

INTERACTIVE METHOD FOR DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH

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Abstract: This paper clearly focuses on how interactive method is the best method for developing communication skills in English. In particular, the focus is on how the speaking skills enable other skills like listening, reading and writing. The second language learners struggle a lot to express their views, which cause various troubles and problems because of lack of self-confidence and hesitation. The solution for this is to interact with others to develop their communication skills. The ability to communicate effectively in English has become a prerequisite for entry into the highly competitive international job market. If one tries to master over the language, it means that he is naturally developing his control over communication. Learning a language does not mean developing language skills alone but simultaneously communicative skills also. This study points out the fact that mastering both the skills has its root in interaction. Language competence can be developed positively through interaction.

Key Words: Communication Skills, Problems, Competition, Interaction, Method.

Human being views the world through the spectacles of his learning and knows the world not only by first hand sensible contact but also by the experiences of others as preserved in language and communicated through speech and words.

Language is an extraordinary gift. Language is necessary for man in order to be a rational creature and only to man it has been given. Language is not only a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but also it forges friendship, cultural ties and economical relationship.

In our world today, the knowledge is one of the key factors in competitiveness. In an advanced society, in an increasing independent world, the knowledge of a universal language becomes indispensable. Knowledge of English language is one of the most important tools available. It is one of the international languages, a tool for communication between countries, cultural groups, various companies and organizations, communities and friends.

English is one of the most important languages in the world today. An international language, as commonly imagined, is not in any sense a substitute for existing tongues, but simply used as a secondary language for the growing needs of understanding and intercourse between persons of different nationality.

There are several reasons for the popularity of English. The foremost reason for the popularity is colonial expansion of the British Empire. English pop songs have made English language popular and while singing them youngsters are also motivated to pick up the language.

English is commonly used as a medium for the communication of information and news. Eighty percent of computer data are processed and stored in English. Much satellite communication is carried out in English. More than half of the newspapers published in the world are published in English. Even in the entertainment, inventions like television and radio, English occupies a prominent place.

English is the major language of international business diplomacy, sciences and professions. Important commodities such as silver, tin and hard currency are traded in English. It is the language of international conferences and athletics. English is the international choice for tourists' interaction. People who work with tourists generally speak English to attract the foreigners.

In the modern day, people who speak English occupy a pivotal status in society. Standard English is taught in schools because it is necessary for the students to acquire the white-collar jobs and it is also necessary for their future prospects.

The term "Indian English" does not imply that there is complete homogeneity in the use of English in India; nor does it imply that all the Indian user of English have uniform proficiency in speaking and writing. Many educated Indians confess that they are able to speak like native speakers of English and Indianism creep into their language.

English has been the medium of instruction in the language of administration and law too: and the main vehicle to communicate with the ruler. English has developed through the education system. In India, it has been taught as a subject and then it is used as a medium of instruction in colleges and universities.

English is not the language spoken by most of the population. Almost all Indians have a different mother tongue and they use English only as a connecting language. English has acquired the status of an Indian language in the same way as any other Indian language like Hindi, Tamil and Punjabi. In India, English knowledge is necessary to every individual because they had to compete with the developed countries in fighting age-old poverty, illiteracy and other social evils.

English has not only influenced their social life but it has also enriched their regional languages. English text books have become model for the textbook written in other Indian languages. Knowledge of English is considered as a successful passport to prospective career. An English-speaking Indian is preferred to almost all the jobs in a government department- whether at the centre or in the states.

English has been retained as an important language in India and it is used as a lingua Franca too. This is important because the research in science and technology has been carried out in English. It also helps in developing the creative - faculty in students so that they are able to contribute to the national development and international understanding. They need to develop contact with the outside world. English presents the best opportunity for such a contact.

It is high time we thought about educating the Indian in this language, not only because it is an international language but also because it is used around us the mother - tongue and as a second language. Many people still

consider English, as an alien language. English, however is an Indian language, that has a functional role to play in our society.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the basic communication skills. Having command over the skill is a greatest asset in the learning process in any situation. Communication skills are tools that will help one to adopt to a variety of work situations. Communication skills can be paired as 'Speaking - Listening' and 'Writing – Reading'. Oral communication requires a speaker and a listener. Oral communication is effective when the speaker has good speaking skills and the receiver has good listening skills.

