

PROSPECTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN ENGINEERING COLLEGES

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ABSTRACT

English Language learning is a part of any study in India. May it be at the school level or the Engineering level the students are supposed to use language to learn other subjects' content in English and at the same time use language in terms of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing to prove their competency while moving towards their careers. With its rich heritage English is making its way throughout the world ever since. And now this is a crucial time when students are expected to work with self-motivation to acquire the Language. And if the students are not motivated to the expected level it forms the duty of the teachers to motivate the students from the beginning of their schooling by teaching the students the complete grammar and lexis so that their motivation is retained in their further studies and the teachers teaching them need to adopt various innovative and creative techniques to unleash their capabilities in their language learning. In this paper there is a mention of the different levels of motivation.. The First Level of Motivation: Finding Learner's Passion the Second Level of Motivation: Changing Learner's Reality the Third Level of Motivation: Connecting to Learning Activities

Keywords: *Motivation, Competency, Language Learning, Proficiency*

I INTRODUCTION

English language with its rich heritage and culture plays a vital role in the making of a whole new world today. It has played a constructive role in building-up of free world. It is no more a language of one particular country. It is widely accepted as a language of international. It is like a window through which we can see the world. The entire universe has become a village.

We cannot deny that English language carries a high degree of importance in our life. English language competence is an important aspect in our academic life and prospective career. One reason is that English language is the important tool in academic life. The other reason is that we can communicate with people in community. First of all, English is a tool that significantly affects engineering students in academic life. While most of the theories in engineering are taught in English language, students are required to have a level of proficiency in English language. In many Universities of the world, students are required to take Qualifying English Test to assess their proficiency of English language. To a certain level where students are not able to pass, there is a necessity for them to go for extra English module to brush up their English. Such measurements are carried out to ensure the students are able to write, listen, and converse with proficient English.

Secondly, after students step out of academic life and enter into real life to work, the most important thing is to socialize with people around. As socializing requires communication, this is where we put English language in use. Engineers work in teams. Without proper communication, they will never be able to create the world today. Through conversation in English language, we are able to communicate with others in a big community. Engineering students require competence in English language in order to succeed in their career. With this background it is pertinent to explore the teaching-learning process and the perspectives of proficiency in English for our engineers.

II INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

From Indian national development perspective proficiency in English for our scientists and engineers is important. As it is the dominant language of science and technology. Proficiency in English is also important for the academics and research bodies as a good number of scientific papers or journals in the world are written in English. Hence it is imperative that our students have the requisite proficiency in English if we want our country to occupy leadership position in the field of science and technology. In this era of globalization and job crunch, if our engineers and scientists continue to be complacent about their proficiency in English Language, the country shall once again be relegated.

III THE INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVE

Decades ago it was generally believed that engineers were to do technical things behind stage and therefore did not need any higher level of proficiency in English. The engineering curriculum therefore didn't give any emphasis to developing communication skills in English. With India fast becoming a global economy and English being the language of global business, the Indian companies are increasingly focusing on English language skills of employment seeking candidates. Moreover, English is the medium of interpersonal communication in the corporate and therefore having good command on English language has become even more crucial. Engineers usually work in groups and this very nature of their work demands mutual cooperation and effective interpersonal communication within and outside the organization in order to understand and coordinate with co-workers and accomplish their projects. To be able to do so engineers need to possess high level of listening comprehension, speaking and reading fluency and good writing skills in English. It would be squarely wrong to depend solely on technical knowledge and skills, which could be less than adequate due lack of language comprehension and production skills in English, to progress in one's professional career. Good communication skills in English and sound domain knowledge is also crucial to make the most out of the globalised job market

IV ENGLISH IN ENGINEERING CURRICULUM

In view of the growing importance of English as a tool for global communication and the consequent emphasis on training students to acquire language skills, the syllabus of English has been designed to develop linguistic and communicative competencies of Engineering students. In English classes, the focus should be on the skills development in the areas of vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing. For this, the teachers should use the

prescribed text book for detailed study. The students should be encouraged to read the texts/poems silently leading to reading comprehension. Reading comprehension passages are given for practice in the class. The time should be utilized for working out the exercises given after each excerpt, and also for supplementing the exercises with authentic materials of a similar kind, for example, from newspaper articles, advertisements, promotional material, etc. The focus in this syllabus is on skill development, fostering ideas and practice of language skills.

V COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course will help students to:

- Improve the language proficiency of students in English with an emphasis on Vocabulary, Grammar, Reading and Writing skills.
- Equip students to study academic subjects more effectively using the theoretical and Practical components of English syllabus.
- Develop study skills and communication skills in formal and informal situations.

Course Outcomes: Students will be able to:

- Use English Language effectively in spoken and written forms.
- Comprehend the given texts and respond appropriately.
- Communicate confidently in formal and informal contexts.

