
Chapter 3

SKILLS' DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

Globalization has made the job market very competitive. The prospective job seekers are either finding it tough to secure a good, sustainable job or they are not fit to be employed. Three key factors that render the youth unemployable are lack of knowledge, very poor cognitive skills and very poor communication skills. Certainly, people with good communication skills are in an advantageous position. Lack of communication skills will certainly make them lose out on important opportunities. Thus, training of learners in communication skills is essential not only in terms of communicative competence, but also for a better understanding of the core subjects. Therefore, the job of teachers of English is really challenging and demanding. ELT has to operate within the framework of developing communicative and linguistic competence and critical thinking (cognitive) of the learners.

Teaching English to speakers of other languages (in the Indian context) can be viewed in many ways. The pedagogical perspective of teaching various language skills is one of the key areas of concern. The four primary skills of English language, that is, Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing need to be taught in an integrated and holistic manner so that the desired communicative competence of learners may be effectively achieved.

3.2 Language Skills

3.2.1 Listening

Listening is both a skill (planned and conscious effort to learn something over a stipulated period of time) and an art (practiced out of interest and mastered spontaneously, regardless of timeframe). Listening in English means to be able to attend to and interpret oral English. The student first carefully listens to the spoken word or conversation, then divides into parts all that he hears, makes word groups, phrases, and sentences and then he tries to comprehend or understand what he has heard. Listening is an activity that helps the learner to comprehend the speech of the native speaker of English as they speak in a natural manner at a normal speed.

Research shows that on an average almost half of our time we spend is in listening to people through mediums like television, films, documentaries, lectures and so on. The rate of speaking amongst human beings is almost one fourth to that of listening. If we speak two words in a second, we at least listen to eight words at the same time. This in itself proves that listening certainly is easier than speaking. What is needed is that we must fine tune our ability to listen and listen carefully so that it becomes more than mere hearing and is able to serve a communicative purpose. Listening is a very important aspect of developing communication skills. Forty-five per cent of our time is spent on listening to someone or something. This shows that listening is easier than speaking provided we employ our skills usefully to achieve better communicative efficacy. While listening to the speaker, it is also crucial to be observant of his body language, his gestures, his posture, and mannerisms because these also provide an insight into the intentions of the speaker. Listening comes prior to any other language skill that we acquire in our lifetime. It offers a firm foundation for all other skills that will follow. It

enables an individual for making fruitful contributions in life. Words and sentences are received, processed and absorbed by the brain. It also initiates a grip on ideas and thoughts; facts and meaning. However, concentration and alertness are the key words while listening. And the mind easily can get diverted. A non- receptive, prejudiced mind is the greatest obstacle that can hinder listening. There is a clear demarcation between hearing and listening. While hearing is a superficial exercise, listening asks for greater attention. This attention alone leads to picking up the language rapidly and gaining hold of speaking as a skill. There are certain techniques which enable the learner to develop the skill of sensible listening:

Sub Skills of Listening

There are some sub skills of listening which need to be taught to the learners.

- Prediction- to foresee the speech of the speaker depending on what the context is.
- Guessing – to guess the meaning of difficult words through listening.
- Skimming - to do a mental revision of the oral message in order to grasp the central idea.
- Scanning - to scrutinize the oral message and to reach the core idea.
- Discovering the speaker's point of view – a keen listener will try to decipher the speaker's attitude and gather ideas from the oral message.
- Utilizing the context- Good listeners are able to make out or guess the new words and structures depending on the listening text.

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- To be able to discriminate - To get the accurate message out of the oral message; listener needs to be able to discriminate between the English sounds, stress and intonation patterns.

Teaching Listening

i) Bottom-up Approach

In this approach, learners make use of their knowledge of language to identify the linguistic patterns starting from the phoneme which is the smallest unit that is at the bottom of the whole text which is the largest element and is placed at the top. The listener is dependent on the input alone to infer the meaning of the message or the text.

Bottom-up strategies:

- a. listening for important words or messages
- b. recognizing cognates
- c. recognizing individual phonemes
- d. recognizing phoneme sequences which form words
- e. recognizing word-order patterns
- f. recognizing prefixes, roots, and suffixes
- g. recognizing stressed syllables
- h. recognizing intonation contours.

ii) Top-down Approach

The top-down approach is based on the listeners' background knowledge of the topic, the situations, contexts, texts, phrases, and sentences spoken by a speaker. The listener reconstructs the meaning using the sounds as clues and comprehends what he hears. This prior knowledge helps the listener to know what to expect from the speaker, to understand the speech and to expect what comes next.

