

Digital Journalism and English Language Learning in Engineering Colleges

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: February 11, 2019
Accepted: February 28, 2019
Published: March 31, 2019
Volume: 2
Issue: 2
DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2019.2.2.11

KEYWORD

Digital Journalism; Learning; Engineering; LCD projectors

ABSTRACT

English enjoys a royal status in this technological world with its wide spread use. It is the language of technology and hence the demand for it has increased. Especially technocrats need it more than ever. The growth and development of science and technology has had a tremendous impact on the various industries and life in the world. Language learning and teaching has also been touched by this technological boom. The language classroom uses more of audio and visual aids, content from TV channels, internet sites and various technical gadgets like LCD projectors. In fact, the use of technology has increased the interest of the learners who are more technology oriented. With every passing day efforts are being taken to make the language classroom more learner-centered and need based. One of the byproducts of the advent of smart phones with inbuilt cameras is digital journalism. Almost everyone has started telecasting or broadcasting the news and events happening around them. The paper aims at employing digital journalism to improve the language learning skills of the learners with particular reference to engineering students. The main objective is to make the learning process interesting and fruitful for both the learners and the teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

“With the rapid development of science and technology, the emerging and developing of multimedia technology and its application to teaching, featuring audio, visual, animation effects comes into full play in English class teaching and sets a favorable platform for reform and exploration on English teaching model in the new era.”

(Solanki D. Shyamlee 2012)

English enjoys a royal status in this technological world with its wide spread use. It is the language of technology and hence the demand for it has increased. Especially technocrats need it more than ever. The growth and development of science and technology has had a tremendous impact on the various industries and life in the world. Language learning and teaching has also been touched by this technological boom. The language classroom uses more of audio and visual aids, content from TV channels, internet sites and various technical gadgets like LCD projectors. In fact, the use of technology has increased the interest of the learners who are more technology oriented. With every passing day efforts are being taken to make the language classroom more learner-centered and need based.

One of the byproducts of the advent of smart phones with inbuilt cameras is digital journalism. Almost everyone has started telecasting or broadcasting the news and events happening around them. The paper aims at employing digital journalism to improve the language learning skills of the learners with particular reference to engineering students. The main objective is to make the learning process interesting and fruitful for both the learners and the teachers.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Engineering colleges stresses the importance of the acquisition of language skills. Curriculum and the materials are so designed to teach the learners all the four language skills and grammar in a technical context. They are given listening and speaking activities as part of their regular curriculum along with the reading and writing activities. The learners are given language lab sessions wherein they are exposed to audio and visual content to learn English language. The learners are exposed to digital learning as part of their curriculum. The learners are given activities like news reading, story writing, and review writing for movies as part of their assignment activities. Hence an attempt was made to introduce the digital content into the language learning process.

3. Digital Journalism

Digital Journalism is telling news by way of a digital story. A story is created using multimedia technology and it is published in the digital world by way of uploading into the world of internet such as facebook, google, youtube and other websites. With the advent of smart phones and the easy and fast access of internet, journalism is taken up by everyone who can record a video and who has an opinion. News about a theft or a violent beating is known to the world not by news channels but by a multimedia content that is uploaded in whatsapp, youtube, and facebook. The flood in Kerala was best covered by the press but the news about the suffering of the people; the landslides, the measures taken to supply food etc were covered by anonymous citizen journalists. So news reaches far and wide like never before only through these 'citizen journalists' via digital journalism.

4. HYPOTHESIS

- Digital journalism can be used to enhance the language learning skills of the learners.
- Using digital stories instead of traditional content like newspapers results in better language learning by the students.

5. METHODOLOGY

Digital journalism can be used in two ways for the purpose of language learning. One is to watch a digital content and language activities follow it. Second is creating a digital content employing the language skills. In the case of former language activity is initiated by digital journalism and in the case of latter language skills are employed to create it. The activities were carried out to the first year Computer science students.

