

Synchronizing the Primary Language Skills for Effective Communication

Dr. Queen ugochi njemanze^{1*}, Mark chitulu ononiwu²

¹Directorate of general studies,
Federal university of technology,
Owerri, nigeria

¹ugonje@gmail.com

²mctv_ono@yahoo.com

*Corresponding Author

Abstract-*The primary language skills; listening and speaking skills are interrelated and unique language activities embedded in communication. the basic need for humans to engage in communication involves having a comprehensive knowledge and command of the language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. The processes of listening and speaking form the major focus of attention in this research. It requires the individuals involved to speak eloquently and listen attentively. It makes them think critically, react confidently and respond appropriately to a communication programme. This paper therefore aims at highlighting listening and speaking skills as language skills that promote proficiency in English language communication. Thus study discovered that the combinations of these skills consolidate the meaning in syllabifications, stress and intonation in a communication program and as well reduce the complexities of effective communication.*

Keywords- *Language; Listening Skill; Speaking Skill; Communication*

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is usually achieved through the use of efficient listening and speaking skills. Individuals who use language adopt a number of skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing for effective communication. Listening skill is regarded alongside speaking as primary language skills. Although they are regarded as language skills they are fundamental contributors' to the development of an effective communication process, njemanze (2006/2007:1)[9]. This author believes that the skills of listening and speaking have advanced beyond being mere receptive language skills. When a language is learnt, there is need to internalise the language skills in order to achieve complete communication processes. However, as a result of the growing trends in academics and society, communication is being elevated from the process of simple interaction to the new height of information network process.

Thus, listening and speaking form the foundation of other language skills, this is because a child does not go to school to learn listening and speaking skills rather, he/she adopts a mechanism known as language acquisition device (LAD) which is part of his development process. In the words of Brown (1982)[3], the highest correlate of listening ability is intelligence, especially verbal intelligence. From his perspective, intelligence enhances listening and speaking. Speaking is the manifestation of language; which produces meaningful utterances, these

skills are the oldest and commonest medium of information dissemination.

This study therefore examines the various definitions of key concepts, listening and speaking skills and effective communication and posits a holistic approach to synchronizing these two skills for effective communication process.

2. LISTENING

Listening behavior is a dynamic language activity. Not all people with "normal" hearing listen efficiently. Thus, listening has been defined in a number of ways by different scholars. Tomatis (2002)[14] defines listening as "an active, focusing process which allows for quick and precise analysis of sounds that are heard". What this means is that as a result of similarities of some sounds, meaning may be distorted as in "desk for deck", 'right' "write" etc. Listening as an active focusing process has a motivational component. Therefore desire to listen must be present for the child to achieve successful recognition. Listening, according to Tomatis, is a product of motivation and focus hearing.

Listening emphasizes attachment of meaning to oral symbols. This is so because one must hear a sound in order to interpret it. Jones (1986)[6] describes it as, "the selective process by which sounds communicated by some source are received, initially interpreted and acted upon by a purposeful listener. Therefore, it is the process of receiving, attending to and assigning meaning to what is

heard. This listener deduces meaning from oral communication. A good listener therefore should be able to concentrate, comprehend, interpret, reflect and react or respond to information received. This is achieved through effective communication process or model.

3. SPEAKING

Speaking is a natural phenomenon which every individual is endowed with. It is central to human communication. Speaking is a skill that requires no special attachment before it is learned. It has no constraint or limitation in its use or acquisition. It fulfils the communication needs of its users. A speaker puts into consideration, his audience, the situation or context, his purpose, and medium of communication. It is a two way communication process. There is always a listener/receiver. Thus, any breakdown in the communication process leads to misinformation or communication breakdown.

Attention should therefore be given to the principles of good speech making. Speaking skill has been expanded to go beyond only public speaking. Brown (1981) identified speaking to reflect a variety of settings one-to many, small group, one-to-one, and mass media. Speaking is organized to achieve specific purpose; to inform, to persuade, and to solve problem. It accomplishes such purposes as giving directions; asking for information or providing basic information in an emergency situation. The combination of this news emphasizes that communication is an interactive process which requires the services of a listener and speaker to be successful.