Top-down strategies:

- a. Listening for the core idea
- b. Guessing
- c. Drawing conclusions
- d. Summarizing
- e. Distinguishing fact from opinion
- g. Interpreting tone.

The teacher should be judicious while selecting, listening strategies and use either /both, depending on the classroom situation.

Barriers to Listening

Listening is different from hearing and it has to do with more than just listening to the words uttered. It is an art and a skill where only practice leads to perfection. There are many hindrances that block listening and a keen listener has to overcome these in order to become an effective listener. The barriers to effective listening are:

- **Multitasking while listening:** We are not likely to grasp the spoken word if we multitask or communicate with more people at the same time for e.g., watching

television and working on the laptop at the same time or talking to someone on the phone and simultaneously talking to another.

- **Biases and Prejudices:** Personal prejudices do affect listening to a great deal. Our liking or disliking of the speaker has a huge impact on the process of listening. We might just not pay attention or be receptive to the words of someone we don't like.
- **Feeling drained or sick:** We cannot concentrate when we feel physically or mentally drained out and therefore don't listen to the speaker fully.
- **Lack of empathy:** Listening for the sake of it and not really absorbing the spoken word also hinders the process of listening
- **Prejudice against the speaker:** This could be on the basis of caste, creed, religion, gender and so on.
- **Preconceived notions:** One has to be open minded and receptive to the ideas and views of the speaker irrespective of whether we agree with them or not. Preconceived prejudices or opinions about the speaker will hamper an unbiased listening process.
- **Previous experiences:** We respond to people based on our personal experience with them which could be unpleasant or biased. This would again be a hurdle in making a true assessment of the spoken word. We cannot hold an objective view in such a case.

Making Listening Comprehensive

Mark Twain once said, “If we were supposed to talk more than we listen, we would have two tongues and one ear”.

It is important to listen to what is unsaid more than what is being said. This is called listening between the lines and a good listener will do just that. And for doing this a listener also has to be a keen observer who can gauge the body language of the speaker along with being able to fill the gaps between what is said and what is left unsaid. A good listener will also keenly and intently listen to the speaker without overriding the conversation or interrupting him. But, of course, he might seek clarifications regarding whether he has understood the matter well enough. For the listening process to be effective and comprehensive; one could remember the following points.

Gear up for listening

One should be ready to give the speaker undivided attention and focus on his speech instead of being carried away by distracting thoughts.

Making the speaker comfortable

The speakers need to be made comfortable, be given the freedom to express themselves fully, be listened to attentively and to be received with an open mind.

Saying no to distractions

Any activity that obstructs the process of listening or distracts the speaker or the listener should be avoided. Lack of focus, sullen expression, fidgeting with pen and paper etc can make the speaker uncomfortable.

To understand the speaker's viewpoint

One should display a receptive frame of mind and understand the opinion of the speaker. The attitude should be of acceptance even if one has a separate point of view. One can always logically and peacefully argue or counter the speaker's point of view if not in sync with it.

To display patience

A good listener must have the patience to listen to the speaker till he is done with his speech. If there are pauses in his speech, one should give the speaker time to manufacture his sentences.

Impartiality

A good listener is the one who is totally unbiased and does not form an opinion impulsively. Some people might take more time than others to complete their point. One must show enough patience and thoughtfulness in listening to such speakers. What is spoken should be of more consequence than how it is spoken.

To have knowledge of proper stress and intonation

A good listener will look for the real gist of the talk. He should be able to identify the stress and intonation used by the speaker to define his point. Different levels of volume, pitch and so on will identify the flow of the conversation which a good listener should be able to pick up.

To be able to pick out the crux of the talk

One should be able to sift the chaff from the grain. The core idea is more important.

Words in themselves carry no meaning, but the context has to be well understood.

Nonverbal medium

There can be various other mediums than the spoken word which carries a lot of significance for the listener. Hand movement, facial expressions, gestures, eye movements are some of these. All of these sometimes convey better than words. A good listener keenly pays attention to this aspect.

Effective Methods of Teaching Listening

- **Story-based Method:** Listening can be taught in many ways. It is up to the teachers about how they frame their teaching activities. The textbook might not have many activities. The teachers could make use of the art of story-telling and could relate tales from our folk lore in order to make the students interested. They can give the student the opportunity to guess what would happen next and encourage the student to use his or her imagination.
- **Task-based Method:** In task-based teaching, there are certain tasks given by the teacher to the students. The tasks could be of various kinds like listening to the text carefully and then fill up the gaps or label a diagram based on it or make a table noting down the main points. If the learners are able to perform these tasks successfully, there is a reason to believe that the lesson or task has been successful.

