



Department of English
PSNA College of Engineering and Technology, Dindigul-624622
Tamilnadu, India

***NEW VISTAS IN ELT: EMPOWERING ENGINEERS FOR
EMPLOYMENT***

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Editors

Dr. Joseph Thomas, Ph.D.
G. Vijay, M.A., M.Phil.
Mrs. Shabnam Niher, M.A., M.Phil.

**Focused Teaching of English Grammar and Composition to
Engineering Students: An Outline**

C. Karthikeyan, M.A., M.Phil.

Abstract

Students of Engineering, after joining an engineering college, are exposed to technical English Grammar and Composition in their first year of study. Most of the students find it difficult to cope with English Grammar which they had learnt in school. The main reason is that the students learn English in schools only from the point of view of facing the

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examination. The schools are also bent on achieving 100% results. Consequently, the students are trained to memorize everything blindly, without knowing the meaning of the underlying text. They learn everything by heart and reproduce as it is in the exam. After coming to college, they follow the same method. But they fumble miserably as the syllabus does not contain prose and poetry that can easily be memorized and presented.

Students have to be trained in reading not only for pleasure, but also for the higher purpose of learning English language. Through entertainment, they can arrive at enlightenment. Since the reading habit is on the decline now, it has to be revived. Presenting the study of grammar and composition in an interesting manner would enable the pupils to read and understand English properly and enrich their vocabulary. It will also kindle their grasping abilities, enable them to express orally and write what they have read well. They would start enjoying their learning instead of looking down upon it with distaste.

This paper aims at presenting the methods and means in teaching English language effectively to students of engineering colleges, for the higher purpose of employing it in real life situations instead of teaching it for the sake of facing examinations. The class room sessions should be a preparation for facing the examination of life and emerging victorious.

Key Words: English Grammar and composition, examination, reading, enlightenment, vocabulary, grasping abilities, learning, real life situations, victorious

Introduction

English is accepted today as an international language and its importance is realized by everyone as it stands as a world language. The most important tasks in science, engineering, technology and other fields are being written only in the English language which is also a tool for communication purposes. But the importance of English is not fully understood by many students as most of them hail from rural areas. The schools teach them English with the intention of producing 100% results so that they might get good admission figures every year. The learners become competent only in the memorizing technique rather than learning the language. As soon as they enter an engineering institution, their hopes are shattered because they cannot apply the same method here as the entire English syllabus is based on Grammar and Composition. This memorizing method has resulted in instilling fear

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and inferiority complex in the young minds instead of any hopes of mastering the language. Hence the goal of language teaching and learning is lost. Consequently the students consider English language as an unwanted burden imposed upon them. Dr. K.M. Prabhu rightly declares:

Indeed the notebook and the classroom should serve as sources of inspiration for further learning and not act as hindrance to learning itself. (ELM: 181)

Reading Habit

The reading habit is on the wane today among the younger generation. The learners should be trained to read English books not only for entertainment, but also for enlightenment. It is in the hands of the teachers to make the teaching interesting so that the learners may develop a taste for reading.

There are two types of reading – intensive study and extensive study. Intensive reading aims at concentrating on the language, whereas extensive reading concentrates on the subject matter. Intensive teaching in the class must be supplemented by extensive reading outside the classroom. Extensive study or reading has the advantage of learning English grammar.

For example, in extensive reading, the pupil comes across the same word a number of times in association with other words and thus he comes to know of its various shades of meaning. While reading about Nuclear Energy, he notices many words related to the subject matter like nuclear reactor, nuclear fission, nuclear power, nuclear fuels, nuclear plants, nuclear wastes, nuclear physics, nuclear radiation etc. and he learns many words. Many good readers know little grammar and yet they can speak and write English correctly. Owing to the reading practice, they automatically develop this skill. K.L. Sharma explains:

The specific aims of teaching English grammar and composition must be the following: 1) to increase their knowledge of English language and 2) to increase their knowledge of the technical subject matter and to enrich their intellect. (MTEI: 45)

Analysis of Text

So, teaching must depend on analyzing the text and explaining every word with its meaning and grammatical implications. The multifarious aims may be as follows:

- To enrich their vocabulary
- To learn English grammar and its implications
- To enable the students to read English passages loudly with proper pronunciation
- To help them comprehend the passage and grasp its substance
- To enable them to express orally and in writing what they have read
- To test their abilities and skills in the language which are applicable in the study of the passage
- To compare and contrast ideas, incidents and events under study
- To lay emphasis on the context or draw their attention to specific reference

Thus the teacher would play a pivotal role in achieving the above multifarious tasks.

