

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 12 : 6 June 2012

ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D.

Assistant Managing Editor: Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.

Strategies for Effective Communication

K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.



Communication is the transmission of thoughts, ideas, feeling and attitudes from one person to another through a medium. The English Language plays an indispensable role as a very powerful medium of communication at the global level. It is therefore necessary for the English teacher to make their students expert in handling such an essential language. With

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Strategies for Effective Oral Communication

good communication skills, one can convince people, control situations, comprehend complexities and command respect. By adopting effective strategies, the teachers can equip the learners with personal and social competence, self-confidence and positive outlook. The learners being so well-trained, any challenge will be as easy as cakewalk for them.

Listening Skills

Listening and speech are interdependent skills. They were the foremost skills to evolve. Speech follows listening. Listening alone helps an infant to grasp a language before it is three years old. An utterance becomes effective and useful only when it is listened to. Listening is the first step to knowledge. Unfortunately, in the present day world, people fail to listen well. Listening is no more a passive skill. It is an active process, a cognitive activity, a door to wisdom, and a key to good rapport with the speaker.

Speaking Skills

Spoken communication plays a major role in displaying the personality of an individual. Based on the effectiveness of this means, the prestige, social status and image can be maintained. Above all, only good communication can convey ideas clearly and correctly. Spoken communication can be between or among individuals of a group, or it can be in the form of addressing the public- as speeches or presentations. This is where our students lag behind. They become tongue-tied, as soon as they realize they have to address an audience, and that to be done in English. The most effective method to rid them of such a fear can only be brought about by exposing learners, especially the timid ones to such environments repeatedly.

Activity

I would like to share an activity in one of my sessions based on presentations. SILENCE was used as a powerful tool. One of my weak students was to present ‘**Autobiography of a school bag**’ as an extempore speech. She was given three minutes time. After the initial sentence “I am a school bag”, she stopped and looked at me for help. I was tempted to prompt, but controlled the ‘mothering’ attitude. She looked at her friends for

help, but silence prevailed. She wanted to leave, but we gestured that she had two more minutes and had to continue. She thought hard and then continued, “My friends are books and lunch bag”. After further struggle, during which her friends encouraged her with thumbs up, she came out with the statement: “I am overloaded with too many books.” By now, three minutes were over and she went to her seat amidst applause and with better confidence. This proves that SILENCE helps enhancing creativity and originality.

Presentation Skills

One of the biggest fears of our students is speaking in public. Presenting well requires a combination of knowledge of the topic and audience, preparation, delivery skills, confidence and time management.

Strategies

- Ask your students to do a lot of background research. It is useful to have good knowledge on the subject for discussion and audience questions
- Learners must know to put their presentation in order.
- Ask them to focus on the question set.
- Make them practise before presentation.
- Ask them to speak clearly.
- Tell them to have eye contact with their audience.
- Teach them how to use the different audio- visual aids.

Activities

Ask each of the students to give the presentations for 3-10 minutes. At the end of all presentations give your feedback. Feedback given after every individual presentation would create unnecessary fears in your students of making mistakes, which will affect the quality of their presentation

Picture/Sketch

Draw the plan of an apartment. Mention what each room signifies -living room, bedroom, bathroom, balcony and kitchen. Instruct each student to explain for 5 minutes the

floor plan, and how one finds the way to the kitchen or living room or the bedroom. (Freeman)

Information

Provide a menu (of a restaurant) to your students (Idly-5 rupees, Vada-6 rupees, Veg.Pulav-8 rupees, cooldrinks-8 rupees each etc). Ask them to choose any items from the menu. Ask them to talk about the item, and why it became their choice.

Reading Skills

Reading is of two types – loud reading, for practicing speed and pronunciation, and silent reading, which enables comprehension of the given text. It is surprising that many university students lack adequate reading skills. Some are able to read and manage with the overall meaning, but most cannot pronounce even simple words correctly.

