

## **Modern Technique of Teaching English to Engineering Students**

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**Abstract---**Language skills do not function directly in knowledge acquisition and application for engineering students. However it is very crucial for them to learn English language to survive in the competitive world of Engineering. Real Skills development happens through the English as English has become the medium of instruction in engineering institutes. Teaching English to engineers is the most demanding task today. This paper presents a way of teaching English in a practical and suitable way.

**Key words**—Teaching English Language, traditional method, communicative method, functional approach, speaking skills

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Engineering education requires practical approach along with theory and facts. Thousands of students pursue engineering degree every year. As engineering course is offered in English by most of the engineering institute, Students acquire knowledge through English language. So learning English is an inescapable task for the students. Apart from this English has become Lingua Franca so it is very crucial to learn English for communicating with outer body and inner body of the country. NASSCOM finds that only 25% of the total engineering workforce is found equipped with employability and other skills. The skill gap is both in terms of English language skill acquisition and employability skills (Hema N 2015). Teachers now have to stop ‘teaching about English’ and start focusing on ‘teaching English language’. This is a crucial jump from structural approach to functional approach for teaching English effectively. Structural approach enables the learners to memorise or learn rules of using language. As its name suggests, it teaches structure and grammar of the language. The approach lacks practical production of language by students. They know the rules but when it comes to produce the language, they find many difficulties. Thus, the structural approaches to the teaching of English as a second language made at best the learner “structurally competent, i.e. the one who has developed the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences-yet who is unable to perform a simple communicative task”. (Newmark, 1966) calls such learners ‘communicatively incompetent’ (Hymes, 1970). To make students effective users of language, a teacher needs to change the style of teaching which leads to functional or communicative approach. To fulfil the need to engineering profession, English must not stick to teaching grammar only. Students must be able to produce (speaking and writing) the language.

### **II. TRADITIONAL VS. COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH**

The traditional way to teach Grammar is that the teacher announces the grammar structures and lists of rules. Sometimes this happens in mother tongue. This is also called ‘the deductive learning ‘or ‘deductive approach’ which (Nunan, 1999) describes as, “the process of learning in which one begins with rules and principles and then applies the rules to particular examples.” Here, examples followed by rules are not in context but they are isolated sentences. (Long, 1991) has labelled this approach as

“FOCUS ON FORM”. By applying this approach teacher delimits the students’ ability to grasp and produce target language. On the other hand, (Nunan, 1999) stresses on the use of ‘inductive approach’ which he describes as, “the process by which the learner arrives at rules and principles by studying examples and instances (Morrison, 2012).

Researchers have indicated that in order for learners to acquire grammatical competence they must “have exposure to examples of that particular language” (Schwartz, 1993). Vanpatten calls this, “meaning –bearing input” that is “language that the learner hears or sees that is used to communicate a message.” Vanpatten’s comments support Krashen’s idea of ‘comprehensible input’ that “comprehensible input increases students’ ability to learn and speak the language” (Krashen, 1982).

### **III. INPUT HYPOTHESIS**

The Input hypothesis is Krashen's explanation of how second language acquisition takes place. As per this hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the 'natural order' when he/she receives second language 'input' that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. For example, if a learner is at a stage 'i', then acquisition takes place when he/she is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1'.

“Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers is concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.” Krashen

Thus teachers can change the methodology of teaching by applying “i+1” hypothesis. Here I have taken only one skill of language i.e. speaking for explanation.

### **IV. TEACHING SPEAKING**

Sometimes speaking ability becomes the measure of knowing language. Recharads and Renandya (2002) state that speaking is the ability to use the language appropriately in social communications which involves not only verbal communication but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as pitch, stress, and intonation. Moreover, non-linguistic elements such as gestures, body language, and expressions are needed in conveying messages directly.

Nunan (2003) states that teaching speaking is to make the students do as follows:

- Produce the English speech sounds and sounds patterns.
- Use words and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second or foreign language.
- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence, use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called fluency.

