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EXPLORING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SPEAKING SKILL FOR EFL  
LEARNERS

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### Abstract

In theera of globalization, people need communication and for this purpose, the communication skills perform a key role. To become successful in the desired fields, all people need to get proficiency overall skills of language. Among these skills, speaking occupies the coreposition. Without this skill, the purpose of communication cannot be performed effectively. English has become the universal language and all people of the world can communicate with other people through English. People need interactions in presentglobalworld and for the purpose of interaction with all people across the world, one common language is needed, and English fulfils this need. People can understand and can be understood by this medium of communication. Akhter, Qureshi, Hassan and Barira (2020) illustrate that English has become international language. Owing to its significance in this globalized era, it becomes imperative for the learners to get command over the skills which fulfil the task of communication. For EFL learners, the need to acquire competency over these skills increases many times. To survive in 21<sup>st</sup> century successfully, the knowledge of English and command overall skills is essential. So, to keep pace with the trends of the modern world, EFL learners should gain the knowledge of English Language. To improve their communication especially speaking skill better, ideal place is classroom.The issues of EFL Learners should be interpreted by the instructors. They should introduce such strategies

in the classroom which improve their all skills in general and speaking skill in particular. The undertaken research is an attempt to highlight the significance of speaking skill for EFL Learners. Moreover, the present study also explains the various effective methods and techniques to enhance EFL Learners' speaking skill.

### **Introduction**

Undoubtedly, English language has gained the status of international language due to its countless users. It is the sole language that is spoken and perceived widely. In every field of life throughout the world, people use it. It has become the language of research, education, business, the internet, travel and tourism, media and newspapers, software, medicine, engineering, information and technology, entertainment, banking and so on. Now -a-days, communication is carried out throughout the world among people through one common language that is English. More than 84% research studies use English language whether these publications are about natural science, mathematics, humanity, social sciences, agriculture, business, fashion designing, internet and so on (P. S. Rao (2019)). Not only publications, but almost all books at higher education level are written in English. Owing to the importance of English, EFL learners want to gain the knowledge of English to progress in this technologically skilled world of globalization. In learning process of English language, four basic skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing are important. In the absence of these four basic skills, the learning of English is not possible (Boonkit, 2010). Now-a days, a significant change has been observed in the learning and teaching of English language (Xu, Akhter, & Qureshi, 2020).

Among these skills, Speaking is considered the important skill. This skill is used in effective communication and communication is the basic need of the present world. People cannot survive without communication. They need to express their thoughts, views and opinion and this need can be fulfilled through language. People need to communicate with others in this global village and this purpose is fulfilled by means of English. This is only possible when they are able to express their ideas in English. For this purpose, they need to develop speaking skill. Without speaking skill, non-native speakers of English cannot communicate with the people of other countries who speak different languages.

So, speaking skill occupies a prominent place in the communication process especially when mother tongue is not being exploited for communication and medium of communication is foreign language. English is widely used everywhere in the world for communication. For this purpose, special attention should be given to improve the speaking skill of the EFL Learners. By getting command over speaking skill, they will be able to communicate with native speakers of English as well as the other international people. Bailey (2005) and Goh (2007) explain the strategies which may be effective to improve the speaking skill. They argue that syllabus should be designed carefully, teaching method should be changed and tasks and material should be introduced in classroom to improve the speaking skill. Apart from this, speaking assessment task should be organized.

Speaking skill is given the vital importance during the teaching and learning process of foreign language throughout the history (Nazara, 2011). Recently, speaking skill enjoys higher status because its importance is being increased dramatically due to various reasons. It has become the language of international communication. It promises for bright future to people who have excellent command over speaking skill. They can get jobs in foreign countries because of their communication skill. It serves the purpose of main gate for securing lucrative jobs. Richards and Renandya (2002) state that majority of non-native learners learn English in order to get command over speaking skill.

Owing to the importance of English in the present scenario, to introduce effective teaching and learning material, the best teaching techniques, activities, and other useful strategies is the need of the hour to improve the speaking skill of EFL learners. They should provide such environment where they can easily develop their speaking skill. Several studies have been conducted which tended to enhance the speaking skill of EFL Learners. But EFL learners are facing problems in learning speaking skill. They find themselves in a fix while speaking. To communicate with other in English is uphill task for them. Hinkel (2011) argues that it is challenging task to get command over speaking skill. Significant research works should be carried out from students' perspective and teachers should be aware of the importance of this skill. They should provide proper guidance to learners in this context. **The Basic Language Skills of English** English is enjoying the status of international language. That is why, all EFL learners endeavour to get the knowledge of English. For getting the knowledge of English, four basic skills are involved, and they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As the Fig.1 shows these skills.

