Promoting English Learning Among Engineering College Students In Tamil Nadu Through Animation Videos

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Abstract

Educators are constantly searching for new and creative approaches to instruct young students. The typical style of teaching that is now used involves providing text books to the pupils and giving them vocal instructions. With the speed at which technology is advancing, it is imperative that educators use interactive learning platforms to improve students' retention and overall learning experiences. An inventive and clever method of encouraging students, particularly English language learners, to communicate ideas, concepts, tales, and grammar in a creative way is through the use of animation / multimedia enabled content. Previous research has shown that using animation to teach English can be a fascinating way to address the needs of students in the twenty-first century. Students can collaborate with peers and engage with other communities in the today's digital era, using technology to validate their learning in an effective way. This paper explains how animation-based language learning and training in engineering institutions in Tamil Nadu, India, can help students who are mostly taught in the vernacular at the primary and secondary level of education improve their English language skill.

Keywords: Language Learning and Teaching, Animation, Learning motivation

Introduction

It is quite obvious that English is global lingua franca. In India, engineering students are forced into a classroom conditioning that their communication skills in English should match with or exceed the linguistic competency expectations of Multinational Corporations (MNCs). It is quite interesting to note that India, a multilingual nation, is the third largest English-speaking country after USA and UK. During colonial era, Lord Macaulay(1834) recommended studying English is better than Arabic and Sanskrit which is beneficial to Indians who pursue higher studies. At that juncture, to gain roots in the educational system, English gradually spread wider in India. Starting from kindergarten until higher secondary level, all students in India have to learn English as one of their allied subjects. Therefore, it has become a compulsory subject in Indian educational system. Moreover, it is taught as a common subject and not as a language. In spite of learning English language for 12 years in schools, the students who opted for engineering course still find it difficult to communicate effectively for jobs or other examination purposes. The paper depicts that animation-based learning environment is very effective to transfer knowledge and promotes internal motivation to speak effective English.

Literature Review

Teaching is a gratifying profession and considered to be one of the difficult processes in the current scenario, because the students browse through the course mostly online. Classrooms across India are having increasing numbers of students whose primary home languages are not English. At present, the students are technologically brilliant as they use the latest gadgets, hence teaching and learning should both be carried out in technologically enabled environment. Hoeffler, & Leutner (2007) point out that a meta-analytic finding reveals that dynamic animations have significant advantages in promoting of successful learning. Animation is a dynamic representation that can be used to make changes and complex processes explicit to the learner, Schnotz, & Lowe (2003). As the use of technology becomes an integrated part of higher education, animation has a high potential to enhance students' understanding and learning motivation. Multimedia education offers an alternative to traditional education that can enhance the current methods and provide an alternative. Shis, C. Papa, M. Chang, and T. Hsin (2012) depict that Language learning classrooms can be vibrant, with the help of innovative methods like using resource materials with animation videos. Therefore, it gives more academic support for students in mastering the language learning process in engineering colleges.

Sun and Dong (2004) portray that Animation is considered as one small part of computer revolution which forms a very important share of higher order technology. Moreover, David and Dan (2002) state that this issue points to the fact that a successful and contemporary animation curriculum should not only be interdisciplinary, but also should encourage students to develop effective skills and activities. Language teaching/learning is one of the areas that have been feeling the impact of the changes afforded by technology. As Chapelle (2007) points it out, not only are these changes going to lessen, but also technology will continue to influence every aspect of the lives of language learners, including their formal as well as informal language learning experiences. One of the aspects of the new technologies that have become prevalent in language learning contexts is the use of audio-visual materials. McNulty & Lazarevic (2012) describe the ubiquity of audiovisual materials has never been more obvious than it is nowadays for the new generation of language learners.

Teaching Language in Engineering Colleges

The standard of English among today's engineering graduates is truly inferior. A fresh or an experienced teacher may observe that the students keep silence all the time during the teaching and learning process. The main reason for this situation is the fact that the students do not want to speak in English and a few may be from vernacular medium schools. In most of the English classroom teaching, the teacher tries to explain and make the student's to speak but the teacher is unsuccessful in making the students to speak in English. Even when the students know the answer to a simple question, they still hesitate to open their mouths because of the unfamiliar rules in English language. Having confidence to speak the language is considered necessary in the present scenario. Animation video learning teaches language learners to observe how to listen, speak and continuously watch the video till they understand the stories, concepts and ideas. The study projects animation teaching will enable students to use English for their daily life, knowledge acquisition and to prepare them suitably for jobs.