Unfortunately, most of the JNTU students consider English as just one of the subjects they want to get only good marks in the exam and are not bothered about actual learning. Students always have a feeling that their placement comes only in the final year and so they do not find any immediate need for improving English in the first year. Especially students of Civil and Mechanical Engineering have a strong conviction that English language is not essential for them as they are going to work with machines and construction workers. Learning English Language seems to be simple for the engineering students as they get good aggregates in the examination, but mastering the English communicative skills depend more on the curiosity and commitment of the learners.

5.1 Attitude of Engineering Students towards learning English

Attitude is considered as one of the most crucial factors for learning a second or foreign language for a specific purpose. It plays a major role in arousing student's interest and motivation towards learning. Generally students learn English in two different levels –School and College, where English is taught to students in different learning situations and to serve two different ends. In School English is taught to improve their spoken skills and to get hold on the language by LSRW. At the school level the attitude of the students towards Language Learning is different since their mind is preoccupied with examination pattern and the marks they score. In college the language teaching lays emphasis on Soft Skills and employability skills including language. Students enter Engineering colleges right out of school, they are just "babes in the woods". There is so much happening around them- it is a dramatic change for some and a drastic one for some others. These young minds are either forced to sit in a room and listen to lectures on heavy, technical topics for about eight hours a day or they are in

labs, where it is mandatory that they work quietly and correctly. Recreational hours are few and the English class is counted as one among them. If the teacher is a little lax the students tend to use that time too for completing records and so on.

Hence, it is essential to impart language courses by realizing the appropriate attitudes perceived by students. There is a strong connection between attitude and language learning process. Therefore, it is useful to know the attitude of the students at the college level to plan and implement language courses successfully.

VI RIGHT MOTIVATION

The term itself indicates, it is a —motive force|| , something that prompts, incites or stimulates action. To think of motivation as belonging only to the initial stages of an action, - that is as concerned with arousing initial interest and turning it into a decision to engage in some activity. Motivated learners are every teacher's dream — they are willing to work hard, add their own goals to those of the classroom, focus their attention on the tasks at hand, persevere through challenges, do not need continuous encouragement, and may even stimulate others in the classroom, promoting collaborative learning. However, we all know that the motivation behind our learner's learning varies widely. As teachers we can generally see who is motivated and who is not, and often we may wonder how or even if we can harness the motivation of some and spread it out to others. Tapping into motivation is crucial for language teachers because we know that motivation is one of the key factors driving language learning success.

There are three levels of motivation in language learning that are accessible to direct influence by the teacher. To the extent that a teacher can tap into any or all of these levels, he or she is more likely to become a —motivating teacher.

A. The First Level of Motivation: 'Finding Learner's Passion', The first level or the central core of motivation is what might be called —finding your passion. All successful learning is somehow connected to a learner's passion. Passion means a person's central goals in life, the things the learner cares about most, the things that move him or her emotionally. It doesn't mean that a learner needs to become passionate about learning English in order to succeed. Rather, the learner needs to find a way to connect English learning to his or her real passion in life.

B. The Second Level of Motivation: 'Changing Learner's Reality' In every language learning setting, learners cannot make sufficient progress in the Second Language setting because they do not receive enough instruction, not nearly enough attention in class, not nearly enough input or meaningful interaction or opportunities for serious output. Any learner needs a minimum of four hours a week of quality contact with a language in order to make progress. Even if this estimate is not true for all learners, it is clear to many teachers that learners need more language instruction than teachers can provide in their classrooms. Learners need more quality instruction — input, interaction, and opportunities for meaningful output — not only to make progress, but in order to maintain a sufficiently strong connection to the language and to build their own motivation for learning.

C. The Third Level of Motivation: ‘Connecting to Learning Activities’ Connecting means the engagement of intention, attention, and memory in the activity itself. All teachers want their students to connect with the learning activities they prepare, yet they often fail to take concrete steps that will lead to better connection. Here are a few —connecting principles|| that can be used in teaching materials, such as:

- Use personalized warm ups to lead into an activity. This creates relevance which is an essential condition for memory to work effectively and we have to aim to get all learners involved in the warm up.
- Make each learning activity as different and acceptable as possible. It is effective if we use provocative topics. Include visual aids (pictures, charts) and approachablereferences (games, boards, index cards, chits) to engage students ‘attention. We have to provide a variety in learning activities so that learners can try out different learning styles.

VII CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students should understand the importance of English language learning for their prospective employability. There is a positive change in the attitude of students when they move from the 1st year to the final year. Although some of them find it difficult, they are willing to improve their language. Yet most of them, unfortunately, do not have the sufficient time required, especially with the pressure of the intensive course, long hours, and the demand of other subjects. The large number of vocabulary items and grammatical structures need to be taught in the English courses. More emphasis can be given on speaking activities, student should be allowed to practice vocabulary and its usage. It would be helpful if the colleges adopt a more flexible, less intensive curriculum and allow teachers sufficient time for reflection, creativity and adjusting to their needs.

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