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TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LABORATORY FOR TECHNICAL STUDENTS: A PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

It is a known fact that teaching speaking skills has a significant role in English language teaching. These skills depend on various aspects, such as teacher and students roles, methods and materials of teaching. These aspects are modified to teach effectively in technical colleges by decorating E-learning language laboratories. This paper examines the problems of teaching speaking skills for B.Tech., students by investigating proportionate techniques to solve the problems. The teacher is a facilitator; he provides the learning situation, whereas students need to participate in activities. The plot form and the title software usage is unavoidable one, because the functioning of teacher console and students stations are mandatory tools, which helps in broadcasting and giving instructions of teaching facets. This paper also studies the existing methods and material to identify the gap between the teaching outcomes and the demands of the present industry by suggesting a few ways to enhance teaching speaking skills for the need of industry. Key words: speaking skills, plot form and title software, audio and video activities, analysis and recommendation

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INTRODUCTION

Generally there is a scope for advancement for already existed position in any field. In the same scenario English Language Teaching (ELT) has witness of changes in methods, approaches and techniques. Still it needs changes according to the necessity. The development of Information Technology and global business give more scope for the use of communicating/functional English. Professional students need to develop simple and effective communication skills. Particularly engineering students necessitate formulating two types of skills; they are core skills and communication skill (verbal and nonverbal) to discharge their duties further at workplace. But it is

observed that, engineering graduates have various speaking hindrances. There are different reasons causing for crop up of these impediments for engineering students. The researcher intends to find out various deterrents of speaking skills and use proportionate activities to promote speaking skills by implementing latest technology.

Language laboratory provides the flexibility of self learning for students and practical teaching facility for teachers. This research article forgo with enhancement of speaking skills through language laboratory in the technological institutions under JNTU Hyderabad. The language teaching Pendulum has swung away from grammar translation to the direct method, and then to alternative methods

(Richards & Rogers, 2003). Communicative approach is the appropriate one to develop speaking skills directly by using the target language.

Advantages to the Teachers and Students

English Language Lab helps the teachers to teach enthusiastically by remotely controlling the students, monitoring the session, broadcasting audio and video activities, word document instructions and black out screens; lock cursors and keyboards to focus attention on a given task; log off or restart student computers and assist them through teacher console. Underwood states that "the lab was seen as a sort of tireless teacher's Aid that could drill the mechanical aspects of language, freeing the teacher for more creative activities" (Underwood, 1984-34). A large number of teachers considered English lab as an effective tool for teaching; therefore, the lab was seen "as the center of language teaching, with the teacher assisting the lab operation and adjusting to it" (Lado, 1965-173). Students can practice language exercises on listening, speaking, reading and writing comfortably by getting clarification of the doubts with the teacher from their own station, instead of disturbing the entire class. The recording feature helps them: listen, repeat, record and compare and re-listening. Many language learning software solutions keep teachers and learners firmly at the center of learning activity with a set of classroom management tools.

Use of Language Laboratory and Software

The concept of language lab is a new introduction to the students of engineering in their first year, so they are fascinated to learn communication skills through laboratories. At the same time they face different types of obstacles in first year and get thoroughness in using labs for developing language skills, then they have break in next semester and also it is not continuing in the second year. This gap keeps away the students to pay attention towards developing communication skill continuously. Therefore continuation of the course is required for four years then they have chance to develop their basic and advanced communication skills in addition to get perfection of all language skills. Platform software helps the teachers in pairing and grouping the students to provide opportunities to participate in activities

whereas title software helps the students to enhance the communication skills. Croft stressed that "the value of the language laboratory lies not so much in the kind of equipment you have, but in the way you make use of it" (1972-369). According to Antich (1988-175), "the main objectives of the language laboratory are to make the individual practice of students more effective, and increase the productivity of language teachers who only need to focus on the student's production and the mistakes encountered." Therefore effective use of language laboratory is required for students in all four years of engineering.

Communicative Activities in Language Laboratory

Communicative approach mingles extensive, high-quality content with flexible and interactive activities more effectively by using multimedia technology. Ting (2009) says about the purpose of communicative language teaching is to prepare students for the real world activity, saying that the learners should be able to express language functions (such as requesting, congratulating, apologizing, complaining, consoling, and promising) appropriately. The learning software modules are needed to design based on communicative approach to develop language skills (especially speaking) through audio and video activities. Many English teachers claim that the best way to acquire speaking skills is by interacting. This aspect is fulfilled by means of communicative language teaching and collaborative learning by student's participation in audio and video activities.

Analysis of Materials and Methods for Speaking

Teachers as facilitators have to respond to the needs that students have, so that the teaching and learning process will be the fruitful one. Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad introduced English language laboratory to enhance language elements (vocabulary and grammar) and skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) of B. Tech students through various tasks and activities. The syllabus provides flexibility to the teachers those who take laboratory session to take relevant material to conduct lab activity based on the prescribed unit. For example developing Group Discussion skills it is a unit prescribed in III B. Tech., but there is no mandatory of particular title

software to use, therefore teacher can take any title software which he thinks to teach more effectively. Thus there is a flexibility for using materials and methods which suitable for the teaching and developing skills according to the need.

