students to practice grammatical structures more and more and be more creative. The teacher can write a sentence on the board and ask the students to make as many questions as possible. The other method is to ask the students to make imaginary interview situations and make as many questions as possible and then answer them.

## **2- Topics**

When EFL/ESL students reach to intermediate and advanced levels, they can speak without previous practice. This is exactly like what the actors sometimes do on a stage. To do this, the teacher, writes various topics and puts each of them in a separate envelop and does the following processes.

- a) Asks a student to choose an envelop.
- b) Asks him/her to read the topic for the class.
- c) Asks him/her to call another student and start speaking about the topic.

While the students are talking, the teacher does not interrupt them and writes down the mistakes if there is any; and let them come to a conclusion. When the dialogue is finished the teacher corrects the mistakes and asks other students what they would do if they were taking part in the dialogue.

## **3- Texts and Stories.**

In higher levels of English conversation classes, the teacher can use various short stories and texts.

- a) The teacher reads a text or a short story in the class and then asks the students some questions related to the text.
- b) A student reads a text or a short story in the class and then the teacher or other students ask him/her some questions related to the text.
- c) All the students read a text or a short story at home and then bring it to the class and ask and answer questions or they are asked to write some questions at home.
- d) All the students read a text or a short story at home and then they are asked to tell the summary of the story in the class.
- e) All the students read a text or a short story in the class and then discuss it.

## **4- Compositions**

In conversation classes, the teacher can use the students' compositions which they have written in their writing classes, so that the teacher:

- a) Can ask the students to talk about the title of their compositions in the class.
- b) The teacher can ask the students to bring their writings to the class. Each student will read his/her writing and other students ask questions related to the text.
- c) The teacher reads a composition in the class and asks the students to note down; then wants them to give a summary of what he has read.

## **5- Oral Presentations**

Oral presentations are a great way for EFL/ESL students to practice their listening and speaking skills. The extra pressure of knowing they're going to be in front of the classroom provides students with some great motivation for staying on task.

Presentations are not good for all levels and conversation classes. Instead, university students and those who can speak fluently and for a long time are good for this purpose. The teacher should consider some steps as the followings:

- a) Help the students in finding a topic.
- b) The students should be given enough time to prepare their presentations.
- c) The teacher should devote a short time for a short presentation and a longer time for a longer presentation.

- d) The teacher asks the students to write their presentations first and if they have any mistakes, correct them.
- e) The teacher should let the student feel relax in his/her presentation (does not ask him/her to stand in a specific place for example).
- f) The teacher informs the students that they are supposed to ask some questions from the presenter. This will motivate the students to listen to the presentation more carefully.
- g) When the student finishes his/her presentation, the teacher asks some questions from the student and lets the presenter relax for sometime. Then, the teacher wants the students to ask the presenter some questions.

### **6- Groups and Conversation Classes**

To get better results from teaching listening and speaking skills, the teacher can do the followings:

- a) Divide his/her class into small groups of three or four students.
- b) Give a separate topic to each group and ask a member of each group to write the discussed points.
- c) Give ten minutes to each group for their discussion and when the discussion is finished; ask each group to select a speaker and inform the class of the points they have discussed.
- d) Want your class to ask some questions from the speaker of each group or other members of the group.
- e) To motivate the class more and more, the teacher also participates in this class activity.

### **7- Panel Discussion**

Since EFL/ESL students can discuss in their mother language, panel discussion is very helpful in conversation classes. To help the students speak English more fluently, they need to practice more and more. In panel discussion sessions, the teacher can do the followings:

- a) Give a topic to the class.
- b) Let the students decide if they agree with the topic or no.
- c) Choose two groups for the discussion of the topic.
- d) Let the groups sit in front of the class to be seen by other students.
- e) When the discussion is finished; let other students ask questions from the members of each groups.

### **8- Pictures**

In teaching listening and speaking skills in EFL/ESL classes, pictures are very important.

- a) The teacher brings some pictures to the class and asks the students to look at each picture very carefully and explain it.
- b) The teacher can ask some questions from the students or want them to ask each other some questions.
- c) Each student is asked to bring a picture to the class and talk about it in the class or ask and answer questions related to the picture.
- d) A picture is shown to the students and they are asked to come and explain it. Other students can explain the details that were not already covered.
- e) Show similar and different pictures and ask the students to explain the similarities and differences of the pictures.

f) Show a picture to the students and ask them to make a story related to the items in the picture.

### **9- Films, Television and Radio Programs**

Films, television and radio programs are very helpful in teaching listening and speaking skills. Silent films are also of great importance. These films can be about art, history, literature and social issues. The teacher can do the followings:

- a) The teacher watches the films first and writes some questions for discussion in the class.
- b) The teacher lets the students watch the film and write down some questions and ask each other.
- c) The teacher lets the students watch the film and discuss some related issues the teacher presents.
- d) The teacher can ask the students to watch a specific television program or listen to a radio program at home, write down some questions and bring them to the class for discussion.

### **10- Proverbs**

Proverbs are very interesting for EFL/ESL students. In intermediate and advanced levels and also university classes, proverbs are of a great help and sustain the nature of English language. The teacher can write a proverb on the board and explain its structure and words and ask the students to make a similar one. Then the teacher can ask the students to talk about it in the class. In this way, the students can be familiar with the cultural aspect of English language as well.