Strategy-1

The objective of this module is to share an enriching classroom activity called Current News Awareness, which can be introduced and managed on an on-going basis, using some of the local newspapers and TV News channels. The main objective is to encourage the students to improve their reading skill, and enhance their knowledge of current issues.

Scan Heading for two minutes gives you the overall view. It is a good opportunity to practise skimming. Reading the big news stories of the day for six minutes (local, national and international) keeps you informed. Reading the editorials for about six minutes tells you what the events mean (as the editor sees them). Look at the cartoons and photographs for a minute. This is for insight, humour and heightened observation. Read what you like for five minutes (Sports, films, comics etc). This is fun and relaxation. (Mcgrath)

Suggested Activity

- Any daily of the whole week can be distributed among students.
- They should be arranged into groups, each with 5 members. There can be 8 groups.
- Each group should work on a daily; divide the news items based on politics, industry, society, sports, weather etc.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Strategies for Effective Oral Communication

- They can be given 20 minutes for reading.
- Instruction should be given that, when each group presents, one, member will play the role of a news reader, and others will be special reporters, each reading news items based on politics, industry, society, sports, weather etc.

This activity will ensure that reading is a delightful exercise. Monotony never takes place and information is also gained.

Strategy-2

Book Reviews

There is yet another way of enhancing the reading skills of the learners by encouraging the habit of reading books. This may not be given any importance if suggested as an advice. Instead, if we teachers project it as an activity, students will participate and benefit greatly. By training the learners to review books, we help them develop accurate analytical reading, and express their reactions in a logical, coherent and organized manner.

Activity

Assign one book to a group of three students. The books can be based on personality development. All the team members should read the book within the time given (two weeks). The whole book or part of it should be presented as a role-play or skit.

How to Read and Understand a Book

- ✓ Read the book with care.
- ✓ Note effective passages for quoting.
- ✓ Note their impressions as you read.
- ✓ Allow yourselves time to assimilate what you have read.

Students can be asked to give a written and oral presentation of the contents of a book

Written Communication

Written Communication involves creativity, logical evolution of thought, clarity of expression, and proper presentation with good grammar. Constant exposure to good writing

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Strategies for Effective Oral Communication

styles, awareness of the idiomatic expressions, application of a different set of vocabulary by the students other than the usual routine words, and above all, making writing sessions interesting by providing activities that lean on resourcefulness will go a long way in developing good writing skills. Some forms of written communication are communicating by letter, interpreting and converting information, describing, narrating, note taking, reporting, arguing and expressing oneself.

Strategies

Informal Writing

Ask the learners to write about:

- Their individuality, background, family details etc. (Letters to friends)
- Letters based on a trip
- Their happy and sad experiences. (Diary writing)
- Reactions to a poem

Formal Writing

- Writing about oneself objectively- Bio data
- Critical analysis
- Presenting opinions on various controversies.

Activity

1. Provide a timetable of a class in a school, presenting the working hours, sessions and classes handled. A set of questions based on the timetable, will be given. Students should answer them, in sentences, which will help with shaping the prospectus of the school.
 - How many languages are taught in the school?
 - How many sessions are spent on teaching each of these languages per week?
 - Is science thought to be important in this school?
 - Are there regular P.E Classes?
 - Are there any extra-curricular subjects taught?
2. Based on the same timetable, they can be asked to write a few sentence on
Language, Sciences and extra-curricular activities (Freeman)

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Strategies for Effective Oral Communication

3. Students can be assigned live projects in English based on survey, interviewing VIPs of the city etc., which can be presented as a report.

The activities suggested will enable the student to think logically and write to the purpose at hand.

Non-Verbal Communication (Body Language)

Body language is the communication of personal feelings, emotions, attitudes, and thoughts through body movements. No doubt, it is an important parameter for judging a candidate in an interview. A candidate's attitude, confidence, enthusiasm, and energy - they come through naturally. Students can be made aware of the positive and negative interpretations of certain gestures, facial expressions, postures and the body movements. When the awareness comes, they may start focusing on it and try to rectify it.