(Basic Skill of Learning English)



(Fig.1: Four skills to acquire the knowledge of English Language)

These four skills can be called receptive and productive skills. Listening and reading are called passive skills or receptive skills, whereas, speaking and writing can be called active skills or productive skills.

The figure 2 shows that productive skills are Speaking and writing, and Receptive skills are Listening and reading. Productive skills are most important because the EFL learners have to produce learnt language in form of written text or oral context. Whereas in Receptive skills, the learners remain passive and they have no need to produce sentences. They just focus on listening. In Receptive skills, they just listen or read the written material without any intention to produce language. That is why, productive skills are crucial because the learners make sentences for spoken or written purpose. For this skill, they need to gain the knowledge of several things such as vocabulary, collocations, and grammar etc. According to Akhter, Nordin (2020), For the non- native learners, collocation plays the key role in the acquisition of English language. Its remarkableness is indisputable for them. Collocation is the unit of lexis, that is why, its remarkableness in the acquisition of English language is an admitted fact (Xu et al., 2020). Practice is also required for this purpose. Consequently, speaking and writing are regarded as active skills because they keep the learners active to produce the language.

### **The Importance of Speaking Skill**

At present, the need for speaking mastery in English has been dramatically increasing due to the strengthening position of English as a language for international communication (Nazara, 2011). No doubt, without language, there will be no communication. Language is needed to convey ideas, feelings, and thoughts. People share their problems by means of language. Language is the beauty of life. To fulfil the task of communication, speech is required. So, speech is imperative for communication. Owing to the importance of speaking skill, EFL learners struggle hard to get command over productive skill. Without language, there is no society and without speech, there is no human language. The language devoid of speech is just like a script. Without speech, language is like a drama without characters. Language is used in different situation to convey messages, share ideas, and communicate with others. This productive skill is used by people while working, enjoying the moments of life and so on. Understanding develops among people due to effective communication. A gap of communication creates problems. Effective communication can be carried out through productive skill.

To run any system smoothly, it is necessary that the speakers are well equipped with the speaking skill. People are attracted if the speakers have mastery over productive and receptive skills in general and speaking skill in particular. It is well known proverb that a person is hidden under his tongue. The tongue is the interpreter of the intellect. The merit of a man is known from his speech. It can be maintained that speech awards the people with several benefits. With help of speaking skill, they develop good relations with other people. They feel pleasure by sharing their thoughts. They get better job opportunities due to speaking skill. Through interaction, they understand other people clearly. It is not exaggeration to say that clear

thoughts are reflected through clear speech. The person with good speaking skill has ability to attract the attention of the people and engage them until the delivery of his/her message. Speaking skill ensures the lucrative careers. The activities of social life can be promoted due to this productive skill.

Furthermore, persons can get their desired aims, purposes, and targets using appropriate language for communication (P. S. Rao, 2019). So, language needs that communication should be carried out among people across the world. Since English has won the place of international language and all over the world its speakers are found, it assists people to communicate with the people belonging to diverse regions, states, countries, and continents of the world. In the process to gain the understanding of foreign or second language, this active skill performs significant role. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) narrate that this productive skill is important from this point of view that the learners are judged upon the most in actual life situations. No special attention is given to teach this skill. EFL learners are being taught this skill just to memorize the dialogues or repeat the drills. However, it is the demand of the advanced world that learners should have better command over communication skill and this task can be achieved if EFL teacher teach them in a way that their learners will be able to develop and polish their capability of speaking skill. Due to improved speaking skill, they will be able to perform effectively in the actual life situations.

Regretfully, speaking skill is undervalued in EFL/ESL classrooms. Teachers just focus on traditional methods which promote cramming habits and learners become passive listeners. They show no interest in learning English. The learning of English becomes a nightmare for them and some of them say goodbye to their studies. Speaking skill is ignored whereas this skill is imperative for employment. And communication rather than technology is needed for employment. In EFL classrooms, the attention is given to reading and writing. This important skill is totally neglected. That is why, learners are not able to pronounce even single sentence. But recently, stress is being laid to improve the speaking skill for the attainment of desired aims. Additionally, English is the means to get opportunities for employment and to survive in this global village successfully.

