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John George Athyal
Maya Dutt, Ph.D.

The Importance of Language Ability

The growth and development of an individual is greatly dependent upon that individual's ability to comprehend the language of his or her society and reciprocate effectively. For this to happen, individuals need to have adequate exposure and experience using the language of the specific society. When we use language for communication we must have a knowledge of the linguistic forms of the language we use and also knowledge of when, how and to whom it is appropriate to use the forms, i.e., a leaner should have not only linguistic competence but also communicative competence.

Chomsky observes:

> By grammatical competence I mean the cognitive state that encompasses all those aspects of form and meaning and their relation including underlying structures that enter into that relation, which are properly assigned to the specific subsystem of the human mind that relates representations of form and meaning. I assume that it is possible in principle for a person to have full grammatical competence and no pragmatic competence, hence no ability to use a language appropriately, though its syntax and semantics are intact. (59)

Situation in India – Past Methods Have Not Helped Improve Our Communication Skill

The problem of learning and using English in India mostly revolves around the adequacy of exposure and experience in using English.

Various methods were adopted in the classrooms. We need to evaluate these methods as to their ability to provide adequate exposure and experience in using English. Although the role of the teacher has undergone a drastic change, many of our teachers still remain as facilitators of examinations rather than facilitators of communicative proficiency.

Grammar translation method or memorization of vocabulary and sentences was the main technique that we employed in the past. By 1970 we experienced the influence of Structural Linguistics. Now we make use of computers and language laboratories. But all these have not yet

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contributed to any significant change in the communicative competence and performance of vast majority of students.

Though we give due importance to English language in our school curriculum, the only English that our students learn at school is what they are taught in the English classroom. Students do not make use of their target language, English, freely.

Students should be made aware more intensely that the ultimate aim to make his students effective communicators. Teachers of English also should keep in mind that the ultimate test of their success lies in how their students communicate effectively with appropriate fluency, pronunciation, word choice, sentence construction and appropriate meaning and idiom. We should realize that our goal is to help students use English to meet their needs effectively, both as individuals and as employees/employers in wider fields of business, etc.

Because our success in learning and using English is not yet adequate to meet the demands of education, business, diplomacy and so on, we need to review the methods and models available and to seek to adopt more effective models.

Models and Modeling

From the dictionary meaning a *model* is a pattern of something to be made or reproduced and a means of transferring a relationship or process from the actual setting to one in which it can be more conveniently studied.

From the point of view of teaching, a model of teaching is a plan or pattern that can be used to shape curricula, to design instructional materials and to guide instruction in the class room and other settings.

The most important aim of any model of teaching is to improve instructional effectiveness in an interactive atmosphere and to improve or shape the curriculum.

Several New Models

Several models of teaching were made available through the research of Joyce and Weil. They were able to find a variety of approaches or strategies of teaching to match various learning styles.

Joyce and Weil assert, "Models of teaching are really models of learning."(7)

Kinds of Models

A model of teaching consists of guidelines for designing educational activities and environment. It specifies ways of teaching and learning that are intended to achieve certain kinds of goals.

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Joyce and Weil group the models of teaching into four families:

1. The Social family.
2. The Information Processing family.
3. The Personal family.
4. The Behavioral Systems family.

The Social Model

The social models, as the name implies, emphasize our social nature, how we learn social behavior and how social interaction can enhance academic learning. Joyce and Weil emphasize the collective energy called synergy. This enables the students to generate a positive interdependence. Students share their views in groups.

The social models of teaching construct learning communities and these communities help those students who are weak or shy to express themselves in the target language, overcome their mental barriers. Co-operative behavior is stimulating not only socially but also intellectually. We can design tasks requiring social interaction to enhance language learning.

What Is Group Investigation?

Group investigation is the direct route to the development of the community of leaner. John Dewey developed the idea that education in a democratic society should teach the democratic process directly. This idea was further modified by Herbert Thelen. He believed that one should not attempt to teach knowledge from any academic area without teaching the social process by which it was negotiated.

Group Investigation has been used in all subject areas, and with learners all of all ages. In it, students are organized in to democratic problem solving groups that attack academic problems. The cognitive aspect of the learner is focused here. Rote learning or memorization has no room in this model.

The important figure in the effort to develop models for democratic process has been John Dewey. He proposed that group investigation should be the basic model for social and academic learning.

Co-operative Learning

The simplest forms of co-operative learning organize students to help one another respond to the cognitive and social tasks of the information-processing models of teaching. Joyce and Weil in *Models of Teaching* state that the model is designed to lead students to define problems, explore

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various perspectives on the problems, and study together to master information, ideas, and skills-simultaneously developing their social competence. (13)

In this model students are encouraged to communicate freely; they control the discussions and arrive at a conclusion. Therefore it is intellectually better than the work done individually.

Constructing and Reconstruction Knowledge

The philosophers Gordon H.Hullfish and Philip G. Smith believe that knowledge is constructed and continuously re-constructed by individuals and group. Knowledge is constructed by the learner in relation to his experiences and also in relation to others. A classroom is considered as society and knowledge is constructed only when students interact with that community. It is through interaction that positive views emerge and they learn the general group skills. Man is a social being and a social being cannot act without reference to his or her companions. Man builds with other men the rules and agreements that constitute reality.

