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Edited and Published by

Tarun Patel

Bhaskar Pandya

Kaushal Kotadia

Rajesh Bharvad

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ELT Video: Shaping the Way We Teach English: Module 13, Peer Observation in Teaching Practices

Classroom observation can take different forms. The two most common are: 1. Summative observation, in which another teacher or an administrator observes the class. The purpose for this is evaluative and may result a rating of some kind.

2. And, formative observation, in which two teachers, or “peers,” do a “friendly” observation of each other’s classes. The purpose is to improve teaching practices and to engage in a systematic form of professional development.

The focus in this module is on formative or peer observation. Formative observation can benefit both the observed teacher and the teacher doing the observation. In order to do so, it must be carefully organized. We will follow a teachers through the three phases of a successful observation: * First, preparing for the observation. * Then, observing in the classroom. * And, finally, the post-observation debriefing.

An innovative offering from the Office of English Language Programs, Shaping the Way We Teach English, is a 14-module teacher training video series developed and produced in cooperation with the University of Oregon.

Watch the video ‘Shaping the Way We Teach English’ at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/07/65-elt-video-shaping-the-way-we-teach-english-module-13-peer-observation-in-teaching-practices/>

Word of the Week: Action research

“Action research is a development tool for a teacher that involves observing or gathering other data about a class through interviews, case studies, and questionnaires. A teacher can establish a cycle of identifying problems, planning changes in response, implementing changes and gathering and analysing data to evaluate the implementation. Action research can be used to help general development or to resolve specific problems with teaching or learners.

Example

A teacher has problems with giving feedback to learners on speaking problems and decides to record their classes. They then analyse the recordings to identify more effective ways of correction. They implement changes based on this, and collect data to analyse whether feedback is now more useful to learners.

In the classroom

Peer observations, learner and teacher diaries, audio and video recordings, case studies, questionnaires and interviews with learners are all methods that can be used to gather data for action research.”

[retrieved from <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>]

Book Review: 'English and Communication Skills for Students of Science and Engineering' by Dr. S. P. Dhanavel

'English and Communication Skills for Students of Science and Engineering' by Dr.S.P.Dhanavel. Chennai: Orient BlackSwan, 2009, pp.228.

Reviewed by Dr.S.Kumaran, Assistant Professor of English, University College of Engineering Tindivanam, Saram-604 307. Tamilnadu – India.

English and Communication Skills for Students of Science and Engineering, written by Dr S P Dhanavel, Professor and Head, Department of English, Anna University Chennai, has carved a niche for itself in the current scenario of English Language text books. It differs from the rest of the books on English language teaching by its innovative design of content and thought provoking sections that help learners achieve overall language competence. This book is divided into ten units and each unit has five sub-sections to enhance understanding of various language skills and functions. Further, the book facilitates participatory learning and encourages students to experience the joys of learning English language in the classroom. They can also use the book on their own as it has been in the self-instructional mode.

The contemporary topics chosen in the book provide an insight into the crucial issues of the present day world. Some of the topics like, *Nanotechnology*, *Water: The Elixir of Life*, and *E-Waste Contamination in India* create an awareness of environment and necessitate the importance of preserving natural resources. These

topics are quite modern and relevant and they also hold scope for the moral development of the students.

The sections that are dealt in this book are very useful for the development of the learners' LSRW skills. Listening is a skill that needs constant practice. *Listening* section of this book helps learners have hands-on experience through the audio CD attached with the book. Language learners could identify the complexities involved in interpreting messages while listening and learn the ways to counteract the stumbling blocks in the process of listening. *Thinking and Interaction* creates an opportunity for students to participate in group activities. Through active participation in group activities, they can develop soft skills and get motivated. Moreover, the activities are aimed at identifying their ability and developing their communication skills.

Grammar is a component that cannot be neglected in the process of language learning. Grammatical items chosen by the author in this book are highly useful to understand the basics of language in a simple and learner-friendly manner. *Reading Comprehension* is the hallmark of this book. It ascertains the importance of precision and necessity of interpretation and trains the learners to hone their thinking skills. *Paragraph Writing* teaches coherence and cohesion and aids the learners to practice writing with clarity. It also makes the learners to delve on a particular topic and to identify the need for exactitude and brevity. *Word Power* is one of the best ways to master vocabulary and this book enhances it by offering relevant and core words. *Homograph* fulfills the scientific study of words by providing basic knowledge about sound and *Word Origin* imparts knowledge of words to learners. They inspire the learners to learn new words and to use them

exactly and aptly. *Noun Making Suffixes* assists the students to realize how vocabulary can be increased and further, motivates them to heighten their vocabulary. *Role play* is a wonderful method to develop communication skills and moreover, it is a painless and promising process that enables the participants to achieve overall proficiency in communication skills. It improves their soft skills too.

