

Teaching Speaking Skills and the Rule of Turn Taking For Effective Communication: A Pragmatic Approach.

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ABSTRACT: Teaching and learning are seen as the two sides of a coin. They are such inseparable entities that have been effectively used throughout the world to achieve maximum development. Teaching and learning can be formally or informally done. Among the four language skills, speaking is psychologically the most demanding. Acquiring communication is one of the most pivotal developmental milestones for effective interaction. Communication starts with basic elements, such as babbling and one-syllable words, and gradually develops to full conversations and exchanges. The learning and the development of conversation skills go hand in hand with the learning of the skill of turn-taking. This paper explicates the ties between speaking skill and turn taking. It further explores the importance of turn taking in spoken discourse and its variation among cultures. This study adopts the intonation discourse theory of Brazil (1992). The purpose of adopting this method was to see how the components of spoken discourse affect the meaning of utterances in conversation. This study adopts the descriptive approach. The study reveals that speech and its components like intonation, pitch, backchannels and turn taking skills are beneficial and effective for comprehension of any interaction. The study was able to establish the fact that the skills of speaking and turn taking are not just necessary but they serve as tools for effective communication.

Keywords: Pragmatics competence, Speaking skills, Communication, Turn taking, intonation

I. INTRODUCTION

“Semiliterate formal speech is sometimes heard from radio speakers. I recently heard one such speaker solemnly announce, ‘Sun day will be Mother’s Day’. Because the speaker, in his ignorance of good English thought he was making himself plainer by using the distorted pronunciation sun day instead of the standard pronunciation Sunday, he actually was misunderstood by some listeners to be saying ‘Someday...’ [1]

The power of words in a spoken discourse has the ability to bind and on the other hand scatter the long time plan of man. Production of words by man cannot be possible without the use of speech. Speech has been recognized as an important feature of language. Speech is the primary mode of interaction because the written mode is secondary and derives from it. [2]. Humans engage in talk-in-interaction as an aspect of interactional discourse to communicate their emotions and feelings. Being able to speak naturally and appropriately with others in a variety of situations is an important goal for many English as foreign language (EFL) learners. Because the skill of speaking invariably involves interaction with people and using language to reach objectives (e.g., ordering food, making friends, asking for favors), it is crucial for teachers to explore activities that help students learn the typical ways to express these and other language functions. [3]. To interact successfully in myriad contexts and with many different speakers, learners need to develop a repertoire of practical situation dependent communicative choices. The study of how language is used in interactions is called pragmatics, and while appropriate interactions come naturally to native speakers of a language, EFL learners need to be aware of the many linguistic and strategic options available to them in certain situations.

“One basic attribute of human beings is the ability to communicate. For communication is basic to all human processes. Without communication, man cannot perform organized group processes that help to coordinate our activities in the society”. [4]. When a group of people involve in conversation interact with one another, there are transfer and replication of ideas. This wouldn’t be possible if some features of conversation are not employed. These features like turn taking, backchannels as well as intonation help in sharing information for mutual understanding. Conversation skills with the help of turn taking makes interaction effective. According to [5] turn taking mechanism is a systematic logical system that is governed by the logic of communication and is also universal. It becomes language specific when it comes to and relates to the socio-cultural aspect of the language. “Turn-taking in conversations not only helps us apportion the floor, but also serves a symbolic function of helping the interactants to define their relationship. The basic environment for language development is oral interaction, and turn-taking is its core form of organization [6].

II. TEACHING THE SPEAKING SKILL

“One of the distinctive ethnological properties of human is that they spend considerable hours in the day in the close (often face-face) positing with others, exchanging short burst of a sounds in a human specific communication pattern” [7]. One can speak without communicating. The above assertion can be possible if the words uttered by the speaker are unintelligible to the hearer. Speaking has been considered the most challenging of the four language skills as it involves complex processes of producing meaningful communication. Almost every social group grants high status to members with good verbal skills. The skill of oracy is a productive skill needed for effective communicative competence which is display through oral interaction. Oral interaction is a veritable tool human beings employ to speak to one another. Speaking skill is very important in all round development of an individual; that is the reason why the development of communicative competence should be given adequate attention by the classroom teacher. This is why competence is the major concern of most linguists. According to Chomsky’s linguistic theory (unconscious knowledge possessed by the speakers of a language) (1965) , man is born with language acquisition device (LAD) which is profitable in the acquisition of the first language, (L1). Speaking is a crucial part of the language learning process. Effective instructors teach students speaking strategies -- using minimal responses, recognizing scripts, and using language to talk about language -- that they can use to help themselves expand their knowledge of the language and their confidence in using it. These instructors help students learn to speak so that the students can use speaking to learn.

