Enhancing English Vocabulary in Low Proficient Learners using Online Tools with Special Reference to Arts and Science Colleges

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Abstract: In today's world of development any individual is in need of developing the employability skills in order to grow and settle in their profession. Their possession of hard skills such as education, experience and expertise does not guarantee them perfect job opportunities. Low proficient learners from Arts and Science Colleges find it difficult to get reasonable jobs because they lack employability skills. This is an attempt to analyze the role of technology in the development of employability skills particularly English vocabulary in the low proficient learners of Arts and Science College. 20 students from 3 different departments were given assignments to be done using 3 online tools. Assessment has been made to find out some difference in training the low proficient learners from Arts and Science. The result shows a tremendous change in attitude in learning vocabulary in the low proficient learners from Arts and Science. English vocabulary can be. The soft skills syllabus prescribed can be enriched and made more interesting especially for the low proficient learners with the addition of the online tool 'Memrise" for learning vocabulary. This will pave a path to those that found learning English difficult.

Keywords: Employability skills, Technology, Vocabulary, Low Proficiency, learners.

I. INTRODUCTION

The low proficiency learners of Arts and Science colleges are always at a risk of poor skill development because of many setbacks in their way of living and social background. A general study analysis is essential, in order to identify their inabilities and give suitable suggestions and recommendations for their development and upliftment. Teaching and learning has many sources of reference unlike ten to fifteen years back. Education offers new technology content every day. The role of online technology tools in the development of employability skills in low proficiency learners particularly vocabulary has been analyzed. The analysis brings out and propagates the positive impact of online tools in the development of vocabulary in these low proficient learners of Arts and Science colleges.

It will prove to be a launching pad in boosting confidence, in the use of vocabulary in these low proficient learners. The low proficient learners will be motivated if they are given an opportunity to explore with something which is interesting and enjoyable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

K. Alex (2009), comments that the employability skills or soft skills are, "the non-technical, intangible, personality specific skills that determine one's strength as a leader, listener, negotiator and mediator". According to Mercy V. Chaite (2016), "a degree can provide transferable skills, but it is also vital to take every opportunity to identify and further develop these skills, as much as personal qualities and attributes." According to her, student's employability upon graduation significantly improves if they spend time and energy in developing non-academic skills throughout university. These skills help a person excel and be a successful person in their profession. These skills cannot be taught but developed through proper training. Theory based education without skill development does not help an individual acquire the employability skills needed for development. "The goal of language teaching is to develop learners' communication competence and equip learners with the ability to use the language for communication" Cook (2001).

Horwitz et al. (1991), language anxiety means, "the feeling of nervousness, worry or uneasiness experienced by foreign language students." (Foss et al., 1991) says, "many students especially in classroom situation find that learning a foreign language is stressful, especially if they have to perform, something using foreign language, owing to the fear of making mistakes, feeling of high self-consciousness, and the desire to be perfect when speaking." Sunanda Mahesh Shinde et al., (2015) "language learners can communicate effectively by using their hands imitating sounds, inventing new words, or describing what they mean." They are communication strategies. "Communication strategies are attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second - language learner and the linguistic knowledge of his or her interlocutor in real communication situations" Mojtaba Maghsodi (2010) declares, "mastery of vocabulary is an essential component of second language acquisition."According to Wilkins (1972) "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed." Dornyei, 1995, Kirk, 2008; Fitzgibbon and Prior, 2006says,

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"The skill set of the students from low socio-economic backgrounds may not equate to the skill set of mix traditional students in terms of writing & language, research, computer and overall academics". Yahya (2013) while speaking about the anxiety of low proficiency learners, "EFL learners suffer from language anxiety which is aroused mainly by factors of fear of negative judgments by others, leaving unfavorable impressions on others, making verbal pronunciation, grammar or spelling mistakes and disapproval by others."Marcia Delving and Jade McKay (2014) talking about the teachers' role says, "Teachers should know the students, means knowing the students' names, background, learning styles and preferences, needs, difficulties, strengths and weaknesses." 'Sivakumar U.Ganachari (2016) in his article says, "Sometimes teachers of English are more interested in completing the syllabus than making the students acquire good language skills." 'Noel Bilner, Joe Bilner (2002) says, "The knowledge needed for tomorrows' jobs will change before many of todays' students enter the job market." Gnana Gandhi, Mercy S.et al., (2018) quotes, "Our educational system is manufacturing students who know some facts but certainly do not know how the facts live in their everyday world". She also comments 'We cannot ignore the definite need to reform our teaching strategies and methods'.