In the book, *Food for Thought* stimulates the interest towards the wisdom of the ages and the knowledge of the past. *Domain Names* and *E-mail Writing* prove to be a novel attempt to club technology and language. They support the tech-savvy students to experience the transforming power of language. Most L2 learners have difficulty in sequencing sentences that are not in order. *Sequence Words* section of this book offers scope for practice and directs through clues. *Pie-Chart* and *Flowchart* nurture thinking and train the wards to interpret the data provided as code. *Understanding Letter to the Editor* and *Writing Memos* instruct the students to correspond better and *Understanding Checklists* prepares them to be meticulous while carrying out tasks. Finally, *Group Discussion* aims at placement and prepares the students to court success in Job interviews.

Thus the book provides scope for successful language learning through the multifarious sections and activities. No doubt learners can achieve command over the English language in both oral and written form with the help of Prof. Dhanavel's unique book **English and Communication Skills for Students of Science and Engineering**. It is in fact useful to all learners of English in both technical colleges and arts and science colleges.

Article: ‘Teaching English Language to Beginners’ by Mako Fisher

Young students especially, have short attention spans and quickly lose concentration so in order to keep lesson momentum and the student interested in the topic at hand, break the lesson time down into ten minute module blocks. For young students or absolute beginners, start with the alphabet and numbers. Lesson 1 for example could be to learn the alphabet letters to “g” or whatever you feel is within the students ability. For very young students consider bringing a lap top computer and printer to the class and as part of the lesson find, and print out the Flash Cards you intend to use. Likewise with numbers. Make or print out numbers up to 5, then 6-10 then 11-20 and so on.

Another 10 minute component could be to print out some writing practice sheets so students can start learning how to write letters and numbers. Compliment the lesson with Flashcards with words starting with the letters you are teaching. For example Apple, Airplane, Air Conditioner, Ape, etc etc.

To round out the lessons you could introduce a simple song, even make one up yourself if you are musical enough. A game related to the topic at hand is also a good option towards the end of the lesson. There are a variety of board games on the market relate to English learning or again you could design one yourself. Simple memorizing or guessing games using playing cards can be very entertaining to students if approached correctly and for the right duration. Use Flash Cards to gradually build your students vocabulary.

If you have a group of students, divide them into teams and play a “who knows” game. Quickly display a Flash Card (either number, letter or photo). The student

who answers correctly earns a point for their team. An incorrect answer loses a point for the team.

These types of games are ideal for larger groups as you can also build English repetition around the set up of the game and how you divide the students.

For example:

Surrounding dialogue: “Ok we’re going to play a Do You Know Game. Put all the tables to the side of the room. Put all the chairs in three lines from the front of the room to the back of the room. Make three lines. The first line is all students who were born in either January, February, March and April. The middle line is all students who were born in either. May, June, July and August. The third line is all students who were born in WHAT MONTHS?

That’s right. September, October, November and December. Okay, form the lines and let’s start. Who’s going to go first?”

In summary:

Present material in ten minute “bite size” blocks.

Have all materials for the class prepared in advance and in order of use during the lesson. Have additional material ready in case you need it. In some instances you might get through material faster than anticipated. Some of the material may be of very little interest to the student and even spending ten minutes on it is far too long.

In another instance you may overestimate your students ability and the material being studied may be far to difficult for the student to understand.

In all lessons it's important to have extra materials and resources to help you when unexpected dilemmas happen/occur.

Have fun with your students and they'll enjoy learning from you.

Mako Fisher

Current and past English teacher in Japan <http://www.24hourenglish.com>

Article Source: [<http://EzineArticles.com/?Teaching-English-Language-to-Beginners&id=3479362>] Teaching English Language to Beginners

Article: ‘Allow Reading Aloud to Feel Proud’ by Dr. G.A. Ghanshyam

Speech is civilization itself. The word, even the most contradictory word, preserves contact – it is silence which isolates.

– Thomas Mann

Speech, the first form of communication came much earlier than the written form of language in the progress of civilization. Even today there are many tribes, which have an oral form of language with a non-existent written script. Though writing preserves the wisdom, knowledge and experience of man for posterity, yet it is the spoken form of the language that gains in stature and priority.

The world in which we are living today is a globalized world, a world entirely dependent on effective modes of communication. Language being the medium of communication, it is essential that a certain degree of perfection be achieved in the area. According to Ludwig Wittgenstein “What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.”

