



Teaching interactive communication through english literature: A pedagogical approach

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Abstract

Despite the abundance of research on the impact of literature on effective communication, this article specifically explores how the proper study of literature can enhance interactive skills. Interactive communication fosters development rapidly. Through a secondary research analysis of existing studies, the researcher identified a lack of interactive practices in literature classrooms. To address this, the researcher recommends teaching students convincingly to analyse lifestyles depicted in literary works and adopt critical approaches. The literature classroom should be interactive, encouraging learners to analyse, discuss, act, and react. The study suggests strategies for creating productive classrooms that develop students' interactive skills.

Keywords: Literature, communication, interaction, act and react, critical theories, and interactive communication

Introduction

The world is becoming a global village due to the internet and the international language, English. English is the lingua franca connecting countries and regions around the globe. Communication and interaction enhance the universal spread of development strategies and inventions. People from different ethnicities communicate and interact in English and share their knowledge and experiences. Effective communication and interaction stimulate inventions and interventions by sharing breakthroughs and advancements in all development fields. In the fields of business, academics, science, computing, education, transportation, and entertainment, English is recognized as the de facto lingua franca.

Every country whose mother tongue / national language is other than English is designing and offering courses in English. Pedagogy for the learners of English (L2 learners) is prudently selected. In the undergraduate programmes, during the first three semesters, resources for learning comprise a balanced mix of the four communication skills – listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Knowledge related to social, cultural, developmental, and ethical life prevailing all over the world serves as a resource in the learning platform. Till level four, students learn English communication by acquiring skills in listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The linguistic inputs and outputs are sufficiently strengthened among the learners. From level four, the students opt for any of the specializations such as English Linguistics and Literature, Business, Science, Computing, Education; the Medium of instruction for these learners is English. A part of the content in the Bachelor of English course curricula is English Literature, along with Linguistics. The curricula are designed to inculcate in the learners an attitude of independent perception and spontaneous reaction.

But there is a need to strengthen the classroom experience as L2 learners face problems. This is because the country of origin they belong to uses a different national language (L1) for interaction and communication. The learners lack chances to communicate in English with the society around

them. Social environment and family environment deny them chances to think, perceive, and react in English. The lack of soulful communication and interaction is a big lacuna. This lacuna can be filled if the learners learn and understand that English literature offers them the tactics of communicating and interacting. Collie and Slater (1987) ^[4] say learning English literature - ... offers useful real content, fosters personal engagement, and helps readers become more culturally and linguistically literate". The promotion of personal engagement is made possible in the process of effective teaching and learning of English Literature.

The proper study of Literature imparts the practice of interactive communication skills. The learners are placed in an environment that provides opportunities to practice what they have learnt. Many of the experiences of the successful learners establish that nothing could be more complementary than literature. The dire need is that the language proficiency level should be given attention. The language they learnt should be used to think, act, and react; and it should be a complete resource. As the learners have basic communication skills, the study of literature would not be a big challenge if they are confident and attitude.

The learners' knowledge about global lifestyles and skills is not new to them. The Internet is a rich source of knowledge and informs them of global development. But the only gap is, they do not know the equivalent parlance in English related to the information they have to react. They need to develop skills in using apt vocabulary in a context that is closely related to their perception. Metin Boşnak (2020) ^[3] categorically opines that "Rich metaphorical usages of the language not only teach additional language, but also engage students with critical concepts". The study of literature renders opportunities for promoting the practice of correct use of language.

The teacher should facilitate the learner to feel, sympathise, and empathise, and as a result, they get motivation to act and react. Bilal Zakarneh (2021) ^[15] rightly points out ...using literature in foreign language classrooms allows teachers of foreign language to use meaningful content to

provoke learners’ interest, provide them with an item that provokes conversation in the classroom and capture their imaginations” (p.213). This fervent stimulation to spontaneous conversation enhances interactive communication. But it should be realized that active participation of the learner starts only when they get the confidence to deliver information impressively. The skill to make a precise understanding of a given information and reacting to it productively are the two strategies for interactive communication. By purposefully teaching literature which is reflecting the life of different communities, the teachers should make the learners perceive different types of personal, social, psychological, and political situations prevailing in the literary pieces. The teacher should enable the learners to research and review the experiences reported in the literary product.