II. BACKGROUND

The LPL of Arts and Science Colleges are always unable to compete with others even after their graduation. English being a universal language, communication in English has become a necessity for survival. After Higher Secondary the students choose different courses according to their marks. Many students opting for under graduate courses in Arts and Science colleges enter without the basic knowledge of English, in spite of having learnt English for Twelve academic years in school.

Many LPL are first generation learners and there is not much motivation because of lack of exposure from their parents' side. Lacking motivation because of poor social status may be one of the reasons. Another major reason is their aversion towards the English language because they do not use the language confidently and they also fear criticism by peers, who are well versed in the language because of their strong foundation in School. The LPL are not able to get reasonable employment because they are poor in communicating in English which is the base for all the major employability skills development. The employability skills development of these LPL has to be addressed .Some solution has to be sought out to upgrade these LPL to the next level.

III. SCOPE

Familiarity with the words of a particular language will make one confident in using the language for communication. Learning words of the English language with interest will help the LPL to become confident in acquiring the skills essential for employability. Incorporating online tools in the study of English vocabulary will help the LPL learn the words of the English language in a easy and stress free manner. This will make the students learn English words without being conscious of being embarrassed in front of others. Soft skills learning can be made interesting and purposeful by incorporating the latest technology of learning methodologies. The purpose of the University for having introduced Soft skills in Arts and Science Colleges will be fulfilled by introducing online tools like Anki app.

IV. EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The employers expect certain essential qualities, attributes and skills beyond qualification and experience as essential skills for employability in their workplace. Soft skills is the foundational skills or work readiness skills. In a nutshell, the common skills expected to do most jobs are called employability skills. Employability skills have to simultaneously develop along with the excellent academic record which one possesses in order to prove in this competitive world. A person becomes employable by possessing the skill that is transferable. Subject knowledge and understanding along with technology updated skills are expected by an employer. According to STEMNET the essential Employability skills include the way of communicating, staying motivated managing time management stress, organizational abilities, adapting and learning capability, accounting valuing socialization and capacity to negotiate official issues. An organization finds the above general skills as core and main trait desirable for any job.

In a business environment the success of an individual getting employment depends on the mastery of skills. In other words it is the expertise level and mindset that is increasingly necessary for success in the modern workplace. Technical experts who have developed their soft skills will always be in demand. Many potential job seekers lack the employability skills, essential for an organization. The need for employment in the modern workplace is technical knowledge along with soft skills.

A. *Need for developing employability skills*

In the present world of technology an individual should possess good communication skills with updated knowledge of recent changes in technology for their better settlement in their career. Stress management skills along with Time Management skills will take them to the next level of achievement. In addition to the degree, the soft skill that one possesses is the key to get jobs. The individuals are compelled to compete with a number of other graduates who are equally well qualified academically. Employers demand skills which are outside the subject area of their course of study. The acquisition of generic skills is desired more. The subject knowledge of the individual is needed but not sufficient to get a job.

Proficiency in English language is an empowerment and communicative competence and is a prerequisite for a reasonable job. Communication skills in English comprising of Learning, Speaking, Reading and Writing are the base for the development of all the other Employability skills.

To start with the development of these four basic skills, one has to be comfortable with the vocabulary of the language.

B. *A focus on LPL*

The students who have received their schooling in English medium schools are able to perform better and develop their employability skills in a better manner when compared to the others. Majority of the LPL are from local medium schools. These LPL enter Arts and Science colleges without the basic communication skills in English. English being the second language in colleges, it is not given priority, when compared to the other major subjects. The low proficient learners are marginalized in their campus, and treated and placed at a competitive disadvantage because of their invisibility. Many of these low proficient learners claim to have come from low social status lacking motivation and confidence. Moreover their mindset of feeling less important than others makes them more introvert. They lack confidence because of lack of communicating in English.

