

## Interactive Teaching Method for Communication Enhancement

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*Educating the students means providing opportunities to them to unearth their knowledge and hone their skill. The students of current age also expect such a miracle in language learning so as to fit them in a promising placement after obtaining a degree. The transformation in all the fields in the recent decades stresses the implementation of an innovative language teaching at the tertiary level. The current practices in learning English have become an issue during the learners' campus recruitment as today's learning is measured by what they are able to write on the content. The present syllabus, teaching and the evaluation procedure of it focuses mainly on increasing students' content knowledge with less focus on enhancing communication skills. Hence, the study is an attempt to augment the learners' communication skills to make them more employable; and the researcher made a functional application of interactive teaching methodology in the language classroom for a few months. To prove its validity, the impact of the methodology on the learners is analyzed statistically using Descriptive Analysis and Paired T-Test.*

**Keywords:** *Communication enhancement, Content knowledge, Education, Interactive teaching method, Transformation in teaching/learning second language*

### Introduction

English language is universal and unique. Globalization in all the fields necessitates the learning of the international language as the number of people who use English as a means of communication now-a-days exceeds much more than the number of people who speak it as their mother tongue. For more than two centuries, India had the influence of the English language either directly or indirectly, on all the fields. In higher education, English language has become a vital requirement and it is a preferred medium of instruction. Language teaching and learning was exactly a traditional and an orthodox one till the 1980s. The chronicle of language teaching in the past one hundred years has been regarded as a milestone by a quest for more effective ways of teaching second or foreign languages. The solution to the issue lies in the adoption of a new teaching approach or a method as making the students "communicatively competent" has become the major job of today's English teachers.

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## English Language Teaching Tradition

As a second language, English is a dynamic obligation in the teaching programmes of the developing countries. In the field for intensive research and theorizing, second language teaching and learning has become imperative all over the domain.

Today English is the world's most widely studied foreign language but five hundred years ago, Latin was the dominant language of education, commerce, religion, and government in the western world. However, in the sixteenth century, French, Italian, and English gained importance because of political changes in Europe. The status of Latin diminished from being a "living language" to being an "occasional subject" in the European school curriculum. The study of classical Latin especially the works of Virgil, Ovid, and Cicero and an analysis of its grammar and rhetoric became the model for foreign language study from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The students were given rigorous introduction to Latin grammar through rote learning, translation, and practice in writing sample sentences which made school learning a deadening experience.

Roger Ascham and Montaigne of the sixteenth century, Comenius and John Locke of the seventeenth century made specific proposals for curriculum reform and for changes in the way the classical language was taught. In the eighteenth century, "modern" languages began to enter the curriculum of European schools but they were taught using the same procedures used for teaching Latin. By the nineteenth century, it became the standard way of teaching a foreign language.

The objective of foreign/second language study in the past was only to learn a language in order to read its literature or to benefit from the intellectual development that resulted from the study (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 3-5).

In the mid nineteenth century, the issues of syllabus design emerge as a major factor and the curriculum development for language teaching began. The systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning is a powerful one and the quest for better methods has been the preoccupation of many teachers and applied linguistics since the beginning of the twentieth century. Many methods have emanated and vanished in the past hundred years in search of the "best method". The following chronology with dates suggests the periods of greatest dominance: Grammar Translation Method (1800-1900), Direct method (1890-1930), Structural Method (1930-1960), Reading Method (1920-1950), Audio lingual Method (1950-1970), Situational Method (1950-1970) and Communicative Approach (1970-present).

Throughout the twentieth century, new approaches and methods proliferated; some achieved wide levels of acceptance and popularity, but were then replaced by methods based on newer or more appealing ideas and theories. Hence, "... the concern was not with syllabus questions but with approaches to teaching and methodology that could be used to support an oral-based target-language-driven methodology" (Richards 2010: 3).

In India, English language teaching is inseparably interrelated with the status and role of English and it assumes added significance for the masses as well, especially the disadvantaged sections of society for whom it can be an effective instrument of economic and social progress.

### **Review of Related Literature**

The history of language teaching has been characterized by a search for more effective ways of teaching/learning second or foreign languages. English language teaching methodology is not the same as the teaching of Mathematics or Physics. More than any other language, English language teaching has been practiced in various adaptations, all around the world for centuries. Changes in language teaching throughout history have reflected the need for language proficiency of the learners as the aim of language study has shifted from acquiring receptive skills "Reading" and "Listening" towards productive/active skills "Speaking" and "Writing".

