

Strategies to Develop Communication Skills through ELCS Labs among First Year Engineering Students of Nalgonda District in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT: *The main objective of writing this research paper is to bring out the status of the engineering first year students in terms of obtaining communication skills through English Language Communication Skills Lab in the engineering colleges of JNTU affiliated engineering colleges of Nalgonda district in Andhra Pradesh, India. Today's 21st century is regarded as an era of globalization where science and technology achieved rapid strides, in the search for global language English would be undoubtedly accomplished the status of official language of the world. Since the time of colonialism, English has been spreading across the world, till today it's being occupied official status in terms of communication skills and soft skills. Nowadays English communication skills are considered vital, inevitable in terms of job searching in the neck deep competition of the professional world. Engineering education occupies larger part of professional career in changing the world of science and technology. Apart from that, the mastery of knowledge in core subjects they need to perform excellent abilities and efficient communication skills and soft skills like many developing nations, India too has taken to develop English communication skills and stands today as one of the largest English speaking countries in the world. As an outcome of interacting and teaching English language and communication skills for engineering students for the past many years, a new dimension has been explored to develop communication competence among the students with ELCGEP.*

KEYWORDS: *ELCS, Multimedia lab, Interactive lab, Communication Skills, ELCGEP.*

I. INTRODUCTION

English language communication skills labs play a pivotal role in the developing communication skills among the students of engineering. The idea was innovative when English language labs were implemented in the year 2005 by the JNTU Hyderabad for all affiliated engineering colleges. Effective communication skills enables students to acquire substantial abilities to excel not only in academic affairs but also to meet the requirements of everyday corporate life. The primary aim of the labs is to focus on developing students in the LSRW skills. The labs are highly competent to invoke the latent abilities among the students as many of them hail from rural areas and whose background is largely L1 (Telugu) medium. The strategy of the labs is to provide wide range of learning opportunities for the students besides creating interest and enthusiasm towards learning the objectives.

Engineering students need to be able to think logically, critically to find suitable solutions to the problems and communicate clearly, need to be creative and work in a team in order to get placed in a reputed company. As the need for the students of engineering to be trained in a multitude of transferable skills in many private colleges in the are required special care for hiring communication skills faculty and personality development mentors to train up their students in communication and soft skills in order to prepare them for on and off campus placements. In many engineering colleges, English language faculty members are involved in placement training and they are expected to play significant role in shifting communication skill to multi –skills in an integrated manner.

1.1. English Language Communication Skills Lab

English language communication skill lab plays pivotal role in developing communication skills among the students of engineering first year. The idea was innovative as implement in the year 2005 by the JNTU Hyderabad, to implement effective communication skills that enable students to acquire substantial abilities over daily usage of English language effectively.

The strategy of the labs is to provide wide range of learning opportunities for the students besides creating interest and enthusiasm towards learning the objectives.

As many affiliated engineering colleges of JNTU in the state have two fold way of learning labs. 1. Multimedia lab. 2. Interactive lab.

1.2. Physical requirements

1. Multimedia Language Lab

This is also called as the computer aided language lab for 60 students with 60 systems, are master console. LAN facility and English language soft ware for self-study by learners.

2. Communication Skills Lab

This lab consists of movable chairs and audio-visual aids with a P.A. system, a T.V., a digital stereo-audio & video system and camcorder etc. (JNTU academic regulation course structure and detailed syllabus) The multimedia lab consists required number of systems (60) as a slot and equips with head phones and all systems are connected to teacher console. Most of the labs are air conditioned and well furnished. (Physical component) the interactive lab is said to a very essential component because larger scope is provided here to involve in teaching and participating in affinities, (physical components like caller phone, mike, life size mirror, voice recorder etc).

1.2.1 Engineering Education in the District

The purpose of this paper is to study the role of ELCS lab communication skills among engineering first year students, for various reasons. Firstly the students who join engineering first year are just new comes from 10+2 (intermediate level) of them from L1 medium background.

The impact of learning with respective of their socio-economic status and affordability of joining engineering course in the district for many students drastically comes down if the government withdraws fee-reimbursement scheme in the state.

1.3. The Importance of ELCS lab

In view of growing importance of communication skills, English language is truly regarded as a tool for global communication and the consequent emphasis on training students to acquire language abilities. The syllabus is prescribed by the JNTU-H to develop linguistic and communicative competence of engineering students.

The primary aim of the university is that the focus should be on the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. And for the teacher should use the text prescribed for detailed study.

The students are encouraged to read the texts selected paragraphs silently.

The language lab focuses on the production of sounds of language and familiarizes the students with the use of English in every day situation and contexts.

