

Reading Skill Enhancement: Pedagogies, Practices & Consequences

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Abstract:

Among all the four communication skills such as Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, reading skill is the most neglected skill. For engineering graduates it is one of the most vital skills. The present paper endeavours to prioritise the significance of reading skill. It further spotlights on some of the methodologies implemented to create interest and attain positive attitude for enhancing reading skill in the minds of the students. The implementation of some of the methodologies such as Editorial review, Movie review, Novel review, etc. has helped a lot in order to whet their reading skill. As reading skill is the core competency in professional courses, this paper presents an attempt to bring improvement and perfection amongst the professional learners.

Keywords: Communication skill, Reading skill, English Reading Revolution (ERR), Editorial review, Movie review, Vocabulary skill

Introduction:

Every professional should have positive attitude for communication skill with their technical know-how and expertise to suit them for this competitive world. Communication skills enable them to be fit for active participation in the rat race of the world.

Communication is a process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. It may also be defined as giving, receiving or exchanging information, opinions, ideas by writing; speech or visual means, so that the material communicated is completely understood by everyone concerned. Communication is a dynamic process. It grows and develops. Language is an indispensable part of communication. Each language is structured differently, and the different structures offer users different suggestions to meaning.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), U.S., defines English language proficiency in this way: “A fully English proficient student is able to use English to ask questions, to understand teachers, read materials, and to challenge what is being asked in the classroom.” Four language or communication skills contribute to proficiency and they are:

1. Listening: It is the ability to comprehend the language of the teacher and instruction, comprehend and extract information, and follow the instructional discourse.
2. Speaking: It is the ability to use oral language appropriately and effectively in learning activities (such as peer tutoring, collaborative learning activities, and question/answer sessions) within the classroom and in social interactions.
3. Reading: It is the ability to comprehend and interpret the text in appropriate way.
4. Writing: It is the ability to produce written text with content and format.

