A Teaching Experience and a Survey on Methods of Teaching Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT

In my internship report, I tried to focus on a short investigation which I conducted while taking classes as a training teacher in an English medium primary school. My internship objective was to focus on how English speaking skill is taught in the school. I wanted to observe how the teachers teach the oral skills (the methods and techniques) in the classroom and whether it is facilitating effective learning for the students or not. I analyzed a short survey based on the interview of some English teachers and described my experience as their speaking teacher. My main motive was to examine the way they taught: whether it is the same traditional approach that has been followed since the colonial period or they are using some upgraded method to conduct speaking classes. I wrote this brief report where I found that most teachers preferred a traditional way of teaching speaking to the young learners and interestingly the students are quite habituated with it. This helped me understand why students fail to speak fluent English even after twelve years of schooling. While teaching, I tried to apply some of the speaking techniques, activities and practices that I learned as a student of English Linguistics. The literature reviews (secondary data), statistical demonstration of the survey, its methodology, teacher's interview and discussion/findings along with my contributions are included in the paper. The paper also illustrates what difficulties I faced while teaching speaking in a different way. Besides, the limitations of this survey/observation

report and recommendations of how to make students speak fluently in the classroom are

provide in the conclusion.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introducing Speaking:

Why do English medium schools of Dhaka are trying to promote English learning? What could be their main purpose behind teaching English to young learners? Is it just for the young kids to know English by heart or is it to gain practical communication and interactional skills? If the latter one is the main motive, than why are the young learners of our country studying English by means of traditional methods?[1] (Haider &Chowdhury, 2012, p.13). Is this because they think they are being benefitted by this sort of learning or the truth is that they are simply getting good opportunities? This paper will try to answer and discuss all these questions in the light of how speaking is taught in such a school (primary level) of Dhaka. Speaking is one of the major areas of language elements which mean verbal communication to interact[2] (Ferris &Tagg, 1996, p. 298). Any learner who is learning a language will first have the interest to speak and therefore function successfully in the language. Otherwise the language itself will become useless to the learner. However, in most of the primary schools of Dhaka, (and including schools outside Dhaka) speaking English could sound quite challenging. This is because in our country, the teaching of speaking is not done in the way Nunan, Ara and other ELT specialists has suggested. As explained by Nunan (2003), teaching speaking could include not only learning speech sounds/ patterns, use of words and sentence stress, intonation patterns, use of appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter but also the fluent use of language as a means of expressing values and judgments(p.

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[1] Traditional methods mean learning English through Grammar Translation Method, Audio-lingual Method etc.
[2] Interaction means exchange of verbal communication among two or more persons

330). Besides, the approach, method and techniques of teaching 'how to speak' are done in form of repetitive drills and by translation mechanics (memorization of dialogues). Again, as stated in a research done in Bangladesh, this is not the right way of teaching speaking (Ara, 2009, p. 167). According to Ara (2009), students should learn speaking English by means of fun activities since some traditional educational approach has prevented learning rather than facilitating it (p.167). Moreover, Bangladesh is such a country where both formal and informal speaking skills are being taught in the most common traditional methods since its independence (Imam, 2005, p.474). Especially most of the primary sections of schools (both Bangla and English medium) are practicing traditional pedagogy in classrooms where students were just passive learners (Haider &Chowdhury, 2012, p.13). As a result, the students are not being able to communicate and function in this language even after twelve years of schooling. Their communicative competence is therefore hindered since they are not able to express their own views, opinions and experience a real life communicative influence.

This is something that I felt while doing my internship in Mohammadpur Preparatory School[3]of Dhaka. This very fact also interested me to focus my internship report on speaking skills rather than anything else. Through this, I found the main reasons why young students cannot use English fluently as their second language. My experience as a teacher and my classroom observations therefore inspired me to conduct a small survey on how speaking is being taught and practiced in the school. I talked with some teachers about how they are teaching oral skills in the classroom. Later on, I analyzed their interview responses using a statistical method for better understanding. My motive was not

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[3] it is an English version school (Boys) situated in 3/3 Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207. I have done my internship in the primary section of this Higher Secondary school where I used to the young learners

to find out all the flaws in the current approaches rather was to find out what the approach itself is. That is to say, I wanted to examine whether the approach has changed since the British era or is it still the same traditional one). My main purposes were to understand how teaching is being done in classroom level, why it is done in the contemporary way and whether the students are being benefitted from it or not. I also wished to examine whether there was any way of incorporating some new changes in this ongoing process. By changes I mean whether there were any scope of teaching speaking in form of both accuracy and fluency through different stages and guidelines[4] by help of different controlled, guided or free activities (information gaps, role plays, simulations, discussions, games, Brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, picture describing etc.) (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 1995, p. 99-11). In fact this investigation also helped me find some interesting reasons of why the conventional teaching approach of speaking is so popular although there are a lot of inadequacies in it. I will be providing some secondary data to strengthen my investigation. I will elaborate the purpose and significance of my study, some focal questions of my investigation and the methodology I used. I will be using a pie chart and bar diagram for analyzing the results. Later, I will discuss the survey findings and my experience/contribution to bring some changes. The conclusion will cover some suggestions and limitations along with references and appendixes in the paper.

1.2 Research Statement/Problem:

The main cause is to investigate whether the teaching of speaking is still done in a traditional method or not. That means I will examine why it is done in this contemporary way and whether it is assuring effective learning on the students behalf or not.

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[4] Guidelines of speaking mean the speaking activities that need to be practiced 'before the lesson', 'during the lesson' and 'after the lesson'. (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 1995, p. 102-103)

1.3 Research Purpose:

To observe the teaching method, approaches, techniques and activities of the ongoing process of teaching oral skills. The study was done on basis of the teachers perspective in the school I have done my internship. The other purpose was to see whether there was any scope to bring about some effective changes/modification in the system or not.

1.4 Research's Central Questions:

Q.1) Why little changes has been made in the traditional way of teaching speaking skills?

Q.2) What are the main reasons or barriers that is keeping the students away from 'speaking'?

Q.3) What happens in the classroom where speaking is taught to the young learners? Why is it being considered less important than the other productive skill (writing)?

Q.4) Are the teachers aware of their teaching method? Do they have enough teaching training? How much conscious are they about making the students 'speak'?

