CALL: AN ELEVATING TOOL FOR LEARNING LANGUAGE

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Abstract

In the globalized context and present scenario, students of Engineering and Technology need a specific set of language skills for their success in education and career. English for engineering students poses a challenge to them. Industries are also voicing their concerns about the need for better communication skills among students of Engineering. They require an ever increasing range of skills to maintain relevance with the global environment of the new millennium. Communication is the pivot on which the globe revolves, recognized by academia and industry.

Effective communication is an essential component for success, whether it is personal, professional, and group, organization or individual levels. A recent newspaper report said that: "Out of very hundred interviews, only five qualified for the employability. It is not that were technically not sound but they lacked in communication skills." These are as important as school and college qualifications for youngsters aiming at a bright career. Students come with a wide variety of abilities, attitudes, interests, ambitions and levels of motivation that are effective for some students may be relatively ineffective for others. To balance these two categories our University suggests CALL Lab in acquiring proficiency of the Language skills. The object of this paper is to highlight the necessity of CALL Lab and make students ready for campus placements.

Introduction

"In the developing world drama, the future is with English and it is an indispensable tool,

a cementing force, a key, a bird and a channel for promoting international contacts.

Hence, it is wiser on the whole to foster this bird in hand" ____ K.R. S. Iyengar.

It is astonishing to note that the English language has won global status and all the evidence suggests that the position of English as a global language is going to become stronger. Knowledge of this global English naturally provides competitive advantage over others. In this context, to get command over the English language has become an essential qualification. So, the Professional profile of a modern qualified engineer should include well-developed communication skills besides academic excellence to achieve success in the cut-throat competitive global arena.

In the process of educating future engineers, special emphasis on Communication skills becomes necessary. Be it an interview or dealing with the project leader or working out a solution with a team or writing a project report, getting across the point effective is what matters. Engineering students in our university often fail to reach their full potential as English language learners due to low motivation and lack of interest. A young employee working in a prestigious private set up got five promotions in five years**. *When someone asked him the secret of his success, he simply said – 'I could communicate well'*. So, communication skills were cited as the single most important decisive factor in choosing managers. A lack of sufficient communication skills serve only to be to disqualified in the placement interviews. So, in order to inculcate interest among the students Acharya Nagarjuna University has introduced CALL Lab in all the affiliated colleges especially engineering. To have a Language Laboratory is a mandatory requirement in the Engineering colleges in almost all the universities. CALL Lab enhances the student's proficiency in the use of English language as a means of self-expression in real life situation. The main objective is to develop communication skills and make the students employable.

Objectives of the CALL

- ✓ To improve teaching and learning by using computer as a tool
- ✓ To instill interest among the learners
- ✓ To promote a self-determined learning instrument that can be used collectively for many learners

- ✓ To make the learner more comfortable in the classroom while receiving the information or knowledge.
- ✓ To provide a relevant, challenging and non-threatening environment to motivates the students to communicate.

CALL is compulsory for students especially in engineering colleges affiliated to the Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur. It is offered to all four year B.Tech students. In University college of Engineering and Technology the first year students have the CALL apart from the curriculum. They just exposed to the different language modules in the system. They will give presentations orally or through PowerPoint. We will conduct some activities to the students to overcome the stage fear. In the second year (semester system) on wards the students will come to the language lab according to their curriculum. The details included in the below. For the CSC & IT students our university allotted CALL in two semesters. In II/IV they will have communication and soft skills and again in IV/IV B. Tech they have Soft skills in the curriculum.

- In II/IV B. Tech I semester CSC & IT students, and in the II semester Civil
- In III/IV B. Tech I semester EEE and in the II semester ECE and MECH
- In IV/IV B. Tech I semester CSC & IT

The main objective of the CALL is to develop communication skills and get them prepare for campus recruitment. Almost all the Universities designed a special curriculum regarding CALL. My University also has designed the CALL. The subject Title is 'Professional Communication Skills', a theory subject and 'Communication and Soft Skills' a Practical subject. The lab training is given with the Assistance of Computers.

