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LEVERAGING COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS FOR MORE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

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Abstract

Learners of English language must admit that acquiring English is not a big deal to fight in their day today life. Being influenced by the British, people in India will certainly feel more comfortable in using English in their daily conversation. As a result of being colonized for years, opportunity for using English words during their regular conversation in their vernacular is high. As a result, speakers find using English words more common and easy than using the same words in their mother tongue. For example, the words 'Pen, bus, tea, book, time, etc.' are used in English while conversing in their vernacular. Keeping some of these key aspects to consider, the language is quite easy for learning; but making effective conversion in English is always looked as a herculean task. This research work measures and delivers some essential inputs and seasoned aromatic ingredients for effective conversation. Acquiring and mastering the language, though simple, the speakers and the learners find challenging to speak effectively and comfortably. This paper aims to make the needy achieve their level of comfort and to converse effectively in the desired language. One of the essential key tools for effective conversation is 'Communicative Functions' used during the conversation. Using the right communicative functions will certainly make the language effective and better. The speakers will certainly achieve fluency with no doubt.

Key Words: Communicative function, effective conversation, pronunciation, fluency.

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Introduction

Acquiring proficiency in any language can never be a big challenge, and there is no need to get much worried if certain parameters are followed to acquire the same. This condition is applicable for acquisition of any language. When the condition is amazingly easy for acquiring any language, then the condition for enhancing the proficiency of the English language will not be a great deal for non-native speakers. Due to colonization, English language in India has become part and parcel of life; even a person who has never attended school can use English words in their day today life. The essential for acquiring any language is words; in this case, English is considered one of the key strengths of people in India. At numerous instances, people in India are familiar with words in English rather than the words in their mother tongue. This is because of the natural influence of the language. This training made the learners feel easy to acquire conversation tips and achieve fluency during conversation.

Know the Track

A similar concept to sports and games in achieving success should be used to be proficient in English. Knowing how to run is not important when you run in a competition, rather knowing how to run on a track in a competition will fetch laurels. Similarly speaking in English may be bit easy but knowing how to converse effectively is more important. Knowing on how to run on an international track (Using English language fluently and effectively) needs exposure and experience in addition to the ingredients added to make it professional and effective. Using the right ingredients is very much essential for effective conversation. Ingredients such as words, proper grammar, pronunciation, intonation, stress, effective sentence construction, communicative functions etc

are much essential. All the mentioned cannot come easy to every learner all at one instance, rather it could be done on intervals at different phases.

Conversation at different places can be different by the way it is done. Formal communication requires formal conversational tone and language, but informal communication does not need any formal tone or formal language; either formal or informal conversation, they need to be perfect, and it must carry effective means and forms to have the successful conversation or dialogue without ambiguity and confusion. There are many tools for effective conversation, one among them is communicative functions. Communicative functions can be considered as a valuable tool because it begins the conversation, it continues to have effective conversation and it concludes the conversation. The effectiveness of the conversations will be achieved when the communicative functions are used at the required places with impacting the scenario. For example, achievements are to be complimented; using right complementary phrases and responding to the compliments are essentials for effective conversation.

Communicative Functions -An Empirical Study

Fifty students from the first-year engineering course were selected for this study based on the interest, proficiency, and conversation skills. A total of 30 hours of training were planned and conducted, the training was held one hour a day for 30 days spreading to 2 months. In the first training session, students were asked simple questions, and they answered it in a word or two. This is the first stage of speaking skill development. Next, they were asked to answer the question in a complete sentence, they made a good attempt to answer all the questions. Next,

they were given simple scenarios to build conversation and they were asked to make the conversation in front of the remaining participants. Learners found very difficult to build conversation because they had idea on what to talk but they were not able to have the continuation or the logic to extending the conversation. This gave a clear picture that communicative functions were lacking in their conversation.

It is easy to convince the learners that speaking skills are important. All the selected learners were clear about the significance of speaking and their focus on this skill is high compared to all the other three language skills in the form of listening, reading, and writing. Challenges remain constant, irrespective of skill. Though it is clear amongst the learners, when it is said that the session is on speaking, silence is the result. All the skills and the learning tools require motivation but speaking needs more. The learners are continuously motivated on the importance and the outcomes. Though challenging, it is made clear to the learners, and they were made ready. “Studies compare naturally occurring discourse with the language taught in textbooks, for example, Pearson (1986) examines agreeing and disagreeing, while Scotton and Bernsten (1988) analyze the language of direction-giving” (Koester, 2002). This was clearly explained to the select learners and they were mentally prepared on the importance of using a correct communicative function according to the situation.

The key ingredients in conversations are contractions and communicative functions (How to greet others, how to say thanks and sorry and how to respond to it, parting and leave taking, complementing etc.). “Pragmatic or functional uses of language, such as making suggestions, agreeing, disagreeing, asking for information, are important in many different types of interactions” (Koester, 2002). In this training, these communicative functions were concentrated on having better conversation style and having the strength to converse effectively. “Since the development of the communicative approach such speech acts or ‘functions’ have been a regular feature of most English language courses, especially those focusing on oral skills” (Koester, 2002). The list of selected communicative functions and examples are discussed below in this study. Greeting is the first step in conversation; this must be clear and effective so that talking to others will be fruitful.

In the next session, the students were introduced to greetings and responding to greetings. This session focused on the importance of greetings while beginning a conversation and how to respond to the greetings. For example, a few learners were able to extend the greeting ‘nice to meet you’ but they were not able to respond to this greeting. Many learners were not even comfortable enough to use the greeting ‘nice to meet you’. All phrases related to greetings and responding to greetings were given and practiced. The list is given below.

