RESEARCH ARTICLE

A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO ENHANCE LANGUAGE SKILLS OF ENGINEERING GRADUATES

M. SRILAKSHMI,[1*] P.V.RATNAKUMAR,[2] P.C.VISWANATH,[3]

[1]Associate Professor, Aditya Engineering College Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. [2]Associate Professor, Aditya Engineering College Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. [3]Asst. Professor, Aditya Engineering College Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh

M. SRILAKSHMI

P.V.RATNAKUMAR

P. C. VISWANATH

ABSTRACT

It has been revealed that engineering professionals face tough challenges in global market if their language skills are not up to the mark. Good language skills are often needed to get a good job for an engineering student. If one is clear in expressing ones thoughts and articulating one's accomplishments and attributes, an interviewer is more likely to form a favorable impression .The academic language ability may be sufficient to manage their course work, but they struggle to cope with the communication demands of the global market .So, there is a great need to frame course material and develop methods so as to enhance language skills of engineering graduates. This paper is a modest attempt to present a new communicative approach specially designed to assist the engineering students in augmenting their communicative abilities. This method is practically implemented in B.Tech classrooms and it has worked out miracles and the engineering students have come out with miraculous response.

INTRODUCTION

Engineering Students - Language Skills

Good language skills are often needed to get a good job for an Engineering student. If one is clear in expressing one's thoughts and articulating one's accomplishments and attributes, an interviewer is more likely to form a favourable impression. In the globalize context students of Engineering & Technology need a specific set of language skills for their success in education and career. Industries are also voicing their concerns about the need for better language skills among students of engineering. The professional profile of a modern qualified engineer should include well developed communication skills and high English proficiency to help him achieve success in modern highly competitive global work arena.

Engineering professionals who are proficient in language skills have a considerable edge over those who have not. Lack of language skills will certainly make an engineering professional short of resources. It has been revealed that engineering professionals face several tough challenges in global market if their language skills are not up to the mark. So there is a great need to frame course material and develop methods and strategies so as to enhance language skills of engineering graduates.

Role Play

Make them Be Aware, not beware of learning language

The ultimate goal of speaking skills in English is, to enable the learners to communicate his or her thoughts, ideas, and feelings via oral language, to equip them with the necessary potentialities concomitant to the developing modern needs in the art of learning and improving language and usage. In order to develop the learner's communicative ability, the teacher needs to teach the target language in a vibrant, active and interesting manner.

One of the best communicative approaches to make learners actively involved and give them an opportunity to practise communicating in different contexts is a Role - play. Role play uses different communicative techniques and develops fluency in the language, promotes interaction in the class room and increases motivation. Peer learning is encouraged and sharing of responsibility between teacher and the learner in the learning process takes place.

Role play with proverbs - Reasons

"Everyone understands the importance that proverbs have in every language. In the form of short, easily memorable phrases, the proverbs contain a great treasure of folk wisdom, and through use of a short proverb, it's often easier to express an idea better and more convincingly. Knowledge of proverbs is necessary for perfect knowledge of a language." —M.F.ZAMENHOF.1905.

Role play mirrors the speakers mind. The bright point in the proverb can be enhanced in diverse ways. Role play with proverbs is an innovative method which, exclusively created for engineering students brings out the hidden talents in students and tells how he approached the main idea, how he expanded it in a way that is fruitful to him and to others as well, and how he conveyed the message while enacting.

The student may fail in selecting a righteous topic which enlightens others and society at large, because he is young and inexperienced. He cannot get at the various aspects of the varied life of modern society. By selecting the proverbs the students are driven to awareness as to significant facts of human existence which will definitely brighten the exemplary way of living. Thereby they will be convinced of themselves regarding the better and fitting ways of living. Thus he can trod on the better ways of living and trammel others to track on them. Learning by interacting and integrated actions for innovation and competence building are the core elements of this approach.

Plan intervention

"For things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them"

1. **10** proverbs told by the students are written on the blackboard.

2. Now the class is divided into small groups- each group consisting of six members.

3. The students are asked to copy them.

4. Each group individually has to discuss the message in the proverb.

5. After the discussion, the group with the consent of all the members in the team has to pick one proverb which is easier for them to express the idea better and more convincingly.

6. Now the group together has to develop the script with six characters, which conveys the message of the proverb.

7. Students work on the script with different personalities, beliefs, value systems, abilities and background experiences. The script is woven around the bright point in the proverb.

8. The script can be prepared for any situation like , 'at the restaurant',' checking in at the airport',' class room situations',' any real life situation'.

