

Classroom Techniques to Stimulate Communication Skills in Engineering Students

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Abstract: The paper highlights the difficulties of engineering students who are structurally competent but fail to communicate aptly. The paper describes a communicative approach adapted for the enhancement of speaking skills applied to a set of engineering students. The paper brings to light the processes involved in the conversational interaction of the students. The purpose of conducting such activities enables the students to use the language according to different situational context.

Index Terms: Activities, Communication, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary.

I. INTRODUCTION

English Language has become an international language. English is taught and learned around the world as a second language. It serves as a lingua franca. Language is the means of communication. Through communication the needs, ideas and interests of humans are expressed. Without speech there can be no communication. The importance of speaking skills is vast for the learners of any language. The use of language is an activity that takes place within the realms of any community. Language is used in enormous situations. Any gap identified in communication leads to misunderstandings. For successful running of any organization the speakers of a language need to be skilful speakers. In order to communicate efficiently one needs to be proficient in listening, speaking, reading and writing. However the ability to speak provides the speaker with distinct advantages. The ability to express one's thoughts and feelings in the form of words put together in a meaningful way provides the speaker with these advantages. The clarity in speech reflects explicit thinking. A productive speaker can gain the attention of the audience and hold it till the completion of the message. Speaking skills are essential for one's career success.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF SPEAKING SKILLS FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

The Paper identifies importance of speaking skills for Engineering Students on various horizons:

- A. The medium of instruction for majority of the interviews is English.
- B. It raises the personality of the candidate.
- C. Fluency in English is a highly stressed factor in

millennial era.

D. Most importantly students are briefed that a good oral communication emphasizes their career growth.

III. SIGNIFICANT REASONS FOR DEFICIT OF SPEAKING SKILLS IN ENGINEERING STUDENTS

It is observed that majority of the students are comfortable conversing in their native language. They do not move out of their comfort zone in implementing second language as their medium of instruction. It is also observed that most of the English medium students comprehend spoken and written English. They however fail to converse fluently in English because they do not practice regularly. Teachers at college level are bound by the pressure of covering prescribed syllabus for the University exams. Therefore the pressure of completing the syllabus dominates rather than conducting interactive sessions which can encourage students to develop speaking skills.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE FOR SPEAKING SKILLS

Body Language plays a vital role in speaking skills. Eye Contact, Facial Expressions, Gestures and Postures of a speaker play an important role while delivering the content to listeners. Continuous Eye Contact, poised posture, relaxed hands and arms indicate positive vibes of any speaker. Avoiding Eye Contact with the listeners, jittery hands, folding arms and repetition of the same content indicate the nervousness of a speaker. Body Language influences the way the message of the speakers is deciphered.

V. ACTIVITIES FOR ENHANCEMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS

In the context of English Language Learning it has been observed that students are grammatically competent but cannot communicate effectively. In order to overcome this problem the processes involved speaking interaction. Activities which develop communicative competence are conducted with the selected group of engineering students. The language games that are truly communicative have three features of communication: information gap, choice and feedback.

A. "Classroom English" for Students

Students are taught classroom expressions appropriate for their level. The teacher makes sure that the students comprehend the meaning of the expressions and use them in the classroom the way the teacher wants them to know. The more the students communicate with each other in English the more easily they will develop speaking skills.

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B. Self-Introduction

This activity works for the teacher to learn about the standard of the students. It also establishes rapport between the teacher and students. The students are first asked to write in points about their educational, personal and cultural background. Their personal details may also include their strengths and hobbies. They can even talk about their role model. Through this activity the students open up and pave way in improving speaking skills. It is the responsibility of the teacher to see that all students are speaking.

C. Use of English Newspapers in the Classroom

Students are asked to read an article in the sports section on the performance of Indian Cricket Team in the semi-final. The students are first asked to create a content in their own words what they have read in the first paragraph. The teacher then asks them to make possible predictions on the team's performance in the final match. They may also speculate on what will be the team strategy in the final match. The whole activity encourages students to express their thoughts and knowledge into words. They discuss ideas amongst each other. The students act as both learners and speakers. The teacher acts as a conversationalist during the activity. Through the activity communication takes place as there is an information gap which the learners cover. The activity enables the learners to express ideas which in turn allows them to use language efficiently to convey thoughts and ideas clearly.