Objective of the Research

The researcher, being a lecturer of English language and literature, attempted to review research studies on the effective use of literature.

The objectives are:

- To establish literature as a resource for developing skills in interactive communication
- To deliberate ideas to strengthen teaching and learning

It is hoped, the outcome of the research study will develop effective teaching strategies to motivate learners to practice what they learn in the classroom.

Methodology

The research is not primary, and so no need for sampling and data analysis. The researcher made use of related research papers published in popular journals on the internet, classroom experiences, peer and group discussions with colleagues and students. The discussions are given in the following order:

1. Describing effective communication and interaction
2. Literature as a tool to practice effective communication and interaction

Communication for interaction

English poet John Donne precisely said, “No man is an island”. Everyone lives in a social environment. This social setting gives impetus to development aspects channelized through effective communication and interaction. A well-informed society becomes dynamic and progressive. Knowledge is the outcome of understanding information clearly. Knowledge is inborn. It is this innate presence of knowledge that makes humans get organized. This knowledge is transmitted or acquired through social acquaintance. But there are barriers such as improper understanding and wrong communication due to a lack of proficiency of English language.

It is essential to understand the factors that could make one competitive in communication and interaction. Communication is a multifaceted process that involves the exchange of information, ideas, and emotions between individuals or groups. It requires active participation from both the sender and receiver, and can be influenced by non-verbal cues and contextual factors. It is the art of exchanging information. This art serves as a link between knowledge and information. The communicator should improvise the information with essential inputs that are strong and reliable. The popular saying ‘knowledge is power’ should be modified to ‘applied knowledge is power.’ Effective communication skills are developed through the right use of four skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. While these four skills are signposts of language skills, the deliberation of the subject with sufficient analysis signals interaction. Effective communication is rooted in interaction.

Interaction is a dynamic process that involves reciprocal actions and reactions among individuals or groups. For interacting meaningfully, the participants must understand, communicate/act, analyse, and react. In other words, shared engagement and participation influence the contextual factors. It is the art of engaging with equal participation. It is the art that requires more in-depth knowledge and a clear understanding. Here under an analysis of the language communication and interaction is tabulated:

Purpose	Four skills of Communication	Communication and Interaction
Level of engagement & reciprocity	It is a one-directional scenario, which provides and teaches rules related to four skills – listening, reading, writing, and speaking.	Interaction facilitates mutual understanding, proper exchange of information filled with soulful reactions. Feedback and group discussion create a participatory environment.
Contextual factors	The texts and context shape the language and presentation and help to make correct sense.	The texts and contexts shape the learning behaviour and fulfil the expected learning experience. There should be guided collaborative efforts to interpret.
Intention and purpose	Develop confidence in the use of the four skills to understand and convey a message.	Well-balanced interaction starts spontaneously if the ideas to share are complete. Shared engagement gets focused through critical analysis and appraisal. A creative action is an outcome of an effective reaction.

There are many insightful resources like history of English literature, literary theory and literary criticism, biography of the writers, etc., in the syllabus along with prescribed literary products. In the miniature society created by the writer, the learner should be enabled to perceive how a particular incident is depicted and how it generates action and reaction. The proposition would make the learner critically appraise by imagining the authors’ social environment as their own. Literature is a cognitive mechanism that promotes interactive learning. Sara De Felice (2022) ^[12] and her team rightly say, “...Human learning refers to any form of acquisition of new knowledge

and skills by an individual. One can learn new information alone, e.g., memorizing events via reading a history book. However, often learning occurs with and from other people. When such learning occurs via transmission of information across members of a social group, it is defined as ‘social learning’.

