Abstract

Instructional Design (ID) is the only approach to be adopted to improve the language competency as well as Communication competency in the Technology and Professional courses classrooms. The traditional Pedagogical approach used by the majority of the Indian Technology and professional Institutes is not resulting in the desired results specifically the English Communicational Competency. This paper is an attempt to point out the stumbling blocks of ELT (English Language Teaching) and Developing English Communication Competency and to share the fruitful academic experience that is based on ID, which uses a scientific method that follows: Development → Implementation → Evaluation → Maintenance logically. The whole attempt is to do away with traditional Behaviorist approach and embrace Constructivist approach, so the learning is not Instructor controlled but naturally facilitated by Instructional Designing. This presenter also seeks scholarly as well as applicable suggestions, so that ELT becomes more meaningful and most effective in our Technical and Professional Classroom situations.

Keywords- Communication Competency, ELT (English Language Teaching), Instructional Design, Technical and Professional Classrooms

1. INTRODUCTION

According to ABET, an United States official agency for accreditation of Colleges and Universities knowledge' it is very much essential in this globalized world for the Engineering students of US to develop to develop the ‘Professional skills’ or can be said the ‘Soft Skills ’along with the ‘Hard Skills’ that is the ‘technical skills’. Professional skills like Communication Skill, Teamwork, Understanding Ethics and Professionalism. Further it points out how the world competition, especially the countries like India, China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan where they with large, well-educated work forces, have learned how to move large segments of their populations into the advanced industrial economy has increased which is to great extent is going to affect the employment of Engineers from US. [1]

But, on the other hand in India National Knowledge Commission (NKC) very starkly objected and observed “currently most graduates do not possess, the skills needed to compete in the global economy and industries have been facing a “consistent skills deficit”. This is to be understood in the proposal of NKC, The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) demanded to increase the present 415 universities to 1500 by the year 2015, along with it, demanded substantial increase in the IITs, NITs and NIMs and central universities etc. but this upward mobility will slide down if, the English Communication Competency level
of the UG as well as PG students of the Professional Courses is not attended properly and professionally, which will further slide down in proficiency level at almost all levels. [2]

So, whether it is United States or any other country, all of them feels that the Development of Communication Skills and English Communication Competency are need of an hour. And as the problem is important and need to be solved urgently and plus where students do not have any schooling background for these skills it has to be handled very efficiently. And the answer to this problem is Instructional Design.

2. WHAT IS INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN?

Instructional Design is something that can make an ineffective and boring learning experience into a memorable one. ID is an instructional strategy to ensure the desired learning quality. Instructional Design is a branch of knowledge concerned with research and theory about instructional strategies. Instructional Design is the science of creating detailed specifications for the development, implementation, evaluation and maintenance of learnability. Instructional Design is the systematic development of learning material using learning theories and instructional strategies, to ensure the quality of instruction. “Instructional Design is a process of analysis of learning needs and goals.” [3]

Instructional Design is the complete process of analysis of learning needs and the development of a delivery mechanism to meet those needs. It includes design, development and evaluation of instructional materials and activities.

According to “Training and Instructional Design” by Applied Research Laboratory, Penn State University Instructional Design can defined as ‘a Process’, ‘a Discipline’, ‘a Science’ and as a ‘Reality’. [4]

3. WHY INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN?

The first reason is that, Instructional Design is Learner Centric & follows a well defined process of learning and comprehension development. Secondly its Contents are ‘Need Specific’, the needs of Students differs based on their educational background where a Student from English medium do not need to learn English but needs to develop the Communication Skill. Again if a student is from English medium but needs to work on pronunciation influenced by the region it belongs to. They are ‘Tailor made’ to fit all according to their needs. The level and understanding of student at Post Graduation is different from that of student still at Under Graduation and the diploma students; each faculty or discipline has its own need for example need of Chemical Engineering student may differ from that of Computer Engineering or Civil Engineering as they have work in different situations and has to deal with totally different sets of people. And, the material and activities are GOAL oriented. Thirdly, unlike traditional classroom teaching, it believes in learning and to facilitate the learning it goes beyond the classroom. Instructional Design helps in E-Learning where learning can be ‘Web-based Training (WBT), Computer-based Training (CBT), Instructor Led Training (ILT), Technology-based Learning etc.