Human communication can be taken place between the speaker and the listener if only they understand each other. The speaker has to convert his message into spoken language, while the listener has to understand the language of the speaker. Inserting technology in developing speaking skills can take several forms. This research article limits to develop speaking skills of technical students by using various methods and materials. Methods and materials need to update according to the time in teaching. As Seven and Engin (2007:1) concluded in their research, "the more the teacher uses visual and audio materials during the course, the better students concentrate on the lesson". It is observed that the visual materials did attract students' interest and attention. Generally students get motivated to learn when they feel the material they are taught as worth learning. Therefore teachers need to prepare materials on all language skills which will be suitable to teach in language laboratory. The best way to acquire a language is by engaging in conversation with an English-speaking peer, colleague, or friend who is patient and willing to help you along. Conversations complete the circle of communication: you listen, McLaren says "listening is important for speaking because it establishes the good basis for successful communicative exchanges (2006:344)", speak, speaking is an "activity requiring the integration of many subsystems...all these factors combine to make speaking a second or foreign language a formidable task for language learners...yet for many people, speaking is seen as the central skill" Harmer J. explains that, "When speaking, we construct words and phrases with individual sounds, and we also use pitch change, intonation, and stress to convey different meanings (2007: 29)". And in a face to face interaction the speaker can use a whole range of facial expressions, gestures and general body language to help to convey the message (Harmer, 2007: 53). Basically speaking requires confidence, flow of thought, accuracy, fluency and

body language. But technical students have problems in these aspects. Teachers and course designers need to keep in mind these problems while preparing for the students. The researcher takes here a few audio and video activities to enhance the speaking skills by using language laboratory plot form software.

Activity: 1 Broadcasting Expressions (Text and Video)

Procedure: the researcher takes a set of general English expressions in text (MS word) and broadcast them by asking the students to use the same expressions in different contexts in a polite manner orally, and also allow these students to write in their own way, this oral presentation is recorded to student station as well as to teacher console. Teacher has to instruct the students to listening carefully the recorded expressions of their own again and again until he/she realizes the mistake he has made and note down the mistake until the teacher broadcasts the same expressions of a particular student to all. And there will be an open discussion among all the students to prepare possible expressions in different contexts by using the given expressions. One of the students has to list the acceptable expressions. At last the teacher displays the original expressions video with subtitle to all the students. There will be the practice of the expressions through role play among all the students based on the expressions.

Analysis

Preparation of text for oral expression based on the given text makes the students to think in different contexts, it enables them to search for suitable words, phrases, sentences and expressions. The recorded voice provides them to check their own pronunciation of words and expressions and also it allows the students to compare with other students expressions and at last they can compare with the final video of the teacher. This activity develops the practical approach of speaking confidently. Using the same expression in role play gives scope for real usage of expression.

Activity: 2 Picture Broadcasting and Teaching (Picture, Text and Video)

Procedure : A list of pictures broadcast to the students through teacher console and instruct them

to select their interesting picture from the list. Teacher has to divide the students into mini groups with five students based on pictures they selected and instruct them to sit picture wise group. Now teacher suggests the students to log in with name or role prepare a text of 300 words within the given time on student's screen. Every student from each group has to read openly by using mike one after another, this voice will be displayed in the same peer group with the help of plot form software. All the students get an opportunity to listen different types of interpretation on the same picture. The video description on the same picture is available with the instructor. He displays the same through LCD projector, and then students have the chance to compare their analysis with the original. The same picture will be given to other peer group to speak a minute then the experienced group will observe and give feedback. Like in a lab session all students approximately thirty students involve in writing, listening and speaking.

Analysis

This type of activities enhances the analytical, descriptive, writing, speaking and listening skills. During this communicative activity brainstorm will take place, it helps a lot in language improvement. Peer and group participation skills also develop by this type of activities. It is suggestible activity for engineering students because they are good at technical skills to use language laboratory. Students can change their roles from passive to active learners.

Activity: 3 Audio and Video (Speech)

Procedure : Teacher takes a bit of speech (audio) by an eminent person and broadcast it to the students twice. And the students are instructed to prepare it as the text. Before to this, students have instructions on syllabification functional and content words, weak and strong forms of the words, word accent, sentence stress and intonation. Now students have to identify and divide the speech into sentences after this they separate the content and structural words by underlining. It is also needed that to divide content words to syllables and structural words into weak and strong form. Marking primary stress on prominent syllable then giving intonation marks is instructed to the students. Students need to

transcribe the text into phonetics by using software dictionary. The same speech displays again for making corrections. Now teacher broadcast the speech with text. Students can make necessary correction by comparing the original video and audio display. Now students have to read out the speech of eminent person by applying same nonverbal communication aspects.

Analysis

The purpose of this activity is to test and enhances the pronunciation of the students. The confidence level and use of postures of the students after listening to the original speech may be improved. Abdul Kalam speeches are available in internet (Youtube), which contains appropriate pronunciation, body language and effective speaking skills. Teachers can take these speeches for practice in the lab sessions.

Recommendations

It is suggested that several steps can be taken by authorities to make effective use of English language lab in order to develop communication skills among the engineering students by establishing interacting lab according to the curriculum. Here as teacher it is the responsibility to use appropriate tasks and activities to implement in the lab for the betterment of the students. The researcher tried to motivate the students and teacher through this paper for the best use of language lab through various tasks. College authorities need to provide facility to the teachers to access with software companies and language teachers frequently, because it gives clarifications and provides plot form for updates and innovations.

Conclusion

English teacher is not just a teacher of grammar and sentence structure but also the faculty of communication skills in engineering colleges because communication depends on syntax and semantics so he has to incorporate these in a technical way. He needs to play an active role as a teacher and facilitator of learning opportunity. The activities which used in this paper will help to the students to develop speaking skills, so they are recommended to the lab sessions in technical institutions.

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