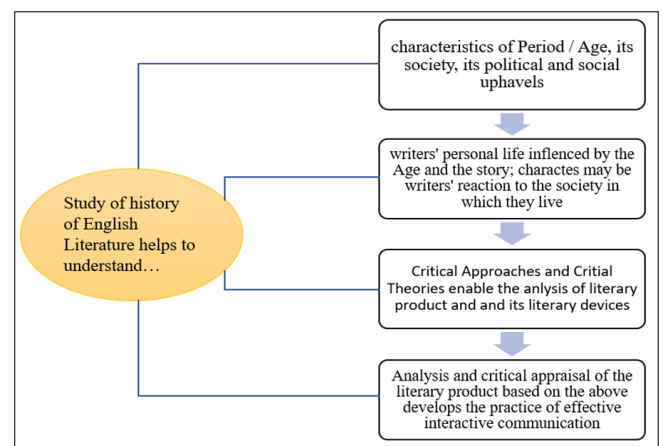
Interactive Communication through Critical Thinking

Interactive communication is a two-way process of exchanging ideas that requires a sender and a receiver to give feedback. The teachers of any literary genre must aim at promoting the skill of interactive communication.

Teaching literature for promoting interactive skills in the classroom is an inspiring and creditable experience. The teachers should use reciprocal techniques such as group discussion and reading. The learners should read, understand, and empathize with the characters and situations presented in the literature. This engagement not only deepens their comprehension but also fosters a greater awareness of diverse perspectives and human experiences. By empathizing with literary figures, students can connect their own lives to broader societal issues, enhancing their interactive communication skills and critical thinking abilities. The learners should read literature not just to understand the content, but to empathize with the characters and their experiences. This deeper engagement helps foster critical thinking and enhances their ability to connect with diverse perspectives. By relating to the characters' emotions and struggles, learners can develop a more nuanced approach to communication and interaction in their own lives. This process cultivates both empathy and critical analytical skills, reinforcing the interactive communication capabilities that are essential in today's global scenario. For this, the students should develop the skill to comprehend and analyse the literary background.

Introducing students to research studies related to the prescribed literary texts could promote effective interactive communication. For this, the researcher feels, the teachers should facilitate resources to analyse a literary production. Burk (2016) presupposed that literature instruction should be based on varied tactics that improve students' understanding and appreciation of literary works. Literary texts are vital material because of its language (Moody, 1986:2) [7]. Literature is a popular structure where fundamental language skills and parts are taught (Hismanoglu, 2005:53) [5]. According to Sage (1987) [11] the power to interact reinforces one's learning; the communicator needs to rethink and come out with a productive information. Rethinking is action, and production is the interaction. The study of literature with critical perception develops an automatic skill to act and react. The researcher presents a chart below to describe how the teaching learning process, along with the study of History of Literature, promotes both communicative and interactive skills:

communication process becomes more effective and gets stimulated. Muhammad Khaled Al-Alawneh says, '... effective communication encompasses not only being thoughtful to talk plainly and absolutely, but also valuing others and paying attention to what others share.' Attention and reaction are possible if only, the learners get background knowledge about the author, the environment, and his writing. Ms Kulsum Begum emphasises that "... literature helps the learners in stimulating their background knowledge of language and enables them able for the practical application of that knowledge. Major emphasis of the language-based linguistic issues of literature, which work as the basis of learning of linguistic input. It works as a bridge between literature and linguistic inputs through making an accessible and more comprehensible connection of language and literature". The frequent reading analysis of literary products would render the skill to understand the wide world, as literature encompasses all fields of knowledge, emphasizes Ahmed Mohammed (2023) [1]. The researcher presents a review of how literature helps the learner make effective interactions.



