

**Certain Remedial Solutions For Communication Breakdown Between Native  
Speakers and EFL Users**

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**ABSTRACT**

This work is generally intended to give a comprehensive account of the communication breakdown between native speakers and EFL users. As international communication increases in the trend towards globalization, the demand for competence in English is interesting more and more in the countries where English is a second /foreign language. Teaching English in these countries, however, fails to develop English proficiency for communication. The deficiency of communicative competence in English appears to result from the lack of interpersonal interaction in English . Therefore, one may suggest that improving interpersonal and interaction is one main factor that possibly narrows the gap in the communication between native speakers of English and those who use English as a second/foreign language. It presents some brief views of some researchers who consider interpersonal and interaction a fundamental requirement in the acquisition of second/foreign language. Accordingly , it is regarded as a fundamental requirement for Foreign Language Acquisition (henceforth ,FLA). The interactive and perspective in FLA have placed considerable attention on the role of interaction in general. On the one hand, "internal communication" seems to require multiple competences. Studies of pragmatic and discourse competences that focus on the process of achieving mutual intelligibility in spoken or written text, gain increasing significance.

**1. Introduction**

Language is a human vocal noise or the graphic representation of the noise fused systematically and conventionally by members of a speech community for communicative function. As such, language is the most influential human means of communication. The so- called "expanding circle" of foreign language speakers was said to include more than 750 million EFL speakers during the second millennium, compared to 375 million first-language speakers and 375 million second language speakers. Members of the English language speech community spread all over the world; they can be found in Europe, North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Australia. The primary utilitarian categories of the English language exist in many countries within the continents listed above. English is used as a native language or a mother tongue or a first language(L1) in the United State, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New-Zealand, most of Canada, and South Africa. English is used as a second language (L2) in countries like Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra, Leone, and many other commonwealth countries. English is also used or learnt as a foreign language (FL) in countries like France, Belgium, Germany, Benin, Cameroon, and Arab Homeland .Osisanwo, W. (1989;35) suggests that since all the users of English in the three utilitarian categories belong the English speech community, it is reasonable to expect that one of the major goals of acquiring it should be the attainment of international intelligibility in expressive and receptive skills at the oral and written levels of communication. The question then arises whether such a laudable goal is ever achieved in many cases. Research findings abound on problems militating against the achievement of international intelligibility, especially in the area of mother – tongue interference on English as a second language (Lado 1957, Banathy et al, Duscova 1969,LoCoco 1975,Selinker et al 1975).As international communication increases in the trend towards globalization, the demand for communicative competence in English is increasing more and more in the countries where English is taught as second/foreign language. Teaching English in our school, however, fail to develop English proficiency for communication. The deficiency in communication competence in English appears to result from the lack of international interaction in English as a foreign language.

In this paper, The researcher will try to shed some light on the communication breakdown as a problem EFL users are usually faced with whenever they are exposed to conversational situations with native speakers. The primary goals of this paper are to present this problem, study its cause and find the most remedial solutions to solve it.

**2. Communicative Competence**

Osisanwo,W.(1989; 36) states that communicative competence in a language entails the acquisition of receptive and expressive skills in the language . The poor acquisition of these skills

often leads to a breakdown in communication between some native speakers and some ESL/EFL users of English. In some undergraduate courses such as varieties of English, the English Novel, and Shakespearean Drama offered in the present writer's institution for ESL teachers in training –records, tape recordings, videotapes, and films are often used as instructional materials.

They always ask for a replay of such discs or tapes, even after they played several times. The demand does not arise as a result of interest or enjoyment but because they just can not understand substantial parts of the conversation. Their low-level performance in the assignment based on such materials is a confirmation of the problem. Communication strategies form the part of strategic competence which comprises verbal and –nonverbal strategies that language learners utilize in order to compensate for lexical problems (Canal and Swan, 1980), to enhance the effectiveness of communication. Canale (1983;11) states that one should sustain the continuity of a conversation in the face of communication difficulties, for example, by playing for time to think while searching for the intended meaning. Teaching English in our schools, however, fails to develop English proficiency for communication. The deficiency in communicative competence in English appears to result from the lack of interpersonal interaction in English as a foreign language.

