

Perspective of Teachers on Challenges of Learning English Communication among the Undergraduate Engineering Students in Chennai

Sindhu.P

(Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Vinayaka Mission's Kirupananda Variyar Engineering College, Salem, India)

Abstract

English communication is one of the quintessential skills for the job market. Student of any discipline should be adept in the four common types of communication namely interpersonal, nonverbal written oral communication. A holistic approach towards imparting this is needed from the institution front. This paper focuses on the challenges faced by the students in acquiring the needed English communication to ace their interviews and contribute well in their respective domains. The perception of the teachers had been collected using an online survey. Apart from the usual challenges like lack of infrastructure for effective teaching learning, conventional teaching methods adopted, the study has found that lack of seriousness among the students towards the learning of the language as the major challenge.

Keywords: English, Communication, Challenges, Seriousness, Teacher

Introduction

The ability to convey information to another effectively and efficiently plays a great role in the life of the student. The students should have the basic communication skill to successfully complete the course and land in their dream career. The student should be effectively trained on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, right from his first year. A systematic and planned approach needs to be followed in imparting these skills to the students.

Need for the Study

The employability skills of the students are found to be not matching with the requirements of the industry. The lack of domain knowledge and communication skills is the looming challenge in front of the students. If these skills are not developed , they would

remain as mere graduates with very little scope for employment in this fast growing technological era. Hence there is a dire need to identify the challenges faced by the students and this study had been devoted to the identification of challenges in communication from the teachers perspective.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives

- To identify the challenges in learning English communication from the teachers perspective among the UG students of BE and B.tech degree.
- To analyze these challenges and propose recommendations.

Methodology

Descriptive research had been employed here. The study had made use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data had been used for data collection. 250 language teachers/trainers from engineering colleges were chosen for the study and 242 had successfully responded. The survey had been conducted online in a period of two months. Convenient sampling had been used as this study intends to investigate the challenges from the perspective of the teachers. Structured questionnaire had been used to collect the data from the respondents. Percentage analysis, mean and Standard deviation had been applied for the data.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Percentage analysis of demographic factors of the respondents considered in this study is given below.

Table 1

Variables	Categories	Percentage
Age	Below 25-35	16%
	35-45	50%
	45-55	25%
	Above 55	09%
Education	Post Graduate	31%
	M.phil and B.Ed.	49%
	PhD Holders	20%
Designation	Assistant Professor	45%
	Associate Professor	35%
	Professional trainer	16%
	Professor	4%
Experience	Less than 5 year	30%
	5-10 years	45%
	More than 10 years	25%

Source : Primary data

As already discussed, to make the best use of the available time, online survey had been used to collect data from the teachers working in engineering colleges in Chennai. Majority of the teachers are in the age group of 35 to 45 with considerable experience. Fifty percent of the respondents are either M.phil holders or Post graduates with B.Ed. 45 percent

are Assistant professors while 16 percent are professional language trainers employed by the college.

Table 2
Summary of Statistics

Sl.No	Reasons	N	Percentage	Mean	SD	CV	SE
1.	Teaching methods adopted	35	14.5%	1.41	0.693	0.493	0.083
2.	Non availability of professional language trainers	28	11.5%	1.71	0.706	0.412	0.094
3.	Lack of seriousness among the students in learning English	111	45.86%	1.90	0.636	0.334	0.043
4.	Insufficient infra structure in college for effective teaching	31	12.80%	2.02	0.757	0.376	0.096
5.	Failure to educate the students on importance of English language	14	5.78%	2.14	0.356	0.166	0.067
6.	Fear about the language	28	11.57%	2.28	0.675	0.296	0.089
7.	Mother tongue influence	7	2.89%	2.00	0.707	0.354	0.196
8.	Time allocated for the training course	2	.82%	1.00	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Total	242	100%				

Source : Primary Data

Almost 46 percent of the respondents have opined that lack of seriousness among the students in learning the language is the main pitfall. The students are either disinterested or do not make an effort due to their lack of seriousness. 14.5 percent have agreed on the inefficient and conventional teaching methods adopted which do not have the intended effect. 12 percent have responded that there is insufficient infrastructure like language labs to impart systematic learning. These points are analysed and suggestions are proposed below.

