Linguistic Skills vs Communicative Competence: Insights on Use of ICT

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Abstract: **Linguistic Skills and Communicative competence are two integral aspects of Language learning. Generally it is taken for granted that the knowledge of the previous entails the later. But the research has found that it is not the case. The knowledge of linguistic skills does not necessarily result in good communicative competence. On the contrary the ability to communicate (though by means of para- linguistic features) has the potential to enhance the knowledge of Linguistic skills. The paper argues that in a classroom use of ICT the teacher must carefully choose paradigms and equipments so as to strengthen both the linguistic skills and Communicative competence.**

Keywords: **linguistics, communication. Information and CommunicationTechnology, competence, pedagogy, skills.**

1. INTRODUCTION

In the light of the age old controversy regarding the communicative skills and language skills the study presents an account of whether the communication be really taught in the conventional classroom? Beginning with the negative response and an endless interrogation about the very nature of both the skills the study argues that with the changing of time and with the advent of technology a teacher could provide a real like communicative experiences to the students. The exposure to linguistic and cultural environment in quasi real time and space provides impetus and adequate paraphernalia to express themselves. The conventionally negative approach towards the validity of the of teaching communication in classroom situation has turned larely positive. Despite its many advents the study suggests the use of technology with caution and care.

David Abercrombie says, "We speak with our vocal organs but we converse with our entire bodies". Statement is very significant and contains the potential to highlight the process of communication. When we speak, normally in the course of natural communicative interaction, we do not only use our vocal organs. The act of speaking involves not only the production of sounds but also the use of gesture, the movements of muscles of the face and indeed the whole body.

H. G. Widowson makes distinction in linguistic skills and communicative ability. In his article with the same title he states, "Those skills which are defined with reference to medium (speaking, learning, composing and comprehending) are linguistic skills. They refer to the way in which the language system is manifested or recognized to be manifested, as usages. And we will refer to those skills which are defined with reference to the manner and mode, in which the system is realized as use, as communicative abilities. Communicative abilities embrace the linguistic skills but not the reverse."

What then should be the role of teacher in teaching through ICT? How should he carefully select and monitor ICT in order to fulsome development of both the linguistic skills and communicative competence? Though the distinction is clear, they can't be isolated from each other. The teacher must therefore understand the nature of communicative abilities. Essentially they are way of creating or re-creating discourse in different modes. This activity involves inferring what propositions sentences are being used to express and how they interrelate. It involves also the ability to infer what illocutionary acts these propositions are being used to perform and how these combine in a coherent way. In brief it involves an understanding of the communicative value of linguistic elements in context and this is based on knowledge of how these elements may serve as a clue which can be interpreted by reference to shared conventions of communication.

According to Allan Maley, "Communicative competence is made up of four major strands: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence." (Maley:2010) What is meant by grammatical competence is the mastery of the language code. Such competence focuses directly on the knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances. It is this type of competence which much classroom teaching seeks to promote. Tools like power point presentations, language game modules might directly prove an aid in developing this skill. Sociolinguistic competence involves the ability to produce and understand utterances which are appropriate in terms of the context in which they are uttered. This necessarily involves sensitivity to factors such as status, role, attitude, purpose, degree of formality, social conventions and so on. Many of the communicative failures experienced by learners of foreign language have their origin in lack of sociological competence. ICT tools including movies, dramas, cds containing real life experiences prove extremely useful with teacher's initial comments and regulations. Discourse competence concerns the ability to combine meanings with unified and acceptable spoken or written texts in different genres. Genre covers the type of text involved: narrative, argumentative, scientific report, newspaper articles, news broadcast, casual conversation etc. Controlled viewing of television channels, interviews, panel discussions, documentaries, and reports on channels like National Geographic, Animal Planet or History etc will provide access to this genre. Strategic competence relates to the verbal and non verbal strategies which learners may need to use either to compensate for breakdowns in communication or to enhance the effectiveness of communication. Strategic competence also refers to the intuitive feel by participants for the kind of communicative event they are engaged in and the direction it is moving in. This allows then to predict moves in advance and to nudge the discourse in the desired direction. ICT tools like recorded versions of similar situation may prove aid to learners.

