



Need and Importance of English Language for an Engineering Student

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Abstract

In the era of globalization, the professionals in every field need to enhance their English communication skills and other soft skills in order to cope up in the highly competitive job market. Earlier for getting a job core competence was sufficient but in the present time along with the subject expertise the skills in communication, reasoning, attitude, body language, presentation etc. are of utmost importance.

The software sectors and the multinational companies require fluency and control over language which is obviously English. Besides communication, soft skills and other modes of verbal abilities are also required in order to crack a job interview. The core industries also demand a fair amount of communication and other life skills. An engineering graduate is no exception from this above phenomena. In order to meet the professional demands an engineering student, extensive training in all these aspects are required since their first year of study.

This study aims to find out the real scenario of English language teaching-learning in the engineering colleges of West Bengal. The study is based on the background of the learners coming from different parts of West Bengal and other neighbouring states. It further discusses the scope of the syllabus in English communication and suggests the pros n cons of it. The research work involves the opinions of the different stakeholders like the students, alumni, English trainers, placement officers and the recruitment officers through survey, interviews and





discussions. This paper is a mission to identify the major weaknesses pertaining to communication and verbal skills which hinders the path of employability of the engineering graduates. It is expected to give a new dimension in making the engineering students industry ready.

Keywords: Communication, English Language, soft skills, verbal abilities

Introduction

In a globalized world English language is very important in all facets of life. Language is an important tool through which we are able to share our thoughts, ideas and opinions. There are numerous languages in the world, out of which some are spoken by millions whereas others by thousands. There is no such definition of a global language but there needs to be a particular language which is understood and spoken in most nations and which is used in diplomatic and official purposes. As the world is termed as a 'global village', so a global language facilitates the communication from varying backgrounds and culture. The impact of a language is evaluated on the basis of the following factors: about the percentage of people using it as mother tongue, number of people using as a second language and the total number of countries using it for execution of their official work.

Communication is of utmost importance in these days. Communication is a process through. It has left no field untouched: be it a medical, or engineering, Arts or Law, or even Sports or which we are able to express or share our views or knowledge. For a successful professional communication a proper channel or medium is required and in this context English language plays a pivotal role. It has left no field untouched: be it Medical or Engineering, Arts or Law, Sports or Music.





Status of English in India

The English language has its roots from the British rule. When India were a colony of British then English was treated as a foreign language but later on after independence English gradually earned the status of a second language. India is celebrating seventy years of Independence and English now holds its position as the most essential and powerful language of the country

English is considered as the associate official link language in our country and is used beside Hindi in all central administrative purpose. English has a special position in the fields of politics, journalism, education and workplace.

English is the language of industrialization and modernization, and now it is the language of globalization. Observing the rapid change in the place of English in India Scrase remarked: “English is recognized as an important global or international language, essential for professional employment and significantly, a key component of the cultural capital of middle class Indians”.

English language in Engineering Education

Engineers are the creators of everything on this planet. These innovators require a universal medium to express their ideas and knowledge to the benefits of mankind. English as a global language may help the engineers to express and share their ideas. This is the reason for which besides studying the core subjects one needs to acquire proficiency in English. Let’s see why...Nearly all the textbooks in different Engineering subjects are written in English. The reference books and notes available in the market are also in English. There is hardly any availability of engineering books in regional language. The most convenient source of information pool is Internet which again requires understanding of English language. Moreover majority of the Professors deliver their lectures in English while teaching in a classroom. The assignments and laboratory reports, project submissions require writing in English. On needs to





write in English to pass the semester examinations. Then the final time of job interviews come when starting from clearing the aptitude to appearing in GD s and PI, preparing a job application letter and CV – in all aspects the only mode of communication is English. It doesn't end here because in the workplace every now and then English is necessitated. An engineer needs to write Letters, Memorandum, Notice, Minutes of the meeting, Technical reports, give presentations, attend discussions, conferences, seminars, symposiums-everywhere he is surrounded by English. Therefore English as a global language is important not only in the commercial and administrative sectors but also in the academic and professional field students with potential growth fail to prosper due to weakness in English. As per a survey conducted by Hindusthan Times across 500 engineering colleges and 30,000 students, some very alarming statistics have come up:

- 97% of engineering graduates in the country cannot speak English required for jobs in corporate sales or business consulting
- #6.8% engineers show the ability to speak or respond spontaneously in English
- #More than 51% engineering graduates are not employable based on their spoken English scores
- Around 61% engineers possess grammar skills no better than a Class 7 student
- 7.1% engineers can speak English fluently
- Women score over men in writing in English while men show better abilities of speaking English

Statement of Problems

The research paper deals with very pertinent problem issues like:

- How far is English Language useful to B.Tech professionals, or is it useful at all?





