"Learning Professional English: A study on Improving listening and speaking skills"

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ABSTRACT

The present research highlights the specific social factors that affect Professional English. Learning Professional English is a complex phenomenon with different variables concerning the psychological factors of the native language speakers and the socio-cultural elements of the contexts. Besides numerous new methodologies in the field of Professional English teaching there is a lapse with respect to the intended outcome. This research work puts forth the strategies which will be used for elevating Professional English such as improving Mother Tongue Influence (MTI), pronunciation and accent neutralization, cross-cultural communication, open-mindedness, class room speakingand so on.

Key words: teaching, learning, English, profession, language, listening and speaking

Introduction:

Teaching Professional English has been a challenging task since it is not always based on choice but very often based on needs. The context of the whole teaching situation started changing in the recent times. Professional English has become an advanced proficiency language worldwide. As it is skill-oriented language it should meet the needs of the native language speakers. Still English continues to be taught in a teacher-centric manner. Languages are learned in social contexts and it is a bonding component of the social mechanism.An attempt has been made to explore how our understanding of these issues has changed over in the recent times. When the scenario of the world is changing so fast 'Professional English' should also be ready to bring a change in the in the field of corporate sector. Keeping in view the present strategy, this paper is designed to meet the needs and to encourage learners of native language speaker to promote the necessity and application of the Professional English in different professional studies courses like management, engineering and journalism etc. Language is the faculty of speech having meaning. Research shows that language skills and conceptual knowledge are generally transferable from one language to another. First languages provide a foundation for developing proficiency in additional languages. First languages also help students preserve vital links with their families and cultural background and a solid sense of their own identity. The Advance Oxford Dictionary has definedLanguage as 'the method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in an agreed way'. Language learning is considered as a task facilitating the language user to communicate in various situations i.e., good and adverse. It encourages the user of Professional English to maneuver English language in a specific situation. Professional English is much updated form of English language. Hence the acquisition of Professional English language is unique and goal-oriented. No doubt, the main goal of Professional English is to acquire communicative competence it also emphasizes much on building mutual relationship among the human race. In spite of its humble offshoot from the English language it hasbeen made highly

articulated and discourse. To say'Professional English Language is more of developing business and corporate communication skills thanspeaking of any other activity.

Concept of Strategies:

The task of accomplishing positive output in Professional English Communication depends on many aspects. For instance, flexibility and experimentation incorporate to broaden the scope of Professional English learning and teaching. Learners do learn things easily when they are liberated from restrictions and given the choices to perform individually. In fact, numerous ways work to make a specific task effective and successful if implemented in right direction. 'Certain works cannot be achieved by simply hard work and perseverance; but can be accomplished by sheer adaptation of techniques.' The use of Professional English in the present world has become extremely vital. As Language is used to express suppress and impress it is relevant to design Professional English more elaborately to suit the purpose of the user at every level of communication. The thrust of the language rests on the temperament of the Language user. We can link this idea with the lines of Ashtavakra Gita 18:90, "Only the individual with desire sees without seeing, speaks without speaking, knows without knowing." These lines of Ashtavakra Gita simply expose inadequate knowledge of something or knowing nothing of anything. Bringing a change in the field of Professional English will be helpful to the globalized business world. Flexibility in stress level also makes the concept of strategies clearer and fruitful. Learning and teaching Professional English is effective when group work/participation is acknowledged and given priority. Mentor of Professional English can utilize the group activities by using effective teaching in the classrooms. In this regard learning through group activities is always joyful.

Draw backs of English Language:

1. Mother Tongue Influence (MTI):

"A foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native tongue. The child sees his/her language as one particular system among many, to view its phenomena under more general categories and this leads to awareness of his/her linguistic operations." Vygotsky (1962: 110

It is revealed that teachers are more positive and confident in teaching the mother tongue when they had the opportunity to:
1) Spend time learning about their own language,
2) Create mother tongue teaching and learning materials, and
3) Reflect on their early learning experiences.

