

Integration of Communication Skills at Elementary level

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Abstract:

The phrase "Good Communication Skills" has been associated with our chances of success in all facets of life. Our language serves as a means of thought, a platform for literary expression, a social institution, a source of political debate, and a tool for constructing nations. A youngster uses language as a tool for communication to understand the present, reflect on the past, and plan for the future. Among all the languages spoken today, English is deserving of the title of world language. English is the most widely spoken language in the world, with speakers in four continents. These days, it's critical that students possess an English language proficiency that enables them to communicate verbally and in writing in a wider range of settings. What is needed is for us in India to give our elementary school pupils' communication requirements more priority.

The primary objective of an English language instructor is to help students become truly proficient communicators in the language. When studying, working, or just having fun, students should be able to interact in English effectively outside of the classroom. Outside of the classroom, we communicate because we truly want to or need to, employing a variety of syntax and vocabulary, and concentrating on ideas and information rather than words. Undoubtedly, the classroom provides a highly particular communication situation. The four primary communication skills in language instruction are typically listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, it's critical to mimic this organic skill integration in the classroom.

It is now generally agreed that effective listening and reading require as much attention and mental activity as speaking and writing. Two common misconceptions are that they are productive skills are more "communicative" than the receptive skills, and also that they are the basis of learning process itself. To some extent these misconceptions are understandable. The skills of listening and speaking are combined in conversation. Outside the class room, we continually integrate the skills or switch from one to another. It is important to replicate this natural integration of skills in the classroom as much as possible. Greetings, questions, instructions, explanations, anecdotes and so on, are probably the most natural and generally effective listening comprehension practice we can provide in the classroom. When we use English consistently in this way, we are giving the learners meaningful, authentic listening practice. It has a clear purpose and it is focused on the message rather than on the language, and it can be quite varied.

We can expand the range of English we use as the course progress and encourage our learners to use it as much as possible. When the learners also use English for most classroom purposes, both with the teacher and their peers, the listening practice time is increased enormously. Pair and group work can also provide extensive listening as well as speaking practice. But classroom listening of these kinds is rather restricted. Among other things, it is limited to the speech of the teacher and the learners. So it is very useful to bring into the classroom recorded speech in situations from the world outside, and with a variety of voices and accents. Recorded texts may include all the types of listening.

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Good listening texts should contain interesting information or present situations the learners may really meet outside the classroom. However, the text itself is only one element in a listening activity. We can make course book or other listening practice more realistic and interesting by following specific stages and using specific techniques. Three stages are recommended: pre-listening, while- listening, and post - listening. Listening comprehension is best taught in these three stages. Pre-listening stage prepares learners, while- listening stage develops and checks comprehension, and the post-listening stage relates what they heard to their own experience. Like listening skill, speaking skill should be pretty be the natural result of using English as the main means of communication in the classroom. But speaking will probably develop more slowly than listening.

We can help learners understand what we say in English by simplifying our speech and using gesture or mime. We cannot so easily get them to express themselves in English. Conversation is difficult for many learners because it takes place in "real time" and involves various skills. Public speaking inhibits people. While learning to speak foreign language, we inevitably make mistakes. For all these reasons we should create relaxed atmosphere, accustom the learners to listening and speaking in natural interaction. Organize pair and group work, and avoid any obsession with accuracy. We should encourage incidental classroom speaking, giving learners the expressions they need, and exploit every opportunity for conversation. Some fluency practice activities can be repeated and developed without any specific language focus. Many speaking activities have essentially communicative not linguistic objectives. These include unscripted role-plays or simulations, problem solving / decision taking activities, discussions and debates, and group projects.

Writing is usually more grammatically complete than speech. While spoken communication is supported by tone or voice, gesture and context, written text has to communicate through language alone. This usually means more carefully constructed sentences and a great range of vocabulary and grammar. As a consequence, writing may often be more complex than speech. On the other hand, readers and writers can take their own time, for example, readers can reread difficult passages, and writers can plan and edit various drafts of a text. Reading has much in common with listening, but the text is permanent, which may make it easier to understand. As with listening, our expectations and world knowledge, as well as our knowledge of the language help us make sense of the text.

