

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Annotation. *This article explores practical and research-supported strategies for developing speaking skills among secondary school students. It highlights the importance of oral communication in language learning and provides a comprehensive overview of classroom methods, such as interactive activities, task-based learning, and the use of technology. The goal is to assist language educators in creating an environment that encourages student participation, confidence, and fluency in speaking.*

Key words: *speaking skills, language teaching, communicative competence, classroom strategies, secondary education, ESL, oral fluency, student engagement*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a crucial part of language development, especially at the secondary school level where students are preparing to use language in more complex academic, social, and real-world contexts. However, teaching speaking effectively remains a challenge in many classrooms. To address this, educators need to adopt purposeful strategies that encourage active participation, build confidence, and improve fluency. One key approach is to create a communicative classroom environment. This involves encouraging students to use the target language as much as possible in daily interactions, rather than relying solely on textbook exercises. When students are given frequent opportunities to speak in meaningful contexts, they become more comfortable and confident in their abilities. Teachers can support this by using English (or the target language) as the primary medium of instruction and by promoting pair and group work that fosters authentic communication.

Regular speaking activities are essential for language practice. These activities should be varied and engaging, such as role-plays, interviews, discussions, debates, storytelling, and oral presentations. Role-plays and simulations, for example, place students in real-life situations where they must use language creatively and spontaneously. Group discussions and debates help them develop critical thinking, as well as the ability to express and defend opinions. Task-based learning is another effective method for improving speaking skills. In this approach, students work on tasks that require the use of language to complete a specific goal. These tasks often mirror real-world challenges, such as planning an event or solving a problem, and they naturally lead to communication. By focusing on the completion of tasks rather than just language accuracy, students become more fluent and engaged.

The integration of technology and multimedia tools has also proven beneficial in teaching speaking. Language learning apps, video recording tools, and online platforms allow students to practice outside the classroom and receive immediate feedback. Activities like creating video blogs or participating in virtual speaking forums can motivate students and provide additional exposure to spoken language. Providing effective feedback is crucial for helping students improve. Rather than focusing solely on errors, feedback should highlight strengths and suggest specific areas for growth. Peer assessments, self-reflections, and teacher evaluations can all play a role in helping students become more aware of their speaking abilities and how to improve them.

Pronunciation is another important aspect of speaking that should not be overlooked. Teachers can incorporate short, focused activities to help students recognize and produce key sounds, stress patterns, and intonation. Listening to native speakers and repeating phrases or short dialogues can enhance students' pronunciation and listening comprehension. Furthermore, speaking tasks should be relevant and meaningful. When students see the real-world value of learning to speak effectively, they are more likely to participate and take risks. This can be achieved through activities such as conducting interviews with community members, participating in school language clubs, or engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. Lastly, instruction should be adapted to the diverse needs of learners. Not all students have the same level of confidence or proficiency, so teachers should differentiate speaking activities and provide appropriate support. This might include allowing students to choose topics they are interested in, giving more preparation time to those who need it, or providing structured speaking frames for beginners.

To expand further on the topic of teaching speaking skills in secondary schools, it is important to understand the broader context in which these skills are developed. Speaking is not just about pronunciation or grammar; it is about effective communication, the ability

to convey thoughts clearly, respond appropriately, and participate meaningfully in conversations. As students progress through secondary education, their communicative needs become more complex, requiring a deliberate and structured approach to speaking instruction. One of the foundational aspects of improving speaking skills is building student confidence. Many secondary school students are hesitant to speak in front of their peers due to fear of making mistakes or being judged. Teachers play a critical role in creating a safe and supportive learning environment. This involves praising effort, normalizing mistakes as part of the learning process, and ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to speak. Techniques such as "think-pair-share" or small group discussions can be less intimidating than speaking in front of the whole class and can help gradually build confidence.

In addition, exposure to authentic language use is vital. Authentic materials such as podcasts, interviews, movies, and TV shows offer students the chance to hear how language is used in real-life contexts. These materials can serve as models for pronunciation, intonation, and natural conversation patterns. Teachers can use them as a basis for listening and speaking activities, encouraging students to mimic speech, respond to content, or create their own dialogues. Classroom routines that integrate speaking into daily practice are also effective. For example, starting each class with a short speaking task such as "Question of the Day," "News Sharing," or "Two-Minute Talk" gives students consistent opportunities to use spoken language. Over time, these short but regular activities help reduce anxiety and increase fluency.

Another strategy involves teaching conversation skills explicitly. Many students struggle not with vocabulary or grammar, but with the mechanics of conversation—how to start and end a conversation, how to ask follow-up questions, how to show interest, or how to disagree politely. These skills can be modeled through role-plays, analyzed through video examples, and practiced in structured pair or group work. Assessing speaking skills is often challenging for teachers, especially with large classes. However, effective assessment is necessary to track progress and provide meaningful feedback. Formative assessment tools such as observation checklists, speaking journals, and audio recordings can be used to monitor student performance over time. Teachers can also use rubrics that focus on different aspects of speaking, including fluency, coherence, pronunciation, and interaction. One of the major barriers to speaking in some educational contexts is limited classroom time and curriculum constraints. In such cases, teachers can integrate speaking practice into other subject areas or combine it with reading and writing tasks. For example, after reading a short story, students might be asked to act out a scene or give a

short oral summary. Similarly, after writing an opinion essay, students can present their arguments orally in a debate format.

CONCLUSION

Effective strategies for teaching speaking skills in secondary schools involve a holistic and student-centered approach. Confidence-building, authentic practice, regular routines, explicit instruction in conversation skills, and meaningful assessment are all crucial. When these strategies are implemented thoughtfully, students gain the tools they need to become effective, confident communicators both in and out of the classroom.

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