Lucidity and clarity of the spoken word is very essential for communication to be effective and useful. All our social, personal, political and economical interactions are based on the foundations of correct and accurate use of the language; that is an efficient communication system. So language learning occupies a pivotal place in our life.

Language learning involves development of the four basic skills, LSRW that is listening, speaking, reading and writing. So for the development of speech skills firstly what we require is to listen to the language being spoken. Listening is placed first in the acquisition of language skills because it is through listening and imitation that a child learns a language. And when the child imitates he does so in the spoken form. Only after the first two skills are developed the child goes on to acquire reading and writing skills. However in case of second language learning the students have to face a serious handicap and that is the lack of proper environment conducive to the development of the first two skills. In such a case it is primarily through the development of the third skill, reading, that a learner can learn to speak correctly.

Acquisition of language requires the development of the vocabulary and comprehension powers of the learner. Unless the student is placed in an atmosphere that helps him/her to imbibe and develop these skills, language learning will pose a problem. For a learner to be proficient in the language, nuances of the language need to be learnt.

Second language learning like ESL is an essential part of our curriculum today. In this age of globalization and revolutionary advancement of communication, English has become a universal language, a language that has broken down barriers and immensely contributed to the emergent trend of the world being seen as a 'global village'. In the Indian context, English has not only shed its colonial image and taken roots in the native soil but has also transcended the regional divide effectively. Recognition of English as the second official language and the

immense potential that it has come to represent for the skilled human resource of the country on a global level has greatly increased the importance of the language. Though English has been included in our course curricula from the school level continuing till the time we graduate, yet the level of competence achieved in the language is hardly satisfactory. Learning in an atmosphere that is not very favourable to the development of the language skills hampers the learners' progress. As there is not much scope for the student to listen and speak the language as a part of their learning process, it is essential that proper concentration and guidance be given to the development of reading skill.

Reading has various advantages and plays an important role in the acquisition of language. Reading can be of two kinds- silent reading and reading aloud. Silent reading has its own benefits but in the present case scenario that is in the development of language skills, reading aloud needs to be emphasized. Acquisition of language especially for oral communication requires proper attention to be given in the acquiring of the various nuances of the language like pronunciation, intonation, stress, pauses, punctuation, voice modulation, expression, etc.

However despite its importance the art of reading is steadily getting lost among the new generation of students.

'Reading' as a habit is fast disappearing amongst the younger generation. They would prefer to see a movie adaptation of a novel or a play because 'reading' can be time consuming. (Major, 2004: 31)

Advent of the electronic media and modern modes of computer-based education is distancing the learner's from the printed texts. Gradually they are losing touch with books and joys of reading. It is therefore very essential that:

The student must be trained to read and think about the text rather than just listen to lectures on its literary and linguistic nuances. (Jose, 2003: 27)

Reading aloud is the closest that an average Indian student can get to speaking and listening to the language. For development of oral communication in English, which has gained much importance in the present context, it is necessary that the student learn to speak correctly. Reading aloud gives them an opportunity to not only practice their speech skills but also develop the confidence to speak in public.

The practice also provides the student with an opportunity to correct himself/herself wherever he/she falters while reading.

It is a common phenomenon in India that the teachers of English have to hassle a lot in motivating and inspiring the students to speak English, the target language. The disinterestedness and the lack of motivational approach from the teacher have made the target language the most vulnerable among the learners. Keeping reading aloud in mind I have undertaken the responsibility of motivating the students and also to create interest among them towards English. During my teaching in the English class, I planned to carry out an experiment of reading aloud in English with the undergraduate class in the rural area, so as to make them confident, efficient and determined. The students who were reluctant to utter a single word in English have been asked to read the textual lesson in the class everyday.

Before setting out with the execution of my experiment, it would be worthwhile to have a glimpse of the problems faced by the miserable lot of English teachers, and the objectives that we aim to achieve by overcoming these obstacles to knowledge.

OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS:

Innumerable problems and obstacles plague the job of an English teacher in his/her professional life. Some basic problems hampering the progress of the class are:-

- **Fear Psychosis**: The foremost problem that we face in an English class is the inherent fear amongst the students regarding the language. The fear generated by the tyrannical and high-handed attitude of some teachers combined with the unfamiliarity of the language gives birth to a fear of the language, its supposedly difficult structure and composition.
- **Hesitation**: The effectiveness of the English class can be best judged when the students are asked to speak the language. Even the most interested and active student start whimpering about their inability to do so. The self-conscious attitude of the students, fear of peer response and mistakes, never lets them to make progress leading to their hesitation to speak English.
- **Lack of Confidence**: Fear and hesitation on their part leads to a lack of confidence and pessimistic attitude amongst the students. Even before trying to speak a single word they already decide about their inability to do so. Lack of confidence never lets them to get across the obstacles that are an impediment to language learning.
- **Faulty pronunciation**: English being the second language for us it is quite natural that our pronunciation will not be the same as that of the native speakers of the language. But efforts can be made to correct our speech and attain perfection.

