

ENGLISH FOR EMPLOYABILITY A CHALLENGE FOR ENGLISH TRAINER

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ABSTRACT

There is a never-ending demand of candidates with good communication skills in global job market. The basic reason is that the world is one global family with diverse language and ethnic culture and English is one of the mostly spoken global languages and thus, it becomes necessary for the prospect candidates to know the language as it is the only medium of communication. Thus, making it more challenging for the regional local students to equip with the power of English language. Over the decades English has given more importance in the Indian curriculum in the hope of providing more exposure and employability opportunity for the young graduates. My study in the paper and examples are basically for the technical institute since I am working in a technical institute. The reference is basically drawn from my own teaching experiences. The aim of the paper is to share few of my perspective and how English teacher needs to maintain the students' technical knowledge and groom them to compete in the global job market related to skills and English knowledge. There are many engineering graduates in India who are not employable due to lack of communication skills.

KEYWORDS: *Employability, English for Engineer, English Trainer, Soft Skills, Opportunity*

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

“47 per cent graduates in India are not employable for any industry role. Their lack of English language knowledge and cognitive skills were identified as the major obstacles to their suitability in the job market.”

I came across the above quote on the internet recently which was published in ‘The Hindu’ newspaper in 2013. It’s quite alarming to see the high rate of unemployment problems in India especially the young engineers passing out from technical institutions. The reference in the paper is from the institute where I am currently teaching. In our institute the students have one paper of Professional communication course in their B Tech first year. Basically, the class is a mixture of students from Hindi medium, English medium, and Bengali medium. My class consists of 65 to 72 students per section. Among them, only 10 students are outspoken, smart and can communicate well. The rest 55 to 62 students are the flaccid listener and hardly can speak for 2 minutes in English. The students have sound knowledge with their core engineering papers but they are not serious about learning English. There are various reasons where both the trainer as well as the students need to work out together to have a productive class and the trainer need to groom students to get a better opportunity for employability. Now a day’s people all over the world go to different place for better job opportunities and

knowing English is one of the important aspects of getting a job abroad or working in Multinational Firms. It is proven by many studies that English is the business language across the sphere. With globalization, all cross-border business communication is usually done in English. Its existence in the global marketplace cannot be ignored. So fluent in English will allow one to access an implausible amount of information which may be useful to one's career growth. Being an effective communicator in English can help one land that first dream job. It can also make one better than other applicants who are less competent in English. In fact, English serves as a stepping stone to leadership responsibilities and career advancement. One will be in a better position to explain one's ideas to others in ways that make sense and are easy to understand by other colleagues. One will be able to talk with co-workers to make sure that all are working together for the benefit of the company. English is required for communicating in a variety of professional fields like business, information technology, science, medicine, aviation, entertainment and diplomacy, where there are many employees with different cultures and customs and countries work under one roof.

Limitation

Communication is what we humans do most of the time both formal and informal since from the time immemorial. We communicate with our family members, friends, cousins, shopkeepers, with the teacher and especially in workplace its only communication we do both in written as well as in spoken. If we see a family member not speaking properly we try to correct them or help them to speak well. Not speaking properly in whatever native language one is speaking is measured as the handicap and more so critical in professional circle. Thus, it becomes more important for the prospective candidates should equip themselves with good effective communication skills. The better the communication skill one's has the better chances of success in one's career. Communication occupies a pivotal role. Thus, it becomes more important for the trainer to focus on the students' communication skills for employability. The following fourteen reasons are the limitations I found with my teaching experiences and what I believed is that the institution needs to work on rigorously to provide a better space for teaching-learning process

- English trainer also needs to upgrade themselves from time to time
- Students of different levels in the same class which make the trainer difficult to balance.
- There are more than 65 to 72 students per section.
- Lack of time to complete the prescribed syllabus.
- Need to make changes from the conventional way of conducting the evaluation.
- Apprehension on teachers to produce high pass percentage in final exams.
- Lack of accessibility of quality textbooks and CDs in the library, especially Communicative English.
- Lack of availability of question banks in the library
- Lack of support from college managements in term of up gradation of Language Laboratory.
- English being treated as negligible subject to study.
- Has the English course equipped the students in language skills with one-semester course? Very doubtful according to me.

- Do the English professors train the students to face the challenges of the industry? 50% they try but not fully due to lack of time and facilities available.
- How confident are the engineering students to face job interview sessions and group discussions? 50% of students are confident but the rest are not.
- Are the students happy that they are aptly trained for employability? 60% of students who truly attended the class try to change themselves, the rest is doubtful according to me.

Limitation from the authority is a huge hindrance in making a productive class. In today's world, there is no denying that effective speaking in English is needed in every field and there is no field or workplace where English is not used. The trainer must try to equip each student with proficient, fluent and accurate in English and be a good communicator. A student also needs to understand that they need the capability to exploit their core engineering knowledge to market and sell it well which is possible only through effective communication. For employability, there are many sets of abilities which the students need to find out one of them is to search the job where everything is done in English, from advertisements in the newspaper/ websites to personal interview. All these stages he/she needs to have a clear understanding of English. The performance of these stages finalizes the suitability of the candidate for the particular job. In order to provide all the facility, the policymaker of the institution needs to seriously think of implementing new innovative methods and provide well furnished English Laboratory. Students per section are high that is also one major factor for slow improvement. The above observation is vital according to me since it helps to structure and make necessary arrangement for the smooth running of the class. According to me, we as a trainer also need to equip with the demand of the current market and try to go out from the four walls and meet the recruiter to know what they are looking in a candidate.

