

METHODS OF IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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ANNOTATION: The article is devoted to discuss the methods of improving students speaking skills in different ways from the point of view of linguistics in the English language.

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Developing fluency in English. When we talk about fluency in general, we are talking about the flow of speech, the speed at which students speak the pause and the language that students can readily produce between those pauses. In an ideal world, everyday exposure to the English language via regular communication with English speakers on a variety of topics is the best way to learn to speak English fluently. Unfortunately, relatively few English learners have an opportunity to practice speaking in a truly immersive setting. It is surprising how many international students return home after spending years in an English-speaking country with limited English-speaking ability. They often find themselves in a community with many students who speak their language. As a result, they may not be getting as much opportunity to use English outside of class as we might imagine. This just highlights the importance of providing regular speaking opportunities in the classroom. This article focuses on how teachers can provide these opportunities in the classroom so that students can build confidence and develop their fluency. There are a few things to consider when it comes to helping students develop their oral fluency.

Before conducting any speaking activity, it is important to think about the type of

speaking skills that students need. Do students need to practice their everyday communication skills, or do they have other important professional or academic communication needs? Once teachers have a clear awareness of students' communication needs, they can plan and create lessons that can cater directly to them. As an example, let us look at how teachers could implement professional and academic speaking activities to develop their students' oral fluency at more advanced levels. For students looking to develop their professional and academic speaking skills, they might consider incorporating more discussions and presentations. These are often vital skills to build upon at more advanced levels, as they help students become more proficient with longer and more structured speech and develop improved fluency and coherence in expressing their ideas. **The importance of pronunciation.** For many students, pronunciation is not a significant barrier to attaining fluency. However, it should not be ignored as incorrect pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings or breakdowns in communication. Some students may struggle with pronunciation in English, mainly because there is no one-to-one correspondence between spelling and sound. It is also important for learners to be familiar with stress and intonation in English words and within sentences. For example, certain words can change from nouns to verbs and just by changing the stress from the first to the second syllable. In natural speech, English words are often connected or chunked together. Native speakers also tend to stress certain words in a sentence for emphasis to convey a particular meaning. A learner, therefore, needs guidance on these particular pronunciation features because they may not be present in their first language. Some activities that can help with pronunciation are, of course, the traditional repetition drills, or ones that ask students to listen and shadow the pronunciation of speakers in English songs or English videos. It is also helpful to practice reading aloud with narrative texts, or even by creating dialogues and having students present them. **Maintain eye contact.** Engage in eye contact with students during instruction and encourage them to do the same. Maintaining eye contact will help learners indicate their audience's attention and adjust their language, their volume, or the organization of their speech. This will help them be better understood, communicate more clearly, and successfully interpret

nonverbal cues about their clarity.

Teach concept words. Some students may have difficulty with abstract concepts such as *before*, *after*, or *following*, and with sequences such as days of the week or months of the year. To help students learn and retain these concepts, you may need to present and review those many times and in multiple ways. For example:

- You might ask students to identify which holiday comes in each month and then review holidays for other months in sequence: “Groundhog Day is in February. What holiday is in March? In April?”

Have students identify the month before or after a given month. “May is before June and after April.” “May is between April and June.”

Teach for oral reading fluency. Oral reading fluency refers to how rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically students read text. The goal is accurate and fluid reading with adequate speed, appropriate phrasing, and correct intonation. Here are a few activities that aid fluency:

- ***Sentence completion:*** Read a phrase and signal for a student to complete the sentence. Then read another phrase and signal another student to complete the next sentence. This activity provides good modeling of rhythm and inflection and builds reading group skills.
- ***Round robin repeated reading:*** Each student reads a sentence, paragraph, or page, and then the next student gets a turn. Prompt each student to read with rhythm and fluency.
- ***Partner reading:*** Paired readers choose a quiet, cozy spot to practice reading to one another. This activity provides additional practice after reading in small groups.
- ***Monitored reading:*** Ask an aide or parent volunteer to listen to a student’s oral reading and watch for good phrasing and rhythm.
- ***Repeated reading:*** Parents may assist with repeated reading at home by asking students to read orally the same 150- to 200-word passage repeatedly over several

days. Students do not have to spend more than 10 minutes rereading each night.

In conclusion developing oral fluency takes time and effort on the part of the student, and effective planning, guidance, and patience on the part of the teacher. With that being said, we can see that many factors need to be considered before conducting speaking activities. Teachers need to determine the speaking skills that students need to work on and whether the students have sufficient or relevant input. It is also important to include useful lists of fixed conversational phrases or chunks and to teach strategies that can help students sustain conversations. Finally, the way that feedback is implemented during speaking activities is of utmost importance, as this can make or break the success of a speaking activity as well as your students' ability to progress or develop fluency. By considering these factors, teachers can help their students to develop into more confident and competent speakers of English.

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