

## READING TO ENHANCE FLUENCY IN SPEAKING IN ENGLISH

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### Abstract

*English Language Learning or Teaching has two broad areas to cover namely language skills and language areas. Language skills are four in number. They are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Language areas cover the grammar content of the language. It is generally accepted that Listening – Speaking and Reading –writing are binomials and they work accordingly with respect to skills development. In recent times, this notion of binomial operation of skills development seems outdated as all the four skills are inter-related and interdependent. The study in this research paper concentrates on how the habit of reading can improve the fluency in speaking among the English as second language learners. This paper envisages how reading could be considered a base to improve fluency in communication and how reading could help the speakers maintain their pace in communication. The role of teachers in inculcating the habit of reading to enable students to communicate in English fluently is also discussed in detail.*

**Keywords:** *English Language Learning, Language skills, Reading, Fluency in communication.*

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English in India is either considered to be a Foreign Language or a Second Language as per the ethnic and cultural set up. It is expected that the students in India are supposed to master English language for the very purpose of being equipped to converse or communicate in a language that is common to create understanding between the talk and talked. Developing language skills have become mandatory in the globalized context. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are known to be four major skills that are essential to be mastered to stand in par with the global standards in this competitive world. No skill can be disregarded or discarded unimportant. Every skill is unique in itself pertaining to the use of it. Of all four skills, the learners of English as a Foreign Language or English as a Second Language are expected to pay more attention to speaking skills. This idea is promptly stressed by Ur, who states: "Of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important" (1996, 120).

Speaking, in general seem to be intuitively significant. The purpose of speaking in English can either be for business or pleasure but the common notion and the motivation of the learners of EFL/ESL is to converse in English with the speakers of English language. This highlights the reason why many learners are interested in developing speaking in English Language yet the real concern of lack of fluency is the biggest constraint that Indian speakers face. This concern is an important aspect that has to be taken for study to enable the speakers of EFL/ESL to converse fluently without any hesitation or stammering.

The prime motivation of the learners to speak in English is thwarted by the difficulties and ignorance prevailing behind developing that particular skill. This is the greatest challenge for many Indian learners inspite of its importance. This leads the EFL learners to a strange

conclusion that English is a difficult language to learn. The teachers of English should carefully divert students from such strong conclusion and provide them avenues to learn micro-skills involved in speaking like pronunciation of words, stress and intonation and the usage of expressions to be used in formal and informal contexts. These micro-skills can be developed by inculcating the practice of reading among the students that eventually actuates or develops the speaking skill of the students.

Reading is an aspect that is neglected by the most among the students of India from the elementary level to tertiary level and beyond. Reading is considered as an involuntary development that is a part of human system. This notion is absolutely untrue and the teachers of English are responsible to clarify this notion to be false among the students. Reading can be developed as a habit only through conscious efforts taken voluntarily with an intension to become a good speaker or a communicator. The interest in reading has to be consciously developed among the students. The educational scenario with respect to language learning in India is the teachers of English read a lot and lecture thereby provide minimal opportunity for the students to taste the fruits of reading. The time spent for teaching all the other skills (Listening, speaking and writing) is extraordinary when compared to the time spent by the teachers in developing interest towards reading. Lorena Manaj Sadiku states that

Reading is fun-way to knowledge hunt. We read or see innumerable quotes and proverbs on reading. How far is it true? It is true indeed- reading brings wisdom. Through reading, we learn a lot and it is the most prominent language skill. But the fact of making a reading habit or being good at it is the question here. For now, students, adults and even educators read very less. The tragedy is that, with time, people have lost their skill and passion to read. Reading has declined among every group of people in today's world of technology and entertainment. There are many other exciting and thrilling options available, aside from books. And that is a shame because reading offers a productive approach to improving language- vocabulary and word power. (2015, 30)

Sadiku is very explicit in disclosing the fact that generally people read less but reading indeed brings wisdom. Wisdom is essential for improving delivery skills like Speaking and writing. He

also states that, in today's world of technology and entertainments through technological advancements have badly tampered the habit of reading among the students, adults and even the educators at the worst case. The need to develop the habit of reading daily can automatically equip students to master delivery skills precisely and promptly.

