

# Developing the Listening and Empathetic Skills of The First Year MBA Learners with Special Reference to Osmania Affiliated Colleges.

T.Kranthi<sup>1</sup> K.Nageshwar Rao<sup>2</sup> J.Neeraja<sup>3</sup>,  
 1.Scholar of Rayalaseema university-Kurnool

2.Assistant professor Department of English Nizam college-Hyderabad  
 M.V.S.R .Engineering College, Hyderabad

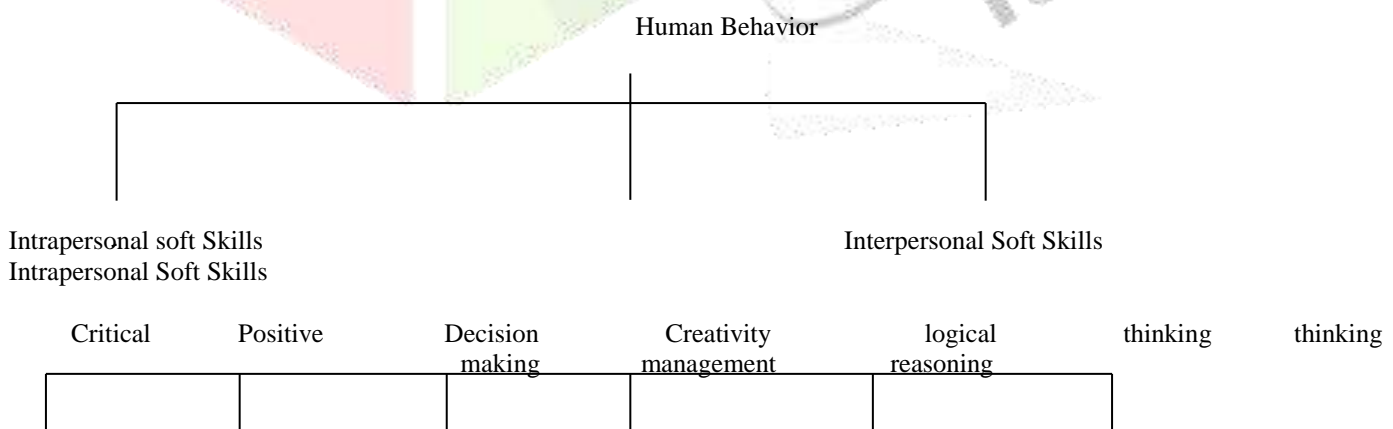
*Abstract* : Teaching English for Learners pursuing a course in MBA does not involve just the LSRW skills. As it is a course in ESP, we are more concerned of equipping them with the skills required to face the challenges of their profession. They have to face a cut-throat competition as the number of learners pursuing a course in MBA is increasing year by year and the companies rely on the professionals for an extra edge of human skills. The selection process for a job involves a screening test based on group discussions. These discussions test the in soft skills or human skills of the candidates which are mainly based on their thinking abilities. The present paper is based on the study conducted with the learners pursuing a course in MBA and aims at developing the listening and empathetic skills of the learners. The Learners pursuing a course in MBA need to think and analyse to be professional.

**Key words:** Interpersonal Communication, Intrapersonal Soft Skills, empathy, interpersonal relationships.

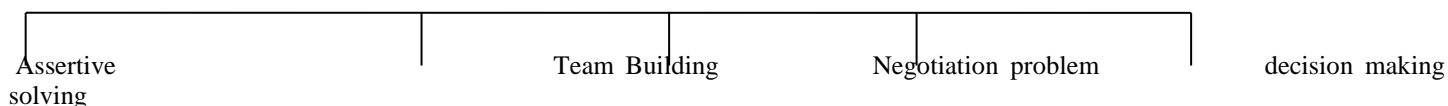
## Introduction.

**Interpersonal Communication:** It is the communication within the individual (introspection).

This is the way one analysis one’s skills. This is an important aspect which would enable the candidates to draft a functional resume, perform better in group discussions and in the Human Resource round during interviews. **Interpersonal Communication:** Communication at this level means sharing of information among people as a group. All the inter/intrapersonal skills mentioned below involve thinking.



## Interpersonal Soft Skills



Certain personal qualities are a prerequisite of effective interpersonal relationships. Warmth, genuineness, empathy and unconditional positive regard are some of these personal qualities.