Faults in pronunciation are a problem that needs to be dealt with proper guidance along with other nuances of the language like stress, intonation, etc.

- **Lack of Congenial Atmosphere**: A congenial atmosphere that is conducive to effective learning of a language is necessary for effective learning. However in case of a country where English is considered a language of the elite, a foreign language, there is a paucity of favourable and positive atmosphere which will help the students to learn the language in a better way.
- **Lack of Interest**: “Mention General English and the students lets out a groan.” (Jose, 2003: 27) General English classes don't come in the priority list of subjects for the students. There is a collective uninterested-ness amongst them regarding the English class, which can be ignored and neglected in favour of the more important main subjects. This lack of interest and motivation is a major problem that is faced by the English teachers in colleges.
- **Lack of Student-Teacher Interaction**: The course syllabus of General English is concentrated more on the development of the writing skill in the language than on oral communication. Pressurized by time constraints the General English class lacks in a very important aspect of good and effective learning atmosphere and that is a lack of student-teacher interaction.

Keeping in mind the above problems amongst a plethora of others that plagues the English classroom, I undertook the experiment in 'Reading Aloud' with the following objectives:

Objectives of Reading Aloud:

- **Removal of Fear and Hesitation**: The foremost task in the learning process is to remove the misconceptions and the resultant fear and hesitation of the students

regarding the language. Only when the students approach the subject with an open and positive mind without any dread or hesitation they can imbibe the language learning lessons better.

- **Development of a Congenial Atmosphere**: The next step in the process of effective language learning is the creation of a congenial atmosphere, which will help the students in their task. Language learning involves the development of four skills of LSRW. Students should be provided with an atmosphere that will help them to imbibe these skills better.
- **Familiarity**: Frequent use of the language not only in the written form but also while speaking in the class will help to increase the familiarity of the students with the language. This will develop an affinity with the language thereby contributing to the creation of a congenial environment between the students and the teachers.
- **Speech Skills**: The case study is undertaken with a purpose to develop and enhance the speech skills of the students, giving them proper guidance regarding the various nuances of the language. Proper development of these minute points inherent in a language will undoubtedly strengthen and perfect the language skill of the students.
- **Comprehension Power**: Development of language skills also involves the development of the comprehensive power of the students. Unless they understand the text they read, the whole exercise will prove futile. A level of comprehension power needs to be achieved in the development of language skills.
- **Attitude Building**: A positive and confident attitude is the pre-requisite to proper learning and utilization of language skills. The learning process should play an important and effective role in the development of the students' attitude towards learning and using the language.

- **Art of Oratory**: Oratory has always held a high position from times gone by. Oral communication is a skill that is of prime importance for each and every individual in this highly competitive world. The exercise is aimed to meet this end and develop the art of speaking amongst the students.
- **Student-Teacher Interaction**: For effective learning and teaching experience it is essential that a positive and productive interaction be developed between the teachers and the students. An open and interactive channel between these two pillars of education will not only help the process of learning but will also contribute in bridging the gap between students and teachers that hampers the education process.
- **Development of Interest**: The most important and crucial factor for an English teacher is the development of interest for the subject amongst the students. It is only when a level of interest and an eagerness to learn is generated in the students will they imbibe the lessons better. Motivation is the key, which is needed to keep the wheels of education properly oiled and in perfect shape.
- **Learner Oriented Education**: Giving prime importance to the students by making the learning process in class learner oriented will certainly help in generating interest amongst the students. When students are assigned the prime role and given an active part to play in the learning process, they will undoubtedly take more interest in the class.

There are countless problems related to an English class. But when there is a will there is a way. So with a positive approach regarding the Herculean task of removing the obstacles, an experiment was undertaken with the aim to realize the above-mentioned objectives. The experiment involved an exercise in 'Reading Aloud' in order to feel proud.

CASE STUDY

CLASS: Undergraduate Class in a Rural College.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: Approx. 40.

AVERAGE LEVEL OF STUDENTS: Undergraduate, Ist Level, Hindi Medium.

EXERCISE: Reading Aloud of the Text.

