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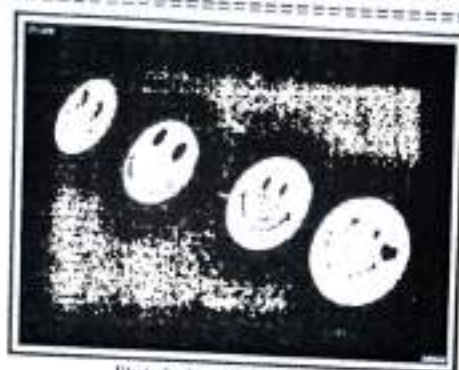


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Language Learning and Teaching

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Editors

Dr. S. D. Sasi Kiran and Dr. Sharada Allamneni

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36. Enhancing Communicative Competence and Need of ICT in English Language Teaching

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Introduction

Today's world is undergoing a rapid change which is caused by globalisation process. The purposes for which people learn English today have also evolved from a cultural and educational enterprise to that of international communication or language of globalisation. This process affects all spheres of knowledge and human activities giving rise to numerous projects concerning language acquisition and language proficiency and highlights the extreme importance of developing communicative competence. The knowledge revolution in the present age, the importance of career purposes and employment opportunities demand a greater need for communication skills. A fair high degree of proficiency in English and excellent Communicative skills enhance students' employability.

Communicative competence: Communication is the cornerstone of language teaching and communication in the exchange of information or ideas. It is an art of expressing a message in a way that allows others to understand. Communicative competence is the ability to communicate in a personally effective and socially appropriate manner. It is a requisite to discuss and learn about all and other concepts. Communicative competence includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence Canale and Swain (1980). And it is a highly topical linguistic term which refers to a language users' grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately. Through the influence of CLT it has become widely accepted that communicative competence should be the goal of any language education central to good classroom practice. The goal of language acquisition is communicative competence: the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish the communication goals.

Grammatical competence: Chomsky calls grammatical competence as linguistic competence and Hymes says what is 'formally possible'. It is the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity. It includes increasing expertise in grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. With regard to speaking, the term mechanics refer to basic sounds of letters and syllabus, pronunciation of words, intonation and stress (Scarcella and Oxford 1992:141). To convey meaning, ESL learners must have the knowledge of words and sentences. They must understand how words are segmented into various sounds, and how sentences are stressed in particular ways. Grammatical competence enables the speaker to use and understand English language structure accurately and unhesitatingly which contributes to their fluency. Grammatical competence is knowledge of the structure and form of a language, some of which include its morphologic, syntactic, phonemic and graphemic features.

Sociolinguistic competence: Sociolinguistic competence refers to an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction. For effective and appropriate use of target language, learners must have competence which involves knowing what is expected socially and culturally by users of the target language. Learners must acquire the

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rules and norms governing the appropriate timing and realisation of speech acts. Learners know what comments are appropriate, how to ask questions during interactions and to respond non verbally according to the purpose of the talk. "Adult second language learner must acquire stylistic adaptability in order to be able to encode and decode the discourse around them correctly" (Brown 1994:238). Sociolinguistic competence focuses in the recognition in accordance of the rules of interaction, taking turns, appropriate greetings, proper use of formal / informal register, naturalness or overall native - like language.

Discourse competence: Discourse competence refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of the meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. ESL learners must develop discourse competence, which is concerned with intersentential relationship. In discourse whether formal or informal rules of cohesion and coherence apply. This aids in holding the communication together in a meaningful way. Both production and comprehension of a language require ones ability to perceive and process stretches of discourse. Effective speakers should acquire a command as structures and discourse markers to express ideas, show relationships of time and indicates cause, contrast and emphasis (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). The knowledge of relationship between and logic across sentences and phrases is characteristic of discourse competence. An individual with strong discourse competence can aptly judge the relationship between different ideas within a text.

Strategic competence: Strategic competence refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. Strategic competence "is the way learners manipulate language in order to meet communicative goals" (Brown 1994:228). This is the most important of all elements of communicative competence. In speaking it refers to ability to know when and how to take the floor, how to keep a conversation going, how to terminate the conversation and how to clear up communication breakdown as well as comprehension problems. It is characterised by the ability to make the most of the language particularly when compensating for language deficiencies.

To access communicative competence and determine a student's growth and skill, world language teachers turn to how communication is defined within the standard. Communicative competence is manifested within the national standard, through the interpretive mode, interpersonal mode and presentation mode of communication. The interpretive mode of communication is characterised by the ability to interpret and understand spoken and written language whereas interpersonal mode of communication describes the ability to maintain, conversation between two or more individuals. The presentation mode of communication is highlighted by information presented through spoken or written language when combined the three modes of communication represents authentic real world communication setting.