Q.5) What are the comfort zones of the teachers and the students in the current method of teaching and learning? Is there any possibility to bring some quick changes in the method? Will the teachers or the students be ready to adopt some modern techniques/strategies?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Speaking: Definition and Kinds:

According to Murphy (1991), "Oral communication is a complex and multifaceted language process"(p.51). Speaking can be learned into two basic ways: accuracy and fluency. In 1995, Gower, Phillips and Walters explained that Accuracy would mean the correct use of vocabulary, grammar etc. in case of controlled and guided activities while fluency would mean the ability to get the message across regardless grammatical mistakes (p. 100). As Gower et al. (1995) advised, the students should not be corrected during their speaking since the natural use of incomplete sentences, common expressions, use of filters, hesitations etc. might be hampered (p. 100).

2.2 Approaches to Speaking:

As illustrated by Murphy (1991), the following are the modern approaches of teaching speaking used after the Grammar Translation Method. They are the Silent Way: teachers rarely speak, while student speaking is focused; Suggestopedia: very controlled speaking activities which are based upon lengthy written scripts; Community Language Learning: many peer-to- peer interactions that contribute to a community spirit among students; the Direct Method: students engage in many controlled, context-explicit, speaking activities; the Natural Approach: initially emphasizes guided speaking; Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): many peer-to-peer, guided, and free speaking activities which are organized around notional, functional, and/or linguistic considerations; and a Task-Based Approach: activities are centered upon practical tasks for students to perform (p. 52-53). However, he further added that not all methods are applicable for young learners yet the CLT and TBA are widely used for them (p.53).

Gower, Phillips and Walters (1995) suggested some examples of interactions approaches like 'giving direction to someone', 'making an appointment 'and 'making group works'(p. 104).

2.3 Activities Promoting Speaking:

Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) divided speaking activities initially into three criteria: Controlled (repetition practices by accurate use of words, sentences, structures etc.), Guided(model dialogues used by students to communicate their needs and ideas) and Free/Creative activities (practice of fluency, use of real life language in different situations, opportunity to experiment real life problems etc.) (p.100-111). Other good examples include: 'Information gap activities' where students complete gaps in pairs by communication, 'role plays' where students takes part of a particular person acting out a conversation and 'simulation' where students being a particular person solves a task in a given situation. Besides, another common activity is 'Discussions' where classroom talking takes place among students and they share their ideas by particular language structures and vocabulary without teacher's interruption. The rests are interacting games, storytelling/completions where students are required to tell imaginative stories by themselves, picture descriptions where students will explain any given picture in any context and interviews (Murphy, 1991, p. 55).

Again, in 2003, Donough and Shaw gave a list of effective classroom activities which are used to promote speaking in developed countries. They are communication games, problem solving tasks; moreover, using materials requiring personal responses (students can talk about themselves), materials illustrating rules of conversations (natural sounding speech and how to talk in various situations), materials enhancing academic

speaking skills (speaking practices done in any pedagogic context), giving appropriate feedback to learners (correcting them after they have finished their speech) etc. are some effective activities that promotes speaking (p.147-152).

2.4 Bangladesh's Language Based Identity and English Speaking:

In 2005, Imam explained the Bangladeshi unique history of language movement and how it brought independence for the nation. He linked this crucial issue to Bengali people's sentiments and emotions (p.471). He said, "One problem is that in the minds of most people, national identity and learning English are positioned as antagonistic, not complementary" (p. 471). He briefly elaborated that the national language Bengalis spoken by 98% people and therefore since the declaration of independence in 1971, Bangla was confirmed as the medium of instruction in government schools (p. 474).He also added, "Bangladesh, being a new country and having its origin in the glorious 1952 language movement, is comparatively new in this English language promotion race and as a nation it has also been shaped by language and the politics of language, to an unusual degree" (p.472).He concluded his statement by saying, "The global English might function as a Trojan horse: as a displacer of national tradition and an instrument of continuing imperialist intervention" (p.472).

2.5 Teachers: One Who can bring a Change:

Imam (2005) stated that a teacher can bring about a lot of significant changes in the classroom if he/she wishes. The way a student will learn to speak depends on how he/she is being taught (p. 475). This also depends on a teacher's perspective and personal variables like motivation, interest, experience, attitude towards job etc. Moreover, since a teacher can be an explainer, involver and enabler, so he/she can easily incorporate new techniques in

classroom practices (Scrivener, 1994, p. 13). Imam (2005) stated the main reason why teachers cannot contribute their best in our classrooms. He said, "One survey found that the average English language skill level of university students is equivalent to Grade 7 standard; Nine out of ten teachers have completed 1-2 years of teacher training, of variable quality" (p.476). He added that, "Underpaid public school teachers often work in private schools or government-subsidized non-formal adult education" (p.476).

2.6 Speaking Guidelines & Cultural Differences:

As Gower, Phillips & Walters (1995) suggested, there are some guidelines which can be followed for successful speaking sessions (p. 102). The stages to be followed are: Before, During and After the speaking activities. This means teachers should facilitate some activities before starting the lesson, some while doing the lesson with the students and some after the lesson has been completed. Gower et al. (1995) explained that 'Pre-speaking activities' would mean working with the material, setting the class time, deciding the aim of the lesson and giving instructions, 'While speaking activities' is about arousing student's interests through visuals, relating the topic to their real life experiences, setting up the activity, monitoring and evaluating the student's tasks and 'After speaking' is about checking how each person communicates and how well they argue, noting down their errors etc. (p. 102-103).

According to Cline and Shamsi (2000), speaking should be followed according to the learner's cultural context. If the text is out of cultural appropriateness then learners may not be comfortable with what they are learning. Moreover, they said, "For any child with learning difficulties, an assessment needs to take account of their position in society, their situation in their family, their educational history and the current educational provision."(p.

29). This is also stated in 2005 by Moriam, "Over the past decade the effort to explore the relationship of the use of language learning strategies with other variables such as motivation, gender, cultural background, type of task and age has been given tremendous importance" (p. 48).

2.7 Encouraging Speaking & Some Recent Changes:

In 1995, Gower, Phillips and Walter advised that speaking should be encouraged by four main ways: a) Encouraging student's interaction, b) Giving plenty of controlled practice, c) Making activities communicative and d) Planning activities carefully (p. 101-102).

