



ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

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Abstract: Professional courses such as Engineering, and Management Studies have been very popular in India today. Getting employment is a prime aim of opting for such courses. However, surveys conclude that students pursuing engineering education even in tier-1 institutes are facing a huge skill gap to meet industry requirements. One such major skill gap commonly found among them is the English language and communication in it. Though the English language has been taught by English teachers in school, students still find it difficult to use it effectively for communication. Therefore, the role of the English Language Teacher is very important in finding out the problems and providing solutions to overcome these challenges, thereby making students effective communicators in their professional life. The present paper focuses on the role of language teachers to enhance the communication skills of engineering students in the English language.

Index Terms - Professional courses, language teacher, effective communicator.

I. INTRODUCTION

Engineering education is one of the biggest fields of education in India due to its popularity among students. The changing trend of engineering education from class education to mass education has offered many challenges for teachers, students as well as industries to make them employable. Engineering education has brought about many new developments in the market. The increase in the youth population gave rise to demand in engineering and human resource requirements for multinational industries in the years to come. India can become a hub of service and product providers for the world. But skilled manpower is still a distant dream. Thus, to make India from a developing nation to a developed one, engineering education should be treated as an important field for the overall growth of India and its economy.

Engineering education can be used for gaining employment as well as employment generation. But for both, engineers should be skilled not only in technical aspects but also in non-technical skills. English language competency and communication is one of the major concerns for technically sound engineers as they cannot express the knowledge they possess. Due to this, engineers with good scores and technical skills lag in the rat race. Therefore, to convey and share their knowledge, it is obvious that English language skills are important to succeed in the career. Though one of the official languages of India, English language has over the years become an important medium of communication in India and at the international level. English language learning is important to communicate effectively and easily with the global citizens. It is also observed that more than 1.5 billion populations that is around 20% of the world population speak in English language (Samarin, 12). Many surveys prove the fact that a major proportion of 51.2% of engineering students are not employable based on their spoken English scores on multiple parameters like Fluency, Active listening, Vocabulary, Grammar, Spoken English Comprehension and Pronunciation (Aspiring Minds, 21). As a lingua franca of the world, the English language has paramount importance in shaping the career of engineering students. Although one of the non-native speakers of the English language, India has broadened its scope of acquiring English language competency for not only to gain, grow and sustain in the job but also to enhance and widen their scope of succeeding in qualifying the placement rounds and competitive examinations for higher studies.

Moreover, it has also been observed that students from metropolitan cities do substantially better in written and spoken skills as compared to non-metros. The exposure to the English language for small-town students is quite less and they struggle to figure out the meaning and try to use the language. The incorrect way of using the English language is quite natural among students learning in metro cities. On the other hand, many engineering institutes, by understanding the need for English language competency and communication skills, have engaged themselves in finding out ways to introduce bridge courses in engineering studies beyond the syllabi. Looking at this, urgent intervention is required from English language teachers to provide guidance in mitigating the problems. The English language teacher should play a crucial role in initiating and finding out innovative methods and techniques to fulfil this demand of engineers to be competent and communicative in English. Against this background, the paper tries to propose a few ideas and ways for an English language teacher to implement during teaching and training.

II. STATUS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AT SCHOOL

Being a multilingual country, India has many languages which are taught in schools and English is one of them. As a compulsory language and a second language in India, it is not yet given priority to communicate and master. English is scarcely used and a neglected language in vernacular medium schools, which result in creating fear in the mind of the students. Moreover, this fear grows as they do not use it in day-to-day interaction because of their family background. It is also found that they do not have reasonable exposure to communicate their thoughts in the English language. In addition, even English teachers at the school level do not use the target language for an explanation. The condition is not different in English medium schools, as English is not made mandatory to communicate. The teachers too do not have adequate proficiency, which makes their students avoid using the English language. Though English is an internationally acclaimed language and plays a key role in the success of students, it is not yet internalized with competency. Students understand the language. However, they barely touch upon the spoken aspect of it. Spoken English can suffice them with confidence and express themselves with accuracy. The teachers focus more on grammar more than the spoken aspect of it. Due to insufficient knowledge of grammar, students automatically get discouraged to speak in English with the fear that they will use inaccurate grammar. The teachers focus more on listening and writing skills which is not satisfied with teaching pedagogy (Ghazvinia, 1212). The pedagogical findings can help in revamping the teaching methods and ensure the effective classroom teaching (Nassaji, 339). Therefore, class environment is required to be focused more on spoken aspect of English language.