Developing vocabulary in the low proficient learners will help them become more confident and motivated. The paper's core aim is the development of employability skills especially vocabulary in LPL. The LPL, stand in need of recognition and settlement in their career. High motivation and positive guidance can develop the LPL from vernacular background to a reasonable level in the society.

C. *Problems of LPL*

Schools lay the foundation for the learning of second language English. In many schools the language is taught by teachers with limited teaching ability without sufficient time for communication activities. There is limited use of teaching aids. Some other constraints which restrict the students to learn the English language are large class-room size, students from different background, grammar driven teaching and finally students' lack of confidence in using oral English. With the above limited exposure, the low proficient learners who are mostly the first in their families to attend colleges enter for learning under graduate courses in Arts and Science College

The social status of the LPL is one of the major setbacks. Because of the background the LPL are unaware of many schemes and benefits for their growth. Many Arts and Science Colleges lack well trained soft-skill trainers. English being a compulsory subject and the system of education in Arts and Science colleges being semester, the English teachers are often interested to finish the syllabus for the written examination rather than making the students acquire language skills. The LPL are the most affected because they are not able to develop skills in Schools as well as Colleges. Language laboratories which tune the basic employability skills are not found in many Arts and Science colleges.

VI. ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ONLINE TOOLS

New technologies have become reliable viable and mostly affordable. Android mobile phones have become an affordable possession by any category of student. The present student community is comfortable with the mobile and internet culture. The skills which are necessary can be tuned by using the latest technology tools which seems interesting to the present generation students. Sending messages through mobile and updating status has become a routine for any student. Online learning felicitates to access learning materials and activities at one's own convenience. Modern technology such as Wikipedia, simulation games, collaborations and online tools can be used to develop the employability skill which is necessary for the students.

In today's world of technology, teachers are in an educative system and it is their responsibility to use digital tools to train and educate the students. It should be made available to all students along with their curriculum program. For example let's take vocabulary; the online tools give more information about any word and its meaning than the conventional traditional system of learning. Some tools are very flexible and the words are understood and learned by the students in an interesting manner. It can be practiced, and the results can also be reviewed.

A. *Anki*

Anki app is an advanced algorithm which helps in making powerful, intelligent flash cards, by adding images and sounds, to remember things easier. This method seems to be more efficient when compared to the traditional study methods. The possibilities of exploring the vocabulary seems to be more and it also supports images, audio videos and scientific markup. The synchronization App. available in this Anki App. keeps the card in synchronization mode. Other features available in this App are clips of audio and pictures, scientific markup and videos. It can handle deck of 1, 00,000 and more cards without problem. Add-ons are also available in large numbers in this Anki app. Spelling mistakes are also adjusted.

B. *Wordsteps*

Wordsteps is a personal vocabulary manager which by investing 15 minutes makes a person learns 20 words. It is a dictionary of themes available in the language of different countries like England, Russia, France, Spain, China, Germany, Japan, Italy and Portugal. Vocabulary is learned using this tool by selecting the language and choosing a set of vocabulary words in that particular language. Every set of vocabulary words has six types of practice activities. The practice activities are flash cards, translations, variations, words variants, alphabet soup, and word by word translation. Personal time is easily saved by using Wordsteps and it is also a suitable easily accessible and adaptable online facility providing great opportunity to learn different words. There are many features which can be used without registration.

After registration process the user can access the history and statistics of learned words and can also exchange chat with other users by adding them in the list of friends .Dictionary for the users' own words can be created and the best dictionary opted by many users will be posted on the main page of the website.

C. *Memrise*

Memrise is a free online learning tool that offers its courses as a smart phone app or as a browser based web app. that helps to learn new vocabulary. A new dimension of learning vocabulary through online has been created by Memrise. Interesting lessons and topics which are mostly based on the language is created using mnemonics changing the style of learning into an art making it easy and enjoyable.

The main features include creating mems such as pictures, sounds, rhymes to create a vivid mental association for learning the word more quickly. The user can connect with other users and learn their progress. A feature known as ignore button is available, wherein when using courses by others one can ignore the words with which they are familiar. Spaced- time feature that provides solid learning and revision structure wherein the software reminds the words which is found difficult by the user.