In case of some changes in recent years, Ara (2009) said, "Little improvement has taken place in the overall English proficiency among the students. And this is only because of inaccurate teaching techniques of English at the primary level. Therefore, if things have to be changed, our focus should be on the primary level" (p.167). Even Haider and Chowdhury (2012), showed how teaching speaking needs more emphasis in our country. They said, "Despite the introduction of a communicative syllabus, NCTB had the realization that a syllabus alone could not ensure the implementation of communicative language teaching and learning in the classroom, it could only provide a set of criteria for a change. Therefore, in order to get the best out of the new syllabus a number of reform initiatives such as preparing suitable teaching materials, arranging teacher training and bringing about changes in the examination system were recommended." (p. 12).

CHAPTER 3: MY EXPERIENCE

3.1 The School Where I Worked:

The school where I got the chance to do my four months internship is Mohammadpur Preparatory School of Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka. I worked as a trainee teacher under the principal of English Version Boy's Wing. He was my on-site supervisor throughout the time. At first, he asked me to observe a few English classes and then he allowed me to hold the classes of English Paper I and II of class two, three and five. Later, after observing my teaching, he shifted me to high level classes. However, I spent most of my time teaching with primary classes where I tried to observe and promote students' English speaking skills. The school has an increasing number of students and is well reputed in Mohammadpur. Although the seating arrangement and the classroom size were not gratifying to work the overall teaching environment was very enjoyable. I liked the teachers I worked with. They guided me from time to time. They also encouraged me to apply many speaking techniques in classrooms whenever I wished to.

3.2 Speaking Classroom that I Observed:

During the first weeks of my internship, I got the scope of observing an English First Paper Class taken by Shoheli Sharmin. She was taking 'English for Today' in class three. I took her permission to sit at the back and observe her teaching. She started with the second chapter where she discussed a reading comprehension titled 'Going to School'. I observed she was writing all the answers to the practice exercises provided at the end of the chapter. The students copied all of them from the board. The most important part of her teaching was with the speaking exercise of the last page of the chapter. The exercise was about two school friends 'Shahana' and Raju' introducing each other. The teacher asked the students

to memorize the given dialogue of the two friends. She said she would ask anybody to come and write down the dialogue on the board. She added that this piece of dialogue would be in their first term examination where the students would fill up the blanks. The students started memorizing with in a second. Then she randomly picked a boy name 'Tahsin' and asked him to write down the first two lines of the conversation. Tahsin wrote it but made a little mistake. However, the second boy came and completed it properly. The importance of mentioning this class observation is because this is the class which inspired me to observe other speaking classes of different teachers. This also helped me to conduct speaking classes in the school whenever I got the scope. I started applying different techniques of how to make the students speak without making them memorize anything.

3.3 Myself as an English Teacher:

Working as a real teacher in a real classroom is thousand times more challenging than peer teaching that I did in my University. Teaching becomes even more challenging when the students are very young and therefore emotional. Students at a young stage need more care from teachers. They demanded fun activities and a teacher with whom they can talk freely. While taking speaking classes, I kept this in mind that I have to make my students 'speak' and for that I did anything possible from my side. During my first speaking classes, I tried my level best to involve the students with the dialogues of the textbook since I was told to teach them as it was. Later, to make them to come to the front of the class and talk, I adopted some of the textbook speaking materials. For example, I changed some of the dialogues that sound very unnatural to me. I made them more informal and asked the students to skim over them. After that I would ask two or three of them to come and talk with each other. I mentioned they can use any vocabulary and they liked the idea. They

enjoyed speaking in very informal tone and to encourage them more with speaking, I started doing group works with them. However, I could not continue with it since the class times were just thirty five minutes. During the final classes of my internship, I used to change their seating positions in order to get full attention from them. With time, the students who I kept on teaching speaking become very friendly with me. They used English eagerly with me whenever they could because they had the learning autonomy. I lowered my talking time more and more with days to increase their talking time. Although they made a lot of grammatical mistakes I never let them stop. This helped them to get rid of their anxiety to speak.

3.4 Some of my Lesson Plans & Classroom Activities:

I would like to show some of my lesson plans that I followed for the speaking classes. The lesson plans helped me divide the class time and follow a particular way of conducting the class. Along with finishing the English Second Paper with them, I incorporated some of the speaking sessions as their classroom practices. Whenever I got the scope, instead of doing the dialogue practices from their textbook, I arranged some simple and interesting classroom activities. The following lesson plans will give a clearer idea:

Lesson Plan: 1

Topic: Describing a Picture   **Grade Level**: Three

Duration: 25 minutes   **Date:** 3rd Feb, 2013

Purpose: Improving their fluency   **Classroom size:** Large

Proficiency level of Students' L2: Elementary   **L1:** Bangla

Materials: Pictures Of duck, car and plane   **Teaching Aid:** Board, Chalk

Activities: Picture based oral question/answers   **Evaluation**: Only on fluency

Procedure of Teaching: a) guessing about the incomplete pictures, b) giving names to the complete pictures, c) describing the features of the object drawn

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Class Conduction: At first to arouse their interest, I draw half of the objects. This was to make them predict and guess. I picked the students randomly and asked them to come in front of the class. Few of them came because most of them were shy. They talked about any of the features they know about the objects. For example, they described the duck's physical features, what they eat, where they live and how they are useful to human. Some of them also answered why they like the animal and gave reasons for it when I asked them. Feedback was not given on grammatical mistakes since they were at elementary level. The ones who answered all of my questions in English were rewarded with candies.

Lesson Plan: 2

Topic: Story Completing   **Grade Level**: Four

Duration: 35 minutes   **Date:** 25th Feb, 2013

Purpose: Improving their fluency/Creativity   **Classroom size:** Medium

Proficiency level of Students' L2: Elementary   **L1:** Bangla

Materials: Three pictures telling one story   **Teaching Aid:** Board, Chalk

Activities: Imaginary stories with different endings   **Evaluation**: Only on fluency

Procedure of Teaching: a) Three pictures were shown in sequence, b) Every one made up their own endings, c) Students came in front and shared their stories

Class Conduction: At first, I showed the students some pictures which tell a story without an ending. The pictures were shown slowly and thrice to the class. When the students understood that the pictures tell a story in sequence, they were given ten minutes to create the ending of the story. I mentioned clearly that each of them should have a different ending. So the students prepared an ending by their own imagination. Some of them also drew a picture that described the ending. After that, I asked each of them to come up and share it. Some of them were very creative and to encourage them I gave good comments. The following are the pictures I gave them to create an ending:

> What Happened Next??