Learners should be discouraged from reading or translating slowly word by word. Skimming and scanning are two approaches to reading which can be very useful for specific purposes (getting a general idea, or finding specific information). Full reading comprehension, which is needed for serious study or work, requires more knowledge of the language and higher-level reading skills. Like listening, reading is usually approached in three stages: pre-, while- and post - reading. Reading in itself helps to develop the skills and language knowledge necessary for efficient comprehension. But most learners will read outside the classroom only if they have interesting texts available at their level. In order to develop the skill of reading properly among the pupils, the teachers should have a thorough understanding of factors that effects the development of reading skill.

A child is considered under achiever if his reading ability is not on par with his intelligence. Under achievers read slowly when compared to intelligent children. Intelligence plays an important role in intensive and extensive reading. Individual differences play a major role in affecting reading skill. All children differ as much mentally, emotionally and physically. The emotional imbalances among the pupils affect their reading habits negatively. Some pupils who are shy and submissive face difficult to read aloud before other children. Emotional factors affect a lot in development of reading skill. In general emotions are the product of perception. The care of an emotion is feeling. Some students are very active and others are inactive to read. Emotions are the prime movers which

affect reading skill. A teacher can play a vital role in development of reading skill among pupils. Factors such as classroom organization, methods, reading habits, library facilities are needed to develop reading skills. Hence the teachers should provide good environment for the pupils to read. Teacher has to encourage the pupils to do intensive and extensive reading.

The physical factors which are within the individuals are vision, hearing, speech defects, vocalizing, word by word reading, word blocking, word analysis. The physical factors, affect the reading skill. Poor vision is a distinct handicap in reading. Ability to hear sounds accurately is essential for learning reading skill. Unless the child hears properly, we cannot expect him to be an efficient reader; lastly speech defect is a prominent type of motor in co-ordination often associated with reading inefficiency.

The teacher should identify the physical problems of pupils and help the pupils to overcome them. Thus the teacher should cultivate correct speech habits among the pupils right from the beginning. Then only students will acquire the skill of reading properly. Writing is the language skill used least by the most of the people. It is also a skill usually learnt formally at school, and not handled well by many people, even in their mother tongue. It involves low level skill hand writing or typing, spelling, constructing grammatical sentences, punctuating) and high level cognitive skills (gathering ideas, organizing and sequencing, structuring, drafting and editing). Most writing in elementary English courses is largely to consolidate language learning. This can be developed at higher levels into the composition of written texts (for example stories, letters, and reports).

A little real composition can be started at lower levels with activities such as parallel compositions, parallel letters, and picture compositions. Composition work at higher levels can involve the whole class, or working in pairs or groups, as well as working individually. We have to involve learners in the correction of their own errors. In our everyday use of language, we are continually integrating the language skills or switching from one skill to another. It is best to reflect this integration when teaching a second or foreign language. The integration of skills can be the basis for whole lesson plans. This is usually done by building the plan around a theme. Course books often provide good material for this, which we can adapt or supplement in order to relate the theme more directly to our learners.

We could get the learners to discuss and then write compositions about possible solutions to the problems that they intend to deal with. We could ever organize a public meeting simulation, with the learners playing the roles of moderator, city mayor, head of police, head of the public transport, president of the Drivers' Association, and president of the School parents' Association. One activity that can form a good basis for integrating skills is a project. The learners, working in groups choose a topic they are interested in, and develop an extended piece of work, perhaps in form of a poster or a set of posters. Most teaching of a specific skill involves the use of other skills. Whole lesson plans can integrate skills around a single theme or topic. Group projects also involve the use of all the skills. Integrated skills lessons, and projects can be very interesting, enjoyable and satisfying for the learners. In the current environment, where English language is ruling the world of technology and administration, increasing number of students are voluntarily learning English, with several students opting to study in English medium schools /colleges.

With the diversity of learners from different family backgrounds, English teachers need to use a combination of several methods, but not any one method rigidly. While some basic principles of language absorption have to be kept in view, the techniques of imparting communicative skills in English should be as varied as the learners themselves. Any skill can be acquired only through practice and not by reading about. Similar is the case with using, a language. Interpersonal communication is now more vital than academic usage.

Conclusion:

The language used for communication depends mainly on the topic of communication, the relationship between the participants involved in the act of communication, the medium of communication, the context/ situation and the purpose. Non -linguistic skills refer to facial expression, body posture, gestures, eye-contacts and personal appearance. An excellent speaker in public, a leader in group discussions and an anchor make good use of conference skills. Role play can be used to train students to acquire skills that are needed for participating in seminars, conferences, group discussions and anchoring.

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