

FOSTERING THE SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH DEBATES FROM READING COMPREHENSION LESSONS IN FIRST YEAR STUDENTS.

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ABSTRACT

Teaching a foreign language is a challenging task. Speaking is one of the four-macro skills to be developed as a means of effective communication in second language learning contexts. In learning English as a second language, the speaking skill is considered a fundamental productive part of learning. The lack of vocabulary makes learners hesitant in speaking. The students have problems in speaking due to reluctance, hesitation, fear of making mistakes, or lack of adequate vocabulary. There is a close relationship between the reading and the speaking skills. In foreign language learning, encouraging learners to read a specific text can overcome learning hesitations and weakness in speaking. Debate is one of the most essential strategies, which can effectively enable the students to express his/her ideas and thoughts, and being able to speak is one of the indicators of mastering the foreign language. Therefore, fostering improvement in word knowledge through wide reading has the potential for fostering enhancement in speaking skills.

KEY WORDS: SPEAKING SKILL; READING COMPREHENSION; DEBATE.

RESUMEN

La enseñanza de una lengua extranjera presupone un reto. La expresión oral es una de las cuatro macro habilidades a desarrollarse para lograr una comunicación efectiva en el contexto del aprendizaje de una segunda lengua. Al aprender Inglés como segunda lengua, la habilidad de expresión oral se considera parte fundamental de este proceso. El vocabulario limitado hace que los estudiantes vacilen a la hora de expresarse en la segunda lengua debido al miedo a cometer errores o no usar términos apropiados. Existe una estrecha relación entre las habilidades de comprensión de lectura y expresión oral, por lo que motivar la lectura de ciertos materiales en el idioma extranjero puede contribuir al desarrollo de la expresión oral. El debate es una de las estrategias esenciales para facilitar el desarrollo de esta habilidad, que a su vez es un indicador del dominio del idioma extranjero. Por lo tanto, facilitar el incremento del vocabulario tiene el potencial de favorecer el desarrollo de la expresión oral.

PALABRAS CLAVES: HABILIDAD DE EXPRESION ORAL, COMPRENSION DE LECTURA, DEBATE

INTRODUCTION

Teaching foreign language is a challenging task; in language learning, speaking skill is considered a center productive part of learning. As language learners who had learned English intensively, the students should be able to interact orally each other through English.

Speaking is one of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking). It is the means through which learners can communicate with others to achieve certain goals or to express opinions, intentions, hopes and viewpoints.

Speaking is one of the four-macro skills to be developed as a means of effective communication in second language learning contexts. It is a very important skill important in the context of English learning. This is due to the fact that through verbal language, speaking enables to express his/her ideas and thoughts and being able to speak is one of the indicators of mastering the language

The mastery of the speaking skill in English is a priority for many language learners. The English speaking ability is very important for people interaction. In this global era, many people use English as a means of communication and it makes people who come from different countries to be at ease while making interaction and communication.

Speaking is one of the productive skills, which is the ability in using language orally to present information, to produce ideas, and to express meaning while interacting with one another. Reading comprehension can develop the speaking skill.

The Reading skill is a good way of comprehension. Reading can play a big part in successful language learning. The development of reading and speaking skills is to use the language for learning as well as communication.

Reading is essentially the process of getting information from written language. While the concept of reading to learn in content areas is familiar, the students are less familiar with the concept of reading to get knowledge about the language. However, the act of reading itself exposes us to language that we process as we seek to gain information that is important, meaningful, and that promotes debates.

Reading can built second language vocabulary, writing abilities, reading abilities as well as conversational proficiency. Teachers need to carefully select texts at appropriate levels of reading difficulty, focusing on the level of decoding, vocabulary knowledge and cultural or background knowledge needed to handle and debate the text. They also need to develop classroom activities to debate the text. Teachers as well should help students identify the topics they are interested in.

Debates allow students to see both sides of a situation, topic, or story, and debates also require them to think critically and support what they say with substantive and factual information.

DEVELOPMENT

The main goal of teaching speaking is to train the students to speak fluently and accurately. There is an increasingly high relationship between reading and speaking skills. Reading can play an essential part in successful language learning as it develops speaking skills.

In modern societies, individuals critically weigh issues, form opinions, and express their ideas through dialogue and debate; therefore, getting our students ready to debate plays an important role in the classroom. The activities promoted in the reading comprehension lessons must pursue this goal.

One of the most practical and productive ways to improve speaking skill is through reading comprehension. There are some effective reading strategies proved by researchers. These strategies are divided to some specific strategies:

Questioning: The most crucial step of thinking is asking questions. The questioning process requires readers to ask questions of themselves to construct meaning, enhance understanding, find answers, solve problems, find information, and discover new information (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

Prediction: Prediction refers to guessing and understanding what is coming next based on the context. Using the title, table of contents, pictures, and key words is one prediction strategy. There are 3 varieties of prediction, pre-reading, while-reading and post- (after) reading. While-reading prediction questions differ from post-reading prediction questions in that students can immediately learn the accuracy of their predictions by continuing to read the passage. In contrast, post-reading prediction questions generally have no right answers in that students cannot continue to read to confirm their predictions.