When one thinks about “human” skills, the first character which strikes to the mind is showing empathy towards others. Empathetic skills form the base of all interpersonal skills.

To maintain interpersonal relations at home or an organization, one should exhibit care and empathy towards others. Success in life depends on getting along with other people and having them on our side. Empathy, and being caring is the key factor in trying to win people over to our side.

Wells notes how early as well as proficient readers may draw on what he calls ‘epistemic literacy’ which involves the ability not merely to understand the events of the narratives but to engage with their implications, to move beyond the text and to make critical and cognitive links with the readers’ own life experience. The readers start analyzing the characters during the process of understanding a piece of text. In other words, the readers start empathizing with the characters. One should listen to the other person or group members to be able to show empathy and thereby relate oneself to them.

### Methodology.

#### Details of the Study to be Conducted

Objective: Enhancing the listening and empathetic skills.

The Target Group: MBA I YEAR learners.

Number of Learners:45.

Materials: (i) A poem “Active Listening”  
(ii) A short story “I Love you, Mom”  
(iii) A questionnaire on listening skills for self – analysis

**Venue:** English language Lab. with the state of the art equipment. (acoustically treated, with the LCD projector and the screen).

#### The Procedure Followed:

Step1: The learners were first asked to read a poem “Active Listening” silently. (AppendixA).

The poem clearly shows the relation between listening and empathy. After reading the poem the same was discussed with the learners.

Step 2: They were then asked to read a story “I Love you, Mom” (without mentioning the title) silently.

The story has been divided into intelligible chunks followed by comprehension questions so that the learners can understand the story and empathize themselves with the characters. (Appendix B)

Step 3: They were then asked to analyse their own listening skills through a questionnaire and thereby improve their listening abilities and show empathy towards others. (Appendix C).

Step 4: Finally the learners were given a topic and were asked to discuss as a group and give a solution. The task is designed such that their decision making is based on their empathetic skills (Appendix D). They were divided into four groups, each group consisting of ten members, seeking four different solutions for the same problem.

#### Active Listening (Appendix A)

When I ask you to listen to me,  
And you start giving me advice,  
you have not done what I have asked

When I ask you to listen to me,  
and you begin to tell me why I shouldn't feel that way,  
you are trampling on my feelings

when I ask you to listen to me,  
and you feel you have to do something to solve my problems,  
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen,  
All that I ask is that you listen  
Not talk or do – just hear me.  
When do you something for me,  
That I need to do for myself,  
You contribute to my feelings of inadequacy.

But when you accept as a simple fact  
that I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational,  
then I can quit trying to convince you  
and go about the business of understanding what's behind my feelings.

So please listen and just hear me,  
And if you want to talk,  
Wait a minute for your turn – and I'll listen to you.

#### **Appendix B**

#### **A Short story "I Love you, Mom"**

After 21 years of my marriage, my wife wanted me to take another woman out to dinner and a movie. She said, "I love you but I know that this other woman loves you and would love to spend some time with you."

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Who do you think the other woman is?

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The other woman my wife wanted to visit was my MOTHER, who has been a widow for 19 years, but the demands of my work and my three children had made it possible to visit her only occasionally.

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The narrator used to meet his mother occasionally. Is it true of people you know?

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That night I called to invite her to go out for dinner and a movie.

"What's wrong, are you well?" she asked. My mother is the type of woman who suspects that a late night call or a surprise invitation is a sign of bad news.

"I thought it would be pleasant to be with you," I responded. "just the two of us."

She thought about it for a moment, and then said, "I would like that very much."

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What was the mother's initial reaction to the invitation? Why do you think she wanted to know if the narrator was well?

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That Friday, after work, as I drove over to pick her up, I was a bit nervous. When I arrived at her house, I noticed that she too seemed to be nervous about our date. She waited at the door with her coat on. She had curled her hair and was wearing the dress that she had worn to celebrate her last wedding anniversary. She smiled from a face that was as radiant as an angel's.

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Both the mother and the son were nervous. Were they nervous for the same reason?

"I told my friends that I was going to go out with my son, and they were impressed," she said, as she got into the car. "They can't wait to hear about our meeting." We went to the restaurant that, although not elegant, was very nice and cozy.

My mother took my arm as if she were the First Lady. After we sat down, I had to read the menu. Half way through the entries, I lifted my eyes and saw Mom sitting staring at me. A nostalgic smile was on her lips "It was I who used to read the menu when you were small," she said.

