

AN ACTIVITY BASED APPROACH TOWARDS ENHANCING THE LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS FOR THE STUDENTS OF POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

In today's language classrooms, Considerable emphasis should be given to all the four language skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing). More emphasis is given for listening and speaking skills for polytechnic students as it helps them to develop their communicative language. Various activities are identified to enhance the listening and speaking skills, which can be practiced by the students in the classroom situation. By practically there activities, the polytechnic students develop their confidence levels, independent learning, assertiveness, leadership, team work, peer work, group work and gain practiced integration of knowledge, skills and aptitude.

Key Words: Listening, Speaking Skills, Peer work, Assertiveness, Independent Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool for communication used by us. Communication helps us to acquire, exchange, store, retrieve and process information. It has a clear relationship with the society. It has become the greatest need among the polytechnic students. The buzz word in today's education and job market is Communication possessing good Language Skills is the integral part of Communication.

English language involves linking of the Four Skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing,. Listening and Reading are the receptive skills. Speaking and Writing are the productive skills. Language learning becomes easy if the polytechnic students break out of their inhibition and fear.

The content based subjects are History and Science. It is about facts and experiments. They are knowledge acquiring subjects. Bur Language is a skill – oriented subject. The power of a language is its skill than its knowledge. This power grows by exercise, and not by rules.

Developing Effective English Language Skills is the most important need of the rural polytechnic students, who aspire to become employable immediately after their Diploma Course. It is a great challenge for the English teachers to teach English Language skills to the students of Polytechnic College.

Teaching English Language Skills to the students is basically to improve their Communication Skills. So, designing tasks and activities accordingly would help the learners to achieve their goals. It also paves way for their proper professional development.

In the recent times, the companies have reported, the lack of Communication /Employability Skills among the students of the Polytechnic Colleges. Newspapers have also reported about the lack of Communication Skills among engineering Diploma holders. The main reason behind this scene is that the polytechnic students suffer from low confidence level in their usage of English. This can be set right by concentrating on the Language Skills. In particular, by practicing Listening and Speaking activities in the classrooms by the English teachers.

Listening activity is the most neglected area, in Language learning. Since the students are not provided a natural environment to listening English, practicing this in classroom situations becomes mandatory.

Lecture method is prevalent in most of the Polytechnics. The acquisition of speaking skills in such situation is very difficult. Moreover, in a teacher-centred instruction, regular speaking practice cannot be achieved at a desired level.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES WHICH CAN BE USED TO ENHANCE THE LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

Audio/Video/CD/ Movies/Internet

Listening to the programmes of Language related- content on audio/video CD's. Motivating the students to browse the websites for programmes on Language Skills and listen to Talk Shows on the Television. Encourage the students to watch good English Movies to create interest among the students.

Short Stories/Narratives

Short stories and narratives can be read / narrated to develop their listening and comprehension skills. Short stories should focus on voice modulation and pronunciation.

Rhymes

Music is a wonderful resource for drawing the attention of the student. Singing/Saying/Reciting of rhymes or listening and reciting rhymes from CD's is not a child's play. It not only teaches language, vocabulary and rhyme schemes but also manners and values.

Word Building Games

Acquiring vocabulary can be initially started with '**Word Building**' and slowly developed into '**Guess the Word**' exercise/game. These vocabulary tests will strengthen their word power and increase the confidence level of the students. The game is such that the students will be divided into two groups. The teacher will prepare chits with words written. One student from a group would be called and he/she has to enact it with hints or gestures. The other group has to guess the word. This leads to the practice of looking into the dictionary for words. Moreover, each student can learn five words in the alphabetical order with

their meanings and note down in a notebook separately. The students will learn new words everyday and at the same time will be curious to build their vocabulary.

JAM Session

JAM – Just a Minute Session is assessed on the parameters of content, language and body language. In this game, the students have to speak for a minute without repetitions, hesitation and deviation. They can also use pictures and other properties to play the game.

Extempore Session

Students should be made to participate on a regular basis in this activity. Choose topics of interest and make the students to speak for a minute. Even things like pen, book etc can be used for this exercise. The students will learn to frame small sentence structures by practice.

Role Plays

Students can enact short skits by memorizing their part. They will identify themselves with the character being acted. Through this activity they improve their pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency.

Picture Composition

Pronunciation practise plays a vital role in Language Skill development. Students can describe a picture in their own words using appropriate sentence structures. It helps them to develop their Communication Skill.

To gain confidence in speaking skills, an ice-breaking session is to be organized. The students can sit in pairs and discuss about each other. After a discussion of ten minutes they were asked to introduce their partner to the whole class. While they frame sentences, the teacher can correct their mistakes.

Dialogues

Conversation practice in class was another exercise that yields fruitful results. Imaginary situations like making requests, inviting people, and answering the telephone can be practiced in class rooms Dialogue delivery helps them to improve their speaking skills. The classroom will be noisy but students will learn to focus on what their partner is saying and thus develop their listening skill.

Shouting Dictation

We should have two sets of a printed text in hand. One set with complete text and the other one with words blanked out. The class can be split into two groups. The set with the complete text can be given to Group A and the set with blanks to Group B. The two groups should stand in either side, facing each other (with a partner in the other group). The Group A can read the full text loudly and the Group B has to fill in

the blanks with what their partner has read out. This exercise will help the students to sharpen their listening skills.

Mouthing Words without Sound

The students can be divided into pairs. A list of words /phrases is given to one of the pair. The person who has the paper should mouth the words/phrases to their pair. The partner has to write them down and they can check at the end. The variations in this exercise are to whisper the words across the room, so that the partner writes the word.

Active Listening

Split the class into two groups. Instructions to be given to each group separately, without the other group hearing. Tell Group-A to prepare a two –minute story, it can be a made up one or a personal one. But it should be interesting or exciting. Group B is to be informed about the story telling. Time limit can be given and observe the students. Group B can respond to Group A after the time limit. Get feedbacks from the groups regarding this game.

Keep Talking

A topic or an interview question is given to the students. A minute or two is given for their thinking process. They come out with various responses. Choose the relevant points and ask them to frame the full answer in sentences. This practice is given to make them think and speak.

Conclusion

Practising few of these activities in English classes will definitely motivate and create interest among the students. Encourage them to play few of these games with their friends during leisure time. Constant practise of listening to English language and speaking it will improve their Listening and speaking skills.

Communicating in English will build their self-confidence and they can face interviews without any hassles in their mind. The low confidence level, fear, shyness, hesitation etc will slowly disappear and they prepare themselves to face the world with a strong mind.

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