

Problems in Teaching Speaking in Traditional ESL Classrooms

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## Chapter = 1

### Introduction

In today's world smartness, good appearance, personality and talent are needed to be successful in life. In these days to get a good job and also to get good opportunities in life speaking fluently in English is very important. The ability to speak English fluently opens up wider opportunities to achieve success in life. Sometimes people build judgments about others on the basis of their speaking ability. So people are having more and more interest to learn and speak good English. It is very difficult to survive in today's world without speaking English fluently.

Different people learn English for different purposes, for example to get quality education, to get good opportunities to build up their career or simply they have fascination for learning English. Now in many offices, institutions, private universities English are considered as the only medium of communication. The ability to speak English fluently has great influence in our life that is why we cannot ignore it. In genuine communication, speaking is purpose-driven or we can say that we want to communicate to achieve a particular end, for example, expressing ideas and opinion, expressing a wish or desire to do something; negotiating or solving a particular problem; or maintaining social relationships and friendship etc. So we can say that speaking as a skill is playing significant role in our lives.

Speaking is a productive skill. Accuracy and fluency are the two important aspects of speaking. Accuracy is the extent to which students' speech matches what people actually say when they use the target language while fluency refers to the extent to which speakers use the language quickly and confidently, with few hesitations or



unnatural pauses, false starts, words searches, etc. Speakers should pay importance to both accuracy and fluency. In front of a large audience speakers might get nervous because if they lack both accuracy and fluency in speaking.

During my internship in an English medium school, I observed that in the same classroom, all learners do not belong to the same proficiency level. Students face different types of problems such as some might feel shy, some might not know when to speak etc. To solve these problems learners should be given enough opportunities to speak in the classroom, because as much as students will speak, their level of accuracy, fluency and confidence will develop. Again, teachers can teach speaking in the classroom in many interesting and innovative ways; that is the reason I have chosen this topic “Speaking” for my internship report.

So in my internship report, I would like to talk about speaking as a skill, different aspects of speaking, different problems which are faced by the learners in the classroom while speaking and I will also give some suggestions as to how to overcome this problem. In my internship report I would also like to share my experiences, observations during my internship and try to relate those with the existing researches on speaking.

## School profile

### West Bridge School

West Bridge is an English medium school which is situated in Uttara. It is one of the well known in our country. It started its journey in 2005 with very little students and few qualified teacher, and is now comprised of 120 students and 20 teachers. The aim of the institution is to give better education to the students. The main motto of this school is “Wisdom”, “Education”, and “Progress”.

This school maintains a very cordial ad friendly environment for the students so that the students feel comfortable to study. The teacher works really hard to make teaching interesting and they apply different techniques to make the lessons more effective for the students. In this school the teachers pay special attention to the weak students. This school is well-reputed for maintaining good discipline.

#### Basic information about West Bridge School

West Bridge is a child based education centre, which is now from play group to seventh standard. All the classes are held in the morning from 8am-2pm. This school does not have enough students right now, since it is a very new school.

The chairpersons of this school, Brig. Gen. Abdus Salam Chowdhury and his wife Lt Col Rokeya Rahman try their best to provide all the facilities which are required for a good school. There are highly qualified and caring teachers who work sincerely under

the guidance of the chairpersons. They try to help students develop talents and interest in studies. They talk to the students individually and provide both academic and emotional supports. This school also maintains a very good relation with the parents of the students.

Though West Bridge School is a small school, it is equipped with fairly good facilities. It has a small library, a computer lab and a small playground for the students. Every year the school conducts a number of sports competitions, talent shows and outdoor visits. These field trips and competitions make education practical and entertaining for the students.

The school is now operating with a very limited resource, since it is a new school. But it has already gained a good reputation and it is still flourishing with the participation of an efficient team of advisors, teacher, staffs, students and parents.



## Chapter =2

### Literature Review

#### Speaking

Speaking is an important part of second language learning and teaching. Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued. English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as memorization of dialogues. Now a day the goal of teaching speaking is to improve learner's communication skill. "Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information" (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. Speaking needs that learner not only should know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary but also those they understand when, why, and in what ways to produce language.

