Certain Investigations on Mapping the Gap Between Campus and Corporate Communication Among Engineering Students

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ABSTRACT

Background: In this competitive world of professionals, the ultimate aim of any engineering graduate is to get employed in a reputed concern with a comfortable pay package. Though about 40 % of our engineering graduates manage to get placed in reputed concerns, the remaining 60 % of the students struggle to find the right job—for want of good communication skills. There exists a huge gap between campus communication and corporate communication. This gap is due to the way English is taught and learned in the classroom. Objective: This paper focuses on the wide gap between campus communication and corporate communication and suggests remedial measures for empowering the engineering students so that they become employable. write the main objective for your paper. Results: The paper makes recommendations for reframing the existing English curriculum of the engineering programme to enhance the employability of the workforce in the corporate arena. Conclusion: The present teaching and Learning of English in the Engineering colleges does not suffice the demands of the Corporate world. Hence, Industries and Institutions should interact and share their requirements and have a liaison between them. These solutions will imply suitable changes in the days to come.

INTRODUCTION

Today, English has become mandatory to attain a job or to perform effectively in one’s job in the business world. But a majority of our engineering students are found to be far below the level of expectations of the employers in terms of their communication skills. Most of them are unable to write even a simple letter or to talk about something they have done, say their projects in the final year or to write a report of the industrial visit they have undergone. What is the reason for such a poor state of affairs, as regards English? Why do they still find it difficult to communicate in English, even though they have been studying English for the last 16 years? These are some of the questions this paper purports to answer.

This paper also intends to look into the limitations of the present teaching and learning of English in engineering colleges as well as the demands of the present corporate scenario. The tremendous expansion of the industry, trade and commerce has paved the way for what is called English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). But in the academic circles, what the students learn is English for Academic Purposes (EAP) which enables students to develop skills needed for getting through in the examinations. Yet getting through in the examinations is one thing; developing appropriate skills for the job-related functions in the future is another. So these EAP skills will not be sufficient when the college leaving engineering graduates take up jobs in the industry or in the ever so many multinational companies, spread across the globe. While EAP is related to scholastic achievements EOP is concerned with job-related skills like customer care, brand management, advertising, problem solving, creative thinking, sales, marketing, report writing skills and presentation skills.

Of course, students who do well in academics and in co-curricular and extracurricular activities are likely to do well in their jobs because they will be naturally inclined to develop work-related skills. Nevertheless, work-related skills, to begin with, will vary from those skills they learned at college, though the language skills like listening, speaking, and writing will remain the same. For example, upcoming engineers need to develop...
non-verbal cues like body language, effective listening skills if they are talking on the phone with customers, presentation skills and report writing skills.

Unfortunately, these skills not effectively imparted in the academic environment because English teachers are constrained by lack of time and the rush to complete the syllabus on time. But given extra hours, a few additional hands in the form of faculty support, and facilities like language laboratory, equipped with the latest software packages, the situation can be handled with success. Colleges need to recruit more English teachers or to bring in more outsourcing agencies if they are really serious about imparting linguistic skills to our engineering students so that they become employable.

Since the crux of the matter is communication skills or soft skills a lot of work by way of planning, implementing and testing needs to be done to deal with this vital issue, in most of the engineering campuses. In the opinion of these authors, English teachers have to spend more time planning modules and how to administer them to the students. Students too have to spend more time learning English, both inside the campus and outside of it, say by listening to good TV programmes or reading newspapers and Journals like CSR, Sportstar, Frontline, and Business Line etc.

In fact, the quality of a large number of the engineering students is so poor that something significant, in terms of effective methods in classroom teaching and training strategies must be done to develop the communicative competence of the students. For instance, presentation skills, problem solving, case study approaches, decision making skills, measures to develop self-confidence, telephone etiquette, drafting e-mails, and job-interview skills can be some of the components that require attention, apart from classroom teaching. These, of course, can be done only during the vacation or week ends or in the evening hours. But we need to understand that these programmes do not tax the students and complicate their regular, academic performance. So the best time would be the vacation period and the English faculty and any number of other faculty members, who speak and write good English, from other engineering departments, and outsourcing agencies could be roped into this work.

A research survey says that the present academic English in the engineering colleges alone does not meet the requirements of the corporate world. English for Occupational Purposes, of which English for Business Purposes (EBP) is a branch, suggests ways and means of making suitable changes in the teaching of English in order to train the students in the engineering colleges for the job market.

Thus there are different priorities: ‘knowledge for its own sake’ and knowledge for a profit margin’. The authors of this paper carried out a case study in a well known multi national company which gave guidelines for the future workers and the methods to enhance their communication skills in the corporate arena. It consisted of an empirical research and termed as linguistic audit. This linguistic audit carried out by Pilbeam in 1976 identified the strong and weak points of a company’s organization in terms of communication process. This paper identifies the tools used to fulfill the needs of the corporate scenario based on English for Occupational Purposes.

State of Affairs - A Review:

In today’s world, English plays a vital role in the job market. This particular demand has evolved into new fields of research and disciplines like English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). This paper intends to look into the demerits of the present teaching and learning of English among engineering students as well as the requirements of the corporate world. It then suggests various remedial measures to make the would-be engineers employable, productive and successful in their chosen careers.

The teaching of English for academic purposes particularly in engineering colleges has its own limitations. Its spectrum covers generally English for specific purposes. English for occupational purposes has an increasing demand because English is known as a foreign language. At present, it has become a universal form of communication spoken in almost all parts of the world. There have been complaints from companies recruiting graduate students for placement that the majority of our engineering graduates coming out of the most of the engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu are not employable. The only reason for this is their lack of communication skill.

