

Development of Communication Skills In English For Engineering Graduates

B.Rajeshwar Reddy

¹ *(Assistant Professor in English, Department of Humanities and Sciences, Malla Reddy College of Engineering & Technology, Secunderabad, Telangana State, India.)*

Abstract :- Communication skills in ELT is very much essential for a graduate engineering student to explore in his/her professional and career aspirations. Engineering communication skills have several core elements such as reading, technical writing, drafting and oral communication apart from fundamentals of visual communication practices. Fluency in English communication skills can only be achieved with a planned teaching and learning practices which vary depending on the context of the educational process that takes place i.e., whether the English language is learned as the first language or a second language or as a foreign language. The primary objective of this proposed study is to assess the English language needs of the Engineering students. This research work addresses several issues of concern and proposes to investigate the present status of the English communication skills of graduate engineering students. Current English syllabus and teaching methodology followed in the Engineering institutions will be studied in detail using different research tools such as questioners, workshops, seminars and feed backs etc. The major research questions identified are, firstly, is there any gap existing between present English language syllabi of engineering colleges. Secondly, is there a need to identify or modify and revise the present English language course to suit the needs of the graduate engineering students? Based on the research findings suitable suggestions will be recommended for development of English and communication skills of the graduate engineering students.

Keywords: - *Communication Skills, Technical Writing, Reading Skills, ELT.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The communication skills are primarily responsible for helping the Homo sapiens evolve beyond our related ancestors, and these skills have also helped humankind to develop into advanced societies on Earth today. There is enough indication that these communication skills of the present graduate engineering students passing out of the colleges are not up to the expectations of the industry, both nationally and internationally, wanting to employ them. It is a well known fact that engineers who are adept at communication skills have a greater advantage over those who are not. Further the lack of communication skills only serves to undermine the whole profile and image of the graduate engineer. Communication skills play a vital role in the professional growth of the engineer as it has become a regular feature of an engineer's job in any industry. The industry and the graduates themselves who are employed in the industry identified that there is urgent need to improve the process of acquiring these skills in the engineering colleges. These skills are considered to be crucial in enhancing their career. Communication skills such as reading, writing and oral communication are to be fostered in engineering education, not just because they are qualities that employers look for but because they should be part of any tertiary education.

Despite its crucial inevitability in professional world, thousands of Indian students studying in top universities, best Engineering colleges and institutes of higher learning in India find themselves ill equipped when it comes to carrying out communication related tasks effectively in their day-to-day professional world. It is ironical to observe that in spite of the staggering proliferation of 'English medium schools' all over the country, the fear of English continues to haunt thousands of students pursuing their UG and PG programs in Engineering. Some of the best students in Engineering develop cold feet when it comes to making a presentation, participating in a group discussion, making an impromptu speech, or appearing at a job interview. What adds to the tragedy is the lack of attention that best academic institutes of higher education pay in providing adequate training in developing and improving the English communication skills of their students. The importance of English, as a subject of formal studies and as a skill has been under scrutiny and debates for decades now. However English has been indispensable virtually for all disciplines. While English has been a compulsory subject for conventional degrees, 'communication skills' in one form or the other, in one name or the other, has been a subject of concern for technical, vocational and professional courses. At present, because of the globalization and liberalization, there is a need for developing effective communication skills. In settings

like India, ELT and Communication Education have become synonymous. English being the preferred medium of formal communication and language being the basic development of communication skills, English Language Teaching has a vital role to play in the development of communication skills. Students of professional colleges need a great deal of help in improving their ability to communicate in English to obtain easier entry into the corporate world. Keeping this objective at the focal, most of the syllabi of the course of communication skills is designed in almost all the universities imparting professional education. Similarly, it also brought out a change of syllabus in the technical education too along with the transition of syllabi into other professional programs.

II. OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to investigate the existing English syllabus followed in the university affiliated engineering colleges and to ascertain how far they meet the students' communicative needs, and to identify the academic and professional needs of engineering students at different engineering colleges in under the university region and also to propose modifications and revisions in the existing curricula so that the communication needs of graduate engineering students are fulfilled.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Which aspects of the present English language course (goals, content, materials used, technology involved etc.) in engineering colleges of university region need to be modified to meet the engineering students' communicative needs to apply it in real life situations?
- What are the academic needs and professional needs of the university affiliated engineering students in the language learning context?
- Does the English language syllabus in the university affiliated Engineering Colleges meet students' academic needs and professional needs?

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

Suggested methodology for investigation into and implementation of the Development of Communication Skills in English for the Graduate Engineering Students is mentioned as under.