Summarization: The ability to retell the key points of a text in a logical sequence and hold these details in memory is an important comprehension strategy called summarization. Summarizing may be based on a single paragraph, a section of text, or an entire passage.

To be successful in teaching speaking, according to Brown (2001: 271-274) several classroom activities could be conducted, such as imitation (drilling), intensive speaking, responsive speech, transactional dialogue (exchanging specific information), interpersonal dialogue (maintaining social relationships), and extensive monologue (oral reports, summaries, short speeches).

According to Bonwell and Eison, 1991, "students learn more effectively by actively analyzing, discussing, and applying content in meaningful ways, rather than by passively absorbing information". Likewise, one of the most accurate approaches to acquire the language is through the implementation of the debate technique. Debating is an excellent way of improving the speaking skill and it is particularly helpful in providing experience in developing a convincing argument.

Debate can be defined as an old teaching-learning strategy that presupposes an established position, either pro or con, on an issue, assertion, proposition, or solution to a problem. Jackson (2009, p.151) states "...topics or questions for debates are by their nature without right or wrong answering". The use of debates provides an opportunity for students to give alternative solutions to a specific debate topic, rather than seeking to find one correct solution (Yang and Rusli, 2012).

Debate is an interactive public speaking activity that usually requires a greater degree of organization than other speech tasks. Debates can be held with two or more students, and range from casual to highly structured. Debates require students to master content and gain conceptual knowledge of a topic as they sort through information and make decisions about what to include in their presentations.

Through Debate as a technique, the students are expected to be more confident in delivering their own point of view in many issues in whatever circumstances. It is important to adapt debate activities to the specific needs and level of the students.

Many English learners find obstacles and are unsatisfied with their achievement in speaking. They face some drawbacks in mastering the speaking skill. Some students have problems while speaking: they hesitate, they are afraid of making mistakes or being laughed at, have lack of vocabulary, lack of ideas and they have limited opportunities outside the class to practice the language they are learning. Some others are simply shy or reluctant and unmotivated.

Satria Adi Pradana. *Using Debate to Enhance Students' Speaking Ability As Their Character Building in English Education*: Journal. p. 153-154 states that Debate contributes several aspects of development. Balcer and Seabury (1965: 23) stated that the contribution of speech training is as follows:

- To improve the ability to think, express thoughts and listen.
- To help students to deal with social life, especially in a global stage.

- To build an ethical character.

Kruger (1960: 5) states the advantages of academic debate:

- It trains how to think quickly as well as critically.
- It trains how to express ideas clearly so that they may be understood and evaluated by others.
- It develops tolerance and understanding for different points of view, and is thus a valuable means for seeking the truth.
- It also trains how to speak effectively before a group.
- It motivates the student to learn more about current social, political, and economic problems.
- It provides healthy competition and helps cultivate a sense of fair play.

Departing from reading comprehension lessons, the students are instructed to present a certain topic by introducing it, developing it, and providing their viewpoint on it, and finally they summarize the presentation.

The introduction includes a presentation containing definitions and an overall idea of the topic. In the development they provide data, examples, expert's opinions on the issue. Finally they retake the topic and provide their view point on it.

The students may have the topics in advance; teachers will need to bring in points got from their own investigations, and extra materials to support the main text of the reading comprehension lessons.

In the syllabus of the English Language subject, the speaking skill for the first year of the major, the teacher assigns the students to investigate about a given topic for each lesson, the teacher had previously taught an article, which was analyzed in class.

Such article must be read by different students to practice pronunciation, and once is over; the teacher must start asking comprehension questions related to the reading, which must result in a debate. The objective of the debate is to enhance student's speaking skill, to prepare the students and to make them give their opinion on the topic so they develop critical thinking. All this elements are meant to prepare students for the final exam of the subject.

Some of the topics the students deal with during the first year of the major are the following:

- Prodigies.
- Technology. Social Media.
- Health.
- Money.
- Love_ Chemistry Relationship.
- Disasters.
- Appearances and Looks.
- Environment.

Once they have analyzed the article in class related to the topics mentioned above, the teacher may provide a set of yes/no question to debate in which the students are expected to be in favor or against the topic the dealt with. Pair them up for a quick debate and assign who will support and who will oppose the idea. Another way might be providing some situations to promote debate. The teacher should allot students two or three minutes to think of ideas, take notes, or check dictionaries.