Bueno (2006) narrates that EFL learners find speaking skill problematic. For them, speaking of English is an uphill task. Many factors are involved in this challenging situation. Poor teaching method is one of them. Teachers do not focus on the speaking skill. They just stress on reading and writing. Lack of practice is also one factor. Students are not provided opportunities where they do practice of speaking skill. Shyness and lack of confidence is also its causes. Speaking is regarded as the important skill. EFL Learners learn English from primary level and majority of them is unable to speak English fluently after completing their higher degrees. Several Higher degree holders face problems when they are supposed to communicate in English. This challenging situation can be overpowered due to several reasons. EFL learners should be aware of the significance of the speaking

skill and they should endeavour to gain this skill. Because this skill is important for them to keep pace with the trends of the modern world.

Speaking skill is challenging task because EFL Learners have to make sentences without planning. It is not easy for EFL or ESL learners to make sentences without the knowledge of grammar and its structure. They need sufficient vocabulary to speak. Vocabulary also occupies an important place in language learning as Akhter, Tribhuvan and Qureshi (2020) argue that vocabulary is the heart of language. Akhter, Anwar, and Qureshi (2019) opine that vocabulary learning is one of the challenging tasks in a foreign language classroom. So, non-native speakers of English confront with various issues during the procedure of learning grammar and its structure. As speaking skill holds a prominent place during the process of communication, individuals attempt to acquire this skill to be in contact with the whole public across the world.

Furthermore, this communicative skill is required to settle down well in the careers. People are assessed at the time of interview through their speaking skill. If the person conveys his/ her ideas effectively to the interviewers, he / she is considered a talented person. Many applicants are selected at the time of interview due to their speaking skill. Additionally, the person having impressive communicative ability, can get the importance of the heads, interviewers, boss, audience and so on. Words have magical power to catch the attention of the people. The good speaker casts a spell over audience with the magic of his/ her words. Sometimes, the speaker with the beauty of his/ her words keeps the audience engaged in such a way that they forget their surroundings and are fully lost to the speech or talk that is being carried out. Briefly, it may be said that speaking skill performs crucial task and the way, style, and way of talking of speaker also count how he/she delivers his/her ideas to others.



**(Fig.3: The Importance of Speaking Skills)**

Speaking skill is important for them who have desire to acquire the knowledge of English language. It is necessary for them who want to get

better job opportunities. It becomes imperative for those who are ready to boost up their business. This skill plays its role to raise the confidence level of persons. It makes people well equipped to take part in debate, discussion, and speech competitions. It makes people capable to develop good social relationships with others. It raises the creativity skill. People are prepared well due to this skill to attend any difficult interview. Presentation is delivered impressively and so on. EFL learners can get mastery over this skill through practice in EFL classroom. After getting competency over this skill, they will be able to communicate effectively in and outside of the classrooms.

### **The purpose of teaching Speaking Skill in EFL Classrooms**

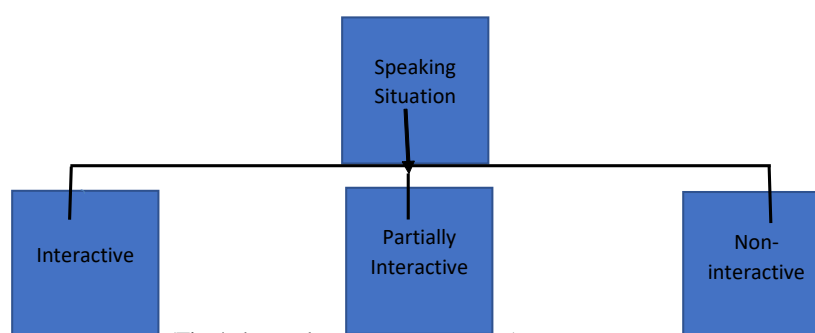
The world has become global village due to fast modes of communication and latest inventions in every sphere of life. People need to convey their ideas, feeling and thoughts. They express and share their thoughts with the people across the world. To communicate with other people is the need of the day. For the accomplishment of their tasks and desires, they share their experiences, knowledge, thoughts, and opinions with other people. To perform this function of communication, the significance of Speaking skill increases. To survive in this technologically skilled world, all non-native nations of English Languages are giving emphasize for the learning of English. And for effective communication, they are stressing to improve the productive skills mainly the speaking skill. All EFL /ESL learners are realizing the fact that to enhance the speaking skill is the requirement of this era in order to keep pace with the challenges of this global market.