4.1 English –The Global Language

In this Globalization age number of international assignments are increasing in all fields including academics. Also cross-cultural communication and collaboration in respective areas, especially in Engineering field is increasing rapidly. As English is the most widespread language in the world, more number of people speaks English with at least some degree of proficiency and hence an Engineering student must have proficiency in English.

Beyond language hegemony, an engineer has to be aware of the potential for cultural imperialism, which involves the systematic penetration and dominance of the nation's communication as well as informational systems and educational institutions. The importance of multilingualism for the global engineer is not confined to only learning English. Multilingualism in an engineering study is increasingly focusing on regional communication skills where the regional main language is as important as learning English.

4.2 Need of English for foreign Studies

Every year thousands of Graduate Engineers applying for different Foreign Universities seeking admission in to different courses both in Engineering and in Management studies. Most of the countries are selecting the students based on their score obtained in GRE(Graduate Record Examination), TOEFL(Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS(International English Language Testing System) etc., this is because of the fact that a Global Engineer should be able to communicate effectively in a shared tongue, especially when the engineer is assigned to international projects or curriculum. Engineering graduates can operate across borders in an increasingly globalised and multinational industry and society especially in English as First Language (EFL) countries. Hence, this important issue must be addressed in engineering curricula.

4.3 English for Specific Purposes

The need for effective English communication skills for engineers is evident and a course in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) will enhance the English language and communication skills. The ESP concept is more useful in engineering education as it focuses the learners attention on required communication skills in their professional field.

4.4 Communication issues

The following four factors are identified as significant in weakening the communication skills of engineers.

1. Insufficient/ in appropriate course content
2. Students' attitudes to learn communication skills
3. Inappropriate teaching methods
4. Lack of practice of communication skills by the student

4.5 Feedback of Engineering Graduate's

According to a recent survey made on the Engineering Graduates in India, most graduates felt that they had gained analytical and problem-solving skills, Subject-specific knowledge, research and improved decision-making abilities through their degrees but lacking in the following skills.

1. Professional Ethics and Human Values
2. Oral communication skills
3. Management skills
4. Understanding of other points of view and other cultures
5. Awareness of the social implications of their course developments
6. Confidence and competence to work in International environments

V. SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE

It should start from the grassroots, like from LKG, as it usually happens in European and American schools, as a mother tongue, and should be practiced in all Indian schools. Students should be made to read the news in the assembly in their day to day school going. It should not be only for few selected students, who are detailed for limited morning assembly, related to school activity. And, they should be motivated from the secondary level to collect the news from various sources, and they should prepare themselves a news letter and should be made to read out, if not in the assembly, at least in the classroom. A student should be motivated to read English literature as a special subject, from higher studies, and there should be change in syllabus, if it is outdated, and should be reviewed every five years.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author sincerely acknowledges the valuable support extended by Sri Ch. Malla Reddy garu, Chairman and Sri Ch. Mahender Reddy, Secretary, CMR. Educational Society, Hyderabad, India. Support extended by Dr VSK Reddy, Principal, and Dr. Madhusudan Reddy, HOD, Department of Humanities and Sciences, Malla Reddy College of Engineering and Technology.

REFERENCES

- [1] Tattersall, I., Once we were not alone. *Scientific American*, 282, 1, 38-44 (2000).
- [2] Jensen, H.P., Strategic planning for the education process in the next century. *Global J. of Engng Educ.*, 4, 1, 35-42 (2000).
- [3] Grünwald, N., Quo vadis German engineering education. *Proc. 2nd Asia-Pacific Forum on Engng. and Technology Educ.*, Sydney, Australia, 371-374 (1999).
- [4] Professional Writing Seminar for Engineers, <http://www.ecf.toronto.edu/%7Ewriting/prowriting.http>.
- [5] Baum, E., Engineering accreditation in the United States of America – Criteria 2000. *Proc. 2nd Global Congress on Engng. Educ.*, Wismar, Germany, 17-20 (2000).
- [6] Keane, A. and Gibson, I.S., Communication trends in engineering firms: implications for undergraduate engineering courses. *International J. of Engng. Educ.*, 15, 2, 115-121 (1999).
- [7] Polack-Wahl, J.A., It is time to stand up and communicate. *Proc. 30th ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Educ. Conf.*, Kansas City, USA, FIG-16-F1G-21 (2000).
- [8] Beder, S., Valuable skills learned from “basket weaving”. *Engineers Australia*, March, 46 (2000).
- [9] Kitao, K., Why do we teach English? *The Internet TESL Journal*, 2, 4, 1-3 (1996), <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/>
- [10] Clyne, M., Pluricentricity: National Variety. In: Ammon, U., *Status and Function of Languages and Language Varieties*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter (1989).