Recently, 'genuine' or 'natural' discourse has become a goal of communicative approaches in the second or foreign language classroom. Kramsch (1986) suggests that communicative competence must include the ability to express, interpret and negotiate meaning. She advocates that, for as natural a communicative situation as possible, students must be given opportunity in the classroom to interact with both the teacher and fellow students through turn-taking, giving feedback to speakers, asking for clarification, and starting and ending conversation. Nunan(1987;137) also suggests that "genuine communication is characterized by the uneven distribution of information, the negotiation of meaning through clarification requests and confirmation checks, topic nomination and negotiation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not." On the whole, in traditional EFL classroom, individual language learners receive limited number of speaking turns, partly because in most classroom a large number of language learners has to share speaking turns. Especially in classroom where the teacher memorizes the discourse and in which the information predominantly flows in one direction (from teacher to learners), the less assertive and less proficient learners receive minimal output opportunities (Ellis, 1990; Johnson,1995). In particular, language learners are rarely pushed through negotiation of meaning (Lyster and Ranta, 1997, Van den Branen1997). In this regard, Mackey(1999) highlights the importance of active participation in the interaction, suggesting that one of the features that best interact with the learner-internal actors to facilitate language development, is learner participation in the interaction. The teacher's role in the foreign language classroom, therefore, is to construct an interactive learning environment in which learners can associate with each other and generate meaning in the target language.

### **3. Social communication.**

Social interaction allows the students to reflect and consider, get help and support, and participate in authentic problem solving (Brown and Duguid),1989; 34). Social has a strong and lasting influence on the students' lives. Researchers indicate that social interaction with peer can

make substantial contribution to individual's intellectual development, academic and behavioral functioning, and skills acquisition (Ryan,2000; 108). Teachers who adopt cooperative learning models will need to teach students new social norms and social learning skills. These skills (conciseness, listening, reflecting) are communication skills. An important meta-cognitive communication skill is reflection. Having students consider other students' ideas, as well as their own, or having students rephrase what they just said, are ways of building upon and extending ideas. Communication skills are not only important to the teacher, but they are an integral meta-cognitive strategy (Wood,2009;61). According to Varonis (1985), social interaction depends on four basics;

- a. Communication; No interaction takes place between two or more individuals without communication. Communication assists in many ways in unifying thoughts and reaching the cooperative behavior.
- b. Expectation; plays a fundamental role in social interaction as the human behavior is formed according to his/her expectation of others' response.
- c. Perceive and play the Role; Each individual has a role to play in the society which is manifest through his behavior. Individual's behavior is interpreted through different social roles he takes part in. When interacting with others, he requires the experience according to his social interaction.

d. Meaningful Symbols; Communication, expectation, and playing roles are done effectively by meaningful symbols common around the group such as language, restores hand movement ,etc. These ways will lead to common perceive and unify thoughts and aim among group individuals and they will think and perform in the same way.

### **4. Interpersonal Interaction**

Interpersonal interaction is regarded as fundamental requirement of (FLA). Many researchers, such as Kramsch(1986), Rivers, (1987), and Ellis (1988), have claimed that language instruction requires the development of interaction competence and interaction is the key to language teaching for communication. The interaction perspectives in FLA have placed considerable attention on the role of interaction in general. Many researchers consider interpersonal interaction a fundamental requirement in second and/or foreign language acquisition. Kramsch (1986) claims that language instruction requires the development of interaction competence, and suggests a three-step approach to improve natural discourse and to build interaction competence in the classroom. The first step is to work on teacher/student oriented interaction, during which the students practice the target language with their teacher classroom and to generate meaning as well. In the third step of the interaction approach, students practice the ways of interacting without violating social and cultural constraints that learners meet in natural conversations. Rivers (1987) treats interaction as the key to language teaching for communication . She defines interaction as the facility in using language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages . She suggests some illuminating ways to promote interaction in the language classroom such as, avoiding teacher- dominated classroom , being cooperative and considering affective variables, among other. In similar vein, Ellis (1988) states that classroom-based second/foreign language development can be successful when a teacher not only provides an input with (x) features of a target language, but when the reciprocal interaction occurs as well. Hartley (1999; 20), states that interpersonal communication is the process by which people exchange information, feelings and meanings through verbal and nonverbal messages. This definition highlights the important fact that interpersonal communication is not only concerned with what is said, i.e, the language use , but how it is said e.g , the nonverbal messages sent , such as tone of voice and facial expressions. Hargie (2010; 53), suggests that interpersonal communication includes the following aspects ; non-verbal communication, reinforcement, questioning, reflecting, opening and closing, explanation , listening and self- discourse.