Stages in Learning Interactive Communication

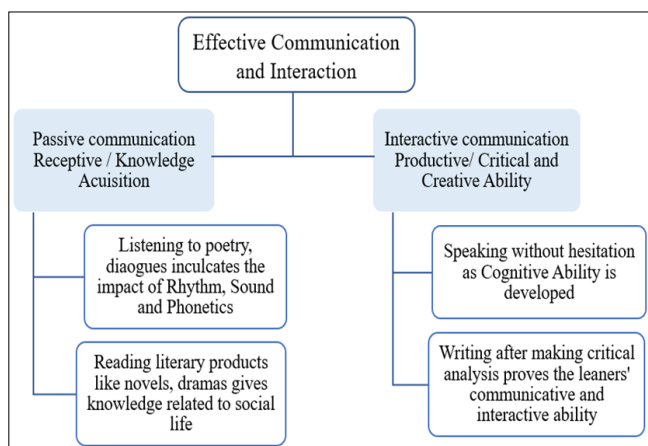


Chart on Effective Communication and Interaction

It is evident from the chart above that the acquisition of correct skills in using language should be clubbed with literary genres. Every stage of the effective language

The teachers should deliberately promote all the aspects discussed above, even when they handle one or two of the literary genres. Every day review of the classroom should provoke this aspect to learn the resources related to literature. None of the aspects should be segmented. As postulated in the self-describing chart above, insights into literary products for their theoretical, critical, historical, biographical, and political (Marxism) render sufficient exposure to critical and creative thinking and thereby make them experts in making effective interactive communication.

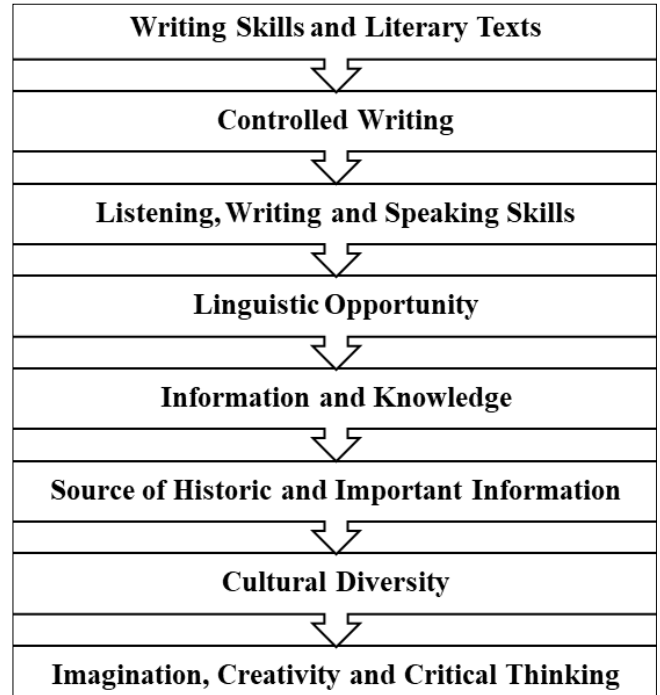
Collie and Slater (1987) [4] explain the authenticity of literary texts as these are not arranged specifically for a language teaching situation. Literature just provides the life history of people in the past and present. The learners should relate the contents of the literary text to the lives of the individuals around them. Such perception trains their mind to act, react, and interact. The teaching sessions should include an understanding of the implicit and explicit meanings of the literary product. The teacher should motivate the learners to collect background information and draw inferences to test predictions, interpretations, and

conclusions. Palincsar (1986) [10] endorses critically evaluating the content for internal consistency and comparing it to previously learned information, and employing periodic reviews as part of continuous comprehension monitoring. York (1990) says, “It [narrative literature] contains a wide variety of styles, ranging from everyday conversation to suggestive rhetorical devices” (p. 313). While teaching literature, the teacher should provoke the learners’ imagination, creativity and critical thinking, cultural diversity, source of historical and important information, and information and knowledge. If they use the learnt experiences properly, they can write in a controlled way.

