

EMPATHY : DEVELOPING PEOPLE SKILLS IN LANGUAGE LABORATORY

If you wish to know the mind of a man, listen to his words. – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care. – Theodore Roosevelt

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Abstract

The 20th century was the age of introspection, wherein self-help and therapy culture encouraged us to believe that the best way to understand who we are and how to live was to introspect. Undoubtedly 21st century, is the age of empathy, an absolutely vital personal attributes to excel in People skills and to build everlasting human relationships. This differential outlook has been practically presented in this paper with opinions given by different researchers & scientists coupled with our practical experiences as Life skills facilitators. Moreover, it is substantially elaborated how empathy can be developed through language laboratory activities.

Index Terms: Empathy, Introspect, Personal attributes, people skills, human relations, substantially, enhanced.

1 INTRODUCTION

EMPATHY is a potential psychological motivator for helping others in distress, and can be defined as the ability to feel or imagine another person's emotional experience. The ability to empathize is an important part of social and emotional development, affecting an individual's behavior toward others and the quality of social interaction.

Developing an empathic approach is perhaps the most significant effort one can make toward improving one's people skills. When you understand others, they'll probably want to understand you – and this is how one can start to build cooperation (human networks), collaboration, and teamwork. Perhaps through effective communication and interpersonal skills one can empathize with others and this paves the

way for cultivation of healthy rapport, a strong base for interpersonal skills.

Moving from the information age to that of the Conceptual age, Daniel Pink predicts that power will reside with those who have strong right-brain (interpersonal) qualities.

He also suggests six areas that are vital to succeed in life. One of which is empathy; (the ability to imagine yourself in someone else's position), to imagine what they feel, to understand what makes people tick, to create relationships and to be caring of others: All of which is very difficult to outsource or automate, and yet is increasingly important to business.

Empathy is also particularly critical to leadership development in this age of young, independent, highly marketable and mobile workers. In a popular Harvard Business Review article entitled "What Makes a Leader?", Dr Daniel Goleman isolates three reasons why empathy is so important: the increasing use of teams, (which he refers to as "cauldrons of bubbling emotions"), the rapid pace of globalization (with cross cultural communication easily leading to misunderstandings) and the growing need to retain talent.

2 LITERARY REVIEW



While empathy is a right brain activity, it is far from being a touchy-feely topic. At its core,

empathy is the fuel that keeps relationships running smoothly. The fact that empathy is an important component of effective relationships has been proven: In studies by Dr Antonio Damasio outlined in his book: "**Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain**", medical patients who had damage to the part of the brain associated with empathy showed significant deficits in relationship skills, even though their reasoning and learning abilities remained intact.

World literature distinguishes four levels of empathy, identified by the Italian researcher Daniele Trevisani (2005) that examines the dimensions useful for applying empathic component to an intercultural setting:

- 1 **Behavioral empathy:**
- 2 **Emotional empathy:**
- 3 **Relational empathy:**
- 4 **Cognitive empathy** (understanding of different cognitive or prototypes):

Indeed, empathy is a valued currency. It allows us to create bonds of trust, it gives us insights into what others may be feeling or thinking; it helps us understand how or why others respond to situations, it also sharpens our "people acumen" and informs our decisions.

Moreover, it's the buzz word of scientists and business leaders, education experts and political activists.

Empathy is not just a way to extend the boundaries of your moral universe. According to new research, it's a habit we can cultivate to improve the quality of our own lives.

2.1 Major Theories & Empirical Findings

In recent years, there has been growing investigatory focus on how empathy specifically provokes helping behavior. Current studies in neuroscience have allowed us to understand the neurological basis of the human mind's ability to understand and process emotion. Present studies provide the opportunity to notice the activation of mirror neurons and attempt to explain the basic processes of empathy. By isolating these mirror neurons, and measuring the neural basis for human mind reading and emotion sharing abilities- Science has come one step closer to finding the reason for reactions like empathy. Neuro scientists have already discovered that people scoring high on empathy tests have especially busy mirror neuron systems in their brains (Dr. Christian Keysers). Empathy is a spontaneous sharing of affect, provoked by witnessing and sympathizing with another's emotional state. In a way we mirror or mimic the emotional response that we would expect to feel in that condition or context.

As it is stated in empathy we feel are the emotions of others, which makes it both affective and cognitive by most psychologists.

Another growing focus of investigation is how empathy affects cross-cultural relationships. According to a theory, there are seven components involved in the effectiveness of interracial communication; out of these empathy was found to be one that is learnable and has to do with perceptiveness and receptiveness.

A study by Robin Michelle Keillor hypothesized that empathy training would not only increase the measured level of relational empathy among the individuals in the experimental group when compared to the control group but also enhance the communication skills.

2.2 RESEARCH

A formal definition of Empathy is the ability to identify and understand another's situation, feelings and motives. It's our capacity to recognize the concerns other people have.

It enables us to learn more about people and relationships with people - it is a desirable skill beneficial to ourselves, others and society.

2.3 EMPATHY IS NOT SYMPATHY

There is an important distinction between empathy and sympathy.

To empathize is feel how others feel, to see the world as they do. Empathy with the people in the example above would require for every one of us living in materialistic world.

It may not always be easy, or even possible, to empathize with others but through good communication skills and some imagination we can work towards more empathetic feelings. Research has suggested that individuals who can empathize enjoy better relationships with others and greater well-being through life.

3 EMPATHY THROUGH LANGUAGE LAB ACTIVITIES

When ELCS lab activities (Role play(s), Debates, Group Dynamics & findings and group tasks, etc) are facilitated, students consciously;

- ✓ Pay attention, physically and mentally to what's happening.
- ✓ Listen carefully, and note the key words and phrases that people use.
- ✓ Respond encouragingly to the central message.
- ✓ Be flexible – prepare to change direction as the other person's thoughts and feelings also change.