### **5. Discourse Analysis.**

There are two vast fields of research that, despite their common interest for text, talk and communication , seem to virtually ignore each other ; the study of communication on the one hand and discourse analysis on the other hand . There is a small link between the two disciplines in the form of a method of description, viz. content analysis, but linguistics and especially current developments in discourse analysis have as yet had little influence as an explicit basis for such a method of research . In fact, one central element in communication process, viz. the 'message' itself, has received little autonomous attention in communication research.

### **6. What does Interactive Competence Include?**

Interactive competence includes the ability to perform different speech acts and to negotiate meaning. Kramsch (1986) suggests that communicative competence must include the ability to express and negotiate meaning. She calls for a communication situation as natural as possible, where students are given opportunities in classroom to interact with teacher and students through giving feedback to speakers, and starting and ending conversation. Byrnes (1987) also calls for a greater emphasis on the learner, on speech as a process, and on the interactive process of speaking . On the other hand, Swan (1994) points out that the qualitative or quantitative distinction is not always clear cut in practice, as applied to education research; the distinction is more on the continuum than on the dichotomy. It is often useful to draw on a combination of methods that may complement one another and provide a more complete picture of language. Remarkably, Blake (2000; 6) pinpoints that their utterances are " neither all wrong nor all right, but somewhere in between". The frequent errors in their language involved misuses of singular/plural omissions of verb ( be) and the articles (a, an, the), and the reverse of order of words. These language errors were sometimes connected through their explicit or implicit feedback, namely negotiation, and self-corrections. But sometimes, contrary to Blake's comments (2000), these incorrect forms were explicitly passed from one to the other in their negotiation .

Students copied incorrect forms from another student's message. From the researcher's observation made during the student's Computer Mediated Communication (henceforth, CMC) session, one noticeable characteristics of the student's engagement in CMC chats was the increased motivation and active participation. Students were so enthusiastic about their chat performance that they were absorbed in communicating in English to solve their tasks, and it was surprising, given the classroom context, for the students to be engaged to such an extent in the use of the target language. Their attempts to resolve their communication problems were so active that they always activated the dictionary function via internet on the computer screen before logging onto their chats. On with the interruption successfully, persuading intruder to leave the chat room . Thus their attention to their conversation never waned, but lasted throughout the session. These results are in accordance with the previous findings (Pelletieri, 1999; Blake, 2000), which indicate that task based CMC does foster the negotiation of meaning, and this negotiation appears facilitate comprehension and successful foreign learners do engage in such meaning negotiation through task based synchronous CMC which researchers claim to be beneficial for foreign language development. Considering that English language has a quite different phonological system, foreign students still need oral practice in English for their own oral communication competence.

### **7. Grammatical Competence.**

One of the positive aspects of CMC is the increased use of inter language. Moreover, Pelletieri (1999) suggests that synchronous CMC can play a great role in the development of grammatical competence. Conversely, Blake (2000) raises a question on the focus of form approach, in particular, the issue of grammatical development , indicating that lexical negotiation pre- dominate these networked exchanges.

### **8. Increased Motivation and Participation.**

From a pedagogical standpoint, one of the greatest advantages of CMC is the student's increased motivation and active participation. Pelletieri, (1999) States that as previous research on CMC demonstrated, the students reduced anxiety about making errors and increased motivation for using the target language, both of which result in greater opportunities of embittering target language production. The increased motivation leads the students to participate in the CMC actively. However, the distance of the first language from the target language in phonological system still requires oral practice in the target language. Communicative competence in a language entails the acquisition of respective and expressive skills in the language . The poor acquisition of these skills often leads to a breakdown in communication between some native speakers and some ESL/EFL users of English. (Osisanwo, 1989) In some undergraduate courses- such as varieties of English, the English Novel, and Shakespearean Drama, offered in the present writer's institution for ESL teachers in training – record, tape recordings, videotapes, and films are often used as instructional materials. They always ask for replay of such discs or tapes, even after even they have been played several times. The demand does not arise as a result of interest or enjoyment but because they just can not understand substantial parts of the conversation. Their low-level performance in the assignment based on such materials is a confirmation of the problem. (Ibid)

