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LISTENING SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP QUALITIES AMONG PUPIL TEACHERS

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Abstract

In the modern context the complete knowledge of English language has become inevitable and mandatory for every teacher. A teacher is the leader of his class. A teacher with knowledge of language pedagogy and well equipped with leadership virtues is an indispensable being not only in solving problems of pronunciation but also in dealing with many challenging issues satisfactorily. In four communication skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing; the listening is considered the utmost important skill of a teacher. The present study was conducted with a view to find the relationship between a teachers' ability to effectively listen and their Perceived leadership ability. Sample of 50 pupil teachers was taken by using random sampling. Keeping in mind the nature of the present problem, the survey method has been used. The present study identified several significant relationships worthy of further discussion. Most important is reconfirming the relationship between leadership and listening effectiveness among the pupil teachers. This study strengthens the contention that being perceived as an effective listener is significant in leadership effectiveness.

In the modern context the complete knowledge of English language has become inevitable and mandatory for every teacher. A teacher is the leader of his class. A teacher with knowledge of language pedagogy and well equipped with leadership virtues is an indispensable being not only in solving problems of pronunciation but also in dealing with many challenging issues satisfactorily. In four communication skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing; the listening is considered the utmost important skill of a teacher. The one who listens well could administrate well. According to Gregory L.(1999) in Executive Leadership it is learned that creative managers are good listeners. They listen to their personnel and build on their suggestions. In particular, they seem to have the ability to draw out the best in their subordinates and then add to it (NFA, SM 6-14). Good leaders have the ability to “squint” with their ears as it is at times noted. Axley (1996), asked the question to thousands of managers over a fifteen year period, “What percentage of your job activities involves communicating and/or communication of some sort?” His findings were that only rarely does anyone report that less than the majority



of their time is spent in communication activities. That is strong testimony to its importance to managers and leaders.

The very problem lies in the gap between said but not listened problems. Usually this gap becomes too wide to be fathomed easily by a teacher. Everyone needs serious listening. Teacher educators, pupil teachers and students could contribute better if they understand the deep relationship between listening and leadership qualities. Listening involves hearing the speakers' words, understanding the message and its importance to the speaker, and communicating that understanding to the speaker. Of all the communication skills, listening is the earliest learned and the most frequently used, yet it seems to be the least mastered. Listening is a skill that underlies all leadership skills. It is the key to developing and maintaining relationships, decision making and problem solving. As leaders (teacher educators and teachers) we spend as much as half of our communication time listening, much of it is wasted since we do it so poorly. It is such a part of our everyday life, both in our career and at home, that we sometimes take it for granted. The overwhelming majority of how we define leading and leadership, Axley (1996) continues, either depends on or simply is some variety of communication activity or process. Leadership is more of a communication activity, certainly more than any other activity.

REVIEW

It is evident from the review of researches of during the last decades that significant research has been done in the area of teaching of languages and the development of communication skills.

Bowman, Richard F.2014 conducted a study; "Learning Leadership Skills in Elementary School" Leadership is everyone's responsibility-even first graders. The most important contribution that any educator can make in an era of unrelenting change is identifying and developing aspiring leaders. Elementary school teachers can embed leadership development opportunities into the classroom to foster leadership dispositions and skills grounded in the spirit to include, the passion to serve, the courage to question, and the discipline to listen. Four leadership dispositions illustrate a framework for identifying and developing aspiring elementary school leaders. Mustafa 2010 conducted a study "An Analysis of School Principal' Listening



Skills According to Teacher Feedback” His study investigates school principals' listening skills according to teacher feedback in terms of a number of variables. The study is conducted according to a general survey model. The sample consists of 477 elementary, general and vocational secondary school teachers working in Konya, Turkey, in the 2007-2008 education years. The sample was selected by the random sampling method. In summary, it can be seen that school principals have sufficient listening skills in the perception of teachers participating in the study. The study results reveal that teachers' feedback concerning their principals' listening skills differs in terms of the variables of the school at which they work, their educational level, their professional experience, the length of time they have worked with the principals and the number of teachers at the school, but teachers' feedback concerning their principals' listening skills do differ according to the principals' major.

