Importance of Communication Skills and the Needs of Engineering Students from Rural Areas

1Ramya D and 2Saranya Devi P
1,2Department of English
1,2School of Science and Humanities
1,2Kongu Engineering College, India
1ramyaduraisamy10@gmail.com, 2saranyadevipradeep@gmail.com

Abstract - Engineering study is considered as one of the major fields of study all over the world. Mostly the web content, the research works of various researchers and their studies, journals article, are written in the English language. So, it is considered to be essential for the second language learners especially for grabbing the opportunities of employment. The students who opt engineering needs to be good in the English language because it is very important for the academic life and it helps them to prosper in their professional life too. If the students fail to have good acquisition in the English language, they are unable to understand the important concepts and ideas conveyed by the writers in English. This present paper tries to highlight the significance of English and how lack of English knowledge can reduce the opportunity of employment. The researcher has given some solutions to overcome the issue.

Keywords - English, Employability, Engineering students, Motivation

1. Introduction

In the world of corporate companies, it is considered to be the need of an hour to use English as a communicative language. When a curriculum is designed for engineering students, English has been given an integral part because it plays a pivotal role especially in finding jobs and it decides their professional life [1]. In India, English language is used by many educated persons in various occasions like teaching learning, business and in corporate in a larger extent. Communication is very essential for the engineers to achieve success in their social life as well as in their professional life. As [2], 2010 states English language takes an important part in all the fields’ especially in educational sector, communication media and also used as the medium of communication in most of the private and government sectors.

In India, English language acts as an influential means for the changes happened in the country. English is considered as the ‘lingua- franca’ for the international trades and business, information and technology, aviation, banking sector, etc., As [3] stated that in radio broadcast 60% of the programmes were transmitted in English, when a letter is composed one-third of the content comprises in English, especially address written on the letters are available in English. In the 21st century English is considered as the world language and it doesn’t fail to leave impact with anyone. It is expected by the employers from the employees is ‘Excellent Communication Skill’. Many technical institutes especially engineering colleges used to concentrate and give training for soft skills and they used to give utmost importance in betterment of communication skills for the learners, but it is the worrying part to know that students graduating from various reputed technical institutes are not able to meet the standards of the corporate industry [4]. Some students are technically good, but lack in fluency and knowledge in language which is the considering factor and it affects from getting jobs. With experience of teaching English to young and aspiring engineering students, it seems many problems were faced the people from the students from the rural background and those who completed their higher secondary schooling in the vernacular medium. [5]

In this research article, the researcher tries to find out some of the challenges faced the students from rural background and suggests some of the remedies to overcome the problem.

2. Literature Review

In [6] in the research article stated that most of the students are from the rural background. The students face various problems while learning the communication skill. It is suggested by the researcher that with teacher and student initiative they can improve the competency in English.

Communicative competence, the common term used in the process of teaching and learning and it is referred as the ability to convey the meaning which is combined with linguistic and sociolinguistic knowledge and rules applicable for communicative interactions [7].

As [8], mentioned English for engineering is a sub-class in the vast arena of English for specific purposes and it posses’ various features available in the vast field English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It mainly concentrates on the focused and practical learning of the English language.

[9] conducted a study to investigate the requirements of English by the engineering sector at Nigde University in Turkey. The researcher collected the data with the help of Questionnaires and interview. The primary objective of the research is to identify for which of language skill is given much priority. The secondary objective is to verify
the significance of language task and activities associated with the language skills. The result showed that the students studying engineering needs to concentrate and improve their reading skills and they used to consider speaking as the most wanted skill [10].

In the research article [11] mentioned it is the real challenge for the teachers as well as learners to find ways to retain the important factor motivation for long when they attempt to learn new language. The main objective of conducting this case study is to identify and portray the student’s motivation when they try to learn English language. The findings state that motivation improves success but, it is not fixed but it is strongly improved and affected by feedback from the environment which is associated with the learners [12].

[13] in her research article mentioned that English Language is the ‘Lingua Franca’ and without good knowledge in the language it is tough to climb the ladder of success. It is important for the engineering graduates also and she highlighted the importance of English language and how it affects the employability if a learner lacks in communication skill.

As [14] mentioned, in India English is used as medium of communication and also it is used as common language for library. In the field of higher education, it plays a leading role especially in the lives of engineers. It is essential for getting good jobs as well as in getting promotions. It is considered as a medium and with the help of the language one can share their emotions, feelings, ideas and they can have a casual interaction in order to get betterments in their professional life [15].