An old woodcutter……going to the deep jungle….suddenly saw a wolf

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Lesson Plan: 3

Topic: Informal Presentations **Grade Level**: Four

Duration: 30 minutes **Date:** 3rd March, 2013

Purpose: Improving their fluency/accuracy **Classroom size:** Medium

Proficiency level of Students' L2: Elementary **L1:** Bangla

Materials: Interesting Topics **Teaching Aid:** Guideline

Activities: Talking for two-three minutes **Evaluation**: Fluency/accuracy

Procedure of Teaching: a) I wrote different topics on board, b) I did some brainstorming with the topics, c) The students choose any of them, d) I give them a handout of guideline, e) they prepared their speech and presented
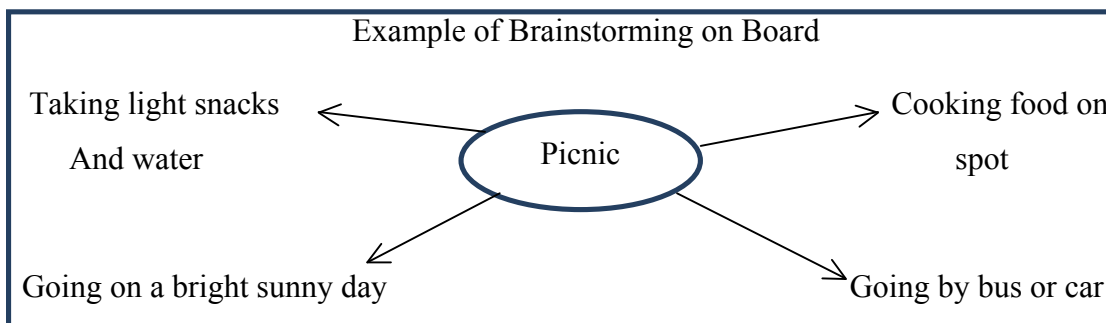
Class Conduction: To grab the students' attention at the very beginning, I started the discussion with their favorite topics. I asked them randomly to come and write any topic they liked. For example, I asked them about their hobbies and what they do during holidays. They came up with different ideas like playing video games, going to picnic, playing football/cricket etc. After five minutes, I started jotting down different ideas on their given topics. This is because I wanted to give them clues on what they would be saying. I gave each of them a handout (guideline) which elaborated their task. I gave them another fifteen minutes to prepare a short talk on the topics. At last, I asked them to volunteer for the speech. I did not force anyone who did not want to give speech since it was their first time. The students, who were willing to say something, came in front and said whatever he liked. I gave marks mainly on their fluency. However, this time I also gave feedback on grammatical mistakes which were very prominent in their speech.

Example of Brainstorming on Board

Taking light snacks And water ← Picnic → Cooking food on spot

Going on a bright sunny day ↙ ↘ Going by bus or car

Guideline for Speech

1. **Think of your favorite topics (playing football, cricket, watching TV)**
2. **Select any one of them. Example: Watching TV**
3. **Think what you watch on TV. Example: Cartoon.**
4. **Say anything you like about it. Example: I like Tom and Jerry. It starts at the evening. I watch it after my study etc.**
5. **Add more ideas to it! Say why you like Tom and Jerry? What is the most funny part of it? How often do you watch it? Now share it with us!**

These were some of those classroom tasks that I managed to do with the students of class three and four. Managing these tasks in a big classroom of thirty to forty students from different educational background was quite challenging. This is because the learners were very young and they could not hold their attention for a long time. Moreover, in noisy classes, explaining tasks in English became difficult. In fact, I had to explain some of the things in Bangla whenever most of them did not understand. For example, in the story completing class, I had to explain 'how to create an ending' in Bangla; otherwise it was very problematic. This is because the students always seemed to be satisfied with a Bangla instruction. Again, some of them could not understand the Guideline I provided for the speech which I repeated in Bangla. Apart from these, I initiated different other home tasks on speaking. For example, I had given them many particular topics and asked them to think about it and tell me the next day.

3.5 Methods I Usually Followed:

During my first speaking classes with the students, I used to follow a direct method of teaching English speaking. That is to say, I used to instruct and talk in English with them all the time. Whenever they made any request in Bangla (for example, they had to take permission to go to toilet), I asked them to repeat it instantly in English. However, soon I came to realize that this direct immersion method of English would not work for my students. This is because it scared them away from to speak in English. Again, this might have hampered the comfortable relationship I shared with them. Besides, the tension of making mistakes while speaking and being criticized by their peers might have a negative effect in their learning. My responsibility was to promote their learning and not to hamper it by making continuous corrections. So I had to look for a better method which I could

apply particularly in class three and four. To make them speak, I chose the Task Based Approach. The task based approach worked well since most of the students were interested in following directions rather than initiating speaking by themselves. This worked well since the students were eagerly doing different activities within the classroom according to my directions. I did this since I wanted to motivate some of those students who were not interested to talk with me directly. They could remain silent whenever I asked any question. Therefore I decided to apply this approach where they did not have to speak instantly rather they could take their time to prepare their speeches before starting talking to me. I found that the weak students were performing better than the strong ones. I was pretty much satisfied when I saw that they were proudly volunteering for the activities. This method also gave me a clear idea about their English understanding. I came to know how much they could comprehend my directions and act accordingly. This went on for several days until I got an overall idea about their speaking speed and accuracy. The in-class tasks showed that they were quite nervous to use difficult words and were comfortable with simple vocabulary. They also tend to made silly mistakes while responding to my questions. For example, I remember one student whom I asked 'Where is your *Fun with Grammar* book?' He replied, *'I forgot bring it'. These mistakes were very common because the students used to speak by omitting functional words like 'to', 'with', 'the', 'an', 'of' etc. The following is an example of a task that I commanded Sajjad (one of the students of class four) to act on.

"Take out any of the folded paper from the third pocket of my purse. Now do not open it. There is a picture of an animal or a flower. You will have to guess its name. Try to make a

guess about what is drawn in the paper. Then pass it to Mithu. He will also make another guess. This will go on until any of you make the correct guess. The one who will make the correct guess will be rewarded."

