



The Importance of Communication Skills in Engineering Colleges: Issues, Challenges and Employment

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ABSTRACT

Proficient communication skills enable a student to achieve higher levels of success in life, while a lack thereof might impede their professional progress. Engineering students in India must possess strong English communication skills to fulfil the requirements of Information Technology (IT) and Multinational Corporations during recruitment. Without employability skills, having expertise in a specific engineering domain will not lead individuals to get positions in reputable companies or open doors for additional educational opportunities. They need to improve their communication proficiency to flourish in their professional environment. A high level of English proficiency is often regarded as one of the most important qualities employers seek. The technique used for teaching plays a vital part in achieving this purpose. In this scenario, the instructor is the facilitator, using various processes to accomplish the established goals. This research aims to highlight the inadequacy of the content and transaction system in preparing students to be competitive in the labour market. The instructors should be consulted and given top attention to educating them comprehensively in all elements of language teaching, enabling them to develop students' language proficiency effectively.

Keywords: Communication skills, employability skills, global enterprises, employment, pedagogy, transaction mechanism

Overview

The success of a person hinges on their capacity to communicate with efficacy. Effective communication is essential for both personal and professional success. The many engineering courses now available in India were introduced in the 18th century and are of exceptional quality. Each year, a substantial number of students graduate with their technical degrees. Most of them meet the requirements with a notable proportion. However, their lack of practical communication skills hinders their ability to get employment in Information Technology (IT) and Multinational Corporations. Without the necessary employability skills, possessing just technical expertise in a particular engineering discipline will not be enough to secure the appropriate employment opportunity. More proficiency in communication is needed to ensure pupils achieve excellence in their workplace. English proficiency is regarded as an essential characteristic for securing a job. The teaching technique is essential for achieving this purpose. In this environment, the teacher must facilitate using specific instructional strategies to accomplish the established goals.

The position of English at engineering institutions is crucial due to the competitive advantage of English-speaking countries in terms of their economic standing, commercial transactions, and technical breakthroughs. English is an essential component in engineering schools since it serves as the foundation for communicating the information gained in core topics, both verbally and in written form. In addition to English, students are given lectures on fundamental areas exclusively focused on technical information. The engineering degree may be separated into two main components: the technical component, which encompasses an understanding of physical and mathematical concepts, analytical procedures, and models, as well as a set of general abilities. At this level, it is essential to encourage students to cultivate a solid dedication to learning, enhance their interpersonal skills, master the art of using time and resources efficiently, constructively use criticism, and improve problem-solving, critical thinking, and stress management abilities. If students are equipped with these qualities, they can effectively manage any scenario they encounter in their personal and professional lives. Despite their academic brilliance, engineering students often need help to articulate themselves well during interviews and group discussions, which might hinder their chances of being picked for further education opportunities abroad.

The learners demand lifelong skills, which the language instructor should develop. The language session provides a direct opportunity for students to connect with the instructor and learn various self-expository approaches, which helps them relax and improve their skills in several areas. Without awareness of the progress of functional components, the learner may mistakenly believe that English is straightforward and can be fully understood without the guidance of a teacher. The instructor and the students need help comprehending the underlying purpose of including English in the curriculum, resulting in the pupils attaching importance to the material presented in the assigned lessons. Conversely, a competent teacher introduces pupils to various language abilities by incorporating them into the subject.

Purposes of Incorporating English in Engineering Education

English is incorporated into the engineering curriculum to integrate students' technical and specialized oral and written communication abilities, explicitly focusing on reasonable explanatory procedures. If the student does not get sufficient direction, their exceptional topic knowledge may not be effectively presented. Once the students have obtained their academic degrees, they must join a professional organization and adhere to the correct behaviour and etiquette to integrate into the organizational structure. Language cultivates their skills in this domain to adapt to professional enthusiasm. An undergraduate student obtains a foundational understanding of the language. Therefore, it is essential to instruct them on using suitable structures and terminology to enhance the effectiveness of their presentations. The pupils must be aware of the appropriate use of tenses and voice during oral presentations. Students sometimes need to know the fundamental distinction between written and spoken language.

Consequently, they tend to write in a manner that mirrors their speech without fully grasping the intricacies and nuances of written communication. They should be instructed on the distinction between written and spoken communication, sometimes mistakenly considered interchangeable and called interactive mode. At this level, a learner must have strong listening skills, particularly in understanding and comprehending specific terminology and grammatical structures. Proficiency in reading is a crucial talent essential for thriving in the professional realm. Reading talent is a cognitive ability that encompasses the techniques of skimming, scanning, note-taking, and note-writing. Engaging students in the teaching/learning process is crucial for their professional growth as it fosters the acquisition of vital skills.

These goals aim to cultivate proficient communication abilities within a professional setting, equipping students to successfully compete for engineering or technical careers and excel in their chosen fields.