### **11- E-mails and Letter Writing**

When I received my first letter from England twenty years ago, that was really pleasing and English language appeared really alive for me. In EFL/ESL classes the teacher can ask the students to refer to appropriate sites for finding new friends. In this way they will be very happy to use English language. The teacher can ask the students:

- a) To bring the e-mails and letters they have written in their letter writing class, or the letters and mails they have received from different parts of the world; read them for the class and talk about them.
- b) To write a short letter and read it in the class and others can talk about the contents of the letter.
- c) The teacher can divide the class into smaller groups and discuss the content of an e-mail or a letter they are going to write.

### **12- Group Works**

Group work is also another method for helping EFL/ESL students to learn listening and speaking skills. Team works such as sports, entertainment, cooking and painting are some group works that are really interesting for the students and can help them to learn these skills better and better.

### **13- Extracurricular activities**

Sports, going to parks, zoos, concerts and museums are really helpful in practicing listening and speaking skills. This is not only fun but also a great activity. This is because the students are asked to:

- a) Talk about each of these issues in the class.
- b) Ask and answer questions about each of them.
- c) Write about them and read it in the class so that other students can comment on the details that are not mentioned.
- d) The teacher can also let the students have an English class out of classroom with such activities as a class barbecue, picnic and party.

#### **14- Games**

Games in EFL/ESL conversation classes make the students not to get tired; and make the class an interesting place for the learners.

- a) The teacher asks the students to wear masks and play roles. Wearing a mask also protects the students from embarrassment.
- b) One student is given a simple drawing and sits behind another student, facing away. The first must give instructions to the second to reproduce the drawing. The second student asks questions to clarify unclear instructions, and neither can look at each other's page during the activity.

#### **15-Poetry**

This is also another way for better learning listening and speaking skills. Plutarch believes: "poetry is an image that speaks to us." (qtd. in Edward Allen). The teacher can bring poems to class and

- a) Read them for the students.
- b) Talk about the theme of the poems.
- c) Ask the students to search for the biography of the poets and present them in the class.
- d) Ask the students to comment on each poem.
- e) Ask the students to learn them by their hearts, since memorizing is a good way to learn English language.

#### **16- Songs**

Students in EFL/ESL classes enjoy singing songs. The teacher asks the students to listen to a song very carefully, and then sing it together. This brings a live atmosphere to the class, especially when the students sing it together. The teacher can divide the class into groups and sing a song; then asks each group to repeat it.

#### **17- Short plays**

This is also a good method for intermediate and advanced levels and also university students. Since plays are consists of dialogues,

- a) Students can practice short dialogues and perform it in the class.
- b) Students can practice short plays and perform it in the class and in this way act different roles.
- c) The teacher writes some topics on the board and asks the students to write short dialogues for each topic and then perform them in the class.
- d) The teacher can divide the class into different groups and give some topics to work together and write a very short play for performance in the class.
- e) The teacher can ask other students to comment on the performance or give their suggestions on the dialogues.

Since this is a very helpful way and makes the students creative, it can help them to practice listening and speaking skills more and more.

After students finish their speaking in class, the teacher should encourage them and let the students feel they have made some progress. The teacher tries to do these steps:

- a) Be firm in a gentle way and give them praise whenever they are doing anything close to a good job.
- b) Be sincere and look for opportunities to find them doing something right. Never get frustrated, angry and impatient.
- c) Be a nice, sensitive, and approachable person at all times. Never single students out or put them on the spot.
- d) Treat them with kindness and respect. Smile a lot and value their opinions. Never embarrass anyone for a laugh.

In doing each of these methods, the teacher should point out apparent mistakes in the students' speaking, for example, the incorrect words in pronunciation or some serious mistakes in grammar, but it is better to mention that after the students have finished their speech; and when the conversation is actually finished, the teacher should give students, a clear understanding of the outcome.

### **Part Three: Conclusion**

Students need to communicate to coordinate their own work and that of others. Without explicit effort their conversation will lack communication and so the teachers' work too will collapse. The key to success is to treat a conversation as we would do any other managed activity; by establishing an aim, planning what to do, and checking afterwards that we have achieved that aim. Only in this way we can work effectively with others in building through common effort.

In classes where students are practicing speaking and listening skills, they must be given opportunities to produce meaningful spoken messages with real communicative purposes; and they must be given opportunities to improve fluency. In conversation classes there must be some attention to the formal aspects of speaking such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and the appropriate use of the spoken language. There must be opportunity and encouragement for learners to produce meaningful spoken messages where the messages have real communicative goals. At elementary levels, emphasis should be placed on form-focused activities; at higher levels, a correspondingly greater emphasis should be placed on fluency activities. All of these parts, however, should be present at each stage of an effective speaking program.

When our students are encouraged to participate in conversations, they learn to use spoken language for a variety of purposes, follow and give simple directions and instructions. Ask and answer questions, use appropriate speed when they speak, follow the rules of polite conversation, such as staying on a topic and taking turns, use language to express and describe their feelings and ideas, and listen carefully for different purposes, such as to get information or for enjoyment.

Students actually have a strong desire to listen and speak English. They are reluctant to listen and speak, because they are afraid of making mistakes and failing to find suitable words to express themselves well. If the teacher try to encourage them to speak by using as many ways as possible and creating a good language speaking environment, students will speak actively, willingly and naturally. Listening and speaking as two of the four skills of English language can be mastered only through practice. Practice makes perfect.

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