The aspects of the body that body language covers are:

- Facial expressions (smiles, nods)
- Gestures (especially hand and arm movements)
- Body movements
- Posture
- Visual orientation (especially eye contact)
- Physical contacts (like handshakes, patting)
- Spatial behaviour (proximity, distance, positions)
- Appearance (including clothes)

Gestures

All hand movements have hidden meanings. What a person does with his hands, fingers, and arms is directly related to what is going on in his mind.

Demonstrate each of the gestures given below to the students.

1. **Relaxed Hands:** confidence, acceptance, and well-being.
2. **Open Hands:** Trust, and a show of interest in the opinion of the other person.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Strategies for Effective Oral Communication

3. **Clenched Hands:** Emphasis, vehement declaration and desperate resolve. It also indicates tension and frustration and even anger.
4. **Wringing Hands:** Discomfort and Tension.
5. **Pointing Index Finger:** Threatening or warning, when one tries to drive a point home.
6. **Cracking of Knuckles:** Anxiety, nervousness, boredom, restlessness and an unresolved state of mind.
7. **Crossed on Folded Arms:** Protective, guarding against an anticipated attack.
8. **Arms Behind the Back:** Inner conflict
9. **Mouth Covering:** The person might be lying, unsure of what one is saying, trying to prevent oneself from expressing one's view, which may be opposed to the speaker's.
10. **Putting Objects in Mouth:** Great pressure.

Postures

The Crossed Legs: In the normal crossed leg position, one leg is crossed neatly over the other. When a person crosses both legs and arms it is an indication that he has emotionally withdrawn from the conversation.

The Foot Forward Position: This is a clue to our intentions because we point our lead foot in the direction our mind would like to go.

Shaking One's Foot: Can reveal impatience, anger or nervousness, while stamping can reveal authority, arrogance or contempt.

Facial Expressions: The face is the most significant and the most photographed part of the human body. The flashes of facial signals are generally spontaneous reactions, which a person finds difficult to hide.

The Eye Contact: When someone talks to you, do they look directly at you or look away? Maintaining eye contact when talking (or listening) to someone gives an impression that you/they are confident and honest

Blinking: People under pressure, for example, when they are speaking a lie, are likely to increase their blinking rate as an unconscious effort to block the other from sight.

Slanting gaze: This means that the person seems to be on the sly, or is suspicious.

Smiling and frowning: These are two major facial expressions. The smile tends to convey the general states of acceptance and agreement, the frown of rejection and disagreement.

Activity

1. Ask the class to sit in pairs.
2. Select a few students to be observers.
3. If there are ten pairs, you should have ten observers.
4. Tell the students who are sitting in pairs that they have to just talk for 2-3 minutes.
5. The subject matter is unimportant.
6. After 2-3 minute period, ask them to stop talking.
7. Ask each observer what he has seen about the pair's non-verbal behaviour.

For example, did the person keep fiddling with a pencil, or was continually tapping his fingers and so on. After these gestures have been identified, acknowledge that most of us do these movements unknowingly. (Give each observer 2 minutes to present his observation). Similar examples as mentioned above could be given as classroom activities, which will be educative and enjoyable.

This is communication era. While language skills teach us what to convey, soft skills teach us how to convey. Attitude, aptitude, atmosphere, and apt situation play a big role in the success of any communication. Since the world is in constant flux, and requirements keep changing, the strategies we adopt must also be effective and innovative to suit the varying demands. As language trainers, it is important for us to be up-to-date with the latest technology and trends, to render able guidance and bring up a competent generation with good communication skills.

=====

References

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 6 June 2012
K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.
Strategies for Effective Oral Communication

Freeman Sarah. Written Communication in English. Orient Longman Ltd., 1977, Chennai.

Mcgrath E H, S J. Basic Managerial Skills for All. Prentice Hall, 2010, New Delhi.

=====
K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of English
Sri Sarada College for Women (Autonomous)
Affiliated to Periyar University,
Salem 636 016
Tamilnadu
India
k_sangeeth@yahoo.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 6 June 2012

K. Sangeetha, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Strategies for Effective Oral Communication