TIME TAKEN: Regular Class of 40 Mins. and Extra Class of 1 Hour.

TASKS INVOLVED: Reading of Prose Works, Stories, Articles, Poetry and Plays.

STEP I: Xerox copy of the material to be read in class is distributed among the students. The passage chosen for reading is a simple one containing the words of day-to-day use to which the students haven't been exposed yet.

The teacher reads the passage for model reading and the students are advised to listen properly and to pay attention on the speed, pronunciation, punctuation, style, voice modulation, and so on.

After the teacher reads out the passage one of the student is asked to read out the passage. The learner or the student who comes from the socio-economically and academically backward background feel hesitant, lose confidence and moreover are shy of committing mistakes. The teacher who plays the role of a facilitator must create a jovial, inspiring, cooperative and congenial atmosphere for them to come out of their cocoons and shine confidently with pride in themselves.

STEP II: The teacher must not stop the student from reading if he/she commits mistakes, because this hampers the flow of reading and also creates discomfort and

low level of confidence amongst the readers. Then the teacher must carefully make a note of not only the mistakes committed but must also observe and note various other feature required for reading aloud (Like pronunciation, punctuation, stress, intonation, voice modulation, etc.).

STEP III: After the student reads out the passage the teacher must pat him for his reading and encourage him. The mistakes committed by the students are to be pointed out in a sportive way and must be told to rectify. Then the teacher must ask the student to re-read the passage incorporating the corrections told by the teacher. This must go on till the students read the passage. It may not be equal to the level of the teacher but it should be able to make him feel proud of himself.

STEP IV: After this simple passage the difficulty level of the passage is to be increased and the same procedure undertaken earlier must be followed.

STEP V: Carrying out the experiment to the next level some poems prescribed in the course having an inherent expressive quality in them was taken for recitation. The activity of recitation that was carried out in the past and has become lost in the present is being revived. This exercise would help them to express the emotions, feelings and the very soul of the poem. Reading of the poem is entirely different as compared to passage reading. This exercise will help in promoting creativity to use their body language according to the words.

STEP VI: After poetry the reading aloud is shifted on to drama wherein the students are guided to use dialogues. The expressions that they have learned in the previous step are put into practice by helping them to give voice to an identity.

Once again the innovative and creative teacher will work as a facilitator in guiding them to play their respective roles. With the delivery of the dialogue the teacher must observe the proper force required to utter the word, clarity of speech and, gesture and posture of the student.

Undertaking these steps will re-charge a positive energy in the students and they will readily take up English for their reading. The steps used have shown a tremendous response and has created a sensation in the minds of the socio-economically and academically backward students. This activity has motivated the students to read the textbook, which they read only before the exams. The exercise of reading aloud has provoked the students to come out of their complacent attitude towards the language and use it effectively for communication as well. This approach has created in them an interest and at the same time love towards the language. This method has proven the fact that if good, congenial and cooperative atmosphere with a proper guidance is provided, the students of the rural area will be second to none in using, communicating and expressing the target language, English.

The experiment has led to the positive observations regarding improvements in the language skills and over all confidence level of the students.

- Development of interest.
- Removal of hesitation, fear and shyness.
- Increase in confidence and positive attitude.
- Improvement of language skills- LSRW in one single practice.
- Active participation of students.

- Practice of public speaking.
- Enhancement of comprehension level.
Before concluding my case study on a positive note of success it would be worthwhile to ponder on certain points that need to be kept in mind before applying the present experiment into further use.
- **Book Selection**: Choose a book that you yourself enjoy, and never hesitate to reconsider your choice if the book appears to be a mistake. Age, intellectual and emotional level of students is to be kept in mind while selecting the material for reading.
- **Preparation**: Read yourself and lead by example. Self-reading is important to 'read aloud' with the students. Practice what you preach.
- **Interaction**: Positive participation should be encouraged amongst the students; this will help in holding their attention and also provide relief from monotony of a reading session. Along with enhancing language skills this will help the students in thinking 'out of the box'.
- **Questions**: The class can be made interactive best through the use of questions. This will stimulate their mind and make them to think.
- **Style**: Guide the students to hold the listeners' attention by voice modulation and intonation. Proper guidance is to be provided regarding the setting of pace and pitch according to the demands of the text. Artificiality in diction should be discouraged.
- **Expression**: Plenty of expressions are to be encouraged while reading as per the requirements of the text.
- **Pleasure**: Take pleasure in reading. Reading should be made an enjoyable experience and not something to be dreaded. It should not be tied down always as

an instrument of evaluation and threat, or be confined into the narrow confines of classroom work.

