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EFFECTIVE LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS AS TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR ONLINE CLASSROOM COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The four basic skills in communication in which students are usually involved are LSRW skills. Each of these skills serves important purposes in the online classroom too. This paper particularly analyses the purposes served by the oral skills --Listening and Speaking. . The two types of online communication are synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous communication happens during the live lesson, where we can communicate with the students directly, via a video conferencing app. Asynchronous communication is when we use emails or any kind of messaging service and answer when we see the message. The art of communication is always to be in a win situation between the teacher and student, as also in an online English classroom context. Today a good knowledge in English belongs to the most important requirements in many professions (McArthur, 1990). A person that speaks English well also has a better chance of finding a good job abroad. Many multi-national companies when dealing with Cross border business communication will do it in English. A great impact on the overall aspects of teaching skills in online platforms includes self-efficacy, empathy and compassion, emotional intelligence and assertiveness. Many teachers and students are forced to switch to distance learning without having a choice to adapt their teaching and learning processes, so we must be able to transfer the skills we already possess to the online environment.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND TEACHING LEARNING PURPOSES IN DIGITAL CONTEXT

According to Devito (1978) "Communication refers to the act, by one or more persons, of sending and receiving messages, distorted by noise within some context, with some effect and with some opportunity for feedback". The preparedness of the teacher in the online communication process is to collect relevant data of the student's previous knowledge, learning styles, cognitive styles, motivation, interests, personality etc and to develop

effective communication skills- both verbal and non-verbal. The teacher needs to develop and update Communication skills that can be acquired through constant training and practice. Having hold on pedagogy and androgodgy helps students to plan, organize, deliver and evaluate instruction based upon the sound principles of teaching learning. Teacher should have enough flexibility in his/her approach so as to adapt or modify instruction and remain open to feedback from others. : Learning outcomes should be clearly stated and should satisfy

the criterion of being SMART i.e. learning outcome should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic and
- Time Framed.

If an online classroom is observed for certain duration, during the teaching learning process the teacher and students spends most of the time listening and speaking. Thus through this paper we are going to understand the principles of effective listening and speaking. Lectures thrive as a mode of communication and involve listening and speaking skills. The term communication comes from the Latin words communis (common) and Communique (to share). Thus both participants (teachers and learners) should share enough common frame of reference so that message has some sense or significance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An online teaching method comprises the principles and methods as used for offline classroom instruction. Commonly used teaching methods may include class participation, demonstration, recitation, memorization, or combinations of these (Bryson, 2003). Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking (Crystal, 2001). It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving. However, speech is not always unpredictable. Language functions (or patterns) that tend to recur in certain discourse situations (e.g., declining an invitation or requesting time off from work), can be identified and charted (Burns & Joyce, 1997).

Online Communication is an integral part of any teaching learning process and its effectiveness is one of the factors, which determines to a large extent the degree to which the learning outcomes

will be achieved. The primary objective of instructional objectives in English language classrooms is to achieve learning outcomes in the cognitive domain namely those concerned with developing remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating abilities. It also helps in building affective relationships with students (Mottet et al., 2006). The process of classroom communication is affected by a multiplicity of factors pertaining to teachers, students, message, instructional methods and media and learning environment (Tulsi, 2000). But, today, in this digital era it's necessary to understand the nature of communication and make deliberate attempt to improve its effectiveness. Evidence indicates that by improving communication skills, individuals can have more effective and satisfying communication experience. In a Journal of Educational Research published in the 1950s it was found that 45% of communication was listening, 30% speaking, 16% reading and 9% writing which can be cited even today.

ACQUIRING LISTENING SKILLS

Listening far from passively receiving and recording aural input, listeners actively involve themselves in the interpretation of what they hear, bringing their own background knowledge and linguistic knowledge to bear on the information contained in the aural text. Language learning requires intentional listening that employs strategies for identifying sounds and making meaning from them (Watkins, 2005). In addition, listeners must cope with the sender's choice of vocabulary, structure, and rate of delivery. The complexity of the listening process is magnified in second language contexts, where the receiver also has incomplete control of the language school (Bryson, 2003). Strategies to develop the speaking and listening skills are essential for language teachers to help their students become effective listeners. Learning to communicate in another language takes a long time (Watkins, 2005). It is one of the most challenging tasks students are likely to undertake, and they can easily become discouraged and bored with it. Most teachers will be familiar with the concept of grading with a rubric, a table with different criteria and a grading scale. Pronunciation

is a basic quality of language learning. Though most second language learners will never have the pronunciation of a native speaker, poor pronunciation can obscure communication and prevent an ESL student from making his meaning known (Bryson, 20003). Vocabulary comprehension and vocabulary production are always two separate banks of words in the mind of a speaker, native as well as second language speakers. . Students should be encouraged to have a large production vocabulary and an even larger recognition vocabulary. For this reason it is helpful to evaluate your students on the level of vocabulary they are able to produce (Bryson, 2003). Fluency does not improve at the same rate as other language skills. You can have excellent grammar and still fail to be fluent (McArthur, 1990). Fluency is a judgment of this ease of communication and is an important criterion when evaluating speaking (Watkins, 2005). These criteria, pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, communication, interaction and fluency are all markers of a student's overall speaking abilities.