4. COMMUNICATION

Communication is central to language learning. It is an indispensable tool for interaction. Hence seam (1981)[12] describes it in his writing; as having the ability to maintain and animate life. It leads people from instinct to inspiration, through variegated processes and systems of enquiry, command and control. It creates a common pool of ideas, strengthens the feeling of togetherness through exchange of messages and translates thought into action. Communication integrates knowledge, organization and power and runs as a tread linking, the earliest memory of man to his noblest aspiration. Looking at this writing one discovers that communication is more of an abstract concept. It has a lot of meanings attached to it. It is also a social process. In the words of little (1992)[7] communication is the transmission of information from one person to the other. Communication is a process of transfer of information of idea between individuals and or organizations using a pre-determined or understandable symbol. It is a give and take process. Information moves from one person to another; who also uses an understandable code. This implies that communication does not take place in a vacuum.

Communication in whatever form or shape it assumes is crucial to the social enterprise and central to all levels and spheres of human interaction. In simple terms;

communication involves transmission of information which elicits response which is achieved through an understandable code. Communication is highly effective in (human) language especially in speech and listening.

Communication is carried out at different levels, thus; it could be an inter-personal affair. This is when an individual communicates with himself. He tries to build self concept and motivation which he will use to communicate with other people. It could also be carried out at intra-personal (level) where information is transmitted between two people; example is lecturer-student, doctor-patient relationships. Communication could be at the multi personal or extra-personal levels. In multi-personal level of communication more than two people are involved. This is also called group communication. The extra – personal level of communication refers to communication between human beings and non humans. Example, communication between man and his pet animal. Communication is further classified according to mode. Here we have the verbal mode and the non-verbal mode. The verbal mode is characterized by the use of language structure selected in order to facilitate meaning and comprehension of the information being transmitted.

Communication is further classified into the oral medium and the written medium. The written medium of communication involves a permanent record. It is associated with documentation. It also makes information circulation easy; an example is the newspaper, our text books etc. Oral communication on its side, involves the use of speech in information dissemination. Thus, this study examines speaking and listening in oral communication.

5. SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS IN ORAL COMMUNICATION

Oral communication is highly central to language learning. No individual claims knowledge of a language he/she does not speak. It is this conservation process that guides the speaker and the listener in their communication learning process. Every individual requires a conducive environment for effective communication. In the view of udoh and ajala (1991)[15], a beautiful environment contributes to healthy living and emotional well being which are needed for thinking, comprehension, creativity and feedback. In order words achievement of effective communication both (oral and written) of a speaker, depends on the level of the communication knowledge of the skills and the speaker's use of the english language.

Communication between humans is a complex phenomena, some people engage in conversation because they are compelled to do so, either by addressing an audience or passing information. Others may have some communicative purposes such as to create an impression, to complain, to teach or to give some information. To succeed; we have to achieve communicative competence.

Communicative competence is a dynamic construct that is expressed by an individual. It is that knowledge that makes an individual to communicate effectively, functionally and interactively. Brown (1987)[2] sees it as that aspect of our language competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meaning interpersonally or within specific context. The speaker therefore has to produce speech which is easily interpreted, understood and responded to by the audience.

Oral speaking thus lends itself to both formal and informal conferences. The speaker's ability to use the language effectively in a communication model will ensure that the listener thinks clearly, arrange the information logically, put his expressions in a concise form and respond appropriately. Hence, Burniske and Monke (2001:57)[5] assert; "..., achieving a responsible tell collaborative project is the establishment of a forum for speaker's expression, a forum that nurtures exploratory discourse rather than the recitation of homogenized thought". To achieve effective communication, organizers should provide forum for this kind of expression. This paper therefore considers it necessary to assess the relevance of efficient speaking and listening in a communication model.

6. LISTENING AND SPEAKING AS COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION MODEL

This art of communication is usually situation conditioned; it does not happen arbitrarily, rather it is usually induced. Efficient listening and speaking are necessary in achieving effective communication. They are transactional nature of communication. The art of communication will not be effective if these skills are not present. We listen to receive information from oral conversation (the speaker). The listener should be able to think critically, react spontaneously and respond appropriately. He should be associated with flexibility, ability to comprehend, retain and recall information he received. He has to listen efficiently in order to decode the information being received from the speaker.