The controversy over the second language teaching and learning is not new but a recurrent one in the history of language teaching. Corder (1975: 109) admits, "At the present time, we lack any clear and soundly based picture of the language learning process". Gregg (1984: 95) states, "We do not yet have a theory of second language acquisition" but the present position is not what it was three decades ago.

Richards and Rodgers (2001: viii) opine that for more than a hundred years, debate and discussion within the language teaching profession have been often centered on issues such as the role of grammar in the language curriculum, the development of accuracy and fluency in teaching, the choice of syllabus frameworks in course design, the role of vocabulary in language learning, teaching productive and receptive skills, learning theories and their application in teaching, memorization and learning, motivating learners, effective learning strategies, techniques for teaching the four skills, and the role of materials and technology. NS Prabhu (1990: 162) in his article titled "There is No Best Method – Why?" writes, "... no single method is best for everyone, as there are important variations in the teaching context that influence what is best". He also asserted that we should expand our horizons regarding methods.

In India, the situation became more complex because in some states English has its entry at an elementary level; and in some others it starts after the 5th grade. Being a multi-lingual country and because of political dynamics, India cannot follow a uniform approach in the teaching-learning process. The problem became more acute because of the elite urban, town and rural division in India. In a more complex classroom like India, innovation is compulsory as language competencies vary a lot and all stakeholders like students, parents, teachers, managements etc., want to implement latest developments as this can also encourage fairer higher educational and career opportunities for diverse sections of society in India in particular and other countries in general (Jaisingh 2015: 48-49).

Basically, the teacher controls the instructional process, the lecture content is delivered to the class by her/him and the students listen to the lecture. Thus, the learning mode tends to be passive and the learners play little part in their learning process. This learning approach can be found in almost all educational institutions and universities in India. In such a lecture, students assume a purely passive role and their concentration fades off after 15-20 minutes.<sup>1</sup>

Researchers such as Long (1975) and Long and Porter (1985), Pica and Doughty (1985) made a basic distinction between a "lockstep" organization of classroom interaction where activities are teacher-fronted and a small-group format. They explained "lockstep" as a situation where the whole class is moving along together, where all the students are "locked" into the same activity at the same time, at the same pace and where the teacher is the primary, even the only, initiator. Students are frequently "observers" of others and there is little flexibility whereas in a small-group format, each and every learner has an opportunity to contribute in the learning process.

Long (1975: 216) comments more critically, "The teacher who attempts to conduct a large, heterogeneous group of ... 30 secondary age EFL students through a language programme as one unit is obliging all the students to cover the same ground, at the same time, at the same pace, via the same approach, method and technique, and using the same material". In such a context, he argues, 29 out of 30 people will be "unemployed" at any one time, at least as far as observable learning behavior is concerned.

In Richards and Rodgers (2001: 247-248), curriculum planners debate over a second language teaching method as part of a broader set of educational planning decisions. But absent from traditional view of methods is a concept of learner-centeredness and teacher-creativity ... and that teaching methods must be flexible and adaptive to learners' needs and interests.

Telling is not teaching and listening is not learning. In such a situation, adopting interactive teaching methodology in the language classroom is the only way to make the learners get motivated and enthusiastic in the learning process. Kevin Yee from the University of Central Florida, affirms that teaching involves an open-minded plan for helping students meet and exceed their educational goals. Teaching styles may differ from teacher to teacher and class to class. Yet every teaching objective must include a structured but flexible process for student advancement. Interactive teaching styles incorporate a multitude of goals beneath a single roof. Interactive classes are designed around a simple principle: without practical application, students often fail to comprehend the depths of the study material. Whereas students often lose interest during lecture-style teaching, interactive teaching styles promote an atmosphere of attention and participation and make the learning process interesting and exciting.<sup>2</sup>

Elliot W. Eisner who is known for his work in arts education, curriculum studies, and educational evaluation states that "the ultimate aim of education is to enable individuals to become the architects of their own education and

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from [goo.gl/NX1wPd](http://goo.gl/NX1wPd).