**9. Communication Tasks.** Eight communication tasks are selected and developed for the purpose of this work. The selection of these tasks is motivated in the first place by previous studies, e.g, Pelletieri, (1999), Blake, (2000), and in particular by two collections of articles edited by Crookes and Glass (1993a, 1993b). An effective way to assist language learning in the classroom or to study the processes of Second Language Acquisition henceforth, (SLA) is revealed and validated through the use of communication tasks (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun, 1993, Nobuyoshi and Ellis, 1993). The theoretical perspective which supports the use of communication tasks is one which holds that language is best learned and taught through interaction. In interaction –based pedagogy, classroom opportunities to receive , comprehend , and ultimately internalize L2 words, forms and structures are believed to be most abundant during activities in which learners and their interlocutors can exchange information and communicate ideas. Such activities are structured so that all learners will talk as a means of sharing ideas and opinions collaborating towards a single goal, or competing to achieve individual goals. (Nunan, 1987, Rivers, 1987). It's therefore, maintained that "classroom and research activities must be structured to provide a context whereby learners not only talk to their interlocutors,

but negotiate meaning with them as well", and consequently to engage learners in these kinds of interactions (Pica, Kanagy and Falodun, 1993;11).

According to Pica, Kanagy and Flodun's typology (1994), a task that promotes the greatest opportunities for learners to experience comprehension of input, feedback on production and inter language modification is one that meets the four following conditions;

1. Each interaction holds a different portion of information , which must be exchanged and manipulated in order to reach the outcome.
2. Both interactions are required to request and supply this information to each other.
3. Interactions have the same or convergent goals.
4. Only one acceptable outcome is possible from their attempts to meet this goals.

The eight communication tasks employed are not open, but they are closed tasks, such as jigsaw and information gap activities, in which the interactions possess different pieces of information needed for a solution and, therefore must work collaboratively to converge (Noun) = use spread over or cover on a single outcome. Each task was photocopied and distributed among participants. In foreign language situations, it is very difficult to have exposure to the target language outside the classroom. With this limitation , task based activities are provided for learners to generate 'modified interaction'. Currently computer networks are being used in language teaching and learning. The use of global communication networks such as e-mail is increasingly significant. The literature and previous research in this area suggest that advantages over face -to – face oral exchanges, such as strong motivation, equal participation and the increase of target language production (Kelm,1992, Beavois, 1992, Kern, 1995, Chun,1998). In (Kern,1995,Chun,1998).

### **10. Causes of the Breakdown in Communication.**

A comprehensive investigation that is carried out to confirm or breakdown in communication revealed the following insights;

- A breakdown in verbal communication usually occurs when a foreign learner feels unable to catch the words of native speakers at any opportunity of communication du to different reasons such as the way native speakers talk or converse, or the native speakers' speech rhythm.
- The deficiency of communicative competence in English as a result of the lack of interpersonal interaction result in failure communication.
- There is a strong link between the breakdown and the native speakers' speech rhythm . (Osisanwo, 1989).

The third finding deserves to be described briefly so that the suggestions are made and appreciated.

### **11. English Speech Rhythm .**

As mentioned by Osisanwo (1989), the fact that English is a stress-rhythm language was discovered to be the strongest source of the breakdown in verbal communication . English language has word stress as well as sentence stress . In any poly- syllable word , one syllable is usually stressed while other(s) have a weaker degree of stress or unstressed. Here are some examples;

1. un'fortunate      electrifi'cation
2. re'markable      'bachelor
3. industrialization      uni' literalism

In connected speech , the native speaker gives prominence to the stress syllables. The resultant production is such that the ESL listener , who is less skillful maladroit as hearing and connecting the unstressed syllables with the stressed ones , often fails to recognize such words or understand them At the sentence level , certain words have syllables that are stressed while some words are completely unstressed . In connected speech , stressed syllables tend to occur at fairly regular intervals in time . This stress – timing gives the language its speech rhythm . A breakdown in communication occurs in connected speech when the native speaker achieves this speech rhythm by almost glossing over all of the unstressed syllables . This phenomenon can be briefly illustrated by the following sentences;

1. I 'thought you'd /'gone a/'broad .
2. The po'lice had a/rressed the/'thieves.

Each of the underlined syllables is stressed and therefore, the native speaker gives it prominence . the other syllables, which are unstressed are

said so quickly and lightly that they are not received by the ESL listener . The situation is even worse when the native speaker is a naturally fast speaker. \_ Tracing the problem of constant breakdown in oral communication to phonological differences between English and the ESL learners' mother tongue , we have been able to solve the serious problem of hearing difficulty, by doing three things, Osisanwo (ibid) suggest three remedial steps to deal with this problem.