Discussions and recommendations

Forlorn education system

This whole Macaulay system of education is so complicated that little emphasis is given to develop the creative and the cognitive faculties of the students. More importance is given to the core subjects and English is always treated as the step-child. The curriculum has to evolve to suit the growing market requirements. Considerable time has to be allotted on a daily or weekly basis charting out a unique training plan for the students. The communication skill training has to be treated on par with the education imparted on the core subjects. There is no use in creating top notch professionals, who may have hard time expressing and communicating out there when they step into the real world. Instead of concentrating on the mass production of template made technical /non – technical graduates the system has to evolve to the requirement of the market needs in producing quality personnel with exceptional interpersonal skills.

Some institutions have woken up to the stark reality of this and hence try to conduct workshops on personality development. It is a welcome move, considering that it was a non-starter for so long. But again, whether the purpose is served or not, is another contentious issue. **These workshops are focused on again teaching “techniques “of communication rather than providing a conducive atmosphere wherein the students learn to evolve at their own individual pace.** Every individual has his/her own style of communicating. The training module should be imparting methods to help them re-discover themselves.

Lack of deeper understanding among learners

The students fail to acknowledge the importance of effective communication until it is too late to redeem, when they are left to fend for themselves while facing the real world. The apathy towards English as a subject is quite obvious even in the school education level. The importance of English as a powerful medium of communication is not realized by the folks. We have this innate primal urge to communicate from the instant we are born. A baby listening intently to its mother and trying to repeat the sounds that she makes to understand how fundamental is an example of this urge to communicate and ironically called as its mother-tongue. Among the non-native speakers of English, one of the reasons for this callous attitude of the students, who invariably find it tough to master the language, is **the mother tongue influence (MTI)**. Specific demographic patterns of this MTI has emerged, which has become quite hackneyed over a long period of time since we have adopted English as a prominent medium of instruction and communication. If specific care is taken to neutralize these, it can make an adverse impact in the way the language is spoken.

Another of the most common overlooked issue in spoken English is the way the **students process the language**. Usually languages are usually processed in the left side of the brain, whereas creative, artistic thoughts are processed in the right side of the brain. Being non native speakers, the ubiquitous glitch is in execution of vocalization, likely, they process the words in the **native language and try to translate into English while vocalizing**. For eg: if they see a dog and want to convey some idea

on the dog , they process the information in the brain in the mother tongue and translate into English and then try to vocalize. This is where people become poor communicators. When non-native speakers try to see things or think in native language and translate into English and speak, there arises a conflict and become less effective in communication. **Thoughts become words** , words become actions and thereby habits. Slowly they have to start thinking in English, seeing things In English.

Failure to enlighten the importance of communication

There are lots of studies done on effective ways of communication throughout the world. One of the interesting analogy done by Professor Mehrabian combined the statistical results of the two studies and came up with the now famous—and famously misused—rule that communication is only **7 percent** verbal and **93 percent** non-verbal. The non-verbal component was made up of body language (**55 percent**) and tone of voice (**38 percent**). Workshops have to be conducted to drive home the point on being articulate while communicating. Mock interviews, simulated corporate selection process, employing real time industrial players to interact with students can make a hell of a difference in structuring the students psyche. Non verbal communication like body language, gesture, tone and pitch of the voice, gestures etc, is something innate in all primates. We just need to **be aware and conscious** to improve communication skills.

Time

Imparting communication skills cannot be time-bound programme. Developing excellent communication skills is probably best thought of as a long-term project. It is, therefore an active process. There is nothing passive about communication, in either direction.

Conclusion

Effective communication and interpersonal skills aren't exactly concept oriented as analytical methods. It is more like an art, like a sense. You can take a horse to a pond but you can't make it drink. Likewise students can only be **taught how to think**, or methods to kindle their creative abilities to effective communication. Effective communication involves speaking as well listening too. To be a proficient speaker one needs to be a good listener too. The students need to be sensitized on the importance of honing their listening skills. As mentioned in the beginning, a holistic approach should be designed and systematically implemented for successful learning.