Speaking, as a productive skill, is very complex requiring the simultaneous use of a number of different abilities, which often develop at different rates. According to David P. Harris there are five components that are generally recognized in analyses of the speech process:

- Pronunciation
- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Comprehension

### Different aspect of speaking:

Accuracy and fluency are very important aspects of speaking. If the learner does not know the correct use of the language then (s) he should be given enough opportunity to improve their speaking proficiency. During speaking the teacher should not interrupt students to point out an error. This makes students anxious and affects fluency.

### Accuracy:

Accuracy means the correct use of language in terms of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. According to Harmer “Accuracy involves the correct use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation”. In speaking, accuracy is very important and the teacher should make them clear about the correct use. Teacher should encourage the students for the correct use of the language. According to Nunan, “Accuracy is the extent to which students’ speech matches what people actually say when they use the target language”. However, teachers should not be too focused on accuracy. Because, if they are very particular about producing correct language from the beginning, then students might never gain fluency of speech.

### Fluency:

Fluency is the capability of the speakers to use the language quickly, spontaneously and confidently. Learners must be given opportunity to develop both their fluency and their accuracy. According to Nunan, “Fluency is the extent to which speakers use the target language quickly and confidently with few hesitations or unnatural pauses, false starts, words searches”. When the students get used to the language and learn to communicate

properly then the fluency comes. We cannot expect from a beginner to speak fluently. For improving fluency, the learners should be given the chance to speak spontaneously without worrying much about accuracy.

### What a good speaker does

A good learner always organizes his thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence and uses language as a means of expression. A good learner should know the use of right words in the right order with the correct pronunciation, different language functions and social and cultural norms. "Speakers must be able to anticipate and then produce the expected patterns of specific discourse situations. They must also manage discrete elements such as turn-taking, rephrasing, providing feedback, or redirecting" (Burns & Joyce, 1997). Learners have to take part in communication and have to choose correct vocabulary, use facial expression so that other people can easily understand what he or she is trying to say. According to Brown a good speaker does the following things

- Using grammar structures accurately
- Selecting vocabulary that is understandable and appropriate for the audience
- Using gestures or body language
- Paying attention to the success of the interaction and adjusting components of speech such as vocabulary, rate of speech, and complexity of grammar structures to maximize listener comprehension and involvement



## How to encourage students to speak:

It is very important for teacher to encourage students to speak in the classroom. If they do not encourage them to use the language then students' speaking ability will never improve. Students usually do not use the target language beyond classroom. That is why they need to speak up in the classroom. In the classroom if the students make any mistake, the teacher can help them to correct their mistakes. According to Philips, the teachers do the following things to encourage students to speak in class

### **1. Encourage students interactions**

Most of the students feel very shy to speak in the classroom because they are not used to take part in classroom discussion. Students do not even interact with other students if they have to use the target language. Philips emphasizes on creating a comfortable atmosphere where students are not afraid to speak and enjoy communicating with the teacher. Students have to be given an atmosphere where they can speak without any pressure and stress.

### **2. Make speaking activities communicative**

Speaking activities need to be very interesting to encourage meaningful interaction between students. If the speaking activities are not interesting enough and do not provide opportunity for students to speak then there is no use of giving speaking activity. According to Philips, "The aim of communication activities is to encourage purposeful and meaningful interaction between students. Communicative tasks are designed so that students have a reason or a purpose for speaking". Teacher should

give such activities so that students can share their thought, express their feeling, find out the real information, discuss and argue.

### **3. Plan speaking activities carefully:**

According to Philips, “Speaking activities need to be very carefully structured at first at lower levels, so that the students have few demands on them.” At the beginning stage, activities should be easy but good enough so that students can use the target language. Students might not be fluent and accurate in speaking but they should not remain quite. When they get used to communicate then the teacher can introduce more difficult activities such as role-plays, discussions, debates and problem-solving tasks.

