

CAUSES AND REMEDIES FOR THE BACKWARDNESS IN ENGLISH OF THE LATERAL ENTRY STUDENTS IN ENGINEERING COLLEGES

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Abstract - Industrial revolution, colonization, technological development and globalization have made the world a global village where English has become the link language. The engineering education is taking a surge in the Indian educational scenario, teaching and learning of English has taken varied proportions. In majority of the schools, English is taught as a subject and not as a language. With this background, a good number of students with a diploma degree in engineering, enter engineering colleges directly in the second year (as lateral entry engineering students) aspiring to take a BE degree. Due to their poor exposure to English language, they find it an arduous task to communicate in English and learn their lessons in English. This situation makes them feel inferior and backward. In order to help these lateral entry engineering students, task based teaching methodologies, and computer aided learning activities have to be adopted. Moreover the proper exposure to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills have to be given to them. A guided and humane approach is required to make them better communicators in the English language.

Key words: Surge in engineering education in India, lateral entry engineering students, lack of communication skills, teaching and learning of English, task based learning activities, L.S.R.W skills.

1.INTRODUCTION

Ever since the industrial revolution had its sway over the globe, the world started shrinking and later the technological boom has made the world a global village. People who were confined to their territory speaking in their mother tongue started moving towards different directions for trade, commerce, higher studies and tourism etc. Meanwhile the colonization of Asian and African countries by the British Empire for centuries made English the link language in the multilingual societies as India has.

Industrial revolution and technological development that surfaced in the west especially in Britain and America, the two powerful English speaking countries had a sway over the rest of the world. Naturally all the basic concepts, developments and research were documented in English and thus English, a language of communication has predominantly become the language of science and technology. And it has become imperative to the students of science and technology to acquire good command over English for making further development in science, technology and worldly affairs.

Despite the fact that English has become the second language in India, English as a language of written and oral communication still remains a far cry for the majority of the people. A great number of students in polytechnic and engineering colleges find it a difficult task. The reason for this situation may be varied but it is imperative to look into this issue as a great surge of technical education in India in the recent years.

2.RECENT TRENDS

In the past, professional courses like medicine, engineering and law were available only to the cream of the society who really aspired for it. The students with both attitude and aptitude only could become professionals. But the trend has changed now. India is developing rapidly in all the fields and it needs a great number of professionals in the process of nation building to compete with the other countries. In order to cater to the needs, a number of educational institutions that provide professional education have been started.

Higher education in India relies especially on English language as it would be difficult to translate all the technical and scientific information in all the Indian languages. Moreover, only with the good command over English, a professional can become a global player; otherwise he is often considered incompetent in the global market.

As diploma courses in engineering have attracted the masses, many take up engineering courses in the diploma level. After taking a diploma degree, they look for a B.E degree which is more valid as it opens up better job opportunities. With the motive of taking a B.E degree they join B.E in the regular stream or part time stream. Though such students have some practical knowledge in their core subjects, they are very poor in communication.

3.CAUSES FOR BACKWARDNESS

To understand this problem, a comprehensive idea of the schools where they have their basic education is needed. Majority of the diploma holders have their schooling in mother tongue or vernacular language medium which attunes their mind to think in that language only. So all their communication is constricted to their mother tongue.

English is taught to them as a second language but it is considered more a subject than a language. Very little exposure is given to spoken and written English in such schools. This void is the problem when they enter a college for higher education, especially in the technical education where everything is taught to them in English. In addition, the books which they have to refer are also in English.

4.SITUATION IN THE COLLEGE

The learning atmosphere in a college is different from that of the school. Moreover the subjects have to be learnt are also newer. And all the subjects are taught in English in which they are expected to write their exam also. Their exposure to reference books and text books is poor as they are often spoon fed to clear their papers in the school exams. The same approach is continued to a greater extent in most of the diploma colleges.

To make the matter worse, they do not have English as a course of study in their second and third year of the diploma course. They literally have no exposure to formal speaking and writing in English. After taking the diploma degree, majority of the students' work in industries related to their core subjects where they communicate only in their mother tongue.

5.CHALLENGES

Literally with a break of two to three years from using English for communication, they enter an engineering college to pursue their B.E course where they find it an uphill task to cope with English in which they are expected to take their lectures, make references, write exams, present papers and participate in seminars. This situation makes them feel backward and inferiority complex weights them down. They look for loopholes to get through their core papers but technically they lack in communication skills which make them poor performers in today's job market.

6.REMEDIESH

This issue needs to be addressed with all the seriousness, so that the higher education imparted becomes purposeful and productive. Any student who is given professional education should have employable qualities when he comes out of the institution with a degree. To realize this objective, lots of corrective measures have to be implemented in the school education, which happens to be the base for the future career of an individual.

Though the states offer education in the mother tongue medium, added importance is to be given to the communicative aspects of English which is taught to them as a second language. English should be taught as a language and not as any other subject. Regular, intensive sessions of teaching the basics of English should be complemented richly by creating an environment to use English for the casual communication.

Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) skills have to be developed from the 1st standard and graded lessons should be given up to class XII. A task oriented approach will do a lot of good. All the schools must have an English language association or a club which could act as a platform for developing the English communication skills. The English language teachers can act as teacher guides in opening new vistas in the language learning. First, the students should be given confidence and encouragement to use English in the same manner as they use their mother tongue. If this approach is continued up to the last leg of their schooling, they will not have English blues when they take up higher education.

Next, the polytechnic colleges are expected to take English seriously and they should create space for more interactive sessions in English during the three years period of study. Apart from the official paper offered in the 1st year, the students should be given embedded practical courses on communication skills development. They have to be given compulsory activities like newspaper reading, vocabulary improvement, report writing, note making, letter writing etc.

Activities like group discussion, just a minute speech, situational conversation role play, mock interviews, advertisement demos have to be conducted time and again to bring them out of the cocoon they have weaved for over a decade. Use of the Audio Visual aids plays a vital role in language learning. Every institution should provide the students an audio visual lab for improving their listening and speaking skills. These labs improve their vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency. Guided and task based language activities create a positive atmosphere for the language acquisition.

7.CONCLUSION

In addition to these external factors each student is expected to take up a four pronged approach to improve the command over English.

1. Listening to All India Radio News/BBC News for about ten to fifteen minutes a day
2. Reading English newspapers/stories for about fifteen minutes a day and noting down the words and expressions for which he needs to refer to a dictionary.
3. Allowing the mind to think in English to write a few sentences in English on any topic that interests the student.
4. Interacting in English with the close friends associates regularly combined with mental talk.

It is essential to make them to realize the fact that English is an easier language which can be acquired with some sincere efforts over a period of time. It is a well-known fact that a highway road worker or a tourist guide speaks four or five language though he/ she had not undergone any formal teaching or learning process. They listen, learn and speak. Students who lack in command over English should take it as an example to gain the confidence to improve their English. It is a simple fact that any art is mastered with practice. And language is also an art which can be achieved with the constant practice. If students join hands with the teachers and work with a plan, they can very well become conversant and fluent in English in a short span of time.

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