



## A Study on Enhancing Communication Skills in English through Digital Interactive Materials

C.Gowsalya, Part-Time PhD Research Scholar, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai.

Dr.M.Muruganandam, Research Guide, Assistant Professor of English, Rajapalayam Raju's College, Rajapalayam.

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4865254

### Abstract

*A language could be a means that of communication. What we tend to feel or what we all know, we've to share the equivalent to other people. So as to convey we all know or we tend to feel, we want a tool. That tool is language. There are several languages within the world. One among them is English. Language could be a system. Every language has its own structure, its very own system. The main objective of the teaching learning of a living language – like English – is to assist the students with becoming ready to utilize it to speak with others, by sending and receiving significant messages. Language is a vital tool of communication to precise one's ideas, views and feelings. Basic communication skills are the four language skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing [LSRW] and advanced communication skills refer to language functions such as discussing, persuading, negotiating, sharing ideas, opinions and views, agreeing and/or disagreeing with others opinions. **Communication is that the art of being understood. Communicating in a international world could be a difficult task!** Communication is that the exchange of information or thoughts between at least two individuals. It is the act of expressing thoughts in a manner that others understand. This article reports on the impact of digital interactive materials to enhance advanced English communication skills of the learners. An action research project is carried out to train the tertiary level learners to enhance their ability to using the language in different situations. The result was satisfactory in enhancing not only the language skills of the learners but also their lateral thinking.*

**Keywords:** digital interactive materials, communication skills, lateral thinking

### 1. Introduction

Language that has been thought of man's most striking accomplishment, is so much a part of our lives, similar to the air we tend to breathe, that very often we take it for granted and as frequently don't know about its characteristic features. There are numerous things regarding language that are as yet a riddle and will probably remain so. However, there are perspectives we do know. The past many decades have seen an enormous amount of linguistics as a language, a depiction of its fundamental qualities would make a superior comprehension of linguistic science. Language is a system. It is not an arbitrary collection of items. Patterning is terrifically imperative. Every language has its own structure, its own



system. It has its very own unique way of arranging its units into an internal structure. Generally when the question of language teaching and communication are raised, one can immediately think about the knowledge of the structure of the language concerned and also proficiency in the four basic skills of the language. They are

1. Listening skill
2. Speaking skill
3. Reading skill
4. Writing skill

Among these four skills, both listening skill and reading skill are called as **receptive skills** or **passive skills** and the other two skills, namely speaking skill and writing skill are called as **productive skills** or **active skills**. It is very important to note that there is a close link between all the above skills. In other words, every skill in its own way is interconnected in order to achieve the overall objective of communication. Except if one has deliberate exposure in receptive skills, he/she cannot be systematic in productive skill. Everything happens and develops within the linguistic, cultural and social boundaries of the concerned society in which the specific language is spoken.

## 2. Changes in methodology and materials

ELT has undergone drastic changes in the 21st century. The expedition propelled ELT has crossed several milestones such as chalk and talk method, teacher – centered, learner – centered, task based teaching and learning, communicative language approach and learning – centered. Now the focus is solely on learning and by all means the learners must be able to use the language. Learning – centered classrooms cater to the individual differences of the learners and also their strengths and weaknesses. Learning – centered approach provides opportunities for varied learning styles and strategies, taking into consideration multiple intelligences and the needs of the learners. ELT practitioners believe that learning is process – oriented and not product – oriented. This kind of approach is essential in this era of technology.

## 3. Interactive Materials

Interactive Materials reinforce the spoken or written words with concrete images and thus provide rich perceptual images which are the bases to learning. At the point when these materials are utilized in an interrelated way they make learning permanent. They provide for an incredible variety of methods. They bring the outside world into the classroom and make us teach with efficiency. In order to derive the advantages of using teaching aids, a teacher needs the knowledge of different types of materials available, their place in the teaching-learning process and the methods of their evaluation. The materials alone cannot accomplish the task of education and the teacher always remains the main pivot of all teaching. While using teaching aids the teacher should be clear about the objects of instruction and thus make the right use of the right material at the right place and at the right time. Materials which interact among themselves to reveal and make them understand are referred as interactive materials. Instead of going to the established items of grammar book, thesaurus or



appendices, learners can comprehend materials by consulting the other related materials included in the textbook. Interactive materials develop study skills and enhance self learning.

#### **4. Digital interactive materials**

Materials can be referred as interactive as they interact with one other and enable the learners to interact with them to be more comprehensible. Interactive materials are designed in such a way that it is pertinent to the learners and keep them engaging. The learners know their progress as they do the task or activity. They receive immediate feedback. In general, digital interactive materials are referred to e-materials. But in the context of a semi-urban context where technology is not practiced much, interactive materials is of great help to the learners. With a wide range of materials available, the teacher can exploit them in order to enhance the communication skills of the learners.

