DESIGN OF MATERIALS AND TASKS FOR MAKING ESP CLASSES INTERACTIVE

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ABSTRACT:

This paper focuses on improving the communicative competence of ESP learners. Students of Engineering have to be motivated and guided in the classrooms with a wide range of tasks. They can be helped to enhance their speaking skill by carefully selecting materials and designing tasks based on their level and requirements. These tasks will enable them to interact with their peers in the classroom. In keeping with this view, an experimental study was conducted to show that learners will improve their speaking ability by taking part in their classroom activities. It was observed that students were largely benefited by participating and using the language in interacting with others.

KEYWORDS:

1. Need analysis
2. Generation of content
3. Peer relations
4. Multi-level language abilities
5. Socio-linguistic competence
6. Negotiation of meaning

INTRODUCTION:

An important trend in the teaching of language has been that the teacher, especially the ESP teacher creates her own materials and devises tasks based on the needs of the learners. The teachers rely on their own materials rather than depending on other resources. It is an arduous task for the teachers as they have to make a thorough need analysis and so have to focus on factors such as the learning objectives, the methodology, the outcomes and most importantly the level of students. The author, being an ESP teacher for more than 25 years is of the firm opinion that by selecting suitable materials on topics of relevance and designing tasks which cater to the needs of the learners will go a long way in encouraging students to take part in the process of communication in the ESP class room.

The author's years of experience in teaching ESP learners, her awareness of the problems of ESP learners initiated her to do this study. For the purpose of analysing the needs of learners, she had discussions with them .She also analysed the learners' future communication needs which require them to communicate in their real life situations.

In order that they develop the ability to communicate, the learners need opportunities for interpreting, interacting and conveying the messages. These opportunities can be provided in the form of well designed tasks which require them to communicate effectively. Accordingly, the task designed by the author, replicate real-world communicative tasks. They provide rehearsal for their real-life tasks. These tasks give them adequate practice in the use of language to enable them to meet the demands of their target situations.

Learners' needs are of paramount importance in the preparation of materials. Keeping this objective in mind, materials are prepared which would equip the students to communicate both inside and outside the class room.

The aim of the study was to provide opportunities to students to make use of the language orally through interactive based methodology.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Materials form an important tool in the professional development of ESP learners. ESP teachers have to plan the course, select and prepare the material based on their needs. Richards and Rodgers (1986) suggest that instructional materials can provide detailed specifications of content, even in the absence of syllabus. They give guidance to the teachers on both the intensity of coverage and amount of attention demanded by particular content or pedagogical tasks. According to Trimble (1985) four types of materials can be used: Genuine, adapted, synthesised and created materials. The material selected by the author consisted of an adapted text.

As the concern of ESP teachers is to develop the learner's ability, to take part in the process of communication, opportunities can be provided to them in the form of tasks devised on the materials selected. Tasks for eliciting information, expressing opinions, exchanging information will engage them in meaningful interactions. Different types of tasks have been discussed by various authors. In his article, "A frame work for the implementation of task-based learning", Peter Skehan (1993) makes a mention of Long's two way tasks where each participant has information to transmit in an interaction. These two-way tasks are more effective than one-way tasks.

Lockey and Bley Vroman (1990) observe that, "Different tasks can put different requirements on particular knowledge and it is correspondingly possible to construct tasks which involve grammatical knowledge in various ways and various degrees. "According to Willis (1996) "The most dynamic element in the process is the learners' creativity; by exploiting rather than stifling the creativity, we make learning vastly more efficient". Engineering students should be provided with tasks that encourage them to perform group discussion, role play, etc. Activities of these types provide ways for stimulating communicative interaction.

METHOD:

The experimental group consisted of 30 students of first year engineering who belong to average category-those who have obtained marks between 50 and 60 % in English in the Higher Secondary Examination. According to Ellis, (1985) "The successful language learning depends as much on the type of interaction that takes place in the classroom as on the method used. Moreover, it is recognised that learner participation in the class room activities represents an important aspect of class room instruction". Realizing the importance of interactive teaching and the need of designing of tasks that promote interaction, the author prepared material which consisted of an adapted text titled "Importance of Mechanical Engineering" in keeping with the view of Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters (1987) that learners' attitude towards the subject content of the texts must be taken into consideration in the designing of tasks. It was ensured that the text suited the level of students; it did not pose comprehension problems. The topic has relevance to the students of Engineering. Based on this text, she designed tasks following the

criteria set by David Nunan which served to guide the selection and sequencing of tasks. The tasks therefore,

- Derive input from authentic sources.
- Involve learners in problem solving activities in which they are required to negotiate meanings.
- Relate to learners' real life communicative needs.
- Integrate the 4 macro skills.

