

A Need for Attention – In Making Ardent Learners with Interactional Skill

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Language is at the centre of human life . One of the most important ways of expressing our feeling such as our love or our hatred for people is language. Our goals and careers are achieved only through the effective use of the language. Vivian Cook says " it is a source of artistic satisfaction or simple pleasure. we exchange ideas and experiences through language; we identify ourselves with people who speak the same language"(1). Language is to speak and interact. The very purpose of learning a second language is to share our views and ideas to others in the socio cultural setting to which we are accustomed. In the modern world, more people learn English as their second language. "English has become an international commodity like oil and microchip and more than a quarter of the world's people use English; the world has become a global village. English has become for mobility and social and economic success in the world today" says N.Krishnaswamy in his book *English Teaching in India*. The importance of communication skill in English, in the globalized world is realized well by all, even the learners who are from rural background. People around the world speak more than one language for example, in Philippines; people speak Pilipino, their national language, one of the vernaculars and English or Spanish. In countries like Netherland and Israel, most children require to learn one foreign language in their course of study. In this context, India, a multilingual nation requires a second language which is common to all. English has a special place in almost all Indians' life as it has historical associations and has made an impact on cultural life. Therefore, it may not be treated as a foreign language but it could be considered as a second language. Even psycholinguistics studies suggest that people who speak more than one language are more skilful than monolinguals. English is the language of Science and widely accepted language. So learning the language English has become inevitable.

The aim of teaching English to our learners is to make them use English efficiently, that is, they should be able to communicate and develop an ability to understand the basic pattern of the language. As a second language in classrooms, the language is the most important ingredient. In the Indian context, to learn English, only the classroom is the ideal situation. It is the sole factor

so if the teachers do not show attention on organizing language content and interaction, the learners will suffer when they meet real life situation.

The teaching of English in India has been less successful as it is confined and restricted to very small set of social domains. On this ground, the learners' attitudes and attempts in the classroom is an important component in learning the second language. As Bloomfield in *An Introduction to the Study of Language* says, "We have seen that the greatest stimulus toward the development of expressive actions is their emergence into voluntary communicative use. A language is developed in the interchange of messages, and every individual who has learned to use language has learned it through such interchange. The individual's language consequently, is not his creation, but consists of habits adopted in his expressive intercourse with other members of the community"(17). The learners get the second language first from the teacher, second from the teaching materials or the textbooks and third from their peer groups. So the teachers also should take responsibility to impart the patterns of interaction between the teacher and the learner, and also among the learners inside the classroom. The teacher should encourage spontaneous natural interaction in the learners. Opportunities are to be designed for the learners to learn from each other and the learners are to be prepared to perform their own roles in a new language.

Knowing a language does not mean the learning of the phonological, syntactic and semantic rules of a new language, but also learning the ability to make appropriate choices, organising them correctly in variety of contexts and also interpreting them correctly in extra linguistic contexts. The objective of teaching English is to make the learners interact well with their counterparts. English, as Shivendra K Verma rightly points out in his book *Aspects of English Language Teaching*, "an associate official language, and international link language, the language favoured by all Indian institutions, the legal and banking systems, trade and commerce and defence. English has important functions to serve internally - in addition to its role as our 'window on the world'."(111) So English language learners need greater proficiency in the skills of listening, writing, reading, perhaps more effort should be shown on speaking in English. It includes interactional skill also.

Learning a language does not end in writing the language but speaking the language. To become a good speaker it is must to be a good communicator. To speak a language, it is very much essential to know the differences between knowledge about a language and skill in using it; that is knowledge is understanding and the skill is practicing. In the context of learning a

language, it is not enough to gain knowledge about the language but to know how to use it skilfully or efficiently.

Learning and using of the language do not stop in a point. But it involves the learners adapt to the circumstances. The skill to adapt the language to situations needs continuous practice. The learners should get themselves trained not only in understanding the language but also in recalling and articulating in the correct form at the right time. The learners should always create situations to use the language and what they have learnt, without any hesitation by themselves or with the help of the teachers. This situation could be created in the classroom where the teacher becomes a moderator. The instructor sometimes becomes mere observer and it is necessary to draw the classroom from teacher centred classroom to learner centred classroom.

In the Indian context, most of the cases, in the classrooms have ethnic group of learners. Thereby bringing the students under one particular aspect is very difficult but it is important that the teacher should identify the requirements of the various groups of learners and try to give them relevant to the need of the learners. Special chances are to be made to help the slow learners to acquire an adequate competence in the new language and for upward social mobility. So practices meant for interactions could be started with simple exercises. The learners need to be told and trained in participatory competences. They should be made to get involved themselves with the activities prepared for them. Exposure to carefully controlled language activities in the classroom will be the great opportunities for the learners. This will make possible for them to speak the language by imitating the teacher and those others who speak the language. By applying the principle of opinion gap exercises that is exercises incorporating controversial texts or ideas, which require participant to describe and perhaps defend their views on these ideas, learning process will be more effective if the learners are actively involved in the process. Perhaps they will make mistakes in the beginning, but these mistakes will enable the learners to learn more.

Learning the language is not the subject to read for the students, rather it could be a learning activity for the better performance. Students at the present scenario have become print lazy, their reading habit become less as they are very much engaged in media based entertainment. So they could be asked to read aloud in the classroom and their peers could be made to listen to make the learners better readers. Activities like making and performing dialogues, enacting skits, interviewing, solving problems, asking and answering questions, reading aloud the newspaper articles or any interesting items, sales talk, reciting poems or any literary pieces, storytelling, group discussions, narrating the incidents, describing - things,

pictures, places, etc., could help the learners to overcome their inhibitions in using the second language. When it becomes the regular practice in the English classroom, the learners will be highly motivated to use the new language.

Most of the learners isolate themselves in the classroom, as they feel inferior to others. They get afraid of others those who use the language fluently. They understand the language but when they try to talk, they shiver and stumble. Their palpitation increases and they feel as if they are humiliated and neglected. The rationale behind this is not having been given enough practice in the use of language. Small group provide greater intensity of involvement so that the quality of language practice is increased and opportunities for feedback and monitoring also increases when given adequate guidance and preparation by the teacher..." classroom setting also plays a vital role

Most of the learners get stressed themselves when they are asked to perform in the larger group. They show less interest in public performances. Paul Verghese in his book *Teaching English as a second language* says " In India English is taught as a second language in schools and colleges for five or six hours in a week. Perhaps the duration is hardly adequate ; also the courses are spread over years..." and also he brings the truth as "a class consisting of forty or thereabouts becomes unwisely, and no individual attention can be paid to the students, so to give them desired impact." In this situation, for giving them enough practice for oral communication, there are possible ways to make the group divided into dyads (pairs), triads group of four , groups of six, group of ten, half the class and sometimes the whole class.

The trainer should keep in mind that the learners' age and their necessity for learning while training them. So that the level of interest could be increased and their need could be fulfilled. If so, they will observe the things taking place, hesitate and rehearse themselves in the beginning but at a later stage, they will come forward to participate in the activities. Thereby they will carry the skill from inside the classroom to the outside world and finally they will present it and utilize the language in the real life situations. Thus practices which a teacher gives in the classroom will help them in many ways to improve their interactional skill.

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