

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN STUDENTS

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Abstract

Communication plays an important role in our everyday life. Good communication is therefore vital for effective functioning in the work environment. There is overwhelming evidence that proficiency in communication skills can make any individual more versatile, and thus more competitive in the workplace. Communication is a mode, which helps every one of us to transfer our messages, thoughts, feelings, thinking, imagination and ideas. This is a function pre-installed or naturally exists in every human being to show his/her existence by language. Thus, every student certainly needs effective and impressive communication skills. As a result, there are growing expectations from educational institutions to cater the needs of the workplace. One of the major issues we need to address includes, what measures should be taken to make the students work-ready? In this perspective, Teachers have an important role to play in enhancing the communication skills among students. Considering the diversity in the classroom, there is a growing demand to use innovative methods and strategies, including framing good quality instructional resources to enhance various sub-skills of communication among our students. An attempt is made in this article, to contribute to the ongoing discussion in the changing contexts of communication skills from the perspective of preparing our students to face future challenges. The paper shares ideas on enhancing the four core elements of Communication skills, including listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in order to get an edge up in the competition for work and employment.

Keywords: Communication Skills, Education, Classroom Practises



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1. INTRODUCTION

The educational institutions are mainly involved in producing graduates in various fields to fulfil the manpower requirements as per the industry needs. During this progression, it is indispensable not only to focus on academic achievement, but also on “Communication skills” to prepare our students for competing in the job market and work places. At Present, employers place greater importance on Communication skills and personality in choosing their future employees.

According to the Concise *Oxford Dictionary* the word communication means ‘the act of imparting, especially news’, or ‘the science and practice of transmitting information’. These definitions clearly show the link between ‘teaching’ and ‘communication’: teachers are constantly imparting new knowledge, or transmitting information. Communication skills are the essential skills, although it encompasses several elements, such as listening, speaking, reading

and written skills. Considering fresh graduates usually tested on their communication skills during job interviews, all the educational institutions will have to ensure that students are well-equipped with the ability to communicate clearly and effectively. In this perspective, this article shares a few innovative ideas and approaches for classroom practices to develop communication skills among students during their stay in the campus.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

For the subject, relevant literature was reviewed to acquaint with the work already done in the field regarding the significance of communication skills, as well, as how it affects the teaching practices. The review of literature mainly encompasses research work & studies related to topic within India and Abroad.

As per review, communication mainly involves the exchange of ideas, opinions and information with a specific objective. Broadly, it is defined as a process of exchanging information, from the person giving the information through verbal and non-verbal methods, to the person receiving the information. The most common technique of communication is verbal, using a specific language where it is a two-way process, with feedback on the message received. Apart from oral communication, information can also be exchanged using symbols or signage.

As per Seiler & Beall (2005), Communication is defined as sharing and giving meaning occurring at the same time through symbolic interactions. Sulaiman Masri (1997) said that Communication starts when a message or information is transferred from the sender (the speaker, writer) to the receiver (listener, the reader) through an instrument or channel, and followed by the receiver giving feedback through coding and interpreting the information. Some researchers defined communication as verbal communication, written communication, non-verbal communication, listening and giving feedback (Najmuddin, 2010). Likewise, Rodiah Idris (2010) proposes that communication as a non-verbal skill, giving feedback, presenting ideas verbally and in written form, doing presentations and negotiating to achieve a goal and getting support/agreement.

As per these definitions, elements of communication include person-giving information, the information and feedback by the receiver and repetition of these processes creates knowledge development. The process of communication generally involves four elements, which are the speaker, the receiver, communication channel and feedback. Communication is more effective, if the receiver (of the information) can understand and practice the core skills. Further, communication will be more meaningful, if the physical and social factors are

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taken into account during the communication process. A positive communication environment provides good opportunities for students to learn how to communicate and thus have better communication skills.

In the Indian context, students' success in the on-campus recruitment is mainly based on their demonstration of communication skills. According to Karnik, Former President, NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Services Company), only 25 percent of graduates are suitable for employment in the outsourcing industry because of their lack of abilities to speak or write well in English. (Karnik, 2007 as cited in P. Rayan 2008:1). Most of the students are not industry ready because they lack communication skills. (Infosys, 2008).

Communication skills are categorised in different ways. Broadly, it involves four core elements such listening, speaking, reading and written skills. As a result, during Classroom interactions, students need to be given enough opportunities to communicate, in order to be better prepared for the job market after their completion of the studies.