The CALL is divided into two categories as English Language Lab & Career Lab. In the English Lab focuses in the LSRW skills of the students. Different soft wares are used in the affiliated colleges. In the Career Lab students were participated in the Group Discussions, Mock-interviews and so on. The internal Assessment is awarded for 30 marks based on attendance, maintenance of lab record, observation and test marks. In the End Semester examination, students are tested both in English Lab and Career Lab. 70 marks are allotted for the external assessment, 30 marks are allotted for English Lab and 40 marks are for the Career Lab.

What is CALL?

CALL means *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. It is a facility where a student can learn a language with the help and guidance of a teacher through a system to improve her/his speaking and listening capacity. They will listen to different prerecorded lessons, audio and videos, CDC, etc. The teacher will monitor the students during the learning process through the Teacher console. (master control)

Some CALL programs are designed to enhance employability of the students to succeed in recruitment process. Soft skills lab not only helps students in getting into their dream job but also help them perform well at the work place.

Thus CALL can be use effectively in training the students in the four skills of the language – listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition grammar and vocabulary can be taught which constitute the foundation for the LSRW skills.

Based on the results of the study, it is suggested that CALL be integrated into the traditional classrooms where the instructor is also available for further assistance and questions, and teachers help students practice reading passages or article on a computer and some activities should be provided in order that students become familiar with reading and accessing to reading material online. It is also suggested that CALL is great help in learning/teaching situations where repetitive practice is required.

Advantages of CALL

- ❖ It promotes a positive second language learning environment, stressing the importance of learner autonomy.
- ❖ It makes the learner more comfortable while receiving the information or knowledge.
- ❖ It can provide endless opportunities for interaction with a rich set of media types, character and cultural information.
- ❖ It not only instills interest among the learners but also enhances the learner's motivation.
- ❖ It inculcates self-learning among learners and also offers great potential for language learning.
- ❖ Its software has tutorial modes, which help the students explore the correct answers and learn from the errors they make.

❖ It increases the level proficiency in learners.

I observed some **barriers** inhibiting the practice of CALL

- *Financial barriers*: Money is a matter that affects the use of CALL. The cost of hardware, software and maintenance is a pressing challenge.
- *Availability of computer hardware and software*: Availability of high quality software is a serious problem in CALL.
- *Lack of Technical and theoretical knowledge*: Many language teachers face the problem of computer literacy. They may not have a proper knowledge of how to use the software effectively. Further many do not know how to integrate technology with the teaching process.

These are the few barriers in the CALL. However, CALL helps the students in acquiring the proper language skills. It is very useful aid to the students who wishes to be successful in their career. So, it is clear that computer not only has impact on the way English is used, but also has impact on the language itself. For educators and practitioners there is a changed dynamic in which computers have now become much more than a tool or a tutor for developing language skills.

The pedagogues have to play a vital role in CALL. They need much more work, to identify the factors involved in using software efficiently, for language teaching. The teachers have to update the changes according to the needs of the learners. They have to create awareness in students regarding the best use of CALL. The teacher has to play the role of a facilitator. Real learning does not take place in many Indian classrooms. The obvious reason is that there is not enough 'practice' and many students have very few opportunities to speak the English either in or outside the class. In this situation the teacher must create a friendly atmosphere for students to speak and participate in the activities like GD's, Debate, seminars, role plays and so on. Language acquisition involves the active participation of the learner

Ultimately the motive of CALL is expected to prepare students to adapt themselves with ease to the needs of the industry, etc. It takes the 'pain' out of teaching any language and makes learning to communicate effectively a 'pleasure' for the students. CALL plays a vital role in motivating the students to participate actively in the activities. It also brings

out the students creative and innovative thinking and became an elevating tool in learning language skills through technology in the present scenario.

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