I found that Sajjad was getting confused when he heard my instruction for the first time. So I repeated myself. I wanted to see how much he could understand my direction. After repeating it for the second time he understood the direction but could not gave a reply. I asked him to give the reply later. Then I asked him, 'So can you do it for me?' At first he just nodded his head assertively. Later, he said, 'Yes, I will do it'. So the game seemed to be effective since my main intention was to make them speak.

After two weeks, I reversed the method. This time it was the students who gave certain directions to their fellow classmates. This became more effective. I saw that many of them correcting each other; an indication that the change in my method was working. The commands were very easy for them. I appreciated their class tasks since they enjoyed learning speaking without learning it consciously (by knowing grammatical rules of formal speech). For example, one day, I asked for two volunteers who would perform a task in the classroom. Arif and Sajal were interested. I asked Arif to explain a task to Sajal and Sajal would have to act accordingly. Arif instructed to collect all the English 2nd paper copies from the students who got less than five in their class tests. He asked Sajal to bring those copies and keep on the desk sorted according to their roll numbers. In this way, I used to make them talk within the English grammar classes.

3.6 Game I Played to Prompt Speaking:

"And many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak" (Ur, 1996, p. 120). My main purpose was to make the students skillful in speaking.

Something that I noticed during my internship was that my students were very young to understand many of the activities which an adult learner could have easily understood. According to Harmer (2007), language learners can be divided into some levels (p. 95). I found my students to be in the elementary level which is between the beginner and intermediate stage. The following diagram shows the student's level:
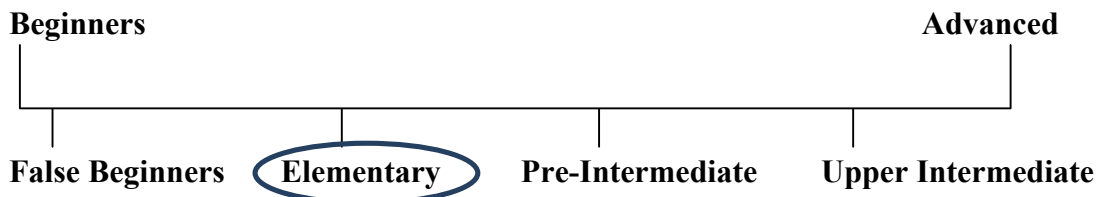
Beginners   **Advanced**

False Beginners   **Elementary**   **Pre-Intermediate**   **Upper Intermediate**

Figure 1: Language Learners' Levels (Harmer, 2007, p.95)

So my first aim was to do something in the class that could bring more fun for them and would help me to involve them into the process. For this, I tried some of the games that prompted the students to talk in front of the whole class. The following is the 'Lottery Game' procedure that I played with class three. The lottery game was about picking up any one of the folded papers to find out a topic and speak about it. At first, I made some small pieces of paper where I wrote different topics like 'My Mother', My body', 'My Classroom', Myself, My favorite Teacher', 'My best Friend' etc. and folded them carefully. Later I putted all of them in a box. I instructed them about how to play the game. I said that I would choose some of them randomly. They would pick out any of the folders and would talk about the given topic. They found it very interesting and seemed quite excited about it. I knew this was the time when they could speak because their friends were cheering for them. The game worked well. I was delighted to see the shyest students who also gave a

trial. This was in fact one of the most successful speaking classes I have taken. Actually young students can learn a lot of thing only if they are given the appropriate stimulation.

3.7 An Oral Examination in Class Four:

According to Carter and Nunan (2001), "Oral language because of its circumstances of production tends to differ from written language in its grammar, lexical and discourse patterns" (p. 14). Therefore speaking exams and assessments should also be different from that of a written work. Instead of testing the student's speaking skills with help of 'fill in the blanks' from given dialogues, I took an oral examination. It was difficult to manage this slot since the teachers were not agreeing. This is because the students were already having their first term examination. However I requested an English teacher to allow me fifteen minutes to take the exam during his class period. Although I could not ensure everyone's participation, yet I could manage half of the class's participation. My examination was based on some simple questions. I asked some very basic questions to a few of them. This was done to assess how much they could speak without any preparation (it was a surprise test for them). I wanted to examine their prompt answers. The following are the questions which I asked them randomly.

Questions for Surprise Oral Exam

Q.1) How do you come to school?	Q.2) Where do you live?
Q.3) What do you have in your lunch?	Q.4) What are your hobbies?
Q.5) What is your favorite game? Why?	Q.6) What is your favorite subject? Why?

The main aim of this exam was to give them individual feedbacks. This is because in case of young learners, the general feedback might not work well. While they were answering my questions, I note down their main mistakes. This time I took both fluency and accuracy into consideration. After they finished, I talked with each of them about the areas they need to improve.

3.8 Feedback & Comments:

Like I said earlier, young students are sensitive and their productive works should always be appreciated with positive comments and feedbacks. This is because the main intention of feedbacks is to improve and enhance student's learning autonomy. Negative feedbacks might work well for a few of them. However, I think most of the time negative feedbacks demotivate a student more than anything else. I believe feedbacks should not be used for criticizing anyone. I think the bad feedbacks/comments are meant to say 'You cannot do it'. This hampers a student's learning process. I tried my best to give some motivating comments regularly on their speeches. Nevertheless, I was strict with those students who tend to make maximum mistakes. For example, there were some weak students who could not organize their talk. They were used to talk in an unspoken/unnatural way. I often used to call them to start a general conversation. I never stopped them until and unless they stopped talking and wanted help.