VII. DEVELOPING VOCABULARY THROUGH ONLINE TOOLS

Vocabulary development is the basis for learning any language and it is the processes of acquiring new words. The students are benefitted in learning the concepts and meanings of the words. In a conventional class-room dimension the teacher plays a dominating role and because of time constraint the teacher is unable to provide individual attention. A teacher has to give a detailed meaning of words and follow new teaching plan to help the students learn the concepts of the words independently.

Learning English can be fearsome for low proficiency learners. In a conventional class – room the LPL fear grammatical errors, to add on to the anxiety of these students there are some perfectionist attitudes which hinder LPL ability to fluently verbalize their sentence. The anxiety which these low proficient learners have is because of their fear at attempting to learn and perform the English language. Because of their anxiety they start to behave passive, resilient and avoid using the language in any form. If this behavior is left unmonitored or uncontrolled it will lead to a permanent and serious withdrawal of learning. Because of this lack of confidence they end up in social embarrassment.

A Change in the traditional learning methodology will help these LPL to become confident in the English language. Online tools can supplement the teachers 'ability to bring new information to students in an interesting manner. These modern technology learning tools are capable of changing the monotonous style of teaching. The student is now able to learn the language with interest and less strain. They help them to learn the words in their own convenient time .Anki app, wordsteps and memrise online vocabulary tools are taken to the analyze the difference in learning by these low proficiency learners. Reformation is needed in the teaching methodologies. The conventional methods of teaching should be replaced with new technology based teaching methods.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The possible ways by which, online tools can be used in developing the employability skills specifically vocabulary is taken as the research study. The recommendations for the implementation of online learning tools in the education systems for developing vocabulary, which is the base for mastering all the four communication skills in low proficient learners is also discussed This analysis was mainly ushered to identify the importance of the tools available online for developing vocabulary. It was designed illustrative in nature to make an analysis of the role of online tools in the expansion of the usage of words among the low proficient learners.

The sample consists of 20 final year students of three Departments of Mar Gregorios college of Arts & Science College, Chennai. 20final year under graduate students whose academic performance and development, in their first and second year proved to be below average were selected and three online tools for vocabulary used to find out the students' interest to explore the English language. The minimum testing time for each online tool was ten days and the maximum was fifteen days. A statistical survey was used as a testing device for collecting the required data which was further analyzed to make a decision and give suggestions.

Table 1 Scores of B.Sc (Maths) students using online tools

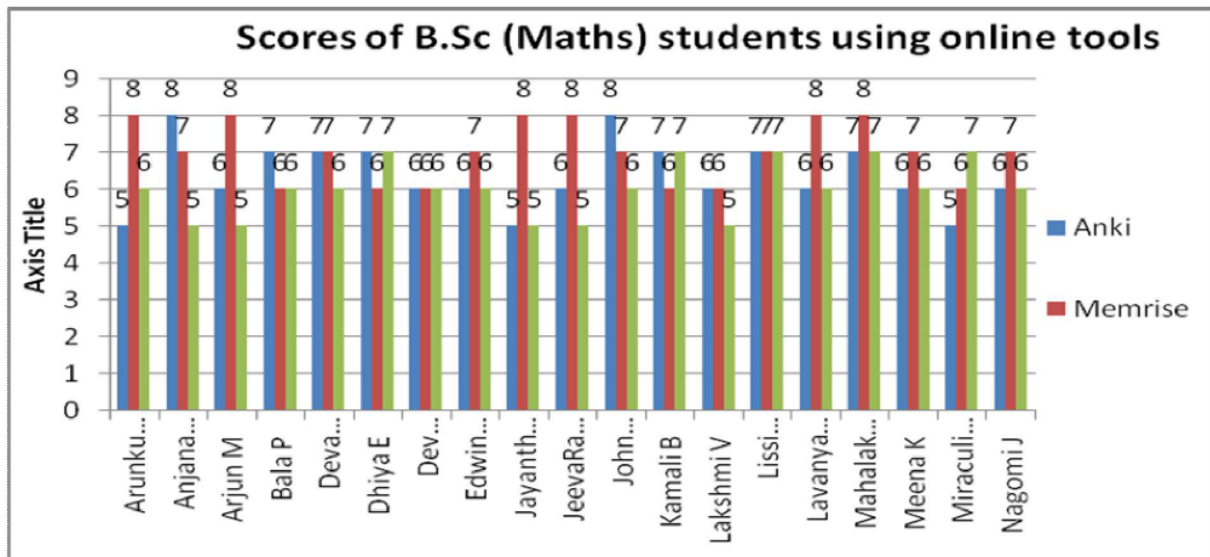| No.	Name of the Students	Anki	Memrise	Word steps
1.	Arunkumar J	5	8	6
2.	Anjana Mary S	8	7	5
3.	Arjun M	6	8	5
4.	Bala P	7	6	6
5.	Deva Dharshini S J	7	7	6
6.	Dhiya E	7	6	7
7.	DevNaresh V K	6	6	6
8.	Edwin Joel P	6	7	6
9.	Jayanth Kumar R	5	8	5
10.	JeevaRathinam M	6	8	5
11.	John Kilbert D	8	7	6
12.	Kamali B	7	6	7
13.	Lakshmi V	6	6	5
14.	Lissi Jenifer S	7	7	7
15.	Lavanya M	6	8	6
16.	Mahalakshmi D	7	8	7
17.	Meena K	6	7	6
18.	MiraculinBelciya P	5	6	7
19.	Nagomi J	6	7	6
20.	Nandhini R	7	6	5
	Total	**128**	**139**	**119**
	Percentage	**64%**	**70%**	**60%**