For learners of English, listening is vital because it is through this sense that they receive information on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, spoken word order, as well as the stress patterns of words, phrases and sentences (Watkins, 2005). The learner may also register and retain words and phrases which, having heard them from a native speaker or their teacher, they know to be acceptable for their own use later on (Bryson, 20003). Listening is not only crucial for the learner to understand how to learn the language, for example via instructions in the classroom or via audio devices, but also because it is a core life skill. Sometimes called Active Listening, it involves not only the sense of hearing, but also being aware of body language and being able to empathize with the speaker to ensure that the message being transmitted is received correctly (Bryson, 20003). Listening strategies are techniques or activities that contribute directly to the comprehension and recall of listening input (Crystal, 2001). Listening strategies can be classified by how the listener processes the input. Top-down strategies are listener based; the listener taps into background knowledge of the topic, the situation or context, the type of text, and

the language. This background knowledge activates a set of expectations that help the listener to interpret what is heard and anticipate what will come next (Crystal, 2001). Top-down strategies include listening for the main idea predicting, drawing inferences & summarizing. Bottom-up strategies are text based; the listener relies on the language in the message, that is, the combination of sounds, words, and grammar that creates meaning (Crystal, 2001). Strategic listeners also use metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their listening. They plan by deciding which listening strategies will serve best in a particular situation. They monitor their comprehension and the effectiveness of the selected strategies. They evaluate by determining whether they have achieved their listening comprehension goals and whether the combination of listening strategies selected was an effective one.

Students need to attend to the parts of the listening input that are relevant to the identified purpose and ignore the rest. This selectivity enables students to focus on specific items in the input and reduces the amount of information they have to hold in short-term memory in order to recognize it. Select top-down and bottom-up strategies that are appropriate to the listening task and use them flexibly and interactively (Bryson, 20003). Students' comprehension improves and their confidence increases when they use top-down and bottom-up strategies simultaneously to construct meaning in the listening process. For assessing Listening Proficiency one can use post-listening activities to check comprehension, evaluate listening skills and use of listening strategies, and extend the knowledge gained to other contexts (Watkins, 2005). A post-listening activity may relate to a pre-listening activity, such as predicting; may expand on the topic or the language of the listening text; or may transfer what has been learned to reading, speaking, or writing activities (Nelson, 2003). In order to provide authentic assessment of students' listening proficiency, a post-listening activity must reflect the real-life uses to which students might put information they have gained through listening (Crystal, 2001). It must have a purpose other than assessment. It must require students to

demonstrate their level of listening comprehension by completing some task.

The best way to understand people is to listen to them” Ralph Nichols.

The different types of listening in Classrooms can be categorized as (a) Active listening where the listeners paraphrase and confirm the concept of the topic delivered and thereby provide feedback (b) Critical listening which involves reasoning and a systematic approach like academic rules and regulations or warnings and (c) Empathetic listening where emotional support is provided to the speaker as a psychiatrist listens to a patient. The teachers listening empathetically enhance student’s self-respect and natural friendliness with the teacher which promotes effective communication. The example of empathetic listening is providing emotional support as a psychologist does to a patient.

ACQUIRING SPEAKING SKILLS

Speaking is a crucial part of the language learning process. Effective instructors teach students speaking strategies -- using minimal responses, recognizing scripts, and using language to talk about language -- which they can use to help themselves expand their knowledge of the language and their confidence in using it. Minimal responses are predictable, often idiomatic phrases that conversation participants use to indicate understanding, agreement, doubt, and other responses to what another speaker is saying. Some oral communication situations are associated with a predictable set of spoken exchanges or a script. Greetings, apologies, compliments, invitations, and other functions that are influenced by social and cultural norms often follow patterns or scripts (Watkins, 2005).

