Strategies for Developing Speaking Skills of Technical Students

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Today, English is the most widely studied foreign language, the world over, after the globalization. English language learning and teaching in Engineering institutions in Tamil Nadu has become a medium of instruction. Most of the entrants of engineering education are second language learners, who were taught English language as a subject, not as a skill at primary and secondary levels. They are unable to cope with the burden of technical subjects especially at the entry level, due to the medium of instruction and method of teaching and learning. The syllabus and the text books prescribed by Anna University for the engineering students aim at developing language skills still the students have not developed spoken skills. Due to that, now-a- days, there is a wide gap among the learners in the acquisition of spoken skills of the language both in general and technical contexts. This condition of the learners prevents them from employability. On the other hand, the language teacher is also professionally liable for the learner's communicative constraints especially spoken skills. It is a challenge for English language teacher to teach heterogeneous group of learners in abnormal ratio.

Need for the study:

There is a wide gap between employability and unemployability of engineers and technocrats, due to their communicative constraints especially spoken skills. Engineers with communicative skills may enhance their career in any industrial milieu while engineers without communicative skills may become unemployable. To bridge this gap, there is a need for improving their spoken skills which were not accorded due importance at tertiary level.

Researches on the LSRW skills are increasing, however a research on user-friendly, flexible, pragmatic approaches, strategies and techniques for developing speaking skills of the second language

learners of Engineering education in Tamil Nadu was not done so far as revealed by the review of related researches.

Significance of the study:

It is anticipated that the study would focus on communicative constraints of the second language learners and on the prescribed text books that lake adequate aspects need for developing speaking skills of the learners. Besides, the present state of affairs pertaining to teaching and learning of communicative skills especially skill of oral presentation of learners may be analyzed to recommend to implement the user-friendly, flexible approaches, strategies and techniques to improve the speaking skills of the learners.

Scope of the study:

A content based analysis of Technical English at UG level prescribed by Anna University, in Tamil Nadu will be done. Based on the content analysis, the units common for all the technical institutions will be identified. A survey of selected Engineering Colleges affiliated to Anna University will be done, getting first hand information about effective implementation of speaking skill development strategies. Students from government, government-aided, self financing and autonomous institutions of engineering and technology will be selected for the study.

The present research would be a need-based survey to unravel the practical issues of second language learners of engineering education, with specific reference to Technical English focusing on speaking skill development strategies.

Statement of the problem:

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS OF TECHNICAL STUDENTS

Assumptions:

1.   The methods currently used for teaching Technical English focusing on LSRW skills do not meet the requirements of the learners to improve their oral communication skill, despite the syllabus design at the university level for the purpose.

2.   There are no personalized approaches available for teaching Technical English to a heterogeneous group of learners.

3.   The rural-urban divide is widened due to the poor communicative skills that hurdle their career chance, despite the common syllabus.

4.   It is hoped that the research would pragmatically analyze the needs of the

learners at tertiary level to identify the weak spots to offer viable solutions.

Research Questions:

1. What are the present approaches and strategies in vogue for developing speaking skills in Technical English?

2. Do they really serve the purpose in teaching Technical English to the second language learners?

3. What are the problems faced by the second language learners?

4. What is the present level of communicative competencies of the learners of technical institutes?

5. How can teaching of Technical English be personalized?

6. How far ICT be used to improve communicative skills especially spoken skill of the learners?

7. What are the practical problems faced by both the teachers and the learners of Technical English?

8. Are the learners really benefited by this type of syllabus?

9. If not, what is the need of the learners of Technical English?

10. What would be the suitable methodology for improving the speaking skills of the second language learners?

Objectives:

1. To identify the limitations in Technical English Syllabus of Anna University and the methodologies adapted by language teachers of engineering colleges to suggest remedial measures for second language learners.

2. To find out, the extent to which the objectives of the Technical English syllabus are achieved.

3. To identify the gap in the teaching and learning process of Technical English syllabus.

4. To assess the present approaches in the syllabus of Technical English

5. To list the problems faced by the learners and the teachers of Technical English to suggest remedies.

Tools for the study:

1. An observation schedule to assess the spoken ability of the learners of Technical English.

2. A Problem check test to find out the difficulties of the learners of Technical English.

3. A Problem check test to find out the difficulties faced by the teachers of Technical English.

4. A questionnaire to find out support needed to improve the strategies for speaking skills.

5. An open-ended questionnaire to get expected changes in the Technical English syllabus.

Methodology:

Survey and content analysis will be the research approach to the present study. The researcher would obtain the Technical English syllabus prescribed by Anna

University, autonomous colleges affiliated to Anna University. These syllabi would be analyzed based on their aims and objectives stated by the university and colleges.

A questionnaire was provided to the teachers of Technical English and the learners of the same paper to find out the problems in imparting as well as acquisition of spoken abilities of the second language learners.

An interview with the teachers and the learners was conducted. Stratified random sampling technique will be adapted. Stratification was done based on gender, location and the type of institution.

The identified problems were analyzed taking into account the actual need of the hour and suitable remedial measures would be suggested at the end of the research.

Conclusion:

The analysis of the Syllabi of Technical institution gives several implications. Though the syllabi are designed, meeting the practice needed in LSRW, more attention is warranted on testing, and all feel revision of question paper.

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