An important objective of the method Learning by Sharing (LbS) is to train the students systematically. In order to reflect continuously on the mental processes of the other students, they tend to transmit updated content in different situations to other fellow learners during the lab training activities. This way it is possible to develop step-by-step the students' feeling for group reactions and networking. Carl R. Rogers

pioneered research in effective psychotherapy and teaching which espoused that empathy coupled with unconditional positive regard or caring for students and authenticity or congruence were the most important traits for a therapist or teacher to have. Other research and publications by Tausch, Aspy, Roebuck, Lyon, and meta-analyses by Cornelius-White, corroborated the importance of these people-centered traits.

3.1 FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In group dynamics students;

- ✓ listen – truly listen to people.
- ✓ avoid interruptions.
- ✓ Tune into non-verbal communication.

This is the way that people often communicate what they think or feel, even when their verbal communication says something quite different.

- ✓ Practice the "93 percent rule". (We know from a famous study by Professor Emeritus, Albert Mehrabian of UCLA, when communicating about feelings and attitudes, words – the things we say – account for only 7 percent of the total message that people receive. The other 93 percent of the message that we communicate when we speak is contained in our tone of voice and body language).
- ✓ Use people's name.

- ✓ Be present intellectually.
- ✓ Exercise GRACE Principle. (according to Dale Carnegie,- a soul to win and influence people)
- ✓ Encourage others, particularly the quiet ones.
- ✓ Give genuine recognition and praise.
- ✓ Take a personal interest in people.

Empathy is an emotional and thinking muscle that becomes stronger the more we use it, as it is not selective but rather an act of habit.

3.2 EMPATHY CAN BE LEARNED

Over the last decade, neuroscientists have identified a 10-section “empathy circuit” in our brains which, if damaged, can curtail our ability to understand what other people are feeling. Evolutionary biologists like Frans de Waal have shown that we are social animals who have naturally evolved to care for one another, just like our primate cousins. And psychologists have revealed that we are primed for empathy by strong attachment relationships in the first two years of life.

Research in sociology, psychology, history—and my own studies of empathic personalities over the past 10 years—reveals how we can make empathy an attitude and a part of our daily lives, and thus improve the lives of everyone around us.

According to three separate research projects by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Stanford Research Institute:

85% business success rests on *People Skills* 15% Technical / other abilities.

With our experience as a Life Skills facilitator, we reckon, we are all unique individuals who bring certain natural strengths to the table and if we focus on those strengths, have a better understanding, purposely use them and look for opportunities to grow in those areas, then we can grow at an accelerated in every walk of our lives. Empathy may never be one’s strongest people skill but it can be a derailleur for one, if not possessed.

To improve performance and effectiveness, leaders may need to develop the capability to demonstrate empathy. Some people naturally exude empathy and have an advantage over their peers who have difficulty expressing empathy. Most leaders fall in the middle and are sometimes or somewhat empathetic. Fortunately, empathy is not a fixed trait. It can be learned (Shapiro, 2002). If given enough time and support, with practice of coaching, training, or developmental opportunities and initiatives. Educational institutions and Organizations can encourage a more empathetic work place and help employees improve their empathy in a number of simple ways like:

Talking about empathy.

Teaching listening skills.

Encouraging genuine perspective-taking.

Cultivating compassion.

Supporting & collaborating with performers.

3.3 EFFECTIVE USE OF EMPATHY

The main priority for many organizations is to look beyond traditional strategies for management development and recruitment to create a cadre of leaders capable of moving the company forward.

And no wonder, Ineffective managers are not only expensive but also cost organizations millions of dollars each year in direct and indirect costs. Surprisingly, ineffective managers make up half of the today's organizational management pool, according to a series of studies (see Gentry, in press; Gentry & Chappelow, 2009).

With such high stakes, talent management and HR professionals as well as senior executives are pursuing multiple strategies for developing more effective managers and leaders.

Managers, too, may be surprised that many of their peers are underperforming. It's a smart move for individual managers, then, to figure out how they rank and what skills are needed to improve their chances of success.

Empathy also plays a major role in emotional intelligence that several researchers believe in as being effective leaders (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; George, 2000; Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Through AELCS (Advanced English Language Communication Skills) laboratory activities students primarily learn and experience that understanding is the desired outcome or goal in any communication process and a deeper understanding is the result of effective communication that involves overcoming the various barriers of communication.

Different activities, games, case studies practice help students in developing Communication & interpersonal skills, can-do attitude, go-getter nature and several other life skills coupled with great experience of how to be empathic.

Here are the Six Habits of Highly Empathic People!

- I. Cultivate curiosity about strangers
- II. Challenge prejudices and discover commonalities
- III. Try to validate the other person's perspective.
- IV. Listen attentively
- V. Inspire mass action and social change
- VI. Develop an ambitious imagination.
- VII. Ask what other person would like to do.

It is absolutely vital that language facilitators consciously create an environment that fosters students' open minded nature, creative thoughts and path breaking innovative ideas coupled with zeal to learn and unlearn.

4 CONCLUSION

Socrates said that the way to live wise and good life is to know thyself, that is self reflective – looking into thyself, is all about introspection. we believe fervently in the 21st century. we need to recognize that to know thyself is something that can also be achieved by stepping outside oneself by discovering other people’s lives, and it is vehemently stated that empathy is the way to revolutionize our own philosophies of life to become more outrospective and create revolutionary human relationships as long as mankind exists.

Empathy can be imbibed through language dynamics activities, games, practicing case studies etc in language laboratory especially in professional students as dynamic activities create room for students to communicate their views, creative ideas., lucrative thoughts and path breaking innovations above all exploring their imaginations that foster their inherent potential.

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