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**Breaking the Barriers of Limited Vocabulary through
E-Learning**

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Abstract

English is the most widely spoken language across the world and this language has the credit of having more second-language speakers than all other languages. The British council has the statistical evidence that at least one billion people in the world speak in English and about 300 million people use English as their medium of instruction. Our nation has in its makeup an integration of many rural villages; despite the advent of science and technological developments and economic reforms, most of the villages of our country are deprived of basic facilities, including education. In many of our educational institutions, knowledge is imparted only in vernacular languages and hence, the students unconsciously develop an aversion towards English; so, even after their higher education, they lack confidence to converse and communicate in English. The remedial measures taken at college / school levels are all in vein. It is proposed to provide solution to this ever-growing problem through e-learning. A very important reason for regarding English as a world language is that the world's knowledge is enshrined in English. It is a progressive language. It is dynamic and flexible. Over and above, English is universally renowned for its power of expression and its rich literature. Education has been the primary factor in the more formal transmission of English around the world. In present times, English is the most preferred language. This paper explains the design and implementation of e-learning based vocabulary building tool.

Keyword: Village schools, English language, E-learning, vocabulary building tool

Introduction

English by itself has evolved as the dominant universal language due to various social, economical, historical and political reasons. E-learning technologies provide interactive environment to the learners to control the content of learning sequence, pace of learning and so on, based on the learner's knowledge level. E-learning tools can flexibly be tailored according to the learning ability of the target learners. These features can be explored and exploited to build the vocabulary of the college students from rural pockets. As globalization is the order of the day, it has opened up many avenues for overseas education, employment, business etc., as expertise in English is considered to be the primary requirement than that of subject / area of specialization. In this context, in order to compete with contemporary talents inland / overseas, our Indian education system has a well-structured curriculum for English communication skills. The students of rural and semi-urban areas in India lack English communication skills because English is not their mother-tongue. Learning tools are devised and tailored as per the requirements, in the vernacular languages from school education to higher education. In the era of information technology, where computers have evolved as a powerful and effective means of e-learning, with the support of advanced technological development in multimedia and the supporting operating system, any e-learning tool can be deployed with the least difficulty.

Limited Vocabulary

Only a limited number of words are used even by the most educated community. In order to have an effective communicative skill, one should necessarily have good vocabulary. Unfortunately, Indian rural students are not aware of the importance of building vocabulary skills and hence there is a growing demand to devise a remedial mechanism, especially for this issue. Thanks to the internet, an evolutionary outcome of computer revolution. The power of the internet has broken the barriers across the world and has shrunk the entire world, as a global village. This powerful internet has a feature namely e-learning, which is a technological endeavor for virtual learning and teaching. Learning a second language means acquiring a system of rules, but just as very little is known about these rules, even less is known about how such rule systems are acquired.

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Students find themselves unable to express themselves in English. The vocabulary of the rural-based students is very low. The students are familiar with a handful of vocabulary, which is evident from their formal or informal conversations.

Students from Rural Areas

Students of the rural areas do not realize the importance of English as a language of communication whereas this is the most important aspect of this global language. They lack confidence to speak and express themselves in English. First reason is that they have been taught English through Grammar-Translation Method. This method makes them dependent on their mother tongue, as whatever they read and write they consciously and /or unconsciously translate it into their own vernacular. To tackle the problem of lack of vocabulary in the students, productive and receptive use of words, should be kept in mind. To begin with, the students should be made to learn simple words. This will help in inculcating a habit of learning new words over a course of time. The newly learnt words will become a part of their own vocabulary; sooner or later and they will be in a position to use those words, while speaking and writing. This enhancement of vocabulary will result in knowledge building. The common errors made by the students in the different usages of the same word can be cured by this technique. Normally, the students cannot differentiate between noun and verb, adjective or adverb. They should be clearly guided about the difference between the parts of speech by practice.

Proposed Methodology

We propose here a methodology and mechanism of improving the vocabulary skills for rural college students. This proposed e-learning package has three modules, Beginners, Intermediate and Expert. The learner may choose any one among the three choices based on his / her level. In the first level, the learner can learn a minimum of five words per day with meaning, pronunciation and usage. The students can learn the words and once they are familiar with those words, they may test their expertise by taking a test, for which scores are given at the end. For the other two levels, the number of words per day is given as 15 and 25 respectively. Hence the proposed e-learning tool would

definitely be a boon for rural college students / rural community to enhance their vocabulary skills.

The e-vocabulary builder may have three levels: Level1, Level2, Level3 as Easy, Intermediate, and Hard. Each level has five days working out and each day has five words with Spelling, Meaning, Pronunciation and Usage in a sentence. This package is developed in HTML using a Pentium IV processor in the computer. The students can learn from these exercises and they can also strengthen their vocabulary. It will help in breaking the monotonous routine of learning in the classroom environment. Regular tests can be held to evaluate the progress of the students. The students are free to learn the words at their own place and hence it is ideal from slow learners to fast learners as a part of ICT scheme by government of India, each panchayat is provided with a computer in which this can be deployed and utilized in schools and colleges. This may be introduced as a self learning scheme. The vocabulary drills can help them to understand the usage of words in the text books and to overcome Logophobia or Verbophobia.

Conclusion

When the students have practised different uses of words and have developed a habit of reading, they can avoid the common errors of Translations. Simple usage of words will become a part of their speech only when they are exposed to deliver a speech and express their own ideas. The zeal for learning will help them in their own advancement. The e-vocabulary builder would definitely be a successful self-learning tool, especially for rural students. As a pilot study this was tested as paper – pen model and was proved to be promising. Hence, this e-learning package will supplement the efforts of vocabulary building, especially for rural students.

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