The question arises why is important the speaking skill. Why should EFL teacher focus to develop this skill. The answer is simple that it is the most demanded skill in this era. It is needed at the time of interviews to express knowledge. It is needed for effective presentation. Presentation and speech leave good impression when thoughts are well organized and explained beautifully by keeping in view the rules of grammar. Businessmen need to flourish their business, and this is possible when they interact with other businessmen to expand their business across the world. For interaction with non-native languages businessmen, they need mode of communication. When businessmen have good command over speaking skill, they gain wonderful results. Traders, doctors, showbiz people, politicians, and players etc need to communicate with otherpeople. They express their feeling and thoughts and for this purpose which skill is required. The required skill is speaking.

Since speaking skill occupies a core place in several spheres of life, it becomes imperative for EFL/ESL learners to pay specialheed to this desired skill. Moreover, it is strongly recommended that instructors implant fruitful techniques and activities in the classrooms which ensure the improvement of the learners' speaking skill. The instructors should engage the EFL learners in speaking process.EFL/ESL learners 'speaking skill can be improved if they are provided opportunities for practice to speak. It is said that practice makes a man perfect. So, in order to make EFL learners perfect in speaking skill, practice is needed. Practice develops their speaking skill enormously. Practice gradually improves their speaking skill. They gain

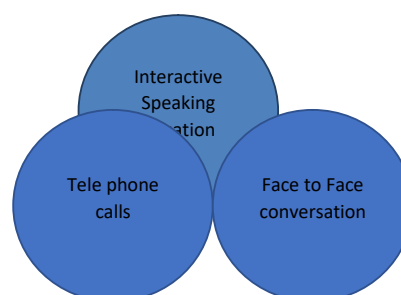
confidence and start speaking. With the passage of time, they will be in a position to participate in discussion and debate. And They will start organizing their thoughts in their own way. They can present their ideas in front of the whole class and audience properly.

### Three Kinds of Speaking Situations



(Fig.4 shows the speaking situation)

The speakers can convey their ideas impressively by means of speaking skill. Interactive, partially interactive and non-interactive are involved in speaking situation (P. S. Rao, 2019). What is interactive speaking situation. It can be understood by the following Figure.5



### 5 shows the Interactive speaking situation)

Figure 5 shows the interactive speaking situation. In this situation, persons have opportunity to repeat the question and can request to repeat or clear the statement. So, this situation is more convenient and helpful for persons involved in the discussion process. They can interpret the matter and communicate with ease.

Second situation is partially interactive situations. Speakers deliver speech or convey message to the listeners and audience. It is live discussion. Here speakers express their views to the audience and audience do not interrupt the speakers. The speakers have opportunity to see the listeners and the responses of the audience are judged by the speakers. The speakers can



judge them from their facial impression whether they are interpreting the speech. At the end of speech or talk, the audience can ask questions to clear their doubts. And speakers give answers to the questions through the session of Q/A. Whereas, non-interactive speaking situation is different. No interaction of audience is involved. It is recorded type of conversation. Speakers do recordings for audience as radio broadcast.

So, all these three speaking situations need speaking skill. And EFL/ESL speakers face problems. To acquire speaking skill is not an easy task for EFL speakers. It is not simple skill that can be learnt within days. It needs time, patience, practice, and well-trained instructors. Environment also plays an important role. They should provide such environment where they can easily practice of speaking during classrooms and outside of the classrooms.

### **The Advantages of Speaking Skills**

No doubt, all skills are important to gain the knowledge of English language but among these skills, speaking skill is given special importance because it is used in communication. Communication is the trait of human society. Human beings cannot survive in the community without interaction. In EFL context, its importance has been increased many times. Recently, all educational institutions are trying to promote this skill from school level. It is regretful situation that after spending several years in educational institutions, EFL learners find them helpless in producing English language properly. Their poor speaking skill creates many problems for them. They cannot find good job opportunities. They cannot communicate with other. They cannot talk with native speakers and convey their stances. There are several advantages of speaking skill for speakers. They take part in all the activities conducted in the classrooms in form of group or pair. They can speak on every topic assigned to them. They can make good speeches and take part in discussion. Speaking skill promotes their thinking. It widens their knowledge by means of interaction with foreigners.

