

3.1 INTRODUCTION

An important element of communicative approach is a student's ability to use and understand the spoken language' (Leech and Svartvik, 2000). This is because, underlying any social interaction, is the human desire to make contact with other people and to cross the gap between their thoughts and one's own. Vygotsky, (1962) has said that 'language is the primary tool through which we use words to capture our own and other people's 'sense', our own contextualised understandings and connotation for events and ideas'

'As human beings, we are driven by a need to make sense of and to make 'sense to' others, in what has been described as an innate drive for 'coherence. ...' (Meadows 1993).

Most of the language used is in the spoken form. In fact, language derives its vitality, sustenance and dynamism from speech. In the learning of any foreign language we need to first comprehend the import of the spoken utterance and then make active use of language to express meaning, which other people can make sense of.

Speech skills or oral skills have two major components, The first comprises the motor perception skills wherein the learner of a foreign language is exposed to sounds and structures of the target language, which the learner perceives, recalls and articulates in the correct order. The language in these imitative and repetitive exercises is presented in a discrete manner without a context. The learners practice the sounds of the language (phonology), vocabulary (lexis) and grammar (syntax) without the basis of content and situation. Though it serves a purpose at the elementary level, this does not prepare them for fluent use of the language in real life for personal use. The learner is not able to transfer his/her knowledge from a language-learning situation to language-using situation.

The second major component of speaking comprises the 'interaction skills'. As the learner progresses through various listening-speaking contexts, s/he begins to reach a level where the foreign language is merged as it were with the situation and the learner begins to think in the language.

Interaction skills involve the use of language for a certain purpose, according to the audience or listener and the situation. The learner may have to seek information either in a face-to-face contact or over the telephone, describe things, express opinion, narrate incidents or converse with friends.

In the second language classroom there is now a growing need for the development of speech skills where a learner develops a wide range of language resources and skills, Language using experience in a variety of situations means that a learner's resources can be used across an increasing range of contexts. This would have to be developed by a variety of activities in different language contexts.

Taking responsibility for how other people will understand what you say and for making sure that you understand them, is an aspect of discourse that develops as one grows.

3.2 NEEDS OF THE LEARNER

By the time the learner reaches the secondary level, s/he would have acquired the skill of using both conversation (face-to-face or telephonic) and extended talk comprising descriptions and narrations, which are part of linguistic discourse.