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from [goo.gl/7nXBwq](http://goo.gl/7nXBwq).

through that process to continually reinvent themselves".<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the curriculum is a mind-altering device. Hence, revision in curriculum regarding L<sub>2</sub> teaching is mandatory as it is the concern of millions of learners and many English teachers.

### **The Present L<sub>2</sub> Teaching Scenario**

In post-independent India, people are still living on received knowledge. The entire exercise in educational institutions is examination-centred and degree driven because English teaching has not been made relevant to our own situation (Krishnaswamy 2012: 1). Previous research on the students' efforts in learning English pointed out the demerits of teaching methodology, which emphasizes "writing" as the integral part of a learning process.

In the realm of Higher Education, the aim of the government of Tamilnadu is to develop, recognize and enhance talent and skills in youth so as to equip and enable them to meet the emerging challenges of the century. It also stresses the need for revamping the language curriculum to face the demands of the global job market.

Concurrently, on realizing the importance of learning languages at all levels of under graduate education, the members of the Board of Studies of UG and PG Courses, Tamil Nadu State Council for Higher Education (TANSCHE) decided to improve the ability of students to speak and write all languages with confidence in correct form; and gave the following reformation during the meeting that was held in 2012-2013:

- i. All colleges are required to offer Part I and Part II languages in all the first four semesters of all UG programme.
- ii. Practical application of languages should be included in Internal Assessment (IA). 15% of the 40% of Internal Assessment is devoted for practical functional application in languages (English and other languages).
- iii. Internal Assessment which carries 40 marks is divided into 25 marks for theoretical components viz, tests, seminars, assignments etc., and 15 marks for practical application in languages (Speaking, Listening and Comprehension, Reading and Comprehension – each 5 marks).

Hence, in order to strengthen the Part II English curriculum, TANSCHE has proposed a model curriculum framework for the four semesters that would lead to a combined and comprehensive approach towards mastery in language skills, communication skills as well as aesthetic and literacy appreciation skills. The model curriculum thus evolved is capable of meeting the overall development of proficiency in English, especially communication skills. The universities are directed to have their own choice of textbooks and materials; however care should be taken to retain the exercise and the activities on Skills,

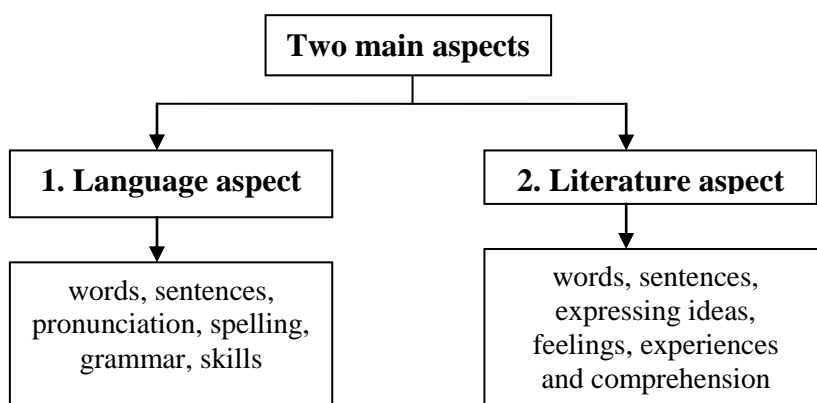
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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from [goo.gl/fsuGNv](http://goo.gl/fsuGNv).

Syntax, Language Skills and Business English (TANSCHE 2012-2013). Unfortunately, the model curriculum framework for Part II English was not yet implemented.

English teaching, according to the Ministry of Education is: to enhance students' basic abilities of English communication skills, to motivate students' interest in English language learning, and to broaden students' perspective towards the importance of learning English to improve their competitive power in global society. In India, English is taught as a second language and the objective of teaching English has two main aspects (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Objective of Teaching English in India



English teaching has also been categorized under skill objectives and cognitive objectives.

#### *Skill Objectives Include*

- i. developing the skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, and
- ii. enabling students to use grammatically correct structures appropriate to the situation.

#### *Cognitive Objectives Include*

- i. acquiring knowledge of how the language works,
- ii. diagnosing the errors in speaking and writing English,
- iii. comparing and illustrating linguistic components,
- iv. classifying the elements of the English language, and
- v. understanding the content conveyed through literary writing such as prose, poetry, story and drama by reading.