**12.The Three Remedial Step.**Osisanwo (ibid) suggests three remedial steps to deal with this problem. These are briefly discussed under " model selection," " contrastive analysis" and "course modification".

**12 .1 Model Selection.** The first step taken was to determine what model of English language should be taught. There is the unresolved controversy as to whether to use the native- speaker model or the educated West African (or even Nigerian ) model for teaching Oral English. Unfortunately, a detailed description of the phonology of educated militating ; having weight or effect glossing over dealing with a subject too lightly or not at all tackling ; dealing with cross the hurdle ; overcome the difficulty supra- segmental ; units which extend over more than one sound in an utterance boost ; an act that brings help or encouragement. This issue of model selection is crucial to succeed wherever this problem exists. It should be recalled that our investigation showed that a breakdown in communication occurred frequently in the area of the supra- segmental . We consider it essential to use that very model that Constitutes (poses) a problem as the teaching model.

**12 .2 Contrastive Analysis** After selecting a model , the next major step taken was to carry out language and the students' first language . This step enabled them to every practical session in the language laboratory, each student was requested first of all to produce the text of the day and records it. They were then supplied with standard version of the text to listen to . Each student was asked then to mark on the script all areas where his production differed from the standard version supplied . This was usually followed by an intensive listening session during which the standard version was repeated several times for the students to internalize . This step is consonant with Ladefoged's (1967;167) assertion that " in general, people cannot hear differences between foreign language sounds until they have learned to make these differences." This approach was very effective because, while the students improved their production skills, their receptive skill also received the required boost.

**12 .3 Course Modification** The final step was relevant to the content of the phonetics and phonology of the English course . The emphasis on segmental phonemes was reduced . The supra- segmental phonemes of English were given more attention because this aspect constituted a greater problem. This was done within the context of meaningful utterances. Practice materials were extracted from recoded dialogue ,plays , and films with educated native speakers dominating.

**Conclusion**Internationally intelligibly oral communication has two sides . While the person acquiring the language has to be able to speak to members of that speech community within and outside his country, he should be able to understand their speech, too. Emphasis has been laid on the ability of ESL learners to achieve a level of spoken English at which they can be understood by other foreign speakers of the language . Ironically, the ability of the ESL learners to understand other international members of the English speech community, especially educated native speakers, has not given sufficient attention.

An effective way to assist language learning in the classroom or to study the processes of (FLA) is revealed and validated through the use of communication tasks.

On the one hand, " international communication" seems to require multiple competence . Studies of pragmatic and discourse competences, that focus on the process of achieving mutual intelligibility in whle spoken or written texts, gain increasing significance . (See for example Mckay, 2002,pp.49-76). In addition, developing the kind of strategic competence that has already been highlighted as an important aspect of "communicative competence" is also inevitably worthy of renewed attention, as international communication seems to require the ability to adjust to almost infinity divers intercultural communication situations. Traditionally , however, "communicative competence" has been used to refer to the adaptation to single and well-established speech communities.

There is a consensus on the fact that language is best learned and taught through interaction . In foreign language situation, it is very difficult to have exposure to the target language outside of the classroom. With this limitation, task-based activities should be provided to generate modified



interaction. Improving interpersonal interaction is one main factor that helps to narrow the gap of communication between native speakers of English and others who use it as a second/ foreign language. One should add that what has been achieved can be comprehensively assimilated only if there are follow-up or reinforcement drills and the constant provision of natural settings where the newly acquired skill of thoroughly understanding educated native speakers of the English language are used. From a pedagogical standpoint, one of the greatest advantages of CMC is the student's increased motivation active participation which result in greater opportunities of target language production. Chun (1994; 28) reports that " computer assisted class discussion (henceforth, CACD) provides excellent opportunities for foreign language learners to develop the discourse skills and interactive competence." The transcripts of discourse produced by Korean learners in tasked based CMC also support this finding by showing that learners do perform several interactive speech acts; they ask and answer questions ; they give feedback to others ; they check comprehension , and they start and end conversation with appropriate greetings and leave taking. Therefore, this study has come to suggest that task based CMC can be an effective method for increasing interactive competence because it provides students with the opportunity to generate different kinds and modes of discourse. The final conclusion is concerned with the so –called 'expanding circle' of foreign language speakers. If we succeed in breaking down the actual communication breakdown, the number of such speakers will be billions.

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