



COMMUNICATION SKILLS: LEARNING NEED AND ITS REALIZATION

Nanda K Thakre

Department of Humanities, Yashwantrao Chavan College of Engineering,
Nagpur-441110, M.S., India



Article information

Received:12/4/2021
Accepted: 22/5/2021
Published online:28/05/2021
doi: [10.33329/ijelr.8.2.124](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.8.2.124)

ABSTRACT

Today, careers in the field of science and technology, business and commerce require a good knowledge of English. The vocabulary and terminology used in these are available in English. With the increased importance and use of computers in every field, English language has received a further boost. In today's world, where the students would be competing for job positions with a global workforce, it would be their English language proficiency that would be tested. The position of English as a global language is being strengthened day -by -day with the advent of modern communication systems and the concept of globalization gaining much importance and growing at faster pace in the recent times. The latest trends in engineering studies can be accessed only if the learners have a good comprehension skill in English, as most of the latest science and engineering theories are written in English.

Keywords: communication competence, employability skills, LSRW

1. Introduction

Worldwide expansion of English Language has increased and this demands acquiring good communication skills in English. The United Nations Organization (UNO) has given English the status of an official language. It is not just because it is one of the most widely spoken languages, but also because the use of English has made the social and economic exchange between people of different communities and cultures practically possible. English-speaking persons can be well recognized in all the continents of the world and is the reason for its importance in the compulsory education of many countries across the globe. It is not only used in public and private offices but also in education institutions, media, sports and business. English is the chief language in the Indian education system today. All most all the states in India have prescribed English as a medium of instructions. The Radhakrishna University Education Commission recommended that "English is a language which is rich in literature—humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we give up English, we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever-growing knowledge."

2. Importance of English Communication for Engineering Students

Engineering is the biggest field of study in the world with various disciplines. English is a tool that significantly affects the academic life of engineering students. As all the subjects in engineering are taught in English, it requires having good English communication competence. In academic life, engineering students have to deal with the countless English lectures, tutorials, lab works, project reports, paper presentations, seminars. As English is a medium of instruction in maximum universities of India, most engineering professors in various

universities are also conducting lectures in English. The most convenient source of information i.e. internet provides most of the information in English. During the job seeking process in interviews, GD's, it is but of crucial importance to achieve proficiency in English. After securing the job, they are required to work in groups since their task seldom be solved by an individual. Very often recruiters complain that most of the students do not have employability skills. When they mention the word 'employability skills' what actually they mean is 'communication skills'. A number of educationists and HR managers have highlighted the importance of taking steps to enhance students' communication skills. In the introductory chapter to Technical Writing and Professional Communication for Non-native Speakers of English [1] Thomas N. Huckin and Leslie A. Olsen, state:

"Scientists and engineers may be technically brilliant and creative, but unless they can convince co-workers, clients, and supervisors of their worth, their technical skills will be unnoticed, unappreciated, and unused. In a word, if technical people cannot communicate to others what they are doing and why it is important, it is they and their excellent technical skills that will be superfluous. From this perspective, communication skills are not just handy; they are critical tools for success, even survival, in "real world" environments"

3. Present Education System and Syllabus

Most engineering and technical colleges seem to focus only on achieving higher pass percentage every year at the cost of compromising quality. The teacher who prepares students for examinations well and who awards marks to the students generously is adjudged the best teacher, and the one who is creative and who teaches English for life is considered worthless. The other important factor is the traditional education system which affects English language learning and acquisition. Basically it requires four skills i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). Our students are trained in reading and writing for long time but listening and speaking skills are neglected and ignored which are very important. Learning is one of the one basic skills which makes speaking possible. Learning language is possible only through active listening. Our education neglects the importance of listening which results in lack of skills of speaking. Language teachers in Engineering colleges may feel perturbed about implementing practices that are aimed at developing learner's independence in an academic setting, where students' attention is largely focused on completing technical curriculum. When teachers deal with such technical students, it becomes nearly mandatory that the English teachers revamp the syllabus right from the start in order to cater to the needs of technical students.

