



INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES INCORPORATING COGNITIVE STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract: This article examines teaching methods that incorporate cognitive strategies to improve speaking skills among English as a foreign language (EFL) learner. Emphasizing learner-centered approaches, the article reveals the effectiveness of repetition and practice through the use of role-playing, visual organizers, and mind maps, and the development of self-monitoring and self-assessment skills. Together, these cognitive strategies foster more effective, confident, and independent speakers in the EFL classroom.

Key words: cognitive strategies, speaking skill, rehearsal, self-monitoring, learner autonomy

The most advanced language skill is speaking which is the most intricate since learners of a new language need to create sentences that follow grammatical structures and form their ideas in fluid sequences that can be expressed coherently in simultaneous communication. The development of speaking skills for learners at a more advanced level poses a variety of challenges, for example, retrieving the right words, planning a sentence structure, or monitoring one's own speech. Many language instructors and educators have noted the application of cognitive strategies using mental instruction prior to speaking as a targeted process that can assist learners develop their controlled verbal output.¹

These strategies range within the realm of cognitive strategies and includes but not limited to rehearsal, organizing thoughts to enhance clarity, and self-regulation. Acquisition of cognitive strategies assist learners accomplish their communicative goals within the assigned preset framework as they plan, manage their cognitive load, and check the accuracy of their grammar and vocabulary during the actual communication. Therefore, the tailored instruction of cognitive strategies related to learners' autonomy can help them become independent speakers and greatly improve their skills.

Rehearsal and practice through role-plays

Rehearsals or drills of practice are a basic cognitive strategy which aids learners in preparing and perfecting their language output before engaging in free speech. Within the classroom, one of the rehearsal techniques which is most effective is through role plays that enact real-life scenarios and enable students to exploit their speaking ability.

Role plays catalyze the movement of concepts to the classroom because students perform various roles: they can be a customer and a shop assistant, a doctor and his patient, an interviewer with a candidate, and so on. This kind of representation motivates students because it helps them to think of what can happen next, what their response could be, how to think of their concepts, and how to formulate their statements. Students indeed become more fluent after rehearsing their dialogues because their mental processes during rehearsals greatly reduces the effort required to overcome the cognitive demands associated with speech production.²

From the cognitive point of view, rehearsal by role plays encompasses a number of mental activities. Students have to recall the appropriate vocabulary, grammar items, organize their

¹ O'Malley J.M., Chamot A.U. Learning strategies in second language acquisition. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. — 203 p.

² Nation I.S.P., Newton J. Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking. — New York: Routledge, 2009. — 237 p.

thoughts in a logical manner, and observe the use of the language – its relevance and correctness. Such active volition improves the efficiency of the connections that are made in the brain regarding the production of language, and will lead to faster progression of automaticity.³

Moreover, role-plays create a comfortable, low-anxiety setting in which learners can experiment with language usage without fearing potential correction or, worse yet, ridicule. Such comfort is highly conducive to risk-taking, which is, in turn, necessary for language learning. When students feel free to commit errors and benefit from constructive criticism, they get even more motivated to immerse themselves in the language.⁴

The greater effect of role-plays will be attained if the teacher guides the learners in rehearsing. Activities might include brainstorming vocabulary and expressions relevant to the theme, modelling the dialogue, and encouraging repetition of the dialog. Before doing a role-play on travel arrangements, the learners, for instance, can give themselves a list of useful expressions such as "I'd like to book a ticket," or "What time does the train leave?" This kind of scaffolding facilitates processes for the learners by giving them linguistic frameworks from which to draw in their acting. In short, rehearsal and practice through role-plays bind together cognitive and affective factors to forge effective development of speaking skills. This technique not only improves linguistic accuracy and fluency but also builds learners' confidence and communicative competence, making it an indispensable tool in language classrooms.

Usage of visual organizers and mind maps

Flow charts and mind maps are cited as neurocognitive tools critical to a learner's development which assist learners in organizing their thoughts prior to and throughout the occurring verbal activities. These tools make planning for speech easier which externally demonstrates the essential processes needed to create an oral output thus reducing the burden on the learner enabling their speech production to be more comfortable.⁵ When executing speaking tasks learners are encouraged to harness the power of mind maps. This is because mind maps enable them to brainstorm vocabulary, construct collocations, and even determine the logical order of sequences. The design of mind maps ensures that the learners are able to grasp and develop their ideas or even recollect their ideas (which is more advantageous) during the execution of difficult and complex tasks like presentations and debates. Unlike other visual organizers which are purposeful aids in the enhancement of learners within and across disciplines visual organizers set boundaries in terms of cognition. Relying on the demands of one's working memory or offloading working memory is needed gives us their advantage over other organizers. Sweller argues that speaking is a multifaceted and exhaustive exercise. It encompasses the formulation of language, the ideation, and monitoring. Most crucial is the use of mind maps because they enable learners to demand less from their brain in terms of information recall and arranging this information (in guiding the resources which are captured). As a result, they are able to give more focus on the precision of the language being used, the stress, and the negotiating strategies interact with while talking.⁶

Before carrying out oral tasks, teachers may assist learners in making concept maps related to the topic to introduce visual organizers into classroom practice. To illustrate, before discussing environmental conservation, learners may create a mind map with the following arms: 'pollution', 'recycling', and 'renewable energy'. This type of pre-speaking preparation enhances thinking processes related to the subject and helps them remember better. In addition, visual organizers are known to assist different types of learners, which is especially helpful for pupils who learn best through seeing. Autonomy in learners is promoted by allowing the pupils to plan their speech independently through the use of visual organizers. According to Buzan, such designs become

³ Levelt W.J.M. Speaking: From intention to articulation. — Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989. — 310 p.