People get opportunity to make good relationship with the international people through internet. People can expand their business by finding more companies in global market. It is only possible for them when they have ability to convince others with help of speaking skill. The interviewee can attract the attention of the interviewers with the effective speaking skill. It boosts up the confidence level of the speakers. Speaking skill provides a lot of benefits to speakers and EFL instructors should emphasize to develop this skill. For this purpose, they should change their traditional methods and introduce latest techniques.

### **How to develop Speaking Skills?**

To develop the speaking skill in EFL/ESL classroom, various strategies can be adopted. First of all, all the teachers should leave their old ways of teaching and adopt new ones. They should provide such environment where students participate in oral activities in order to improve their speaking skill. Teachers are overburdened and classes are overcrowded. The strength

of classes should be minimized so that the burden of teachers can be reduced.

The English educator employ numerous techniques to promote the speaking skills of the EFL learners. Many students do not speak English due to the fear of mistakes. They should be encouraged to speak without any fear or hesitation. They should be assigned some tasks. The instructors should give them some interesting topic and ask them to express their ideas about these topics within two or three minutes. It will improve their speaking skill as well creativity. Then the teachers can present such activities as "Speaking about themselves". He can give his/her own example to the class. Then he asks the students to come forward and express yourselves. He can motivate them to speak. He can ask them that they all are interested in knowing this particular learner.

The teacher should motivate them to come for speaking. He/she should not force them. Brainstorming technique can be used in EFL classroom. This technique is useful in developing vocabulary and vocabulary is used in sentence making. Newspapers are also effective in learning English. Newspapers reflects the current language of the society (Akhter, Kausar, & Faisal, 2020). That is why, newspapers are being used as an effective tool for the purpose of learning English in EFL contexts. Newspapers headlines can be used for this purpose. But one thing should be kept in mind that no strict rules should be made to express their own ideas during speaking session.

Role play activity is also useful. It is the best activity to present for EFL/ESL learners in order to promote their speaking skill. The role of teacher is that he/ she divides the learners into groups and make their pairs. Each pair should be given interesting and sometimes informative topics to discuss in front of the whole class. Ten or fifteen minutes can be given to students to discuss and prepare the topic. Then the learners should be asked to come and speak grammatically correct sentences about the topics.

According to Rao (2018), While choosing the topics, the teachers should keep the requirements and interests of the learners. If teachers consider these factors, learners' interests in activities will be increased and learners show good results. Teachers should use student centered method in place of teacher centered method. This method makes the learners active.

Story telling is an effective technique to promote the speaking skill of EFL/ESL learners. The instructors can use this technique effectively in classrooms. While using this technique, the teachers provide situations, and the learners are asked to keep on telling the story. To continue the story, the learners quickly think sentences that seem relevant to the situation and add them to complete the story. In this process, they have to think and choose sentences themselves. This thinking and choosing ability enhance their speaking skill. After selecting sentences, they are asked to speak these sentences and every learner is bound to add one sentence. They should be encouraged to add grammatically correct sentences. This activity motivates them to produce and add at least one sentence by uttering to

complete the story positively. Now, it is up to the teachers how they motivate their learners to produce many sentences. This motivation will enhance their active skill as well their creative ability.

### Conclusion

Of all the four macro English skills, speaking is considered the most important skill needed for the purpose of communication (Zaremba, 2006). Speaking skill is the ability to express oneself in real life situations. It has the ability to account the acts of situations or phrase words. It shows the sequence of ideas in a fluent way (Boonkit, 2010). It highlights that in teaching EFL Context, teachers should focus on speaking skill and introduce meaningful activities for this purpose. This undertaken research has revealed the importance of speaking skill and explained the advantages of speaking skill. Different activities have been described to promote this skill in EFL classrooms. Speaking skill has become uphill task for non-native learners of English language. Without getting competency over this productive skill, they cannot communicate. So, attention should be paid to promote speaking skill in EFL/ESL classrooms on emergency basis. It will prepare them to face the challenges in future life. The improvement of speaking skills makes the learners confident.

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