Tate 2005 conducted a study named “Strategic Listening for School Leaders”. The ability to communicate effectively with multiple constituencies is recognized as an essential characteristic of effective leaders. Listening strategically is a way of showing parents, students, faculty, staff, and others that their ideas and beliefs are of value. The authors' practitioner-friendly book concentrates on the importance of listening as a critical interpersonal skill for school leaders in guiding their organizations. "Strategic Listening for School Leaders" offers valuable, practical insights and research on how listening, serious conversation, and thoughtful dialogue strengthen school leaders' ability to understand others' strengths, motivations, and weaknesses. By learning to listen, the authors demonstrate how a leader can bring out the best in everyone. Focusing on an effective style of listening, the authors present: (1) The basic theories underlying strategic listening; (2) Succinct examples of strategic listening in practice; (3) The positive impact of strategic listening on school leadership and school climate. "Strategic Listening for School Leaders" will help advance one's overall communication expertise and open up a whole new world of possibilities for student success. Following a foreword by Roland S. Barth, a preface, and an introduction, this book is divided into two parts. Part I, Strategic Listening in Theory, presents: (1) Understanding the Basics of Strategic Listening; (2) The Listening Process and Different Ways We Listen; and (3) Barriers to Effective Listening. Part II, Strategic Listening in Practice, continues with: (4) Strategic Listening in Difficult Situations; (5)



Listening to Your Constituencies and Managing Your Allegiance; (6) Strategic Listening to Build Trust; (7) An Insider's Look at Strategic Listening in Action; (8) Listening to and Presenting Data; and (9) Considerations for Your Own Practice. The book concludes with one resource; a list of references; and an index.

Keil, Virginia L.2005 conducted a study, "Communicating for Results". Principals are quick to agree that communication is an extremely important part of their daily work and that technology provides them with more opportunities and methods for effective communication than ever before. However, even though technology has made it possible for principals to share excessive amounts of information with teachers, students, parents, and other constituencies, it is doubtful that the effectiveness of communication within schools and school districts has improved at the same rate as technology. Therefore, because the need for meaningful and valuable communication is greater than ever, principals need to understand how to communicate for results, rather than simply for information exchange. If administrators are truly going to lead their schools to better performance, they will not only need to recognize strategies that improve and enhance communication, but also develop the communication skills that will meet the needs of the information receivers. There is a compelling need for principals to develop best practices in communication and to assess their own effectiveness so they can improve and sustain quality communication. To be understood--and to help constituents understand each other--principals must develop a systematic approach for assessing and benchmarking their communications. Here, the author suggests some questions principals should consider in assessing school communications: (1) Is the right person communicating?; (2) Is the information valuable and meaningful?; (3) Do constituents feel informed?; (4) Am I listening to concerns?; and (5) Is communication ongoing and systematic? Includes a self-assessment rubric.

Cook et.al (1987) conducted a study "Developing Supervision Skills: Establishing an Effective Climate, Listening, and Developing Teacher Improvement Plans". Educational supervision may be categorized according to three philosophical positions with distinct methodologies: essentialism/directive supervision; experimentalism/collaborative supervision; and existentialism/nondirective supervision. This paper proposes that time and efforts are required to develop key interpersonal skills needed for facilitating teamwork and collaborative



relationships among teachers, peers, and supervisors. The training program described fits most closely the collaborative supervision model. After outlining Theory Z principles applicable to supervision in the schools, the paper focuses on two leadership skills (listening and developing improvement plans) those administrators can learn to use more effectively within a Theory Z context and cites supportive research findings. Based on Theory Z principles, the paper assumes that level relationships between instructional supervisors and teachers are more effective than vertical ones that the primary motivation for instructional improvement is the teacher's, and that teamwork is an essential ingredient of the change process. Advice is then provided for learning to listen and developing improvement plans. A single-case research project to assess the training program's effectiveness is briefly described. The study showed that supervisor behavior moved toward collaborative styles immediately after training in both quality and quantity. (Nirankari, Sarla 2003) has conducted the study i.e. "Proficiency in English language among school children of Himachal Pradesh. In this study the objective was to assess the level of proficiency in English language of the students studying Government and Private Schools of Himachal Pradesh. Survey method of research was used. Research found that the students studying in schools exhibit very poor level of proficiency in English language .Further the level of proficiency appeared to decrease from lower to higher classes. It is quite important to mention here that very few studies on B. Ed. trainees and the development of their communication skills .Kumar(2010) has conducted a study, 'Neuro-linguistic programming of B.Ed trainees'. He suggests that to make the education competitive all in compassing and according to changing norms, teachers must be updated and provided training as and when needed. Tool:Neuro-Linguistic Programming Indicator. Method: sample of 500 B.Ed. trainees was taken from two districts o Kerala state.Findings:1 there was no significance difference between male and female rural and urban B.Ed trainees in neuro-linguistic programming, 2 only the difference in the type of institution affects significantly on the neuro-linguistic programming but not by the difference in gender and locality

