



STRENGTHENING ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH LITERARY ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT:

Proficiency in skills cannot be imparted through teaching or traditional learning methods; rather, skills are acquired through practical experience. Despite its lack of threat to other languages, English retains its dominant position globally. Literature, often referred to as the "mirror of life," serves as a reflection of human existence. This research titled "Enhancing English Communicative Skills through Literary Engagement" commences with an overview of English's significance in today's competitive world, accompanied by pertinent literature definitions. Distinctions between Approach, Methodology, and Technique are elucidated, along with an enumeration of language teaching-learning approaches. The study underscores the benefits of literature study in fostering effective communication skills and concludes by offering suggestions to augment language proficiency through literary exploration.

Keywords: Language, Communication Competence, Approach and Method, Literary Works.

INTRODUCTION:

Subjects can be classified into knowledge-oriented and skill-oriented categories. Knowledge-oriented subjects involve teaching and learning, while skill-oriented subjects require practice, training, and experimentation. It is universally recognized that skills are acquired through practice, not simply taught or learned. Enthusiasm stands as the driving force behind mastering any targeted skill. Learning a language shares similarities with acquiring skills such as swimming, driving, and painting. Although language serves as a communication tool, it possesses exceptional power for effective communication.

Mitchell says, "Language development is based on pragmatic communicative needs and that forms of language are used to convey meanings".

Mastery of skills is achieved through persistent practice. High marks on exams do not necessarily indicate language proficiency, as marks are awarded based on exam performance, not actual knowledge. Rote memorization can lead to high scores, but true language proficiency necessitates consistent practice and genuine enthusiasm.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ENGLISH TODAY:

Among all languages, English enjoys a unique status as a native, official, semi-official, and second language. Technological advancements have effectively reduced global distances. While colonial rule ended, English remains. Proficiency in English is essential for those aspiring to remain updated in science, technology, business, management, medicine, and other fields, ensuring a promising future. Mahatma Gandhi, despite opposing British rule, endorsed foreign language study, particularly English. He advocated for a diverse cultural influence and encouraged Indian youth with literary interests to learn and contribute to India and the world.

In India, English retains its dominance as a language of prestige, status, and privilege. English proficiency has become crucial due to its widespread use in global interactions such as business, trade, aviation, and project-based discussions. English is essential, even in technical institutes where it receives as much emphasis as technical subjects. Interviews prioritize communicative competence in English. Language labs in technical institutes promote online language activities alongside conventional classroom instruction. Newly recruited employees in software companies undergo intensive communication skills training.

LITERATURE STUDY:

Some leaders captivate hearts through eloquence, often attributed to their communication skills. Literature study contributes to this quality. Communicative competence is a sought-after trait in leaders. Bacon's words, "Reading maketh a full man; writing an exact man," highlight the importance of reading and writing skills for effective communication. Ezra Pound says, "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree". Alfred North Whitehead says, "It is in literature that the concrete outlook of humanity receives its expression".

Literature is not a mere description but a reality that adds value and depth to life. It nurtures essential life competencies and serves as a mirror reflecting and enriching life experiences. Studying literature equates to studying life, offering insights into diverse themes that resonate across centuries. It serves as a gateway to profound thoughts and ideas.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: APPROACHES, METHODS, AND TECHNIQUES:

Effective and meaningful teaching and learning hinge on appropriate approaches, methods, and innovative techniques. According to Edward Anthony (1963):

“An approach is a set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught”.

“Method is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach. An approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural”.

“Within one approach, there can be many methods, a technique is implemental that which actually takes place in a class room. It is a particular trick, stratagem or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Technique must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well”.

Language teaching and learning involve continuous experimentation and implementation to achieve optimal results. No single approach, method, or technique is deemed best, as their effectiveness is contingent on learner understanding during the teaching-learning process.

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY VIA LITERARY ENGAGEMENT:

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are language learning skills rather than communication skills. Communicative competence arises from mastering these language skills, which are interconnected. Among various language teaching approaches, the Literature-Based approach offers unique advantages. While other approaches focus on developing language skills and sub-skills, the Literature-Based approach promotes English communication skills while fostering an understanding of life and human values.

BENEFITS OF ENGAGING WITH LITERATURE:

The Literature-Based approach enhances communicative competence across disciplines, fostering skills such as imagination, creativity, analytical ability, gumption, agility, critical thinking, logical reasoning, and communication. Literature provides meaningful exposure to language usage, empowering learners. John Milton's words, "The man of words is the man of the world," underscore the power of language for communication. Literature aids vocabulary acquisition and enriches expression.

CONCLUSION:

While technology offers unique advantages, over-reliance on it for language teaching-learning may lead to unintended consequences. Frequent use of SMS language, even in formal contexts, can erode correct spelling knowledge. Excellent communicators like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mrs. Indira Gandhi didn't have access to today's technology, yet their communication skills were enriched by their affinity for literature. Therefore, studying literature cultivates communicative competence in learners.

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