- **Interpretation**: Students are to be encouraged to form their own interpretation of the text as an exercise in increasing their comprehension level. The teacher should not force his own interpretations on the student as this will curtail their interest in reading.
- **Versatility**: An approach of versatility is to be maintained throughout the reading session. What to read, how to read, and provide clues; where to stop, think and interact; are some of the points that needs to be decided and handled in an innovative manner. Approach should be versatile and flexible not rigid and dogmatic.
- **Posture**: Correct posture is to be maintained during the reading session. Too much relaxation and the student will feel drowsy. The student should stand properly while reading and sit straight up while listening. They should remain alert and active.
- **An Everlasting Experience**: Include reading aloud as a daily activity. Make it as a 'family' classroom time for the student when they can connect, cooperate and interact with each other and also with the teacher. Be enthusiastic in your attitude and approach so much so that it infects the students too.
- **Evaluation**: Evaluate the student's mental ability by encouraging projects and group work based on the reading activity. But don't evaluate through marks for this will destroy the magic and joy of reading tying it down to just another activity to score grades.

Man cannot survive in isolation. Communication is the key, which connects and interlinks man to man and man to society. Language is thus an important factor responsible for proper development and maintenance of emotional, political,

economical, personal and social relations. 'Reading Aloud' is an effective and time-tested procedure through which language can be learned, practiced and utilized. Potential of language is immense because it is mainly through language that we communicate and interact but correct and accurate use of language is equally essential to utilize this potential effectively and to its optimum level. 'Reading Aloud' is the way through which we can achieve this potential that holds this world together and paves the way to progress in life. To progress you need self-confidence because when you are confident you value and pride yourself.

Thus **TO FEEL PROUD** one must **READ ALOUD**.

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Article: ‘Mastering Listening as a Non Verbal Communication Skill: An Approach to enhance Communication skills’ by Dr. Sunita Agarwal

People often focus on their speaking ability believing that good speaking equals good communication. The ability to speak well is a necessary component to successful communication but the ability to listen is equally important. Most of us do not realize the importance of listening as a communicative tool. Peter Drucker, a great linguist says

“It is the recipient who communicates. The so called communicator, the person who emits the communication, does not communicate. He utters. Unless there is someone who hears, there is no communication. There is only noise.”

Communication, as we all know is a two way process. It involves at least two parties – the communicator and receiver, or sender or receiver. The purpose of any communication is not achieved till the receiver receives the message which a communicator/sender wants to put across. Unless the receiver gives his/her response, the process of thought remains incomplete. We often take listening for granted, never realizing that it is a skill that can be learned. Most of us do not realize the importance of listening as a communicative tool. Adair, a language teacher says, 'Listening has been variously called the neglected art or forgotten skill in Communication.' (81) Yet studies have shown that we actually spend 50% more time listening than we do talking. In this paper, an effort will be made to look into some of the important questions to underline the importance of listening within human communication (1) is listening to someone the same as hearing? (2) Do we all listen differently? (3) What makes a good listener? (4) How to acquire

active, productive listening skills and put them to work— professionally, socially, and personally. The paper will also have a positive bias: listeners are active. It will contend that all listening is and should be an engaged activity for effective communication. With practice listeners can become active and aware rather than passive and unconscious.

Watch someone who listens attentively. He/she makes eye contact and focuses on the other person while he/she listens. He/she listens with his eyes as well as his ears. While listening, he nods or makes attentive noises from time-to-time. This is both a skilled listener and an attentive listener. The person he/she is listening to feels a sense of communication. The first communication skill we engage in the moment we are born is listening. It is how we learn and acquire language. Speaking and listening, then, are always interrelated. However, although it is our first communicative behavior, listening is usually our most underdeveloped communication skill. The International Listening Association (www.listen.org) defines listening as the process of receiving, constructing meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal messages (1996).

Listening is an important aid to communication. In order to communicate effectively we have to be able to hear what the other person is saying. Yes, listening starts with hearing but goes beyond this; when we hear something, its just sound waves reaching our ears and then being forwarded to our brain. If we are actively listening, then we absorb what we hear, we think about it and we store it in our short memory, may be later on, add it to our long term memory. To listen is thus an active effort, hearing is a passive. Brownell (2006) defines “Hearing is essentially a physiological process, involves three interconnected stages: reception of sound waves, perception of sound in the

brain, and auditory association (77). While listening is a very complex psychological process. A successful communication takes place only when the receiver participates and listens actively and decodes and interprets what the sender/communicator intends to convey. To listen effectively one needs to go through five separate steps-:

- Receiving
- Decoding
- Remembering
- Evaluating
- Responding

Thompson & Rubin (1996) describes the listening process from an information processing perspective. They write, " it is an active process in which listeners select and interpret information that comes from auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express" (331).