2. Application of Correct Grammar:

Professional English is a rapidly evolving language which too has some short-comings and lacunae. It often mars the meaningintended by beautifying the genuine expression. It incorporates sentences much meant than that is felt by the heart. Some critics define grammar, "as constituting rules and principles that help a person to make use of words or manipulate and combine words to give meaning in a proper manner"/"as an important component that relates phonology and semantics, or sound and meaning." *"The methodological proposals in pedagogic grammar for teachers are often implicit rather than explicit"* (Corder,1988; p.127). The knowledge of grammar will act as the generative base to express ideas and events that happened in the present, past and

future.Domination of people over others by language variation in the present world is much acknowledged and appreciative. The drawback of English Language limits the language user to use grammar which is authentic for expression. For instance, Indians speaking in English usually mess the English grammar with that of their own (First Language Grammar). Henceteaching of Professional English in the classrooms should be effective, result-oriented, of appropriate grammar structure and strategized content-wise.

3. Challenges to Learn Professional English:

Research result shows that most learners of Professional English are afraid of making mistakes and receiving negative feedbacks. In a classroom this phenomena is a matter of grave concern. Learners are to overcome adverse humiliating phase often in order to acquire the special skills required for proficiency in Professional English Language. Learning a Foreign Language like English in a classroom is a problematic affair. The learners will face unexpected situations while delivering and learning the language such as receiving unwanted criticisms.Teachers can act as a support, rather than a barrier in Professional English language. The following steps should be adopted by teachers to avoid Mother Tongue Influence. Teachers can examine their previous language, learning, and literacy experiences and beliefs in light of their own teaching practice.Training teachers in how to teach English as foreign language will give them the experience of being a learner, teacher's lack of knowledge about teaching second languages should be enhanced, teachers' lack of skill in developing learning materials for mother tongue instructions should be strategized.

4. Role of Pronunciation and Accent Variation:

As Indian people have numerous Regional Languages, differing Pronunciation and Accent is apparent. Pronunciation always posed a great stress for all the learners of Professional English Language. One has to realize that if anyone does not easily understand one he/she must elevate his/her pronunciation quickly. Pronunciation and Accent variation to a great extent also depends on phonetic transcription and neutralization of phoneme sounds.Pronunciation along with accent variation occurs mainly because of Mother Tongue Influence (MTI) and Cross-Cultural Communication.Acquiring a sound knowledge of phonemes in relation to its use and acceptance will do wonders in learning Professional English.When working with bilingual students, it is important to be aware of typical articulationrules and patterns of speech found in their language and dialect. Knowing these differences helps the teachers to complete an evaluation to be aware of what might be a disorder versus a difference resulting from the particular rules and patterns of the students' primary language.Often, it is easy to mistake typical differences in articulation as a disorder if the student is transferring rules of speech from his/her primary language into the second language. Learning these typical differences will help avoid misdiagnosing bilingual students as having an articulation/pronunciation/accent disorder.

5. Role of Cross-Culture Communication:

Research shows that extensive use of the native language can become problematic in the mainstream classroom since students can become too comfortable with speaking their native language at the expense of improving their English language skills.Communicating across cultures can be confusing and uncertain unless you have the right frame of mind and approach.It plays a major role indeparting education to the learners of any languageIn our own classrooms we can create an

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environment in which students of varied cultures and languages will thrive and grow, academically and personally. Stephen Krashen, noted linguist and lecturer, developed "i + 1" theory, which holds that students need instruction that is appropriate for their current level of competence while pushing them just beyond their comfort level (Shutz, 2002). Students from foreign cultures can be excellent cultural asset. The teacher should take advantage of their first-hand knowledge of a particular culture. Many cultures have certain etiquette when communicating. It is always a good idea to undertake some cross cultural awareness training or at least do some research on the target culture. Cross cultural communication is about dealing with people from other cultures in a way that minimises misunderstandings and maximises potential to create strong cross cultural relationships. Most educated foreigner will not have a complete knowledge of slang, idioms and sayings. The danger is that the words will be understood but the meaning missed.

