

E-LEARNING AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS OF ENGINEERING STUDENTS: AN EXPERIMENT

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Abstract

Communicative skills are a prerequisite for engineering students. Students need the skills to participate effectively in several accomplishments they do in their course as well as career. Teaching or training communicative skills to engineering students is a challenging task as the whole curriculum is designed to develop their technical skills rather than communicative skills. Yet, students are expected to perform sound communication skills for they have to be successful in the job interviews. In this connection, we need to apply a method that makes the students to enhance their communication skills within the course time. Keeping the technological development in view, E-learning can be incorporated as a tool to enhance their communicative skills. Educational institutions usually have electronic equipment for various purposes. Students can make use of electronic machinery such as desktop computers, laptops and tablets. A Wi-Fi connected gadget would give a great benefit to the engineering students in enhancing the communicative skills. This paper is an attempt to find out the suitable e-learning tools to enhance communicative skills of engineering students and also challenges of e-learning.

Key words: communicative Skills, E-Learning, Computer, Tablet, Smart Phone, Internet.

Introduction

The main objective of teaching English language is to develop the essential language skills among the learners. The four basic language skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing could be enhanced using a variety of techniques by a language teacher/trainer/facilitator/educator in the classroom. E-learning can be the most effective tool that can be used to enhance the communicative skills among the learners. Engineering students tend to use technology for most of their academics. The same can be used to enhance their communicative skills.

Improving the quality of communicative skills is a challenging issue in engineering colleges as the main focus of the students is demanded by technical syllabus rather than enhancement of communicative skills. Students, especially rural folk are very much worried of their communicative skills. They might not have exposure to skills such as public speaking,

listening to professionals, reading difficult texts and writing world class English. Students hardly find time in their college to concentrate on learning or improvement of communicative skills. In this connection, e-learning would help the students to bridge the gap between engineering studies and enhancement of communicative skills.

To make one's communication effective one needs to be sound in the usage of both verbal and non-verbal skills. Though non-verbal communication plays vital role in face to face communication, verbal communication plays prominent role in making one's communication ability more effective. In order to be effective in verbal communication one must have store of vocabulary, correct sentence construction without grammatical errors and be aware of situational conversations and dialogues.

Learning vocabulary through e-learning:

Puzzles

Learning vocabulary is the biggest challenge among the engineering students as there is no special course designed to teach vocabulary by the universities and colleges. E-learning is right solution for this problem. As students use smart phones frequently, they can solve certain word puzzles based on their capacity. Gradually, the students can go to the high difficulty level puzzles to solve. While solving the puzzle students will make several attempts to find a word to fill. In this process, the learner either finds a new word that he/she doesn't know till then or search for the required word with the help of the given clue in google in order to solve the puzzle. Both these ways expose the learner to new vocabulary.

Word Quiz

Students can logon to certain websites to answer vocabulary quizzes. Doing vocabulary quiz helps the learner to get exposed to a new word as the learner makes attempt to answer. When the student doesn't know the correct answer, a wild guess may be done, no matter whether the guessed option is right/wrong but the students learn the new words as the correct answer will be revealed by the computer immediately on the screen. This will not only help the student to learn the vocabulary but also to use it in his future communication.

FAQ

Surfing internet for frequently asked vocabulary questions will help the student to concentrate on learning required vocabulary for their target academic or professional careers. Most of the material of list of vocabulary is available on internet for free of cost. Students can utilize this to go cost cutting learning. Qualifying exams GATE, GRE, TOEFL, IELTS etc focus more on vocabulary.

Listening and Speaking Skills:

YouTube

Students frequently hit on YouTube for various purposes. The same can be used to enhance their listening and speaking skills. Students may be given a URL by the trainer, where they

may be listening to the targeted video. Tedx talks, conference videos, seminars, lectures by eminent people, group discussion, debates, live television shows etc. are uploaded onto YouTube. While students listen to such videos they learn how the presenter is speaking language and how the listeners act when the others speak. YouTube has been dumped with a large number of songs. Students listen to songs to understand mood and emotion of the singer and lyricist. This will help the learner to enhance the art of expression.

CALL

Computer Aided Language Learning: Institutions can procure professionally designed software like K-VAN, Globarena, British Council Learn English, BBC Learn English etc. This software is to be installed in language laboratory. This initially raises interest to get used to learning communication skills by using computer. This software must be timely updated based on the changes that take place in the communication process.

Communication Enhancement through Social Media

Reading and writing skills can be enhanced through social media. It has become powerful tool these days for communication irrespective of age and profession. Most of the people choose social media to express their valuable opinions and impressions. It has become an interesting platform for students especially. Facebook (Feb, 2004), Whatsapp (Feb 2014) , Instagram Oct 2010), Twitter (Mar 2006) etc. set an open platform for all in the world. Students can open an account and view what their friends and relatives post in the form of news. Students can also react and respond to posts in various forms. They can like, dislike, love, hate, support or oppose the point of view of others. In this process, learners get exposed to a variety of expressions made by others as the whole conversation is displayed.

Students those who regularly use social media tend to have social transformation. When they respond to the post of others they may have to learn as to how to write a post to satisfy their interest and intension. It helps the students to learn social behavior, and personal behavioral change that happens in their life without any special professional training for this very purpose. Through social media, students will learn wide variety of communicative techniques such as social mobilization, social marketing, information dissemination and education, group media to share videos, photographs and posters.

References :

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