### **Principles for teaching speaking:**

In the communicative model of language teaching, the teacher helps the students in real-life communication. They help their students develop the ability to produce grammatically correct, logically connected sentences that are appropriate to specific contexts. According to Nunan there are some principles for teaching speaking some of which are described below

#### **1. Give Students practice with both fluency and accuracy**

At the beginning and intermediate level of studies learners must be given opportunities to improve their fluency as well as accuracy. Accuracy means using the target language correctly and fluency is using language quickly and confidently. The teacher should not emphasize on any one aspect of speaking. Rather, students should get practice on both accuracy and fluency.



## **2. Use group work or pair work.**

To improve students' speaking, they should be given enough opportunities to speak in class. So, in class teacher talk time should be less and student talk time should be more. According to Nunan, it is important for language teacher to be aware of how much students are talking in class so the teachers do not take up all the time. To increase student talk time, the teacher should engage them in group work and pair work. According to Nunan, "Pair work and group work can be used to increase the amount of time that learners get to speak in the target language during lesson". In this way, the students will get chance to interact with other students.

## Chapter = 3

### My Experience as an intern:

During my three month internship in West Bridge School, I performed a lot of responsibilities. During the first few weeks I observed some English classes from KG One to Standard five. Most of the observed classes were in the junior level and some of them were in the senior level. At the first day of my internship, the Chairman of the school told me that “Though it is an English medium school but many students can not speak fluently in English”. He also mentioned that students were very shy to communicate in English but they should speak up. Also, there were some students in the school who never speak up because they had to speak in English. So, I put a lot of emphasis on speaking. Whenever I observed any class, I used to observe whether students spoke in English or not. After two or three weeks I started taking English classes in the junior level. I also took English classes in the senior level and conversation classes. Apart from my scheduled duties, I taught in some classes as a substitute teacher when some teachers were absent.

### **Findings based on my observation:**

During my internship, I found that in the classroom most of the teachers did not encourage the students to speak in class. I also found that some teachers spoke in Bengali in the classroom and also allowed students to speak in Bengali. When I observed and conducted few classes I realized that students do not feel the necessity to speak in English. The teachers did not motivate students to improve their speaking ability.

In the junior classes I have seen that students do not speak in English at all. Students who speak, their sentences are incomplete. Students produced just few words in English such “Miss, water” or “Miss, wash room”. Whenever I asked anything they just replied in one word. I realized that they did not have enough knowledge on vocabulary and grammar. In the classroom they just completed their activities from the book. The teacher gave much emphasis on writing skill rather than speaking skill. In the conversation class the teacher did not utilize the class. There was hardly any speaking activity done by the students.

In the senior classes’ problems were similar to those of the junior classes. The students tried to speak in English but their sentences were not grammatically correct. Some students do not want to speak in English because of making mistakes. In the classroom the teacher did not introduce any speaking activity to improve their speaking. I observed that the teachers taught grammar in deductive way. They taught them the rules but did not show the practical use of the rules. As a result, the students were very confused. All the classes were teacher-dominated. Students did not get proper chance to communicate in the classroom. That is why most of the time students remain quiet. The teachers never motivated the students speak in the class.

I observed an English literature class of standard II. The teacher read out a story from the book and explained each and every line. After finishing the story, she gave them a set of vocabulary items to memorize. The teacher did not explain the meaning or gave any synonym. In class the teacher talked more than the students. Only one or two students asked few questions. Most of the students remained quite in the class. There



was no discussion on the story and hardly any interaction between the teacher and the students.

### **The reasons behind the problems mentioned**

Though it was an English medium school and the medium of communication was English, all the students of the same class did not have the same ability to speak in English fluently. During my observation I noticed that the elementary level students and the more advanced level students had different types of problems. Elementary students did not have enough knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. On the other hand, the advanced students knew all the rules and had good vocabulary but they did not have proficiency in speaking. From my observations, I have listed down some reasons behind students' problems while speaking.

#### **1. Lack of Interesting topic**

In the upper level, students did not want to speak when the topic was not interesting. In the classroom students were repeatedly asked to introduce their families or schools, talk about their hobbies. Almost all the students in the classroom talked about similar things, which could hardly present anything new to each other.

