

ENHANCING COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS AMONG ITI STUDENTS FOR LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT

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Abstract

Industrial Training Institutes and Industrial Training Centres are post-secondary schools in India constituted under Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET), Ministry of Skill development and Entrepreneurship, Union Government to provide training in various trades. Trades like Electrician, Welder, Draughtsman, Fitter etc., are conducted under Craftsman Training Scheme, whereas Centre of Excellence scheme conducts MultiSkill Training like Automobile, Electrician etc. Though the focus is on acquisition of technical skills, language skills are equally important for recruitment in Industrial and Corporate sectors. Learners need to be competent in reading, writing and computing in English language along with technical skills. Based on experience in teaching in Industrial Training Institute in Pune, the researcher aims at the methods of teaching to improve communicative skills among the students who have just passed out of Secondary schools. This paper also focuses on the impediments in learning and writing English Language as means of Communication, as well as improving one's academic record in their respective trades.

Key words Industrial Training Institute, CoE, Communicative Skills, DGET, Teaching, Technical Education

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Introduction

Industrial Training Institutes play a vital role in economy of the country especially in terms of providing skilled manpower. At present there are a total of 11,964 (Govt. 2284 + Pvt. 9680) numbers of it is in all States/UTs. Training is imparted in 126 trades (73 Engineering + 48 Non-Engineering +05 exclusively for visual impaired) of duration 1-2 years. The Craft Instructor Training (teacher training) in implemented with the objective to train the Instructors of it is in the techniques of transferring hands-on skills. Structure of programme is such that comprehensive training both in skill development and training methodology is imparted to the instructor trainees. Ministry of Labour and Employment has constituted a tripartite body at the National level namely National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) to advise the Government on training policies, norms and standards, trade testing and certification.

Technical trade (ITI) : Job prospects and career options

After completing engineering trade course in ITI, eligible students can opt for higher studies like diploma in engineering and later Bachelor degree in Engineering. There are also specialized short-term courses for certain trades, offered in Advanced Training Institutes (ATI's), which enhances the skills of candidates. Most industries/companies accept ITI graduates only as apprentices and they train them for a period of 6 months to 1-2 years, depending on the company. They may be considered suitable for employment only after the training period. Reputed ITI's and ITC's have their own placement cells and candidates after completing their trades may be directly recruited to the companies. Based on the trade opted, ITI qualified candidates can apply for jobs in the private sector and public sector. Electronics, welder, refrigeration and air-conditioner mechanic trade are the trades in ITI's, which are most in demand. Since electronics is the basic of almost every field, it has got a vast scope. Electronic mechanic trade graduates can find opportunities in Information technology firms and in the manufacturing units of electronics equipment. Both welders and air-conditioner mechanics have much scope in India and Abroad. The major job openings of an A/C mechanic

are in the different sections of the Public Service Commission (PSC) and in railways, as technicians, instructors etc. Opportunities for fitters are immense in on shore and off shore areas such as oil and gas, factories, shipyards etc. Those with electrician trade can find openings in the electricity board / department for which the recruitment is through PSC (Public service Commission) Exams. Job opportunities are also available in government organizations like Indian Army, Indian Navy, Air force, Railways, Telecom and paramilitary forces like BSF (Border Security Force), CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) etc. Besides these, ITI passed out candidates can find self-employment by setting up their own garage, winding shops, fabrication shops etc.

Communication Skills in ITI syllabus

A new subject named Employability skills was introduced in the ITI syllabus in the year 2013, under semester system. A textbook bearing same title written by Manojkumar C. Shimpi is referred by students of all trades in the first semester. The medium of instruction is both English and mother tongue Language (Marathi). The book contains the topics of English Literacy and Communication Skills in first semester only, along with IT and Motivational Training.

ITIs /ITCs in Maharashtra

According to the sources from **Directorate of Vocational Education and Training** there are 417 Government ITIs and 429 Private ITIs with total of **846** in Maharashtra state alone. In Pune District, the total number is **63 ITIs**, 16 of Government ITIs and 47 Private ITIs. Students seeking admission in ITI is qualified with least passing percentage in SSC or have passed 8th and 9th Std high school only. Average percentage of aneligible student, at SSC level, is between 40 - 60%. Mostly they come from low to middle income group (100000 – 200000) family background. After completing a course of one or two years, students get enrolled for Apprenticeship program in Industries, Commercial (Food and Chemical) and Corporate sectors. Intake capacity for admissions is 1,25,681 including Private and Government sections for all trades. After completing ITI, tradesmen can undergo Apprenticeship training in different industries. The Scheme is implemented by Directorate General of Training under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship with the objective that "Training imparted in Institutions alone is not sufficient for acquisition of skills and needs to be supplemented by training in the actual work place."