Teacher's Role

As students prepare the script for the role-play they might find that they are struck for words and phrases. This may need the teacher to act as a sort of ' walking dictionary', monitoring the groups and offering assistance as and when necessary. If the teacher is not happy doing this and feels that the process of finding the new language should offer more student autonomy, they could have 'time-out' after the practice stage for students to use dictionaries to look up what they need.

Guidelines

To enhance competitive spirit among students certain guidelines are set for which marks are awarded

1. The group should complete the script with in 30minutes-the teacher should feel free to alter the time limit i.e., either increase or decrease the time according to the pulse of the class. Within the given time all the members of the group have to discuss the proverbs, select one out of the ten and develop a theme (with six different characters) which conveys the message of the proverb. The group after selecting the proverb is not supposed to disclose it to the other teams. Finally the script is created with six different characters. The group that completes the script within the time gets one point. This helps to hone student's time management skills.

2. No word from the proverb should be used in the script. For eg. - 'slow and steady wins the race.' If this is the selected proverb out of the given ten, students are not supposed to use words like slow, steady, wins, and race. They can use alternatives for these words which convey the meaning. They are free to use articles, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns and auxiliaries .sometimes though the words are not used in the script they are used in the role play while enacting. In such case the group gets a negative mark. This is a test to their alertness as it creates an excellent stimulating environment by making the student more active and more alert during the play.

3. The best script that conveys the message clearly gets one point as it is the result of excellent team work and negotiation.

4. While enacting the play marks are awarded to the groups individually for eye-contact, stage sense, voice clarity, dialogue delivery, involvement in the character, body language which reflect their dormant comprehension.

5. While enacting the play the individual groups are not supposed to disclose their proverb in the introduction part. The individuals introduce themselves and the characters they enact.

6. After the completion of the role play, audience should guess the proverb being enacted based on the message given, if the proverb is guessed the group gets a point. If the audience can't make a guess or makes an incorrect guess the group gets a negative point.

7. The team that gets the highest score is declared winner.

8. A small interactive session is conducted at the end of every role play where responses generated by the audience regarding the accuracy of enactment and possibilities of improving the same are reviewed.

Consequent academic results

1. It's fun and motivating.

2. Students achieve a level of empathy.

3. Quieter students get the chance to express themselves in a more forthright way.

M.SRILAKSHMI et al

4. Real situations can be created and students can benefit from the practice.
5. The world of the classroom is broadened to include the outside world-thus offering a much wider range of language opportunities.
6. Peer learning is encouraged.
7. Enhances team spirit
8. Encourages self awareness
9. Students get a chance of learning.by doing
10. Relieving the experience adds another element of realism
11. Creates zeal in the student for learning language and ignites his/her creativity
12. Instills confidence by encouraging them to learn language
13. Helps them overcome their inhibitions and stretches their imagination

CONCLUSION

It is crucial for us as teachers to think and plan what should be done to stimulate and facilitate the use of spoken English for academic purposes effectively when making oral presentations, participating in discussions and in a variety of other classroom situations. We need to think of what kind of approaches can be created for distant learners to participate actively in class and how to successfully achieve the needs especially of the weaker learners who have limited face-to-face interaction.

It is not surprising to find that as far as proficiency of English of Engineering Students in India is considered, 80% of them do not meet the qualifying criteria. Proficiency in English is considered more of a 'Qualifying Criteria' than selection criteria for technical roles in the industry.

Language teaching can be an interesting challenge when teachers make the effort to explore a variety of approaches. Role play is just one of the many methods available for exploitation. Role play with proverbs stirs up the students mind in the righteous way oscillating their thoughts towards constructive functioning. It results in general blossoming of culture which is must for a student. Their inner culture thus ignited will come out in various ways which promote the upcoming of service minded youth. So, With some attention given to the needs of the learner, both the teacher and learner can play active roles in the classroom,

making language classes livelier, challenging and above all rewarding.

REFERENCES

Nunan, David(1989), Designing Tasks for the Communicative classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Larsen-Freeman, Diane(1986), Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching. Oxford : Oxford University Press. The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. VII, No.7, July-2001.

Keane, A and Gibson, I.S. Communication Trends in Engineering firms: Implications for undergraduate Engineering Courses. International journal of Engg.Edu., 15, 2,PP.,115-121(1999).

Kitao, K.,Why do we teach English? The Internet TESL Journal, 2,4,PP.,1-3(1996) The Internet TESL Journal, Vol.V, No.4, April 1999 <http://itesli.org/ >