⁴ Krashen S.D. Principles and practice in second language acquisition. — Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982. — 202 p.

⁵ Harris K.R., Graham S. Making the writing process work: Strategies for composition and self-regulation. — Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books, 1996. — 224 p.

⁶ Sweller J. Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. — Cognitive Science, 1988. — Vol. 12, №. 2. — P. 257–285.

automatic with time; learners begin to use them without any apparatus during unprepared situations.⁷ The same technology can be applied by teachers to remind learners of the purpose of the strategy, like the use of software for creating and editing mind maps. Dividing the class into pairs or groups to collaboratively draw a mind map can also enhance engagement and encourage critical analysis to the enrichment of the speaking practice.⁸ Finally, visual organizers and mind maps as aids in teaching strategic fundamentals of speaking help to arrange and organize the spoken words. However, aides help facilitate the smooth flow of factors in reasoning.

Self-Monitoring and Self-Assessment

Self-monitoring and self-assessment are important cognitive learning strategies by which the learner gains control over his/her own oral development by actively observing, evaluating, and regulating his or her own oral performance. These strategies encourage metacognitive awareness as learners think about their use of language, identify strengths and weaknesses, and make conscious decisions to rectify and improve effective communication.⁹

In self-monitoring, a learner consciously attends to his or her own speech while producing it and notices an error or awkward expression that can be corrected: the person attempts the correction immediately. This ongoing internal feedback consumes considerable cognitive effort, but it allows immediate language repair, and thus the enhancement of both accuracy and fluency. In this process, a learner might have recognized mid-sentence that the verb tense he had used was incorrect, so he changed the whole sentence to the correct form. Active engagement with one's own output works effectually in learning a language.¹⁰

In the classroom, self-monitoring and self-assessment may be implemented in various ways. Learners, for instance, might be given a speaking task that is recorded, followed by a session where the instructor guides them through critical listening of their own recordings. This allows learners to reflect and pinpoint areas of concern, which could be incorrect pronunciation, hesitation fillers, or the like, and form a strategy to address those.

Another practice is peer and self-rating scales, where students assess their speaking based on agreed criteria like fluency, accuracy, and confidence. The process helps one with self-awareness and encourages the development of critical thinking skills when learners examine their self-ratings vis-à-vis the teachers or their peers' assessments, noted by Ross.¹¹

Those strategies do not only work on the greater accuracy of the language used but also on increasing learner autonomy and motivation by identifying students as active participants in their learning process. When learners become aware of their own cognition and language use, they gain confidence in themselves and also develop the skills of lifelong learning that are transferable across different languages and situations.¹² A teacher should, however, ensure that guided support is given so that students are able to self-monitor effectively and self-assess. A lack of scaffolding may make students overtly critical or miss out on much of the crux of what should be assessed.

Self-assessment occurs primarily after an activity. We usually describe it as learners evaluating their own performance, either against specific criteria or against their own prior goals. The ability to self-assess enables the learner to identify recurring mistakes, monitor progress over time, and establish realistic goals for further enhancement; teachers can support this process by supplying

⁷ Buzan T. *The Power of Mind Mapping*. — London: BBC Active, 2023. — 240 p.

⁸ Novak J.D., Cañas A.J. *The theory underlying concept maps and how to construct and use them*. — Florida: Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, 2008. — 36 p.

⁹ Oxford R.L. *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. — Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1990. — 368 p.

¹⁰ Levelt W.J.M. *Speaking: From intention to articulation*. — Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989. — 310 p.

¹¹ Ross S. The reliability, validity, and utility of self-assessment. — *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 2006. — Vol. 11, №. 10. — P. 1–13.

¹² Zimmerman B.J. *Becoming a self-regulated learner: An overview*. — *Theory Into Practice*, 2002. — Vol. 41, №. 2. — P. 64–70.

specific rubrics or checklists attending to pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and interaction.

Hence, it is essential that training be carried out in self-monitoring and assesses techniques, with constructive feedback being given to maximize the impact of those methods.¹³

To summarise, self-monitoring and self-assessment are two cognitive strategies that motivate reflective practice and therefore increase the precision in speech, while also fostering learner autonomy. The systematic use of these strategies in language classrooms goes a long way toward the holistic formation of the learners' speaking competence.

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¹³ Boud D. Enhancing learning through self-assessment. — London: Kogan Page, 1995. — 200 p.