Acquiring fluency in the English language is a key asset for India as it is the biggest service provider in the world. Though India is a non-native speaker of the English language, it can expose new avenues for the growth of the nation. Nevertheless, proficiency and communicative competency in English are not given prime importance in schools which may hinder the progress of the students at the individual level and nation at large. Thus, there is an enormous need to put a greater emphasis on the spoken element of English in schools than on the written one. This may improve their understandability and use of English with proper fluency, pronunciation, and sentence construction.

III. ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER

Even today, the English language is considered the language of high learners. With different backgrounds and schools, engineers during their graduation are not very confident about their calibre. They opt for engineering because of the multiple opportunities available after this course. However, these opportunities can be utilized and fruitful only if they acquire English skills to communicate effectively. Though English is a common medium of communication, it is still neglected in institutes. Even the library resources are available mostly in the English language such as books, research papers, journals, thesis, dissertations, and information on the internet. Additionally, English language competency is one of the key requirements for anything that we need to do. English works like a channel of communication to interact and converse (Kannan, 2009). Hence, it is essential to know that English language skills and communicative competency will help in gaining, sharing, and applying their knowledge if they are really interested to bring forth their names in the intellectual market of technology.

In teaching English language and communicative competency to engineering students, the teacher ought to initiate and innovate workable solutions for enhancing their English skills. To learn with ease, the teacher must keep innovating the best practices which may be implemented to enhance their scope of gaining employment. The English language teacher should constantly sensitize them about existing scenarios and encourage them to come out of fear. Multiple opportunities can be provided in the form of paper presentations, project presentations, and seminars which would provide them with a platform to showcase their talent and ability. Such innovative and best practices would provide them confidence, motivation, and high inner strength to develop their mindset and compete in the open market of technology. India has adopted English as second language from western country and it becomes difficult for learners to use it in day-to-day situations. The students learn the language of books, however, during interactions, they barely use the practical language. Hence, it becomes necessary for teachers to use various strategies to ensure that students should not face the difficulties of teaching English language (Long, 125; Chen, 27; Nunn, 57).

Engineering education has little focus on English language competencies, whereas communicative competency is focused on enhancing listening and speaking skills. The four basic skills of language learning: listening, speaking, reading, and writing are required to gain and enhance language. Therefore, it becomes essential for English language teachers to recognize communication skills and develop their confidence by disapproving the fear among students. The fear of what people think about them is the major problem areas of budding engineers. Their confidence level to communicate and converse in English with their peer members or even addressing to a group of people is required to be boosted through various activities (Tiryaki, 210). The teacher can mark out innovative techniques and activities like Chinese whispers, and role-play activities on barriers and non-verbal aspects, to gain their confidence by taking their active participation in activities. Teachers can roll out the student groups or batches by finding out the gaps in learning and the areas of improvement in the English language by considering their schooling medium of instruction. This categorization should be done prior to the actual conduct of any activity or lecture. Beyond the curriculum, teachers can think of rolling out special training sessions for some needy and demanding students and map out a common timetable to train and develop their skills in the required weaker areas. An integrated bridge courses, syllabus and exercises need to be designed with authentic materials drawn from everyday use catering to the students' requirements. Along with that, teachers should ensure that the students use the English language for communication purposes. This will bring them uniformity in using the language and regular usage of it may help them overcome their fear of speaking in the English language.