3. CONCEPT OF TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

A change in the behaviour of an individual, desirable to society, which has been brought without or with a set of instructions, is termed as learning. So often, the teachers create a particular type of environment to bring a particular learning. Such a deliberate manipulation of environment to facilitate the learning process of an individual to have a desired learning outcome is called teaching.

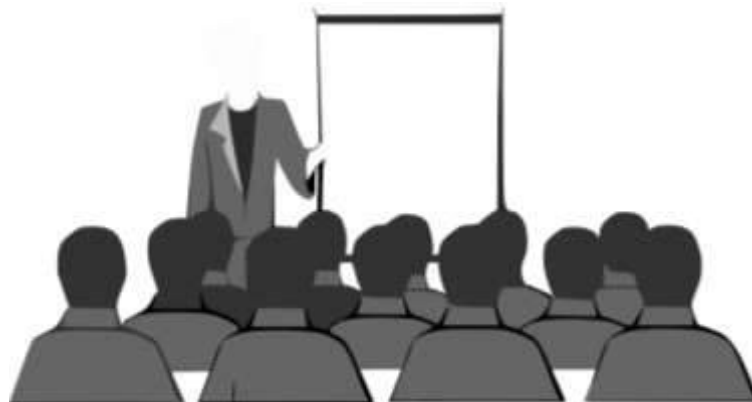


Figure 1: Communication Skills in Classroom Teaching

In a broader view, the act of teaching means understanding and guiding of students as individuals and as groups. It means providing the learning experiences that enable learners to grow continuously and sequentially towards their own role for the future jobs. The teachers being instructional agents can create a positive socio-psychological climate, in which the learner feels comfortable and learning is facilitated. The teacher manipulates and controls the

content in the ways that facilitate learning to realize the learning outcome. Broadly, teaching the communication skills can be viewed as:

- A dynamic interplay between the teacher and the student through the communication skills content.
- The dynamism exists due to interaction between teacher's behaviour and students' behaviour.
- Due to this interaction, a special and purposeful environment is created. This creation of an environment is guided by some norms or standards.
- The created environment helps students to make their learning process more effective. The effective learning process of students improves their communication skills achievement qualitatively.

4. METHODS OF TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Teaching is regarded as providing opportunities for students to learn. It is interactive process as well as an intentional activity. The term teaching method refers to the general principles, pedagogy and management strategies used for classroom instruction. The choice of the teaching methods depends on what fits a teacher i.e. his or her educational philosophy, classroom demographic, subject areas and the mission statement of the institution. The teaching theories may be placed broadly into two categories or approaches, namely the teacher centered and student centered.

| Methods of Teaching Communication Skills | |
|--|------------------|
| Teacher Centered | Student Centered |

In **teacher centered approach**- the teacher is the authority. Students are considered as empty vessels, whose primary responsibility to passively receive information with an objective of testing and assessment. Here, the most important role of the teacher is to pass knowledge and information about communication skills onto their students. The student's learning is measured through objectively scored tests and assessments.

In **student centered approach**- the teachers are primarily concerned with the coaching and facilitating the students' learning and overall comprehension of the communication skills content. The learning of the students can be measured through both formal and informal ways of assessment, including group projects, student portfolios, and class participation. Teachers assess continuous the learning outcomes of students.

5. ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Enhancing communication skills are about recognizing and making explicit what we do already in our courses by drawing students' attention to the communication skills and outcomes they are developing as part of their study. This means:

- i. Raising awareness about how the curriculum develops communication skills.
- ii. Explicitly linking learning outcomes with communication.
- iii. Enhancing students' understanding of the value of study beyond their immediate subject area.
- iv. Giving students a language to communicate more effectively with employers about their skills, knowledge and career potential.

Given below in *Figure 2* is the inter-linkages in developing communication skills among students.



Figure 2: Inter linkages in Developing Communication Skills

- a) Cultivating communication and links between job requirements to create a clearer direction for student learning.
- b) Creating the curriculum content more relevant to current and future needs of work and establishments.
- c) Confining classroom pedagogy so that it incorporates essential communication skill attributes.
- d) Inspiring students obtain the needed skill-attributes through a structured and well-planned programme, class projects, involvement with student and professional organizations.
- e) Systematizing and making essential communication-skills education compulsory in the educational curriculum.