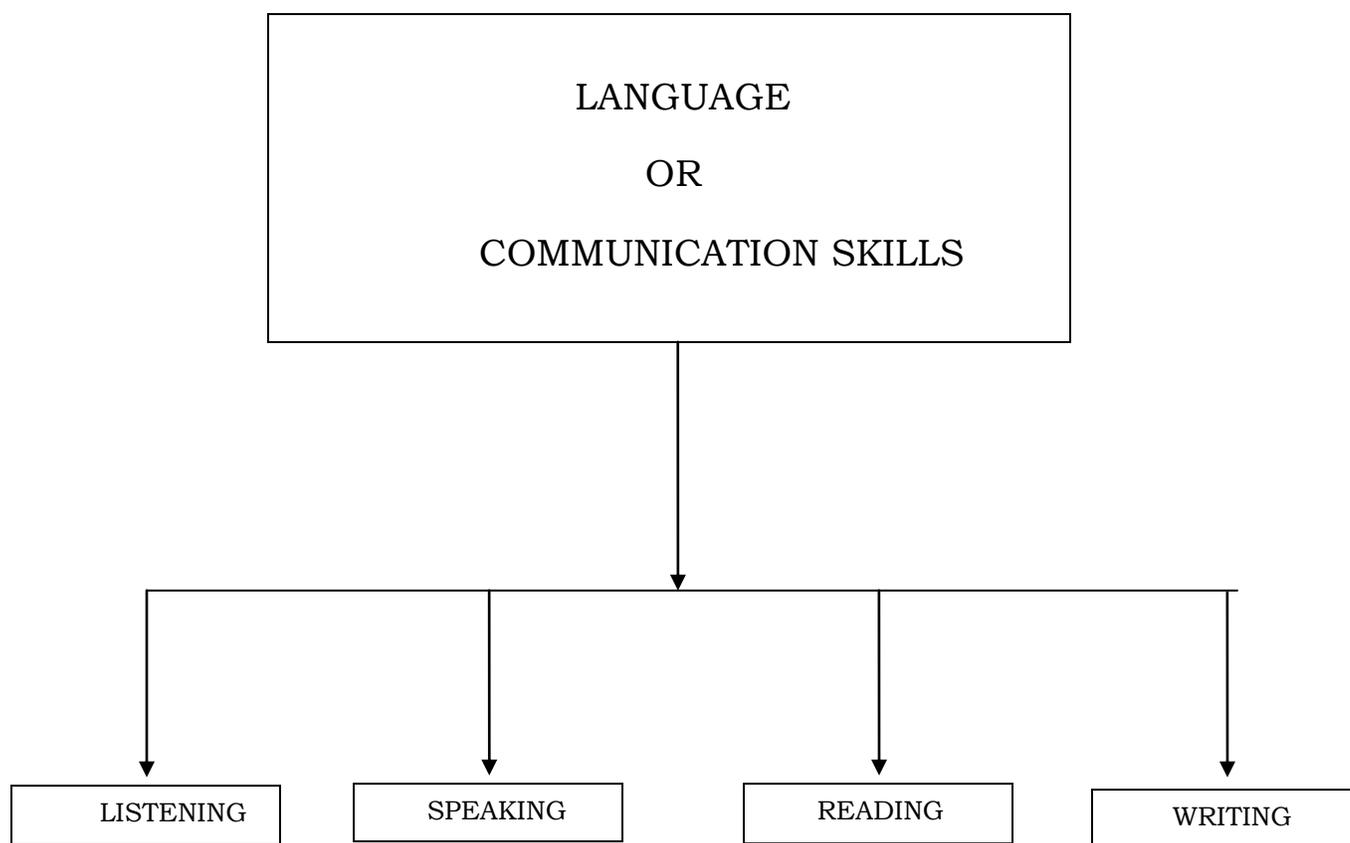


Fig.-1: Four Communication Skills (LSRW)

Language is a means of expressing ideas, thoughts, opinion and feeling, or it can be said that language is an instrument of communication and interaction used by human being. The division of language skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). A language is said to have been mastered when one has acquired these four skills. In fact, familiarity of these four skills is crucial for communication.

Reading:

According to Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and, indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost (1985). Reading skill enables readers to turn orthographic writing into meaning and achieve the goals of independent comprehension and fluency. These are specific skills which enable a reader to read the written form as meaningful language and to mentally interact with the message. In order to enhance reading skill, it is wise to read aloud. Reading aloud helps twist the tongue properly which leads to proper articulation of different words. In the modern age of information, reading truly is a fundamental survival skill. One can improve reading skill by the following steps:

- i. Styles of reading
- ii. Active reading
- iii. Spotting author's navigation aids
- iv. Words and vocabulary

Methodologies executed in order to witness improvement in learners:

English is taught as a second language (L2) in schools and colleges throughout the country. Varieties of method have been adopted to teach this language with an intention to make the learners achieve proficiency in English. Reading is an indispensable part for technical and professional students as it plays an eminent role in their career and placement.

As the author is working as an Assistant professor in a technical college, the idea of enhancing reading skill is related only to technical students. Here the teachers of department of English leave no stone unturned to apply different methods to enhance reading skill of students. Various methods such as ERR (English Reading Revolution), editorial reviews, movie reviews, novel reviews, verbal ability tests, online tests have been executed to help the learners in sharpening their reading skills.

English Reading Revolution (ERR):

English reading revolution is an unparalleled step in witnessing some drastic changes in the attitude of the learners. This comprises an online test which consists of questions on vocabulary

improvement, objective questions which are of MCQ types from the newspaper the Times of India of one week. The students are notified about the test so that they can read and prepare. As far as vocabulary test is concerned, students are informed about a particular list of words from the book *Word Power Made Easy* by *Norman Lewis* which they have been issued from the college. These tests are conducted in the language lab during their Communicative practice lab which is of two hundred minutes. But the students are given maximum thirty minutes to complete the online test. Students always face challenges as far as enhancing vocabulary skill is concerned. To alleviate the pain of this difficulty, they are notified about the portions of wordlist for the online test for thorough preparation. This method has also helped them enhance their word power to some extent. But they have been advised to retain the spirit of reading the book regularly and using the new words in their communication.