Being able to speak English fluently is critical to English language teaching and learning. Development of speaking skill is very paramount to acquisition of some interaction and communicative strategies. Interaction skills involve making decisions about communication, such as what to say and how to say it. According to [8] the speaking of words has been the main mode of communication in daily life for the most part of humanity since the dawn of civilization. Schegloff in fact, characterizes the spoken interaction as the “primordial site of sociality” (1986:112). During social interaction, verbal and non-verbal elements are used when the speaker enters into a communication with the listener. These verbal and non-verbal elements affect communication. The minimal responses, backchannels gestures, intonation have an impact on the quality of the spoken discourse.

Minimal responses are predictable, often idiomatic phrases that conversation participants use to indicate understanding, agreement, doubt, and other responses to what another speaker is saying. Having a stock of such responses enables a learner to focus on what the other participant is saying, without having to simultaneously plan a response. The teaching of speaking skill should include these components like pronunciation, intonation and pitch for effective oral communication.

Methods of teaching speaking skills

The **methods** of teaching the speaking skills can vary according to the teacher. One thing to consider in teaching and learning is the teaching method. Effective and efficient method of teaching will make the students to be active participants in the classroom. It reduces boredom. There are many methods that can be used to teach the speaking skills. They are:

Pronunciation method: The teacher engages the students in writing and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language. According to [9], pronunciation is more than 'listen and repeat'. Pronunciation includes features of language (vocabulary and grammar) and skills (speaking and listening). Like vocabulary and grammar, we pronounce by noticing and understanding rules and patterns which lie beneath the surface of speech. For example, if an English word has two syllables, the stress is usually on the first syllable for nouns and adjectives, and the second syllable for verbs.

I. Interaction skills involve the correct pronunciation of the forty-four sounds. In order to achieve a maximum output, both the segmental and suprasegmental features will be taught. The best way to help students improve their pronunciation skills is to encourage them to speak English as much as they possibly can. Introduce the idea that even when doing homework students should be reading aloud. Learning to pronounce English well takes muscle coordination, and that means practice - not just mental activity! [10]

II. According to [11], Tourism Object Presentation (hereinafter referred to as TOP) is a learning method that was developing them from the method of the field trip learning method by encouraging students to visit an attraction and expand the knowledge and further the student makes a presentation to be presented in the classroom as a monologue [12]. Here, there is a combination of speaking in the class (in-doors) and speaking outside of the class (out-doors). It is in form of field trip that helps students interact outside of the classroom.

III. **Stamp disapproval method:** This method allows the students make a choice of a topic of interest to talk on without the interference of the teacher. This enables them express themselves freely. Since the teacher does not dictate the procedure to follow, even the passive students get involved in the discussion. This method brings out the hidden talent in them in terms of fluency. Interest therefore, is a motivating factor in learning.

IV. **Minimal pairs:** A minimal pair is a pair of words that vary by only a single sound, usually meaning sounds that may confuse English learners, like the /f/ and /v/ in *fan* and *van*, or the /e/ and /i/ in *desk* and *disk*. The class teacher should serve as a positive model to the students by sounding those distinctive sounds in order to contrast the pairs of words like: *pat_cat*, *hen_pen*, *pet_net*, *desk_disk*, *wet_wait* etc.

V. Role-plays will help in improving speaking. Giving a context of personal interest, and asking the students to write and act out and recording their role playing will help improve their intonation, pronunciation, using relevant phrases. 2. Giving a story from their regional language, and asking the students to narrate the same in English will make them strong in thought translation.

The place of convergence between the speaking skill and turn taking

The basic environment for language development is oral interaction, and turn-taking is its core form of organization [13]. As one speaks, he interacts with people with the use of turn taking. Interaction cannot be effectively done without turn taking. Turn taking has been defined by many linguists. According to [14] in conversation analysis *turn-taking* is a term for the manner in which orderly, conversation normally takes place. A basic understanding can come right from the term itself: it's the notion that people in a conversation take turns in speaking.