It is generally acknowledged that the ultimate aim of language learning is to acquire communicative competence, to interpret whether this is made overt in talking or corresponding or whether it remains covert as a psychological activity underlying the ability to say, listen, write and read. The current concern is not whether this is the aim of language learning but how this aim is to be achieved. It will also be generally agreed perhaps that traditionally the focus of attention has been on the linguistic skills and that it has commonly been supposed that once these are acquired in a reasonable measure; the communicative abilities will follow as a more or less automatic consequence. What evidence we have however suggests that this is not the case. The acquisition of linguistic skills does not seem to guarantee the consequent acquisition of communicative abilities. This is not meant to imply that such drills and exercises are not necessary. As was pointed earlier, abilities include the skills. One can't acquire the former without acquiring the latter. The question is how can these skills be taught not as self-sufficient achievement but as an aspect of communicative competence? How skills be related to abilities and in what way does the ICT tools will come to help?

The research indicates that to implement ICT successfully in their classrooms teachers must understand what visual literacy is and rethink what learning to read and write means in 21st century (goodwyn et. Al. 1997; 2002) The research also indicates that ICT is most effective when embedded in the curriculum, and integrated into units if work. English teachers can maximize the impact of ICT in their classrooms by ensuring that they and their students use ICT as an integral part of lessons, present ideas dynamically, and use a range of media. ICT should be integrated in such a way as to require purposeful application and meaningful engagement with technology.

To implement ICT successfully in their classrooms teacher also needs to identify how ICT can be used to meet specific objective within the English curriculum to improve pupil's attainment. He/she must understand that successful use of ICT depends on other factors such as pupil's work in the classroom away from the computer, discussion between pupils and between pupils and their teacher, and the ways in which pupils interact with each other at the computer. Because of its interactive nature, ICT has the potential to meet the needs of individual students by providing opportunities to direct their learning and to pursue information, or complete tasks, in ways which meet their own interests and needs. In particular the integration of technology into the English classroom represents a paradigm shift to acknowledge the importance of emerging technological learning style. Most importantly however, the use of ICT in the classroom signals a shift from a conventional position of power held by the teacher to a more collaborative approach to learning. Generally computer based activities allow the teacher to assume the role of facilitator while students take on an increasing responsibility for their own learning. The use of computer based technologies can shift the emphasis of activities away from the teacher and towards the students, enhance social interaction, and be empowering especially for students with low traditional literacy skills.

ICT is found to be advantageous in several ways as mentioned by Herington (2002). 1 Technology facilitates exposure to authentic language. 2 Technology provides the access to wider sources of information and varieties of language. 3 Technology gives the opportunity to people to communicate with the world outside. 4 Technology allows the learner centric approach. 5 Technology develops learner's autonomy.ICT helps pupil in order to get information and to communicate each other in wider range.

ICT tools in language context:

Interactive multimedia: Interactive multimedia is the integration of digital media including combinations of electronic text, graphics, moving images, and sound into structured digital computerized environment can include the internet, telecoms and interactive digital television.

Computer: Computer can be utilized with other multimedia learning devices or can stand alone and still serves its basic purpose as an electronic medium of language learning. Computer is an electronic device which is capable of receiving information and performing a sequence of logical operation in accordance with a predetermined but variable set of procedural instruction to produce results in the form of information or signals based on Oxford dictionary.