In the subsequent paragraphs, a few suggestions are given to enhance communication skills among the students.

6. EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The effectiveness is estimated with respect to the goals of teaching. A beautifully presented lecture, which merely aims to convey the information about the communication skills, may be considered effective. If the goal is to stimulate the students to develop the skills, then beautifully presented lecture may be regarded ineffective. According to Brown and Atkins (1999) “it is better to teach clearly and stimulate the students to think by drawing their attention to particular issues than it is to be deliberately confusing.”

To be effective in teaching Communication Skills one should realize that (i) effective teaching is a complex, intellectually demanding and socially challenging task, and (ii) effective teaching consists of a set of skills that can be acquired, improved, and extended. To teach effectively, a teacher must know his/her subject, how students learn? And how to teach?

In order to effectively teach communication skills, given below are some of the necessary skills that every teacher must possess so that they interact properly with the students.

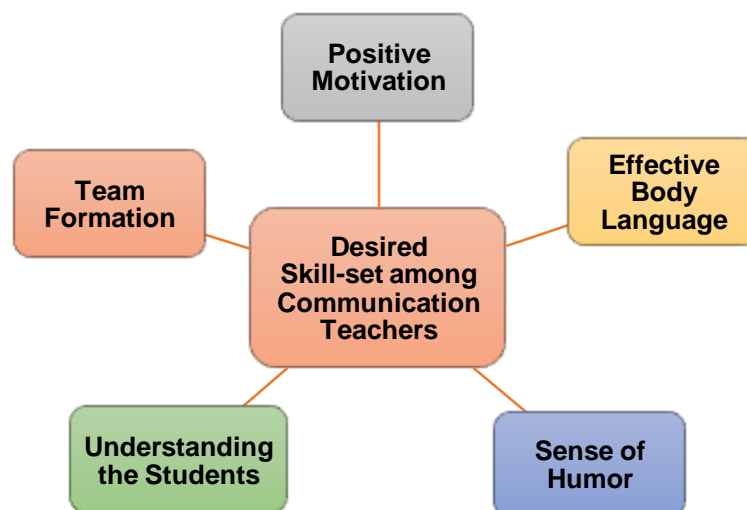


Figure 3: Desired Skill-set among Communication Teachers

Positive Motivation: This is one of the important things that a teacher must possess. In a class, students always have different kinds of taste and preferences over communication skills subject. So it is the job of the teacher to create enthusiasm and interest in the minds of the students towards this subject. It is also a teacher’s role to remove any fear and inhibitions, which a student may have towards the subject.

Effective Body Language: This is the most powerful communication skill that a teacher must possess. Good presentation skills include a powerful body language supported by verbal skills. This can create a long lasting impression in the minds of the students. Thus, the lectures will inevitably become more interactive and interesting for the students. Besides, a teacher should maintain the volume, tone and rhythm of their voice during a lecture.

Sense of Humor: The importance of this factor has been regularly underestimated. A good sense of humor keeps the students active and interested in the teacher's class. A teacher who is dour and lacks humor doesn't contribute to the overall well-being of the students.

Understanding the Students: Teachers should encourage students to communicate openly. There should be emphasis on cultivating a dialogue rather than a monologue. So while solving any kind of problems in the classroom, it is always wise to hear the opinions of the students also.

Team Formation: This is a good method where you can divide the classroom into small teams and ask them to practice different communication skills or solve problems or complete assignments. This practice will increase not only the interaction among the students, but also among the teacher and students.

7. USING INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS AMONG STUDENT

For developing the Communication skills among students, role of teacher is very important as their in-depth knowledge of the particular subject, which they teach. There is need that all the teachers should be aware of the importance of communication skills in day-to-day teaching. They will have to realize that all students have different levels of strengths and weaknesses. It is only through communication skills that a teacher can introduce creative and effective solutions to the problems of the students. Thus, a teacher can enhance the learning process for developing communication skills.

A classroom environment relies heavily on the quality of communication taking place within it. The teacher must take steps towards improving the communication skills of students will contribute positively towards classroom climate. Students with effective communication skills will be more likely to contribute to class discussions, will be more productive members' in-group projects, and will ultimately gain more from their experience in class.

Likewise, it is also important that teachers should be up to date with all the latest teaching aids like computers, video conferencing and especially the use of the internet. This will also help the students to keep up their interest in the learning process.