Situations:

- ✚ Technological devises are very important in our everyday life, however, some young people are addicted to it. Speak on the positive and negative consequences of being addicted to technology.
- ✚ Constantly using mobile devices keeps people from interacting with people around them and experiences day-today life. Do you agree with this statement? Talk about it.
- ✚ An important part of our image is how we look and an important part of how we look is what to wear. What's your personal appraisal on this statement?
- ✚ Constantly using mobile devices keeps people from interacting with people around them and experiences day-today life. Do you agree with this statement? Talk about it

First year students must succeed in the final speaking exam by showing their dominion of the speaking skill. They are supposed to select at random a topic debated in class and discuss it fluently and using strong arguments that support their exposition.

Nevertheless, each time, students demonstrate noticeable limitations on the speaking skill. This occurs due to several factors. For instance, during the debates in class, some students are afraid to talk, others are afraid to make mistakes; and others do not participate simply because they do not feel motivated by the topic, or because they feel they do not have enough vocabulary.

Guidelines for debate:

- Presentation.
 - Thesis Statement. Provide a brief presentation on the topic to be talked about.
 - Develop the topic by providing definitions, examples, personal experiences, viewpoints on the topic.
 - Provide personal opinion on the topic (be in favor or against it).
 - Summary.
 - Conclusion.
- ✓ Take up to 10 minutes to present the topic.

By debating the students exchange ideas and opinions either on a class basis. The teacher is the mediator and to some extent as the participator, or within the context of a group, with the students talking among themselves. It may last for just a few minutes or it may continue for a whole lesson. Students can become involved in agree/disagree discussions.

CONCLUSION

The Debate technique is good to be used in teaching English especially in teaching speaking. The students can participate more actively in speaking lessons.

Using debates in classroom contexts has many advantages as they can easily be adapted to a number of content areas. A debatable topic could not only be a factor to motivate students to speak and acquire fluency in the foreign language, but also constitutes a means to get a cultural background on a certain topic.

Every student should have their own point of view about a topic. In the beginning it can be difficult to say something, because of lack of vocabulary or pronunciation inaccuracies. However, the more the students practice, in a desire to show their agreement or disagreement with their peers' point of view, the more they would be able to deliver ideas in English.

The debate technique is a good way in which the students take up positions on an issue and defend their point of view. It is one technique which has many benefits for students since it improves student's critical thinking and through debating, every student is proposed to analyze an issue critically. It also develops the student's communication skill.

Debate is an easy way to integrate content, language, and strategy objectives, and that students develop an increased motivation and engagement with the content. Language skills will improve because students are using language for specific purposes and working toward personal goals.

Debate empowers students as they make decisions about their learning and display their knowledge in meaningful ways.

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ANNEXES

READINGS:

THE DOWNSIDE OF BEING GORGEOUS.

by David Robson, 13 February 2015

Can you be too beautiful? It is hardly a problem that most of us have to contemplate – as much as we might like to dream that it were the case.

Yet the blessings and curses of beauty have been a long-standing interest in psychology. Do those blessed with symmetrical features and a striking figure live in a cloud of appreciation – or does it sometimes pay to be plain?

At the most superficial level, beauty might be thought to carry a kind of halo around it; we see that someone has one good attribute, and by association, our subconscious assumes that they have been blessed in other departments too. "It's one of many status characteristics that we can identify very early in our interactions," says Walker.

To psychologists, this is called the "what is beautiful is good" heuristic, but fans of the sitcom 30 Rock might recognise this as "the bubble". Jon Hamm's character is remarkably incompetent, yet manages to live in blissful self-delusion thanks to his good looks. As a doctor, for example, he can't even perform the Heimlich manoeuvre, but somehow managed to drift through medical school thanks to his natural charm.

According to the available evidence, the bubble is a reality. In education, for instance, Walker and Frevert found a wealth of research showing that better looking students, at school and university, tend to be judged by teachers as being more competent and intelligent – and that was reflected in the grades they gave them. What's more, the bubble's influence inflates over the years. "There's a cumulative effect," explains Frevert. "You become more confident and have more positive beliefs and more opportunities to demonstrate your competence."

In the workplace, your face really can be your fortune. When everything else is considered, more attractive people tend to earn more money and climb higher on the corporate ladder than people who are considered less pleasing on the eye. One study of MBA graduates found that there was about a 10 to 15% difference in earnings between the most and least attractive people in the group.

But if beauty pays in most circumstances, there are still situations where it can backfire. While attractive men may be considered better leaders, for instance, implicit sexist prejudices can work against attractive women, making them less likely to be hired for high-level jobs that require authority. And as you might expect, good-looking people of both genders run into jealousy – one study found that if you are interviewed by someone of the same sex, they may be less likely to recruit you if they judge that you are more attractive than they are.

More worryingly, being beautiful or handsome could harm your medical care. We tend to link good looks to health, meaning that illnesses are often taken less seriously when they affect the good-looking. When treating people for pain, for instance, doctors tend to take less care over the more attractive people.