3. Engineering Colleges and English

In the last few decades, the interest for engineering has been increased among the school students; it increases the number of engineering colleges all over the country. The increase in number of colleges increases the number of undergraduates every year [16]. This increase causes serious turbulence in job market in all over India [17]. It is not possible to provide jobs for all the qualified engineering students and it has become the important threat in majority of the industries as well as in the educational fields [18]. In today’s world good English Communication skills is the most important requirement and those who apply for the job is expected to speak and voice their opinion in English. But, unfortunately many of the graduates fail to satisfy the needs of the recruiters and they are unable to write and speak accurately and correctly [19]. They used to consider it as the herculean task. Especially the students from rural background, they encounter various problems when they try it use English for speaking or writing. In most of the engineering colleges, curriculum was framed either by the University or the college if it holds autonomous status, English has been given importance [20]. It is taught for the first two semesters. The syllabus in the technical institutes concentrates on the language skills LSRW (listening speaking reading and writing). But, with traditional chalk and talk method and learning inside the traditional classroom will not help the students to acquire competency. [28] It is essential for the engineers to collaborate and work together with the people around the world, so this is considered to the pre requisite for the employment. Apart from class room learning, the students can spend time and they can use online resources for learning purpose. [34], [31]

4. Methodology

To recognize the troubles faced by the students who study engineering especially from the rural areas, the researcher framed a questionnaire consisting two divisions. In the first division, basic information about the respondent has been asked like Name (it is given as optional), Age, Board of study in school, Parent’s occupation, Background, Native place, etc. [21]. In the second division the questions were given to ensure whether they have problem in acquiring the language skills and it was followed by the questions. Later an open-ended question has been given to write the problem specially which they face while learning English and when they try to communicate.

This study comprises of 60 students belonging to particular branch of an engineering college affiliated to Anna University. Fifty percentages of the learners are from the medium of their region. With the help of questionnaire, the date has been collected descriptively. Both qualitative and quantitative approach is used as the method to collect data. The research findings were discussed in-detail by the researcher. The questions were prepared with the help of Likert scale.

5. Findings

From the response for the questionnaire’s question, it is identified that some of the problems faced by the engineering graduates are Lack of practice for speaking skills, because mostly it is given importance for traditional exams. Students strength is another problem, the students are distributed in all medium of school [22]. So, the professors are unable to give importance for the students from vernacular medium. It is also identified that students’ parents are literate. They have better communication skills than the students from the rural background [23]. Traditional education system is yet another factor which affect the learners English language acquisition. In many of the institutes lack technological advancements and it affects the language learning of the students. Students from rural background lack English exposure in their family as well as in the society. This causes lack of confidence among the learners and it makes the learners inferior and they fail to communicate with others [24].

6. Remedies and Suggestions

It is necessary for the teachers as well as the learners to put combined effort to improve the communication skills which is necessarily essential for the employment.

i) Students expect warm and comfortable assistance from teachers, because learners feel that learning to communicate is a difficult task.

(ii) It can also be suggested that instead of teaching Grammar and writing components, speaking activities can be given and necessary suggestions can be given by the facilitators [25]
(iii) Grammar can be taught application oriented and how it can be used in technical communication.

(iv) Instead of chalk and talk teaching, the teachers can encourage the learners to use some of the ICT tools [26].

(v) The teachers can help the learners to understand the techniques, tips and tricks by giving activities like translation, role-play, etc.

(vi) Learners can be encouraged to use mobile phones effectively instead of wasting time, there are various advanced apps are available for language learning.

(vii) Subject-specific competencies can be given training instead of teaching the same old phrase and poem to the engineering graduates [27].

7. Conclusion
To conclude, both in the professional and personal life usage of English skills are considered to be the essential skill. It requires various updates in the methods of teaching to facilitate the learners with the help of advanced technologies available. It is necessary for the learners to utilize the facilities available in their institutions. As well as they need to engage their valuable time in learning the language. It will improve the skills of the learners and they can reduce the unemployment. The results provided by the present study give various important ideas to the Institutions to help in improving the proficiency of the engineering graduates.

