



THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

B. S. RENUKA

Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities and Sciences (English), Rajalakshmi Engineering College, Thandalam



B. S. RENUKA

Abstract

This present paper deals with the problems encountered by B.E./B.Tech first year students of 2020 batch to improve their communicative competence. It is also well known that students belonging to rural area have problems in learning and speaking English. Teaching Technical English as well as communicative English is must for engineering in the scenario. Teaching English for engineering students is defined as a subfield that focuses on the development of communicative competence for business settings, also known as target situations or situated contexts in business. The Need of Effective Communication Skills in English for Engineers is very important in global context. For this teachers have to select suitable language materials and to use them strategically to achieve a particular communicative purpose.

Keywords: Effective Communication, communicative competence, language materials, global context, Technical English

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Introduction

Communication is the process of sharing or exchanging of ideas bringing common understanding. Communication is the dynamic interactive process. It consists of five steps that are ideation, encoding, channel, decoding, and feedback. Today's engineers must be competent in technical as well as in communication. Effective communication is expected from the engineers from their junior level. So they must learn how to communicate with their colleagues, team leaders, and customers. But in reality we come across engineers who are lack in Communication. If they go for proper communication training, definitely they will be able to influence people with their communicative ideas.

The importance of English, both as an international language and as a link language, is now

widely accepted. It is also well known that students belonging to rural area have problems in learning and speaking English. Teaching Technical English as well as communicative English is must for engineering in the scenario. English is the general term for multi-dimensional global movement in ESP with its roots in academic and commercial spheres. It is variously defined by the language used in the business world and by the learners' needs. Teaching English for engineering students is defined as a subfield that focuses on the development of communicative competence for business settings, also known as target situations or situated contexts in business. The Need of Effective Communication Skills in English for Engineers is very important in global context. For this teachers have to select suitable language materials and to use them strategically to achieve a particular communicative purpose.

In the present world of Science and Technology, English Language plays a vital role as a *Lingua Franca*. Engineering students of today are expected to have a command of English language. In the due course, they may contact different companies for project work, industrial visit and campus interview. An understanding of the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) will enable the engineers organize their concepts and present them in logical sequence.

All the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) in English are very important to everyone. The students in business world must have listening and speaking skills in areas such as presentations, negotiations, business meetings, group discussions, video conferencing and speaking over telephones etc. Reading and writing skills are required in reading the business communications, writing business letters, reports, e-mail usage, fax usage etc. Apart from all these skills students' background is analyzed. Since India is a multilingual state, and also English is not a mother tongue for Indian students. Teaching English to the engineering students is taken into account all these fields and the curriculum is designed accordingly.

Students from other states enroll in Rajalakshmi Engineering College, Thandalam, Tamil Nadu, India to pursue various courses in Engineering and Technology. The medium of instruction is English. The present paper deals with the problems encountered by B.Tech first year students of 2020 batch to improve their communicative competence.

Profile of the students

The students are in the age group of 18 to 20. Their educational qualification is a pass in twelfth standard or inter-mediate, who have learnt English as a second language in their schooling. Many of them cannot speak good English, their fluency and grammar is not up to the mark. The reason is very clear that many of the students are from Andhra Pradesh and they studied in their vernacular medium have no exposure to English. Due to parental pressure, present economic condition and passion of engineering they have chosen B.Tech Degree Programme in Chennai. Suddenly, they find the environment alien, with no body is talking in

vernacular language. If they want to communicate, they have to communicate in English only.

Course Design

Initially one month bridge course Programme was designed for all the first year B. Tech students. Sufficient study materials were given to the students and they were motivated to use the dictionary and Thesaurus. They were asked to build Word games and tongue twisters by using English alphabets. Students also were motivated to improve their word power by learning new five words every day. A well-programmed language lab was designed to give students to practice in listening and speaking. Pre – evaluation and post-evaluation test was conducted in the bridge course. This test gives clear picture about students' level of understanding and anxiety were considerably brought down.

Teaching English for engineering students was designed as a curriculum for two semesters. The first semester syllabus is designed with English grammar, reading comprehension, definitions, process description, instructions and letter writing etc.... The second semester syllabus is designed with group discussions, presentations, LSRW Skills, interview skills and different types of thinking like creative, critical thinking and problem solving etc...

Methodology

Their cultural background was also distinct. The teacher was a facilitator in this scenario. The students were given specific tasks and they had to share their experiences with their classmates. Daily exposure to UGC country wide Edusat programmes helped the students to fine tune their communicating skills. Maggie Sokolik observes:

Machines are now used as tools for communication rather than simply as ways of delivering automated drills or exercises. Vast amount of reading on any topic and in many languages are now available on the web and the chance to participate in discussions with people from all walks of life, is motivating for many learners.

As Rajalakshmi Engineering college campus is web enabled, the students used their laptops to

access the Internet and downloaded the required materials for their uses. Dramatic improvements were registered by the participants in the post course evaluation. The students were comfortable with their skills of communication when they joined the first semester.

The first semester focuses on reading and writing skills. Learning grammar helped them to construct sentences without making mistakes. Reading comprehension makes them to read and understand the running sentences. Definitions help them to understand the context and give the knowledge about the particular concepts. Process description helps them to understand the description of the Process of a particular product. Instructions prepare themselves for practical living. Finally letter writing makes them to write letters with the help of their own vocabulary

The second semester focuses on listening and speaking skills. In beginning of the second semester they asked to watch group discussions, presentations, mock interview and problem solving techniques' stories in the communication skills lab and to prepare themselves to participate in group discussions, presentations, mock interviews, it motivates them to speak their ideas clearly and it gives clear understanding about their standards which makes to improve themselves for business. LSRW Skills teaches the theories as well as the body language. Creative and critical thinking skills teach them to think widely about the problems and make themselves to find out the solution for the same.

Findings

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There are 1250 first year B.Tech students were enrolled for the first semester university examination. Out of 1250 students who appeared for communicative English I Paper, 2 students were absent, 3 were failed, overall 1248 students passed in communicative English Paper and the first semester university examination total pass percentage was 95.63%. The same number of students also enrolled for the second semester university examination. Out of 1250 students who appeared for communicative English II Paper, 2 students were absent, 4 were failed, overall 1246 students passed in Technical English Paper and the first semester university examination total pass percentage was 97%.

The greater involvements of the students were remarkable improvement in the communication skills. Students equipped themselves in all the four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) in English and were able to write take part in Group Discussions, Mock Interviews and Seminars. They were also enthusiastic in giving presentations in other subjects. According to Stephen Krashen, (1985) the development of literacy and development of language in general occur in only one way; when we understand messages". One notable outcome was the ability of the students to talk about their cross-cultural experiences in the society. During the admission process, most of the students were anxious and they could not communicate effectively in English. They tended to use words from their mother tongues. In the end of the first year B.Tech Programme, the same students could communicate fluently in English and their communicative

competence was high. This paper, "The Need for effective Communication Skills in English for Engineering Students," enhances the communicative competence of the first year B.Tech students, feedbacks are also collected from the students for future reference and modulation of syllabus.

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