

English language learning activities: Heterogeneous learners

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ABSTRACT

The present world defined by technology with diverse challenges throwing to the professionalsto acquire a language that can help them to communicate with the whole world. The only language that is thought as lingua franca of the world is English. There is need to give practicto the professionals towards English for specific purposes approach to perform their tasks perfectly in general, science and technology. The big challenge in English teaching and learning process is dealing with heterogeneous learners in a class to orient them towards English language. Designing of learner – centred, learner- involving activities help to deal with the heterogeneous learners.This paper throws light on the need of English language to a professional, the better approach(ESP) to acquire a language. It also discusses about the needs of the learners, heterogeneous learners in classes, the problems faced by the slow learners and the English language learning activities to overcome the problems they face in using language.

Key Words: ESP approach, heterogeneous learners, slow learners, problems faced by learners, language activities.

I.INTRODUCTION

In the present competitiveworld which is defined by technology, professional education plays a predominant role.English language serves as a medium to transfer knowledge to and among pedagogy in professional education. English not only gives information in every conceivable branch of knowledge it has also the power to change the world that changes us. However, it is important to note that English is the language, not of westernization, but modernization (unknown). In the Indian context learners of professional courses(engineering) realised that English is necessary to project their identity to know about values and cultures of society to deal with the economy, and gain perfection in their field of study.i.e, science and technology.

II.METHOD TO TEACH PROFESSIONAL LEARNERS

From the last decade a lot of attention is paid on the different methods of language teaching and learning. English for specific purposes is paid attention as it better suits to teach English to the professional learners. ESP refers to the teaching and learning of English for an instrumental purpose, work or study related. (Michael Byram, 2004). The purpose of ESP is to facilitate the learner with the certain linguistic skills that are required for a particular branch of study or pursue a particular vocation. ESP is not for primers it is framed upon the core competence of the English language that is been acquired. One of the learning trends that is much followed in ESP is Pedagogic Needs Analysis. The term pedagogic needs analysis includes deficiency analysis, learning needs analysis and means analysis as proposed by West (West,1998). PNA obtains more information of target group and learning environment which facilitates learning. PNA focuses on needs of the learner to be reached through an ESP course expecting to provide information about the gap between present and targeted extra-linguistic knowledge, mastery of general English and language skills. (Jordan, 1997).

III.HETEROGENEOUS LEARNERS

As it is said ESP is completely based on the competence of the learners. In India the learners in class room are heterogeneous in their competence. In the classroom the levels of learning are varied comparing to students in classroom some students are very quick in grasping and understanding and using English and some learners are very slow. It is a herculean task for the teachers to balance both the level of competence learners using ESP approach. ESP is “a demand for a shift away from literary training, a language suited to specific purposes which encompasses ‘communication needs and language skills which are learner centred and so on” (Brumfit 1984). this approach totally concentrates on communication skills of the learners to use both for general and scientific purposes.

As the future engineers the learners need to acquire English language to perform many tasks like

- a) Presenting the projects, discussing about the projects, clarifying the doubts, giving the explanations.
- b) Giving instructions to the subordinates, leading the teams through co-operation and communication.
- c) Writing reports of the projects, plans and processes, instructions and techniques
- d) Negotiation with the superiors
- e) Discussions with delegates about their company and growth.
- f) Dealing with clients about services and products in their organization.

IV.LEARNERS LEARNING PROBLEMS:

The language needs of the learner can be taught effortlessly to the fast learners as they grasp easily, dealing with the slow learners requires observation to understand the problems faced by the learner to cope up with the peer group. The observations can be mentioned as:

- 1) Lack of confidence

- 2) Inadequate knowledge in English language
- 3) Less scope for using English
- 4) New to the technical field
- 5) Attitude of learners
- 6) Background education of learners
- 7) The area they belong to

V. THE LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES THAT BUILD CONFIDENCE

Considering the above problems faced by the slow learners. The learners should be given ample practice through activities which help them to freely take part for overcoming their inhibitions.

The activities that build confidence

- 1) Conversations and role plays
- 2) Group discussion on well-known topics
- 3) Debates
- 4) Presentations
- 5) Mock interviews
- 6) Project on technical topics

As it is said by Dornyei, learning may be stimulating and enjoyable for learners by: making tasks challenging; making task content attractive by adapting it to the students' natural interests or by including novel, intriguing, exotic, humorous, and competitive or fantasy elements; personalizing learning tasks, and selecting tasks that yield tangible, finished products (Dornyei 2001).

VI. A LANGUAGE PROJECT

The content and the learning activities should be devised at a certain level to linguistic and cognitive difficulties to create an element of challenge to the learners. A language project enables the students to have language experiences through interaction and make the students know how to use English language in different contexts in multifaceted ways.

- a. Helps in cooperative learning of language and practice using English
- b. Project helps to improve the communication skills of the student's while strengthening the LSRW skills and grammar.
- c. Interaction and conversation to gather the information helps to acquire speaking skills.
- d. Listening to the people helps to understand and analyse the information and develop listening skills
- e. Revising the information gathered helps in developing reading skills

- f. Rewriting all the information gathered or obtained and placing the sentences in logical order following the coherence according to importance of the points while framing the sentences following the basic linguistic labels and understand the general and specific English in a report helps in strengthening writing skills.
- g. It also helps the learner to transfer the information from graphs, tables and pictures to sentences.
- h. finally, it helps the learner to use appropriate the vocabulary, grammar, sentence formations and freedom to work freely with the peer group gaining confidence and competence.

VII. CONCLUSION

Learning of English language is inevitable to all the students who are pursuing professional education. As per the studies ESP is the right method or approach helps the learners of heterogeneous class to diagnose the use of English for communication and specific purposes through the tasks and activities focusing the linguistic elements that bind the general and technical content.

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