Before the invent of computer and internet technologies, printed version of resources like books, dictionaries, journals, work books etc. compete a significant role in teaching and learning process. However these printed versions are not easily accessible to all and are also very expensive in nature. During this technological age, digital interactive materials like e-version of books, journals, and web tools etc... or e-resources have become inevitable and hence it is significantly required for both teachers and students to equip them. “A learning tool could be a tool for your own personal or professional learning or one you use for teaching or training.” At present digital interactive materials are most vital and inevitable e-resources for the students and teachers in their teaching and learning process. Digital interactive materials help the teachers to engage students and promote their learning. Many of today’s digital interactive materials motivate the students to learn while developing critical and lateral thinking skills necessary for competing in today’s global economy.

Digital interactive materials are an ocean of materials where learners have to spend more time to choose even amidst irrelevant materials. Digital interactive materials content is available online globally and is more suitable for adult learners. Digital interactive materials are learning tool which takes place as a result of experiences and interaction in an Internet environment. Major fallout of the widespread use of computers in the field of education has been the advent of technology. Digital mode of learning consists of course material that can be accessed on-line. These course materials have everything that a normal course has and work more or less in the same way as a traditional course with assignments, tests, etc. The materials for these courses are delivered in two modes, namely, the CD-ROM and the Internet. The courses are normally prepared using learning platforms or learning management systems (LMS).

**CD-Rom-** In this method, the course is accessible on CDs. Learners either access the CD-ROMs on Local Area Network (LAN) or on the individual computers and laptops. The LAN works like a classroom, with all students accessing the same material, for example business vocabulary.

**Internet-** Many courses are offered on the Internet, and subsequent to choosing the course they need to do, the students register for it on-line. When they register and pay the course fee,



they are given a password that will enable them to go on-line. Course materials are accessible on-line, and also the students need to work through these. Most such courses have assignments that the student should complete and send to the mentors on-line. These assignments are assessed and remarks on the work sent, typically by email. Facilities that are accessible on the Internet are made utilization of on these courses; as an example, chat rooms are utilized by the mentor to talk on-line to the learners or by learners on a similar course to talk with one another. At the end of the course, students have to do a test on-line. They are assessed, and a certificate given.

**Learning Management Systems-**These are systems that are used to develop and deliver on-line courses. They run like a university or educational institute, with one distinction-they are virtual. Such systems even have provision for activities that the administrative section of a college or school carries out, like admissions, fee collection and sending out of information.

### **5. Advantages of using digital interactive materials**

Digital interactive materials certainly encourage students to learn on their own, at their own pace too. It additionally asks them to invest in the learning process. This is an attractive quality to nurture. They provide feedback instantly and provide a global view of the topic given; they assist in independent learning and they are individual oriented. However, since face-to-face interaction has its own advantages, most digital learning courses offer 'blended learning', that is, some work on the computer combined with live teaching by teachers. This also takes care of peer interaction.

Where blended learning cannot be offered, Digital interactive materials offer 'live' chat sessions with tutors or teachers. This is potential because of the video cameras which will be used with computers. The other hand, maybe more expensive option is video conferencing. Video conferencing is turning into more popular, however solely wherever it will be afforded. Digital interactive materials help to engage students and promote learning. Develop effective communication skills among the students as these are very important in all walks of life. Team collaboration is an important learning model in the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. Digital interactive materials can help to create collaborative learning environments. We must recognise the importance of creativity as a crucial 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skill. Creativity is at the heart of information technologies and many of its vast array of tools. Many of today's digital interactive materials motivate the students to learn while developing lateral thinking skills necessary for competing in today's global economy.

### **6. Disadvantages of using digital interactive materials**

On the other hand, there are a few disadvantages of using digital interactive materials, viz. They provide objective feedback without considering the psychology of the learner and furthermore they are not suitable for a core program. Requires computers for utilize the digital interactive material, which many schools and colleges do not have computers. Digital interactive material/courses are too costly to purchase and maintain, especially in the Indian context. They need modern infrastructure, that most schools/colleges do not have. Digital



interactive material expects students to be responsible learners who need to work on their own.

### **7. Significance of the study**

The study demanded the learners to do home assignment on specific topics which forces the learners to consult digital interactive materials to get a global view of the topic. The study does not disregard the use of digital interactive materials completely, but it stresses the importance of interactive materials at the beginning of the programme and slowly moves towards the consultancy of digital interactive materials. Therefore, interactive materials are more suitable for beginners and for advanced learners, digital interactive materials are appropriate provided the learners know how to choose the relevant materials.

