

Developing Knowledge and Skills for Speaking: Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century

Dr Robbie Lee Sabnani

National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University Singapore. 1, Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616.

Abstract

The 21st Century presents several challenges as well as opportunities for the development of English Language Learners' (ELLs') linguistic mastery, particularly in the area of communicative competence. Speaking requires one to think quickly and respond with the appropriate content, organisation and delivery in real-time. This imposes significant demands on learners and in some instances, may limit the effectiveness of messages to their listeners. This presentation underscores the value of directed instruction enriched by educational technologies and web-based tools. It depicts strategies to scaffold learners in conveying ideas clearly, by helping them manage their personal factors and unpack considerations for the purpose, audience and contexts of speaking. It also offers possibilities for leveraging the affordances of the digital realm to strengthen learners' knowledge and verbal skills, and facilitate contextualised practice for them to regulate their progress. Deepening learners' understanding improves their speaking fluency and accuracy. It enhances their oral mastery and self-directedness to develop them as confident communicators in school as well as on the global stage.

Keywords: *English Language Learners (ELLs), communicative competence, speaking, educational technologies, web-based tools, speaking fluency and accuracy, self-directedness.*