Speaking skill is the best way to transmit information. More people use spoken form than written communication. People use speaking skills to share their thoughts, wants, accomplishment and feelings with others. Effective oral communication is extremely important in promoting good public relations.

Interaction is one of the best ways to bring out the best from our thoughts. This ideology is also applicable to language and communication. Interaction is interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society. Today the world has acknowledged that English is the legislator of the world. If one would trace out the history of English language he can evaluate the role played by interaction in the development of the language.

Interaction sees language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transaction between the individuals. Language is seen as a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations. Interactional theories focus on the pattern of moves, acts, negotiation, and interaction found in conversational exchanges. Students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages. This is interaction. Interaction acts reciprocally, and acts on each other.

As far as communication is concerned, the very term 'communication' itself highlights how interaction is important in the process of communication. Communication involves active interaction with the environment - physical, biological and social. Deprivation of this interaction makes one not to be aware of whether one is safe or in danger, whether hated or loved, or satisfied or hungry. This interaction not only helps in the communication process but also it enhances the communication skills. Human interaction is as strong and basic as the need to eat, sleep and love.

There are two kinds of interaction:-

- 1) Active Interaction
- 2) Passive Interaction

Active interaction is like face - to - face conversation, telephonic conversation, and interviews. This kind of interaction involves a listener and a speaker by the way both are benefited at a time. This active interaction involves both listening and speaking. The listener listens to the speaker keenly in order to react. The listener tries to imitate the stress, intonation and tone of the speaker. The interaction between the listener and speaker is initially dependant. The listener tells the speaker what he or she wishes to say in the target language and the speaker tells the listener how to say it. The interaction between the teacher and student in the classroom is a good example for this kind.

The basic interactive pattern in active interaction is initiation response and follow – up. Initiation is the beginning of the interaction process. Normally, the sender is called as the initiator. He starts the process with the help

of his database. The second step is the response that is the part played by the receiver. This response leads to the third step that is the follow up. This follow - up constructs the full interaction. If there is a block in the follow - up then there will be a break in the interaction.

Passive interaction is not face - to - face interaction. It is always in the written format which never expects immediate response. This process involves reading and writing. The sender writes and the receiver reads it. Reading the text carefully makes the reader to understand the construction of the text. Once the reader is able to understand the construction of the text, that naturally enables the reader to write things of his own, by imitating the text he has read.

People have a lot to say but they are unable to interact due to lack of communication skills. Some tries to communicate but fail to achieve the desired result. If it fails, it is called ineffective communication or communication gap. Ideally speaking, the intended message, the actual message and the interpreted message should be the same to make it effective. Miscommunication occurs when one or more of the three message components are different for either the sender or the receiver. The ineffective communication is the biggest cause of frustration, dysfunctional personal relationships, stagnant organization and even war between countries.

Look at the following conversation between the customer and the shopkeeper. The customer wants to get six box-type files (actual message) and he approaches the shopkeeper.

Customer : Do you have box files? {Intended message}
Shop keeper : Yes, we have
Customer : Give me six box files
Shop keeper : Ok

After 10 minutes the shopkeeper returned with heavy stock of six boxes full of files (interpreted message)

In this conversation the customer actually wants some six box type files, the intended message missed the word 'type' and so the shopkeeper misunderstood it. The shopkeeper understands that the customer needs six boxes full of files. So this process is an ideal example for miscommunication. The intended message is different from the interpreted message.

Naturally, there comes the confrontation between the two. This is a sample of how people get into problems due to miscommunication and communication gap. To avoid such happenings and to have a flawless communication interactive methodology should be borne in mind. Without this art of interaction, man will be isolated. It is proved that those who are isolated for a period of time from human company are known to have experienced nightmarish hallucinations. It is estimated that single man without close friends to interact his feelings and emotions has to face the risk of developing heart diseases compared to his social counter parts.

