



JOYFUL APPROACHES FOR SPEAKING COURSES

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Abstract:

Speaking courses in English language education are important to develop many skills. They are enjoyable courses in which students can practice the words, phrases, idioms, or proverbs they learn. Teachers or lecturers are lucky if their students would like to attend the classroom activities, they prepare for their class hours. When students attend classroom activities full-heartedly new words, phrases or proverbs can be learnt joyfully. In speaking courses, phonetic letters, pronunciation of the words, definitions of the words in British English and in many American English are told. During the courses, students also develop their communication and thinking skills. This study deals with the speaking courses in the classes where English is taught as a second or as a foreign language. Sample classroom activities will be shared. Useful books to create joyful class hours will be suggested.

Keywords: speaking courses; British English; American English; sample classroom activities

1. Introduction

Speaking courses are very important in language education. Students who have better communication competence and pronunciation skills always have better relationships with people and they can easily find better jobs. Different kinds of communicative activities help learners speak better and effectively. They also encourage them to speak about the subjects they are given. They can learn how to improve their grammar and how to improve their pronunciation skills with the help of enjoyable classroom activities.

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2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Speaking Courses in English Language Classes

Speaking courses are the courses where pronunciation skills, intonation, vocabulary knowledge, and communication competence skills are taught to students who learn English as a second or as a foreign language.

Speaking courses are important because students learn how to pronounce better, how to use adjectives and adverbs, and how to develop their vocabulary knowledge.

Iftakhar (2013: 183-184) states that:

“Speaking is one of the primary skills which is developed very naturally. But teaching speaking, no matter what language it might be, is not a very easy task. No doubt, mastering the art of speaking is the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language and success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in that target language.”

It is understood in the above paragraph that speaking has a great role in a good conversation and teaching speaking is a hard job as the success of the ability is measured according to a conversation in the target language.

Rathnasena (2020: 34) denotes:

“Language learners employ different types of strategies in the process of learning. They are cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies. Even in the ESL context, these strategies are consciously or unconsciously utilized by the learners. However, in the event of speaking, the appropriacy of these strategies used by students is of great relevance as speaking is the most difficult skill to master for ESL speakers.”

In this paragraph, we understand that language learning does not require only one learning strategy. It requires all of the learning strategies such as cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies.

It has been mentioned by Syahfutra and Wibowo (2021:74) that:

“Speaking is believed to be the most frequent subject arouses anxiety skill among students in English Education Study Program at Indonesia University. Speaking is always considered as one of the most important skills to be mastered by English students through many practical ways such as conversation practice, Impromptu Speech, and speaking practice with natives. Mastery of speaking skills is a priority for learners of second languages and foreign languages.”

After reading the above paragraph, it is understood that speaking courses are crucial courses for students who learn English as a second or a foreign language.

Krisdiana delineates (2021: 187): *“Speaking skill is important for young learners because their brain’s characteristic is good for getting a new language.”*

As it has been stated Dağtan and Cabaroğlu (2021:359):

“The situation of spoken English in both formal and informal settings in Turkey seems to be far from satisfactory. Additionally, the legal arrangements devoted to ameliorate this predicament have proven unsuccessful as far as an acceptable level of competence is concerned.”

According to the explanation in the above paragraph, students in Turkey are not efficient in speaking courses. Their competence is not satisfactory.

Hadi and Junor (2022: 570) state that;

“Teaching speaking skills needs appropriate medias to facilitate students to practice and imitate English speakers accurately. One of the applications that can help students learn speaking skills is the Google Assistant application.”

Teaching speaking skills cannot be done by only using one book or two books. As the above paragraph suggests, Google Assistant application can help students to improve their speaking skills.

Demirezen and Kulaksız (2015: 715) deliniates that;

“Even though it is not regarded as the most crucial aspect of foreign language learning frequently ignored, pronunciation is vital to get your message across while communicating with others and despite having a great knowledge of vocabulary or being competent at grammatical rules, failure in pronunciation can bring about communication breakdown.”

Speaking courses are meaningless if the pronunciation is not taught correctly to students who learn English. Efficient speaking courses must contain teaching pronunciation. As it is understood from this paragraph, failure in pronunciation can create communication problems.

2.2 Outcomes of the Speaking Courses

The outcomes of the speaking courses for the instructors who teach speaking courses are as follows:

- They create more enjoyable class hours;
- They learn more things about their students;
- They learn the problems and the difficulties in learning;

The outcomes of the speaking courses for the students who attend speaking courses regularly are as follows:

- Students learn many new words and phrases while talking with each other;
- Students gain self-confidence;
- Students improve their pronunciation skills.

2.3 Objectives of This Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To help students to practice English as much as possible;
- 2) To help students to feel happier and more cheerful;
- 3) To help students to learn the new words efficiently and accurately;
- 4) To help students to improve their pronunciation skills.

2.4 The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to find joyful methods and approaches to create happier class hours.

