

SIMPLE TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract: *This article discusses simple and practical techniques for teaching speaking skills in elementary English classes. Speaking is one of the most important parts of language learning, but many elementary learners feel shy, afraid of making mistakes or unsure about what to say. For this reason, teachers need clear, friendly and realistic classroom techniques that help students speak step by step. The article explains how warm-up questions, pair work, role plays, picture prompts, sentence frames, information-gap activities and supportive correction can make speaking lessons more active and useful. It also shows that speaking should not be forced suddenly; it should be built through confidence, repetition, useful vocabulary and real communication.*

Keywords: *speaking skills, elementary English, communication, pair work, role play, language teaching, classroom activities, confidence.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching speaking skills at elementary level is both important and challenging. Many students learn English grammar and vocabulary for a long time, but they still find it difficult to speak. They may know the answer in their mind, yet they cannot say it aloud because they are afraid of pronunciation mistakes, grammar errors or classmates' reactions. This is a common situation in many English classrooms.

Speaking is not only the ability to pronounce words. It is the ability to use language for communication. Students need to ask questions, answer simply, describe people and objects, talk about daily routines, express likes and dislikes and take part in small conversations. At elementary level, even short sentences are valuable because they help learners feel that English is a living language, not only a school subject.

For this reason, the teacher's task is to create a comfortable speaking environment. Students should not feel that every word will be judged. They need enough support before speaking and enough practice during the lesson. Simple techniques can make a big difference when they are used regularly and naturally. The aim of this article is to describe several easy but effective ways of teaching speaking skills to elementary learners.

The Importance of Speaking in Elementary English

Speaking gives students a chance to use what they have learned. Vocabulary and grammar become more meaningful when learners can use them in a real sentence. For example, after learning food words, students can say, I like apples, I do not like fish, or

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What do you usually eat for breakfast? These sentences are simple, but they turn passive knowledge into active communication.

Speaking also develops confidence. When students answer even one short question in English, they understand that they are able to communicate. This feeling is very important at the elementary stage. Confidence grows slowly, and every successful speaking attempt supports the next one. If the classroom atmosphere is friendly, students become more willing to try again.

Another important point is fluency. Elementary learners should not be expected to speak perfectly. At first, they need to speak clearly and understandably. Accuracy is also important, but too much correction can stop communication. A good speaking lesson gives space for both practice and gentle improvement.

Warm-Up Questions

One of the simplest techniques for teaching speaking is using short warm-up questions. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher can ask easy questions related to students' lives: How are you today? What is your favourite colour? What did you eat for breakfast? Do you like music? These questions are not difficult, but they prepare students to think in English.

Warm-up questions help students enter the lesson naturally. They also give the teacher a quick idea of the class mood and level. The questions should be short, familiar and connected with the topic of the lesson. If the topic is clothes, the teacher may ask: What are you wearing today? If the topic is family, the teacher may ask: How many people are there in your family?

It is useful to let students ask the same questions to each other. For example, after the teacher models the question, students can work in pairs and ask their partner. This small change makes the activity more communicative. Instead of only answering the teacher, students begin to talk to classmates.

Pair Work and Small Group Work

Pair work is one of the most effective techniques for elementary speaking lessons. In a large class, it is difficult for every student to speak if only the teacher asks questions. Pair work gives more students the chance to speak at the same time. It also feels less stressful because students speak with one partner, not in front of the whole class.

Pair work can be very simple. Students can ask and answer questions, complete a short dialogue, compare pictures or practise a new grammar structure. For example, after learning can and cannot, students may ask: Can you swim? Can you cook? Can you play the guitar? The activity is easy, but it gives repeated speaking practice.

Small group work is also useful, especially for games and problem-solving tasks. However, the teacher should give clear instructions and useful language before group work begins. Elementary learners need sentence models such as I think..., I agree, I don't know, Let's choose this one. Without such support, they may return to their mother tongue.