However, we cannot mention this concept without acknowledging the people that lay the fundamental principles of turn taking. The mechanism of turn-taking is the way speakers hold or pass the floor when involved in interactive communication. Smooth, appropriate turn-taking is characteristic of polite conversation and ensures that no one dominates the interaction and there are minimal gaps and overlaps [15]. Turn taking was first described by sociologists Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. People that indulge in conversation often take turn while speaking. Taking turn in speech gives one an opportunity to express ones thought, actions, emotion as well as hear and learn from the co participant's point of view. A classroom teacher who neglects the rules of turn taking will end up being the only active participant while the students will be passive observers. Classroom teaching and learning should be an interactional section because monotony they say kills interest. Since language learning involves different tasks, parents and teachers should endeavour to inculcate the rules of one person speaking at a time (current speaker), while others wait to take their turns. The current speaker sometimes selects the next speaker and some other times, a listener can self select which could lead to discourse interruption. Most importantly, turn taking should always be done in the transitional relevant place (TRP). The Transition Relevance Place is how one decides the when. It is where speaker change may occur after a turn is completed, and is what a listener usually waits for, and depends on:

Taking turn in a speech is a process that should not be neglected by conversation participants. Neglect of the rules of turn taking has a negative effect like interruption and it can as well lead to overlapping speech. Speakers should always draw a demarcating line between competitive and noncompetitive overlap. For [16] much of the research in turn-taking has looked into competitive versus cooperative overlap in conversations, such as how that affects the balance of power of those in the conversation and how much rapport the speakers have. For example, in competitive overlap, researchers might look at how one person dominates a conversation or how a listener might take some power back with different ways of interrupting. Interrupting is not a violation if it doesn't steal the floor. If your uncle is telling a long story at dinner, you may cut in to ask him to pass the salt. Most (but not all) people would say you aren't really interrupting; you just asked for a temporary pause." [17].

Non competitive overlap aids understanding and always serves as a way that the listeners seek for clarification in support of the current speaker. An overlaps might be more benign and just show that the listener understands. These kinds of overlaps discussed above help to move the conversation forward and aid in communicating the full meaning to all who are listening.

However, the concept of turn taking varies among different cultures. Cultural differences and formal or informal settings can change what's acceptable in a particular group dynamic. "Cultural differences in matters of turn-taking can lead to conversational breakdown, misinterpretation of intentions, and interpersonal intergroup conflict." [18]

Culture cannot be a biological phenomenon but a learned pattern of social behaviour to be followed. It is a wonderful and unique phenomenon of human society with colourful diversity always changing its patterns which is the greatest beauty of human society [19]. To have a smooth flow of social interaction, all societies employ some kind of speech exchange system. On the issue of turn taking and cultural differences, Chaika maintains that some cultures allow the person speaking to continue until he or she wishes to give it up. Others regulate turn taking more overtly. "It has been discovered that the rules for carrying out conversation and other speaking activities varies not only from country to country, but within a country but regionally and ethnically." [20].

Competencies in the Teaching of the speaking skill

A learner's ability to learn depends largely on his intelligent quotient and majorly on the competence of the teacher. Again, the context of situation is another factor to put into consideration during learning. The concept of pragmatics has been given different definitions by different linguists. The most basic and standardize one is meaning in use, or meaning in context [21]. Or, more textually, "pragmatics can be usefully defined as the study of how utterances have meanings in situations" [22]. Pragmatics is about the interaction of semantic knowledge with our knowledge of the world, taking into account contexts of use [23]. Even though teaching every cultural value of the world is not possible, pragmatic awareness is essential to make communication as successful as possible. This is the main objective of teaching and meaning of an utterance will be highly understood by the students according to the context. Therefore, language learning entails different tasks.

The process of learning the speaking skill entails acquisition of some competencies. According to [24] the Council of Europe framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) in 2001 came up with a curriculum for language teaching and learning programme. The CEFR is a "descriptive scheme that can be used to analyse L2 learners' needs, specify L2 learning goals, guide the development of L2 learning materials and activities, and provide orientation for the assessment of L2 learning outcomes" [25].

Nigerian language educational planners should emulate this to come up with a careful design programme which will be implemented to meet our language needs in all schools across the federation. If this is done, it will go a long way in solving our educational problem. According to [26] among the various competences, the CEFR considered some basic ones as meeting their needs. They are linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence. For [27], some other competences are necessary in the teaching of speaking skill, the oral communication competency, besides active listening skills, requires different sub competencies like the Linguistic competence which is the ability to create grammatically, lexically and phonologically correct utterances. Another aspect of competence is the discourse competence which according to him is the ability to produce coherent and cohesive utterances, different interactional patterns in varying socio-cultural and physical contexts.

In 1990, pragmatic competence was considered an essential part of communicative competence. Pragmatic competence according to [8]; [9]; [10]; [11] in Psoma is the ability to use language in communication in a way that is accurate and appropriate to the social and cultural circumstances where the communication occurs (function, register, style). For example, the use of *can I* instead of *Do you mind if* is part of pragmalinguistic knowledge and a learner asking the way to apologize in the target language given the social relationship between speaker and listener, is part of socio pragmatic knowledge.