Greetings	Response
Hello!	I’m fine, thank you.
Hai!	How do you do!
How are you?	Just the same.
How do you do?	Nothing special.
Hello! Peter, nice to see you again.	Getting on well
Hi! Everybody (to a group of persons)	Keeps going.

How are things with you? How is everything? How's everything going? What's up? How is life? Good to see you. Glad to see you. Nice to see you again. It's been ages since we last met.	I've joined communication skills class. It's always a pleasure to see you. It's been ages since we last met. My pleasure. The pleasure is mine.
Eg : A: Hello! Shruthi, how are you? B: Fine, thanks and you? A: Getting on well. A: Mohammed! It's good to see you. B: It's good to see you.	

The learners were able to use it effectively and correctly by the end of the session. Majority of the learners were able to start the conversation without any hesitation because they were familiar with the phrases related to greeting and responding to greetings. In this session, phrases for greetings and responding were practiced intensively both on written and oral. By writing the conversation, the learners were found more comfortable and when they initiated the conversation, the phrases for greeting and the responses were in their flow of conversation.

There are different ways to say sorry, thank you and the responding to it in English language. Knowing these functions is important in regular conversation. When a person feels grateful for something, appreciation to them is

conveyed by saying thank you. And when regret is experienced, 'sorry' is the only word, many uses. "Most learners fail to present pragmatic ability on how to use request, apology by relating expressions to their meanings, knowing the intention of language users" (Hussein, et. al., 2019).

The next training sessions were on 'How to say sorry and thanks' and 'How to respond to people when they say sorry and thanks.'. Like the previous session, the learners were happy to use the phrases because they rarely used very few phrases during their conversation. These sessions gave a vivid picture of the content required for speaking. All the learners were very constructive in using the phrases for 'sorry' and 'thanks'. The phrases given for the training are as follows.

SAYING 'THANKS' AND RESPONDING TO 'THANKS'

How to say 'thanks':	Responding to thanks.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thanks. 2. Thank you. 3. Many thanks. 4. Thank you very much. 5. Thank you indeed. 6. Thanks a lot. 7. That's kind of you. 8. That's nice of you. 9. I am really very grateful to you. 10. I am extremely grateful to you. 11. I am immensely grateful to you. 12. I am very much obliged to you. 13. That's extremely good of you. 14. I should like to say how grateful I am (formal). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It's a pleasure. 2. Not at all. 3. Please don't mention it. 4. Thank you. 5. That's ok. 6. That's all right. 7. You're welcome.
<p>Eg A: Thank you for your Explanation. B: It's a pleasure</p> <p>Passengers in a bus A: Madam, would you mind my sitting beside you? I feel giddy. B: Not at all, Sir. You are welcome. Please be seated. A: Thank you, Madam. Very kind of you</p>	

SAYING SORRY AND RESPONDING TO IT.

expressions used for saying 'sorry':	Responding to 'sorry'
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I'm sorry. 2. Oh! I'm sorry. 3. I'm deeply sorry. 4. I am really so sorry. 5. I am terribly sorry. 6. I'm awfully sorry. 7. I am so sorry. 8. I'm extremely sorry. 9. How stupid of me to behave like this. 10. Oh! It's my fault. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That's all right. 2. That's quite all right. 3. Not at all. 4. Please don't worry. 5. It doesn't matter at all. 6. It really doesn't matter at all. <p>Among friends:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That's OK. 2. Forget it. 3. That's all right.

11. How silly I am to say this to you!	
A: I'm extremely sorry. I couldn't give your book on time.	
B: That's ok, please don't worry.	
A: Sorry to bother you.	
B: That's all right tell me	

The list of expressions given to the learners enhanced the quality of conversation. They could express perfectly when asked to write the conversation and make it in front of others. They also expressed happiness and satisfaction of learning English. In the following sessions, the learners were introduced to the remaining communicative functions and the same training on writing the conversation and then making the same in front of other learners were carried out. The level of comfort and confidence were witnessed evidently in the remaining days of training. Given is the list of communicative functions that were used during the entire training programme.

1. Greetings
2. Saying 'thanks' and responding to 'thanks'
3. Saying sorry and responding to it.
4. Expressing apologies and responding to them
5. Requesting
6. Congratulating / complementing and responding to them
7. Expressing 'surprise' and responding to it
8. Expressing likes:
9. Expressing dislikes
10. Asking for permission and giving and refusing permission
11. Asking for information
12. Saying something is correct
13. Saying something is not correct

14. Expressing general good wishes
15. Expressions related to parting / leaving
16. Showing sympathy
17. Saying you are pleased
18. Saying you are angry or displeased.
19. Making an invitation
20. Offering help

One communicative function a day fetched the desired result. After completing all the communicative functions in the subsequent days of training, the learners were given different scenarios to build conversation. Almost all the learners were able to understand the requirements of building conversation and done a fantastic job of constructing conversation. They used the communicative functions at the right place with the right context.

Conclusion

The present research study has addressed the effectiveness of communicative function usage. This is evident because any communication shall be made effective with the usage of these tools. Learners will certainly be more comfortable in learning this component which acts as a basic tool. Initially they too had quite difficulty in the usage and the application to go with. As days passed by, they were able to get accustomed and worked extremely hard to achieve the desired result. Overall, the mentioned factors about communicative functions will give the desired results and show a better path for the learners. To conclude, a minimum of 180 hours with the right

ingredients in correct proportion will make beginners of English language to sound strong. This mode of training young graduates would enhance their competence to face interviews and professional life with confidence.

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