THE ROLE OF PRACTICAL STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING ENGLISH-LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract:
This article discusses the importance of using practical strategies for improving learners' speaking skills. In the article there are given advantages of practical strategies for developing speaking skills of English learners.

Key words: speaking strategies, speaking activities, visual materials, authentic materials, vocabulary.

Introduction. The ability to speak fluently and confidently in English is a crucial goal for many English learners, as it directly affects their ability to communicate in personal, academic, and professional settings. While traditional methods of language instruction often focus on grammar and reading, practical strategies specifically aimed at enhancing speaking skills are essential to achieve oral proficiency. These strategies provide learners with opportunities to engage in real-world communication, promote active use of language, and build both fluency and confidence. By integrating practical activities, such as role-playing, language games, and technology-based tools, learners can improve their speaking abilities in a more interactive and effective way.

Improving speaking skills in English learners requires more than just theoretical knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. It involves an active, practical engagement with the language in real-life contexts. Speaking is often one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, as it demands not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to think quickly and to express thoughts coherently. Practical strategies, therefore, play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges by providing structured yet flexible opportunities for learners to practice. From conversation-based activities to the use of technology and peer interactions, these strategies help learners develop fluency, accuracy, and confidence. Ultimately, practical approaches bridge the gap between passive learning and active language use, ensuring learners can communicate effectively in both formal and informal settings.

Improving English learners' speaking skills requires both consistent practice and the use of practical strategies that can effectively address the challenges they face. There are some strategies for improving learners' speaking skills:

Focused Listening and Speaking Activities. Listening to and mimicking native speakers helps learners internalize pronunciation, intonation, and natural speech patterns. Engaging in an active listening prepares learners to respond naturally in

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conversations. Using podcasts, movies, or conversation videos for listening practice. Then, asking learners to summarize or discuss the content with peers in English to simulate real-life interactions.

Role-Playing and Simulated Conversations. Role-playing allows learners to practice speaking in different real-life scenarios such as ordering food, asking for directions, or participating in interviews. This builds fluency and confidence [1]. Assigning roles like a customer and a waiter in a restaurant scenario, where students engage in a natural exchange, using appropriate vocabulary and expressions.

Shadowing Technique. This involves listening to a native speaker and repeating what they say almost simultaneously. Shadowing helps with pronunciation, rhythm, and improving speech speed. Learners listen to an English podcast and try to speak along with the speaker, mimicking the exact intonation and pace.

Use of Language Games. Games create a low-pressure environment where learners can practice speaking without fear of making mistakes. This also encourages spontaneous speech. Games like "20 Questions" where one student thinks of a word and others ask questions to guess what it is. The game stimulates speaking, questioning, and critical thinking.

Speaking Clubs or Conversation Circles. Regular group conversations allow learners to practice speaking with peers in an informal setting, focusing on real-life language use rather than formal instruction [2]. Organizing weekly conversation meetups where learners discuss a chosen topic like hobbies, travel, or current events.

Peer Feedback and Self-Evaluation. Encouraging learners to give constructive feedback to each other's speaking efforts helps in identifying areas of improvement while also fostering collaborative learning.In a classroom setting, students record themselves speaking on a topic, then listen to each other's recordings and offer feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and coherence.

Incorporating Technology. Apps and tools designed to improve speaking skills offer interactive ways to practice pronunciation, grammar, and conversational skills.[3] Language-learning apps like Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, or speech recognition software, where learners practice speaking and receive immediate feedback.

Task-Based Learning. Task-based learning focuses on completing real-life tasks that require speaking. This helps learners practice language in context and promotes practical communication skills. Assigning a task such as planning a trip where learners need to discuss destinations, budgets, and activities in English.

Pronunciation Drills. Regular pronunciation exercises help learners focus on difficult sounds, syllable stress, and sentence intonation, improving clarity in speech [4]. Using tongue twisters or minimal pair exercises to practice similar sounds.

Unlike reading and writing, speaking and listening skills are innately developed as a child is learning their native language, listening to their parents and those around them, and creating sounds and babbles to match what they hear. As a result, developing these skills in a second language can be challenging, and this is often seen in the ELL population as students are learning English as their second or third language. Many factors influence the rate of acceleration of speaking and listening in a new language, including students' personalities, comfort level with speaking in public, motivation, time to learn English, and the amount of support a student receives.

Another way to have students practice their speaking skills is during your morning meeting. Allowing students to ask and answer questions of their peers and adults in the classroom helps our EL students become more comfortable using the English language to communicate. I have seen so many of my ELs want to ask questions or even just have conversations with their peers during morning meeting in our classroom as they become more comfortable with speaking. Again, offer your EL students ample opportunities to speak in order to develop their oral language skills [5]. The article offers a thorough overview of practical strategies for enhancing the speaking abilities of English language learners. It effectively emphasizes the importance of integrating interactive and real-world practice into language learning and can significantly help language learners in achieving their language goals.

In conclusion, practical strategies play a crucial role in enhancing English learners' speaking skills. These strategies, such as conversational practice, role-playing, pronunciation exercises, and real-life communication scenarios, provide learners with hands-on experience that fosters confidence, fluency, and accuracy in speaking. By focusing on practical, interactive methods, learners are able to better understand language nuances, improve their pronunciation, and build conversational competence, which is essential for effective communication in English. Practical strategies not only target fluency but also address the common challenges English learners face, such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes. By incorporating strategies like structured dialogues, interactive group activities, and the use of technology-based language tools, learners can practice in a supportive and less intimidating environment. Regular exposure to authentic language use through podcasts, movies, and live interactions with native speakers helps learners internalize natural speech patterns, enhancing their listening and speaking capabilities. Integrating feedback loops, where learners receive constructive criticism, allows them to identify and work on their weaknesses in pronunciation, grammar, and sentence structure. These strategies also encourage an autonomous learning, as students can independently access resources and track their progress, leading to gradual but noticeable improvements in their overall speaking abilities.In essence, practical strategies not only facilitate language acquisition but also help build essential communication skills, fostering a greater sense of linguistic and cultural competence.

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