Fig:1 Results of B.Sc Maths Students

Table:2Scores of B.Com(General) students using online tools

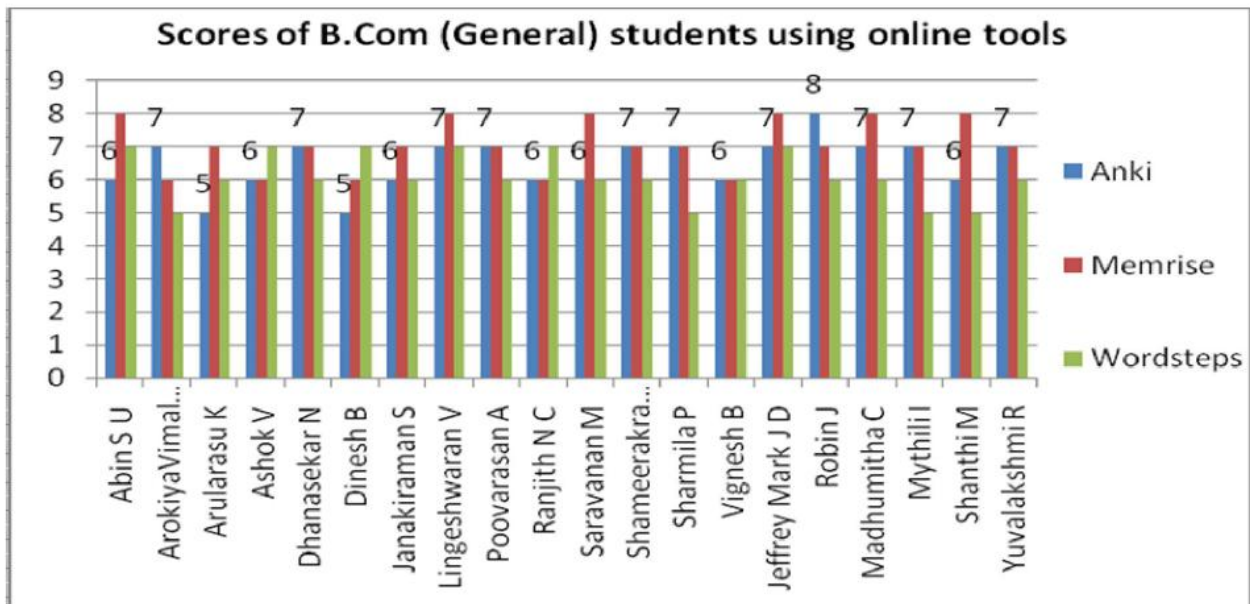| No	Name of the students	Anki	Memrise	Wordsteps
1.	Amit K	6	7	6
2.	Amitha P Davis	7	6	7
3.	Berlina Baby	6	7	7
4.	Devendira Kumar K	6	7	6
5.	Dhanush Kumar I	6	7	5
6.	Dinesh Kumar R	7	7	7
7.	Eby James	7	6	6
8.	Elizabeth Cynthia J	7	7	6
9.	Elsa Sunny	5	6	6
10.	Lijo Jose j	7	7	6
11.	Mithun T P	6	7	7
12.	Naresh G	7	6	5
13.	Naveen D	7	8	6
14.	Pasumpathi M	6	8	6
15.	Prakash P	7	8	7
16.	Prasanna v	6	7	6
17.	Raghul M	8	6	7
18.	Reginavathi K	7	8	6
19.	Sam C Saji	7	8	6
20.	Sarath Kumar R	6	7	7
	Total	**131**	**140**	**125**