3.9 A Special Class:

During my teaching at the school, I got a chance to take English first paper of class six. The regular teacher of this course was absent for some reason and I worked as a substitute. Before starting the class, I introduced myself and then asked them to introduce themselves

one by one. I asked them to stand one by one and talk about themselves (their name, where they live etc.). From the beginning the students seemed quite smart in their attitude. At first I thought they would not cooperate since I was very new to them. To my surprise they were very friendly with me. They were not only responding but also asking back questions. This was something that I missed while teaching the younger students. I had a lot of discussion with them since they were eagerly answering. This I did since I wanted to observe how their speaking varies from the younger students. In our country English is a second language which we came to learn slowly over time. We usually take a lot of time to communicate and interact successfully in English. After talking to this class I came to know that the English speaking skills develop at a slower rate compared to the writing and reading skills. I think this happens because speaking has less importance in the classrooms of our country. Our educational boards do not include speaking in their syllabus. So teaching speaking also does not get much priority. However, I think it is important that students get acquainted with the second language from their kindergarten stage. This gives them a good foundation to speak English fluently in later time.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY OF MY SURVEY

4.1 Method of Data Collection:

Apart from this experience, I decided to make further research on teaching speaking. So to see how speaking is taught in the classrooms of the school I planned to do a short survey. I chose the interview method of collecting my primary data because I wanted to talk with the teachers and know their different perspectives. Since my key concern was to examine whether the method of teaching speaking was traditional or not, my main priority was the teachers and not the students. During my experience, I planned to find out six well known English teachers from the school and talk to them about how they conduct speaking classes. I gave them the interview format[5] during their off periods. All of them gave their own opinions and I wrote it down for them. Later, I concise their answers which helped me prepare the statistical analysis. Another reason of choosing interview was that it allowed more elaborated conversation about the issue. Besides as it was an interview, I could also add their comments related with the main answers. Interviews are actually the best way to collect qualitative data because people feel comfortable sharing their own problems/limitations of teaching which they might not want to write down. Moreover, as it was an interview survey, I had the opportunity for other related enquiries. This also saved a lot of time which could have needed to answer any set of questionnaires in written form.

4.2 Research Data Type:

Both qualitative and quantitative data was being used for the research. Qualitative data was useful to understand the teacher's perspective (since I did not want answers in just yes/no form) and quantitative data was used to analyze their responses in a statistical method. This

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[5] The interview format is given on pg. 28.

is because quantitative/numerical data helped me to make clear comparisons among the non-traditional and traditional approaches of teaching speaking.

4.3 Sampling & Participants Details:

The survey was done by sampling of six English teachers who teaches English First and Second Paper to the students of class three, four, five, six and seven. Four of them were permanent teachers with at least two years of experiences. Others were assistant teachers. The sampling was done by keeping in mind that most of them were teaching English second paper as one of their main courses. The interview was based on nine different questions which they answered orally. I wrote their answers instantly so that I could copy exactly what they were saying.

4.4 Problems I faced:

While conducting the survey, I noticed that most of the teachers did not want to share their classroom problems directly with me. This can be because they did not want to disclose some of their experiences which were not very good with the students while they were teaching speaking. Moreover, as it was their job, I think most of them tried not to share their personal attitude towards their own teaching methods. However, most of them talked freely with their way of implementing the class lectures, activities and feedbacks. Since the inquiry demanded subjective answers from the teachers' behalf therefore there remained a possibility of biased responses. However, I managed to observe their classroom teaching to get more clear understanding of how speaking is being promoted in the classroom.

4.5 Interview Format:

The interview format consists of each participant's experience and teaching subject. On the

basis of their responses, I made a comparison on how many of them actually follow a non-traditional approach of teaching.

Interview format

Interview Date**:**   Teaching Experience**:**   Teaching Subject**:**

Q.1) Is there any necessity to have a particular topic and aim for any speaking lesson?

Q.2) Do you show visuals and photos when you teach speaking? When?

Q.3) Do you always use English during giving lectures or instructions? Why or why not?

Q.4) How do you encourage speaking in classrooms? Do your students take short lead-in-talks, do board games or practice dialogues from their text books?

Q.5) Is group work or pair work done on any new topic? How often?

Q.6) Is it practically possible to encourage speaking sessions after class hours? How about an extra speaking session of at least thirty minutes after school time?

Q.7) How do you make them speak English in the classroom? Is it mandatory for the students to use English always inside the classroom?

Q.8) What are the areas where students are required to speak English correctly? How do you provide feedback to your students?

Q.9) Is role plays, simulations, interactive games and classroom discussions are practiced in the classroom? Which of these are done most frequently?

Figure 2: Interview Format

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Interview Response Chart:

The following interview chart shows the responses of the six teachers to the nine questions that I asked orally. Their responses[6] has been shortened for better analysis.

Teachers _____ Questions	Teacher1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6
Q.1	Speaking topic is determined according to the text books.	The topic is not more important than the aim of speaking.	Sometimes the topic needs to be fixed when it is out of the book	Having a single topic means talking about the same thing	The topic is usually selected from their course books.	The dialogues are given in their text books. The aim for them is to speak in English
Q.2	I show photos for uncommon topics	The photos are in their course book.	Sometimes I draw photos for them on the board	I usually bring photos because they love it	Photos are helpful but not always	Not often, I draw pictures on board when they do not understand me
Q.3	I usually use English but	Bangla is needed whenever they do not	I give lecture in English and use Bangla	Since it is an English version, so I use English	I speak in English with the students	I explain everything in English but when students

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[6] Participants' main response sheets have been provided in the appendix. The Teacher's name has not been shown for sake of confidentiality.

	sometimes Bangla	understand any word	when instructing	for lecturing	most of the time	ask for clarification, I use Bangla
Q.4	Board games are played often	Speaking is normally done by practicing dialogues	I encourage them always to use English in classroom.	Since they are young, they feel shy to talk much	Students are always bound to speak in English	Students prefer board games like drawing picture and naming it
Q.5	Group works are done on known topics	I make pairs for discussing any new subject	I do not encourage group work since they make noise	Students often talk among themselves in pair work	Group works needs a lot of time to finish	I encourage speaking by asking them questions than group works
Q.6	It is possible if students show up	Speaking sessions at odd timing is difficult	It depends on the authority	There can be a speaking session once in a week	It is a good idea but it may not work	I do not appreciate the idea because students will never attend it
Q.7	I always make them response and talk in English	Since it is mandatory I make them answer in English	It is mandatory, but most of them do not use it	Speaking needs to be emphasized both in and outside	I ask and explain everything in English	I interact with all the students in English both inside and outside class

				class		
Q.8	Students need to speak English fluently and also correctly	Grammatical mistakes are commonly made so I try to correct them whenever possible	I give good comments although they made many Grammatical mistakes	I try to correct them instantly so they can remember it later and do not repeat it	Speaking should be fluent so I overlook some of their grammatical mistakes	Students should speak correctly and should also have correct pronunciation
Q.9	Classroom discussions are most frequently done because it is easy to do it inside classroom	Role plays are not very popular in Bangladeshi schools yet it should be encouraged like discussions	Role plays, simulations needs a lot of time and preparation for both the students and teachers so it is not done frequently	Students are not very familiar in our country with this sort of activities and the class time is also not enough	It is quite appreciable but practically not possible. Instead I ask students to come in front of the class and talk	Discussions on any topic is done often in the classroom yet role plays have never being done