6. Strategies to Improve Listening and Speaking skills:

The basic principles of teaching listening and speaking to learners are compulsory so far as Professional English communication is concerned. Oral language skills are a critical component of literacy in any language.Teaching listening and speaking to language learners is a demanding andresponsible task for the teachers. However, if the teachers understand learner's needs for developing both listening and speaking skills and strategies, they will help learners build a very solid foundation for language acquisition.Making listening input comprehensible by using songs rhymes and chants to teach speaking and finally giving some listening and speaking activities in order to foster development is highly recommended.Listening involve distinguishing word boundaries and interpreting word orderpatterns, processing speech at different speeds of delivery, detecting sentence components, recognising cohesive devices,developing listening strategies and using non-verbal clues to understand meaning. Listening strategies are found to be very important for learners, especially 'intelligent guessing' like predicting, guessing from context and recognising discourse patterns.

When developing speaking skills, teachers should provide the balance between controlled and guided activities and allow learners to enjoy natural talk in the classroom" (Scott &Ytreberg 1990, 33). "Meaningful communication in a foreign language depends on oral skills. Learners seek for opportunities to communicate meaningfully, not through boring repetitions. No straightforward correction should be done when learners are engaged in free speaking activities; correction should follow once the activity is over (ibid., 34).

Free speaking activities are paths for achieving fluency and developing communicative competence, i.e. confidence in using language in new contexts.To encourage students for communicating with their classmates, students who are just beginning to speak English need to learn some essential phrases such as:
  a. My name is . . .
  b. Please repeat that.
  c. I don't understand/speak English.
  d. Where is my period two class?

As the students could understand these expressions only as complete units; not fully understanding the component words. The teacher can accelerate students' understanding of these and other essential expressions by modeling them in the classroom. Associating essential phrases with actions or illustrations and involving students in role playing activities can aid the learning process of Listening and Speaking skills.

Main Objectives:

The present study on 'Learning and Teaching English as Professional Language'seeks to fill the knowledge gap left in the field of Professional English. This study investigates the traditional beliefs about the special language of English with the classroom practices. It also examines the strategies required by the teachers to improve Professional English in the classrooms.The aim and objective of the research is to assess the impact of the professional approach on the reading and writing abilities of the learners.

Conclusion:

The conclusion also addresses the important role of teacher mind-set in making sense of teaching actions, decisions and competence in making his/her students understand the lessons taught. It addresses the implications for improving language approach, grammar structure to help the learners who are not the native speakers of English and those who intend to learn Professional English. This paper proposes to describe the strategies and steps in respect to learn the pros and cons of the special language i.e. Professional English Language. Here the findings reveal that the different interrelated sets of beliefs related to the six sub-themes i.e., Grammar, Apprehension of learning Professional English, Mother Tongue Influence (MTI), Pronunciation and Accent Variation, Cross-Culture Communication, Listening and Speaking are an integral part of Professional English which needs special focus. Findings reinforce the importance of having high expectations for English Language Learners; exposing them to a rigorous language arts curriculum; explicitly teaching, modelling and providing guided practice in a variety of strategies to help students read and write about challenging activities; and involving students as partners in a community of learners.

Learning based activities by the teacher for their students in the classrooms contribute to the development of the six sub-themes. Examination of teachers' strategies in coping with loop-holes and especially the learners' incompetence to learn the language reveal that teachers' adaptation of different strategies when responding to different aspects of Professional English is a highly responsible deed which needs skills set and competence.Findings reinforce the importance of having high expectations for English Language Learners; exposing them to a rigorous language arts curriculum; explicitly teaching, modelling and providing guided practice in a variety of strategies to help students read and write about challenging activities; and involving students as partners in a community of learners.Professional groups like lawyers, doctors, and software-engineers etc. fail to use English with competency in social situation like greeting, excuses, compliments etc. Training must be provided to professional groups to enhance their communication skills which as a consequence will elevate the societal values. Socio-cultural factors like cultural difference, social status, self-identity, gender etc. play an important role in increasing anxiety over the mastery of Professional English. English Language Learners naturally

want to develop a grasp of the language for social, as well as academic, purposes. To achieve the goal, they have to start with the essentials – the language of the intellectual, in the community and at school.

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