

ORAL DISCOURSE AND THE WAYS OF IMPROVING ORAL SKILLS OF THE
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Annotation: *This work discusses the different strategies of enhancing oral production of the second language learners and aids to learn about the usage of the oral discourse terminology in the linguistic domain.*

Key words: *discourse, oral discourse, oral production, second language learners, strategies, linguistics.*

In linguistics, discourse refers to a unit of language longer than a single sentence. The word discourse is derived from the Latin prefix dis- meaning "away" and the root word currere meaning "to run". Discourse, therefore, translates to "run away" and refers to the way that conversations flow. To study discourse is to analyze the use of spoken or written language in a social context. Discourse studies look at the form and function of language in conversation beyond its small grammatical pieces such as phonemes and morphemes. This field of study, which Dutch linguist Teun van Dijk is largely responsible for developing, is interested in how larger units of language—including lexemes, syntax, and context—contribute meaning to conversations. "Discourse in context may consist of only one or two words as in stop or no smoking. Alternatively, a piece of discourse can be hundreds of thousands of words in length, as some novels are. A typical piece of discourse is somewhere between these two extremes,"²² "Discourse is the way in which language is used socially to convey broad historical meanings. It is language identified by the social conditions of its use, by who is using it and under what conditions. Language can never be 'neutral' because it bridges our personal and social worlds."²³

When we teach our students how to write a composition in a foreign language, we teach them how to structure their writing. To this end, we provide pictures, guiding questions, key words, sentence starters, and model paragraphs to help them feel at ease with the difficult task ahead.

²² Hinkel, Eli, and Sandra Fotos, editors. *New Perspectives on Grammar Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001.

²³ .Henry, Frances, and Carol Tator. *Discourses of Domination: Racial Bias in the Canadian English-Language Press*. University of Toronto, 2002.

However, when it comes to dealing with speaking in a foreign language—in this case, English—we may not be totally aware that oral discourse requires structuring as well. The more our students speak English in class, the more chances they have to improve their performance in English, and as a result, they are expected to perform better in oral exams. However, all learners are different, and some may need more than just opportunities for speaking in English. Some students benefit from learning strategies on how to structure oral discourse. Certain techniques help these students to gain confidence and get started in oral performance, basically because the techniques, as we will show, prevent the students from purposeless wandering when they have to give certain answers in oral interaction. Brown highlights the importance of developing strategic competence, one of the components of the communicative competence model supporting successful oral communication.²⁴

There are some most common strategies to use in the classroom to develop oral interaction between students, especially the second language learners:

Discussions- This activity fosters critical thinking and quick decision making, and students learn how to express and justify themselves in polite ways while disagreeing with the others. For efficient group discussions, it is always better not to form large groups, because quiet students may avoid contributing in large groups. The group members can be either assigned by the teacher or the students may determine it by themselves, but groups should be rearranged in every discussion activity so that students can work with various people and learn to be open to different ideas. Lastly, in class or group discussions, whatever the aim is, the students should always be encouraged to ask questions, paraphrase ideas, express support, check for clarification, and so on. "Discussion provides learners with opportunities to express their personality and experience through the foreign language."²⁵

Role plays-One other way of getting students to speak is role-playing. Students pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles. In role-play activities, the teacher gives information to the learners such as who they are and what they think or feel. Thus, the teacher can tell the student that "You are David, you go to the doctor and tell him what happened last night, and..."²⁶

²⁴ Canale, M., and M. Swain. 1980. Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics* 1 (1): 1–47.

²⁵ Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

²⁶ Harmer, J. 1984. *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. London: Longman.

Simulations- Role plays and simulations have many advantages. First, since they are entertaining, they motivate the students. Second, as Harmer (1984) suggests, they increase the self-confidence of hesitant students, because in role play and simulation activities, they will have a different role and do not have to speak for themselves, which means they do not have to take the same responsibility

Information gaps-In this activity, students are supposed to be working in pairs. One student will have the information that other partner does not have and the partners will share their information. Information gap activities serve many purposes such as solving a problem or collecting information.

Brainstorming-In this activity, students are supposed to be working in pairs. One student will have the information that other partner does not have and the partners will share their information. Information gap activities serve many purposes such as solving a problem or collecting information.

Story telling-Students can briefly summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody beforehand, or they may create their own stories to tell their classmates. Story telling fosters creative thinking. It also helps students express ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including the characters and setting a story has to have.

Interviews- Conducting interviews with people gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps them becoming socialized. After interviews, each student can present his or her study to the class. Moreover, students can interview each other and "introduce" his or her partner to the class. Using certain technique and interesting topic can stimulate the students to speak English fluently.²⁷

Story completion-This is a very enjoyable, whole-class, free-speaking activity for which students sit in a circle. For this activity, a teacher starts to tell a story, but after a few sentences he or she stops narrating. Then, each student starts to narrate from the point where the previous one stopped. Each student is supposed to add from four to ten sentences. Students can add new characters, events, descriptions and so on.

Picture narrating-This activity is based on several sequential pictures. Students are asked to tell the story taking place in the sequential pictures by paying attention to the criteria provided by the teacher as a rubric. Rubrics can include the vocabulary or structures they need to use while narrating.

Picture describing -Another way to make use of pictures in a speaking activity is to give students just one picture and having them describe what it

²⁷ Liao, G. (2009). Improvement of Speaking Ability through Interrelated Skills. *English Language Teaching*, 2(3), 11-14.

is in the picture. For this activity students can form groups and each group is given a different picture. Students discuss the picture with their groups, then a spokesperson for each group describes the picture to the whole class. This activity fosters the creativity and imagination of the learners as well as their public speaking skills.

In conclusion we can say teaching speaking is a very important part of second language learning. The ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school and success later in every phase of life. Therefore, it is essential that language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking. Rather than leading students to pure memorization, providing a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place is desired. With this aim, various speaking activities such as those listed above can contribute a great deal to students in developing basic interactive skills necessary for life. These activities make students more active in the learning process and at the same time make their learning more meaningful and fun for them.

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