Teaching communication skills to technical students with technical aid

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Abstract
Last two decades have witnessed a drastic improvement in technical education. Technical institutions concentrate more on technical aspects that impairs the imparting of communication skills to their students. In this present epoch English language is the only means to communicate their ideas. It has been observed that CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) is the better approach to improve communication skills of pupils especially speaking skills. The present paper discusses research work practiced with I B. tech students to improve their speaking skills in language lab. It also expresses limitations of the approach.

Keywords: CALL, communication skills, technical students

1. Introduction
It is evident that a bad presenter is career limited. Communication skills, as a part of employability skills, gained a lot of attention in engineering education. Major employers want their employees, can communicate, think and continue to learn throughout their careers. In these globalised and multinational enterprises, English becomes the commonest medium of communication. Introduction of innovative methods and approaches become inevitable to hone the communication skills of students, among all CALL is the most suitable for sharpening speaking skills. A bad listener can't be a good speaker as listening and speaking skills are intertwined. CALL can provide apt set of software to enhance speaking skills.

Literary review
Think mostly in terms of learners' practice not in teachers' explanation find time for really communicative activities not just practice of language forms. (Paul Davies, Eric Pearse: 2000) [8] The present day engineering students are not giving enough importance to English language and they give prior preference to their specialized subjects. So they lack basic language skills, in particular, vocabulary, spoken skills and usage of grammar. (Dipti: 2013) Formal grammar teaching became unfashionable when the communicative approach gained ground. (Indira C, Meenakshi sundaram: 2010) [3, 5] Today business and industry leaders are looking for specific skills in entry-level employees. The current workplace trend in education helps to teach those skills, based on the competencies established for all workers by the U.S. Department of Labor. In particular, today's workers need communication skills: oral, written, and technological. (Nancy Martin-Young: 1996) [7].

2. Need of English Language for Engineering Students
In our country, about 75% of engineering students are from rural areas and most of them completed their schooling in their regional languages. In this context it is apparent that though students have good subject knowledge they lack in knowledge of English language that limits not only their present studies but also professional life in future. Employability skills are part and parcel of communication skills. Today employed engineer has to communicate across the world as the profession demands for it in MNCs (Multi-National Corporations) that is going to be complex for learning engineering graduates in future if they are not accomplished in communication skills.

3. Reasons for Poor knowledge of English
The language course syllabus designed for engineering graduates focuses completely on communication skills and even the approaches also relevant to the syllabus. But the learning engineers find it tough to go with new stream majorly who finished their +2 in local institutions as theirs knowledge of English is skimpy. The reasons for poor knowledge are conferred below:

I. Little exposure to English in schooling
Schooling in rural regions limits the exposure to English communication. They find fewer occasions to communicate in English. Mostly students from local schools could not get much scope for second language (English) usage. Many schools could not provide libraries to improve their skills and many middle and humble families could not afford more than their subject books. After school hours, pupils communicate in their mother tongue at home. All above reasons serve their best to screen students' from improving their communication skills.

II. Lack of trained teachers
In current education system there is a dearth of train teachers for language teaching. Present language teachers have been taught in conventional ways and most of them are employing the same methodologies for their classrooms. But modern classrooms should be student centric where students' can learn themselves.

III. Unstructured internal Evaluation system
The conventional evaluation system does not give room to asses speaking and listening skills which play a vital role in future professional life. Evaluation system has not been in many institutions restructured for substantial period of time. The age old evaluation system could not provide room for self-assessment which crucial in unremitting learning.

4. Experimentation

The experiment carried out in an Engineering Institution situated at heart of Andhrapradesh with variety of pupils from neighbouring states, rural areas, suburbs and urban areas supplies a kaleidoscopic class room, a real challenge for language teachers. In such multi-cultural class room English is apt linking language. Engineering alumni students of the institution, when recently surveyed, stated that they felt working foreign language was a necessary activity in an international career. The suggestions are obvious that English language can serve as secondary language to facilitate communication between two cultures. Acquiring Speaking skill, the prior of all communication skills, becomes crucial for the students. The institution has a very good language lab with teacher console and good language software. Among all software's, a software has been identified a suitable for practicing listening and speaking skills. The Software has been designed for enhancing all communication skills (LSRW), has twelve units of different format. The software can provide novel syllabus and curriculum for self learning and testing.