Communication requires a cyclical process to be effective. It make use of interwoven but continuous variables, Ndimele (1999:129)[8] identifies the basic elements in a communication process as;

- The sender (source or the speaker)
- The message
- The decoding process
- The feedback
- The social setting
- The encoding process
- The channel
- The receiver (listener)
- The noise (noise interference)

The transmitter (encoder) and the receiver (decoder) play paramount roles. The transmitter uses appropriate language of communication which the addressee (listener)

understands. An example is an igbo teacher talking to students of mixed ethnicity, using both english and igbo languages. The message will not flow.

The teacher's information should fit into the linguistic patterns of communication already existing. She should not code-switch or code-mix the linguistic forms which she uses to communicate. If she does this, her communicative competence will be reduced and mutual intelligibility will be grossly affected

The teacher's information should fit the linguistic style of pronunciation. The speaker should not change the stress pattern of words to suit her style either. If she does there will be interference in meaning of information. She should not use diction that is higher than the listener's level of understanding. Failure to adhere to some of these guideline will create a gap in communication. This paper thus takes a peep into some of the patterns of usage of these skills considering the prevalent environment in our nation.

7. PRIMARY LANGUAGE SKILLS AS MEANS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN A PHONETIC ENVIRONMENT

A person does not listen to jumbled sounds, rather to meaningful sounds. Listening and speaking skills are dependent on familiar sounds. To achieve effective communication, phobic analysis, (the study of graphemes/sounds and its blending to achieve appropriate pronunciation) is necessary. A listener may encounter a difficult word; he should be able to make effective guesses of the words meaning. This involves complex rules and generalizations with lots of exception. The generalizations are often prominent in sounds (vowel/consonant).

The listener may therefore encounter communication problems when he misinterprets a familiar sound and an unfamiliar one. Example:

- Let her be she is recovering from the bee stings
- Buy some oranges by the road side
- The girl on braids bought the bread
- It is true, she went through

In addition, intentional patterns help the individual to crate rhythm in speech. Some ethnic groups experience difficulties in pronunciation. This invariably causes avoidable spelling errors. According to williams (1990)[16] a spelling mistake caused by a deficiency in pronunciation can become entrenched if it appears to have some logical connection with the idea contained in the correctly spelt word. Some examples are:

Looseyour temper	-	lose your temper
Causes of event	-	course of events
Guide against war	-	guard against war
Sitting arrangement	-	certain arrangement

Furthermore, some mispronunciation of consonant sounds due to interpolation of consonants could lead to unconventional forms and semantic change.

Some examples are:

Certificate	-	<i>cerfificate</i>
Slippers	-	<i>srippers</i>
Ruler	-	<i>luler</i>
Problem	-	<i>ploblem</i>
Lorry	-	<i>rorry</i>
Fry	-	<i>fly etc.</i>

However, these problems can be subdued if the participants identify the problematic sounds. This conforms with azikiwe's (1998: 128)[1] explanation that. "the meaning of an utterance could still be conveyed if the consonant sounds are correct and the vowels in between them are not". Most times errors in vowel rarely hinder communication but errors in consonants often do. It is also difficult for some speakers and listeners to change the sounds structure of their first language; this creates a gap in communication through interference.

Each language sound should therefore be carried along irrespective of the user's first language. Attention should also be given to the use and effects of stress in pronunciation. Syllabication should be taken into consideration because it helps in word demarcation just as the dictionary does. This should also be put into special consideration for the achievement of effective communication.