The pragmatic competence can be broadly classified into two namely; functional and sociolinguistic (discourse competence). Functional competence (illocutionary) deals with the knowledge of functions (e.g. ideational, manipulative, heuristic, imaginative, etc.). In other words, the relationship with language forms and the roles they play commanding, promising or reporting. The sociolinguistic or discourse competence includes aspects such as dialects, varieties, register. Discourse competence examines 'how sentences connect with larger sketches of spoken or written text in terms of coherence and cohesion' [23].

The pragmatic competence is paramount to the teaching of the speaking skills because it fosters the speaker's ability to use language for different purposes. On the other hand, the listener's ability to understand the speaker's real intentions (for example, implicatures, irony, sarcasm or indirect speech acts) and, finally, the knowledge of the rules by which utterances come together to create discourse [26].

Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical underpinning that guides this research is Discourse theory of intonation. This approach was developed by Brazil (1992). Intonation as an aspect of supra-segmental feature has meaning and plays important role in spoken discourse. Intonation does in speech what punctuation does in writing. The rising and falling intonation are used enormously especially when the current speaker in a conversation wants to end his/her turn. It serves as a clue for relinquishing the floor by the current speaker. This approach provides the participants ample opportunity of when to expect the transition relevant point (TRP). TRP is regarded as the possible structural completion spot of a one-word lexicon, phrase, clause, or full sentence. However, Sacks et al.'s TRP is not always relevant as a turn-taking place [15].

This is noticeable when the current speaker tilts towards a falling tune.

The key concepts of his intonation system are the context of interaction, including the present state of convergence or divergence of an ongoing speech event, and the role-relationship between the speaker and the listener. He identifies four meaningful choices in the intonation system: 'tone unit', 'prominent syllables', 'tone', and 'key/termination' [18]. This theory has it that intonation captured on the basis of common ground between speakers and hearers helps to build up the meaning of utterance. This could be related to the top down approach in pronunciation teaching under the influence of the communicative approach [7]. Brazil's Discourse Intonation constitutes an essential element of language in oral communication and is thus subject of linguistic

research. The tone description of Brazil's theory which supposes that tone reflects the context of interaction and the role-relationship between participants. [23] claims that the interpretation of tone choice that seems most reliable and which seems to make most sense is to see tones as fulfilling an interactive role in the signaling of the 'state of play' in discourse. In other words, a participant tone carries a lot of undisclosed message as whether he/she is ready to relinquish the floor to another speaker as well as the intended meaning of his utterance. In Brazil's system, meanings are attached to tones (proclaiming and referring tones), so that the tone chosen will contribute to the overall meaning. [4] asserts that 'tone', as well as prominence, is dependent on the speaker's choice in the existential paradigm, essentially based on whether the utterance to be made would be common ground (state of convergence) or 'news' to the listener (state of divergence). Study the dialogue below between a mother and her daughter:

MOTHER: Where are you going to?

DAUGHTER: To see my friend, Emeka

MOTHER: He is a friend? Be wise.

This short conversation above has a lot of implied meaning which can be seen as a common ground (state of convergence) between the conversation participants. The concept of 'implicature' according to [12] is to account for what a speaker can imply, suggest, or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says [13]. From the above extract, conversational implicature as a general principle of conversation has not been obeyed because the maxim of manner (be perspicuous) has been flouted.

Furthermore, the rising tone of the mother additionally suggests that Emeka should not be counted as a friend. By this therefore, the mother impliedly refers to Emeka as any other thing other than a friend by her way of expression. This shows that one's tone most often determines the meaning of an utterance. Judging from the context, one may infer that based on some past events between Emeka and the daughter, Emeka should not be called a friend. Some other person may equally infer that the mother is trying to be sure from her loving daughter that Emeka is a friend. This different interpretation is in line with the assertion of [21] that "since the discourse analyst, like the hearer, has no direct access to a speaker's intended meaning in producing an utterance, he often has to rely on a process of inference to arrive at an interpretation for utterance..."

It is very obvious that intonation which comprises the falling and rising tone has a prominent part to play in turn taking. The tonic syllable which is the last stressed syllable that carries the tone of the sentence always serve as a clue for the participants in the conversation to take over the floor from the current speaker without interruption or overlap. For Kato, at the tonic syllable, pitch movement starts.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Speaking skills and turn taking remain very important and useful as long as human communication is involved. This paper has been able to show the differences between speech and turn taking. Speech is pivotal and a veritable tool to interaction. No meaningful communication will take place without the speaking skills as well as effect manipulation of the rules of turn taking. Therefore, effective teaching of the speaking skill should be explicitly done in order to incorporate the fundamentals of speech like accurate pronunciation, stress and syllables. This will go a long way in getting the intended meaning of the speaker's message without misunderstanding.

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