Barr and Beth 1996 conducted a study "From Teaching to Learning, from Managing to Leading: Facilitation Skills To Bridge the Gap" The movement from a teacher-centered to a student-centered classroom environment requires that teachers utilize facilitation skills for



effective collaborative learning. Collaboration is the process of shared creation in which two or more individuals with complementary skills interact to create a shared understanding that did not previously exist. Primary facilitative functions include interventions to provide support for task completion, content acquisition, group processes or self-directed learning. Types of interventions involved in facilitation include those which focus on developing critical thinking skills, those that encourage member participation through the use of critical questioning, and those that encourage problem-solving and decision-making. The following facilitation skills can help cultivate collaboration in classrooms and within organizations: (1) refocusing on issues when necessary to keep discussions from bogging down; (2) validating and bridging topics to transition from one theme to another; (3) using the energy of the group to drive discussions; (4) inviting input and feedback; (5) setting a cooperative climate; (6) coaching to draw out what individuals already know; (7) active listening; and (8) proactively intervening in conflict.

Numerous studies have been conducted on developing communicative skills as psycholinguistic and socio-linguistic factors in relation to reading comprehension skills; achievement level of students; factors associated with low achievement of students, learning from managing to leading, developing supervision skills by establishing an effective climate for listening and developing teacher improvement plans, communicating results, strategic learning for school leaders, analysis of school principal' listening skills and learning leadership skills in elementary senior secondary schools and the effect and relationship of listening and leadership qualities of principals and teachers. But there is a lack of study of listening skills and leadership qualities among pupil teachers. Henceforth present problem will really help the student teachers abundantly. In fact in listening of particularly of English language is a great challenge in pupil teachers of India especially in Punjab. The present study would contribute is exploring the listening problems in English language as it has become a complex issue. And the present learning outcomes of the language are not compatible and sufficient in the global context. Especially in listening skills of English language among would be teachers are a concerned area. The poor models of listening have affected the leadership qualities of teachers badly and created a gap. Henceforth this study will be an effort to minimize the complexities to some extent. It is further stated that barriers of poor listening could be explored and rectified by training pupil



teachers for better listening. They could be well equipped with vital leadership qualities. Over viewing these studies of related literature, it has been found that no such study had been conducted to observe effects of listening and leadership qualities among pupil teachers. Henceforth investigator selected to work on the problem.

PROBLEM: Listening skills and leadership qualities among pupil teachers.

Objective of the study - To find the relationship between a teachers' ability to effectively listen and their perceived leadership ability.

Method---Keeping in mind the nature of the present problem, the survey method has been used.

Sample: Study was conducted in Sant Baba Bhag Singh Institute of Education Jalandhar while random sampling was done .Sample of 50 pupil teachers was taken.

Tool --Two main tools were used to collect information.

- 1 Questionnaire to test listening abilities of pupil teachers.
- 2 Questionnaire Prepared by Gregory L .Rynders on leadership qualities.

RESULTS

Table 1. Listening abilities of pupil teachers

1. Listening part of curriculum/ syllabus Yes = 47(94%), No = 03(6%)
2. Consider self a good listener Yes=46(92%), No= 4(8%)
3. Average Rating listening ability on 1-10 scale 7
4. Average rating of listening by peers on 1-10 scale 7
5. Initiation of discussions with peers result in differences Yes= 10(20%), No= 40(80%)
6. Problem in listening and understanding the lecture/ talk in English language Yes= 12(24%), No= 38(76%)
7. Find problems in understanding text after listening the lecture on the same Yes= 20(40%), No= 30(60%)
8. Certain linguistic problems in the general listening too Yes=04(8%), No= 46(92%)
9. Find difficulty in class management due to language listening hazards Yes=38(76%) No=12(24%)



- 10. Lowest in a rating scale of 1 -10 comprehension of English Lecture in class 5
- 11. Average rating of Teacher' leadership ability on scale of 1-10 is 6
- 12. Have an open door policy for listening Yes=45(90%), NO= 5(10%)
- 13 Manage by walking around to hear in depth Yes=33(66%) No=17(34%)
- 14. Encourage "courage conversations" by listening properly Yes=40(80%), No= 10 (20%)
- 15 Need of training for better listening skills Yes= 31(62%), No= 19(38%)