#### **2. Size of the class**

All the students did not get opportunity to speak or take part in classroom conversations. In the elementary level, the number of the students was near 30. In a class of 40 minutes it was impossible for each student to speak individually. As a teacher I could not communicate with all the students in one class. This led to the

result that the speaking skills of most students were comparatively lower than other skills such as reading and writing

### **3. Anxiety of making Mistakes**

Students were mostly nervous and afraid of making mistakes. In the elementary level since the students did not know the rules of the language, they were not aware of making mistakes until the teacher pointed it out and corrected those. That was the reason why they were not worried about mistakes and tried to speak in English. But in the senior classes students were aware of their errors and that is why most of the time they remained quite to avoid errors. Students knew that if they made any mistake than the others might make fun of them or the teacher might not like it.

**4. Peer response:** According to my observations in speaking classes, apart from the factors mentioned above, the listeners' feedback also has a strong influence on the performance of the speakers. Very often, at the beginning of the performance, the speakers were confident and active while doing any dialogue or presentation. However, when the audience lost interest in the speakers, they began to talk to each other. As a result, the student-speakers sped up or cut down their words. When the speakers did not receive good response from their peers, they did not want to speak.

### **5. Lack of motivation:**

If the teacher do not motivate to speak in English and allow them to communicate in the target language, then the students get chance to avoid target language. If the teacher does not feel the importance of speaking and always gives importance to



reading, writing and listening, then it is impossible for the students to improve their speaking ability.

#### **6. Teacher's talk vs. students talk**

Another important point is almost all the classes were teacher-dominated and the student talk time is less compared to the teacher's taking time. It is the teacher's duty to provide opportunity to students to speak in class. Students should be given enough time to speak and take part in speaking activity.

#### **7. Students participation**

Another thing I observed that in class all the students did not get chance to speak. Most of the time very few students spoke in the class and the rest of the class became listeners. The teacher has to make sure that every student participates in classroom conversations.

#### **8. Lack of opportunity to use the target Language**

The students found it difficult to speak in the target language because they did not see the need to do so. Therefore, they did not want to take pains recalling the words and the grammar rules. The problem in the class was that the regular tasks given to the students required a lot of grammar and writing but very little conversation, so when the students tried to speak anything in English, they could not, although they knew a lot of rules and vocabulary.

### **9. Grammar item taught in a deductive manner**

Many a times the teachers referred to grammar books and presented grammar rules with explanations of the structures. I think a better way to teach grammar is to write sample sentences on the blackboard and discuss those sentences, which will eventually make the structure clear to the students.

#### **Suggestions**

Based on my observation and my internship experience, I have presented below some suggestions to improve learners speaking.

- The teacher should provide maximum opportunity to the students to speak the target language by providing a rich environment that contains pair work and authentic materials and tasks.
- The teacher should try to involve each student in every speaking activity. In classrooms, some students always remain quite. The teacher should identify those students and should encourage them to speak in class.
- The teacher has to reduce teacher-speaking time in class while increasing student-speaking time. If the teacher talk more then speak, then the students will listen to the teacher and they will not participate in the class.
- The teacher should provide positive feedback when commenting on students' responses. If the students make any mistake, then the teacher should correct it in such a way that it does not interrupt. It should look like that the teacher is giving suggestions. Some times students do not want to speak because of making mistakes.
- The teacher should introduce interesting topics and variety of activities to improve learners' speaking skill. Sometimes the teacher may give chance to the students to choose their topics for speaking.

## Conclusion

Teaching speaking is a very important part of second language teaching. The ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school and in every phase of life. Therefore, it is essential that language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking in stead of leading students to written work and memorization. The teacher should provide a rich environment where meaningful communication can take place. With this aim, various speaking activities should be introduced in language classes, which can contribute to students in developing communication skills necessary for life. These activities make students more active and interested in the class and at the same time make learning more meaningful and fun for them.

I really enjoyed Working at west bridge school and it was really a nice opportunity for me to work as an environment. The students and also the teacher were really cooperative .I had a very good relation with all the students; they were very loving and very obedient students

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