Innovative Ideas to be Implemented

India and English language have become indivisible since English has become a linking language for educated Indians as people come from the different regional background. English trainers are responsible to provide awareness about the importance of language skill in job interviews and workplace. Students are now aware of the need to speak good English and command over communication skills for getting a dream job, and thus leaving a moral obligation for the English trainer to read and share facts about the expertise requirement by the different companies. A trainer should be able to impart the entire soft skills requirement for their workplace and employment without scarifying the sensitivity of literature and language. As many students feel less confident about their presentation skills, the trainer should try out new methodology in classes to boost self-confidence and help the students in the best possible way.

Few of the Things I Personally Tried Out in my Class are given below:

- Try talking to each student, at least three students per day.
- Create a common Whatsapp group platform to share an important link and video clipping and speeches
- Encourages the student to do a recording of their speech in English and I make sure to listen and give them personal feedback
- A class presentation should be taken seriously both by the trainer as well as the students

- Special care and attention for those students who are having low self – esteem
- Continuous assessment is important for the overall development of the students.
- I make them create one common mail id where all the section students are there and I sent them information regarding grammar, communication and important links. In this common mail id they are allowed to mail their write-ups and any correction they would like me to do.

Five Serious Common Complaint or Excuses of Below Average Students for Almost Every Semester Are:

- I am poor in English.
- This is my first time speaking in English.
- I come from the village.
- There are lacks of opportunity in my school.
- I am scared to speak in front of people.

Indeed they are shy to come out of their comfort zone. Among this group of students, they are some who are ready to take chances and try to improve themselves but there are at least 20 students who are insensitive and not responsive in the class. The challenge of the trainer is these 50 to 55 students every section. The focus is on these students, they are given every possible opportunity to come off their protected shells. The trainer needs to coax them all the time and persuade them to come up and speak it out in class. During the interactive session, I made it a point that I ask the maximum question to them so that they part in the discussion and I do sitting arranged for these students. The more they mingle with other students the better change out becoming more comfortable in the class.

Importance of Assessment

In an article in “Planning, Assessment and Evaluation” (Web Source) it has elaborately discussed the important of assessment and evaluation by the teacher and has given certain key points where the trainer can focus and work on it for incorporating in their course curriculum. It also says when there is fair and accurate information about students than it is easy to help and motivate the students. The effectiveness of the assessment occurs when there is a clear understanding of the knowledge and skills students are anticipated to display as a result of their learning at each grade. The following are the key points the articles have provided while making the assessment:

- The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student achievement.
- Assessment continually guides the development, implementation, and support of instruction.
- Students need to receive timely, specific and directive feedback in order to meet the grade/course expectations and assessment target
- Diagnostic assessment of content knowledge skill level, use of literacy, numeracy and met cognitive strategies will serve as baseline data and inform instructional starting points.
- Formative assessment provides valuable feedback to the students, parents/guardians and teachers outlining strengths, needs, and nextsteps.

- Summative assessments or assessment of learning provides students with multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their learning.

I strongly agree with the points provided in the articles. The trainer also needs to work harder to provide more information and try out new ways to understand each of the students in the class. I strappingly believed that one to one feedback is important since it helps the trainer to access each student personally. I feel most of the student are not motivated, once a while listening together some motivational speech do wonder in the class. Today's companies are selecting students not only on the basis of their subject knowledge but also on the basis of their soft skills. The ability to communicate effectively is very important, so trainer needs to vigorously assess the condition of the student throughout the semester. Sufficient opportunity should be given to students to work in groups as well as the individual. To assess them I have made three members team and was asked to take interview from the housekeeping department and Security personals or vendors in NIT Agartala campus. This task was given one week ahead of their actual reporting day. On the reporting day, one has to share the experienced they went through while talking to them and a message they learned through the course of their interview. I could see students were excited and the presentation was overwhelming and they really appreciated the task given to them because it makes them realized that they are people suffering outside from the cushioned wall of their classroom and they say that the assignment had made them a better person. They also submit a written report of the interview and based on that I give them equal marks to all the members. This kind of an exercise is quite successful and student wholeheartedly participates in it

CONCLUSIONS

The big question that is still not answered is whether engineering students in India are trained to improve their language skills that are relevant to workplace responsibilities. They are given basic information and platform to groom them, yet there are students who are not utilizing the opportunity. Moreover, one semester is not enough to groom a student; at least they should be given two years to prepare them. Many students have also expressed the opinion that one semester is not enough to train them for efficiently speaking in English. I believed that one more semester in B. Tech 3rd year, before for their campus placement is important to brush up their soft skills is a must and this idea is also supported by many students too. Students are faced with challenging and demanding recruitment process in which they have to prove their strength with English communication skills. Besides being good at English, they need to be aware of the employability skills required at their future workplaces. The ability to listen, question and express opinions and ideas properly and produce written work that is lucid, clear and structured using correct spelling and grammar has become mandatory for every engineering student. The big question is whether the engineering students are pertinently trained in their colleges to face the challenges, still remain unanswered. Policymaker need to give more important to this aspect at the earliest to help our future engineers to get employed

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