A group of 07 pupils were selected from rural back ground of mechanical branch, for the study. All 07 students, weak in language skills are made to practice on the software for once, later their listening test has been taken and marks are recorded 100 points. In speaking skill test they are asked to complete incomplete expressions orally. Speaking skills are tested in three different modules (fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation) and each module is assessed 10 points. The result of both listening and speaking tests are observed poor. Recorded marks are as follows:

S. No	Name	Unit – lesson	Marks obtained in listening skills (100)	Marks obtained in speaking skills (30)
1	Subject A	Unit-5 lesson-2	35	10
2	Subject b	Unit-5 lesson-2	50	14
3	Subject c	Unit-5 lesson-2	40	11
4	Subject d	Unit-5 lesson-2	55	15
5	Subject e	Unit-5 lesson-2	45	12
6	Subject f	Unit-5 lesson-2	50	15
7	Subject g	Unit-5 lesson-2	45	13

I. Methodology for listening practice

The selected software with picture, video, narrative lesson provides a wide range of learning material for language learning. It has been designed to meet all learning approaches required to students with lessons and exercises figured out based on daily activities so that the learner can understand the stuff easily. It has been framed in different activities A (listening and reading), B (listening), C (reading), D (Speaking) and E (writing).

The experiment took over 2 months the 07 students are made to have regular practice of the software for an hour per a day, after each week end their skills are tested and marks were recorded.

II. Methodology for speaking practice

Speaking skills includes accuracy, fluency and accent. The experiment proved that continuous and devout practice makes possible the rich and productive outcome. For the prior diagnostic test they were given to complete the some in complete expression which were spelled by the facilitator. Expression based on simple day to day activities and simple conversations. As part of practice they were made to exercise on different grammar components of Sample of questions given for speaking test.

Sample of questions given for speaking test

1. I like _____ (listen) music.
2. Christ_____ (has forgiven/have forgiven) his crucifiers.
3. _____ you please give your book?
4. If you _____ know ask teacher for clue.
5. I saw _____ book on dining table _____ you were searching for in the morning.

Assessment of listening skills after the practice

S. No	Name	Unit – lesson	Marks obtained in listening skills (100)	Marks obtained in speaking skills (30)
1	Subject A	Unit-8 lesson-2	50	23
2	Subject b	Unit-8 lesson-2	60	27
3	Subject c	Unit-8 lesson-2	55	20
4	Subject d	Unit-8 lesson-2	70	28
5	Subject e	Unit-8 lesson-2	55	23
6	Subject f	Unit-8 lesson-2	60	28
7	Subject g	Unit-8 lesson-2	55	22

5. Limitations of experimentation

After the experiment the results of each session test is conducted and outcome is analyzed. It has been observed that, though same resources and time is provided to all students some could yield better and some could not because of following reasons:

A. Inadequate technical competence

Learning process has been taken place on computer system which requires minimum technical knowledge. It has been observed that many students do not have technical skill to operate the software and failed to follow the navigations that pop out in dialogue boxes. Every time the students look for

help of either teacher or programmer to solve the technical or lexical difficulty, it takes lots of time to take over the problem and complete the practice.

B. Variance in learning attitude
Learning capacity of individual pupil depends on his/her personal and social background and schooling he/she taken. Learning attitudes of pupils varies with educational background as well as on personal background. Student from educated family can grasp the concept fast whereas the student with uneducated parent can get it slowly. Students who finished their schooling at good schools can get hold on technical skills fast.

C. Native speakers' accent
Students are familiar with local accent in which they were taught up to schooling comprehending the native accent is not easy task for them. But as part of experiment they were made to listen foreign accent what they could not understand easily. Some of them could follow it with some difficulty some could not at starting of the experiment after a few days' practice they got familiarization with it.

6. Conclusion
Language teaching is an interesting profession where teacher can also learn new things. In these days language teaching gets innovated with new syllabi and curriculum consequently teachers need to research for new approaches. In this context, experiments and studies over learners' position, attitude and stance gains grand attention of both teacher communities and course designers. The above experiment though carried out with limited group can be extended to large group of people with variety of approaches and methodologies. Limitations stated above experiments can be overcome by consistence update of curriculum and approach.

7. References
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