Fig:2 Results of B.Com (General) students Students

Table: 3 Scores of BCA students using online tools

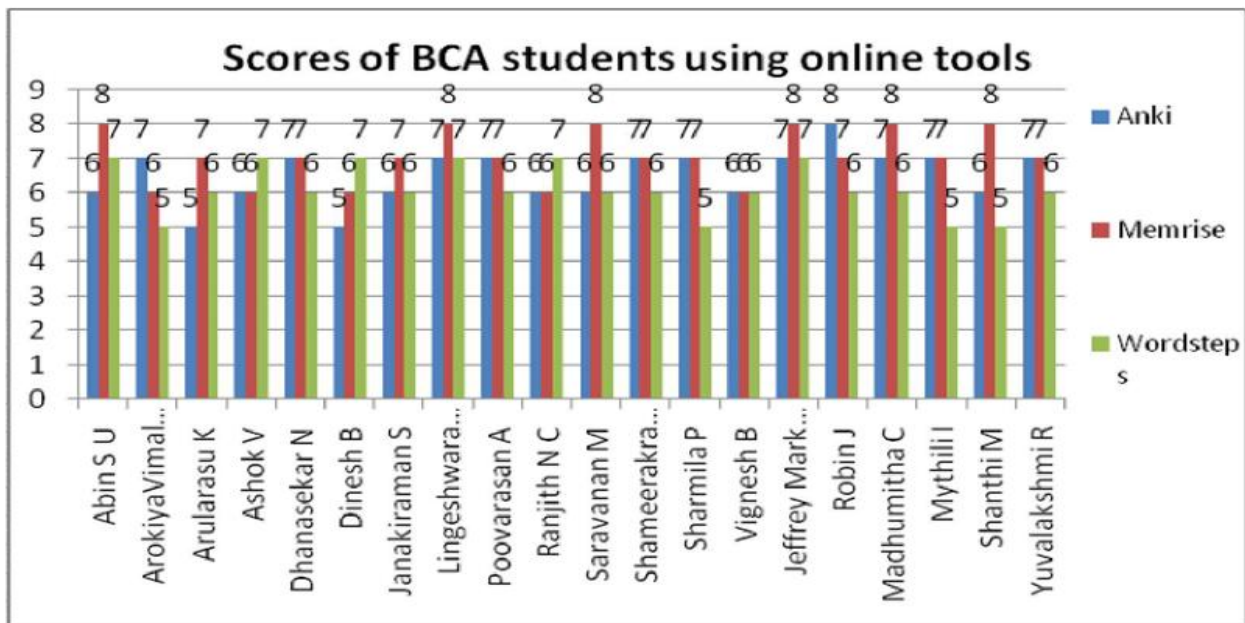| No.	Name of the Students	Anki	Memrise	Wordsteps
1.	Abin S U	6	8	7
2.	ArokiyaVimal Raj	7	6	5
3.	Arularasu K	5	7	6
4.	Ashok V	6	6	7
5.	Dhanasekar N	7	7	6
6.	Dinesh B	5	6	7
7.	Janakiraman S	6	7	6
8.	Lingeshwaran V	7	8	7
9.	Poovarasan A	7	7	6
10.	Ranjith N C	6	6	7
11.	Saravanan M	6	8	6
12.	Shameerakram I	7	7	6
13.	Sharmila P	7	7	5
14.	Vignesh B	6	6	6
15.	Jeffrey Mark J D	7	8	7
16.	Robin J	8	7	6
17.	Madhumitha C	7	8	6
18.	Mythili I	7	7	5
19.	Shanthi M	6	8	5
20.	Yuvalakshmi R	7	7	6
	Total	**130**	**141**	**122**
	Percentage	**65%**	**71%**	**61%**