References
[1]. Barwell, R. Ambiguity in the language classroom. Language and Education, 19 (2), 118-126, (2005).
[2]. Mills J.E. & Tregust, D.F. Engineering Education Is Problem Based or Project Based Learning the Answer? Australasian Journal of Engineering Education, 1-16, (2003).
[3]. Al-Tamimi. Atef & Shuib.Munir. Motivation and Attitudes Towards Learning English: A Study of Petroleum Engineering Undergraduates at Hadramout University of Sciences and Technology. GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies Volume 9(2) 2009.
[4]. Dönşey, Z. Teaching and researching motivation. Harlow, England: Longman, (2001).
[5]. Hernández, A. Todd. Integrative Motivation as a Predictor of Achievement Applied Language Learning. Published in Applied Language Learning, vol. 18 (2008) Nos. 1 & 2, pp. 1-15, (2008). Marquette University
[6]. Kormos, J., & Csizer, K. A comparison of the foreign language learning motivation of Hungarian dyslexic and non-dyslexic students. International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 20, 232-250, (2010).
[7]. Tambunan, Anna Riana Suryanti. “Students’ Motivation in Learning English Language (A Case Study of Electrical Engineering Department Students).” Journal of English Language Studies, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 63–70, Sept. 2016.
[8]. Santiago, L., Coolbaugh, A. R., & Veeramacheni, S. S. Critical thinking skills in first-year engineering students. ASEE’s 123 Annual Conference and Exposition, Conference Proceeding, 26-29, (2016). https://doi.org/10.18260/p.26602.
[9]. Michaluk, L. M., Martens, J., Danzon, R. L., & High, K. A. Developing a methodology for teaching and evaluating critical thinking skills in first-year engineering students. International Journal of Engineering Education, 32(1), 84–99, (2016).
[10]. Bagheri, N. Critical thinking and autonomy in speaking ability: A case study. International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL), 6(5), 73–83, (2018). https://doi.org/10.20431/2347-3134.0605009.
[11]. Gözüyeşi, Eda. “An Analysis of Engineering Students’ English Language Needs.” Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 116 (2014): 4182-4186.
[12]. Ahern, A., Dominguez, C., McNally, C., O’Sullivan, J. J & Pedrosa, D. A literature review of critical thinking in engineering education. Studies in Higher Education, 44(2), pp. 1-13, (2019). 10.1080/03075079.2019.1586252.
[13]. Nagimah, Musrifatun. “Developing Engineering Students’ Critical Thinking for Public Speaking Through Problem-Based Learning.” (2020).
[14]. K. Latha, “Role of English Language for Engineering Students”, American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, (pp.122-123), (2014).
[15]. Nagia, B., “Prominence of English Language for Career Development”, Language in India, Vol-16, No. 4, April 2016 (pp34-42), (2016).
[16]. Dönşey, Z. & Taguchi, T. Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing. 2nd Edition. UK: Routledge, (2010).
[17]. Spence, P., & Liu, G. Engineering English and the high-tech industry: A case study of an English needs analysis of process integration engineers at a semiconductor manufacturing company in Taiwan. English for specific purposes, 32(2), 97-109, (2013). http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2012.11.003.
[18]. Pandey, M., & Pandey, P. Better English for better employment opportunities. International journal of multidisciplinary approach and studies, 1(4), 93, (2014).
[19]. Dagarin, M. Classroom interaction and communication strategies in learning English as a foreign language - English language overseas perspectives and enquiries: Studies in the English language and literature in Slovenia. Slovene association for the study of English, (2004).
[20]. Acharjee, S. Emerging colleges 2013: How small-town India is catching up with the metros: NATION. India Today, (2013). Retrieved from http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/india-today-best-emerging-colleges-2013/1/280171.html
[21]. Jeya Goviri K, “Application of Theories, Techniques, Methods and Approaches to Develop Second Language Skills – A Study based on Transition from Schooling to College”, International Journal of Engineering and Technology (IJET), Vol.7, No.3, pp.210-215, (2018).
[22]. Rao, Sanyasi, et al. “English Communication Skills and the Needs of Engineering Students.” International Journal of Management and Humanities (IJMH) ISSN: 2394 – 0913, Volume -4 Issue-5, January 2020, vol. 4, no. 5, Jan. 2020, pp. 96–98.
[23]. Abilasha R & Ilankumaran M, “The Impact of ICT Enabled English Language Teaching on the Engineering students of Rural and Semi-Urban Areas of South Tamilnadu”, Journal of Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Vol.9, No.1, (2016), pp.434-439.
[24]. Sreena S & Ilankumaran M, “Types of Communication Skills and the Ways and Means to Enhance Them”, International Journal of English Language and Literature in Humanities (IJELLH), Vol.6, No.4, (2018), pp.492-498.
[25]. S. Archana et al., Role of a Teacher in English Language Teaching (ELT), International Journal of Educational Science and Research (IJESR), Volume 7, Issue 1, January-February 2017, pp. 1-4