6. DISCUSSION

Digital content was introduced as a realia to the language learning process wherein the learners were asked to watch a news item and they were given a follow up language activity. This news item can be given by the teacher or the students can be asked to download content of their own interest. Another way of making the students to watch digital news stories is by downloading or live streaming the content from the web and projecting it via LCD projectors. By this way the teacher can have control over the content the learners watch. In language lab classes, the content can be made available in the server and the students can access them from their own systems. This will give them freedom to choose their own content and watch it in their own pace. The teacher can download many news items which cater to the various levels of the learners.

These digital stories have various advantages. The most important one is that the learners will have extra interest to watch a multimedia content to learn language. Likewise, they need not be given any pre-learning activity because they will be familiar with the day to day happenings of their own surrounding. In the beginning, videos were selected from regional news channels that broadcast news in English, so that, the learners were able to relate to the content and understand the language. This gave room for the teacher to choose news item that is fresh, so that it grabs the learners' interest.

The second type of activity involves the learners creating digital content. For this they are given an assignment where the learners were asked to prepare a news item wherein they have to collect news article and create a digital content. The digital content can follow any of the aspects of digital journalism. It can be a power point slide show with audio and visual content or just an audio or a video content. This was given as a group activity, wherein the students can record a video content, give voice over to the content in English and present the complete version to the class. The learners were asked to share their experience about their challenges and their acquisition of English language skills as a follow up activity. The learners were also asked to speak out their experience in the class. The group consisted of 3-5 members giving an opportunity for everybody to participate in it. The entire time duration for their presentation was 3-5 minutes. It was made mandatory that all the students should involve in presentation, especially in the reading or speaking activity of the news content.

7. FINDINGS

Comparatively students showed more interest in creating the digital content activity. The activity was taken up with great interest. With regard to watching news and performing activities, they lose interest after a stipulated time of 30 minutes. On the contrary, they were really thrilled to take up an activity where they can create something of their own. They came out with various questions and clarifications with regard to the various news items. The content that can be included in the news were listed out as sports, business, economics, politics, international, national, regional, weather, cinema and entertainment. Among these the students were willing to take any three or more items for their 3-5 minutes content. They were very enthusiastic and showed interest to create something unique.

The results were quite astounding in many cases but with few hurdles. The students completed before the

given time. They volunteered to include interviews with some personalities. Since, they were asked to include college news wherever possible for regional news; some students tried getting interviews with the college principal and professors. Still, they had learnt new vocabulary and pronunciation for few words thoroughly, especially the content that they had spoken. Even the shy student had either read or reported the news in English. As the students were engineering college students they were happy to handle technology in their first year. It was almost like creating a drama session or enacting a play with all the audio visual effects. Since it is a recorded content many of the students felt comfortable speaking behind the cameras. They were not intimidated by the crowd; they had several rehearsals before coming before the camera. This helped them to perfect their language by making corrections in the sentence structure, grammar and pronunciation. The usual disappearance act before a speaking activity was not found.

8. VALIDATION OF THE HYPOTHESIS

Introducing digital journalism to learners to learn language is more interesting and lively than the usual way of making the students learn through newspaper. Though digital content makes the learners curious and enthusiastic they are more active and participative in creating a digital content. Hence using digital content in the language classroom is productive, wherein the learners learn language skills with interest

9. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The learners had few limitations in preparing this content. Since they were first year students directly from school, they had some difficulty in merging the video content and combining everything. Since mobile phones, especially smart phones were not allowed inside the college campus, special permission had to be sought from the college authorities. Digital content makes the students involve in the activity with interest. Especially,

conveying their ideas and opinions in relation to a particular event is found in abundance. Further, students feel comfortable talking about an issue instead of writing about it.

10. CONCLUSION

Teaching and learning methodologies should be constantly updated to keep it alive and going. Especially, language learning is a challenging and more application oriented activity that is connected to the day to day activities. A learner has to be aware of the usage of language in the present scenario where they would be employing their learnt language skills. Hence it is necessary that the learners are exposed to the real life digital world with its technological advancements. Further, bringing in the outside world to the classrooms or making the learners reach out to the external world makes them stay connected with their language learning purpose and process. Employing digital journalism to teach English language skills helps the engineering students to be in touch with the real world and with their technology.

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