Fig:3 Results of BCA (General) students using online tools

Table:4 Consolidated results of the tests using online tools

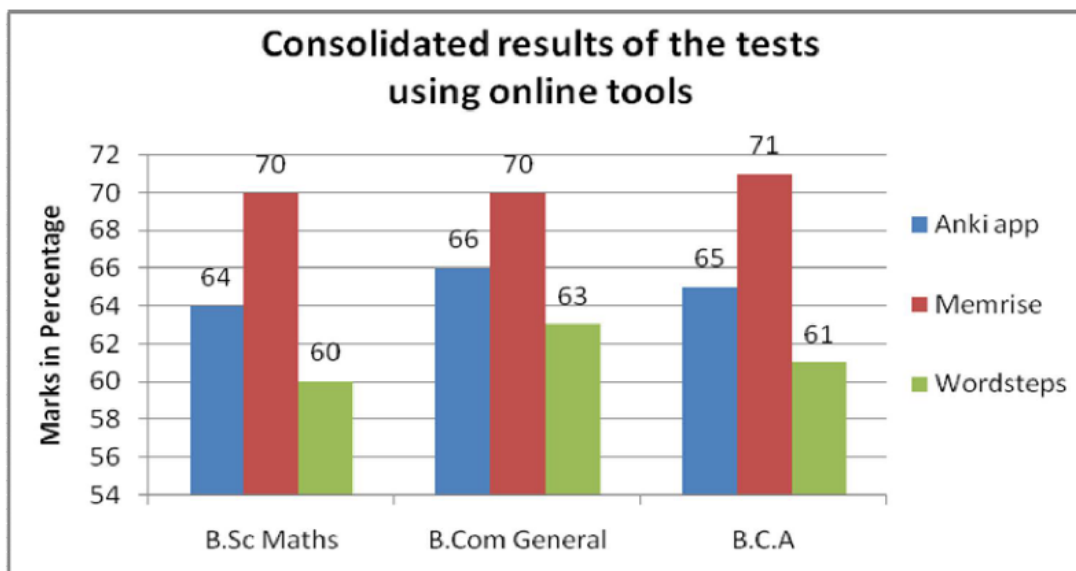| Name of the course	Marks obtained in %		
	Anki app	**Memrise**	**Wordsteps**
B.Sc (Maths)	64	70	60
B.Com (General)	66	70	63
B.C.A	65	71	61
Total	**65**	**70**	**61**

Fig: 4 Consolidated results of the tests

IX. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Low proficient learners when made to learn English words using online tools showed a drastic interest in exploring. Among the three vocabulary tools used for learning vocabulary 'Memrise' was given top priority and by using this tool they scored more points by learning more words .Memrise is readily accessible to learners in Android or IOS,and can be downloaded from Google Play/i Tunes respectively. One of the features of creating mems has influenced the present generation students. Students were able to grasp many words within a short duration of time. They are now ready to communicate with others with a quite comfortable number of words,

this trend take them to the next level in the development of communication skills. The low proficient learners' vocabulary can be enriched in a gradual basis, if made interesting and understandable.

All Arts and Science colleges affiliated to Madras University has four Soft Skills subjects which are mandatory subjects, for completing under graduate courses. Learning vocabulary and other employability skills can be tuned with the help of online tools. The soft skills syllabus prescribed can be enriched and made more interesting especially for the low proficient learners with the addition of this online tool 'Memrise' for learning vocabulary. Changes in teaching methodology are inevitable for the betterment and upliftment of the invisible low proficient learners whose only source of development is their college campus.

X. CONCLUSION

Traditional teaching methods are followed by many teachers. If teachers start exploring innovative teaching approaches with the latest technology, the students are benefitted in a higher ratio. The skills of the students especially the low proficient students will develop if modern gadgets with online tools are effectively used. Vocabulary of language is a definite need for any learner. The low proficient learners when comfortable with many words they try to use them in their writing and speaking, thus carrying themselves to the next level of employability skill development. The confidence level of low proficient learners in using vocabulary has improved with the use of these online tools especially Memrise.

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