Given below are few innovative teaching strategies and suggestive approaches that can be adopted to improve students' communication skills, with the intent of strengthening the classroom learning experiences.



7.1 INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

a) Discussion Method:

Some philosophers believe that knowledge arises within the students and not from external sources. In a classroom, students share their knowledge; as a result, discussion takes place. Discussion is an orderly process of face-to-face interaction in which participants exchange ideas about an issue for solving a problem, answering a question, enhancing their learning or making a decision. Here students take over the communication skills subject from various points of view and with the help of questioning and answering. In this method of teaching, teacher acts as a moderator. This is an appropriate method for teaching communication skills subject, which is social in nature.

Bridges (1998) rightly suggested that in order to exchange an idea, a discussion should meet the following conditions: a) people must talk to one another; b) people must listen to one another; c) people must respond to one another; d) they must be put forward more than one point of view; and e) they must have the intention of developing their knowledge, understanding or judgment of the issue under discussion.

Using discussion is considered to be a co-operative thinking process. During the course, students are expected to share their thoughts, as they discuss academic issues, discussion is both active and highly helpful in students' internal learning.



Figure 4: Improving Communication Skills Teaching using Discussion Method

Discussion method for teaching Communication skills can be used in many different innovative ways, either as part of a lesson, as a whole lesson, or integrated with one or more other teaching methods. A discussion can likewise be used for solving communication problems or to focus on exploring open-ended related issues. A teacher can organize classroom discussion when:

- Students are required to develop a sense of ownership over their new knowledge and responsibility for their own learning.
- Students are supposed to think critically about the topic to develop their communication skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation rather than memorizing the facts.
- Students are required to develop their understanding by drawing on their prior knowledge and experiences.

b) Role Playing Method:

The Oxford dictionary defines role-playing as “the changing of one’s behaviour to fulfil a social role.” Role-playing refers to the changing of one’s behaviour to assume a role, either unconsciously to fill a social role, or consciously to act as an adopted role. Term role-playing is used in four aspects. They are:

- i. The playing of roles generally in theatre or educational setting
- ii. Taking a role of an existing character or person and acting it out with a partner taking someone else role, often involving different genres of practice
- iii. Refers to a wide range of games includes role-playing video game, and so on.
- iv. Refer specially to role-playing games in the context of giving work situation

Role-playing may also refer to the role training, where students can rehearse situations in preparation of a future performance and to improve their abilities within a role. The most common examples are occupational training role-plays, educational role play exercises, and certain military war games.

With the help of role playing a student may attain a clear understanding of how he/she is capable of affecting the behaviours of others. He/she can know the cause of others' behaviour towards him/her. Having such awareness, he/she may be able to make desirable changes in his/her behaviour for the improvement in his/her social interaction and feeling about himself and others.

In role playing technique the teacher puts the students in situations about which he/she wants to teach them. He/she also instructs them to interact in the way if really they have been put in that situation. The reactions shown by them may be very much nearer to the real situation. In fact, role-playing calls for students stepping outside the accustomed role that he/she plays in life. The student is required for relinquishing his/her usual patterns of behaviours in exchange for the role and patterns of another person. This other role may be that of a real person or may be fictional.



Figure 5: Using Role-Play for Improving Students Performance

Role plays can vary from highly structured mainly scripted, through to semi-structured, to very spontaneous performances. Role-play has four major steps:

- i. Setting the scene
- ii. Organizing the setting
- iii. Enacting

iv. Debriefing, discussing and summarizing

Role-plays are highly effective for developing communication skills, as well as practicing problem solving in social situations. This method can be used at various levels. To make a role play to be effective, it is important that:

- The classroom environment is warm, supportive and secure.
- Students need a considerable amount of practice in developing speaking and listening skills, decision-making and reflection.
- A role-play is chosen that is suited to the age, gender, ability level and interests of the students.
- Progress should be simple, highly structured role-plays to more complex, open ended ones.
- The requirements of the role-play should be clearly understood by the students.
- Before being presented to the class, the role-play should be rehearsed and worked in groups.

c) **Demonstration Method:**

Another interesting way to teach communication skills to students is by using demonstration. In this method, the teacher displays or shows or exhibits something. It may be a model human behaviour, objects, or models. Demonstration method can be used in highlighting of various sub-skills of communication skills that could be demonstrated by the teacher during practice session. Students can also perform demonstrations individually or in groups.