In classrooms where English is taught as a foreign language or a second language, students are not directly taught listening but are given practice in listening. There are many types of research and experiments conducted and authenticated, which teach us how to impart the teaching of listening, but sadly these are never really practiced or made a part of the teaching technique. In fact, the skill of listening should be imparted by breaking it into micro skills which would enable the students to understand language in a more effective manner.

Integrating Metacognitive Strategies

- **Pre-listening:** At this stage, the specific purpose of listening is decided depending on the linguistic or background knowledge of the learner. Also, it is considered whether to adopt the top-down approach or bottom-up approach while approaching a text.
- **While-listening:** At this stage, predictions are verified, inaccurate guesses are checked, relevant and irrelevant content is segregated and reviewed. To check this, comprehension exercises may be carried out.
- **Post-listening:** At this stage listening comprehension in a particular area is evaluated and the efficacy of the strategies used is taken into account.

Stages in Teaching Listening

Pre-listening: A few of the activities done at this stage are:

The teacher would provide background information of the selected area of study, the students read something relevant to the topic to be discussed, the learners are exposed to presentations, pictures, graphs, slides, etc. for related information, discussion on the

topic by learners followed by a question-answer session, filling questionnaires, learners trying to draw their own inferences regarding the topic, to figure out the relevance of the title, the teacher helping them to an extent about the text and its purpose. All of these enable the student to concentrate on the gist of the spoken piece and to focus and pay attention.

While-listening and Post-listening:

- **Pictures depicting stories:** In such an activity various slides or pictures are given or shown to the learners and they are told to listen to a story which could either be narrated by the teacher or through a technical medium. The learner will be required to identify and relate the proper slide to the story and in the correct sequence. Or else they could be asked to construct a story based on mixing and matching the slides given to them. This would also tap their imaginative skills
- **Arranging of jumbled pictures/slides:** A number of pictures or slides could be given to the learner and he would arrange them in order after listening to the story.
- **Action based activity:** This could be a simple but fun filled exercise where the student has to listen carefully to what the teacher has to say and to carry out the activity suggested. The teacher will take care that the activity suggested is not monotonous. This will do well in enhancing their listening as well as comprehension skills.
- **Learning to listen to and follow directions and to understand a map:** In this interesting activity, let the listeners listen attentively to the directions given by the

speaker about how to decipher and follow a road map. The map could cover a specified small area having names of roads which are easily readable or recognizable. After the learners gain expertise in reading these kinds of maps, they can move on to the next level where more complex maps can be presented to them which could include maps pertaining to geography, maps which determine the way to hospital, school, market, railway station, airport etc. They can further graduate to understanding how to read directions, how to understand biological diagrams, how to read and understand the diagram of circulatory system in our body to cite an example.

- **Information gap activities:** A wide-range of information gap activities can be developed where the learner picks up information from the text and uses it to do exercises such as completing tables, fill up the gaps, making charts and completing the sentences.
- **Enlisting:** Making lists forms a very interesting activity. It could be making shopping lists or making an itinerary.
- **True or False:** This is the most common listening comprehension exercise. It could be planned in two ways. It could be either opinion based or fact based. Later a discussion could follow.
- **Multiple-choice questions:** Reading the questions by the student and then listening to them carefully when spoken by the teacher will enable the learner to mark his choice judiciously. This could be done both at while-listening and post-listening stage.

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- **Text completion exercises:** In this kind of an exercise, learners would take a good time reading the text, listening will follow and then there will be exercises pertaining to the text which could be in the form of gap filling. This develops the skill of listening and also will improve pronunciation.
 - **Stories:** Stories could constitute real life stories, true incidents like news items, or fictional stories. These stories provide valid and interesting material for various exercises.
 - **Identifying errors:** In this activity, the speaker intentionally makes mistakes while talking about the picture or the text which is already given to the learner. And the student is expected to identify or spot the error. This is one of the interesting activities which keep the learner completely involved.
 - **Seeking specific items of information:** Mostly, all while-listening activities require students to seek bits of information (weather forecast, news bulletin, debate, etc.) with the objective of finding some previous information for a specific purpose. For e.g., the students may watch National Geographic Channel or Discovery Channel to know about the flora and fauna; their habitat and survival techniques. The facilitator then can ask pointed questions based on the specific theme of the episode. The learner will now be required to sift the relevant from the irrelevant in this while- learning exercise.
 - **Comprehension Exercises:** This activity can be done by making notes by the learners while they are at the while- listening stage or else can bank upon their memory. Generally, a story is or can be used as a reference text by the virtue of

being easy to remember. Questions can be put to the students based on it which they would attempt to answer.

