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Interactive Language Teaching:

I-Introduction:

Interaction is an important word for language teachers. In the era of communicative language teaching, interaction is, in fact, the heart of communication; it is what communication is all about. We send messages; we receive them; we interpret them in a context; we negotiate meanings; and we collaborate to accomplish certain purposes. And after several decades of research on teaching and learning languages, we have discovered that the best way to learn to interact is through interaction itself.

II- Interactive Language Teaching:

Interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Theories of communicative competence emphasize the importance of interaction as human beings use language in various contexts to “negotiate” meaning, or simply stated, to get one idea out of one’s head and into the head of another person and vice versa.

Rivers (1987) underscores that from the very beginning of language study, classrooms should be interactive, and states that “through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals. In interaction, students can use all they possess of the language—all they have learned or casually absorbed—in real-life exchanges...” (4-5).

III- The Principles of Interactive Language Teaching:

1-Automaticity: True human interaction is best accomplished when focal attention is on meanings and messages and not on the grammar and other linguistic forms. Learners are thus freed from keeping language in a controlled mode and can more easily proceed to automatic modes of processing.

2-Intrinsic Motivation: As students become engaged with each other in speech acts of fulfillment and self-actualization, their deepest drives are satisfied. And as they more fully appreciate their own competence to use language, they can develop a system of self-reward.

3-Strategic Investment: Interaction requires the use of strategic language competence to both make certain decisions on how to say or write or interpret language, and to make repairs when

communication pathways are blocked. The spontaneity of interactive discourse requires judicious use of numerous strategies for production and comprehension.

4-Risk-taking: Interaction requires a certain degree of risk-failing to produce intended meaning, of being laughed at, of being shunned or rejected. The rewards of course are great and worth the risks.

5-Language-Culture Connection: The cultural loading of interactive speech as well as writing requires that interlocutors be thoroughly versed in the cultural nuances of language.

6-Interlanguage: The complexity of interaction entails a long developmental process of acquisition. Numerous errors of production and comprehension will be a part of this development. And the role of teacher's feedback is crucial to the developmental process.

7-Communicative Competence: All of the elements of communicative competence are involved in human interaction. All aspects must work together for successful communication to take place.

IV- The Interactive Language Teaching Teacher:

a-The Teacher as Controller: For interaction to take place, the teacher must create a climate in which spontaneity can thrive, in which unrehearsed language can be performed, and in which the freedom of expression given over students makes it possible to predict everything that they will say and do.

b-The Teacher as Director: As students engage in either rehearsed or spontaneous language performance, it is the job of the teacher to keep the process flowing smoothly and efficiently. The ultimate motive of such direction must always be to enable students eventually in the real-life drama of improvisation.

c-The Teacher as Manager: This metaphor captures the teacher's role as one who plans lessons and modules and courses, one who structures the larger, longer segments of classroom time, but who then allows each individual player to be creative within those parameters.

d-The Teacher as Facilitator: The facilitating role requires that the teacher steps away from the managerial or directive role and allow students, with guidance and gentle prodding here and there, to find their own pathways to success. A facilitator capitalizes on the principle of intrinsic motivation by allowing students to discover language.

e-The Teacher as Resource: The implication of the resource role is that the student takes the initiative to come to the teacher. The teacher is 'there' for advice and counsel when the student seeks it.

V- Conclusion:

In short, interactive language teaching goes against the creation of an artificial and unnatural classroom atmosphere of communication in the second language; rather, it takes a highly interactive classroom mode to the communication interests of the learners. Experts and scholars in the second language teaching have pushed forward interactive principles that substantiate this teaching approach: automaticity, intrinsic motivation, strategic investment, risk-taking, language-culture connection, interlanguage, and communicative competence.

Though the advantages of this approach are strongly agreeable, so much is expected of language teachers. Distant from the roles of traditional teachers, interactive teachers have been profoundly challenged to perform new roles such as controllers, directors, managers, facilitators, and resources.

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