

# SPEAKING SKILLS

- The ability to speak confidently and fluently is something which children will develop during their time at school, and something that will help them throughout their life.
- Speaking skills are defined as the skills which allow us to communicate effectively. They give us the ability to convey information verbally and in a way that the listener can understand.
- Children will learn English speaking skills as well as speaking skills in other languages, in primary and secondary school. Learning how to develop English speaking skills is so important for ESL students and EAL students too. It's one of the most important parts of language learning as speaking is how we tend to communicate in everyday life.
- Speaking is an interactive process where information is shared, and if necessary, acted upon by the listener. So, it's important to develop both speaking and listening skills in order to communicate effectively.

# THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF SPEAKING SKILLS

## Vocabulary:

- To develop our speaking skills, we first need to know the right words. Vocabulary development begins when we are infants, as we learn to describe the world around us and communicate our needs. This progresses from single words to sentences when children are 2 or 3, at which point they will normally have a vocabulary of 150-300 words.
- Vocabulary development is where students understand the meanings and pronunciations of words necessary for communication.
- When they understand what a word means, they can check what the word or sentence means. This is so important so they can keep up a conversation. If they understand what the other person is saying and they know what vocabulary to say back, they are halfway there to communicating effectively.

## Grammar:

- You may think that grammar is something we only need for written language.
- But grammar includes lots of important areas for spoken language such as an understanding of tenses and the correct way to structure sentences.
- Grammar helps us to convey information in a way that the listener will recognise and understand.

## Pronunciation:

- Understanding how to correctly pronounce words is another important element of speaking skills. We learn how to pronounce words by listening to those around us, such as our parents, friends and teachers. Pronunciation varies from country to country, and even city to city!
- A lot of this comes from phonemic awareness. This involves understanding the small units that make up spoken language. English can differ quite a lot compared to other languages. Some phonemes might not be in ESL students' native languages and children's minds are trained to categorise phonemes in their first language, so it can become confusing. Developing this ability in English can come from playing language games and using songs and poems to reiterate rhythm and repetition. Phonics is where students start to see the relationship between the sounds of spoken language and graphemes which are the letters and spellings representing sounds in written language.

## Fluency:

- Fluency in spoken language is something that naturally develops as children go through school, as they are using and practising speaking skills every day. Reading widely (and out loud) is a good way to improve fluency as it introduces children to new vocabulary and reinforces their knowledge of spoken language.
- Fluency is the ability to hear words and understand them straight away. If they see a word written down, they can read it aloud and pronounce it properly. Ways to develop this include guiding your students to read passages out loud. You could also get your students to read aloud in front of the class. This builds their confidence and also helps them to announce better.
- The more fluent your students are in English, the more interesting, exciting and insightful conversations they can have.

- Speaking skills are one of the most important skills we learn, as they allow us to communicate with others and express our thoughts and feelings. Speaking skills can be separated into formal and informal speaking skills, and we use both types of speaking skills in a variety of contexts throughout life.
- Informal speaking skills are important for conversations with friends and family, helping us to form emotional connections. Formal speech, on the other hand, is necessary for workplaces, in presentations or for conversations with people you don't know. Formal language is important as it helps us to make a good impression on people and communicate politely.
- As an ESL or EAL student, speaking skills are considered the most important part of learning a language. In fact, many language learners measure their performance by how well they can speak it. As most effective foreign language learning takes place through interaction, it's a skill that can be honed to really build an understanding of the language and culture of English-speaking countries.
- Yet it can be so easy to find speaking daunting or challenging. It isn't as straightforward as we may like. Teachers need to encourage students to speak as much as possible. They can make it as fun as the structure of their lessons will allow. This might be through role-play, group work or even projects.