- **Jigsaw listening:** This kind of activity entails dividing the students into small groups. Each of the groups is given a different listening text preserving the sameness of the topic. The inferences or the responses are then matched and the complete story is built.

It was observed during the survey that listening activities are neither administered in the classrooms nor examined as part of assessment (barring a few institutions). A few of the sample listening exercises are attached as appendices, which may be of good use while teaching while- listening skills at various levels including the undergraduate level.

3.2.2 Reading

Reading can be defined as the process in which the learner unfolds the meaning or rather varied meanings hidden in a text. He understands the written words and peels off the myriad layers of meaning which might be lying latent. It depends upon how the text is perceived, absorbed, interpreted, decoded, evaluated and finally presented after all the reasoning and organizing of thoughts is done. It is basically done with the purpose of grasping the meaning of the written text. It involves not just the apparent or written meaning but also the one which lies between the lines. This could be largely dependent on the circumstances, mood, background, state of mind etc of the author.

“The goal of all reading is the comprehension of meaning. Effective reading includes not only a literal comprehension of an author's word but also an interpretation of his mood, tone, feeling, and attitude.” (Dechant and Smith, 1977, P. 237)

According to Gray (1967) when people read something they understand it at three levels. First, the purely literal responding to the graphic signals only with little depth of understanding, the second level at which the reader recognizes the author's meaning, and the third level where the reader's own personal experiences and judgments influence his response to the text. These three levels can be summarized as “Reading the lines, Reading between the lines and reading beyond the lines.”

Reading with a purpose

Reading is an activity with a definite intent. Earlier it was considered that reading essentially entails gaining knowledge and insight into the literature of the language concerned. Therefore, when syllabuses would be drafted, the reading texts would be the literary texts of the language in question which would give a peek into the culture and traditions of the country it belonged to. Reading actually serves many more purposes. It is either indulged in for the sake of collecting information, to attain knowledge, to verify and widen the present knowledge, to appreciate or critique the writer's writing style, for pleasure, for learning and so on. Now the choice of the reading text depends entirely upon what the purpose of reading is for the learner. It also defines the desired or chosen approach which one might undertake. A person reading for the sheer pleasure of enjoying the beauty of language might just be tickled by the choice, use, and play of words. A

person approaching the text for only knowledge might not care much for the aesthetics of language but might just look for the core information that he is seeking. A scientist might not bother about grammar or literariness of the text but would only look for the core concerns. Therefore, unknowingly there is a great relation formed between the reader and the text he is reading. This alone would foster comprehension of the chosen text. A text is a medley of letters, words, sentences, paragraphs, etc. that carry a meaning. But this meaning could be different for different people depending on their perception, knowledge, understanding, skills, and strategies employed for understanding the meaning of it. This ushers comprehension of the text. Therefore, reading the text alone is not sufficient to comprehend it. True reading happens when the reader employs the correct and desired approach for evaluating different texts. One kind of strategy might not be fitting enough for various purposes of reading.

CLT and Reading

The communicative approach to language teaching has turned the tables against the traditional approaches, methods and teaching methodologies followed. It has rendered teachers a completely different perspective on the role of reading in the classrooms and also the kind of reading material that can be chosen. When there is a complete role reversal of what the purpose of language instruction should be and here we are talking about communicative efficacy; the classroom instruction material also has to be realistic than far- fetched. Railway timetables, newspaper reports, and articles, websites on tourism etc. should constitute reading materials in the classrooms to introduce the learner how to operate in the world of reality. This should be firmly followed by a lot of practice.

Qualities of an Effective Reader

1. He should be a voracious reader.
2. He should have the skill of linking knowledge available in the text with knowledge that he possesses.
3. He should be flexible, should have an open mind and should not be limited by prejudices.
4. He should be motivated and stimulated enough
5. He should be clear in purpose for every reading has a functional value.

Reading serves various competencies

- **Linguistic competence:** refers to the knowledge of the syntax, vocabulary, grammar, structures and other elements of language.
- **Discourse competence:** knowledge of discourse markers and the role they play in connecting the entire text or speech.
- **Sociolinguistic competence:** knowledge about the variety of texts and their content, pattern, and structure.
- **Strategic competence:** to make a judicious use of top-down strategies as well as bottom-up strategies as and when required.