Figure 3: Interview Response Chart

5.2 Statistical Analysis (Pie Chart & Bar Diagram):

The below Pie Chart has been analyzed by quantitative data for better understanding of how teaching speaking is being done in the classrooms.
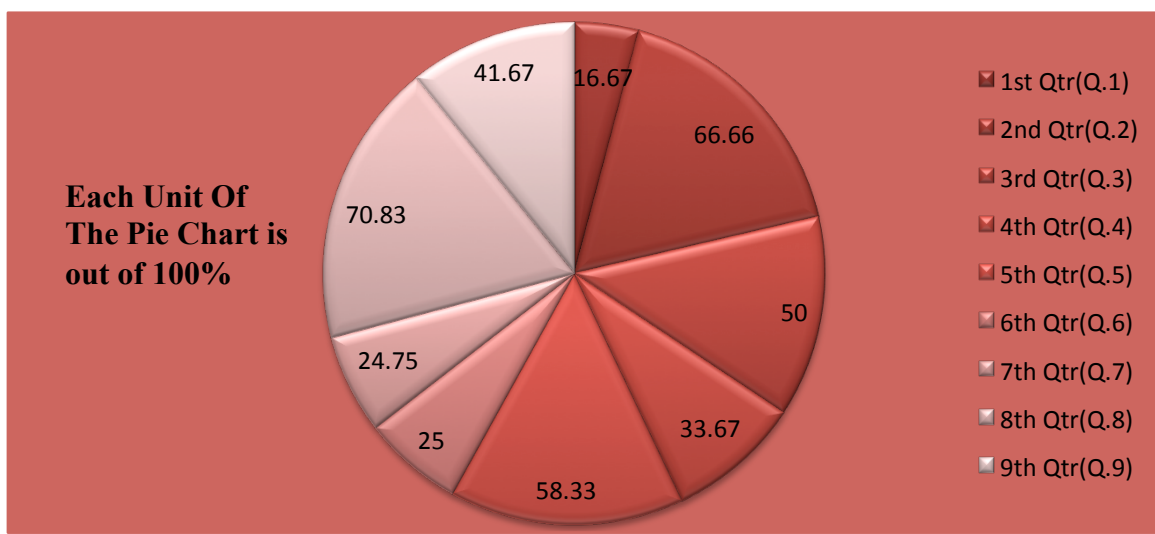

Figure 4: Pie Chart

The above Pie Chart has been analyzed with the help of percentage and each of its unit is measured out of hundred percent. The Pie Chart showed what percentage of teachers is actually following a non-traditional approach of teaching and how many of them are not.

The 1st Quarter (1st Question): Teachers preferring speaking with an aim/topic= 16.67%

The 2nd Quarter (2nd Question): Teachers using photos/visuals while teaching= 66.66%

The 3rd Quarter (3rd Question): Teachers using only English for lecturing/instructing=50%

The 4th Quarter (4th Question): Teachers not encouraging dialogue practice=33.67%

The 5th Quarter (5th Question): Teachers encouraging group/pair works=58.33%

The 6th Quarter (6th Question): Teachers appreciating extra speaking sessions=25%

The 7th Quarter (7th Question): Teachers making English mandatory in class=24.75%

The 8th Quarter (8th Question): Teachers not giving direct feedback on accuracy=70.83%

The 9th Quarter (9th Question): Teachers promoting role plays, board games etc. =41.67%

The Pie Chart showed how the teachers are still following many of the traditional techniques, strategies and activities in the school. Only a few of them are using the up graded ways of teaching speaking to the young children. The following Bar Diagram made a more clear comparison among the teachers. It presented who are still teaching in a traditional manner and who are not.
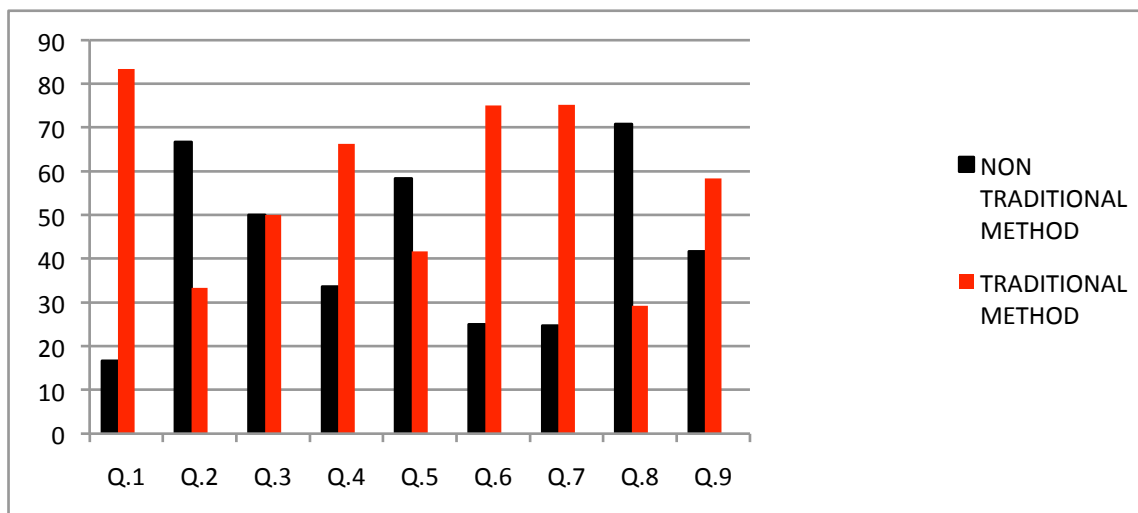

Figure 5: Bar Diagram

The Bar diagram showed a comparison among the two types of speaking approaches: Traditional and Non-traditional. Here, the horizontal axis OX represents the questions asked to the teachers and the vertical axis represents their responses in percentage. Here,

Question.1 shows teachers preferring a speaking topic/aim are 16.67% while 83.33% do not prefer any particular speaking topic. Question.2 shows teachers using photos/visuals are

66.66% while 33.34% do not use or draw photos for the students. Question.3 shows

teachers using only English for lecturing/instructing are 50% while 50% do not prefer it.