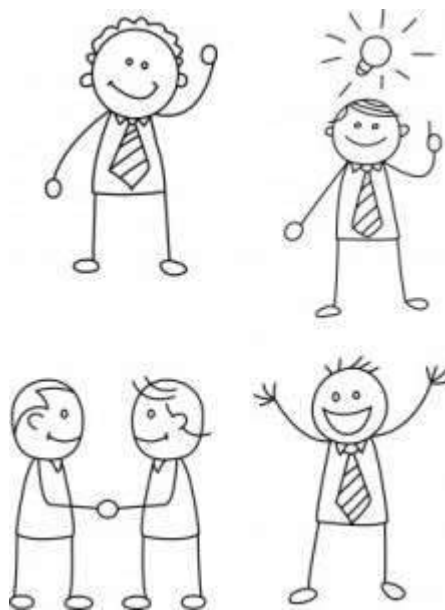


Figure 6: Using Demonstration Method for Communication Skills

d) Group Work Method:

Working in a small group may be a means of deeper learning concepts of communication. According to many educators, allowing students to work in a group is also an effective teaching strategy. Like discussion method, group work relies on input from students. In group work, students are required to work together with no direct intervention by the teacher. The main reason for using this method is that the students when they work in a group get greater opportunities for learning, which is not possible, when work in the whole class teaching. However, it does not mean that group work should always be preferred. It is advisable that teachers should use a combination of both.

When, there is use of group work the teacher should have control over some parts of the lesson. The teacher should create the learning situation for a specific aspect of communication and then allow the students to complete the tasks. Rather than directing the leaning teacher monitors it.

The group work as a teaching method can be very effective in the following conditions:

- i. Students are required to exchange ideas and learn from one another
- ii. To enhance students' motivation and to increase their active participation in learning
- iii. When a teacher is required to concentrate to make efforts of a small group of students who are supposed to participate actively



Figure 7: Group Work for Solving Real World Communication Problems

e) Case Study:

Although the case method has been used for years to teach in the field of law, business, and medicine, it is not common in teaching communication skills. Yet the use of case studies holds great promise as a pedagogical technique for teaching communication skills, particularly to undergraduates, because it humanizes and well illustrates scientific

methodology and values. It develops students' skills in group learning, speaking, and critical thinking, and since many of the best cases is based on contemporary—and often contentious—communication skills problems that students encounter in the real world (such as organizational communication), the use of cases in the classroom makes communication skills highly appropriate.



Figure 8: Using Case Study for Communication Skills

The use of case studies holds great promise as a pedagogical technique for teaching. Many faculty use case studies in their curriculum to teach content, involve students with real life data or provide opportunities for students to put themselves in the decision maker's shoes. Cases add meaning by providing students with the opportunity to see communication skills concepts in practice. Real world or authentic contexts expose students to viewpoints from multiple sources and see why people may want different outcomes. Students can also see how a decision will influence different participants, both positively and negatively.

Cases usually require students to analyse given situation or data in order to reach a conclusion. Since many assignments are open-ended, students can practice choosing appropriate analytic techniques as well. Teachers who use case-based learning says that their students are more engaged, interested, and involved in the class.

In their effort to find solutions and reach decisions through discussion, students sort out the factual data, apply analytic tools, articulate issues, reflect on their relevant experiences, and draw conclusions they can relate to new situations. In the process, they acquire substantive knowledge and develop sub-communication skills.

g. Language Laboratory:

For a successful career in any field, it is essential that students have good communication skills in English. By setting Communication Skills Laboratory, we can prepare students to adapt themselves with ease to the industry environment, thus rendering them as prospective assets to industries. The Language Lab is a fully computerised system (with internet connectivity and educational software is installed) based Lab. The software's used in the Laboratory set-up equips the students with the necessary communication skills to excel in their professions. The labs are generally complete learning solutions, allowing the learners to enhance all the language skills. Added to this is the benefit of self-paced learning. The learners are able to practice at the pace most suitable to their ability. This is normally not possible in a regular classroom.

7.2 Adopting New Digital Media in Teaching-Learning

An important element in teaching communication skills is the use of instructional media or teaching aids. We have all heard the saying: 'What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I know'. Pictures, written posters and practical demonstrations improve communication and we should use them as much as possible. Most of us have access to paper, posters, a chalkboard, or LCD projector. We can use these to prepare instructional aides for our lessons: summaries of important facts, or pictures and diagrams.