Achievement of the Specific Objectives Formulated

The formulated objectives may be attained by implementing a pragmatic pedagogy. The teaching-learning process is anticipated to be focused on learning. Obtaining employment will be easy if the set goals are achieved. In contrast, several highly skilled engineers and software experts need help significantly influencing the global market, primarily due to their insufficient communication capacity. It is essential to recognize that engineers must possess not just technical expertise but also proficiency in the English language to communicate their engineering talents effectively. The lack of knowledge and disregard for the English language should be substituted with a dedicated emphasis on enhancing language proficiency for academic and professional viability. Proficiency in English communication abilities is essential for basic survival. The formulated goals should be carefully deliberated upon, and a strategic action plan should be devised to achieve the anticipated behavioural transformation in the pupils. Himanshu Aggarwal, the CEO of Aspiring Minds, stated that when examining the distribution of employable talent across different states, it becomes evident that although some states produce many engineers, the overall employability is considerably low. This highlights the need for states to prioritize improving the quality of education rather than focusing solely on increasing capacity.

Learning Environment

Indian classrooms are characterized by linguistic diversity, heterogeneity, and various educational and socio-economic backgrounds. These classrooms are often overcrowded, which poses a challenge to achieving educational objectives. Students at this stage may be vulnerable and exhibit either timidity or excessive excitement based on their background. This creates numerous unresolved, challenging situations. Furthermore, the classrooms need more infrastructure to develop specific student skills. In such a setting, teachers should ensure that students are comfortable using appropriate tools so that they can integrate them when needed.

Present Transaction Mechanism

Teaching English at the engineering level poses a significant challenge as students need to be equipped to effectively convey the knowledge they have acquired in their core subjects. While it is widely recognized that solid communication skills are essential for engineers, teaching English in Indian engineering colleges has not received sufficient attention. The curricula for English language learning have yet to be addressed, even though language acquisition requires a distinct pedagogical approach compared to other conventional courses. Undergraduate-level English courses are often titled "Professional Communication in English" or "Business Communication and Professional Development."

It is usually a one- or two-semester course comprising theory and practical classes. The Communicative English course is divided into Theory and Laboratory sessions. The laboratory sessions are intended to involve the participation of the students to a significant extent. Usually, the laboratory is divided into CALL and Communication Skills Laboratory. Through CALL, the students are exposed to licensed software that gives inputs to the students to present confidently on a given topic as part of JAM, role plays, presentations, group discussions, debates, and mock interview sessions. The lab activities cater to developing practical speaking and listening skills in English and soft skills. They are groomed so that they smoothly fit themselves very efficiently during the transition phase from college to the workplace. Initially, the faculty should be oriented about the syllabus, the objectives behind designing it, and how it should be transacted in the classroom to prepare the student's industry. The teacher should undergo vigorous training as the level they will handle is challenging. The faculty is expected to be highly proficient, creative and dynamic. They develop a frame of mind towards English to be irrelevant. The students need English to develop technical presentation and employability skills, specifically from the third year onwards, as they

become aware of their needs and will be desperate to learn. Therefore, there is an urgent need to find a workable solution so that students in professional colleges can acquire the skills needed for professional excellence.

Conclusion

Engineering courses are professional courses that aim to develop students' professional skills. They are supposed to be made industry-ready. The student should be prepared to emphasize skill development for professional and overall development. All these become productive if the content prepared for transacting in the classrooms is utilized rightfully, keeping the objectives in view. Students' learning depends on their age, attitude, motivation, personality, learning approach, previous education, knowledge, abilities, and learning experiences. Most students in India entering English medium schools have limited exposure to the English language and have yet to develop adequate conversational and interpersonal English skills. Therefore, they require adequate time to develop the required skills for successful learning in the regular classroom. Learners who have had substantial exposure to the English language before entering a school require less support and time before fully integrating into the regular classroom. According to Archibald, the student should be immersed for about 10000 hours in the target language to learn a second language and attain fluency. However, they are exposed to English only for 7200 hours. Learning a language aims to enable students to utilize the language in day-to-day tasks and meet academic demands. Linguistic competence is crucial for students and teachers as well. The teaching-learning process should ensure that learning takes place and the learners achieve their long-term goals, including their ability to communicate in the target language outside the classrooms and realize various professional/career opportunities. Although technical universities provide courses semester-wise, they need more than their insufficiency to lead to success.

The student's learning problem is compounded by the need for appropriately trained English language teachers at all levels. Focusing on improving the English language proficiency of the teachers could help improve the situation, as students may need more to learn from their teachers if they are not genuinely proficient. The English proficiency of teachers in rural areas and various English medium schools could be more satisfactory. A university degree in English or a degree in education does not guarantee the teachers' proficiency in English language teaching. Besides university degrees, the teachers must qualify for benchmarked proficiency tests to be considered eligible as teachers of English because the need of the hour is to teach English as an international language solely for academic and professional communication. Teachers of other subjects should also be trained in the methods to be adopted for teaching and be made proficient in English, as learning English is not necessarily restricted to English classes but will have to happen through various subjects that are part of the qualifying examinations.

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