Integrated approach: Language is often called a skill rather than a subject which is learnt by constant practice. It is more a matter of doing than of knowing. The two language skills namely listening and reading require less exertion on the part of the learners. These are called receptive skills because when listening or reading, the person is at the receiving end of the communication channel. Speaking and writing on the other hand are active skills. The person is at the transmitting end of the communication channel. These are productive skills, and the skills overlap as language is not an amalgamation of diverse skills but it is one integrated skill. In most

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cases we have to use more than one skill simultaneously. For e.g. if we are engaged in conversation we have to listen and speak. Writing in most languages is representation of speech sounds, which in turn represent the meanings. In early stages, written medium cannot be taught without reference to the spoken medium. Since the learner has to learn language from others, he has to gain language experience first through skills of comprehension, listening and reading before he can learn corresponding expressive skills. The comprehension skills are learnt before expression skills. The written medium is dependent on the spoken medium. Reading also forms a good basis for writing. No skills can be learnt in isolation because they are interrelated and interdependent. What is learnt through one medium can be transferred to the others. The complex nature of language skill shows that teaching of one skill overlaps the other and thus exercise of one skill facilitates the learning of the other skills.

We Indians are not native speakers of English. We use English as a second language. Learning is not as natural to us as it is to the native speaker but an activity in formal classroom teaching. The native speaker of English imbibes the language and becomes familiar with the components of English in the natural process of growing up. For us, learning English is essentially a deliberate effort at developing a command and control of the different components of the language; its phonology, its morphology and its syntax. From the moment of his birth, the native language child is exposed to the sounds of the language. He is thus in contact with these sounds for most of his waking hours. Most of the language he hears is directed at him by other people. Without any conscious effort he learns the essential components of his language. The two significant factors in the process of language acquisition are that the child is exposed to spoken language and that he hears linguistically uncontrolled language. Communicative abilities include language skill. Content-Based Instruction views language as one involving several skills together. Students should be involved in activities that link the skills because this is how the skills are generally involved in real world. Students may read and take notes, listen and write a summary or respond orally to the things they have read or written. Modern approaches like CLT, TBL and CLIL can be incorporated into the pedagogy of the English classroom.

Modern approaches

CLT aims at communicative competence and procedures for teaching the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication. The approach starts from a theory of language as communication. Hymes (1972) referred to communicative competence as the goal of language teaching. Communicative competence is the ability to interact well with others or it is the ability to communicate in personally effective and socially appropriate manner. According to Canale and Swain (1980) it includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Littlewood (1981: 1) states "one of the most characteristic features of CLT is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language". Breen and Candlin say that learners' role in CLT is as negotiator - between the self, the learning process and the object of learning-emerges from and interacts with the role of joint negotiator within the group and interacts within the classroom procedures and activities which the group undertakes (1980:110). The teacher plays the role of a facilitator, participant, researcher, need analyst, counselor and group process manager. Materials are to be text-based and realia.

TBL: Tasks provide input to learners and opportunities for meaningful language use, both of which are generally considered valuable in promoting language acquisition (Swain 1995). In TBL, basic pair work and group work are often used to increase student interaction and collaboration. Structured co-operative learning formats can be used in task-based instruction. This method exposes language learner to authentic language and challenge them to interact naturally in the language. Learners rapidly gain a true picture of richness and complexity of the English language as employed for communication. English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among the people. The approach allows to track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time. Integrity the language skills also promotes the learning of real content, not just the dissection of language forum. The learner plays the role of group participant, monitor, risk taker and innovator and sequencor of tasks, preparing learner for tasks, consciousness-raising etc. TBI proponents favour use of authentic tasks supported by authentic materials, newspapers, television, internet and other sources. This method depends on tasks as the primary sources of pedagogical input in teaching.

CLIL: CLIL refers to an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organised around content information that students will acquire. It is the teaching of content or information in the language being learned with little or no direct or explicit effort to teach the language itself separately from the content being taught (Krahnke 1987:65). Content refers to the substance or subject matter that we learn or communicate through language rather than the language used to convey it. The main principles are people learn a second language more successfully when they use the language as a meaning of acquiring information rather than as an end in itself and CLIL better reflects learners needs for learning a second language CLIL addressees the role of language as vehicle for learning content and it views language use as involving several skills together. Language is used for specific purposes. CLIL addresses the role of language as vehicle for learning content. It views language use as involving several skills together.

Need for ICT

In past days education was only a means of acquiring knowledge rather than for obtaining employment. But in the globalisation scenario education has become an essential prerequisite for employment. The advancements of technology paved a new way for Information and Communication Technology. In recent years the use of those aids especially those related to computers has increasingly become a common feature of the classroom. They perform the vocational and pedagogic roles. ICT is a valuable tool to enhance teaching and learning. For teachers it is a professional resource mode of classroom delivery and a source of valid and valuable text types. For students, ICT provides opportunities to communicate more effectively and to develop literacy skills including skills in critical literacy. It is tool for researching, composing and responding and viewing and representing in English. ICT covers any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically in a digital form. Information is the processed data in a meaningful and purposeful form. Communication is a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. It is the transfer of information from one person to another, whether or not it elicits confidence. Technology is a scientific knowlege of art or skill. ICT can be described as the utility of technology to support to effort of conveying information and communication particularly in the area of education. The technique includes digital technologies such as computer, internet, audio-visual devices, mobile phones, networks, broad band and so on.