In *Effective Listening: Key to Your Success* Lyman Steil, Larry Barker and Kittie Watson (1983), identify four interconnected activities as essential to the process of listening:

1. Sensing, the first step, is the actual reception of verbal and nonverbal message
2. Interpreting is the practice of understanding the message.
3. Evaluating refers to the process of sorting facts, information that can be verified, from opinion. Evaluating also involves concurring or rejecting the speaker's message.

4. Responding is the process of reacting with verbal and nonverbal cues to the message.

In her research on listening comprehension, Caren Feyten (1991) finds that meaning is constructed, by speakers as well as listeners, through communicative exchanges that include linguistics, such as spoken words; paralinguistics, such as tone of voice, intonation and pitch; and via nonverbal communication, such as body language (175).

Good communication is, thus an interactive process. It calls for participation and involvement. It is usually a dialogue not a monologue. Being listened to, and knowing how to listen, are fundamental to the development of good reading, speaking and writing skills. When a child's ability to listen is well developed, he or she will definitely turn out to be a good reader as well.

Brownell (2006) identifies the following nonverbal behaviors as behaviors that will say "I'll listen":

1. Direct eye contact.
2. Smiling.
3. Nodding.
4. Eyes wide open.
5. Forward lean.
6. Positive facial expression.

On the other hand the following behavioral patterns impede effective communication:

1. Staring.
2. Yawning.
3. Looking away.
4. Nervous habits, fidgeting.
5. Shaking the head negatively.
6. Moving away from speaker.
7. Negative facial expression, such as frowning or pouting.
8. Crossed arms.

Every individual has reasons and objectives for listening and these depend on goals, interest, and the situation. We are constantly engaged in interpretation and meaning-making as we listen, and our listening engagement depends mainly on our environmental contexts and our listening goals. Researchers describe many different types of listening behaviors.

1. **Discriminative listening** is that type of listening in which individuals separate proved facts and Information from opinions, which is more subjective and ambiguous.
2. **Comprehensive listening** is to gain information. It takes place when we listen to receive information or to acquire an answer to a definite problem or question. It helps in enriching our personal perspective

3. **Critical or evaluative listening** is used to evaluate a message before accepting or rejecting it. The aim of critical listening is not only to understand but also to evaluate the information and the details at several levels: the logic of the argument, the strength of the evidence, the validity of the conclusion, the implication of the message, the speaker's intention and motives, and omission of any relevant information etc.
4. **Therapeutic listening** or emphatic or supportive listening allows the individual to listen without judging. The purpose of therapeutic listening is to help the speaker change or progress in some way. The goal of emphatic listening is to understand the speakers' feelings, needs and wants so that one can appreciate his/her point of view, regardless of the fact whether one shares that perspective or not. By listening emphatically one helps the individual vent the emotions that prevent a calm clear headed approach to the subject. A lot of times people just want someone to listen to them, they do not want any advice or suggestion or conclusion
5. **Appreciative listening** allows individuals to listen for entertainment or enjoyment, such as when we listen to poetry or music, drama, watch movies, listen programs on radio or T.V.etc.

6. Content Listening- the primary goal of content listening is to understand and retain the speaker's message. In content listening the emphasis is always on information and understanding.

In his work, Carl Rogers (1962) writes eloquently of the need to abandon an egocentric perspective when listening, which better allows us to comprehend the opposing point of view. Such listening, in his view, challenges preconceived assumptions as individuals are to take in the world around them. As a result of a deeply engaged active listening, individuals gradually experience greater listening competency as well as growth towards valuable modes of understanding.

Secondly, they must develop an empathetic attitude, in which one individual identifies with another, in other words, as Hobart and Fahlberg, (1965,) say “one feels with and for that person” (596). Individuals will stop listening if they become angry or defensive. An effective speaker has the power to coax its audience closer to a model of emphatic listening. If a speaker wants to be really effective, he or she must be more concerned with communicating and encouraging an open and active listening behavior than an egocentric behavior such as lecturing the audience.

In the listening process there are things that interfere with or get in the way of effective listening. We call these situational thoughts and actions barriers to listening. In any situation, barriers prevent effective communication. These barriers can be within ourselves (psychological), in the communication situation or environment (such as noise or other distractions), or they can be learned from our social or cultural associations and influences (like reactions to stereotypical labels or ethnocentric rituals).

