

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Fruitful Teaching Practices to Enhance the Writing skills in English of the Lateral Entry Engineering Students

*R Uthayakumar¹, Dr. N Asharudeen², Dr. K Pramila³

¹Research Scholar in English, Karpagam University, Karpagam Academy of Higher Education, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Asst. professor, Department of English, Karpagam Academy of Higher Education, Karpagam University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

³Associate Professor, Department of English, PSG IT & AR, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.

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ABSTRACT

Writing is the most powerful of LSRW skills as it is preserved as records and documents for the future generation. Professionals like engineers have to be competent in written English without which they would be unsuccessful in their career. Lateral entry engineering students require special attention because their exposure to written English is so poor. Appropriate teaching methodologies and practices are required to improve their written communication. Listening and reading activities acclimatise the students to the English atmosphere. Improving the vocabulary through various activities prepares them better for the task of developing the written communication. Task-based language teaching, guiding in letter writing practice, free writing, cloze testing, hints developing, rearranging the jumbled sentences, object description and peer learning are some of the useful teaching practices that would make them better professionals.

Keywords: Writing skills, LSRW skills, Task based language teaching, Free writing, Self-evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is the best mode of recording the thoughts, feelings, ideas, discoveries, findings and inventions. They remain as records and sources for the future generations. Millions of libraries all over the world impart knowledge through the billions of books written on multifarious subjects.

Even today evaluation in academic competency is mostly based on written scripts. Moreover, professionals are expected to be good at written communication because each word they write plays a role in making them a successful professional. Though engineering education has become the most sought after higher education in India, it has its own chinks in the armour.

Most of the lateral entry engineering students come from rural background; they had their entire schooling in the vernacular medium; these students have little exposure in

using English for written and oral communication. Rote memory is the only method used to pass the English exams in schools. Such students not only struggle to cope with the pressure of understanding their lessons taught in English but also miserably fail in the written communication. Because of this reason, they are stamped as slow learners or academically backward. Actually they are not backward, but their lack of exposure to express everything in English makes them backward. In order to overcome this drawback, suitable teaching practices have to be employed so that these backward students can also enter the mainstream with confidence.

2. IMPORTANCE OF WRITING SKILLS

Writing is the best mode of self-expression. In the social life, written records become the source of power. Poor writing skills make a student incompetent in

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +919842046621

Email address: udhaya.adhitya@rediffmail.com (R.Uthayakumar)

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academics. It is one of the bench marks of the professionals. Command over writing in a language make the individual better equipped to take up the professional tasks in a job situation.

They are expected to write reports, letters, proposals, agreements, descriptions, etc. If a professional is dependent on others for the written tasks, he cannot maintain a secrecy of his business matters and also would lose respect in his own office. In this way, a good writing skill makes a professional independent, confident and competent in any situation. Hence, developing the writing skills is indispensable for an engineering student. The lateral entry engineering students with poor writing skills need to take up varied activities to develop their writing skills. In this concern, different task oriented teaching practices have to be employed to make the students proficient in their writing skills in English.

3. LISTENING AND READING ACTIVITIES

A congenial learning atmosphere has to be created for the students by making them to listen good English like English news from radio and television, lectures given by good orators, language quiz programmes etc. Model reading and listening sessions have to be given by the teachers who can better understand the existing level of the students. Regular exposure in listening the simple and correct English improves the confident level of the learners. Teachers should encourage the students to take notes while listening. Note taking where not much of the grammar is required, improves the confidence level of the students. Training the students to expand the notes into a short passage is a productive step towards improving their writing skill.

“Reading maketh a full man: conference a ready man: and writing an exact man” (Francis Bacon). Reading is the best mode of getting acclimatised to a language. Lateral entry engineering students find continuous reading in English an arduous task, because they are unable to understand the meaning of many words. Reading aloud is difficult for many as they could not pronounce the words. In this situation, short and simple passages have to be given as hand outs to be read aloud in classrooms, in the presence of teachers who can correct their pronunciation then and there.

Teachers can give demo reading sessions with correct pronunciation, pause and intonation so that the students can easily understand the meaning of the passages which improves their confidence to read on their own which result in improving their writing skills also.

4. IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY IN IMPROVING THE WRITING SKILLS

Richness of vocabulary and their appropriate use in sentences add variety and quality to the passages. Reading short stories, newspapers help the students to improve their stock of vocabulary. Reading helps them to understand the appropriate use of the words in contexts. Referring to dictionaries and thesaurus for meaning, parts of speech, spelling and correct usage of the words reflect in their writing. Special training on homophones, homonyms, and spelling rules make them better writers. Vocabulary games such as crocodile word building, anthakshari, word duck, writing a list of words starting with an alphabet, writing all the inflexions of a word, prefixes and suffixes, jumbled letters create interest among the students in improving their vocabulary stock in a short span of time.

5. TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is also known as Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) or Task based Instruction (TBI). This approach focuses on directing the students to do meaningful tasks using the target language. There are three major phases in TBLL:

1. Pre-task: In this step, the teacher creates interest among the students by introducing the task and gives unambiguous instructions to the learners on what to do during the execution of the task.
2. During task: Here the learners are allowed to use the target language freely to fulfill the expectation of the task set. The teacher monitors the progress and offers help wherever necessary to correct their errors.
3. Post Task: The students are allowed to present their tasks achieved. The teacher closely monitors and gives his feedback for the students to improve their written work. They may also get

an opportunity for repeating the performance.

Task Based Learning is more useful because the students are free to use the language as they have understood. Here, the student's needs decide the kind of language to be used. This is a student centred approach where the teacher is only a facilitator. This approach easily motivates the students to take up further tasks.

6. OTHER USEFUL PRACTICES

In order to improve the letter writing skills, the students should be made to read certain error free letters (letters to the editor, standard books on letter writing) on varied situations. This exposure would give them an idea to draft letters on their own to suit their needs. Cloze testing is an interesting method where the student is made to think of the appropriate vocabulary, grammatical function of the word and the meaning of the passage in particular. If practised regularly, it improves the learner's usage and grammar.

Free writing on topics of their choice gives an added interest and confidence to the students to take up the task. The students are given necessary confidence and knowledge to take up self-evaluation based on their experience which improves their confidence to a greater extent.

Developing hints into a well-knit paragraph and rearranging the jumbled sentences into a coherent paragraph help them to learn the art of writing without much strain. Peer learning has to be encouraged as a sharing of the knowledge and it is an easier and quicker method to improve the writing skills.

Object description would be very useful as the learner tries to describe an object, picture, person, and scene as he observes it. Later he can add suitable adjectives, conjunctions and linkers to make it a proper descriptive passage.

7. CONCLUSION

Effective written communication develops the leadership skills as the writer thinks and performs better than many others. Writing goes on reflecting one's thought process and level of comprehension. Writing is an art which could be mastered only by continuous practice. This in turn improves the reading habit and over a period of time the writer understands, that reading and writing are

complementary. As writing is an important employability skill, improving it has always been an advantage for the professionals like engineers.

In order to cater to the needs of the learners the teaching learning process should become flexible, giving freedom to the learners to learn through the modern technologies such as Computer Aided Language Learning, internet, mobile phones and audio visual approaches. In addition to it, the learners should have a personal interest to develop the skill for which the guided and continuous practice is required

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