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ICT facilitates exposure to authentic language, provides the access to wider sources of information and varieties of language, given the opportunity to people to communicate with the world outside, allows learner - centered approach and develops learners' autonomy. ICT has many benefits for the classroom teacher. Using ICT for presentation enables teachers to show ideas dynamically and deliver content effectively. It signals a shift from the conventional position of power held by the teacher to a more collaborative approach to learn. They allow the teacher to assume the role of facilitator while students take as an increasing responsibility for their learning. Teachers can use a range of teaching tools, such as discussion boards, forums, e-mail raps, videos, e-movies, mobile phones etc. Their use in the English classroom extends beyond its motivational value to address key outcomes of the syllabus and allow students to become competent users as well as consumers in English. Research suggests that incorporating ICT into English curriculum can improve writing and reading skills, develop speaking and listening skills, support collaboration, creativity, independent learning and reflection.

Hartoyo (2008) asserts that ELT has been shaped by search for one best method of teaching language whether focus of instruction has been reading, the grammatical rules and vocabulary of the target language (grammar translating method) speaking (direct method, audio-lingual method. The silent way, suggestopedia communicative approach). The latest method CALL, Computer Assisted Language Learning which is flexible and is supported by experts as it supports the utilisation of ICT in language learning to improve efficiency and effectiveness of learning that can improve the quality of understanding and mastery of the language studied. ICT supports the process of conveying information and communication. The ways of conveying do not have to be carried out directly between the communicator and the communicant. The development of ICT makes the process of communication between the communicator and the communicant in easy way through telephone, internet, email, satellite, television, video conference and so on. ICT has an important role as the media bridging the language process. They help in presentation, practice, authoring, assessment, publishing, communication, simulation etc.

ICT in language context

There are some kinds of technologies classified into information and communication technology commonly used in language context.

Interactive media: It is the integration of digital media including combination of electronic text, graphics, moving images and sound into a structured computerized environment that allows people to interact with data for appropriate purposes - internet, telecoms, and interactive digital television, overhead projectors, audio devices, video devices etc.

CALL: Computers can be utilized with other multimedia learning devices or it can stand alone and still serves. Its basic purpose is as an electronic medium of language learning. They can be used as vehicles for delivering instructional materials to learner for understanding language through spelling and grammar checker, desktop editing programmes. Studies have found positive effect associated with technology aided instruction. The learners can edit and save on written text and e-mail exchanges help to communicate with each other. The learners can conduct activities independently in groups with some support from teachers. They can search sources for learning

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materials. They get meaningful practice in authentic texts and opportunities for progress in language acquisition. Computers facilitate high order of learning skills - problem solving, decision making and critical thinking.

Audio devices: They include speakers, earphones, CD's etc and can be used with other media to form interactive multimedia. Internet can be used as a medium of language through email WWW, text, audio and video and video conferencing. They help to support teachers who don't feel as confident with their own language skills.

Television and video: The teachers need to lead students to an appreciation of video as valuable tool for language learning and help to develop viewing skills. We should make the students focus their eyes, ears and minds on the videos to increase comprehension and recall and add to gain from viewing.

PowerPoint: The learner can understand and learn the application easily the powerpoint especially in learning new terms and vocabulary. It is the easiest tool to draw the attention of all students.

Mobile phones: Internet can be connected to a mobile phone and learner can browse net for picture, information, ppts, reading materials. Mobile dictionary is of a great help. They can captivate beautiful pictures and natural sceneries. Teacher can record or download audio clippings from internet, or movies and play in the classroom.

Interactive white board: An interactive whiteboard is large interactive display which works in conjunction with a computer and a projector. It is an effective way to interact with digital content and multimedia in a multi person learning environment and student centred approach to teach language.

Conclusion

When the grammatical, sociolinguial, discourse and strategic competencies are skillfully compose the result is successful communicative competence in which one can express, interpret and negotiate meaning. Halliday (1973) describes seven basic functions that language performs for children learning their first language, the instrumental function, the regulatory function, the interactional function the personal function, the heuristic function, the imaginative function, the representational function. Learning a second language was similarly viewed by proponents of communicative language teaching as acquiring the linguistic means to perform difficult kinds of functions. These functions embrace all the four primary skills of LSRW as well as associated or relation skills such as knowledge of vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, syntax, meaning and usage. This necessity leads to optimal English as Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) communication when skills are interwoven during instruction. This is known as the integrated skills approach. The two types of integrated skills instruction are content based language instruction are content-based language instruction emphasizing learning content through language and task-based instruction which supports doing tasks that require communication. CLT aims at communicative competence. All these methods benefit from diverse range of materials, text books and technologies that provide integration of LSRW skills and communicative competence. The teacher plays a key role in the success or failure of ICT

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tools in the language classroom. It is the teacher who has to select the authentic materials like, paper cuttings, movies, clippings, commentaries, games and provide chances of achieving the important goals for motivating students' interest, providing realistic practice, stimulating language use and heightening students' awareness of particular language points. Incorporation of ICT tools is best when it is used carefully and intelligently as they make learning interesting, motivating, stimulating and meaningful to the students.

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