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Research Paper

Communicative Competency- an Essential Skill for Engineering Students

English

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ABSTRACT

The ability to learn languages and adapt communicative competencies to the changing needs of a global society is becoming a necessity for future engineers. Effective communication is made possible with the help of language. With globalization, revolution in ICT, a demand is created and placed on the part of the engineer's right from the beginning of their career. At present times besides field knowledge, employers look for sound communication skills in job aspirants. In spite of good subject knowledge, students with poor communicative skills are selected out in interviews for placements in jobs; thereby they become unemployable much to the disappointment of both the job aspirants and their parents. So it is clearly proved that, the English language has become a major medium for communication across borders globally; a deficiency in this area might result in barriers for graduates' personal and professional development.

Introduction

The ability to learn languages and adapt communicative competencies to the changing needs and situations of a global knowledge society is becoming a necessity for future engineers. Effective communication is made possible with the help of language. In engineering profession also, effective communication is mandatory. Engineers are also required to interact with their collaborators, the public, their customers, higher authorities, and to use English in writing mails, letters, reports, proposals and over the telephone. Such a demand is placed on the part of the engineer's right from the beginning of their career. Individuals who are able to communicate well in speaking and writing always have an edge over other. They influence others and have some impact over the thinking process and action plans of others. With globalization, revolution in ICT and the ever increasing global exchanges, the space between the proficient competencies and the required matching communicative competencies has always been highlighted. Achieving Communicative Competencies in English is a must to transform the students into enterprising men. In order to be fluent in English, we need to have a command over the language.

Teaching of English in India

In India, teaching of English in engineering colleges has always held a dubious status. An adequate language and its competencies are imperative for good engineers, but curricula for practically developing them are inadequate. In most developing countries, only a very diminutive percentage of students have access to learn through English medium. But the medium of instruction at professional education is English only. Inclusiveness in higher education has provided opportunity for the learners from backward and under developed sections of the society. Consequently, at the level of higher education, the expectations change and progressively become more demanding. In spite of good subject knowledge, students with poor communicative skills are selected out in interviews for placements in jobs; thereby they become unemployable much to the disappointment of both the job aspirants and their parents who strongly believe that their wards are their only future.

Importance of Communicative Competencies for Engineers

English language Communication is essential because, it is a global language and in the globalized backdrop, good listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are the keys to unlock the doors to success. These skills are vital and help to put up a strong relationship and better consideration in personal and professional life. One must know and understand how important the effective communication is for one's successful life. Professional candidates having strong hold on communication skills are considered assets for any organization.

Such proficients set higher level of standards and add value to the organizational set-up. At present times besides field knowledge, employers look for sound communication skills in job aspirants. The professional profile of a modern qualified should include well-developed communication skills and high English language proficiency to help them achieve success in the modern highly competitive worldwide work arena.

Communication skills are essential for engineers, who aspire to carry out their professional practice in the global arena. International practice of Engineering is important in this globalization age, as the number of international projects is escalating, and cross-cultural communication and collaboration is on the rise. As English has become the ascendant language, being the most widespread, it influenced the language of communication between professionals internationally. Engineering communication skills basically constitute core elements such as the fluency in the English language and the basics of visual communication. With command over English language, engineering students could get jobs easily, participate in interviews and discuss with people in a group about any particular important topic or aspect. Apart from being most important, widely used and useful, English is considered to be one of the easiest languages to learn and speak. With daily practice, students could communicate well with others, improve their skills, expose their skills before others to impress and motivate them. Hence, English even though being a foreign language, is now most commonly used language worldwide.

Communicative Competencies of Rural Learners among Engineers – The Present Scenario

Rural learners of English are much affected than urban students. Though they are having an easy accessibility to enter into engineering colleges, having equity, and inclusion, they show high unemployable ratio than urban students. There are approximately 552 Engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu because of PPP (Public Private Partnership). The government gives equal importance in giving admission to rural and urban students to enter into engineering colleges. Urban students somehow manage to learn and use English quite well in the context as they are the third generation learners having spot and co-operation from parents, and surroundings. But rural students are not able to cope with it in spite of their best efforts as they are first generation learners who take English as foster language. However, they might be able to write as per requirement but, speaking remains out of their range. Linguistic research says, this is why a feeling of backwardness embosses among these novices and they find it difficult to understand the substance of the prescribed literary selection.

In India, English is taught as an academic subject as a medium

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or mode of dynamic, productive communicational intellectualization and the teaching is rarely student centered. Hence, most of the students have neither the chance nor the motivation to participate actively. Rural students are deprived of technology as enjoyed by urban students. Lack of technology, books and other things become an obstacle in their learning process. They do not get the opportunity to interact with other renowned personality or peer groups. So like other subjects, students take English as a subject and don't put effort to learn it as a language.

The problem is not with tertiary level but from the primary and secondary level. Mother tongue influence can also be seen in the students with rural area background because they are not given proper pronunciation drill from the primary level. So whatever they speak, vernacular effect can be observed very easily. At the name of audio visual they have only chalk and blackboard, centuries old means of teaching. There is no doubt a teacher can do teaching more effectively and creatively with chalk and duster as research says, but with such a big class of hundred to one fifty students a teacher may find himself /herself handicap.

Consequently, the learners of rural areas get low Self-Esteem and struggle to overcome the problem of getting fluency in English language. They need special attention to gain language proficiency. The above facts clearly suggested that, there is a clear necessity for effective English communication skills for engineers in the current globalised environment. It is clearly proved that, the English language has become a major medium for communication across borders globally; a deficiency in this area might result in barriers for graduates' personal and professional development.

Teaching of English for Communication

English is a language which is rich in creative writing, humanistic, scientific, and technical. If we cut ourselves from English, we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge. English language is the accretion and growth of every vernacular, race, and range of time. English is the major window on the modern world.

Today, we have about 6,000 languages in the world, but only 10 of them are used by half of world's population. But English is the single most dominant of these 10 and considered as universal language, because now it has been more prevalent and spoken by half of the world's population. English claims to be the first rate International language and even be called a Universal language and helpful in fostering true international and co-operation among the nations of the world. English language is a direct medium of acquiring knowledge of modern arts, science, humanities, technology, and is equally important for statesmen, politicians, scientists, doctors, engineers, educationists, business men, and research workers. Its contribution to the progress of the country and offering opportunities for many varied vocations like diplomatic and foreign services, business, commerce, medicine is inevitable. English imparts knowledge of foreign nation and cultures, and requires mutual understanding. The study of English language enables a person to contrast the good and bad thing of one's country with those of other nations. By doing so, a person trains his analytical and reflective faculties. English communication helps students to gain wisdom and lots of knowledge by reading online magazines, newspapers, story books, essays, journals and famous writings of famous poets, authors or leaders.

Conclusion:

Communication skills are significant in the making of a global professional. In a modern polyglot society, modern students must also be able to communicate effectively. So the purpose of teaching language for communication, must be effective while taught for receptive oral (Listening), productive oral (speaking) receptive written (reading) and productive written (writing). The foundation must be strong for the four skills (LSRW) on which language learning are built. Experts who are proficient in communication skills have a considerable edge over others but, job aspirants face several tough challenges in the global job market, when their communication skills are not up to the mark. Inadequate adeptness in English language, lack of exposure, low level of confidence and weak soft skills do not let them uphold in the global market place. Thus, listening, speaking, reading and writing training is essential for any undergraduate programme. Even the employers require a number of efficacies with an emphasis on an increased ability to communicate and good foreign language skills.