The art of interaction not only reduces the stress in human beings but also enhances the communication skills of the participants. Now the question rises that how it is possible to enhance the communication skills through interaction.

Communication is not merely passing of message but a lively activity between the sender and the receiver. Interaction, interchange, transaction, dialogue, sharing, communion and commonness are ideas that crop up the

communication process. In the process of communication the sender sends a message to the receiver through a medium as a result the receiver sends his feedback to the sender. This feedback process is the base for interaction. The mutual sharing between the sender and receiver further develops the interaction process.

The reciprocal act between the sender and receiver strengthens the communication and its skills. The success in communication depends on how far the counterparts interact with each other. This interaction indirectly develops the basic skills of communication such as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In communication, listening is considered as the primary receptive skill. Only after listening to the speaker, the listener can interact with the speaker. So the listener has to be very careful and should keen to observe the speech of the counterpart. A good listener naturally develops his flavor for speaking skill. If the listener interacts with the speakers he will obviously develop his speaking skill.

In any second language learning, the phonological features, especially pronunciation that constitute the biggest hurdle, mainly due to interference from mother tongue it is especially so with English language because of its unphonetic and illogical systems. There is yawning gap between spelling and pronunciation. Apart from the actual sound segments supra segmental features like stress, pitch and intonation are also to be mastered. To become familiar with these features, the interactive method is very much useful for one who wants to develop his communication skills. Regular listening to the English news through television and radio, reading of the English Dailies, exposure to English conversation and lectures etc are very much helpful to improve the communication skills.

Sometimes the conversation between the friends in particular situation - like the conversation between traffic police and the cyclist, vendor and the customer, a boy seeking admission and the head of the institution, tuition teacher and the parent, the son and the mother in the dining hall, inviting a friend for once birthday party, doctor and patient, talk between two passengers in a train compartment and so on - may make the interaction informal and useful.

English language plays a significant role in the highly interconnected global scenario today. The ability to communicate effectively in English has become a prerequisite for entry into the highly competitive international job market. Many a competitive job seeker is unable to tap the potential of the booming global job market for want of this ability to such youngsters in particular and all those who wish to improve their communication skills. The interactive method is very much useful. There is a market for people with the working knowledge of English language. In tune with this demand, many students are flocking to study English, and for them the points discussed earlier may be very useful.

The role of language in communication is a striking one. Both are integrated matter. Language cannot survive without communication; communication cannot be effective without language. So, both are the sides of a same coin. We cannot treat both as a separate entity. If one tries to master over the language, it means that he is naturally developing his control over communication. Learning a language does not mean developing language skills alone but simultaneously communicative skills also.

The present study points out the fact that mastering both the skills has its root in interaction. Language competence can be developed through interaction. For any kind of communication, the ultimate goal is to transmit the message. How we are transmitting the message depends on how we interact with the counterpart. This interaction enables us - what to say, to whom, when, under what circumstance, or in what context exactly. So this interactive

method enhances effective listening, efficient reading, powerful speaking and professional writing in the natural setting.

Ms. Ann Mcallen is an English language trainer at the University of Oregon, USA. Recently she spoke to students from various colleges about how they can improve their language skills during workshops and seminars on ELT in India. She gave some quick tips to improve their standard in communication. They are:-

- 1) Record our own voice and listen for pronunciation mistakes.
- 2) Pronounce the ending of each word.
- 3) Use the dictionary.
- 4) Until we learn the correct intonation and rhythm of English, slow our speech down.
- 5) Make a list of frequently used words that we find difficult to pronounce and ask someone who speaks the language well to pronounce them for us.

As per the dictum, “practice makes a man perfect”, language learning process mainly depends on practice. Without practicing one cannot learn a language. The fluency of the language depends on the constant practice. There is a room for the learners to follow and imitate the user while interacting. This is the great advantage of the interactive method.

The above discussion makes it clear that for knowledge, communication is essential; for communication, language is important; to have communicative competence and language competence, interaction is inevitable. The present study clearly shows that interactive methodology is very much useful in acquiring not only written and spoken skills in particular but also to develop communication skills in general.

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