8. STEPS IN ACHIEVING EFFICIENT LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The prerequisites for efficient listening and speaking for effective communication require some mechanisms. Shuie (2004)[13] identified major steps of achieving this in a communication programme. They include:

- Identifying the message and its purpose
 - Interpreting and assigning meaning to the information
 - Retaining the information
 - Identifying the message and its purpose. This compels one to know the content of information he is receiving. Is it meant to educate or to entertain, or to pass examination? Whatever the purpose is, the listener/receiver only selects the familiar sounds that carry required information.
- ❖ Interpreting and assigning meaning to the information. The speaker must interpret and understand the message. The speaker must be known to the listener; his motives and message must also be clear to him.
- ❖ Retaining the information involves the process of remembering and retaining necessary information. This brings to focus jones idea of speaker and listening; where the individuals only select sounds that are relevant to him, interprets it and responds where and when necessary. Hence, the information obtained may be retained in the long term or short term memory depending on the motive. This; the speaker must ensure, clarity in his sentence usage.

9. SOME OTHER STEPS INCLUDE

- Words and sentences must be chosen to suit the context of usage
- The style of transmission must also be adequate
- Choice of over used expressions must be avoided
- Communicative competence is not only achieved through grammatical correctness and fluency; it also considers the ability to;
- Match the language with the situation or the context
- Appreciate the nature of the participants and the role they are required to play in the communication process.
- Recognize the purpose of communication

Use the right words, phrases and sentences for communication and assign right meaning to them in the communication process. Otagburuagu (2004)[10]. Implementing these language skills will greatly enhance effective communication.

10. CONCLUSION

Expressing oneself clearly and effective listening contribute to effective communication. Efficient listening and speaking require active focusing and a smooth, expressive process in order to transfer and interpret information from a communication model. These two skills build interest, give satisfaction and make the participants fulfilled. They also enhance the communicative abilities of the individuals involved.

There should be on information overload to achieve clarify of purpose and better understanding of information in a communication programme. Speaking, listening and communication are not only relevant between two individuals but also useful in various environments where individuals are motivated to interact, learn, comprehend and even develop intellectually. In order words, even the most informal methods of speaking and listening should embrace the measurement principles of reliability, validity and fairness (Rubin and Mead 1984)[11]. This will yield a successful communication programme.

REFERENCES

- [1] Azikiwe, u. 1998 *language teaching and learning*. Onitsha fep publishers.
- [2] Brown, douglas. H. 1987 *principles of language learning and teaching* 2ndEd. Eaglewood cliffs, n.j prentice hall.
- [3] Brown, k. 1982 "teaching/assessing oral communication". In quest for Quality: basic skills instruction in the 802 texas; centre for the study of basic skills.
- [4] Brown, k. 1985 "teaching and listening skill in the elementary and secondary School". Bastion,

- ma: massachusetts department of education ed234 440
- [5] Burniske, r. W. And monke, l. 2001 *breaking down the digital walls: learningTo tech in a post-modern world*. Albany: state university of new york press.
- [6] Jones, k. 1986 *simulations in language teaching*. Oxford: oxford universityPress
- [7] Little, john s. 1992 *theories human communication* (4th ed. California: Wardsworth publishing company.
- [8] Ndimele, o. 1999 *semantics and the frontiers of communication*. Port- Harcourt University of port-harcourt publishing house.
- [9] Njemanze, q.u. 2006/07 “efficient listening behaviour as tool for effective class room communication: a discourse” english language teaching today. Vol. 3, 1-5.
- [10] Otagburuagu, e. 2004 *new perspectives in business communication*. Onitsha: Mekspublishernig.
- [11] Rubin, d and mead, n. 1984 “large scale assessment of oral communicationSkills: kindergraten thought grade 12 “htt: //us. Ericlearinghouse. (retrieved 16/01/08)
- [12] Seam, macbride 1981 *many voices, one word* ibadan: ibadan university press.
- [13] Shuie 2004 “*english/foreign language acquisition among college studentsListening skills*” retrieved (4/8/04).
- [14] Tomatis, a. A. 2002 “the importance of the auditory system” [http://www. The Listening centre. Net](http://www.TheListeningcentre.Net) retrieved (19/5/06).
- [15] Udoh, c.o. And ajala, a. J. 1991 “*mental and social health in r. Okonkwo andR. Okoye (eds) the learning environment of the nigerian child*. Awka: erudition.
- [16] Williams, d. 1990 *english language teaching: an integrated approach*.Ibadan spectrum book.