Table 1 depicts that about 46% pupil teachers accepted that they are good listeners .About 74% of them asserted that they were very good in listening .In the rating by peers 70% of them found themselves good listeners assessed by peers .But 80% of them declined to initiate discussions with their friends. Another exciting observation was that 76% of pupil teachers have problem in listening and understanding a talk and lecture in English language. About 60% pupil teachers have problem in understanding the text of the same lecture or talk. In lowest rating order of comprehension of English language, maximum pupil teacher have problems. About 76% pupil teachers found language hazard in class management due to language problems. A similarly average rate in comprehension of English language by listening was 5 average rating of teacher' leadership ability was 6 only. Class interaction by in depth listening was just 66%. But class leading by personal presence was 90%. About 62% pupils teachers wanted to have training for better listening skills.

TABLE 2. Leadership abilities of pupil teachers

ISSUES	YES %	NO %	YES %	NO %
1. Students' talk interrupting	yes= 13(26%),	No= 37(74%)		
2. Suggest solutions before the problem is fully explained	Yes= 12(24%),	No= 38(76%)		
.3. Make intermittent eye contact with the student	Yes= 32(64%),	No= 18(36%)		
4. Lack of attention to the student seeking your guidance	Yes= 02(4%),	No= 48(96%)		
5. Receiving and responding phone calls during conversation	Yes= 02(4%),	No= 48(96%)		
6. Closed facial expressions and body language during discussions	Yes= 14(28%),	No= 36(72%)		



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|--|---------------------------|
| 7. Spent a great deal of time talking rather than listening | Yes= 13(26%), No=37(74%) |
| 8. Prejudiced Listening, Motivation and interpretation | Yes= 21(42%), No= 29(58%) |
| 9. Use active questioning of issues | Yes= 44(88%), No= 06(12%) |
| 10. Lack of sincerity in listening to students | Yes= 25(50%), No= 25(50%) |
| 11. Poor listening capabilities | Yes= 19(38%), No= 31(62%) |
| 12. Over powering the student on asking question/ suggestion | Yes= 29(58%), No= 21(42%) |
| 13. Open door policy for your students | Yes= 42(84%), No= 08(16%) |
| 14. Direct interaction with students and make yourself available | Yes= 45(90%), No= 05(10%) |
| 15. Benefit of the doubt given to have meaningful input | Yes= 22(44%), No= 28(56%) |

Note N=50

All of the questions in the survey, “target” one or more of the barriers to effective listening or personally rate their listening effectiveness. As we can see from the questions in both surveys, they perceive themselves as effective listeners. They see themselves as attentive, empathic, available, non-judgmental and without prejudice. They feel they are motivated to listen and present a positive, open setting to invite communication even if controversial. 74% Pupil teachers agreed that they do not interrupt students 76% said they solve their problems before full explanation. It implies that teachers don’t listen them completely. Although pupil teachers’ body language was cooperative, yet listening capabilities were just average. 74% pupil teachers declined that they don’t talk while listening but sincerity in listening was only 50%. Another interesting fact was that in both surveys 90% and 84% pupil teacher said yes to open door policy but benefit if doubt given to students was only 44%. By observing both the surveys in comparative manner, it can be concluded that listening qualities do affect pupil teachers’ leadership qualities. For example 92% of pupil teachers considered themselves as good listeners but while in class room as a leader they have 50% lack of sincerity in listening to students. As leaders 58% pupil teachers in their class over powered their students on asking questions where



as 80% of them accepted in table 1 that they encourage their students for courage discussions. Another important finding was that according to table 1 only 20% pupil teachers have initiated for discussions but being leader of their classes during training; 84% of them opted for open door policy for their own students. The results indicate that there is a positive relationship between effective leadership and effective listening skills. Effective teachers apparently hear what others have to say and empathize with their points of view.

Somehow it is also evident from the analysis that pupil teachers are not at all good enough in listening of English language. They have certain problems in listening and understanding this particular language. In Table 1 questions no 1 to 6 have clear indication to this problems .To remove barriers of good listening they need training which could be followed in further research separately. As communication is considered the main tool of a teacher and it cannot be renounced at any cost.