Types of Reading

Reading aloud

Reading aloud polishes pronunciation but does not help much with comprehension. The “real-life” purpose of reading aloud to others is to convey information to them, to

entertain them, or to share a good story that they do not have (Zintz and Maggaut, 1989, P. 425).

Silent reading

Silent reading is considered to be more comprehension friendly. It gives enough time to the reader to assimilate information and helps in comprehension. Silent reading should be a process of association between perceptual stimulation and meaning. Silent reading focuses on comprehension based on background information, some visual data, and predicting and confirming strategies.

Factors that influence reading

There are a number of academic factors responsible for causing difficulty in reading.

- i) The complex and exhaustive curriculum does not leave any scope for the teacher to pay individual attention to every child.
- ii) Uninteresting and insipid teaching learning techniques.
- iii) Classroom activities and reading programs might not be linked.
- iv) Misplaced concentration on the reading skills poses an obstacle for effective reading.
- v) More than required emphasis and analysis of phonetics causes obstruction in the smooth reading process.

There are factors for which teachers are also sometimes held responsible. "Reading is a complex process made of many interrelated skills and abilities. Success in teaching children to read depends on the teacher. The teacher who is inept because of poor training, lack of experience or a slavish devotion to inflexible routine, is unable to adjust reading instruction to the varied needs of the students "(Guy L. Bond et al., 1989, P. 86.s)

Teaching Reading

Teachers should be able to train students in such a way that even if they find themselves not at ease with grammar and other syntactic concerns, they can get away smoothly with communicative challenges when faced with. With regard to reading, this means, nurturing students and equipping them to make use of reading tactics which can make them understand the crux of the text while being able to point out important information. They should be able to reject irrelevant stuff and not need a word to word comprehension of the text. Teachers can really make this skill effective by stimulating the learner by soliciting full participation from them, by deploying interesting reading strategies and by instilling confidence in them. They can teach them how to combat complicated communicative challenges and situations outside the class. This way a teacher can be a great facilitator.

Stages of Reading

Teaching the art of reading or imparting reading tactics is not an extra or an unimportant activity but an integral and core concern of a language classroom. It is the duty of the instructor to impart these strategies to the learners and help them become efficient and effective readers. These activities entail before, during and after reading strategies.

Pre- Reading strategies

- To decide in advance which text has to be taken up and for what purpose.
- To decide how much linguistic efficiency is needed to comprehend the text.
- To decide which approach to follow while taking up the test; top down or bottom up.

Pre-Reading Activities

- To be able to predict the core content of the text; the way it is organized, presented and sequenced by understanding the heading, sub headings and compartments within the text.
- To know how to view and read visuals, drawings, maps, or graphs and decipher their captions.
- Gaining an insight into the writer's background, his ideology, perceptions, philosophy, style of writing and so on.
- To be able to skim through the text to dig into the main idea and using the learner's prior knowledge.
- To study vocabulary, word forms, and structures.
- Making use of comprehension exercises to hit upon the crux and other information on the narrative.
- To make vocabulary and other grammar related flow charts and tables to understand the content better.
- Doing guided exercises given at the end of the text.

Pre-reading activities form an important basis to acquire efficiency in language at the primary level and at the nascent stages of foreign language learning. As and when learners start moving ahead and become more proficient in using the above-mentioned strategies, the teacher can lessen the guided teaching approach and allow the learner to move further independently.

While Reading

- Verify predictions and check for inaccurate guesses
- Understanding explicitly stated information
- Inferring facts from given information
- Critical reaction on the subject
- Being able to take out the relevant and leave the irrelevant
- Read and reread to check comprehension.
- Be ready to seek assistance.

Post Reading

- Evaluation exercises on comprehension.
- To assess overall progress in a particular task undertaken.
- Conduct a check on all the strategies employed to carry through the task and examine their efficacy and success rate.
- Ready to change or alter the strategies employed if needed.
- To ascertain and review the objectives.

The learners at this stage can be asked:

1. To think of a similar situation.

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2. To say whether they agree with the view of the author.
 3. To suggest solutions to the problems raised in the text.
 4. To express opinion on the content of the text.

3.2.3 Writing

Writing is an important language skill which becomes an instrument of conveying ideas, expressing opinions, sharing information, giving out instructions, storing knowledge and so on. It is much more than just the grammar of the matter, the spelling concerns or the organizational concerns regarding subject matter. It is certainly more than that.

