

Increasing Oral Participation in ESL/EFL Conversation Classrooms

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Students' reticence in the ESL/EFL classrooms is a serious problem. Without students' oral participation, it is very difficult to improve their spoken English. This study reviewed the reasons why some students had low oral participation and methods used to alleviate this problem in the classroom. The study also examined ways to increase students' oral participation by different types of activities and different questioning techniques. Results showed that students' oral participation is increased if application and presentation activities are used; the right vocabulary is offered when students need it to continue; questions related to students' prior experiences are asked; and an informal and friendly classroom atmosphere is present. To achieve these results, teachers should employ multiple methods such as modifying questioning techniques, inviting colleagues to observe, as well as analyzing and reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategies adopted.

Introduction

I taught Oral English Practice to university students in Thailand for more than 6 years, hoping to help my students to acquire better English accents and increased fluency. But, in order for this to occur, students need to talk. I always tried to provide a lot of materials and topics for discussion, and hoped that students would talk at least 5 minutes, but my efforts were not rewarding. Most of the students would only speak for less than 1 minute and commented that they felt they did not know what to say. Even after one semester, students' participation in oral discussion and oral presentation was low. For the most part, they would ask, "How should I say it? What should I say?" and they would pose these questions in their native Thai.