Today, instructional media encompasses all the materials and physical means, an instructor and teacher might use to implement instruction and facilitate learners' achievement of instructional objectives. This may include traditional materials such as chalkboards, handouts, charts, slides, overheads, real objects, flash card and videotape or film, as well newer materials and methods such as computers, DVDs, CD-ROMs, the Internet, and interactive video conferencing. With the new developments in ICT, it has created many new forms of digital media in the instructional system. There are many new forms of digital media entering into the teaching-learning process. Presently, many higher education institutions are on a swift path to integrate learning technologies into classroom practice.

There are several advantages of using digital media in the teaching-learning process. It includes; a) increases the learners' motivation; b) avoid the learners getting bored, c) make
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the learners easy to understand the concepts; and d) make the teaching learning process more systematic. Instructional media help add elements of reality - for instance, including pictures or highly involved computer simulations in a lecture. In our region, many institutions are increasingly making digital media technology as an educational priority.

Today, teachers can use a variety of ICT tools such as, Blended Learning, Web-Based Learning, LMS such as MOOC, Podcasting, Blogs, Wiki, e-learning, m-learning, u-learning, e-books, Social Networking, etc. being integrated and adopted diversely into the present education system. Some of the new forms of such digital media are briefly outlined below;

a) Podcasting

As per Wikipedia, a *podcast* (or non-streamed webcast) is a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are released episodically and often downloaded through web syndication. There are many useful features of Podcasts; it enables students and teachers to share information with anyone or at any time. If a student is absent, he or she can download the podcast of the recorded lesson. Teachers may also create podcasts to be used as a preparation tool for students. There are numerous podcasts on communication skills are freely available on the web. This would be pedagogically equivalent to having students read a text before a lesson. These days like the podcast, Video podcasts can also be employed in all these ways as well.

b) Blogs

As per Wikipedia, a *blog* is a type of website or part of a website. Blogs are usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. Most blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message to each other via widgets on the blogs and it is the interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites.

Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Web pages, and other media related to its theme/topic. The ability of readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (Art blog), photographs (photoblog), videos (video blogging), music (MP3 blog), and audio (podcasting). Microblogging is another type of blogging, and featuring very short posts.

Currently, use of blogs has become very popular in educational institutions including schools and colleges. Blogs can be important tools for sharing useful information and tips for dispersing information to students. Teachers can create, monitor and edit blogs to ensure that the postings are appropriate and pertain to the communication skills in the classroom.

Many teachers use blogs as a way to communicate and enhance classroom instruction among their students. It is easy to introduce the use of blogs in the classroom and allows both the teacher and student the ability to edit and add content at any time. The ability for both the teacher and student to edit content allows the study to take place outside the classroom environment. Blogs increase exposure to other students from around the country or world while improving writing and communication skills. Teachers are using blogs as a way to post important information such as homework, important dates, missed lessons, projects, discussion boards, and other useful classroom information that is accessible by all. Students can access this information from home, or from any computer that is connected to the Internet.

Students can use blogs to communicate with other students for group projects as well. Students can also access the blog to ask each other questions regarding a missed assignment or lesson. It also gives students an opportunity to collaborate on poetry, various writing assignments, or readings. Students can respond initially to the text, including their thoughts, feelings, connections, questions, etc. Other students would have the opportunity to respond and react to these responses. This would generate conversation amongst the students and develop their critical and analytical thinking skills. It also allows students who are shy and reserved in class to voice their opinions and insight using a different approach. With the rising use of blogs in the classroom, students learn from one another and individually express them as well.

There are many blogs on communication skills are freely available on the web. Good use of such blogs in education gives students a global perspective. Learning through blogs allows students to take control of their own learning and steer it to their own needs.

c) Wiki

As per Wikipedia, a *wiki* is a website that allows the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser using a simplified markup language or a WYSIWYG text editor. Wikis are typically powered by wiki software and are often used to create collaborative wiki websites, to power community websites, for personal note taking, in corporate intranets, and in knowledge management systems.

Wikis and education often go together. Many publicly available wikis, such as Wikiversity, allow for self-education. Wikis are also, sometimes used in classrooms for collaborative projects. Some teachers have found, however, that learners prefer to add their own content rather than rewrite others' work, perhaps because of an institutional cultivated norm of individual ownership. Some students also express shyness about exposing their work to be viewed by others. Such transparency seems to reduce plagiarism.