In the words of Dr. Babita Tyagi:

... the role of a teacher is very vital. He acts as course designer and material provider, collaborator, researcher, evaluator and as a practitioner. (ESPIRTTESP: 3)

Strategies to Adopt

With a view to achieving these aims, the teacher has to adopt the following strategies for better results. The teacher has to consider and plan the following:

Use of Audio-visual aids: English, being an alien language, can be taught effectively with proper aids. These aids verily create interest and help pupils grasp the meaning of the text.

Understanding Previous knowledge of the pupils: Before actual teaching takes place in the class, the teacher should know what the students already know and then proceed to utilize their previous knowledge to impart new knowledge. New knowledge must be disseminated in the light of previous knowledge, learning and experience of the learners.

Introducing the lesson: Here the actual task of the teacher begins. He/she puts forward questions on the basis of the previous knowledge of the pupils to introduce the lesson. The main objective of introducing the lesson is to revive their previous knowledge and to prepare them mentally to receive new knowledge. The success or failure of the lesson largely depends on this introduction.

Statement of Purpose: The teacher states clearly and briefly before the class what he/she is going to teach so that the pupils come to know what they are required to do. Both the teacher and the pupils can proceed in a particular direction to achieve the specific aim.

Presentation of material: The teacher presents the material and language to the pupils. Since it is the major part of the lesson, the teacher should take special efforts to present the material in a tangible way. As English is a foreign language, the pupils easily get tired and the session becomes monotonous if special efforts are not taken to sustain their interest. The teacher instead of sticking to the lesson, can refer to examples and illustrations related to the subject matter from real life situations, from literature, from history and so on.

Participation of Pupils: The teacher must interact with the students every now and then to attract the attention of the students. He can ask questions and make them answer in simple sentences. He can ask them to summarize the lesson at the end of the class. This will not only make the pupils take active part in the session, but also act as a motivation booster. Instead of pointing out the mistakes in their utterances, the teacher can encourage them to talk in English. P. Prasad states:

We handle people by speaking to other people. There is no other way than talking to someone in order to get a work done. Therefore, we must learn how to handle human beings who are not creatures of logic but creatures of emotion... (CSFEP: 47)

Assignment: Assignment or homework is given at the end of the lesson. The following assignments may be given:

- To give the meanings of words and use them in sentences
- To explain words, phrases and sentences
- To write the summary of the passage

- To fill in the blanks
- To match the words with their meanings
- To identify the parts of speech in a sentence
- To write synonyms and antonyms

Conclusion

All the above mentioned points contribute towards making things more meaningful and worthy of attention to the learners, than the conventional teaching method. Students must be taught to use the English language in real life situations. But students learn English language only to pass the exam. Prof. Ranu V. Vanikar and Aarthi R. Majumdar point out:

A wide gap seems to exist between the English taught in the classrooms and the English to which they are exposed outside classrooms. (MWLMD: 147)

Both language teaching and language learning will become fruitful and interesting if the methods discussed above may be implemented and this wide gap will gradually vanish. The pupils will show some sign of interest in studying grammar and composition. As a result, learning will become a very pleasant experience to the learners. Like all other abilities, language abilities and skills are also a matter of growth. Hence English should be included in the curricula of Engineering for the entire four years. It will indubitably help the students keep in constant touch with the English language and they will pick it up gradually. At the end of the fourth year, they will emerge very good communicators catering to the technical needs of the modern corporate and MLCs. The learning of English language must center round the specific purpose of getting employed in reputed MLCs and carry out the work place tasks effectively.

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C. Karthikeyan, M.A., M.Phil.
Research Scholar, University College of Engineering, Dindigul – 624 622
Associate Professor and Head
Department of English
Ratnavel Subramaniam (RVS) College of Engineering & Technology
Dindigul- 624 005
Tamilnadu
India
kkvdas@yahoo.co.in