Almost all the technical universities offer Technical English as one of the common subjects for the first year engineering students. Nevertheless, what is the objective of Technical English having been introduced in the curriculum of Technical English Teaching (TET) for engineering university students? "These are more English communication and grammar classes rather than technical writing sessions. These do not train the prospective engineers to write good project reports, documents or proposals. In the pretext of focusing on writing, universities tend to focus more on grammar rather than practicing real writing. It is very important to remember that grammar is only a component in learning a language, but not a skill. But what the budding engineers require is the skill of effective writing. Most of the universities, especially the private universities, seem to have English or Functional English as a subject only for one or two semesters in the whole engineering course. A few universities seem to offer special papers such as Creative Writing, Communicative English, Functional English and, Business English etc. .

3. Learning Need and Its Realization

Teaching –learning process in India is affected by many factors and thus causing a variety of levels of English proficiency. There has been a wide gap between what the students need and what is taught at the tertiary level. Teaching English to a group of students without knowing their language needs is just like prescribing a particular medicine to someone without diagnosing the person's disease. Although most engineering colleges offer one or two courses in English Language, little effort is made to identify the most appropriate content, methodology, time and place for delivering these courses. For the students, on the other hand, it is a question of wrong timing. Most of the English Language courses are offered in the first year, often in the very first semester. At that stage, the student is in no frame of mind to work on English. He feels cheated

for he has, with great difficulty joined an Engineering College and wants to be exposed to higher learning experience rather than to seemingly irrelevant English writing and grammar. At this stage, he is too young to realize the eventual need of these skills. It is only in the third year or so that the students become aware of their needs and are then desperately looking for help, which due to time constraint, becomes not only difficult but rather becomes more difficult. There is, therefore an urgent need to find a workable solution so that the students in professional colleges have an opportunity to acquire skills which would help to induce employability skills. English language proficiency is a resource that can eventually open the doors into the world of professional employment in India and abroad. Thus, English is immediately linked to employability.

5. Lack of Exposure to English Communication

Students from vernacular medium lack the exposure to English communication in the family and society. They also lack the exposure to English as some of the subjects are taught in vernacular medium. As a result of this, even the meritorious students fail to achieve success during personal interviews due to lack of communication skills, soft skills, interpersonal skills and personality development. During academics, lack of confidence of being unable to communicate in English leads to feeling of inferiority complex, as a result students keep themselves lonely and isolated and hesitate to participate in the various events organised . They do not involve themselves in different kinds of texts and media, which the learners can use to develop their competence through a variety of activities and tasks because of uneven nature of English in Indian schools.

Molding the Current Syllabus to Develop Soft Skills

The updated syllabus should bring in a desired outcome in the learners. As Spady rightly puts it, Outcome based learning is "clearly focusing and organizing everything in the education system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organising the curriculum, instruction and assessment to make sure that learning ultimately happens" (Spady, 1994, p.1). The syllabus should fulfil the learners immediate needs – academic purpose (EAP) and for future time when they go to their jobs – occupational purpose (EOP). Engineering graduates are not industry ready because of lack of communication skills. There is no doubt to say that soft skills are nothing but people skills and employability skills. Education system should promote -Teamwork skills, Communication skills, Interpersonal skills, Writing skills, Leadership skills, Online Presence etc.

Conclusion

The objective of this study is that the change would help the students to be essentially communicative in general and technical contexts in written communication. Accordingly, a paradigm shift is needed at different levels of education. If we really want our teaching to be more effective, our approach should be considerate and encouraging. Teachers need to ensure that there is genuine learning and also to help the learner to think critically, creatively and practically. Therefore, the need of the day is to make existing teaching learning process more effective. Teaching learning process should be more learner centric and teacher needs to play the role of a facilitator. There is simply too much to be learnt in too short a time with very limited human resources. New avenues need to be explored.

References

- [1]. Kannan, A. (2013, January 31). Technical writing fails to impress as a career. Retrieved from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/technical-writing-fails-to-impress-as-a-career/article4363534.ece>
- [2]. Spady, W. (1994). Outcomes Based Education: Critical Issues and Answers. American Association of School Administration: Arlington, Virginia.
- [3]. ISTE International society for technology in education <http://www.iste.org>.
- [4]. Tucker, B. (2004). Literature Review: Outcomes-focused Education in Universities. Learning Support Network, Curtin University of Technology.
- [5]. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-educationplus/english-for-survival/article5437489.ece>