There is also one significant capability, with wiki software such as Media Wiki, to review all the edits made by any particular user. In this way, if an edit made by a user is identified as problematic, it is possible to check his other edits for issues. This feature is also useful for teachers to communication skills classes in which grades for group projects are determined by the contributions of individual students to a wiki. Since all the work is done on the wiki, the teacher can see everything that is and is not being done. That makes early intervention possible, whenever it is necessary. In coming years, wiki is going to become an effective tool for instructional system.

d) e-learning

E-learning comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching. E-learning is utilized to reference out-of-classroom and in-classroom educational experiences via technology. Presently, e-learning is essentially the computer and network-enabled transfer of skills and knowledge. E-learning applications and processes include Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classroom opportunities and digital collaboration. The e-content is delivered via the Internet, intranet/extranet, audio or video tape, satellite TV, and CD-ROM. It can be self-paced or instructor-led and includes media in the form of text, image, animation, streaming video and audio. We can find many websites hosting a variety of e-content freely available for diverse learners.

e) e-books

As per Wikipedia, an *electronic book* (also e-book, ebook, digital book) is a text- and image-based publication in digital form produced on, published by, and readable on computers or other digital devices." Sometimes the equivalent of a conventional printed book, e-books can also be born digital. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines the e-book as "an electronic version of a printed book, "but e-books can and do exist without any printed equivalent. E-books are usually read on dedicated hardware devices known as *e-Readers* or *e-book devices*. Personal computers and some cell phones can also be used to read e-books.

Compared to the paperback books, e-books are deemed more convenient and more accessible, since it can be translated into many languages, can be connected to the internet, and can enable a “text-to-speech” option where the contents of the books were read aloud. There are many e-books on communication skills freely available on the web.

7.3 Using Apps for Enhancing Communication Skills

With the growing use of mobile by our students, it has created new opportunities for learning anytime and anywhere. There are hundreds of apps freely available on iOS or android platform for improving English language as well learning the communication skills. Apps can be downloaded with a single click, and used on smartphones, tablets or even on our computer. These apps have interactive tools, structured lessons, vocabulary lists, business idioms and the most recent business news and analysis from around the world. All are designed to help for helping the students to reach success in the business world. Some of the popular apps includes, e.g. *SpeakingPal English Tutor*, *Conversation English*, *Busuu*, *Voxy*, *Spellbee*, *Basic English for Beginners*, *Learn English Vocabulary*, etc.

There are many benefits of using apps, such as a) Improve vocabulary and knowledge of useful idioms and expressions; b) Provide the right set of tools to help develop communication skills; c) Be used anytime, anywhere—while waiting for the bus or while travelling to or from college/work.

To sum up, to make our efforts more meaningful, given below are a few steps that can be employed to improve our students' communication skills, with the intent of strengthening the classroom experience.

- a) Establish the ground rules and norms for class discussion early on. By setting the standards for class participation as early as possible, our students will be more likely to understand their role in the discussion. Specific elements, such as when a speaker should raise their hand, and more intangible aspects such as the tone for the classroom environment you establish, will help our students understand how communication works within the classroom.
- b) Encourage all students to participate in class discussion. Avoid focusing on the students that are always willing to answer. Look for responses from the entire classroom, and be willing to take the time for them to emerge.
- c) Assign frequent opportunities for small group discussion. The more often students work together in order to contribute to the larger discussion, the more comfortable they will become within the classroom environment, increasing their willingness to communicate.

- d) Adopt a policy of openness with our students. When you make a change to the class structure, or give an assignment, be open to students about your intentions, and seek their feedback. By treating them with respect and openness, we will help foster an environment of trust with our students, increasing their likelihood of openness to improving communication skills.

8. CONCLUSION

The paper discussed a wide variety of teaching methods and new digital media that can be used for effective teaching -learning in the context of communication skills. The selection of methods depends on the session instructional objectives. An attempt should be made to promote active learning in the classroom. Hoping that practicing teachers will consider all of the suggestions in the paper in light of their teaching styles and personalities and attempt to adopt a few of them in the course they teach, and then perhaps a few more in the course after that.

The use of appropriate methods and media of teaching has the purpose to improve the level of communication skills and involve students in the educational process. While it will be difficult to predict the extent to which the techniques will succeed in achieving the learning objectives, we can say with great confidence that their use will improve the quality of learning that occurs in the classes.

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