Tasks of text material	**Type of interaction**
i. Group discussion	Group work
ii. Reading comprehension	Individual
iii. Listening comprehension	Individual
iv. Language development activities	Pair work
a. Matching words with meanings b. Using words in sentences	
v. Role play	Pair work

DISCUSSION:

The first task designed is meant for group discussion. The teacher initiates the discussion by asking them to speak about the importance of Engineering, the role of engineers in the society and their special areas of interest in Engineering. Students discuss together in groups and come up with ideas. This activity facilitates interaction among members of the group. In this two way task as mentioned in Peter Skehan's article, "A frame work for the implementation of task-implementation of task-based learning (1993)", each participant has information to transmit while interacting. The expression of different viewpoints by learners leads to group interaction. This strategy is known as brainstorming and it results in the generation of content. The next task is reading comprehension. Students read through the text and learn the lexical items related to

Engineering and Mechanical Engineering including general terms. Followed by this, they are asked to do a listening task .They listen to an audio clip on a specific topic of interest to them and are made to take down notes which describe the features of a car. The next task is language development exercises. By doing these tasks, they get familiarised themselves with the meanings of words. The teacher divides the class into pairs and asks them to enact a role-play by creating a real life situation-A conversation between a sales manager and a customer on purchase of a Ford Figo or a Hyundai i10 car by highlighting its special features. The students enthusiastically took upon the roles and engaged themselves in meaningful conversations. The content generated during the group discussion activity, the lexical items they learned and the information they obtained through the listening activity equip them and prepare them to face the task of speaking in the class room. As the content replicated the real life communicative one, the learners found the task to be enjoyable and interesting.

FINDINGS:

The activities encourage interactions in various forms in the realisation of the communicative value of the language used. It has to be pointed out that the multi-level language abilities of learners facilitate more of interaction between them during group work and negotiation of meaning and build up peer relations. The group work they carry out in performing these types of tasks affords them practice in collaborative work which they have to do later on during their real life activities. The socio-linguistic competence also gets developed in their attempt to negotiate meanings with their peers and teachers. It was observed that the average group of students came forward to participate in the class room activities and they attempted to speak using the vocabulary to be used in the context. They tried to construct meaningful sentences in the process of communicating the ideas among themselves. The ESP teacher can provide more such opportunities by providing practice tasks. Sample tasks are given below:

1. Enact a conversation on the use of mobile phones on the campus.

2. Assume the role of a marketing manager trying to convince the customer in buying a new tablet PC.

Seedhouse (1996) in his article “Task based interaction”, points out that “Each variety of interaction has a pedagogical focus”. Accordingly, each task was designed, taking into consideration, learner’s level and his real life requirement. The teacher serves as a facilitator in engaging students in these meaningful language activities. Before each activity, the teacher has an elaborate discussion with students.

CONCLUSION:

Thus ESP classes can be made more interactive by designing a wide range of tasks based on the interests of the students. The right kind of material and well designed tasks help learners promote interaction in class.

Test material

I. Group discussion.

1. What is the importance of engineering?

2. Discuss the role of engineers in the society.

3. What is Mechanical engineering?

4. Discuss the special areas of interest of mechanical engineers.

II. Reading comprehension.

Read the following passage and answer the following questions.

Mechanical engineering originated when people began to use levers, ropes and pulleys to multiply their own strength and to use wind and falling water as sources of energy. Today, Mechanical engineering is the kind of engineering that deals with the designing of machines and engines and manufacturing of products, converting one form of energy into another form of energy to run turbines and other prime movers.

Mechanical engineers utilise energy in many ways for our benefit. Refrigeration systems help preserve perishable goods for long periods of time, air condition our homes and office and aid in various forms of chemical processing. Heating and ventilating systems keep us comfortable when the environment around us changes with seasons.

The energy crisis of the 1970's brought to focus the need for new sources of energy as well as new and improved methods of energy conversion. Mechanical engineers are involved in research in solar, geothermal and wind energy sources, along with research to increase the efficiency of producing electricity from fossil fuel and from hydroelectric and nuclear sources. Mechanisms used in all forms of manufacturing and transportation are designed and developed by mechanical engineers.

In order to drive the machines, a source of power is needed; the mechanical engineer is involved in generating electricity by converting chemical energy to run steam turbines and also in the designing of internal combustion gasoline and diesel engines for use in all areas of transportation.

The engines and machines designed by mechanical engineers require many types of materials for construction. The tools that are needed to process the raw materials must be designed. For example, a very strong material is needed for a drill bit that can cut a hole in a steel plate. If the tool is made of steel, it must be made of higher quality steel than that found in the plate.

a. Answer the following questions:

1. How do mechanical engineers utilise energy?

2. Why are Industrial engineers preferred for management level positions?

3. Describe the role of mechanical engineers in industries.

4. Why are mechanical engineers interested in the study of different sources of energy?

III. Listening comprehension

Students are asked to listen to an audio clip on the features of a newly launched car and answer the following:

1. Write notes on the special features of the car using the frame work given:

   a. Appearance

   b. Compactness of design

   c. Functional aspects of the features

      i. Music system

      ii. Power Steering

      iii. Air bags

      iv. Aluminium engine

      v. Mileage and performance

iv. Language development activities

a. Match the following words with their meanings

1. Mileage	How well or badly something works
2. Performance	That can be broken
3. Power	The system by which a vehicle is supported on
4. Suspension	Number of kilometres run per litre
5. Collapsible	The ability to do something

b. Bring out the meanings of these words by using them in sentences

1. Choose — To pick out from two or more things.

   Select — To choose something carefully from a group of things.

2. Pretty Attractive and pleasant.

   Beautiful — Giving pleasure or delight to the mind or senses.

3. Avoid — To prevent something bad from happening.

   Prevent — To stop somebody from doing something.

4. Design — Think of and plan a system or procedure.

   Develop — Grow or to cause somebody/something to grow.

v. Role play

Imagine that you are representing a car company and enact a conversation between the sales manager and the customer.

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