And the bubble of beauty can be a somewhat lonely place. One study in 1975, for instance, found that people tend to move further away from a beautiful woman on the pathway – perhaps as a mark of respect, but still making interaction more distant. “Attractiveness can convey more power over visible space – but that in turn can make others feel they can’t approach that person,” says Frevert. Interestingly, the online dating website OKCupid recently reported that people with the most flawlessly beautiful profile pictures are less likely to find dates than those with quirkiest, less perfect pics – perhaps because the prospective dates are less intimidated.

So, as you might have guessed, being beautiful is not a passport to certain happiness – though it helps. Frevert and Walker are keen to emphasize that like our conceptions of beauty itself, these influences are superficial and by no means deep-rooted in our biology, as some might suggest. “We have a whole set of cultural ideals about beauty that let us say if someone is attractive – and through those same ideals, we begin to associate it with competence,” says Walker. In a sense, it’s just a cognitive shortcut for a quick appraisal. “And like many of the shortcuts we use, it’s not very reliable,” says Frevert. And it could be fairly easy to lessen the impact – if human resources departments give more information about a candidate’s achievements before an interview, for example.

Ultimately, Frevert points out that focusing too much on your appearance can itself be detrimental if it creates undue stress and anxiety – even for those already blessed with good looks. “If you are obsessing about attractiveness, it may alter your experience and interactions,” she says. It’s a cliché, but no amount of beauty can make up for a bad personality. As the writer Dorothy Parker put it so elegantly: “Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.”

Adapted from BBC Newsweekly.

A dreadful mistake

Lisa Gonzalez made worldwide headlines when she fell pregnant by her son’s 14-year-old friend Adrian in 2005 – who was 22 years her junior.

Adrian’s sickened family reported Lisa and she was arrested for statutory rape of a minor. But shockingly, the pair married a month later – thanks to a loophole in their home state Georgia, US, which allows under-16s to marry if the bride is pregnant. Lisa was jailed months later and gave birth to their son Skye, now seven, behind bars.

Undeterred, Lisa moved in with Adrian after her release. And, although the pair lost custody of Skye, they had a daughter – Star, now four – and insisted that they were blissfully happy. Lisa even revealed her older sons Bo and Blake, now 24 and 22, and daughter Cayla, 21, were supportive.

But now the bubble has burst. Lisa, 44, who hasn't seen Skye for over two years, says marrying Adrian, now 22, was a massive mistake and admits she's considering filing for divorce. She says: "He's just a big kid – I don't know why I didn't see it before. He skateboards and plays videogames all day while I work and care for Star. It's driving me mad. I still love Adrian and the sex is great, but when we're not in the bedroom, I feel more like his mum. I'm always clearing up after him and nagging. Now I want a divorce – I need someone my own age. Every day I miss my son and I fear I'll never get him back – all because I married Adrian."

Lisa was going through a divorce with her second husband when she met Adrian, a school friend of Blake's, in 2004. When Adrian started calling her and flirting over the phone, she was shocked. But admits she liked the attention. Lisa recalls: "He told me I was beautiful – I was flattered. He kept asking me out and, while I laughed it off at first, I eventually caved and, one night, we went to the movies, then to a hotel. I knew it was wrong, but the sex was amazing and Adrian seemed so mature."

Two months later, Lisa came clean to her kids. And to her relief, they were supportive.

Initially, Adrian didn't tell his guardian, his grandmother – but was forced to when, six months later, Lisa fell pregnant. Horrified, his gran told the police. Lisa was arrested, but while she was investigated, took the extraordinary step of marrying her toy boy.

Lisa says: "I thought he was The One, I didn't care what people said."

Afterwards, Lisa, a transcriber, was banned from contacting Adrian and was placed in care. But he ran away to be with her, and, in January 2006, Lisa was charged with hindering the apprehension of an escaped child and statutory rape. She was jailed for two years and nine months.

After Skye was born in prison, Lisa sent him to live with a friend. Following her release in 2008, Lisa and Adrian regularly visited Skye, until the friend eventually filed for full custody and won.

Now, Lisa wishes she could turn back the clock. She says: "If I'd never married Adrian, I may have been able to keep my son. The honeymoon period's over and I've finally realized Adrian's just a child. He's obnoxious and stays up late when Star's trying to sleep. He's in and out of work and struggles to hold on to jobs. We've split so many times – divorce is the only option. I made a dreadful mistake.

By Ashley Van Sipma, Closer Magazine

Post Reading Phase.

Tell the students that the text deals mainly with the age difference in a relationship. Ask them:

How do you feel about that?

What do you think of those people who have extremely younger/older spouses?

What do you think of those girls/boys who engage with much older foreigners? Do you think there should be a law to ban or punish such behavior?