Following are some well-known definitions and opinions of noted theorists on the skill of writing:

Lindemann (1987) calls writing an economic power because it creates impressions, adverse or otherwise, in one's professional field. In addition, it is a social necessity because it is an established form of communication. No transaction is considered official until it is done in writing.

In the words of Byrne (1979), writing comprises the use of graphic symbols or letters to form words which are arranged in a particular order and linked together to form sentences. It is essentially a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the topic area and to organize background knowledge. So, writing practice is extremely important.

In this regard, Raimes (1984) opines that teaching writing helps to reinforce the grammatical structures, idioms, vocabulary, etc., which are taught to learners. Teaching writing also helps the learners to be adventurous and creative.

Writing is a means of thinking, a method of developing ideas and fleshing them out on paper. Writing is not just communicating a message by putting it on paper, but it is a means to think effectively, use words, improve ideas etc.

Writing is undeniably an indispensable medium and fulfills varied purposes. It makes its presence in a person's daily life like academic, social, official, cultural and various others and cannot be alienated from it. All major communication happens through the medium of writing. Whether it is personal correspondence, writing messages, emails, telephonic chatting, writing reports, circulars, articles, newspapers; all require the medium of writing. Without this skill, all business of the modern world would come to a standstill. And now with a globalized economy and other international concerns, it is imperative to master the skill of writing in English with its ever-increasing importance in daily life. For academic purposes too, the importance of English is unchallenged. We need English for accessing journals, writing assignments, taking exams and so on. All formal communication takes place only in English whether it is conducting written interviews, writing medical reports, recording minutes of meetings or any other technical functions. There is a full-fledged job market for people proficient in this skill. Publications require content writers, editors and technical writers, etc. All other skills of the language like grammar, vocabulary, structure and syntax etcetera, are automatically taken care of with the development of the skill of writing. The teaching of this skill greatly enhances the capabilities of the learner both inside and outside the classroom. This confirms the status of writing as an important skill to be acquired.

Writing as a complex language skill

Writing is certainly a difficult skill to acquire since it needs a lot of mental effort on behalf of the writer. He has to focus both on production as well as organization of ideas. It is a difficult task because it is a single act. It is perhaps most demanding and difficult skills to acquire. It requires consistent, persistent and deliberate effort. It has to be worked upon and cultivated with patience and perseverance. It does not come naturally like listening and speaking. Even for those who are proficient in the language or are native speakers, it doesn't come easy. It has to be consciously acquired and is not spontaneous.

Writing is an individual act and requires more labor than speaking. It is also bound by certain rules and regulations. It is a prone to errors too. The speaker has the liberty to present his speech in his own way, which might not be structured. He is not bound by any standard yardstick of pronunciation, or a certain model of speech. He doesn't have to bother about spelling or lexicon or perfection while writing has to conform to boundaries and fixed patterns. It is essentially a developmental and painstaking process like reading.

We can view writing from four perspectives: Mechanics, emphasized in the low beginner stages (beginning); Extended Use of Language, emphasized in the high beginner and low intermediate stages (Elementary); Writing with Purpose, emphasized in the high intermediate and low advanced stages (intermediate); and Full Expository Prose, emphasized in the terminal stage (advanced) (Bowen 1985).

Approaches to teaching writing can be classified into five types: controlled to free, free writing, paragraph pattern, grammar-syntax-organization, communicative, and process approaches (Raimes 1983).

In the controlled to free approach, the students move up from first attempting to do sentence exercises, followed by paragraphs and grammar exercises for e.g., singular, plural, modals, gender, changing the sentences from questions to statements etcetera.

In the free writing approach, students are asked to write on any topic with abandon, not worrying about the grammar, spelling, syntax, etc. These pieces are not corrected by the teacher; the student is at the liberty to express himself freely.

In the paragraph pattern approach, students are given passages to copy, analyze their form and imitate idea or sample paragraphs. This exercise involves exercises such as rearranging jumbled sentences and threading them into a paragraph, insertion, and deletion of sentences, identification of generic statements and so on.

In the communicative approach to writing, students take on the role of writers writing for an audience who would read their composition. The other students are given the liberty to modify, make alterations or make the piece more viable, so as to serve a communicative purpose.

In the process approach to writing, students shift from the written product of the process of writing. They ask ‘not only questions about purpose and audience, but also the crucial questions: How do I write this? How do I get started?’ (Raimes 1983).

