

The Significance Of English Language Skills And Vocabulary Learning For Budding Engineers

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ABSTRACT

In this world of gizmos, there is cut-throat competition around the world and to become successful and competent the engineering students need to acquire communication skills and vocabulary treating it as a matter of urgency. It is a well-known fact that science and engineering are the two emerging fields of study in 21st century, which play pivotal role in shaping the modern world. The students of these two studies require good communicative competence and vocabulary to succeed in their personal and professional life. The fact of the matter is most of the Indian engineering students hail from rural areas and rural medium backgrounds they feel like a fish out of water whenever they supposed to speak in English. So this incompetence of communicating in English using good vocabulary is the only reason behind their dismal performances during job interviews. This paper tries to explain the significance and the much touted need of learning English language and vocabulary for engineering students.

Keywords: *English language, Infirmities of students, Role of English language teachers*

INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact that Man has been acquiring the worldly knowledge through the language. In all of his efforts throughout the life he primarily depends on his own native language or mother tongue to acquire the knowledge. As the world is fast evolving itself into a Global village, man has found the importance of learning a unique language which helps him understand the world and that language proved to be 'English'. In this modern world, a child from the time of his /her birth is gaining the knowledge of society, knowledge of relations, culture, traditions, and even knowledge of various subjects through English language alone. For a few nations only English stands first prior to their native language and for most of the countries it is a second language. In countries like India we come across many regional languages as a result, though people learn the academic subjects in English, the usual way of communication is in their own mother tongue or native language.

This paper especially deals with the study of engineering aspirants for whom English language

skills and Vocabulary is imminent in learning their academic and technical subjects and even their personal and professional prospects. Engineering students are failing in reaching the expectations of MNCs and global industries, because of their dearth in English language skills and Vocabulary. In Indian context an Engineering student's success in the on-campus recruitment solely depends on their manifestation of communication skills and Voabulary. According to NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Services Company) president Karnik, "Only 25 present of technical graduates is suitable for employment in the outsourcing industry because of their lack of abilities to speak or write well in English". Especially in the first year Engineering English course students fail to acquire English language communication skills and Vocabulary due to many reasons like lack of awareness of importance of these skills, and lack of adequate time to practice, and the main reason is their entire educational background and their mother tongue influence. Students are not trained on listening and speaking skills adequately and their examinations assess only their writing and reading skills. When they reach their final year engineering, it is tough to get into job on- campus recruitment.

This lack of communication skills and Vocabulary only serves to undermine the whole profile of the professional engineer. It is required that students should be trained in the skills which companies are demanding from engineering graduates.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND VOCABULARY: THE GATEWAY TO THE MODERN WORLD SYSTEM

The modern world has witnessed drastic changes that took place in the fields of Technology, Science, Agriculture, Education and Aviation and particularly in communication networks in the recent decades. English language has become a unique tongue of this modern world for communication, the reason English is labelled as Global language. It has become essential to stand out in this cut throat competitive world. In this 21st century, life becomes unmanageable and comes to stanstill for one who is not comfortable in speaking English. It is very mortifying not to speak English when it is demanded and it is merely disheartening when one experiences the failure because of this simple reason. In this competitive world the personality of job aspirant is not assessed by virtue of his IQ, but it is measured based on his effective English communication skills and Vocabulary. English is the official language of Business Management, air transport and Shipping, Science and Technology, Computers and Commerce, and a major medium of world education. As a consequence approximately over a billion people use English language at their basic level.

According to David Crystal (2003) "A language becomes global if it is accepted in every country. According to him, there are two main ways by which a language can become a global language. First, the status of the language, whether it is the first or second language, should be decided. This implies that the language will be used in all walks of life and in kinds of communication, including in academic, technology, science, media and government administration. Second, a deliberate attempt should be made to teach that language in academic institutions. This implies that all the communities should learn that language. In short, a language will be called a global language when it achieves the official status and education priority in almost every nation. With all these, that particular language will eventually be used by more people than any other language (Nga, 2008, P.261)". English is the only language through which we can bring the wonders of the world at our doorsteps. English has been rightly described as a window on the rapid advancement of technology and scientific knowledge that is incessantly happening in the world. Hence English is referred as "**The Lingua Franca**" of the 21st century and a '**Window to the modern world**'. By closing this window we will turn back the clock of modernization.

ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND VOCABULARY IN ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL CAREERS

Engineering is one of the major fields of study influencing the modern world, and the language which is influencing the academic and professional life's of Engineering students is undoubtedly 'English'. All the didactics at the engineering level are taught in English language. During the four year course of Engineering, students have to deal with myriad lectures, presentations, tutorials, seminar proceedings, labs, technical reports and project reports only in English. So they require effective English communication skills to acquire their academic and technical knowledge. Engineering students always depend on the Internet for the secondary source required for their academic subjects, seminars and projects. 95% of the information available on internet is in English. B Tech graduates who try their hand at National and International level entrance exams like SAT; GMAT, GRE, IELTS and TOEFL, to do MS in abroad require English LSRW skills. In the cut throat competition in order to get through in interviews and GDs during job seeking process, it is required to achieve supremacy in English proficiency. After procuring the job, throughout the professional life they are expected to communicate with their peer members, superiors, technologists, business experts, clients and customers in English language only. As they work in Multi-national companies and Industries they have to fly to many continents from their native habitation and may communicate with native speakers of English to get their work done. At this moment they require effective convincing English communication skills and pronunciation skills too.

Effective language skills help engineering students to build relationship and better understanding which are very important in their personal and professional life. In the modern era of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization, expertise in effective communication skills is the key to unlock the doors of success. Engineering Professionals having potential communication skills are considered as the assets for any organization, who play a key role in setting up the higher levels of standards and add value to the organization. Researches have revealed that most of the engineering graduates, who don't have good command over the English communication skills and Vocabulary, fail miserably to fulfil the basic demands of modern day organizations. So, the competency in English communication plays a significant role in the academic, social and professional life and career of engineering graduates.

MAJOR BOTTLENECKS OF INDIAN ENGINEERING STUDENTS IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND VOCABULARY

1. There is no denying that most of the engineering students in India hail from rural backgrounds. Their previous medium of study throughout their schooling and intermediate was in their mother tongue alone. So they find it difficult to cope up with professional courses, while learning technical subjects which are entirely taught in English language.
2. Students from English medium background are also not able to speak English and use rich vocabulary fluently the reason is that they have learnt the subjects in English but haven't practiced English language and Vocabulary so effectively.
3. Engineering students study English subject in their first year engineering course from the examination point of view only. They follow rote memorization and reproduce them in the exam and forget in the same day itself. They never treat the English subject as a source for the development their communication skills.
4. They never try to communicate with their fellow students and teacher in English
5. They find it difficult to understand the concepts of technical subjects due to lack of Basic English

language skills, like Basic English Grammar, and vocabulary

6. Technical teachers will be very busy in completing the academic syllabus. So students hardly get a chance to speak out in their classrooms.
7. One of the major problems faced by engineering students in the beginning of their professional courses is stage fear, diffidence, shy feeling and nervousness while speaking English.
8. They hardly participate in any paper presentations, seminars and group discussions due to lack of communication skills.
9. Engineering graduates lack behind proper English pronunciation skills due to their mother tongue influence

ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN ENHANCING LANGUAGE SKILLS AND VOCABULARY

A modern English language teacher is like a torch bearer to the students who shows the right path to reach their destination, and like a bell ringer who evokes them from their deep slumber. The language teachers shoulder the responsibilities in enriching the communication skills of engineering graduates. They are expected to play various roles: Academic teachers, Counselors, diagnosticians, motivators, communication skills consultants and soft skills trainers. As counselors teachers have to guide the students to set their short & long term goals. As motivators they have to actuate the students to know the importance of English language skills. As diagnosticians they have to find out the communication problems faced by the students, as academic teachers they have to enhance the language skills through English lessons like developing vocabulary, basic grammar and conversational skills, and as communication skills consultants they need to develop the innovative strategies to enhance individual learner's communication skills and as soft skill trainers they have to try to improve the employability skills of the students like leadership qualities, decision making skills, time management skills, and problem solving skills etc.

