ENHANCING COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH PRACTICE IN ENGLISH

Abdiganieva Nadira

Karakalpak State University after named Berdakh

Annotation: Being able to communicate effectively is the most important of all life skills. Communication is simply the act of transferring information from one place to another. This may be vocally (using voice), written (using printed or digital media such as books, magazines, websites or emails), visually (using logos, maps, charts or graphs) or non-verbally (using body language, gestures and the tone and pitch of voice).

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is the act of transferring information from one place to another. Although this is a simple definition, when we think about how we may communicate, the subject becomes a lot more complex. There are various categories of communication and more than one may occur at any time.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The different categories of communication are [1]:

- Spoken or Verbal Communication: face-to-face, telephone, radio or television and other media.
 - Non-Verbal Communication: body language, gestures, how we dress or act.
- Written Communication: letters, e-mails, books, magazines, the Internet orvia other media.
- Visualizations: graphs and charts, maps, logos and other visualizations can communicate messages.

MAIN PART

The desired outcome or goal of any communication process is understanding.

The process of interpersonal communication cannot be regarded as a phenomenawhich simply 'happens'. Instead, it should be seen as a process where participantsnegotiate their role, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Senders and recipients, or receivers, are of course both vital in communication. In face-to-face communication, the roles of the sender and receiver are not distinct, because both parties communicate in both directions, including in very subtle ways such as through eye-contact (or lack of) and general body language. There are many other subtle ways that we communicate (perhaps even unintentionally) with others. For example, the tone of our voice can give clues to our mood or emotional state, whilst hand signals or gestures can add to a spoken message.

In written communication the sender and receiver are more distinct. Until recent times, a relatively small number of writers and publishers were very powerful

when it came to communicating the written word. Today, we can all write and publish our ideas on the Internet, which has led to an explosion of information and communication possibilities.

Here are another ways of developing practical communication skills.

WATCH YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

You tell your partner you're open to discussion but your arms are crossed; you say you're listening but haven't looked up from your phone yet. Our non-verbal and non-written cues often reveal more than we think they do. Whether it's how you make eye contact or how you hold yourself during a video interview, don't forget that you're constantly communicating even when you're not saying a word.

One strange way to tap into your body for better communication? Think about your toes. Or adopt a power pose if you need to boost your confidence before a big talk. Or learn how to read other people's body language so you can respond appropriately [2].

HAVE PRACTICE CONVERSATIONS

If you don't think you're great at communicating with co-workers or people you don't know very well, practice on friends and family that you're comfortable with. Ideally, find people who will give you honest feedback and let you know if you're getting too quiet, personal or might make someone else feel uncomfortable.

HAVE A SCRIPT FOR SMALL TALK AND OTHER OCCASIONS

Small talk is an art that not many people have mastered. For the inevitable, awkward silences with people you hardly know, it helps to have a plan. The FORD (family, occupation, recreation, dreams) method might help you come up with topics to discuss, and you can also turn small talk into conversation by sharing information that could help you and the other person find common ground. Hey, all that small talk could make you happier in the long run.

TELL A STORY

Stories are powerful. They activate our brains, make presentations suck less, make us more persuasive and can even help us ace interviews. Learn the secrets of becoming a phenomenal storyteller with these rules from Pixar or by simply using the word "but" more to structure your narrative. Everyone's got at least one great story in them [3].

ASK QUESTIONS AND REPEAT THE OTHER PERSON

Let's face it, we've all drifted off when someone else was talking or misheard the other person. Asking questions and repeating the other person's last few words shows you're interested in what they say, keeps you on your toes and helps clarify points that could be misunderstood (e.g., "So to recap, you're going to buy the tickets for Saturday?").

It also helps for small talk and to fill in awkward silences. Instead of trying to stir up conversation on mundane topics like the weather, ask the other person questions (e.g., "Got any plans for the summer?" or "What are you reading lately?") and engage in their answers. It's more important to be interested than to be interesting.

PUT AWAY THE DISTRACTIONS

It's pretty rude to use your phone while someone's talking to you or you're supposed to be hanging out with them. Maybe we can't get rid of all our distractions or put away technology completely, but just taking the time to look up could vastly improve our communication with each other [4].

LISTEN, REALLY LISTEN

Finally, going hand-in-hand with most of the points above, the best thing you can do to improve your communication skills is to learn to really listen—to pay attention and let the other person talk without interrupting. It's hard work, we know, but a good conversation is a bunch of words elegantly connected with listening. Then, even if your communication styles don't match, at least you're both working off the same page. And hopefully the other person will be attentively listening to you too.

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