The Use of Technology among Tamil Medium Students – Barriers and Solutions.

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Abstract

The paper deals with the research carried out in a Teacher Training Institute among Tamil medium students who study Diploma in Teacher Education in Tamilnadu, South India. The use of technology among Tamil medium students is very minimal. This is due to lack of confidence, demand for the use of English in the application of technology. Even though the students appreciate the application of technology in learning and teaching of language, these two reasons prevent them from active application of technology. The paper tries to analyze the barriers and tries to find out the solutions for those barriers in the use of technology among Tamil medium students who will be teachers in the secondary education in the near future. The sample for the study comprises 100 students of Diploma in Teacher Education (D T Ed). All of them have studied their Higher Secondary Course (+2) in Tamil medium and English is one of the subjects they study in their course. In spite of studying English for nearly 7 years, they have little confidence in using English either in speech or writing. After they complete the Diploma in Teacher Education they are expected to teach English for the students in classes 6 to 8. The researcher is teaching the methods of teaching English to the sample under study. The researcher taught them how to teach English and at the same time how to speak and write also. The researcher made a programme so that the students try to speak English in the classroom. Everyday students must prepare 5 sentences on anything and speak those sentences in the classroom. This went on for a week. The second week the students are divided into groups and each group prepares 5 sentences on any title or topic and other groups are given opportunity to rewrite or reframe the sentences spoken by a particular group. Students are asked to bring English newspapers and are asked to identify simple, compound and complex sentences which have been taught by the teacher. The same groups are engaged in dialogue. These exercises had given them courage to speak in the classroom. The students are opportunity to handle the computer. Some students have learnt typewriting

and this ability is used in the use of computer. They are asked to type and print the essay they had written during their composition work. Students developed their confidence and slowly started to use English in ordinary conversation in the classroom. This way the sense of fear had been dispelled. The internal and term end examination results in English also proved that the students have strengthened their confidence in the use of English and also the application of computer. This empowerment certainly will improve the use of technology in learning language. The curriculum and teaching methodology should incorporate the use of English and also the use of technology as a practical component.

Project and Discussion

The ultimate goal of today's ESL students is to acquire the ability to communicate with others in a meaningful and appropriate ways. They must become critical thinkers who know how to apply language or convey their thoughts in a variety of situations. The paper identifies two issues. i) lack of confidence ii) demand for the use of English in the use of technology. In order to address the issues, the researcher designed his instruction that involved an active, creative, and socially interactive learning process in which students would construct their own knowledge using their prior knowledge, a process governed by constructivist approach. Breaking students in small groups provides more opportunity to practice the target language as well as reinforcing the knowledge through group discussion and collaboration. In the instructional experiment, constructivist approach is applied. In second/foreign language education, constructivism is often associated with the use of technology in the classroom (Chuang&Rosenbusch 2005; McDonough, 2001; Ruschoff & Ritter 2001) Students learn best through concrete experience, dialogue and active learning (Goldberg 2002).

A constructivist approach makes it possible to alleviate some of the obstacles to developing communication skills for second/foreign language learners. In overcrowded classrooms, where teachers have difficulty in giving personal attention, students may assist each other in understanding new information through group discussion and investigation. Thus students become active participants instead of passive learners, waiting to receive information. This experiment fosters creative and autonomous thinkers who are able to convey their thoughts in a wide variety of different situations.

References:

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