However, the right mix or amalgamation of these approaches will do the trick and make the entire exercise successful. A beginner or a child will have to start learning to write from a scratch, which will require the knowledge of motor skills, about left to right orientation and other basic introductory concepts. This will further graduate to copying words and sentences, speed up writing, listing objects in pictures, drawing, and labeling

etc. And then at a slightly higher level, this would include making to-do lists, making topical vocabulary lists, knowing antonyms, synonyms, making personal shopping lists, framing study time- tables etc.

Types of writing:

Generally, the learners write one of the following types of writing and the related purposes:

- a. Descriptive: writing about inanimate objects, human behavior, events, discussions, people etc.
- b. Narrative: establishing connection between events and incidents.
- c. Expository: giving an exposure of the topic.
- d. Argumentative: expressing a viewpoint.
- e. Reflective: pondering on issues and happenings that have taken place.
- f. Persuasive: coaxing the readers to change their perspective.
- g. Interpretative: presenting the perspective of the writer on the concerned subject.

Teaching writing involves the following strategies:

- a. Guided writing: most of the learners shall be engaged in guided writing unless they are very good. It contributes to the mastery of constructing basic structures and development of ideas.
- b. Free writing: in case the learners are very good, we can use free writing where they decide what and how of writing. Free writing develops creativity.

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- c. Developing content (what): through classroom methodology, paragraph writing can be developed through hints. It can follow the sequence: class brain storming session, thinking all possible points, noting the points on blackboard, and sequencing. The discussion could be started using articles, essays, illustrations cartoons etc.
- d. Developing the technique of writing (how)

Stages of Writing

- Brainstorming (reflecting on every aspect of the topic).
- Note making.
- Organizing the topic.
- Drafting (writing a piece which is open to changes till it gets finished).
- Editing (proof reading and improvising the piece).
- Redrafting
- Final check (looking for errors if any).

Since Indian education system is examination oriented, learners are habitual of writing in their examinations, which necessarily does not make them good writers. Once a learner is asked to write in actual real life context he/ she may not be able to produce a good piece of writing. It could be devoid of cohesion and coherence. In order to inculcate the habit of writing effectively, the learner shall be engaged in natural forms of writing integrated with critical thinking.

Encouraging Writing

There are some simple uncomplicated techniques which the teacher can make use of to encourage learners to write. To paraphrase a given text, to write a summary, to frame questions pertaining to the text, to offer a critique on the piece of writing are some of the examples. Learners can also be made more equipped if they are given the liberty to choose which of their compositions they would like the teacher to assess and evaluate. The flow of comments coming from the teacher should be inspiring and motivating showing appreciation for the write-up. This would keep their interest intact and their attempts continuous.

3.2.4 Speaking

Being one of the productive skills of language, speaking is considered to be the most important skill and the benchmark of language use by any learner. The speaker is expected to:

- Assess the situation.
- Decide about what would constitute his speech.
- Choose his words and sentences.
- Making a correct and flawless speech by following the phonic and structural norms of the language.

Speaking cannot be considered to be merely an oral activity. It is the outcome of integration of various sub skills which could be as following:

- Speaking and pronunciation
- Speaking and meaning

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- Speaking and completeness
 - Speaking and interference
 - Speaking and style
 - Speaking and voice modulations
 - Speaking and gestures
 - Speaking and coherence

Speaking Activities

- A series of pictures may be given which describe a story but not in its natural chronological sequence. The learner would be expected to build a visual in the mind taking help from the given pictures and then construct a logical and cohesive composition.
- Different random words could be given to the learners and they would be asked to use them and construct a story.
- A multitude of topics like planning an excursion, giving and asking for directions, relating a conversation or an experience may be given for speaking in the class. The students can be asked to use devices such as description, gestures, use of speech, illustrations, pictorial representations, use of idioms and phrases, use of modals, determiners, proper stress and intonation etc. as is suitable to the topic to construct his speech. The speech activity should constantly be assessed and monitored by the teacher. It becomes the duty of the teacher to see whether the student is making use of all the components of speech appropriately and correctly. This should be followed up by regular practice sessions.

Development of Speaking Skill

The speaking skill can be developed by following two approaches:

1. Learning language as a skill in the classroom. This involves three aspects:

- The learner should be able to make a mental plan about how to execute his speech.
- The learner shall practice converting the mental plans into actual behavior in terms of pronouncing new sounds, selecting vocabulary items, producing grammatical structures and managing the interactive sessions.
- The learners must be able to express his ideas coherently and lucidly. He should also be equipped to take part in the discussions that ensue.