### **8. Aim of the study**

The primary aim of this research is to study how the digital interactive course materials enhance advanced communication skills of the tertiary level learners by involving themselves in meaningful interaction. The target group is the Undergraduate rural learners. They are socially, politically and linguistically disadvantaged. Most of them are first generation learners. A short term programme with thrust on LSRW skills was planned and executed. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the main skills focused. The sub-skills of listening include listening to descriptions and a short account of experience for details. The following are the sub - skills of speaking– sharing experiences, describing places and incidents, choosing exact words to describe. The sub-skills of reading include scanning for relevant details and reading for local comprehension. The sub-skills of writing include description of a place and tourist spots. They also learn appropriate words to use for travel and tour and also descriptive words. On the whole, the learners apply their knowledge of LSRW skills along with thinking skill to complete the activity by working individually and in groups. The learners are expected to consult the materials when they are given each activity. For example, the learners consulted the text which is about the experience of the author and used it as an example to describe their own experience. Interaction takes place within the materials, among the learners, between learners and materials and between learner and teacher.

This short term programme enables the learners to use the language. Their use of the language does show a significant improvement. However, factors such as motivation and attitude of the learners affect the learning process but were worked on by continuous practice. The learners' thinking skill along with their basic and advanced communication skills is honed.

### **9. Findings**

The general objective was to make them involved in the process of teaching and learning which was fulfilled at the end of the programme. When learners are given opportunities to use the language without many restrictions, their communication skills are enhanced as a result of their creativity. It is found that interaction with the materials and other learners play a major role in language learning. Immediate feedback of the learners'



performance and the learning process enhances learning and active involvement in the tasks. Since most of the learners do not have an opportunity to use the language outside the classroom, they were not exposed much to English. In that case, they tried to use their mother tongue which is again seen as a hindrance in language learning. Besides these, their political, social and linguistic level affects language learning.

### 10. Conclusion

We are now sailing into a sea of change made possible by the rapid development of information and communication technology and availability of the internet. These developments have already begun to fundamentally alter the way. What we can now consider is that the access to the internet outside of formal classroom settings has opened up possibilities that were inconceivable ten years ago. For many students their home will be the principal place of access to the internet and the word *classroom* will assume a whole new meaning. The nature of the traditional classroom is going to change beyond recognition and we too may wonder why *we didn't get* it at the time. Educators face many challenges today. They should adapt to an age of students who have grown up utilizing the Internet. Digital interactive materials and resources have made it easier for teachers to instruct students, and for students to collaborate with those teachers and with other students and parents. These digital interactive materials are not magical, but they may seem to defy definition at times since they save time, help you to stay organized, and often take up little space on a computer.

Thus, digital interactive materials have significant roles to play in teaching and learning process and hence it is the right and appropriate time for the teachers and students to get an awareness of these digital interactive materials as teaching-learning tools for their academic and professional growth.

### References

- [1] Baker, Fiona. S. (2013, July). Role Playing. *Modern English Teacher*. Vol 22. Number 13. pp. 70 – 72.
- [2] Batstone, Rob and Jenefer Philip. (2013). Classroom Interaction and learning opportunities across time and space. In McDonough, Kim and Alison Mackey. (Ed.). *Second Language Interaction in Diverse Educational Contexts*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. pp. 109 –128.
- [3] Gass, Susan. M. and Larry Selinker. (2008). *Second Language Acquisition. An Introductory Course*. Third edition. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- [4] Gupta, Richa. (2002, May). *Optimizing Language Interaction with Socially Disadvantaged Learners: A Study*. M. Phil. Hyderabad: Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages.
- [5] Kenning, M-M., and M. J. Kenning. 1990. *Computers and Language Learning: Current Theory and Practice*. New York: Ellis Horwood.
- [6] Kern, Richard, Paige Ware, and Mark Warschauer. 2008. "Network-Based Language



- Teaching.” In *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd ed, 4:281– 292.  
Springer Science + Business Media LLC
- [7] Kern, Richard, and Mark Warschauer. 2000. “Theory and Practice of Network-Based Language Teaching.” In *Network-Based Language Teaching: Concepts and Practice*, edited by Mark Warschauer and Richard Kern, 1–19. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Norhayati, A. M., & Siew, P. H. (2004). Malaysian Perspective: Designing Interactive Multimedia Learning Environment for Moral Values Education. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 7(4), 143-152.
- [9] Oates, John. Ed. (1994). *The Foundations of child development*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- [10] O’Banion, Terry. (1997). *Creating More Learning-Centered Community Colleges*. U.S.: The Association of Community College Trustees. Special Issue of the Trustee Quarterly.
- [11] Rivers, Wilga. M. (Ed.). (1987). *Interactive Language Teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- [12] Peter, Francis M. (2008). *A Glossary of ELT terms and Key Concepts*. Chennai. RACE.
- [13] Tomlinson, Brian. (2003). *Developing materials of Language Teaching*. London: Continuum.
- [14] Vygotsky, L. S. (2006). *Educational Psychology*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press. John, Underwood. 1984. *Linguistics, Computers and the Language Teacher: A Communicative Approach*. Rowley, MA.: Newbury House.

**Author (s) Contribution Statement:** Nil

**Author (s) Acknowledgement:** Nil

**Author (s) Declaration:** I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



The content of the article is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.