In spite of the pivotal role of English in the educational system, the objective of teaching English at the undergraduate level is far from being ideal. School education says, "Do what I say". Higher education says, "Think for yourself". In keeping with the pace of changing times, the teachers have

changed from "guru" to "instructor"/"teacher" to "facilitator"/"advisor"/ "counselor" as they have the responsibility of transforming the students and send them out to compete in this globalized world. Teaching not only has learning as a crucial key, but it is also a profession in which character-building along with man-making is more important. Besides this, the majority of the prospective employers are interested in hiring employees with good communication skills; so the English classroom methodology should be tailored to develop the verbal competency of the students so as to make them more employable (Chaturvedi 2014: 200).

However, the intention of teaching English is to help learners in learning the language and make them familiar with words and the construction of sentences; to enable them to communicate effectively in different situations; to express their ideas in simple English; and to enhance students' ability to work with others. On the other hand, the students' purpose of learning English is to fit them in a promising placement after obtaining an undergraduate/postgraduate degree; to equip them with self-confidence and enable them to engage with their/other communities as well as to be successful at work. It also supports candidates to challenge and stretch them to reach their potential.

Accordingly, teaching and learning the English language is a way of connection between souls, a means of communication. Hence, an English class in a college has the obligation to encourage students to carry on conversations with each other in the language being learned.

### Objective of the Study

It is high time to educate the students in the language classroom with a pattern meant to develop their communication skills; and colleges, especially English departments have the obligation of augmenting learners' communication skills to make them "more able" as far as employability on the job market is concerned. Henceforth, the objective of my study aims at achieving proficiency and knowledge in basic language skills using authentic text materials prescribed for Part II English with a shift from the traditional lecture method to an interactive environment combined with the interests and ability of the learners.

### Population

The thirty-three under-graduate students of the Microbiology department (calendar year 2015) of an autonomous institution were selected as participants in the study (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Details of the Samples*

Sampling	Male	Female	Total
B.Sc. Microbiology (II & III Semester)	26	7	33

## Methodology

### Research instrument

To investigate the issues associated with teaching and learning a second language in the Part II English classroom, action research was adopted. The course materials used are the authentic text materials prescribed for the second (April 2015) and third (November 2015) semesters of Part II English. At the beginning, the personal details of the participants were collected to know the educational background of their parents. In the study, the lecture method was adopted in the second semester (April 2015) of the language classroom. The performance of the learners in the Formative and Summative examination of the second semester was noted.

To identify the deficiencies of the learners' learning styles and to overcome the challenges of lecture method in the second semester, the researcher made use of an interactive teaching method throughout the third semester of the language classroom. The basic skills of the participants were trained using interactive teaching techniques. Slip tests were conducted to assess their spoken, written and presentation skills. The CIA (Continuous Internal Assessment) of the learners and their performance in the summative examinations were also marked. To support and prove the teaching methodology, Descriptive Analysis and Paired T-Test were applied for statistical treatment.

### Analysis of data

After the collection of data, the participants' average marks in the formative and summative examinations in both second and third semester were compared. In the Descriptive Analysis, the average is found out by Mean, Standard Deviation and Standard Error Mean are used to know the students' level of performance "before" (during lecture method) and "after" interactive teaching methodology, and to find out the expected set values. Paired T-Test is used to compare two population means where the observation in one sample can be paired with the observation in the other sample. It means that the measurements are taken from the same subject "before" and "after" a particular course of action i.e. implementing interactive teaching methodology. The equality of the two population mean ( $\mu_1$ ,  $\mu_2$ ) can be tested with the help of the hypothesis.

### Hypothesis

1. **H<sub>0</sub> Null Hypothesis:** There is no difference between the marks and performance of the students "before" (during lecture method) and "after" the interactive teaching methodology on average.
2. **H<sub>1</sub> Alternate Hypothesis:** The marks and performance of the students "before" (during lecture method) and "after" the interactive teaching methodology have different effects on average.



