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**Effective Activity-based Teaching to Overcome Apprehensions for  
the Enhancement of Speaking Skill**

**P. Subapradha, M.A., M.Phil., B.Ed., PGDELT., (Ph.D.)**

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**Abstract**

For English language teaching various techniques and strategies are employed to acquire desired results. In my practice and observation, the classroom is the best place to bring out one's speaking ability. Speaking ability involves not only the idea of mere exchange of data but also the effective means of communicating, persuading and presenting ideas. In this paper I have mentioned some of the activities to be followed in language classes. These activities will certainly enhance the power of integration and organization of ideas and speaking skills of the student learners.

**Introduction**

Speaking is an art. The school teaching does not give much preference for speaking. The students want to score marks and thus become expert in writing skills but when it comes to the speaking the result is very poor. When students come to college they encounter various problems. One of these problems relates to speaking English fluently. In the modern era a person who lacks in communication skill is considered to be unsuccessful and inefficient. Speaking is an asset for successful professional life. The ability to speak effectively is certainly an asset to professional graduates. This skill will help them to impress and influence people. Unfortunately some people are afraid to speak English openly as they feel that they are not good in this skill.

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Their fears must be overcome if they want to be successful in using English for their professional career.

Communication apprehension is defined by Mary Hinchcliff Pelias of Southern University as "*an individual's level or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons*". However such nervousness need not get in the way of effective speaking.

*Understanding the reasons for nervousness is the first step of controlling it.* (Greene, J. O., & Sparks, G. G. (1983).

**1. Fear of being stared:** Some students may feel uncomfortable being the centre of attraction, and this causes fear and results in inability to speak well.

**2. Fear of the unknown:** Students have the fear of speaking in front of strangers and they avoid speaking in English.

**3. Fear of mockery:** The students have the fear that they lack in ideas and their ignorance may pull down their self esteem.

These factors which intrude speaking ability can be ruled out easily by the help of the teacher facilitator. Fear gives energy. Fear will boost you up to persevere and show respect to the audience and this will help you to build a rapport with the audience and it is an indirect pressure on the speaker to speak effectively. The teacher should teach the student to tackle and manage nervousness. Insist on the students not to crack their knuckles, adjust dress, cross legs, pull back shoulders, and crooked postures. Knowing how to deal with nervousness is the best way to control nervousness. Students should be confident about themselves.

1. Trust yourself.
2. Feel proud that you are the presenter
3. Assume that the audience is eager to listen to you
4. Take deep breath before starting a speech.
5. Don't be afraid of making mistakes.
6. Get mentally prepared to face the audience.
7. Take it as a challenge to complete the task.
8. Persevere

These tips would help the students to overcome apprehensions and perform effectively.

### **Suggested Activities to Overcome Apprehensions**

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According to Nunan, D. 2004, task based teaching and learning will give solution for communication apprehensions. I have suggested some activities which I found productive in the first year engineering students consisting of Tamil medium students. In the course of presentation, the teacher should be a silent spectator and need not correct the mistakes in the middle of the students' presentation which may distract the students. These activities mainly focuses on overcoming communication apprehensions, vocabulary building and enhance speaking ability of an individual.

### **Self Introduction**

The speaker has to come to the stage in the classroom to give the presentation. This activity will help students gain experience in speaking in front of large group and will begin to reduce the apprehensions they feel when called upon to speak. The teacher may give some questions beforehand to students: (i) Tell me about yourself, (ii) Say a few words about your hometown, (iii) favourite sport, (iv) What do you do in your leisure time? Etc.

This initial speech provides an easy subject to speak and to make students feel comfortable and familiar. This activity will help them to analyse their own behaviour and speak without inhibitions.

### **Introduction of Friend**

Students may form pairs and sit opposite to each other to interview the partner asking questions about their whereabouts, likes, dislikes, etc. Both the members have to exchange answers to one another. The teacher may allow the students to interact for 15 minutes. This activity enables the students to ask questions as well as present the answer in third person as well. It is important to make this activity fun and interesting which will enable the participants to ask questions. This activity will surely provide speaking experience with fun and eventually the students will come out from their apprehensions and speak without inhibitions.

### **The Serial Speech**

In this activity, one student begins a speech or story and speaks for thirty seconds. The next student picks up where the first stopped. This continues until all students have had an opportunity to speak. These speeches usually take entertaining lines and provide them with an opportunity to think on your feet in a fun and non-threatening situation.

### **The Pet Peeve Speech**

In this individual activity, the students have to say what angers them the most and then speak on why are they so bothered by that issue. For this activity they may even vent their suppressed feelings by shouting and scolding. This activity may help the monotonic speaker to speak with

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energy and force. Randall L. Bytwerk, author of an article asserts, "The most stubbornly monotonic speaker can display startling energy during this activity"

### **Famous Speech**

The students may copy the speech which is available in the language lab, such as Jawahar Lal's "Tryst with Destiny" or Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream". This activity allows them to focus on memorized speech to deliver easily.

### **Impromptu Speech**

The impromptu speech is one of the most valuable exercises for beginning speech as it teaches the importance of thinking quickly, demonstrates the necessity of effective speech organization with fun and challenge. Five minutes can be given to prepare the impromptu speech to deliver. Topics such as; Rain, My first vehicle, My intimate friend, Thanking your mother, My favourite food etc., can be given to the students to choose any one of the topic given. Brent.C.Oberg opines that building one's skill as an impromptu speaker will help to develop the ability and confidence in all speaking situations".

### **Informative Speech**

This activity is designed to share the audience about a certain subject. The speaker should give facts and information to educate the audience about the topic. The speaker can use visuals to support his/her presentation. Five to six minutes can be given to present the topic. However, they should look professional and be able to manipulate effectively. Topics or Ideas like are useful here.

- New technology ( Nanotechnology, Nanoscience,etc.)
- New inventions (cars of future, artificial tree, sensors, etc.
- Psychologies Issues ( children development, adolescence etc.
- Music
- Sports
- Historical Issues
- Current Issues

### **Advertising (Marketing) Speech**

This activity was a success in my teaching and was more interesting with fun. This may be an individual or group activity. The students were asked to choose a product worth ten to fifty rupees. The product may be an edible item or any useful items for students like pen, eraser, CD, DVDs, chart, etc., or plant saplings, etc. They need to prepare a poster and advertise their product on the stage and convince and negotiate with the audience regarding the price and the

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sell ten products within the time given (30 minutes). After the sale is over, they have to present the report on sales (profit, loss, capital money, strains to choose the product), etc.

### **Lip Synchronization**

This activity is purely based on fun. This develops physical expressiveness. The student has to choose a rhyme or song and then perform it in front of the class, moving your lips to the music. They may use a dump microphone, props to make the presentation more interesting.

### **Story Telling Speech**

This activity may be an individual activity. This activity provides a good idea of the basics of oral interpretation, and to be more expressive, bring emotions to presentations and gain experience in creating characters and making up exciting situations. The students have to deliver original story or narrative. This will enable the students to invent stories and captivate the attention of the audience for five minutes.

### **Conclusion**

Participation in these activities has numerous advantages and benefits. First, such activities demonstrate the importance of speech. Second, they allow for practice of skills that are applicable and important in real world situations. Also these activities require a higher degree of interaction and involvement by students and provide a greater opportunity for learning. In all these activities, appreciation and constant encouragement by the teacher is vital (Glaser, S. R. (1981). Corrections should be given least importance and the main focus must be on the level of participation. The activities suggested should be used in the initial stage of participation to overcome communication apprehension. This practice should be given in addition to the regular curriculum which helps the student to face the competition in the global job market.

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