Language vocabulary and word power are the essentials to convert the thoughts into words with respect to speaking. It is a usual scene that students when given a task of public speaking, they accept and confess their incapability of converting their thoughts into appropriate vocabulary to be conveyed. They complain that they know what to speak but they fish for vocabulary to disclose what they thought. This problem can be suitably dealt with by inculcating the habit of reading. While reading, the readers come to realize new words, expressions and structures. When the readers closely read they imitate the words they come across and try to use it in formal or informal contexts appropriately. While one reads, he/she visualizes what is present in the text and the same is stored in the photographic memory. If stored, the words or expressions or structures can easily be retrieved for future use appropriately in the right place for the right thought.

The role of English teachers is indomitable in instilling the interest on reading in students. The students must be exposed to reading in the class spending little time allocated for the same in the class itself. A little spark is essential to catch a big fire. This small beginning in reading practice in the classroom would gradually make reading a habit. Once reading becomes a habit, naturally the fluency in communication is achieved.

An illustration will substantiate the above said point. It happened so that two students of class 6 and class 9 joined a coaching class for developing speaking skills in English. The tutor taught the basics of English and its grammar items and the students were put into practice sessions to develop speaking skills. One of the students studying class 6 performed well with good fluency and the other was not able to speak without blocks. The reason behind the good performance is that, that particular student had the habit of reading books daily and the other did not have. So experimentally, the student studying in class 9 was advised strictly to read something daily and the fluency of his speaking skill is monitored regularly. Reading tasks and speaking tasks were dealt with continuously in the class for a period of 30 days. It is found that, as his reading speed

of the text increased, eventually his fluency in speaking also developed simultaneously. This made the authors of this paper feel that the practice of reading can to a greater extent help in developing fluency. The student of class 9 increased his pace of speaking in English as his pace in reading a text increased. The reason why he lacked fluency is because, he had real time problem in reading a text in the beginning. He was not able to capture words quickly from the text while reading. But, gradually as his reading pace increased, he was able to manage speaking well.

### **READING PRACTICES IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM**

An English classroom is an ideal place where experiments like the above illustrations can be experimented. As English is a universal language, it is the responsibilities of English teachers to equip students meet the global needs with respect to oral communication. Here are some of the techniques that English teachers can make use of to develop reading skills among students that can help them develop fluency in speaking.

#### **READ & RECALL**

The students have to put into the practice of reading easier text or some short story in the class and ask them to recall it mentally. Each student must be motivated to at least read 5 short stories in a week and must be allowed to recall it, but they should not be allowed to express it. After a week, the students must be allowed to recall and express themselves or narrate a story that they have read the previous week. This will enable a teacher to assess the interest of a student in reading stories. Choice can be given in selecting a text as per the interest of the students. When such freedom is provided, this could definitely pave way to develop interest in reading.

#### **READ & REFLECT**

This task is an immediate task. The students can be asked to read a text and reflect on it on spot with their own interpretations, inferences and explications. This will help the students to be original and critical from what they have read. They should be given freedom to express anything they like to so that the spontaneity is not disturbed. Freedom of speech is one of the important aspect through which the students can become expressive, but it has to be done under



the title of interpreting or reflecting on a text. The magnitude of reflection may be thin, but the outcome would really be sound after a period of time.

### **READ & DISCUSS**

This model is an essential one through which reading and speaking skills can be developed. Keeping reading as a base, peer discussion should be prompted. When the student discusses with his/her peer, the originality is maintained and critical evaluation can be done to decide further steps to be taken to improve speaking skills. Discussion, especially with the peers is an important module to develop and strengthen communicative capability of the students. Here again the choice of text is left with the students so the autonomy is maintained to elicit optimum response.

### **READ & CREATE**

In this task, the students must be asked to read a story till the proper understanding of it is achieved and they must be asked to create a new story and speak it out on the same theme or themes related to it. This will enable students to enhance creativity and expressive skills. After reading they will have a base to build on it. So reading provides a base from where students can construct their own thoughts to spin a story. Newspapers can also be used through which the students can create new news in mind and speak it out in the class.

### **CONCLUSION**

All the tasks mentioned about should be inculcated meticulously and seriously to expect ultimate results. All these are NOT EASY tasks yet can be gradually introduced in the class to enhance reading habit to develop fluency in speaking in English. The authors of this paper are of strong opinion that reading can not only develop writing skills but it can contribute a lot to speaking skills also. The fluency in speaking can to a greater extent be achieved through rigorous reading practice inside an English classroom. The teachers of English are greatly indebted to use such novel practices to develop skills in different ways.

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