3. Method

5.1. Participants

There were 60 (sixty) participants and they were university students at Dokuz Eylul University in the city of Izmir in Turkey. These students were first-class students, second-class students, and preparatory-class students at Dokuz Eylul students in Izmir in Turkey. They were from different departments at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir in Turkey.

3.2. Teaching Procedure

3.2.1. Sample Classroom Activities

Different kinds of classroom activities were applied in my teaching classes. These are as follows;

- 1) using picture cards and pictures;
- 2) using songs;
- 3) dictation activities;
- 4) using documentaries;
- 5) using cards;
- 6) using the internet.

Classroom Activity 1: Showing different picture cards to the students and asking them to talk about these cards with each other.

Picture cards can be bought from the link: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Browse/Search:school%20picture%20cards> (Retrieved 11 October 2022).

According to the age groups and interests of the students, many different cards can be chosen. Picture cards can also be bought from the following link: Action Verbs Flash Cards - 50-Piece Educational Flash Cards for Speech Therapy and Home Schooling - Thick and Durable Vocabulary Builder Flash Cards for Kids and Adults from: https://www.amazon.com/CreateFun-Action-Verbs-Flash-Cards/dp/B07G5NPTBQ/ref=sr_1_30?keywords=language%2Bbuilder%2Bpicture%2Bcards&qid=1673848484&sr=8-30&th=1 (Retrieved 11 October 2022).

Classroom Activity 2: Bringing photos to the classroom and asking students to talk about these cards.

Classroom Activity 3: Using songs to make students more active and talkative during class hours.

The following topics were given as homework to the students in Basic English class to do these classroom activities:

- 1) 3 Different pop song videos and their lyrics. These songs must have the following question words: When/How/Where/.
- 2) 3 Different pop song videos which have the following tenses:
 - Present Continuous Tense;
 - Simple Present Tense.
- 3) 3 Different pop song videos which have the following tenses:
 - Simple Past Tense;
 - Present Perfect Tense.

Classroom Activity 4: Dictation activities

- 1) One student talks about a picture and the other student tries to draw that picture on a piece of paper;
- 2) One student reads a short paragraph slowly and the other student tries to write it on a piece of paper.

Classroom Activity 5: Using documentaries

Students watch short documentaries during their class hours and talk about these documentaries. The following are the documentaries which were used during my class hours:

- 1) Greek Mythology God and Goddesses Documentary. Retrieved 11 October 2022 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MSEsh6jgHE>
- 2) Jericho. The First City on Earth? // Ancient History Documentary. Retrieved 11 October 2022 from : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BrhZBMOS8U>
- 3) 4K Istanbul, Turkey - Urban Documentary Film - Cities of the World - 10 Bit Color. Retrieved 11 October 2022 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJRa1PwvKI>

Classroom Activity 6: Using cards

Different words are written on different cards and they were put on the board. Students were asked to tell the definitions of these words. These words were as follows: Culture, Temple, Palace, Castle, Museum, Ancient

Classroom Activity 7: Using the internet

Finding different short videos and using online dictionaries to show the pronunciation of the words. Sample videos which were used during my class hours:

- 1) The World-Class Museums of Paris. Retrieved 11 October 2022 from: <https://www.ricksteves.com/watch-read-listen/video/paris-museums> ()
 - 2) British Museum. One of the best collections anywhere in the World. London, England. Retrieved 11 October 2022 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u04g-pHLPnM>
 - 3) The Seven Wonders of Ancient World - See U in History. Retrieved 11 October 2022 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ml9HsFDppo8>
- Dictionaries which were used during the class hours are as follows:
- Zargan: <http://www.zargan.com>
 - Tureng: <https://tureng.com/en/turkish-english>
 - Tureng: <https://tureng.com/tr/turkce-ingilizce>
 - Sesli Sözlük: <https://www.sesliozluk.net/>
 - Cambridge Dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/tr/>
 - Oxford Learner's Dictionaries: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>
 - Lexico: <https://www.lexico.com/>
 - Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online: <https://www.ldoceonline.com/>
 - Dictionary by Meriam-Webster: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

4. Findings

Students' comments were positive for all of the classroom activities which were used during class hours. They informed they improved their speaking skills day by day with the help of these activities. But the faculty students who had English courses once a week told that they did not have so much time to practice the English language and they had no English courses in their 4th-year classes.

5. Conclusion

In this study, the importance of speaking courses is highlighted and handled. Sample classroom activities to create joyful speaking courses were suggested.

It is hoped that this study will help colleagues to create more enjoyable class hours. It is also hoped that these classroom activities will be useful for the students who learn English as a second or a foreign language.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Ozlem Yagcioglu is working as a full-time instructor at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey. She has taught different levels of academic courses such as Academic Report Writing and Translation, Academic Writing, Technical English, Medical English, Professional English, Advanced English, and Basic English courses at different faculties. Since 2018, she has been teaching English courses in the Department of Museum Studies at the Faculty of Letters at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey. She also teaches different levels of English courses in the English Preparatory Classes Department at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey. Her academic interests are motivation, happiness theory, positive psychology, vocabulary teaching, academic writing, second language education, and ESP (English for Specific) courses.

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