Question.4 shows teachers not encouraging dialogue practices are 33.67 % while 66.33 are

actually encouraging dialogue practices. Question.5 shows teachers encouraging group/pair

works are 58.33% while 41.67% do not like to do that.Question.6 shows teachers

appreciating extra speaking sessions are 25% while 75% disliked the idea. Question.7

shows teachers making English mandatory are 75.25% while 24.75% do not follow this

rule.Question.8 shows teachers not giving feedback on accuracy are 70.83% while 29.17%

are giving feedback only on accuracy. Question.9 shows teachers promoting role plays/

board games are 41.67% while 58.33% do not encourage these activities.

5.3 Discussions of the Results:

As I said earlier, the purpose of this investigation was to examine the contemporary process

of teaching speaking skill in this school. So I tried to focus mainly on how speaking is

being taught where teachers get the authority to conduct the class, give direction to the

students and manage the whole learning process. A teacher should be more than a teacher;

he/she should be a facilitator. In fact, the learning depends a lot on a teacher rather the

students. As Harmer (2007) said, a teacher can act in many ways: as a controller, prompter,

participator, resource or as a tutor (p. 108). Unfortunately, in our context, the teacher is the

controller of a classroom. He/she guides every action and behavior of the students.

According to Harmer (2007), a teacher who is a controller take his/her job as the

transmission of knowledge from themselves to their students and is very comfortable with

their image of themselves as controllers (p.108).

However, the most troublesome fact that I found was the teaching approach that is being followed till now. The survey results showed that most of the teachers tend to follow the traditional method of teaching till today. The big problem is that they are quite comfortable with the way they are teaching. It is also visible that they are comfortable because they have been trained to teach like that. Nevertheless, the question is whether they are aware of it or not. What I mean is that they must know the differences between a traditional and a nontraditional way of teaching at first. If most of the teachers follow the contemporary method than it means that they are taking it as the best approach. Another issue is whether the teachers think that the current method is effective or not. This is a very subjective issue to analyze statistically or quantitatively. The few teachers (who are trying to follow some of the modern techniques of conducting speaking classes) might have felt that readers are not passive recipients who will digest all the dialogues from board/book and speak fluent English.

Another important purpose of this short survey was to see whether there is any possibility of incorporating some of the modern speaking techniques[7] within the existing process of teaching. After analyzing the data, I do not think it will be very easy to integrate some new ideas in the teaching method. Even if the school authority takes this into consideration yet there is a long way to go. This is because sudden changes can be easily made in theories but practical implication takes time. However it can be made possible over long time. This is because bringing some changes (in teaching process) little by little is neither impossible nor unacceptable.

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[7] The modern techniques, activities, approaches and strategies are given in 'Literature Review', p. 9-10

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Recommendations:

According to Harmer (2007), "Two things about view of teacher's craft: in first place, being democratic and letting students participate in decision making takes more effort and organization than controlling the class from front. (p.107). That is to say, teachers must allow learners' autonomy in classrooms. He also said, "Actually a lot depend on how we as teachers behave in the class. If they see the teachers as unprepared and uncertain about what to do in their lessons, they are far more likely to lose interest. In other words, if a teacher arrive in classroom without a clear idea of what they are going to do, the chances of things going wrong are greatly increased" (p.154). This means a teacher should have a particular class conducting plan before s/he is actually executing the class.

According to Ur (1996), "what teachers can do to help solve speaking problems are:

(1) Use of group work, (2) Base the activity on easy language, (3) Make a careful choice of topic and task to stimulate interest, (4) Give some instruction or training in discussions skills and (5) Keep students speaking the target language" (p.121). Again it means that a teacher has a lot to do to promote learning in a classroom.

Apart from the above mention suggestions, I have some suggestions for teaching speaking skills to the students. These are some guidelines which I believe a teacher should follow to enhance speaking. In a classroom, a teacher should:

Be a facilitator. S/he should provide maximum opportunities to the students for speaking.

Reduce talk time to increase the students' talk time.

Encourage autonomous learning and peer interaction.

Encourage each and every student to speak and give individual attention to each of them.

Provide maximum positive feedbacks so that a student do not feel demotivated to

   Interact freely.

Should prioritize fluency more than accuracy since speaking in a second language should

be as natural as speaking in the first language.

Should avoid giving instant corrections during speaking sessions since it hampers

fluency.

Should be anyone but an authoritative model for the students.

6.2 What I Learned from My Internship:

This four month internship not only taught me how to 'teach' but also helped to distinguish some of the basic speaking problems. The first problem I noticed was that the students tend to translate a word directly from Bangla to English. They were not trying to explain objects with many words rather were looking for a particular term to name the object. Secondly, they often became very nervous and that hindered their natural flow. Thirdly, they were being deprived of the opportunity to use English outside the classrooms.

These were some problems which were keeping students away from speaking however the main problem lied with the teaching process itself. The main problem is that teachers in most of the schools are not very enthusiastic about teaching English speaking with care. This has a number of reasons along with variables like the teachers' age, experience, personality, attitude etc. What I learnt from this experience is that a teacher can do a lot in a classroom. For example, it is not necessary that each and every teacher should

be trained up with modern techniques to teach speaking; this is not even practically possible. Yet, he/she can contribute successfully to the class if he/she is intuitively motivated to do so. If a teacher wants, he/she can bring a lot of effective changes within a simple classroom. At first the teacher can bring a change in the environment, e.g., by changing the seating arrangement, drawing some beautiful pictures for the students and thus create a cheerful atmosphere. Besides, they can spend some time talking in English with the students just before starting the English classes. Although there is no particular speaking sessions they can conduct it within class times. Moreover, there are some fun games and activities (board games, lotteries etc.) which can be done as a part of English first and second paper. Though many teachers will claim that the class time is very short I think it is still possible to organize fun activities within the limited time. This is because I incorporated many of these fun games within the class periods. So teachers can actually spend ten minutes every day on speaking apart from regular classes. During this short time they can do many things. For example, they can talk, discuss, command students to do any task, ask questions, do brainstorming and play games with them. I think organizing these games is not impossible rather it needs a little more effort on the teacher's part. Actually the first step of bringing any sort of changes in the classroom should be from the teachers' side which I came to realize while doing my internship.

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