**Table 2.** *Microbiology - Paired Samples Statistics*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
<b>Pair 1</b>	<b>Formative Summative II</b>	28.3636	33	3.43528	0.59801
	<b>Formative Summative III</b>	30.6364	33	4.58134	0.79751

Table 2 shows that by observing the Mean, it can be understood that the performance of the respondents "Before Interactive Method" (during Lecture Method) has 28.3636 as the mean score. But "After Interactive Method", the Mean score of the respondents is increased to 30.6364. These differences seem to be supporting our hypothesis, but to ascertain whether this result is significant, the Paired Sample Test must be examined.

The Standard Deviation shows that the spread of performance "After Interactive Method" is (4.58134) larger than "Before the Interactive Method" i.e. during Lecture Method (3.43528). Standard Error Mean is an estimate of the Standard Deviation of the sampling distribution of the Mean. The Standard Error "Before Interactive Method" (during Lecture Method) is 0.59801 and "After Interactive Method", it is increased to 0.79751.

**Table 3.** *Paired Samples Correlations*

		N	Correlation	Sig.
<b>Pair 1</b>	<b>Formative Summative II</b>	33	0.569	0.001
	<b>Formative Summative III</b>			

The Paired Samples Correlations show the Pearson Correlations Coefficient and its significant value (Table 3). This test is conducted to show if the results found are reliable. From Table 3, the correlation of our sample is,

- $r = 0.569$  (correlation value), and
- $p = 0.001$  (significant value).

Here p value which is less than 0.05 shows that the respondents consistently got better scores "After Interactive Method" when compared to "Before Interactive Method" (during Lecture Method). So, the data is highly correlated.

**Table 4.** *Paired Samples Test*

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error of Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Mean		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>			
<b>Pair 1</b>	Formative Summative II	-2.2728	3.85902	0.67177	-3.6411	-0.9044	-3.383	32	0.002
	Formative Summative III								

In Table 4, the Mean value displays the difference between the means of participants' performance in the formative and summative examinations of the second and third semesters.

$$28.3636 - 30.6364 = -2.2728.$$

The Standard Deviation indicates that the standard deviation of all the different scores is 3.85902. The Standard Error Mean indicates the differences in the Mean. We would expect by chance if the null hypothesis is true. But our Mean difference which is -2.2728 suggests that the data does not support the null hypothesis. Our calculated  $t$  value is the ratio of these two values.

$$\begin{aligned} t \text{ value} &= -2.2728 / -0.67177 \\ &\text{(mean value)} \\ t \text{ value} &= -3.383 \\ &\text{(original value)} \end{aligned}$$

The 95% confident intervals indicate that we are 95% confident that the true population differences in Mean (-2.2728) will be between upper (-0.9044) and lower (-3.6411) limits. This measure is often used as a supplementary indicator of statistical significance. The  $t$  value is -3.383 at the significant level of 0.002 at 32 level of freedom. It shows that the significant value is less than 0.05 at 5% level of significance.

Hence it is obvious that the marks and performance of the students "after" the interactive teaching methodology is better than their performance "before interactive" i.e. during the lecture method. It could be concluded that the null hypothesis can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis can be accepted.

## Findings

The present study shows that the classroom is clearly a place where people have to work together, essentially requiring a compromise between their own individuality and the dynamics of the whole group. It is ideally a co-operative environment where structuring activities in different ways can allow for the establishment of a cohesive and collaborative work.

Pair work, group work and teamwork are not identical terms. Pair work requires organization of the learners on the part of the teacher and it can be activated in all the classrooms, for instance - a student may be asked to work with the student near him/her; or it may be between students of equal proficiency; or as per the situation and the task demands. Group work, by nature, is a more complex structure as it requires the performance of the learners in different roles assigned to them especially of communicative and interactive setting as well as a certain amount of physical reorganization of the classroom. Co-operation in the classroom is encouraged and these are undoubtedly positive factors (McDonough and Shaw 2003: 204).

The researcher adopted and applied all these different social patterns (pair/group/team work) in the language classroom for teaching the second language. Practical application of Interactive techniques such as Schema Theory, Intensive Reading, Note-making, Summarizing, Word Grouping/Chunking, Pause, Tone-groups, Skimming, Scanning, Interactional Listening Skill, Integrated Skills, Institutional Writing Skill, Compositional Skills etc. were applied while teaching the items of the course to the students. For example, while teaching the poem "The Solitary Reaper" by William Wordsworth, a brief note on the poet and the background of the poem were given to the students. Then, team work, group work and individual work were allotted to them. For instance, as the poem has four stanzas, four teams of students were formed randomly. The learners were directed to read the stanza allotted to them silently and they were advised to comprehend the meaning of the stanza by discussing it with their team members.