D. Scrambled Sentences

The teacher provides the students a short story with scrambled sentences. The students are asked to unscramble them. Students tend to understand the language by placing the sentences in the right sequence. Every student comes to know about one's potential to identify and check one's mistakes.

E. Language Games

The students are divided into two groups 1 and 2. Students of Group 1 discuss with students of Group 2 topics allotted to them. The topics include speaking tasks like problems faced by citizens in Urban Areas and Globalization in the twenty first century. Students of Group 2 give feedback on the performance of Group 1. This game allows students to use their vocabulary and learn to put their ideas into words.

F. The Picture Strip Story

In this technique one of the students holds the picture strip and shows the first picture to the rest of the class. They are then asked to guess what the second picture will be like. The students are then shown the second picture, they compare it with their own guesses and on the basis of the second picture they succeed the story further. They are then asked to guess how the third picture will be like. Through this game students have a choice of words as well as of ideas, as they guess. As the strip continues to unfold they proceed towards the end of the story.

G. Movie Reviews

Students are asked to choose a favourite movie of their choice. They are asked to talk about the plot of the movie, good or bad points of it. This activity can be group based or

individual based. Students learn to express their thoughts and ideas clearly while reviewing the movies.

H. Group Discussions and Debates

These activities help students to converse with spontaneity. For a Group Debate the class is divided into groups of six students each. Each group is given a debatable topic appropriate for their standard. Students are graded according to the relevant points they argue in a debate. Students who do not actively participate are graded negative marks by the teacher. The teacher ensures that every students is given a chance to express one's thoughts.

The teacher also conducts Group Discussion. The topics for Group Discussion are given one week prior so that ample amount of time to prepare is given to students. The teacher divides the groups into good and average students. The teacher asks each of the group to perform their discussion in front of the entire class. The teacher and rest of the class listen to their ideas.

I. Role Plays

In this technique, teacher plays the role of co-communicator. The class is divided into different groups. Two students from each of the groups are selected for different roles to be enacted or performed. Role Plays can either be scripted or non-scripted. While the selected students perform their roles, the rest of the class observe and listen to their dialogues. After the performance the teacher suggests certain inclusions in their performance. Role Plays help students to work on their inter personal relations. Topics for role plays include Hotel Room Reservation, Planning a Vacation with Friends and Interviewing a Celebrity.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The adopted approach for this research paper is descriptive analytic method. Through this method the focus is on learner's perspective rather than the researcher's.

B. Population and Sample of the Study

This study was conducted at Sree Vageshwari Engineering College. The sample students taken for study are twenty students of first year.

C. Research Instrument

In order to improve communication skills among engineering students Language games, Picture Strip Story, Group Discussion, Debates, Role Plays, Movie Reviews are mainly used in this study.

The activities provide pleasant environment, opportunities for students to speak and express themselves.

D. Data Analysis

Activities described in the paper were conducted with all the participants. The activities centre on the difficulties students encounter while communicating English.

E. Results and Findings

The diverse tasks used in developing speaking skills through the study are conversation, explanation, discussion and presentation. The factors that act as barriers to communicate in English for Engineering Students found through the study are limited knowledge of vocabulary. Most Engineering students are shy, lack confidence and use incorrect grammar. The governing factor is students fail to practice to speak in English regularly. The paper suggests that practice is the adequate measure that students must follow in order to converse fluently. In order to acquire pronunciation students are suggested to listen to English songs, news and films of native speakers. Through the activities conducted in the study it is observed that conversation among students help them to gain confidence, overcome shyness and the ability to create grammatically structured sentences.

VII. CONCLUSION:

The teacher provides the students with various activities that encourage them to improve on their speaking skills. These activities suggested provide opportunities for students to apply English language in the classroom. Through enhancing their speaking skills the students gain confidence in facing people and situations.

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