“Then it is time that you relax and let me return the favour,” I responded.

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What do you suppose the mother told her friends about the date?

The narrator says, “My mother took my arm as if she was the First Lady.” What does this tell you about the feelings of the mother? What thoughts do you think would have been running through the mother’s mind as the narrator was reading the menu?

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During the dinner, we had an agreeable conversation – nothing extraordinary, but catching up on recent events of each other’s life. We talked so much that we missed the movie.

As we arrived at her house later, she said, “I’ll go out with you again, but only if you let me invite you.” I agreed. “How was your dinner date?” asked my wife when I got home. “Very nice. Much more so than I could have imagined,” I answered.

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Do you think the narrator and his mother enjoyed the conversation they shared? How do you know?

“Much more so than I could have imagined,” the narrator said about his dinner. What do you think he was expecting?

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A few days later, my mother died of a massive heart attack. It happened so suddenly that I did not get to do anything for her. Some time later, I received an envelope with a copy of a restaurant receipt from the same place mother and I had dined.

An attached note said: “I paid this bill in advance. I wasn’t sure that I could be there; but nevertheless, I paid for two plates – one for you and the other for your wife. You will never know what that night meant for me. I love you, son.”

At that moment, I understood the importance of saying in time: “I LOVE YOU!” and to give our loved ones the time that they deserve. Nothing in life is more important than god and your family. Give them the time they deserve, because these things cannot be put off till ‘some other time’.

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In her note, the mother wrote, “You will never know what that night meant for me.” What does this tell about the mother’s feelings.

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### Appendix C

#### Listening and Empathetic Skills – A self-check questionnaire

Read the following Yes / no questions and tick one of the options as per your self-analysis.

1. Do you understand the difference between hearing and listening? Yes / No
2. Do you give the other person time to speak? Yes / No
3. Do you take care of the posture of the body (the way you sit or stand) while you listen to someone? Yes/no
4. Does it happen that you lean forward towards the speaker at times? Yes/no
5. Do you face the speaker? Yes/No
6. Do you maintain eye contact with the speaker? Yes/no
7. Do you nod your head frequently to indicate that you are listening? Yes/no
8. Do you show (positive) facial expressions? Yes/no
9. Can you adjust the body position *without drawing the other’s attention towards you*? Yes/no
10. Do you encourage the speaker to continue to speak if you feel that he/she is hesitating to speak to you for whatever reason? Yes/no
11. Do you show interest in the other person’s speech by putting simple queries? Yes/no
12. Do you understand the importance of touch while trying to understand the feelings of the other person? Yes/no
13. Do you rephrase the message of the speaker for better understanding? Yes/no
14. Do you try to show concern for the other person’s feelings by using a polite tone?

Yes/no

15. Do you try to visualize and share similar experiences with the speaker? Yes/no

16. Do you put yourself into the shoes of the other person before analyzing his feelings?

Yes/no

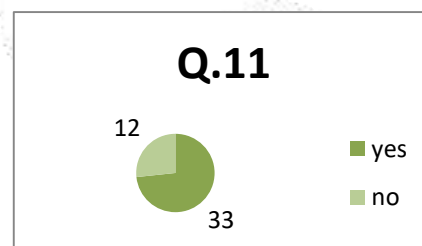
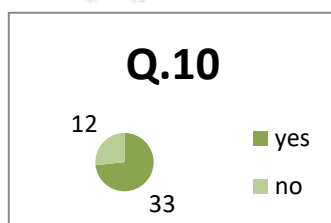
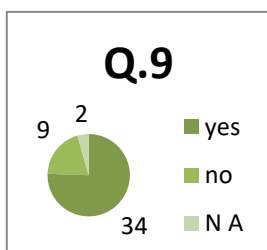
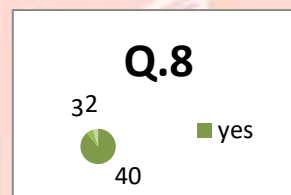
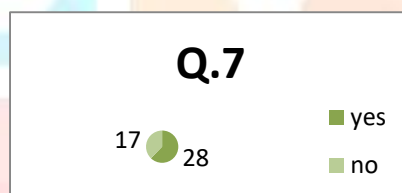
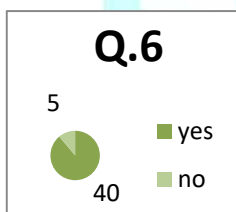
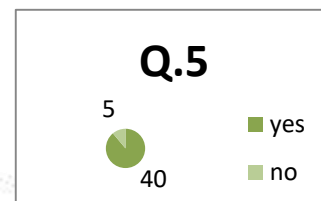
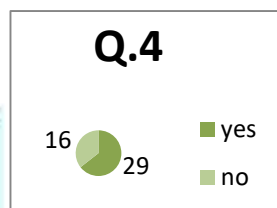
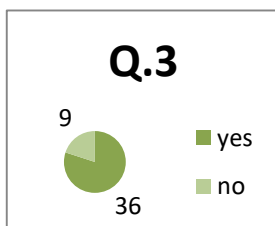
17. Can you summarise the essence of the talk you have listened to? (selective listening)? Yes/no