According to the survey done in Camp Education Society's ITI, Nigdi, Pune, Principal of the Institute, Mr. Basavaraj N. Vibhute, says that after completion of course, students get employed as Apprentice in industries like Tata Motors, Bajaj Company, Mahindra and Mahindra Pvt Ltd, Century Enka Co. Ltd, C.I.R.T Transport Co. Ltd, Trinity Forging Co. Ltd, Thermax company, Pam Pac Machines, Siddeshwar Group of Industries and many other

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reputed Industries. A follow-up of every student is carried out until he is permanently employed or gets self-employed (business). ITI trained (Electrician, Draughtsman, Welder) students get employed in chemical engineering industries, and IT sectors too and they are provided with monthly stipends too. Only few students seek admission to higher studies, to Diploma engineering course in the same field and later to degree course. Majority of students come from low income group family, mainly from rural areas and vernacular medium Secondary Schools. His/her family and cultural background play very important role in shaping a student's career. We face huge problems concerning student's family problems and training a student. With proper guidance and co-operation from Instructors, students can be motivated to learn, gain knowledge and suitably employed to make his life a success.

Impediments in learning English Language

The need of the hour imparting knowledge about communication skills to secondary school passed students and the focus should be on Soft Skills also. According to The Economist (2001), in today's world, fluency in English has been termed as a basic skill of modern life. Further, the modern trend in the business world is global interaction and this has acted as a stimulant for proficiency in English communication across borders, thereby making the language a universal tongue. Very little importance is given to this class of students till date. One of the reasons is that more weightage is given to impart knowledge of technical skills to students, so that they become experts in performing special tasks assigned to them, in very short period. They would be employed by industries sooner and be able to support their families. Secondly, the student's family background, his behaviour, their ideas, lack of knowledge to keep themselves updated, financial situation, their culture, and other factors influence the student's learning ability. Hence Soft Skills and communicative skills knowledge should be part of the syllabus and practical too. Thirdly, the medium of answering the Examination questions papers, from Central Board, are both in English and Hindi language and not in local language (eg. Marathi). English Language Teaching should be given a primary importance in the curriculum along with technical skills. In this era of new technology, it becomes mandatory for each student to become aware of the new changes in the society and acceptance of modern views, usage of net is a must in everyday life. If he fails in one of the areas, he would likely to lag behind in his academic field and in personal life on the whole. He/she would experience intense feeling of insecurity, development of inferior complex, frustration due to unemployment etc, etc., Technically skilled student with high English language proficiency can achieve success in the modern, competitive global work area. Since there is more demand for a talented candidate with leadership qualities who can perform more than one tasks in industries and corporate sectors.

Strategies to motivate English Language Learning among students of ITI

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Larsen & Freeman (2000) classifies language teaching approaches into nine categories: Grammar-Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-Lingual Method, Silent Way, Total Physical Response, Community Language learning, Suggestopedia, Communicative Approach, and Natural Approach. No single method can be perfect by itself. The teacher has to make use of different approaches intelligently to fulfil the desired goals of the learners, taking into account their proficiency levels and their knowledge about technical skills.

1. Encouraging the students to participate in debate, discussions and presentations or seminars are some of the ways by which teachers can actually help their students to enhance and sharpen their oral communication skills.
2. Written communication skills can be promoted by giving more assignments to the students that require their own thinking and writing skills. Further, a better and excellent way to impress the young learners can be achieved with the use of technological support that enhances both their written and oral communication skills under the sound guidance of their teachers.
3. Group projects and presentations will help the students to improve their oral skills, increase their confidence while interacting with their peers and people in industries and organisations thru practical sessions.
4. The suggested curriculum must be revised or improvised to suit needs of the technical students once they complete their academic course, and get employed in industries and corporate sectors.
5. Focus should be on learning English Language rather than on mother-tongue. Increasing English Vocabulary through use of new technology to improve their communication skills.
6. Along with communication skills, acquiring essential soft skills must also be the goal of the learner.
7. Another technology that is invaluable for the promotion of listening and speaking skills is the interactive Language Lab. Because, the language lab does many things that benefit oral skills development better than the regular non-tech classroom. For example, in choral repetition drills, students can concentrate on the model (teacher or tape) with far less interference from the voices of classmates, they can concentrate on the sound of their own voice, and they can record both the model and their own voice for later comparison and practice.
8. Students must be given more assignments that require their own thinking and writing skills. Teachers can conduct writing competition in class or ask them to share their experiences or thought about anything.
9. For writing skill development, technology can be used by creating a text jointly, through shared documents or wikis, or they can take turns posting on a collective blog.
10. Student's learning ability being low and lack of awareness hinders his ability to learn English Language and other skills. Hence he should be provided an opportunity to explore new ideas of learning and awareness of rapidly changing society.

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Conclusion

Considering the factors like student's family background, their family income, status, cultural background, his qualifications, their opinions about training course etc., they should be given an opportunity to acquire communications skills, along with technical knowledge. Redesigning the curricula should be given priority. Then it is possible for them to enhance their skills for better prospects in future, face challenges in life, and walk out with high self-esteem and confidence. English Language learning and communication skills will enhance student's employability skills and this will affect his or her recruitment and career in future.

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