4. THE ‘ELC’ EXPERIMENT

Working at Dharmsinh Desai University, Nadiad, India gave the opportunity to survey and experiment of English Language and Communication. DDU was the pioneer in the western part of India to introduce Communication Skills sessions to its Engineering Students. DDU belongs to semi urban area where students
enrolled are from various parts of India but majority is from Gujarat. More than 75% of the students are from ‘Non-English Medium’ Schools. They are good at Technical Subjects but lags in English Language and Communication Competency. According to Need Analysis:

i. Their deficiency in English Language Acquisition
ii. Their poor Communicational Competencies
iii. The constrained time slot available for ELT in technology course
iv. High expectations of English Communication Skills

On one hand the students are not good at their Communication Skills and English Language and on the other they are very busy with their Technical assignments. So keeping in mind the need and time constraint, the content developed was spread across 30hrs of three months, where Verbal Communication, Nonverbal Communication and English Language area covered. The core Skills needed in and for the Multi National Companies like Group Discussion, Presentation, Interview Techniques, Letter Writing, and Self Presentations are taught along with Basic English Grammar, Pronunciation, Fluency, Speech Improvement, Elocution, Developing the paragraph and story, Comprehension and Précis were incorporated.

For the implementation of this content and for the classroom approach the Theories of Learning like Behaviorism, Cognitivism and Constructivism were studied. Constructivism was applied.

5. THE CLASSROOM APPROACH

A. Behaviorism vs. Constructivism

Behaviorism is based on change in behavior which can be observed. Makes to repeat behavior till it becomes a habit. Behaviorism is Objective, it breaks task into small chunks which over simplifies as a result learning becomes boring as it is very less challenging, it predetermines the contents which is just an assumption and it is ‘Controlled Learning’. The college students are grown up and Engineering students are smart enough to understand, so, the simplification may hinder the interest in Learning.

On the other hand Constructivism believes, that ‘learners construct their own reality or at least interpret it, based upon their perceptions’. It is ‘Constructive’, avoids oversimplification of Instruction; real-world, case-based learning and Instruction should foster learning. It is ‘Natural Learning’. Here the things are not simplified just like the real world, one never knows what is going to happen next or who is going to react how as Human behavior is difficult to predict.

In the DDU experiment students were given the following content:

“This is my pen”

And were asked whether it is question or the statement, the students habituated to Behaviorism spontaneously answered it is a statement and the reason was they gave was question begins with either interrogatives (Who, Whose, What, etc) or with auxiliary verbs (is, can, etc).

Students were asked to change the pitch, going from down to up; that made the question “This is my pen?”

B. Natural Learning vs. Controlled Learning

Constructivism believes in ‘Natural Learning’ where learner learns from the past experiences and forming own perceptions whereas Behaviorism favors ‘Controlled Learning’ where students are made to do the things repeatedly until it becomes the part of the system. It can be said that habits can form the inflexible approach towards the change. In Natural Learning that is
Constructivism there is no habit formation, No pre-determined structured reactions and no fixed pedagogical goals but natural development of Communication Skills.

Continuing with the above example students started experiment the same content with different pitch, tone, pause, stress and volume. [6]

6. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Instructional Design is ‘the tool’ for Developing the Content for Enhancing English Communication Competency. The experiment at Dharmsinh Desai University where the formula ‘Development $\Rightarrow$ Implementation $\Rightarrow$ Evaluation $\Rightarrow$ Maintenance’ based on Instructional Design has shown the lifelong success. The content ‘developed’ was based on the Analysis done of the different Engineering students and according to their need the content was developed. Constructivism, the learning approach was adapted to ‘Implement’ the material and classroom activities. After the finish of this particular course the students were assessed. They were made to go through the written test consisting of Comprehension, Précis and Essay where all the basic components of English Language were assessed; followed by Elocution, Group Discussion and Interview Technique to gauge their Communication Skills. The end result showed that more than 90% had shown drastic development in their English Communication Competency. So, it can be concluded that “Basic English language and communication skills acquisition so, English communication competency Development.”

REFERENCES