Then each team should come to the front; the first team member to read aloud the stanza; the second one to explain the gist; the third one to identify the poetic devices; and the last one to summarize. The observers were directed to question them if they had doubts.

As far as pair work is concerned, the students were divided into pairs; one student was directed to question the other; then the other had to find out the answer. For individual work, they were asked to find synonyms of new words or to identify poetic devices such as rhyme scheme, rhythmic pattern, alliteration, simile etc. Finally, the researcher again elucidated the meaning and the poetic techniques of the poem in detail. These teaching techniques help the learners - to develop their reading skill, to read with tone-groups, to comprehend the meaning of the stanza, to appreciate poetic devices, to frame questions and to discuss and find answers.

An analysis of the educational background of the participants' parents, the essential one in their learning process is shown below:

1. Among the parents of the thirty-three samples, 2 of their fathers are teachers; 1 is an officer; and the remaining 29 are doing work as a coolie, welder, load man, electrician, farmer, driver, and conductor; and one sample has no father. 20 of their mothers are housewives; 1 is a sub-inspector of police, 1 is a nurse, 1 is a farmer and 10 are coolies.
2. Amid the sixty-six parents, 22 are illiterates; 9 have only primary school education; 24 did not even pass high schools; 5 with higher secondary school qualification; 3 with a UG degree; 1 with a PG degree and only 2 with a Professional degree.
3. It clearly states that only 3.03 percentage of their parents are with professional qualification; 1.52 with PG level education; 4.55 with UG qualification; 7.58 with higher secondary level education; 36.36 had not even completed their high school education; 13.63 with primary level learning and 33.33 are illiterates.

The criterion displays the fact that the learners should obviously take care of their studies by themselves and at such a situation, only teaching using an

interactive method in the language classroom should come in hand to make them interact in the target language and be "employable".

### **Recommendations**

Albert Einstein's popular quotes, "I never teach my pupils, but I provide the conditions in which they can learn" and "Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think" expose his passion for holistic learning. Creating a situation which motivates language learning is the needed requirement of second language acquisition and so this study is a practical application of interactive teaching methodology in the language classroom. In such an interactive classroom, each student has more chance to speak in the target language and has more involvement in language use. Instead of the threatening atmosphere of the lockstep classroom, there is positive atmosphere which encourages impetus and possibilities of self-expression. Teamwork in the classroom is encouraged. The sharing and discussion of ideas are more "natural" which makes the classroom hypothetically vibrant. It stimulates an assertive environment which is different from the normal class room.

Malamah-Thomas (1987) isolates "action" and "reaction" as characteristics of traditional lockstep arrangements and stresses the need for "interaction", "a constant pattern of mutual influence and adjustment", whether between learners, or teacher and learners. The interactive pattern includes the relationship of individuals, pairs, groups and the whole class to the product or learning outcome. A teacher working with a mixed proficiency group has the flexibility to allocate activities according to the learners' levels. The learners also do their best when there is interactive teaching/learning in pairs, groups or teams. They learn to ask questions and it exhibits that the teaching process is learning-centered which further motivates everybody's thinking and learning.

The findings of this analysis also confirm that the level of language produced by the students will be considerably "higher" after the training in an interactive teaching method. Hence, the English teachers should be ready to change their attitude towards Part II English syllabus, a skill-based one, to be more communicative and interactive so that their students should not get fettered because of lack of their communicative competency.

### **Conclusion**

Learning in an active and interactive classroom has its implications on the learning process. There is a shift from the traditional teacher-centered model to a learner-centered as well as learning-centered approach. There is also a shift from product-driven learning to process-driven learning; and from teacher as a "transmitter of knowledge" to teacher as an "organizer of knowledge". These variations encourage teachers to reflect not only on the key principles of learning and teaching but also on their role in the process. These changes in the role of the teacher will inevitably result in transforming the role of students in

the classroom.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, the learners can try these techniques and apply them in their own subjects, the obligatory prerequisite of today's learning. Further research with experiential approach on this functional application of interactive teaching methodology in the classroom helps the learners to empower themselves with effective communication skills which give them more weight age in the job market as well as career.

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