1. **Psychological Barrier-** These can include intrapersonal distractions such as interior “noise,” semantic noise, information overload, perceptions of the speaker, or self perceptions and personal biases that get in to the way of listening to others
2. **Situational or environmental Barrier** (such as noise or other distractions), or they can be learned from our social or cultural associations and influences (like reactions to stereotypical labels or ethnocentric rituals)

Teaching listening skills is one of the most difficult tasks for any ESL teacher. This is because successful listening skills are acquired over time and with lots of practice. Students also get confused and show lack of interest in acquiring this skill because there are no rules as in grammar teaching. Speaking and writing also have very specific exercises that can lead to improved skills. This is not to say that there are not ways of improving listening skills though they are difficult to enumerate. Students can improve their communications skill by becoming active listeners. By listening to a teacher carefully they can learn ways of effective communication. In *Developing the Fine Art of Listening*, Hal Ritter Jr. and Patricia Wilson (2006) explain that when engaged in active listening, the listener mirrors or reflects the information by re-stating or paraphrasing what the speaker has said, followed by a question to check for the accuracy of what he thought he heard. Such listening behavior greatly reduces miscommunication and errors in perception by clarifying the message and creating common ground. These are some techniques and ways to improve the listening skills:-

- Eliminate distractions and improve your concentration on what is being said. Give 100% Attention: Prove you care by suspending all other activities.
- Locate key words, phrases, and ideas while listening
- Cut through your own listening biases
- Interpret body language clues.
- One of the largest inhibitors for students is often mental block. While listening, a student suddenly decides that he or she doesn't understand what is being said. At this point, many students just tune out or get caught up in an internal dialogue trying to translate a specific word. Some students convince themselves that they are not able to understand spoken English well and create problems for themselves.
- The key to help students improve their listening skills is to convince them that not understanding is OK. This is more of an attitude adjustment than anything else, and it is easier for some students to accept than others.
- Another important point that I try to teach my students (with differing amounts of success) is that they need to listen to English as often as possible, but for short periods of time. Students must not expect improved understanding too quickly.
- Students must have the patience to wait for results. If a student continues this exercise over two to three months their listening comprehension skills will greatly improve.
- They should ask constructive, non-threatening questions that elicit real information if they have any query or any problem.

- Respond: Responses can be both verbal and nonverbal (nods, expressing interest) but must prove you received the message, and more importantly, prove it had an impact on you.
- Get others to listen to you
- Master a whole range of listening skills that they can use on the job and in their personal life
- Speak at approximately with the same energy level as the other person...then they'll know they really got through and don't have to keep repeating.
- Prove understanding: To say "I understand" is not enough. People need some sort of evidence or proof of understanding. Prove your understanding by occasionally restating the gist of their idea or by asking a question which proves you know the main idea.

If a student listens attentively and carefully in the classroom, then he also pays attention to all other non verbal and paralinguistic skills and these skills help him in developing good communicative skills. When he interacts and responds to someone or engages in communication with someone he is always attentive and careful to follow these non verbal, kinesics and paralinguistic features of communication. By using certain tasks, exercises and activities we can make them good listeners and good listeners make good communicators. These two listening activities which I use in my ESL class help them in enhancing their communication skills. Students are divided into four groups and each group is made to listen to a part of the story on a tape recorder, video or T.V. and the next group listen to the other part of the story and after listening the story attentively and carefully, all the four groups are asked to narrate the story in their own words in the class. The other

students then can be asked to frame certain questions on the basis of their listening to the story narrated by their class-mates. Thus the whole class can be engaged in this task and students do find it interesting as each one is involved in some activity or other. Secondly, we can show them a film script, a play or something else and then we can ask them to review it. In my comprehension class again I ask one of the students to read the passage and before reading the passage I discuss the theme, focus and structure of the passage and what is expected from them and thus the purpose of listening is made clear. The students can decide and determine their own strategy and this facilitates learning and later on questions related to vocabulary, content and multiple choices can be framed and asked. This kind of activity promotes literal, interpretive and critical responses from the students. In this way students are motivated and a way for the smooth process from listening to speaking takes place in a natural way. Thus teachers can build up on listening tasks to provide speaking practices.

Listening to and acknowledging other people may seem deceptively simple, but doing it well, particularly when disagreements arise, takes true talent. As with any skill, listening well takes plenty of practice. Listening is hard work: It takes focus and concentration to listen to what someone else is saying. There are few rewards for listening well. The rewards one gets may be subtle, but they are invaluable – like gaining information and felicitating in good oral communicative skills.

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