English language learning is not mere quest for information; it is indeed a significant skill acquisition. However, it is not enough that learners are made to listen to the lecture; they need to be engaged in the session to learn a language and not a subject. Engineering admissions in Tamil Nadu project a picture of diversity in enrollment. Although the State is more highly urbanized than most other states in India

according to Government of India statistics, majority of the engineering students come from rural areas of Tamil Nadu. First generation learners represent a significant portion of students enrolled in engineering colleges. Even though the college entrants may have opted English as the medium of instruction in their high school and higher secondary classes, their competence in English even for purposes of classroom instruction and learning is not impressive.

The English teachers working in engineering colleges are forced to focus more on the transmission of content than on skills transfer in English. Students coming from remote areas are not trained to write a few sentences correctly. While English is present as part of the curriculum, language learning does not take place in classrooms. English is a compulsory subject of study in engineering course where a student learns two theories and a laboratory course. All the English courses are taught as a subject and not as a language. After learning English with certain language tools and qualifying for the English exam, it is still a big question regarding acquisition of language skills among engineering college students. According to a survey by Hindustan Times, 97% engineering graduates cannot speak English fluently.

The teachers teach Communicative English in the first semester, Technical English in the second semester followed by Language lab activities of three/two credit course respectively. The following illustrates some details of English language patterns in engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu.

Theory Classes
- Students mostly attended theory classes but are not interested in them because they think that they can pass the course without much effort.
- Those who want to score high grades prefer to attend theory classes and study voluntarily.
- Teachers prefer the lecture method in theory classes as it is difficult to conduct learner-centered activities for a class of 60+ students.
- Some self-financing institutions have installed smart classrooms to use digital resources to engage their students

Lab Classes
- Maximum students get a first time opportunity to attend multi-media enabled language lab sessions. They feel excited to do activities in pairs and groups but gradually their interest declines. However most of the enrolled students end up scoring good grades in their assessment.
- Teachers try to design and conduct lab activities but due to lack of appropriate resources they find this to be very difficult.
- Teachers face many challenges in conducting lab classes because the software installed is not updated or they use only the basic software for language teaching.

Purpose of the study
The study is aimed at achieving the following objectives:
- Effectiveness of using animated videos in English language in Engineering colleges across Tamil Nadu.
- Familiarizing English language teachers with the basic principles of designing, selecting and using animated videos in teaching English language as a multi-disciplinary activity.

Students' Academic needs

According to Anna University Curriculum, the students are taught Listening, Speaking Reading and Writing (LSRW) skills with the traditional method preferably with a workbook. To meet the present generation expectations in teaching, technology related teaching activities along with personality development sessions is much necessary. Prensky (2001) accepts that the use of technology in students' lives has increased so much that the students of the contemporary era should aptly be called 'digital-natives' or the' net-generation'. By teaching the curriculum in the traditional method in engineering colleges, students can pass the course on paper, but the right outcomes of the course may not be attained as per the curricula & syllabi in spirit.

Outcomes: At the end of the course, learners will be able to:

- Read articles of a general kind in magazines and newspapers.
- Participate effectively in informal conversations; introduce themselves and their friends and also express opinions/thoughts/ideas in English.
- Comprehend conversations and short talks delivered in English
- Write short essays of a general kind and compose personal letters/emails in English

In order to attain the outcomes of the course, the students should be taught with various animated video clips, comprising dialogues and songs, grammar exercises, and ask to identify the use of tense forms, prepositions, adjectives and other grammar related tasks. The students are expected to become very responsive during the whole lesson. More importantly, authentic videos help students learn the language features in their real context. They can even do the same exercise in their leisure time and enhance their language skills.

Language Learning Animation resources

Some prominent animation content websites to learn English as a second language

- www.littlefox.com, www.fluentu.com www.udemy.com britishcouncil.org, multimedia-english.com, youtube.com, dailymotion.com, educatorstechnology.com. These sites have multi-media enabled content to teach grammar and syntax concepts to learners/users.
- Duolingo (Web and Mobile App): Duolingo offers an interactive and gamified platform to learn English. It includes animated lessons, quizzes, and speaking exercises that make learning fun and engaging.
- BBC Learning English (Website): The BBC provides free resources, including animated videos, news reports, and quizzes, to help learners improve their English language skills.
- British Council Learn English (Website): The British Council offers various resources for English language learners, including animated videos, interactive lessons, and quizzes.
- EnglishClub (Website): EnglishClub provides a wide range of resources for learners, including animated grammar lessons, vocabulary exercises, and pronunciation guides.
- ESL Video (Website): ESL Video offers a collection of animated video lessons and quizzes on various topics, allowing students to practice listening and comprehension.
- FluentU (Website): FluentU uses real-world videos, including animated clips, music videos, movie trailers, and more, to help learners improve their English through engaging content.

