

## **1. Title of the Practice:** Communicative English Programme

## **2. Objectives of the Practice**

The following are the objectives of **Communicative English Programme**:

1. To enable students learn correct pronunciation, spelling, meaning and usage of English Vocabularies.
2. To make students frame correct sentences with known vocabularies based on daily routines.
3. To give English language skill practice to students to enhance their English proficiency.
4. To expose students to native speakers' spoken language to enable students to recognize native speakers' accent and language usage.
5. To simulate real life situations in the classroom to practice real English dialogues and speeches to gain English language fluency.
6. To give both silent and loud reading practice to students, to enhance their comprehension and English sound recognition skills.
7. To help students overcome their fear and to speak in English in front of their peers and teachers thus, build their self-confidence through various classroom activities and outdoor activities.
8. To help students to become autonomous and self-directed English language learners.
9. To produce entrepreneurs among students by making them English language trainers and take communicative English to schools and colleges around.

## **3. The Context**

Sacred Heart College (Autonomous), Tirupattur is geographically situated in Vellore District and it is the agricultural hub. Needless to say that the students at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, hail from these villages. These students are typically from rural backgrounds. When it comes to education, students from rural areas face a number of challenges. Especially, at the tertiary level of education, English is identified as posing a great challenge to the rural Indian learners. It is against this background that the relevance and urgency of this best practice could be understood in its depth as majority of the students enrolled at Sacred Heart College have done their

schooling in Tamil medium, that too in government run schools, their exposure to English is to a very minimum standard.

#### 4. The Practice

##### Facts

- Majority of the students enrolled at Sacred Heart College have done their schooling in Tamil medium that too in government run schools and their exposure to English is to a minimum.
- Though English is a language, it is taught as a subject, i.e., the objective is to acquire knowledge and to merely pass the examinations.
- As parents themselves are not exposed to English, the family situation does not help in acquiring English language at home.
- Acquiring English language as a skill needs continuous language practice, which in the present context of education is not provided.
- These students do have the basic potential for English language, which calls for appropriate ways of making students acquire English.
- As almost all tertiary level studies are done through English medium of studies, it is necessary to enhance English language proficiency of the student's right at the start of the studies, which will help them to pursue their main subjects of specialization.
- An enhanced English language increases the self-confidence of the rural Indian learners. An increased self-confidence in students is a sure way to success.
- A good proficiency in English language could ensure a successful career in the present context of globalization.

All the above-mentioned reasons made the management of Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur, to implement **Communicative English Programme** as a compulsory skill-training programme for all students enrolled in the institute.

##### Strategies:

The following strategies are carried out to implement the program:

1. **Streaming:** Many studies have shown that homogeneous group of students create a more conducive atmosphere for learning. Hence, the first year students at the tertiary level studies are streamed into three homogeneous groups of students.
2. **Gender-wise Streaming:** Most of the students enrolled in the college are from rural backgrounds and are not from co-educational schools. Hence, most of the students especially, the girls are tongue-tied in front of the boys. A mixed-gender atmosphere

increases the anxiety level, which makes language learning difficult. As language learning involves risk taking, the presence of the opposite gender increases the anxiety level.

3. ***Intensive Language Training:*** Any course that meets more than the conventional one period a day can be labeled intensive. It is a well-established fact that a prolonged exposure to a language increases the speed of acquiring that language (The way we have learnt our mother tongue is an example.).Hence, two continuous hours of communicative classes are considered opportune.
4. ***Accommodating Departmental Programmes:*** Each department organizes a variety of programmes like remedial classes, association activities, special classes, CQC activities, etc. In order to enable the students to participate in the above-mentioned departmental programmes, Communicative English Programme is organized on alternative days. Besides, all of these programmes are in English. Hence, the language exposure continues unhindered.
5. ***Basic Language Skills are taught in Isolation:*** The basic language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW) are taught in isolation, emphasizing each skill at a time; though an integrated skill acquisition takes place automatically.
6. ***More Emphasis on Listening and Reading Skills:*** In the general English classes, more emphasis is given to Speaking and Writing skills. Hence, in the Communicative English Programme, more emphasis is given to Listening and Reading skills. Outdoor activities are organized and ICT equipment's are used easily during the communicative English classes to enhance Listening and Reading skills.
7. ***Language Assessment by a Team:*** Language assessment of learners are always done by a team of trainers. Language assessment tends to be more subjective. To make it more objective, a team of trainers assess the learners. Even for streaming the learners, placement tests in LSRW are conducted to assess the entry-level proficiency of learners and are evaluated by a team of trainers.
8. ***Continuous Assessment Tests:*** No term-end examination is conducted for Communicative English Programme. A series of formative tests are conducted at regular

intervals to assess the progress made by the learners. The tests' scores are used to make a final evaluation of a learner.