Editorial Review:

Editorial review is another methodology to sharpen the reading skill of the learners. Students are informed that they should select any one article from the editorial page of the Times of India and to present a review in the language lab during the communicative practice lab. Majority of students select the articles which come under the column entitled “The Speaking Tree” for their review purpose. They find it bit easy to understand. Furthermore, the articles in this column have the power to teach a lesson to the readers. During review, they are encouraged to assess their chosen articles based on style of writing, usage of vocabulary, and what not. Further, they are asked to give feedback and rate the articles based on their understanding and perception. Some students also select articles apart from the Speaking Tree such as write-ups on economics, politics, and culture of various intellectual columnists. This editorial review process helps them in enhancing their analytical and critical skill.

Novel Review:

This is also considered one of the effective methods in order to hone the reading skill of the learners. Students are asked to select a novel of their own interest for this purpose. This novel review includes telling the story briefly without disclosing all the essentials parts, characterization, plot, theme and giving a rate. It has been deliberately chosen to add a literary flavour to make them get rid of the pressure of the engineering curriculum.

Movie Review:

This method is gladly acceptable by the student community. They are asked to watch a movie of their own interest and to present a review in the language lab. This movie review includes sharing the story without revealing the climax and the ending, characterization, plot, theme, any message that it imparts to the audience. One of the students selected the movie *Airlift* and the review was very wonderful and commendable. He was very particular about the review and

presented it by focusing on the theme, language and characterization of the movie and was highly appreciated by the audience. Students are very zealous in engrossing them in the process of movie review as they find this is an attention-grabbing activity and it can help them overcome the challenges.

Consequences of pedagogies executed:

The ERR or English Reading Revolution has been framed in order to bring some changes in the attitudes of learners towards enhancing reading skill. I am able witness some conspicuous changes in the attitudes of my students. M students are very passionate about some of the activities like novel review, movie review and at the end of the semester they are also able to recognise their skills. Editorial review helped the learners in enhancing their vocabulary and understanding the logic behind the writing. It also helped the learners in fine-tuning their speaking skill which is a major lacuna of the learners as they always struggle to overcome this problem. Furthermore the learners are also able to develop the art of giving feedback on the editorials, movies, and novels. The students are able to give their readers not only an understanding of the reviewer's intellectual response to a book but also an awareness of the basis for this response, through example and analysis. In addition to this, they select specific passages from the book in order to exemplify and prove some of the aspects such as elements of style, form, and technique. A review should give its readers not only an understanding of the reviewer's intellectual response to a book but also a consciousness of the basis for this response, through example and analysis. The learners are of the opinion that the meticulous study of the novel enables them to get recognition of themselves in one of the characters of the novel. This is one of the greatest changes that they are able to realize. In fact, the learners collect excerpts in the form of dialogues or quotations or passages to present before the audience to grab their attention and to make their reviews interesting.

The learners are of the opinion that movie review has made them movie buffs. Nowadays they do not watch movies just for the sake of entertainment but with a strong purpose to communicate information to others constructively.

Recommendations:

The above methodologies have helped the students improve their reading skills. These methods facilitate them to become avid readers. As it has already been informed in this paper that reading skill is a great challenge for the students, they are in dire need of certain new and interesting methods which will make them powerful readers. Consequently, these methods may be put into practice for comprehensive development in reading skill. The implementations of some of these methods may bring some noticeable changes in the attitude of the learners' attitude for reading skill.

Conclusion:

All the four communication skills i.e. LSRW are intertwined. In order to become a perfect communicator, one has to sharpen listening, speaking, reading and writing. If any skill is missing, it becomes a very challenging task for the learner to overcome the problems of communication. Reading skill has been considered the most neglected skill. The facilitators must create motivational and need-based approaches to make the learners meticulous readers by mitigating the impediments to obtain and retain positive attitude of learners towards reading skill.

The present study refers to the needs of reading skills for the students and presents some methodologies to enhance interest in reading skill. If executed, these methods can improve the level of understanding and analyzing the text. At the same time the study also prioritises complete involvement of the teachers in enhancing the level of proficiency of the learners.

“Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention.”
Francis Bacon *Of Studies*

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