- What is the Role of Classroom in teaching English language to the engineering students? What kind of methods can be used to overcome students' problems?

The first question talks about the importance of English communication to engineering graduates. India's vast network of academic infrastructure churns over three million graduates annually. However there are growing concerns about parts of the existing available talent pool being unsuitable for employment due to a skill gap. One of the biggest challenges being faced by the job-aspirants at this level is their incompetence in communicating in English. A survey conducted by FICCI found that only 26% employers are satisfied with their employees' ability to communicate in English, "the most widely used professionally communicated language". Engineering colleges in India now have seats for 1.5 million students; nearly four times the 390,000 available in 2000. According to the National Association of Software and Services Company, 75% of technical graduates and more than 85% of general graduates are considered unemployable by India's high-growth global industries.

It is a fact that although the four language skills of English and the soft skills are important in the present job industry but they are routinely ignored in educational institutes.

Secondly classroom is a place which is a major source of learning and the ideal classroom should be a place of interest for the learner as well as the teacher. It should be a common platform where the exchange of skills, expectations and aspirations of both learner and teacher takes place. The activities conducted in the classroom should be properly designed to suit the needs of the learners. The teacher should play the role of a facilitator guiding and motivating the students to overcome their fears and hesitation. The classroom motivation is very important because as English is not a core subject so generally the engineering students are casual about it. The primary role of a teacher is to make them understand that English is important not only as an inter-state link language but also bridges the skill gap among the job aspirants. If the students develop interest their participation in the class will be spontaneous. Thus the classroom teaching should concentrate more on activities than lectures.





The best way to make the learners skilful in their target language is to make them practice English drills in the class. The drills may be designed keeping in mind the ESL learner's background and motivational level. The use of audio-visual aids is a way to promote learner's interest and suitable tasks should be framed based on it. The use of authentic materials in listening and reading activities can also be fruitful. The real life situations like writing a letter to lodge complain or mock conversations depicting social or professional situations, role plays etc...might prove useful to develop speaking and writing proficiency.

Outline of the Study

This study followed a specific route map to assess the ESL learner's motivation towards English language learning in the engineering colleges in West Bengal.

- The English classes in different B.Tech streams in a particular engineering college were observed and the observations regarding the various techniques adopted by the respective facilitators were noted
- The teachers, students, alumni, placement officers and the recruitment interviewers were given survey forms with separate set of Questionnaire and the answers of the different stakeholders helped us to know the pitfalls in the system
- A couple of workshops for English Teachers of different Engineering Colleges were organized where the issues pertaining to the lack of students' motivation was discussed. The teachers were given readymade modules incorporating motivational activities and their suggestions were included in it.





Conclusion

English as an international medium of communication is widely accepted all over the world. In India use of English is no longer restricted to higher studies and for administrative purposes but it has become a part n parcel of everyday life. From socializing to earning bread English has become inevitable. The study has led to several findings which are summarized:

- The core Engineering students are quite reluctant in acquiring English language skills
- The English subject starting from school curriculum to professional courses is basically theory-based and does not prepare the students for practical purposes
- The B.Tech curriculum under most of the Technical universities in India offers English as a subject officially two-three times within the eight semesters. The syllabus appears to be structured in the surface level but is very much examination oriented and there is a wide gap between students' semester examination scores in English and their proficiency in the target language
- The duration of the English in the total curriculum is comparatively less
- The skills required to meet the industry demands are always not fulfilled through the classroom teaching
- There is a dearth of proper textbooks and reference books with a holistic approach to guide the students
- The teachers mostly come from English literature background and hence they cling to the conventional concepts of class lectures with a little scope for innovation
- All the Engineering institutes don't have proper infrastructure to impart innovative training
- The subject experts should take up the task of designing a comprehensive textbook which would act as a one stop solution for becoming proficient in English and life skills required for employability





This study made some important observations regarding the condition of English proficiency with respect to the ESL learners in Technical institutes. It is successful to gather the views of different stakeholders involved in the Engineering colleges. The actual scenario of English teaching-learning, employability skills, industry requirements and lack of student motivation has been addressed through the major findings. This paper hopes to enhance the ESL learner's motivation in acquiring proficiency in English specially in Engineering colleges.

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