Language Laboratory training is one of the best and easiest ways of developing students' skills by giving them live assignments to evaluate themselves with the actual ones. Language Laboratory software can give students hands-on experience to practice everyday conversations and to match their conversations with available audio and visual aids. Verbal aptitude, reading newspapers, magazines, and fiction books, watching news channels, and movies with subtitles, pronunciation practices, activities on grammar, syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency and accuracy, etc. are the different activities to be conducted to develop linguistic skills smoothly. The teachers can also provide them guidance by teaching them about filling out forms online, tracking information on the internet and so on. Group and individual activities, role plays, case studies and mini projects can also make them self-sufficient to boost their confidence. The teachers should guide and assist them to carry out the tasks and activities. This will enhance their skills day after day and provide a learning environment. Such practices can work as a strong foundation which would ease them to step forward with confidence in grabbing the opportunity knocking at the door.

IV. ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR EMPLOYMENT

Globalization has equipped all companies to spread and widen their business all over the country. Enhancing the business of an organization requires a skilled and convincing workforce, and India has the capacity to fulfil this global demand. However, English language communicative competency can hinder their growth. Budding engineers should set their minds on gaining communicative competency in the English language with a focused, attentive, and proactive mindset. They should be habitual in using the language and simultaneously they need to share their technical expertise through proper interaction among the peer group and by participating actively in seminars and conferences for keeping in tune with emerging technologies. Institutes should also take an active part in providing platforms through different events and activities such as training sessions, practices on general awareness, logic building, aptitude, reasoning, personal mock interviews, debate, extempore, group discussion, and quiz competition. This will produce creative minds and innovative leaders in the technical market.

Language plays a key role in success in all paths of professional and personal standing. The English language helps them to build strong relationships and better understanding among fellow peers, teachers, and future colleagues. It is now a bridge language of all international business, technology, research, and aviation. Teachers can roll out various methods of teaching and training students to develop their skills to communicate. They can sensitize students and make them learn to communicate effectively and share ideas with the peer group. They should be provided with various platforms to collaborate with friends, seniors, and teachers to present their research ideas through project and paper presentation competitions. The English language teacher has to work constantly to bring them on toes to converse in English language and make a peer mentor who can guide them for their mistakes as well as motivate them. This ensures to get them habitual of using English language for their day-to-day conversations, which will help them developing confidence in using the language. Therefore, engineering students must keep in mind that in order to get their dream job and grow and sustain their position in the present global competition, they should develop their skills in the English language along with communicative competency. In today's world, employers seek graduates with sound communication skills along with technical knowledge as they are the assets to keep healthy relations with internal and external organizations. Expressing knowledge compared to possessing it, will always hold a higher level of standards in the organization. In addition, to get a good score in aptitude, and competitive examinations, and convey messages effectively to their international counterparts during higher studies, effective and efficient English language and communicative competency are required. All in all, communicative competency in the English language is a significant aspect of an engineering student's academic life and future career.

Mastering English language not only ensures employment but it also ensures successful career in the field of the interest. Most of the engineering knowledge available in the world is in English. Communication in English language creates a comfortable environment among the people around them. Engineers nowadays pursue higher studies in abroad. They need to qualify various competitive examinations such as IELTS, GRE, TOEFL, etc. Therefore, it becomes necessary for teachers to train budding engineers to enhance their communicative as well as language skills.

V. CONCLUSION

The English language teacher has a key role to play in developing confidence among budding engineers by providing them with the positive energy of speaking up their minds in a convincing manner. This will help in sharing the knowledge they possess in the best possible way and can boost their chances of employment. The regular practice and goodwill on the required English language competency of engineering graduates will fetch them multiple opportunities in their job as well as in their chosen careers. Different activities implemented by the teacher can encourage them in participating in activities and learn by doing. With their confidence and use of grammatically correct sentences; and the knowledge and perspectives they gain from newspapers and magazines, they can frame it the way it is understood. Therefore, it becomes easy for the students to practically implement the ideas they learnt. Such communicative competency may also help them in group discussions or interviews. Lack of English proficiency and communication can become the biggest hindrance to gaining, sustaining, and growing in the organization. This may also hamper in qualifying the competitive or aptitude tests. Therefore, English language teachers should opt for unique and entertaining options to train students from the beginning as per the industry requirements and take the necessary step to bridge the gap between industry and academia. This will unquestionably bring forth productive results by bringing an increase in the number of employments of rural engineering graduates.

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