"The two concepts of (1) inquiry and (2) knowledge are central to this model."(Joyce and Weil, 79). Inquiry is stimulated by confrontation with a problem, and knowledge results from the inquiry.

The heart of this model lies in its formulation of inquiry. "Life in classroom takes the form of a series of inquiries. Each inquiry starts with a stimulus situation to which students can react and discover basic conflicts among their attitudes, ideas and modes of perceptions."(79)

The first element is an event the individual can react to and puzzle over-a problem to be solved. In the classroom the teacher can select content and cast it in terms of problem situations. Students must assume the dual roles of participant and observer, simultaneously inquiring into the problem and observing themselves as inquirers.

On the basis of this information, they identify the problem to be investigated, analyze the roles required to solve it, organize themselves to take those roles, act, and report and evaluate those results. Students face a problem and they formulate a study task with the help of an instructor. It is followed by independent and group study and finally they analyze their progress.

The teacher's role in this model is one of counselor, consultant, and friendly critic. It is the responsibility of the teacher to offer interesting topics for discussion. He should encourage group discussion and 'learner-creativity.'

Cybernetics Model

The word *cybernetics* was first used in the context of "the study of self-governance" by Plato in *The Laws* to signify the governance of people.

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Cybernetic psychologists conceptualize the leaner as a self- regulating feedback system. Cybernetics comes from a Greek word meaning the art of steering. Cybernetics is about having a goal and taking action to achieve that goal. "The cybernetic psychologists interpret the human being as a control system that generates a course of action and then redirects or correct the action by means of feedback."(356)

Cybernetics guides the design of the models in the Behavioural Systems Family. The belief is that human beings are self-correcting communication systems that can modify behaviour in response to the feedback that they receive of the tasks done. These models concentrate on observable behaviour and clearly defined tasks and methods.

Simulations are working representations of reality. "They are constructed from descriptions of real life situations. A less-than-real-life environment is created for the instructional situation. The student engages in activity to achieve the goal of the simulation and has to deal with realistic factors until the goal is mastered"(Joyce and Weil, 21). They allow students to explore social or physical systems where the real things are too expensive, complex, fast or slow for teaching purposes. Simulation transforms the content of education from information to experience.

Role playing and simulation are extremely valuable methods for L2 learning. It encourages thinking and creativity; it allows students to practice language in an interesting manner and in a relatively non threatening setting.

Simulation model is an application of the principles of 'cybernetics'', a branch of psychology.

The Role of Feedback

In any given situation, individuals modify their behaviour according to the feedback they receive from the environment. They organize their movements and their response patterns in relation to the feedback. The essence of cybernetic psychology is the principle of sense-oriented feedback that is intrinsic to the individual and is the basis for self-corrective choices.

Here learning tasks are made much less complex than they are in the real world, so that the students may have the opportunity to master the various skills.

> Simulations should be given enough time for students to realize their importance and enough prominence in the outline of the syllabus for students to understand that simulations are a unique educational technique, particularly suited to language learning. It is useful to think of them as developing agents. They are in themselves a test as well as a learning device. They estimate the interactive language competence of the students. (Sharma and Tripat, 271,274)

Inhibitions and Barriers

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The learners face a lot of communication barriers and they are always conscious of the listeners. This inhibition can be overcome if we adopt some educational simulations that enable students to learn firsthand from the simulated experiences built into the game rather than from teachers' explanations and lectures. Learners acquire language when they are exposed to large quantities of comprehensive input and when they are actively involved in the tasks.

Simulations used in the classroom are designed to provide educational benefits. Students are able to construct a bond between experience and expression.   Their language may not be good but they try to narrate their experience in the target language itself. Success of this model of teaching is not measured based on how far the student was able to utter correct sentences in the target language, but whether they were able to cope with the communicative demands of the immediate situation.

How Simulation is Achieved
The simulation model has four phases: orientation, participant training, simulation and debriefing. In the orientation, the teacher presents the topic to be explored and an explanation of simulation. In phase two, the students start practicing. The teacher explains the different roles, rules and also the objective of simulation. The teacher should see that students attain the goal fixed earlier by him. This will be followed by a brief practice session to know whether the students internalized the rules given by the teacher. Next is the simulation operation stage where the students may receive feedback, evaluate their performance and then clarify any misconceptions. Finally, phase four consists of participant debriefing or reflective discussion which is the most important part of the task.

Guiding and Inspiring the Learners

The interest for language learning may be the basic factor influencing one's achievement in language skills. Such an interest may be fostered by familiarizing the individual with the use of the target language. The teacher should understand the dynamics of classroom communication; they should create a congenial atmosphere in the classroom.

Teaching is nothing but guiding and inspiring the learners. It is the responsibility of the language teachers to enable their students to think and interact in the target language. Motivation and presentation of the teachers affect the learning of language. Instead of the traditional methods of teaching, the teacher can adopt interesting methods of teaching and models of teaching are the best example for that. Group Investigation model and Simulation model mainly focus on developing communicative skills. The entire teaching – learning process will be a failure if the students are not motivated in the right direction.

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John George Athyal
Christian College
Chengannur
Kerala, India
johnathyal@gmail.com

Maya Dutt, Ph.D.
Institute of English
University of Kerala
Trivandrum
Kerala, India

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