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Title: Exploring the Applicability and Effectiveness of Activity-based Methods for Developing English Communication Skills among Students Pursuing Technical Courses

ABSTRACT

Key Words: Applicability, Effectiveness, Activity-based Methods, English Communication Skills, Technical Courses

NEED OF THE STUDY

It was found that the prescribed syllabus of English language of B. Tech course was not helping out students to develop their communication skills. There were no studies done to find out the effectiveness of the following two activity-based methods based upon the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT) – the first one is Five-phase Implementation Method based on Text-based Approach and the second one is Three-stage Task Method based on Task-based Approach for developing listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, writing skills, vocabulary and grammar of the B. Tech students studying in central universities of India.

THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the opinion of teachers regarding the applicability of Five-phase Implementation Method (Method A) and Three-stage Task Method (Method B) for developing English communication skills among B. Tech students.
2. To compare the pretest scores of Group A and Group B students in relation to listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, writing skills, vocabulary and grammar.
3. To develop the lesson plans based on Five-phase Implementation Method (Method A) and Three-stage Task Method (Method B) and to teach Group A through Method A and Group B through Method B.
4. To compare the posttest scores of Group A and Group B students in relation to listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, writing skills, vocabulary and grammar, and explore the effectiveness of Method A and Method B.

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1 - There was no significant difference between the pretest scores Group A and Group B students in relation to listening skills, reading skills, speaking skills, writing skills, vocabulary and grammar.

Hypothesis 2 - There was no significant difference between the effectiveness of Five-phase Implementation Method (Method A) and Three-stage task Method (Method B) for developing listening skills, reading skills, speaking skills, writing skills, vocabulary and grammar of the B. Tech students.

VARIABLES

Dependent Variables are the achievement scores of the students in-

- Listening skills, Speaking skills, Reading skills, Writing skills, Grammar, Vocabulary.

Independent Variables are the teaching methods–

- Five-phase Implementation Method by Feez and Joyce (1998) Method A

- Three-stage task Method by Willis (1996) Method B

METHODOLOGY

Population for the Study - All the engineering colleges coming under central universities constituted the population.

Sample of the Study - Limited to three engineering colleges of Delhi coming under central university.

- Indian Institute of Technology – Delhi
- Delhi University
- Jamia Millia Islamia

Design of the Study - Randomized Control Group Pretest-Posttest Design was selected.

Procedure of the Study -Random procedure was adopted in the selection and assignment of experimental and control group, and treatment was only given to experimental group.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF PHASE I OF DATA COLLECTION

It was based upon the exploration of ‘Teachers’ Opinionnaire’ constructed on six dimensions, regarding the applicability of activity-based methods for teaching English to B.Tech students.

89% - Teachers were strongly opinionated about using CLT Approach.67.2% - Teachers were hopeful about the result yielding capacity of Activity-based methods.82.6% - Teachers preferred Text-based approach as the ideal way of developing English communication skills. 62% - Teachers believed that Task-based approach has got the potential of developing English communication skills. 79% - Teachers considered it tough to adopt activity-based methods due to multi-proficiency levels of students, large class-sizes and time constraints.58% - Only 585 teachers believed that activity-based methods could be successful at the university level for developing English communication skills.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF PHASE II OF DATA COLLECTION

1. Oral Language –Listening skills and speaking skills

Oral language was developed with the help of Three-stage Task Method, based on Task-based Approach (a non-conventional approach based on inductive reasoning). Listening skills and speaking skills showed remarkable development with the help of above method.

The Three-stage Task Method works on Task-based Approach, it was based on inductive reasoning, it gave learners ample freedom to explore and choose information, make patterns, hypothesize, and theorize their knowledge. Since the method was not teacher-centric, the topic was not announced in the beginning and it allowed the learners to have maximum interactions among themselves within and outside their classrooms. This process helps in setting achievable tasks, which kept the learners motivated, spirited and connected at all stages of language learning.

2. Written Language – Reading skills and writing skills

Written language showed tremendous development under the Five-phase Implementation Method (method A) which was based on Text-based Approach (a conventional approach, based on inductive reasoning). Writing skills and reading skills showed remarkable development here.

A text-based approach believes in ‘Top Down Model’ of teaching. In the classroom, the teacher announced the topic, wrote the format on the board, taught the necessary grammatical patterns and technical jargons related with the topic. She also gave model texts for reference, to show the students a perfect or near perfect piece of writing. This was the main difference between the teachings of two groups with the help of two methods.