- EngVid (Website): EngVid offers a library of animated video lessons on a wide range of English topics, taught by experienced instructors.
- YouTube (Website): YouTube is a valuable resource for animated English lessons. Many educators and language experts create channels with animated content to teach English language skills.
- Khan Academy (Website and App): While primarily focused on math and science, Khan Academy offers free lessons on English grammar, writing, and reading comprehension, which can be particularly helpful for engineering students.
- English Leap (Website): English Leap offers animated lessons, quizzes, and interactive exercises specifically designed for English learners in India.
- EnglishClub.com's Grammar Animated (Website): This section of EnglishClub.com features animated grammar lessons to help students understand and apply English grammar rules.
- Learn English Kids - British Council (Website): This website is suitable for young learners and includes animated stories, songs, and interactive games to build English language skills.
- Cambridge English (Website): Cambridge English provides free animated videos, interactive activities, and practice tests for various English proficiency levels.
- English Learning on YouTube (Various Channels): Numerous YouTube channels offer animated English lessons for all proficiency levels. Some popular channels include Learn English with EnglishClass101, Learn English with TV Series, and many more.

Animation in Learning Language

Rapid display of images to create an illusion of movement is called animation. Animation has the power to gain attention and generate interest in a learner. To illustrate clear content and challenging grammar topics, the talk and chalk method usually lacks effective approaches. Animation teaches the same thing through the use of new software and hardware techniques. Animated stories, video and lectures bear many prospects for an effective and meaningful language instruction. It can also help to contextualize the new language providing audio-visual input along with the story narration.

Traditional method of teaching English using text books and blackboards do not really convey the complete gist of a lecture. Often students are disturbed and diverted in listening to lectures due to various physical and mental distractions. However, a learner can easily remember a scene in some animated videos which he watched long time ago. Researchers have proven language learning using animation has more retention of information because it is transferred using both visual and verbal communication. Birbaumer & Schmidt (2006) points out that both teachers and students can benefit mutually from incorporating fun and animation videos into the classroom thereby producing the correct outcomes. By adopting animation students learn through what they prefer to see in a classroom environment.

The process of teaching and learning gets a new experience when animation clips are used during the process. Humans have a very good pictographic memory; the more it is used the better the information is stored. Both the teacher and the student would find adopting to animated video is more comfortable to explain or understand a topic; and the students find that no class will be boring. This process not only makes the characters in the novel and drama, grammar clear but also helps the students memorize them for a longer time.

Why Animated Video

Present day students have grown up with gadgets and live in a world where digital technology is part of the texture of their daily existence. They had never witnessed the world without technology. Technology is their native language and they expect to use technology in education. The animation boom extends more aids to the students. As Nicola Davies asserts, "If you want people to emotionally connect with your content, animated video is an investment worth making." Animated movies provide significant content from which students can learn different aspects of grammar, thus facilitating learners through interesting content while at the same time encouraging them to acquire English language.

In the present era, students have access to laptops and computers; they are utilizing them to chatting with friends and to surfing the Web. Hence, video learning is now the preferred medium of communication for students all over the world. The YouTube Generation relates better to video than to text or spoken presentation, and studies suggest that many of them retain information better when presented as video. This requires the students to examine a scene in depth, understand staging, and create an interpretation of the work. It gets the students engaged, and requires them to stop thinking about drama, novel or poetry in written form and think about it as performance. The students examine the grammar in depth and better understand by taking it beyond the written word. Adding multimedia content enables the student to approach the subject in an enhanced way than just using written text and still images. The student has a chance to visualize the character.

Benefits of Animation as an effective Learning Tool

- The abstract ideas and complicated grammar can be concretely captured using animated video.
- 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text. – **Source by Amanda Sibley**
- 40% of people will respond better to visual information than plain text. **(Source: Zabisco)**
- Animated videos are psychologically appealing.
- Animation is inspired and interactive way for flexible education and training, learners will be more motivated to learn more and more.

Conclusion

The study concluded that animated movies are a very effective mode of teaching English in engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu since they provide entertainment and add dynamism to the monotonous learning process. Students learn on both conscious and unconscious levels while enjoying the movie clips. The process also helps them recall the learned concepts more efficiently due to the link between the learned concepts and the animated images in the movie. Offering engineering students the opportunity to develop adequate and comprehensive English language skills is increasingly becoming a necessity and it can be concluded that this method will definitely enhance the language skills. The animation method can help the students to enhance the LSRW in engineering colleges which at present is in the lower level in language proficiency. It is observed that animation can reduce learners' time and make classroom learning more practical and task-oriented. The language learners who have learnt English language in schools through chalk and chalk will feel happy seeing animation videos as a way of learning English grammar. Indeed, students will remember much more when learning through animated videos than learning from a workbook.

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