1.4. Objectives

- . To expose the students to a variety of self instructional, learner-friendly modes of language learning.
- . To help the students to cultivate the habit of reading passages from the computer monitor, thus providing them with the required facility to face computer based competitive exams such as GRE, TOFEL, and GMAT etc.
- . To enable them to learn better pronunciation through stress on word accent, intonation and rhythm.
- . To train them to use language effectively to face interviews, group discussions, public speaking.
- . To initiate them to greater use of the computer in resume preparation, report writing, format-making etc.
- . ELCS lab enables the students to acquire good communication skills and fulfill the instruction by imparting all essential components.

Effective communication skills can be learned and practiced by individuals and the use of these skills for professionals is immense.

The basic purpose of communication is to share information as the process of issuing information, receiving information interpreting information and respond to commands.

Communication is the act of transferring information from one place to another.

1.5. Topics Prescribed

The topics designed and prescribed by the JNTU-Hyderabad for the first year students of engineering are as follows.

1. Introduction to the sounds of English vowels, diphthongs and consonants
2. Introduction to stress and intonation
3. Situational dialogues/Role play
4. Oral presentations prepared and extempore

5. Just a minute session (JAM)
6. Describing objects/situations/people
7. Information transfer
8. Debate
9. Telephoning skills
10. Giving directions

1.6. Utilization of English Labs

English labs are made compulsory for engineering students in many universities. In recent times the role of English labs has become very important in integrating the skills of students (with soft skills or life skills) with a lot of language practice through activity based learning.

To consider multimedia lab, it is largely based on “Learning by Doing Method” facilitated with self – learning materials. The learners are immensely benefited through this.

Typically the following would be required as good communication skills in this lab. The ability to comprehend all the information provided. It enables the learners to polish their abilities in articulating speech sounds with proper accent and intonation. The information could be received from the prescribed software modules. Comprehension enables reading and listening skills.

- The ability to understand the problems while learning and seeking clarification from reliable sources.
- While learning the learners are expected to prepare notes in order to excel in future endeavors.
- To consider interactive lab as an essential component that provides ample opportunities for learners with great exposure for participating the activities to develop communication skills in both individual and groups.

Environment of the Lab

The interactive lab is also named as communication skills lab is to be setup in spacious and well furnished hall that requires huge display board, LCD, a system, mike, podium or rostrum. A life size mirror, speakers, round tables with movable chairs etc as minimum physical requirements.

- Communications skills lab emphasizes the need and importance of acquiring communication skills for the learners and makes them to realize how the LSRW skills to be learned and practiced to the changing needs of globally challenged world.

1.7 How do the Labs Incorporate Communication Skills

- ✚ Provides maximum opportunities to the learners towards understanding given contexts in view of familiarizing new trends.
- ✚ Communicating with others effectively through interactive approach and develops the communication process to fulfill the given task.
- ✚ By means of communication develops an exposure towards different attitudes and establishes rapport by building strong relations with interpersonal skills.
- ✚ Strong foundation towards making tasks, goal settings and imbibing intra personal skills through constant communication processes among the groups.
- ✚ Aims at fulfilling the needs and demands of individuals in order to meet expectations of organizations and multinational corporations.
- ✚ Develops positive attitude, innovative thinking and enhances personality development.

It is also studied that some of engineering colleges in the district have not been updating the multimedia language lab software as per the need of the required specifications of the JNTU prescribed norms as it is a mandate. The first demerit of establishing English language labs in engineering colleges is that they require huge expenses and really its burden for purchasing new soft ware and also it needs constant updates according to changing needs of learners.

1.8. Why the Students Lagged Behind In Understanding the English Labs –Reasons

Barriers for learning communication skills through English language labs:

- Faculty related barriers.
- Student related barriers.
- The major problem is with the inexperienced faculty and untrained lab assistants who do not have any previous knowledge about English labs.
- No training centers to train up the English faculty and lab assistants to create awareness about lab activities according to the syllabus designed for the English labs by the university.
- Exposure for the first time.

- The concept of language lab is new and not experienced by the students in previous classes, language labs are not prescribed at 10+2 level in A.P. government colleges.
- Students are fascinated to learn communication skills.
- Ignored the further continuation of ELCS labs for second and fourth year students of engineering in the curriculum.
- Regular intensive orientation and training for faculty under affiliated colleges of engineering is very much required.
- Conduction of frequent workshops and seminars on the use of English language labs are to be regularly monitored for its effective functioning.
- There is a need to design special projects for developing communication skills in the specified area of ELCS with proper evaluation.
- Time is the factor as it is limited and restricted to learn and acquire communication skills for learners.
- Adamant, reluctant attitude of rigid learners due to poor competence for not showing interest in acquiring communication skills.
- Procuring English language software is rather expensive.
- It is suggested by the students large in number that they are in need of continuity of English labs after first year their engineering. They wanted to have labs for second and fourth year of their course.