Audio devices: Audio devices can be used with other media to form an interactive multimedia. However it can also be utilized separately as independent tool. Audio devices include speaker, earphone CD etc. As M A K Haliday observes, "To a grammarian a text is a rich many faceted phenomenon that 'means' in many different ways. It can be explored from many different points of view. But we can distinguish two main angles of vision: one focus on a text as an object in its own right; two focus on a text as an instrument for finding out something else. Focusing on text as an object, a grammarian will be asking questions such as Why does a text mean what it does (not me or anyone else?) Why is it valued as it is? Focusing text as an instrument, the grammarian will be asking what the text reveals about the system of the language in which it is spoken or written." (Haliday and Matthison: 2003 pp1) However the ICT tools could prove instrumental in understanding the text in both these possible angles of approaches.

Internet: Internet can be used as a medium of language learning through email, www (World Wide Web), text audio and video conferencing.

Television: According to Oxford dictionary, television is a system for converting images into electrical signals, transmitting them by radio or other means, and displaying them electronically on a screen.

Telephone: This telephone medium has not so far been used so widely for language teaching because of the poor quality of analogue transmission. However, there is new invention of digital quality and lower connection cost which potential for conference call.

Mobile gadget: Mobile gadgets such as cell phone and smart phone which are equipped with programs like computer which enable it to perform as mini personal computer. By using this gadget and its internet connection, everybody could enjoy chatting, browsing, and discuss each other with the wider range. The advancement of science and technology makes the size and price of those gadgets are getting cheaper and reachable.

Social Interface: This media provides facility or example that enables an interaction between human and computer. People set up more interaction with computer in a more intuitive way with less effort –through writing, voice, touch, eye movements, and other gestures. This technology serves as a milestone of the recent development of interactive multimedia, audio-graphic computer tele-conference, and interactive television via satellite.

Interactive Whiteboard and LCD: An interactive white board IWB , is a large interactive display such as a touch screen monitor which is connected to a computer and projector. The projector projects the computer's desktop on to the board's surface, where the users control using a pen, finger or other device.

The use of ICT in language learning must be highly intelligent and smartly monitored. A teacher should however avoid fall prey to use of technology for its own sake. The following set of principles would be helpful for a teacher for effective use of ICT in language learning.

1. A teacher must know that learners learn both consciously, with effort and unconsciously, without effort.

2. The use of ICT can be accuracy or fluency focused. The author prefers fluency in which the emphasis is on open ended communication activities, taking place in real time. Of course we should accept the need of all students in varying degree for some accuracy work.

3. We should consider error as a normal part of language learning. Too much correction may be waste of time and may prove unproductive. One has to be resolutely non-judgmental. This would not preclude the provision of acceptable models nor the indication to learners of the existence or location of errors on request.

4. It should be deeply rooted in mind that language proceeds from top down not from bottom up. Meanings are first apprehended as wholes and only later analyzed into parts if necessary. The tasks in the book would thus need to develop holistic processing. Automatic processing would only rarely be used.

5. Its true that learners are more likely to acquire the language if they are exposed to authentic samples of it. Here we must recognize the danger of making God of authenticity. Inputs should therefore usually be truly authentic but accessible or modified authentic that is preserving linguistic properties of authentic text.

6. Language as a use might most effectively be taught by associating the teaching of language with other subjects in the curriculum.

7. We can make use of learner's knowledge of non verbal aspects of discourse and of their ability to interpret them as a means of linking their communicative abilities in the language they are learning.

To put it in other words, we need to remove these abilities from a dependence on linguistic skills in foreign language learning not as the acquisition of abilities which are new but as the transference of the abilities that have already been acquired into different means of expression. It can be achieved with intelligent and creative use of ICT in a language classroom. If this is done successfully of course the learner can go on to extend the range of his communicative abilities through the foreign language without reference to his mother tongue.

2. CONCLUSION

A study attempted so far brings forth few important facts about the question of whether communication be taught in a classroom situation. In a conventional classroom it may look impossible but in an ICT equipped classroom with the help of real experiential learning, students imbibe adequate communicative skills. The use of ICT indeed is a gift for communication and language classroom. But teaching learning in fact is an activity where real human in real time deal with each other. Therefore the use of technology should be with caution, suitable to the units taught without the tools overpowering the human

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