



Acquisition of Communication Skills in English Language
(Short Communication)

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Discussion

English language has emerged as a global language as well as a vehicle for upward social, professional and financial mobility. English is no more just one of the languages of the world. In fact, in today's compact global village, it has become the most important language.

English may be a foreign language, but it is international in its significance. The importance of English language in India cannot be disregarded. English in India is a global language in a multilingual country. A variety and range of English-teaching situations pre-vail here owing to the twin factors of teacher proficiency in English and pupils' exposure to English outside school. Learning to communicate in English is important to enter and ultimately succeed in the mainstream. Working knowledge of the English language can create many opportunities in international markets and regions. English in India is primarily taught as a foreign or a second language. Recent researches have considerably changed our understanding of the processes of second language acquisition and necessitated a change in the teaching methodology, so as to make learning of English more effective and relevant. Moreover, there has been a shift in our aims and objectives of learning English, the primary aim being to communicate effectively. In the wake of these developments, there is an urgent need to replace the existing methods with the ones that can help us meet the desired goal.

Languages have their fascinating history and interesting stories. We don't intend to discuss all that, but it is interesting to note that languages grow out of one another. We have groups of languages which have lot of similarities. A major language may have many sub-languages called dialects, and these are languages which get into their vocabulary words of many languages, in order to increase their flexibility of expression and usage. The world of languages or the story of languages is so interesting and long that we may need another book to talk about it all!

English Language Teaching in India is vibrant and dynamic today. The context of the whole teaching paradigm has changed totally. Speaking is not an easy process. Whereas a child learnt *listening* skill passively for *speaking*, for the second skill, he has to get actively involved. We have to exercise and make an effort, speaking in the beginning a few words, or may be a word. The grammatical rules may not be all that important. The child tends to be perceptive. If we observe, we can say that the child is actually learning by process of repetition. The child tries, commits mistakes and improves. It hears what others say, tries to imitate and then repeats, and when it gets the satisfactory results, remembers to use the expression again. The mind once again stores the language materials and helps the child to recapitulate, and utilize whatever he has learnt. The skill improves as we practise. This is true of anything. To put it simply, practice makes a child perfect in the art of speaking. It is applicable here also in the process of language learning, particularly the learning of the (Mother Tongue) M.T. by a child. The next is Reading.

The child grows further and acquires the 'formal' education in language. 'The speaking' process, and before that 'the listening process', have not really been a part of the formal language learning. There are a large number of people in developing countries like India who are not fully educated, or can be called 'semi-educated'. Such persons can express themselves in the spoken form quite satisfactorily and do understand the language. Such persons cannot, however, express themselves in the written form. Reading is learnt after we learn the 'alphabets' of the language, and start recognising the communications and role of the words in a formal manner in the written form. It is, of course, a formal manner of the learning that expects a child to master the skill of reading, by reading the materials written in his M.T. The next and the most difficult of the four skills is the *Writing skill*.

In writing skill, the child is to acquire a great deal of accuracy— the words and their spellings, and also the usage of the words in sentences. The grammar of the language too is necessary for the child to be able to express himself in the written form. Writing skill, therefore, comes with a great deal of practice and takes the largest period of time. In the spoken form, the second skill mentioned above, one can manage with the help of gestures, etc. also to supplement whatever we may wish to convey. In the listening comprehension, one can understand or may not fully comprehend an idea and yet may be able to manage. But, in the reading skill, if one is to read

aloud, the reading may be 'defective' and may not have a desired effect. In case one is to read to understand text or materials, and if one is not familiar with meanings of the words, one may not be able to understand, and the proper benefit cannot be derived. The writing skill, however, is the most difficult of the four skills and needs to be learnt the longest, and also requires the maximum amount of effort and labour on the part of the learner. As noticed by us earlier, the four skills are learnt by the child in the order in which we have discussed them above i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing.

So, learning a language and, particularly, learning a language in the second language learning situations, is a difficult process. To understand the situation a little more clearly in practical terms, it will be better if we talk about how English is actually learnt by the people in our country, and what problems they can and do encounter in the process of learning. But before we do that, we should briefly understand that learning of the language in the case of one's mother tongue is not a difficult and intricate process. It must be understood how Mother Tongue is learnt.