DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS OF INDIAN STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM SCENARIO

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Abstract :

Speaking is natural but to master a language whether it is the m/other tongue, one needs to make conscious efforts. The first language that is acquired is the mother tongue that comes from the family, environment/ surrounding and continuous exposure to it. As soon as a child steps out from the informal surrounding of home, learning starts in schools in a formal set up. It is here that the child is exposed to another language that may be the medium of instruction.

In India, parents prefer to enrol their child in English medium school with the objective that English language is a language for a successful future. Here the confusion in the acquisition of language begins. At home the child speaks one language and in schools it is English. The exposure to English language is very limited in the Indian surrounding. It is heard, spoken, read and written only inside the four walls of school. In India, English is taught more as a subject rather than as a language.

In Indian schools more emphasis is laid on reading and writing rather than on listening and speaking. The students master the art of writing and score good marks on paper but the real challenge comes when the same student appears for job interviews. The student may have studied English for his entire academic program but falters when it comes to speaking.

The present paper has tried to understand the core areas of difficulties of the Indian students and made some suggestions regarding developing the speaking skills. If certain skills are undertaken from the classroom level, it will definitely bring in the desired change.

Key words : English language or subject, m/other tongue, home and school, LSRW or WRSL

Introduction :

Developing speaking skills is not just an academic requirement, but a life skill. The importance of speaking skills, the challenges faced by Indian students, and practical strategies to develop them in school, at home, and through self-effort is the need of the hour. In India, English is more than a subject in school — it is a passport to higher education, employment, and global communication. Despite learning English for 10 to 12 years, most Indian students can read and write well but struggle to speak fluently. In job interviews, group discussions, and even in classrooms, students often remain silent not because they lack ideas, but because they lack confidence and practice in speaking. English is offered as a subject to study rather than a

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language to speak, express one's ideas and thoughts etc. This hampers the thinking process, that is, the learner has the ability to think and express the same idea or thought in his mother tongue but does not develop oneself to think and express in English.

Importance of Speaking Skills for Indian Students :

In India, English is needed not only for academic success but for professional success as well. Parents prefer to admit their child in an English medium school for a successful life. In schools and colleges students are motivated to participate in various co-curricular activities like elocutions and debates. The objective is to develop the speaking skills of the learner. Further this helps the learner to build his career. Personality development workshops are conducted to develop speaking skills, build confidence, overcome fear, complexes etc. Thus English is a gateway to the world. Speaking serves as a bridge between ***knowing English*** and ***using English***.

Speaking has got its own challenges for the Indian students. The problems faced are not lack of intelligence but social, economic and many more that are an impediment in his thought and expression.

Challenges in speaking of English language :

The learning of English in India starts from school. **English** is taught as a **subject** and not as a **language.** This is the beginning of the difficulties in acquiring the language skills. Indian classrooms have students coming from different mother tongues, socio-economic backgrounds and comprehension levels. The pattern that should be adopted in classroom learning is **LSRW,** i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing but what is followed is vice e versa, i.e. **WRSL**. This is one of the greatest impediments in speaking the language.

Instead of boosting the morale of the learner, the student feels under-confident in speaking. Reasons can also be like shyness, fear of making pronunciation errors, peer pressure etc. Also for the learner of English language the exposure is only in the classrooms and not at homes or surrounding environment.

Also learning to speak becomes difficult because of huge classroom size. The teacher cannot give individual attention to the students. As English is taught as a subject, the teacher's goal is to complete the syllabus and prepare the students for the examination and hence lots of attention is paid to writing and reading but not for listening and speaking. The students start learning the question/ answers in rote method ignoring the higher standards of mastering the language.

The most important aspect on which the learning is based is on the rules of grammar of the language. Students need to master the grammar of the language, to know the rules of the language and are expected to write correct English. Here the entire fun of the language is lost. The charm of the language vanishes and it becomes a **tool of rules** just like mathematics. This is the reason that most students understand English but cannot produce it.

Some Practical Approaches to Develop Speaking Skills :

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Speaking is a skill that has to be practised whether it is the mother tongue or other tongue. As mother tongue is the first language and the practise of speaking it begins from an early age but for the other tongue, the speaking starts outside the home and for that matter English, starts with academics and in school. So to motivate students to speak certain strategies can be adopted.

1. Self Practice : To overcome fear, shyness, and complexes and develop confidence, students must develop the habit of self learning/ practice. Students must be motivated to develop ***listening*** to teachers, to English news, music etc.
2. Learners should be asked to ***think*** in English.
3. Stop ***translation*** methods. It is often so that the speaker speaks in English and when the listener is expected to speak in English, s/he starts mental translation and thus there is a loss of originality of the language.
4. Students should be asked to speak in English and ***record*** their own speech. This would make speaking and listening to one's own voice fun and interesting.
5. Some ***games*** related to vocabulary exercise helps to learn fast. Here students should be asked to speak small sentences by a set of vocabulary.
6. Students must be encouraged to come on stage and some ***situational dialogues*** must be enacted. This helps in speaking in English in routine life.
7. Every English teacher must promote English speaking in classroom by devoting at least 5 minutes for English speaking. ***Role plays*** must be given. Reading English newspapers in classroom by students help in overcoming fear, clubs must be created as peer group speaking brings a positive result.
8. Students must be motivated to pick English books from **library** and develop the habit of reading so that it helps in improving the language.
9. **Language labs** help to speak the language effectively.

Conclusion :

Developing speaking skills for Indian students is not about becoming "British" or "American". It is about being confident to express one's own ideas in English with an Indian identity. The goal is clarity, not perfection.

The solution lies in three words: Practice, Practice and Practice. Students must speak daily, teachers must create safe spaces, and the education system must value speaking equally with writing.

If every Indian student speaks for just 10 minutes every day, in 6 months we will see a generation that is not only educated but also expressive. And in the 21st century, those who can speak well will lead well.

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