2. The natural process of developing spoken skills through exposure and use. It involves the following:

- There must be enough exposure to the language in question which can be imparted through teaching correct pronunciation, keeping a steady pace, employing simpler structures and using commonplace vocabulary.
- Discussions and interactions.
- Motivation to the learner by emphasizing the importance of English for communication in today's world.

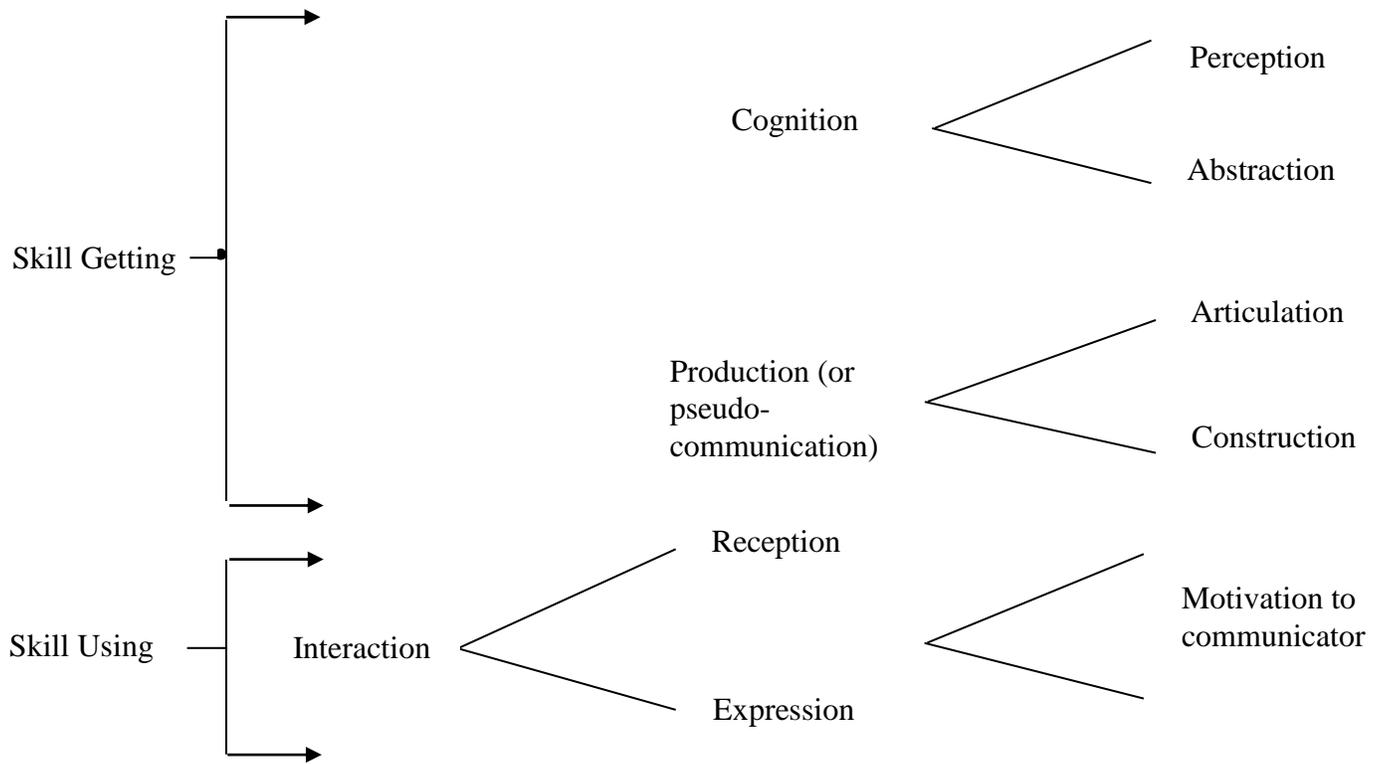


Figure 1

Skill – Learning Model (Rivers, 1983:43)

Assessing speaking skill

Besides teaching effective speaking skill, the teacher of English has to be equipped with an appropriate mechanism to test the speaking skill of learners. There are numerous ways of assessing speaking skill but Bird and Dennison (1987) have suggested a four point scale which involves:

- Pronunciation, use of vocabulary and fluency is such that virtually no communication takes place.
- Limited task response because of incomplete sentences and inadequate resort to English
- Good task response. Despite some inaccuracy in pronunciation and grammar; basic communication takes place
- Very good response to the task, good pronunciation, and accuracy of grammar, appropriate expression, fluency, ability to take initiative beyond basic response.

Besides the above model assessment criteria, the speaking format devised by the researcher is enclosed as an appendix.

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