1.9. Formation of English Language Communication Groups Exchange Project (ELCGEP)

For the first year engineering students the need for improving communication skills is pre-requisite and especially the students come from rural areas with L1 medium would be getting acquainted with new aspects of project work.

This newly designed project is innovative in terms of making the students more competent and enthusiastic to learn communicative aspects in totally new environment which did not exist early before in their institutions.

Apart from regular English language communication skills labs as prescribed in curriculum, the affiliated colleges are advised to make best use of project work for engineering students to strengthen communication skills.

In Mixed Group Orientation:

Orientation is the direction of someone's interest of attitude, especially political or sexual. Basically the project is an enterprise carefully planned to achieve a particular aim. A proposed or planned undertaking

- A piece of regular work by a school or college student.
- Estimate or forecast as the basis of present friends.

1.10. Advantages of English language Communication Groups Exchange Project

- This project is innovative and did not exist before in the course modules or curriculum by the university for the professional students.
 - This project aims at providing opportunities for learners to get exposed towards the new environment other than their own colleges.
 - The groups (each group consists of 10 members approximately) mingle with the groups of other colleges (mutual exchange of the groups).
 - The project duration is approximately 7-10 days.
 - About 6 groups (5-6) from each branch interchange among the cluster colleges.
- English language communication group exchange project provides learners ample opportunities to
- Interact
 - Comprehend
 - Respond
 - Reciprocate to situations.

II. BY THIS PROJECT (ELCGEP)

- The students acquaints with new environment, for example, the rural college students can interact the students (of visiting) of metropolitan or urban colleges.
- The students enjoy learning communication skills in feel free environment. They imbibe skills mostly from interaction and interpersonal activities.
- This project inculcates enthusiasm of learning new techniques, manners and etiquette.
- This project manifests learning process of communication skills in totally different environment.

- Regular intimacy and relations can be established among the colleges in the cluster group ELCGEP project aims at refreshing and recreating the students of engineering in accomplishing communication skills purely by the imitation and interaction among the peer groups.
- This project is an innovative and different with regular methodic English labs being run by engineering colleges under the JNTU-H.
- The students have not been assigned project work in the area of English language and communication skills at the first year level.
- The students develop spoken skills to large extent and communication takes place in a friendly environment both formal and informal ways.
- The students acquire argumentative skills as they participate in sessions like debate and brain storming.
- The students participate in the activities of without fear and shyness.
- The students from rural areas with Telugu medium background are benefited.
- Listening skills are developed as the students pay regular attention to the activities such as group discussions and debates.
- The students are free from regular classroom instruction and monitoring.
- The students acquire skills automatically by the learning and doing method.
- Very less opportunity for passive role by the students in participating language activities.
- Writing skills are developed through writing activities like making observations, note taking, drafting the outline of project, event description etc.
- Reading skills are also developed as the students read and present the summaries prepared by them during their project sessions.
- Gradually the students will be familiarize with the latest trends of communication skills and accomplish competence over communication skills.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS / SUGGESTIONS

1. It is suggested that several steps can be taken by authorities to make effective use of English language lab in order to develop communication skills among the engineering first year students.
2. Strengthening academic pattern by the university to make it more useful for the bright future of engineering students.
3. Certain reformations and alterations regarding ELCS are required in curriculum.
4. The project should be made compulsory for English language communication skills lab.
5. Providing opportunity for visiting software companies/tourism centers/multinational corporations and such other higher halls of learning centers and several other public places to study the groups how language and communication flourishes as part of practicum for ELCS project students.
6. Creating more opportunities for the learners by enhancing time factor for learning and practicing more activities.
7. Required to organize regular seminars, workshops to acknowledge the latest updates in the specialization of English language and communication.
8. Motivating the faculty members for participating orientation and refreshment programs.
9. The colleges should take care for developing creative writing of students by encouraging them besides technical competence.
10. The faculty members of English should encourage the students among themselves at least to communicate in English in class rooms and labs.
11. Conducting regular sessions especially on group discussions, debates and brain storming events to develop their speaking skills.
12. The colleges may duly start the college magazines to encourage students writing abilities.

IV. CONCLUSION

Strategies to Develop Communication Skills through ELCS Labs among First Year Engineering Students of JNTU Engineering Colleges of Nalgonda district in Andhra Pradesh presented a detailed study of advantages of the English language communication lab. The syllabus for engineering students and its objectives were given in the paper. The English language teacher is not just a teacher of grammar and sentence structure; the faculty of English language is expected to play an active role as a counselor, communication expert, soft skills trainer. The students also need to evolve to the heights in terms of accomplishing communication skills despite these many impediments.

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