## **5. Evidence of Success**

A scientific analysis was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of 'Communicative English Programme' as one of the best practices of Sacred Heart College. This study was extended to the final year undergraduate students who have successfully completed two years of vigorous training with regard to the programme on 'Communicative English'. The random sampling technique was adopted and 50% of the total population was taken for the study which constituted of 465 respondents. A tool was developed and tested using an online platform to facilitate students to provide their feedback. The rating scale used in this research was a five point 'Likert' type scale. The reliability of the instrument was tested and found to be .907 Cronbach's Alpha.

The study revealed that:

- Majority (65.4%) of the respondents stated that they were able to improve their English vocabulary.
- Majority (65.4%) of the respondents have developed their skills in narration.
- More than half (56.8%) of the respondents have developed their extempore skills
- Majority (63.7%) of the respondents have improved on their reading comprehensions through the programme 'Communicative English'.
- More than half (56.6%) of the respondents have improved their skills with regard to comprehending an audio and video presentations in English.
- More than half (58.9%) of the respondents have stated that the programme on 'Communicative English' was effective to their overall development in their proficiency of the language.

On cross examination of the various factors contributing to the effectiveness of this programme it is evident that students have improved their vocabulary, narrating skills, extempore, reading comprehension and are able to understand and comprehend audio/video presentation in English. It is noteworthy to mention the fact that though majority (61.1%) of the students from Sacred Heart College are from a rural background and are from a Tamil Medium of education, the

programme has created a standard and a benchmark to enable its students to become efficient in English.

## **6. Problems Encountered and Resources Required**

**Obstacles 1. Bigger students' strength in classes:** Since streaming of students is based on their entry-level English language proficiency, maintaining equal strength in all the classes is difficult. Besides, making them into distinct male and female groups within each streaming, results in uneven numbers in each class. Language practice in classes of bigger number is quite challenging.

**Strategies adopted to overcome the obstacle 1:** The students in "C" and "B" streams' classes are around 30 in number. The number of students in "A" stream classes are around 40.

**Obstacles 2. Late comers:** Few students are invariably late for classes; some come even after 15 or 20 minutes.

**Strategies adopted to overcome the obstacle 2:** The late comers are asked to stay back after the classes to make good for the lost time and are assigned extra work. The lunch break for the students of shift-I is increased by 15 minutes to enable them to come on time.

**Obstacles 3. Regular absenteeism:** Some students are regularly absent from classes for reasons like participating in sports and games events, participating in departmental programs, etc. This again makes a considerable gap in their learning.

**Strategies adopted to overcome the obstacle 3:** The departments have been asked to organize events without affecting the Communicative English Programme. In case of unavoidable situations, the absentees have to make good for the lost class on another day. In some stray cases, the absentees are asked to pay a small amount of money for the mid-day meal scheme. The sportsmen are given certain relaxation, with the approval of the Academic Council.

**Obstacles 4. Lack of interest:** Some of the students consider that it is an extra burden to be carried. Hence, they lack interest and motivation.

**Strategies adopted to overcome the obstacle 4:** On a regular basis, students are motivated to attend the classes with interest and importance of English language in day-today life is pointed out. Effects are made to make classes more activity-based and ICT is used frequently.

**Obstacles 5. Time of the classes for Shift-I:** As the shift-I students finish their regular classes at 1.30 pm and begin their Communicative English classes at 2.00 pm, the students are already tired. Besides, some of them do not have their lunch until 4.00 pm. It makes them all the more tired. Hence, concentration is lacking.

**Strategies adopted to overcome the obstacle 5:** As change of timing is not possible, students are encouraged to bring their lunch. Some of the students who are unable to bring their lunch are asked to join the mid-day meal scheme offered by the college. Activity-based teaching methods, pair work and group work are employed to sustain the concentration and interest of the students.

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