Role Plays and Dialogues

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Role plays help students practise English in situations close to real life. Elementary learners can act simple dialogues in a shop, café, classroom, bus station or doctor’s office. These situations are familiar and useful. Students do not need long speeches; they can use short and practical sentences.

For example, in a shop role play, one student can be a customer and another student can be a shop assistant. They can practise sentences such as How much is it? I would like a notebook, Here you are, and Thank you. A role play like this teaches vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and politeness at the same time.

Dialogues should first be modelled by the teacher. Then students can practise with the text, after that they can change some words and finally perform the dialogue more freely. This step-by-step method is useful because learners feel supported. They are not asked to speak without preparation.

Using Pictures and Prompts

Pictures are very helpful for speaking lessons. A picture gives students something to talk about. When learners do not know what to say, a picture can guide them. They can describe people, objects, colours, places and actions. For example, a picture of a classroom can help students say: There are three students. The teacher is standing near the board. There is a book on the table.

Picture prompts are especially good for elementary learners because they reduce fear. Students do not have to create ideas from nothing. The teacher can ask guiding questions: Who is in the picture? Where are they? What are they doing? What can you see? These questions help students build sentences slowly.

Teachers can also use word cards, real objects and short prompts. For example, students may receive a card with the words name, age, country and hobby. Using these prompts, they introduce an imaginary person. This makes speaking practice more structured and less difficult.

Sentence Frames and Useful Expressions

Elementary learners often need sentence frames. A sentence frame is a beginning or model sentence that students can complete. For example: My favourite food is..., I usually... in the morning, I can..., but I can’t..., There is... in my room. These frames help students speak with correct structure.

Sentence frames do not make speaking mechanical if they are used wisely. At the beginning, they give students safety. Later, students can change the sentence, add more information and speak more freely. The teacher can write useful expressions on the board and leave them there during pair work. This support helps weaker students take part in the activity.

Another good technique is controlled-to-free practice. First, students repeat a model. Then they practise it with small changes. Finally, they create their own answers. This movement from support to independence is very important in teaching speaking skills.

Information-Gap Activities

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Information-gap activities are useful because they create a real reason to speak. In this type of task, one student has information that another student does not have. To complete the task, they must ask and answer questions. For example, Student A has a timetable with some missing information, and Student B has the answers. They need to communicate to complete the timetable.

This technique works well with elementary topics such as daily routines, prices, addresses, phone numbers, family members and classroom objects. The language can be simple, but the communication is real. Students are not only repeating words; they are using English to get information.

The teacher should prepare the language before the activity. Students may need question forms such as What time is it? How much is it? Where is the bank? Have you got a pen? When the needed language is clear, students can focus on speaking instead of feeling lost.

Correction and Encouragement

Correction is a sensitive part of speaking lessons. If the teacher corrects every mistake immediately, students may become silent. If the teacher never corrects mistakes, learners may repeat the same errors. Therefore, correction should be balanced and supportive.

During fluency activities, it is better to listen and take notes. After students finish speaking, the teacher can write a few common mistakes on the board and correct them together. This method protects students' confidence because the teacher does not interrupt every sentence. For pronunciation or important errors, gentle correction can be given immediately, but it should not embarrass the learner.

Encouragement is as important as correction. Simple phrases such as Good try, Very good, Say it again, You can do it, and Nice answer can motivate students. Elementary learners need to feel progress. When the teacher notices small success, students become more active.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, teaching speaking skills at elementary level should be simple, supportive and practical. Students need many chances to speak, but they also need clear models, useful vocabulary and a friendly classroom atmosphere. Techniques such as warm-up questions, pair work, role plays, picture prompts, sentence frames and information-gap activities help learners speak step by step.

A good speaking lesson does not require complicated materials. It requires careful organization and a teacher who understands the learners' level. When students are encouraged to speak regularly, they become more confident and more interested in English. Speaking skills develop slowly, but with simple and effective techniques, elementary learners can begin to use English as a real means of communication.

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