DISCUSSION

The research gathered from the literature review as well as the data gathered from surveys show that effective teachers are perceived to be effective listeners. The present study identified several significant relationships worthy of further discussion. Most important is reconfirming the relationship between leadership and listening effectiveness among the pupil teachers. This study strengthens the contention that being perceived as an effective listener is significant in leadership effectiveness. While managing multiple problems of class good listening skills could help pupil teachers widely. Open door policy, maximum availability of teachers and active participation is only possible through patient listening by teachers. True listening qualities directly conduce to effective managerial skills of pupil teachers. Those individuals perceived as effective listeners were seen by their students to be effective teachers. Implications for teaching profession from this study include the regular need and importance of listening skills for effective teaching not only for pupil teachers but also for teachers and teacher educators in general. A second implication is that effective listening is not a skill useful only for the under training teachers. Listening is a skill valuable throughout the teaching profession. This is true of emerging teachers and apparent teachers at all levels and, finally all empathic listening is a skill valuable for all department members both on a professional level and personally.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the relationship between effective listening and leadership seems strong in pupil teachers it may be that they simply work harder than others at listening. In addition, listening may not be a singular attribute related to

Leadership. It may be part of a set of communication attributes. Leaders may also have Superior verbal skills to effectively persuade others after using enhanced listening skills to Identify central issues. There is a scope for further research to consider this. It will take hard work to learn the skills, content practice to keep the skills viable, and periodic retrospective analysis to check our progress. The utmost important factor is realizing that listening, and in particular, empathic listening, is as important as the other communication skills of reading, writing and speaking. Especially important is the understanding that listening should not take a secondary position to speaking, its verbal counterpart. The barriers of good listening like lack of concentration, motivation, attention, negative attitude toward listening and poor experience and back ground could be dealt dexterously to overpower poor listening. It is very true that teachers need to have good communication skills for better governance in class. Most of the problems could be easily solved in the class if teachers listen properly. In fact the problems of English Language could also be entertained if one listen the language carefully. Good listening skills could be easily inculcated by some minor deliberations. As to listen news on both local and target language, listen talks of experts on favorite issues and by getting training of good listening habits. The opportunities available to develop listening skills are as close as the Internet or your local public library. There are a multitude of books, classes, and audio-visual training programs available to help us develop our listening skills. Hunsaker and Alessandra (1986) summarize their rules for being a good listener which naturally, involve courtesy and common sense. When conversing with another person, we must be aware and practice the following rules:

1. Remember that it is impossible to listen and talk at the same time. This most basic rule is broken most often.
2. Listen for the speakers main ideas. Specific facts are only important as they pertain to the main theme.



3. Be sensitive to your emotional deaf spots. Deaf spots are words that make your mind wander or go off on a mental tangent.
4. Fight off distractions. Train yourself to listen carefully to your employee's words, despite external distractions.
5. Try not to get angry. Emotions of any kind hinder the listening process, but anger in particular is detrimental to message reception.
6. Do not trust to memory certain data that may be important. Take notes.
7. Let your employees tell their own stories first. When employees explain their situations, they may reveal interesting facts and valuable clues to help satisfy their needs.
8. Empathize with your employees. Make a determined effort to see their point of view.
9. Withhold judgment. Judge the value of the message, not the speaker's delivery ability.
10. React to the message, not the person. Don't allow your mental impression of the speaker to influence your interpretation of his message.
11. Try to appreciate the emotion behind the speaker's words (vocal and emotional) more than the literal meaning of the words.
12. Use feedback. Constantly try to check your understanding of what you hear.
13. Listen selectively. Very often in conversation, your employee will tell you things that will help you identify his problems, needs, goals, or objectives.
14. Relax. When another person is speaking to you, try to put her at ease by creating a relaxed, accepting environment.
15. Try not to be critical, either mentally or verbally, of someone else's point of view, even if it is different from your own. Hold your temper and your emotional feelings.
16. Listen attentively. Face your employee straight on with uncrossed arms and legs; lean slightly forward. Establish good, gentle, intermittent eye contact.
17. To the degree that it is in your power, try to create a positive listening environment.
18. Ask questions. Ask open-ended, feeling-finding questions to allow your employee to express her feelings and thoughts.
19. Be motivated listener. Without the proper attitude, all the foregoing suggestions for effective listening are for naught (pp. 137-140).



Students feel relieved when they find teachers who understand what they have to say about their problems. Certainly reciprocal efforts by teachers will help the both. The gap between teacher and taught could be bridged by developing good listening habits.

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