Thus, besides teaching the four major communication skills supported by the linguistic inputs, such as syntax, grammatical structure, semantics, and phonetics, the teaching process at every stage must include efforts to sustain the learning outcome by promoting critical and creative skills. Literature provides all these. Ms Kulsum Begum (2018) claims: It is literature which provides materials of linguistic inputs like syntax, cross-cultural awareness, grammatical structure, semantics, vocabulary, pragmatics, collocation, capitalization, foregrounding, criticizing skills, punctuation, deviation, spelling rules, and error analysing strategies. A second language is thought and learnt through linguistically oriented literature (p 54).

Functioning of the Literary Product

The genres of literature indeed provide a variety of resources such as prose, poetry, novels, plays, and dramas. By studying prose, the teacher and learner get grammatically introduced to structured writing. The language flows with descriptions of natural patterns of everyday life. A study of poetry promotes brevity in expression, understands poetical devices, and delivers the messages attractively. Most of the poetry uses metaphor to evoke emotion and appreciation of life. Suwastini (2023) [13] indicates: “The inherent brevity of poems, combined with their use of figurative and connotative language meant for vocal delivery, positions them as ideal learning tools (p. p240). Brevity develops the art of concise and exact use of words. Short story and drama are the next great resources for teaching and learning English. The characters are realistic and resemble people who live nearby. The characters register everyday life in multiple tones. The teachers can use the dialogues to read and enact the scenes. This may make the learners empathise with the characters and make them perceive the dilemma, the characters undergo. What H. Gardner says that Drama is apt for all literary genres: “Drama, because of its performative and interdisciplinary nature, can teach multiple representations and understandings of important questions, topics, and themes”. Apart from the teachers can impart grammar and sentence structure by enabling a close reading. The chart below indicates the contribution of literary texts to the production of interactive communication skills:



Development of interactive skills through literary studies

Conclusion

Language serves as a fundamental medium of communication, playing a pivotal role in students’ intellectual, social, and emotional development (Nishihara, 2022) [8]. The scholars’ achievements, happiness, and creativity, their ultimate pursuit and achievement of happiness, depend on perceptions that prove their individuality. Cognitive and emotional processes and personal perceptions mix with the cognitive and emotional processes that happen in tandem with each other. If we, as teachers, challenge ourselves with tasks that require a high degree of skill and commitment, we ultimately perceive ourselves as leading a more fulfilling life. The task needs to be challenging enough to evoke an “endorphin rush,” but not so challenging that it overwhelms. The teachers should use literature for developing readers’ understanding and critical thinking. The roles of teachers as recommended by Littlewood are listed under:

- As a general overseer of his/ her students’ learning, the teacher must aim to coordinate the activities so that they form a coherent progression, leading towards greater communicative ability.
- As a classroom manager, he/ she is responsible for grouping activities into ‘lessons’ and for ensuring that these are satisfactorily organised at a practical level.
- In many activities, he/ she may perform the familiar role of language instructor: he/ she will present new language, exercise direct control over the learner’s performance, evaluate and correct it, and so on.
- He/ she will not intervene after initiating the proceedings, but will let learning take place through independent activity or pair and group work.
- When such an activity is in progress, s/he may act as a consultant or adviser, helping where necessary. He/ She may also move about the classroom to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the learners, as a basis for planning future learning activities.
- He /She will sometimes wish to participate in an activity as a co-communicator with the learners. In this

role, he/ she can simulate and present new language without taking the main initiative for learning away from the learners themselves.

The teachers' roles listed above for promoting interactive communication speak of the need to spend careful deliberation. Strategies should be developed by opting to understanding the students' needs. A need-based approach in teaching yields the expected results. The students should not be forced. They should be given time to understand and apply what they learned. It is hence recommended that the practice of writing research projects should start at the beginning of the final semester itself. The graduate-level learners should be motivated to practice what they learn in the theory classes. It is only then that they could be given intensive practice in interactive communication.

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