Speaking involves use of a language, and use of a language involves knowledge of its vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and expression. The effectiveness of speaking depends upon the following three factors: 1. Verbal content 2. Tonal quality 3. Non-verbal behavior. The verbal and nonverbal can be compared to an iceberg, if the tip is verbal the rest of the ice berg is nonverbal. It can

also be calculated in 70: 30 ratios. It’s not what you say but how you say it that determines the effectiveness of your speaking. Speaking involves personality factors too. The receiver interprets tonal quality, and person’s facial expression, gestures, body posture etc. and give meaning to the intended message. More the congruence between verbal and nonverbal communication, greater is the effectiveness of communication. Non-verbal communication can be broadly classified into:

- Kinesics (facial expression, gestures, body postures, eye contact),
- Paralanguage (mode, volume, pitch, rhythm, articulation, pronunciation)
- Artifacts (clothing, jewellery, cosmetics, tattoos, piercing, hairstyle)
- Chronemics (time)
- Proxemics (space)

The speaker should have an in-depth knowledge of one’s subject/content to be delivered is a precondition to effective communication. If you have thorough understanding of the subject, the flow and continuity will be there in communication. The teacher will be able to give adequate explanation, relate subject to daily life and to other subjects, and clarify doubts of students. Message communicated ought to be well organized. And be presented in topical sequencing, Journalistic sequencing, or Chronological sequencing.

When the teachers maintain eye contact, it is motivating for the students and they pay attention to what is being said. Avoidance of eye contact may result in lack of attention, discipline problems or boredom, especially in online platform and even helps the students to divert or engage in other social media or game zones. Its only by maintaining eye contact with class, can obtain tonnes of non-verbal feedback. Face is the index of mind and you express feelings through your facial expression. Face is the index of mind. Emotions expressed through facial expressions and gestures lend support to verbal content. When you say very small, large or big or you want to say right or left, you automatically use appropriate gestures. Audio signals will be interpreted only when they reach the audience. Voice needs to be audible and clear to all the

students in the class. Pronunciation and articulation go hand in hand. Better the articulation better is the pronunciation. Many of the commonly used words are wrongly pronounced. Mother tongue interference or MTI can affect pronunciation but practice leads to perfection. The rate of delivery in the classroom usually should remain within 90 to 110 words per minute. If you are dealing with simple easy material, the rate of delivery can be little faster and if you are dealing with complex difficult material, the rate of delivery can be slower.

CONCLUSION

Teachers make use of all the four communication skills. Before going to the class, they prepare for the class and are involved in reading and writing and while in class, they are involved in speaking, listening and writing. And at times, in class they may be involved in reading also. Speaking and listening are parts of oral communication that go hand in hand. If a teacher uses expository learning strategies such as lectures, he/she is speaking most of the time and if active learning strategies are used, students are involved in speaking more than listening. Research in the field of communication indicates that higher the effectiveness of communication, greater is the chance of instructional objectives or learning outcomes to be achieved especially in online interactive learning platforms.

In the process of listening two messages do flow. One is the content of the lecture and the other is the feeling or emotions beyond words. Thus for effective listening and speaking both the intellectual and emotional involvement is required. The message that the idea is properly conceptualized is given through feedback which is mostly nonverbal like having proper eye contact or verbal like asking questions or by engaging in meaningful discussions and thus motivates the speaker to continue. In classroom a relationship of trust developed among teacher and students can be due to effective listening and speaking only.

The purposes of listening is to interpret the communication in the classroom context to understand the concept and ideas shared, respond and provide positive feedback to speaker thus

further motivating the speaker to continue. On the other hand the purpose of speaking is to explain, state and describe, question, and above all provide relevant information to get positive feedback. Also. The internal and external factors to be considered in the teaching learning process include: Internal factors are those that the individual language learner brings with him or her to the particular learning situation like age, personality, motivation, experiences and cognition whereas

External factors are those that characterize a particular language learning situation as Curriculum, Culture and status. But it's clearly, second-language learners who have no extensive access are likely to make slower progress, particularly in the oral/aural aspects of language acquisition.

Even in the online communication platform impressions do last longer, it's necessary to dress formally while going to an online class. Dressing according to the situation, you feel more confident... Use pauses at appropriate places to convey the meaning you intend to convey. Silence also conveys message. It may convey a message of agreement or disagreement. Some usage of fillers or repetitive words used frequently but convey no meaning causes discomfort to the listener. For example, right, you see, you know, actually, you understand, yes, OK etc. These are filler words which need to be eliminated from the repertoire.

with internet-based technology supplies learners

Internet based technologies provides teachers and learners with authentic and realistic resources to implement and practice. Teachers regardless of using technology or not should prepare pre-while and post-learning activities for online classrooms. As technological developments are rapid teachers need to professionally update themselves. Arindham Choudhary has rightly remarked, "You can never succeed with people without mutual trust and understanding. Effective communication skills could just be the difference between success and you". Communication has assumed great importance in life. People who are effective communicators lead a smooth life, enjoy good interpersonal relations and are more successful in career. In teaching-learning situation, communication plays an important role. Every

activity of a teacher involves an element of communication. Integration of strategies and resources in appropriate measures and implementing it through innovative technological methodologies is thus beneficial to both teachers and learners.

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