18. Do you listen with open mind discarding any sort of prejudice? Yes/no

19. Do you think over the matter while at leisure? Yes/no

20. Do you try to offer a solution *in case the speaker needs one?* Yes/no

Results :



## Discussion.

The topic for discussion was chosen such that the learners discuss among themselves and come to a consensus using empathetic skills.

You are a senior HR manager in a company. The company has been doing well for the past 12 years. You are happy with your job and find it challenging and invigorating.

One of your colleagues, Mr.Subrahmanyam, the marketing manager, had been working for a considerable amount of time and is a warm and friendly person by nature and is well liked by the people around him and reasonably successful at business too. However, you have started observing that he had begun to feel a growing sense of dissatisfaction. He has started to get disillusioned with the corporate culture. Coming from a family of freedom fighters and social workers, he finds himself increasingly suffocated in the atmosphere of selfish competition.

**Discuss, as a group, and decide how you would make him come back to the corporate culture.**

**The responses of the students were as follows:**

**Group 1:** Mr.Subramaniam should adopt himself with the MNC culture because one needs to change according to the changing times. Moreover, the employees being busy with their work, may not get time for interacting with each other. So one has to get on with the work assigned.

**Group 2:** We would talk personally with Mr.Subramaniam. We would also advice him to talk to some senior employees who share his ideas and obtain their suggestions and views. Finally, we would advice him to get along with current trends to survive in the field.

**Group 3:** First of all we would like to talk to Mr.Subramaniam and understand his feelings. We would guide him to change according to changing situations because at this point of time one needs to change oneself to go with the flow.

**Group 4:** We would like to know the exact reason behind getting disillusioned with the corporate culture. As it is obvious that Mr.Subramaniam comes from the family of freedom fighters, he believes in core values. We could convince him that in the present scenario, the opportunities are becoming less and so one needs to adapt oneself to survive in this competitive world.

**Group 5:** We think that the problem should be solved at personal level. This suggestion is given as a well-wisher rather than a HR manager. We cannot change the corporate culture, so we better change ourselves. Whichever company he may choose, there would be a possibility of facing similar problems.

**Group 6:** We would advise him to change according to the changing times. Mr.Subramaniam He could gradually mke acquaintance with the other members of the company, interact with them, exchange ideas and views with them to adapt himself.

**Group 7:** MR. Subramaniam is warm and friendly by nature and is respected and liked by the other employees. As a HR manager I would prefer him to stay back. Also, at the personal level, we would request him to try to inculcate some ethics by interacting with the other employees.

**Group 8:** We would like to talk to Mr.Subramaniam and understand his feelings. We would guide him to change according to changing situations because at this point of time one needs to change oneself to go with the flow.

**Group 9:** We would talk to Mr.Subramaniam and know what is the exact problem. Then we would talk to the other employees and see to it that there would be mutual understanding and co-operation among all the members of the organisation.

**Group 10:** We would suggest that he would take a holiday for a period of one month to release his stress and rejuvenate himself. As this type of culture is persistent in any company, we would suggest that he adapts himself with the changing culture.

**Group 11:** We would find out what exactly is troubling him and explain to him that future is worth giving up the past. We would also explain that the corporate culture is not as selfish as it seems.

**Group 12:** as Mr.Subramaniam is a senior employee, we would not afford to lose him, so we would organize some social events for him to regain his interest in work and life.

**All the students opined that this problem can be solved at personal level.**

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