The English language teachers can utilize latest technological tools like computers, mobile phones, Internet, OHP etc. to teach English language skills to students. As engineering students are very familiar with the latest technology and they enjoy learning language skills through modern technology. Language teachers have to create an English environment in the campus so that every student speaks only in English. Engineering graduates require all the four LSRW skills of English language.

ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE TEACHER: TEACHING LISTENING SKILLS

Listening is prime skill among LSRW skills, and it is often neglected by learners. There is a saying in English. "One can't be good communicator unless one is a good listener". So it is required to make students, realize the importance of listening skills. A child learns speaking language by incessant listening to its members of the family and close relations. Language labs are the best tools for teachers to enhance listening skills of students. Pre-defined software's like 'Multimedia language lab' and 'Advanced English communication skills lab' are very helpful in learning listening skills. By listening to the various audio files and answering the questions related to the audios help the students developing both listening and analysing skills. There are other methods of teaching listening skills like playing audio file through mobile and asking questions, reading newspaper or articles or magazines or narrating a story and asking them to answer the questions will also help equally in enhancing the listening skills.

ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE TEACHER: TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS

Speaking is an active and most important skill of any language. 90% of the Indian engineering students are lacking speaking English skills. The main reason behind it is, throughout their education since childhood they have been

concentrating more on reading and listening and writing but hardly on speaking due to fear of speaking in English. The language teachers should help them by motivating and by making them involve in JAM sessions, role plays, group discussions and debates etc. In order to learn speaking, first students have to learn fighting against their foe 'stage fear'. When the students overcome fear automatically they fell free to speak out without hesitation.

ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE TEACHER: TEACHING READING SKILLS

Reading is most important skill required for engineering graduates for their academic and equally to professional life too. Reading helps the technical students to develop their language vocabulary, comprehension ability, and even to develop their own writing style. During academics engineering graduates may go through different technical article, magazines, and journals, in order to understand the technical concepts, central themes, and main ideas they should master reading skills. After getting into the MNCs they are expected to analyse the concepts of Projects handled by the companies and are asked to give their opinions and suggestions. So it is mandatory for every engineering graduate to boost up their reading skills. Francis Bacon rightly quoted that "*Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man*". English language teachers can develop reading skills of engineering students by making them involved in reading comprehensions by following reading methods like skimming and scanning to analyse and understand it clearly and exactly.

ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE TEACHER: TEACHING WRITING SKILLS

Writing skill is one of the active skills of English language communication. It is mandatory for engineering graduates to acquire writing skills. During their academic life they are supposed to prepare presentations, seminar proceedings, technical reports, CVs, and academic projects. In their professional life also they may be assigned with some writing tasks like preparing project presentations, project documents. Sometimes they have to update the work status to their superiors or boss. So they require good writing skills to convey their message through mails to their peers, managers, team leaders and other superiors. During the academics Language teachers can utilize language laboratories effectively to teach writing skills. Writing skills can be developed by filling up the blanks in a sentence Writing short stories, E-mails and reports. Teachers have to provide feedback so that the students may come to know and correct their mistakes.

CONCLUSION

English language communication and vocabulary skills are acknowledged as the most poignant elements in the academic and professional life of the engineering students. The need of the hour is Indian engineering students are required to enhance their English communication skills to reach the expectations of multi-national companies. Indian technical universities need to incorporate and induct English language courses in the entire four year engineering graduation program. In most of the engineering colleges English subject is accorded less priority compared to technical subjects though it is in the academic syllabus. To understand the technical concepts and acquire the technical knowledge students require Basic English language skills. So it is needed to be given equal parity sometimes more priority to English subject. The engineering colleges which maintain a high standard of education also flunking to provide skilled engineers demanded by the MNC's, when they visit the colleges for campus recruitment. The primary reason behind it is not according importance to language subjects. Engineers are the architects for the development of any nation. So it's the responsibility of Universities, Institutions, and teachers to streamline technical communication skills through English language by LSRW methods, so that the effective communication skills can be assured in the technology developed world.

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