Brown (2001) states that there are five principles for designing teaching speaking that should be known by the teacher in order to help the students to achieve the target language. They are as follows:

- Use techniques that cover learner needs, from language based focus on accuracy to message-based on interaction, meaning, and fluency.
- Provide the intrinsic motivation.

- Provide appropriate feedback and correction.
- Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication.

Encourage the development of speaking strategies.

Hayriye Kayi (2012) mentioned total thirteen activities which promote the speaking skill which are Discussion, Role Play, Stimulation, Information Gap, Brain Storming, Storytelling, Interviews, Story Completion, Reporting, Playing Cards, Picture Narrating, Picture Describing and Find the Differences.

Here, I have mentioned role play activity to improve students' speaking skills as it is a combination of "i+1" and functional approach.

In Cambridge International Dictionary of English, "role play is a method of acting out particular ways of behaving or pretending to be other people who deal with new situation." In addition to that; in role play, students play roles and get themselves into situations which they many times find outside the classroom. Because role play is basically the imitation of the real life and the learners will get the chance to interact and use the language in real life situation. (Gow, 1993).

According to Harmer (1998), "Role-Play activities are those where students are asked to imagine that they are in different situations and act accordingly". Nunan(2005)defines that role play is a speaking activity in which the learners take the part of other people and interact using the characteristics of those people, for instance; age, gender occupation, and so on. Also explain that role play includes a particular communicative task, for example negotiating a purchase, solving a problem, making a reservation, getting information; at particular place, for instance at railway station, at hospital, at school etc. Byrne (1986) gave comments that role play is a part of drama activity. He explains that there are three terms to cover the drama activities such as: mime, simulation and role play.

Anderson has summarized the importance of role play in four points:

- They offer the spoken language practice that is fundamental for all language learning.
- They provide us with the chance to take our students out of the classroom for a "test run" of real world language use.
- They allow students to become someone else for part of lesson, and thereby to leave behind their inhibitions and worries.
- They involved an element of play that provides an enjoyable contrast to the course book exercises and helps to develop rapport between students.

## **V. SIGNIFICANCE OF ROLE-PLAY**

Role play was considered important in language learning and teaching for many years. Rogers and Evans (2008) mentions three aspects which shows the value to role play. First, role play provides situations in which learners practice their language as well as the social skills to communicate with other participants. On the other hand, it gives them freedom to use their imagination and creativity in dialogue writing and playing the role. And the third and very important, the activity motivates the learners and reinforces the language learning. Tobn and Lendrum (1995) says even though students were asked to talk directly assuming the assigned roles, the activity gives them more room for creativity and innovations in dialogue writing and playing the roles. They add that the activity gives them room to perceive, understand and respond as the character of the role.

## VI. “I+1” HYPOTHESIS AND FUNCTIONAL APPROACH FOR ROLE PLAY

Role Play is way of teaching speaking in a natural and comfortable environment. Teacher can give situation which is familiar to students (“i” – students already know). For ex. Making inquiry at Railway station. Here, “inquiry” will be the function of the language. Students have already done this thing in their mother tongue many times in the real life. So they will be very comfortable while acting and speaking. They need to work in pair and form a dialogue between passenger and inquiry officer. Here, they can talk with each other for correct sentence pattern, words to be used in the dialogue. Even teacher can help them out with vocabulary if needed. This activity will be student centered and teacher will play a role of facilitator which will provide comfortable ground to students for drafting dialogue and then performing it before the class. After performance, teacher and classmates give them feedback for the performance. Teacher needs to reinforce the students to build up the confidence. Their drawbacks can be told in soft manner so that they can improve it when they perform role play next time.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Students’ capacity of learning increases in student centered classroom. They can build rapport easily with each other and with the teacher who is their facilitator and not the teacher. Functional approach provides this environment and “i+1” hypothesis increases their curiosity toward leaning. This method is much more effective on students who have not pursued their schooling from English medium. By this technique, they can increase their confidence on using English language.

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