A HR Manager of an International Firm once stated that “Engineers were hired for their technical skills, but fired for their poor communication skills”.

Nevertheless, the most important suggestion regarding the present curriculum is to obtain information that they can apply outside the academic world. The application of authentic material can bridge the academic environment and the professional world of business in a practical way. This point is supported by Ellis and Johnson (1996:157) who insist on the use of authentic material. This material is exclusively designed and delivered by the companies to their employees, like the “Campus Connect” programme of Infosys. Similarly, relevant and productive language skill development programmes have to be designed and imparted to the students through the placement cells of engineering institutions. Then only the students coming out of the engineering colleges will acquire very good communication skills, if not excellent, with more and more emphasis placed on personality development and interpersonal skills.

According to Dudley Evans St John (1998:60) some of the guidelines to be considered include a good knowledge on the part of
employees of the communicative functions: Understanding on behalf of employers of those who need English to be carried out in their jobs and Knowledge on the part of the employees of theory and practice of EOP.

In the curriculum of the present day, especially in the English language there are some deficiencies which do not take into account the job-related skills of the future employees. So a sea-change is needed in designing the syllabus which must enable students to excel in the workplace.

**Scheme:**

By implementing the teaching of EOP, we will fulfill the demands of the corporate sector so that the future professionals will face the corporate world with ease. A study across four engineering service industries in India revealed the top challenges as not asking questions and assuming everything during their high school education. Many students would have overlooked studying humanities namely, language and the arts as a result of parental and peer pressure to master science and mathematics as vital subjects that helped in their clearing competitive or entrance exams.

In this process, an all around development of complementary human intelligences and faculties like creativity and interpersonal skills stunted (Variyar 2009). The syllabus of most Indian universities is not frequently updated and so they remain outdated resulting in wide industry academic gap. The curriculum should be designed based upon English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) so that the student may equip himself with the necessary soft skills to meet the competition arising from the job market. The method of EOP fulfills the effectiveness or the lack of communicative competency of employees with regard to their job related skills. If imparted cleverly, it will showcase the kind of inputs to be incorporated into the training programs and placement related activities.

**Perspective:**

The researcher examined the various ethical issues that face business communications in the workplace. It helped to give a lot of insight in identifying the specific areas of ethical vulnerability in the long run and the need for effective communication becomes vital. She evaluated the communicative skills of students by means of oral interaction, written tests, questionnaires and feedback. A group of students from each department was selected and their conversational skill and communicative ability was evaluated. Tests, debates and group discussions were conducted and used as inputs. In addition to this, field work in the campus and special interviews with staff in leading consultancies became part of the research process.

The objective of this research is to analyze the lacunae or problems which need to be solved in the long run and on a short term basis. The important language problems of employees have been analyzed while they interact externally or internally in their workplace. The companies’ demands and expectations have also been analyzed and identified. Finally, the results are derived and certain recommendations are suggested to enhance the consequent performance levels of employees.

**Analysis based on the results obtained:**

In order to have an approximate idea of the actual situation of the English language in the workplace a questionnaire was sent to workers in few companies. This contains ten questions related to use of English within the workplace. The estimation from the sample shows almost the significant results as far as the use of the English is concerned. Majority of those polled were professionals from different engineering colleges. The following question was posed “Do you think English is important during academic studies” Based on this question asked a Pie chart (Graph 1) was plotted as given below:

![Graph 1: Impact of English.](image)

The respondents replied that no importance was given to language skills that they deserved and about 15% of them thought that English was considered to be very important with regard to the job. About 15% who polled...
felt that English is important and they feel that studying at an engineering college they were not able to learn English in a way which helped them to make use in the workplace. This particular view anticipates the fact that we are living in a multilingual society where English is the only means of communication.

**Present day english syllabi and student satisfaction:**
An analysis of answers, given by students proclaimed the following: even though the students learn English as a subject, only 30% polled that they are learning high level language and the remaining 70% admit that their knowledge is inadequate to face the job market as shown in Graph 2 given below:

**Graph 2:** English syllabi and student satisfaction.

**Diligence of English at Workplace:**
Based on a poll conducted among the employees of a multinational company the following Graph 3 has been designed:

**Graph 3:** Usage of English in job scenario.

About 60% of the employees polled that they converse in English frequently and the remaining 20% admitted that they occasionally speak in English and remaining 15% said that they must improve their communication skills before they use it. The rest of 5% said that they don’t care.

**Suggestions and Recommendations:**
(1) This huge transformation could be achieved by changing Technical English which is the traditional method of teaching language to communicative method of language teaching. (2) The syllabus should be framed in order to enhance the core stuff of the students. (3) The syllabus must focus on soft skills which includes Interpersonal skills, Emotional traits, Leadership qualities etc. (4) The syllabus should be redesigned based upon the perspective of the industries for that purpose, in the II and III semester Communication Skills syllabi Interpersonal Skill set enhancement techniques could be added. (5) The major focus of the companies such as marketing, advertising, organizational structures and their concepts should be incorporated in the syllabus. (6) Terms of printed materials such as circulars, bulletin, annual reports could be a part of the syllabi and preparing such materials could be assigned as workouts/assignments to the students.

**Conclusion:**
These results substantiate that the students from the Engineering colleges, who are technically sound and ready to accept and work in any challenging portfolio lack in communication skills which is the vital segment of the job market. In our present academic environment, various situations involve speaking and writing. The present teaching and Learning of English in the Engineering colleges does not suffice the demands of the
Corporate world. Hence, Industries and Institutions should interact and share their requirements and have a liaison between them. These solutions will imply suitable changes in the days to come.

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