

RELEVANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION FOR ENGINEERING PROFESSIONALS: A REPORT BASED ON INTERVIEWS

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the different views, methods, approaches and suggestions of academicians*, Engineering professionals* and teaching experts* on the importance of English Language Communications for the professionals. Their views and ideas were accumulated to conjoin the theories of communication scholars and philosophers. The interviews are an attempt to showcase their relevant suggestions that would provide the new techniques in the acquisition of communication.

KEYWORDS: Teaching Experts, Engineering Professionals

INTRODUCTION

Informal Interviews have been conducted with the professionals and experts from different universities and colleges. Their views and opinions on language communication skills in English were collected.

Especially the experts' own experiences on communication skills at different situations were extracted. The queries by the researcher and the responses by the experts were recorded; their responses in the form of suggestions benefited the research work. Transcription of the interviews on language communication skills was analyzed for patterns within the interview questions. Different responses were grouped with each question. Questions were asked under four sets.

- First set of questions was framed to know the importance of English Language communication.
- Second set was grouped to analyze the English language implication on students and how far they are successful in utilizing it at their work place.
- Third set of questions was made to analyze the different approaches and methods the students adopt for interpersonal communication.
- Fourth set was prepared to collect the experts' and professionals' valuable suggestions regarding effective communication.
- The first set of questions provided the information regarding the importance of English language communication.
- Second set of questions presented how professionals used the language through interpersonal communication.
- Third set of questions provided their failure and success in the usage of approaches and methods they adopted in

their communication.

- Fourth set of questions helped in the analysis and making the communication efforts effective.

The most compelling result of the interview is related to *the difference in their perceptions about language communication skills*. All the experts had the same response regarding the importance of English in today's world. Almost all the experts' opinion was that English language plays an important role in business all round the globe.

At workplace, or any other situation where people encounter each other, being an international language it is a source through which they share ideas and information. They express thoughts and exchange the feelings in that particular language. Many professionals say that Globalization has been marked by technological developments and increasing interconnectedness that make communication across the world instantaneous. They stressed on its result showing a sharp increase in the number of world organizations and transactional cooperation entering into business in the local markets. They pointed out that in the face of such rapid development the world over, a developing country like India is competing in the global market to develop indigenous technology, on par with the developed countries and promote the economic interests of the nation. To promote research and develop indigenous technology the Government of India has made rigorous attempts to expand technical education since independence. In recent years, Andhra Pradesh (including Telangana) has progressively expanded technical education in keeping with the many changes brought about by the Information and Communication Technologies. In this result according to the experts there is a need of effective interpersonal communication among the professionals and this would only be possible if their language skill is good. Hence English is the only source to run the global market.

Answering the second set of questions, like *how far the students of professional colleges are successful in communication and interpersonal communication*, varied responses were accumulated. Of the professionals and experts interviewed, majority of them stressed on the significant importance of communication skills in the present global professional scenario. According to them the emergence of new work order brought about by globalization and industrialization demands not only specialization in the particular field but also a combination of skills among the employees. Specifically, among the professional learners besides the academic learning, skills such as i) extracting information, ii) interpreting data and theories, iii) reporting on latest advances in particular areas of specialist knowledge and iv) documenting projects undertaken, product presentation, sales talk etc., they also need interactive skills and linguistic skills involving negotiation, procedure elaboration, troubleshooting and decision making. For this purpose they need to have social interactive skills. According to experts' views, human relation skills comprise communication skills and motivation skills. English teaching involves equipping the students with the "basic ability to use the language to receive and convey information associated with specialist studies" (Allen and Widdowson, 1974).

Emphasizing on the philosophy of engineering one professional explained that engineering enables human beings to attain the synergic power to obtain things in greater abundance than was otherwise possible with his physical strength and skill alone. Therefore the profession should deliver goods appropriate to the society. It calls for realistic approach, professional responsibility and purposefulness of the task in hand. The emergence of the new work order has been making new demands on the employees seeking a combination of skills in which language use becomes an integral part of the workers' function.

Therefore equipping undergraduates with the skills required to face the stiff competition of the job market has

become challenging, they believed.

During this time the study of English in India, unlike in England, was devoted to the study of classical literature when the learning English should have been used for the transfer of ‘useful knowledge’ (Krishnaswamy and Sriraman, T. 1995).

While the Grammar Translation method continued to be adopted for teaching English in India, English language teaching underwent a drastic change in Europe. The study of teaching methods and procedures in language teaching assumed a central role in applied linguistics.

According to some experts English is a language of opportunity and employability and takes forward bridging the need of the 21st century globalised world. The growing globalization of the worlds’ economic markets, increased travel opportunities and better communication facilities have created a situation in which people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds need to communicate with each other. When speakers need to resort language which is the mother tongue to neither of them, they use a lingua franca. English is one of the languages that is to be used as communications tool in many a situation.

Many of the professionals’ opined that, English as a language is widely used because it is the medium of instruction in schools and higher levels of education. It is also the language of administration and law. Therefore as non-native speakers, we are exposed to the language in the written and spoken script. Therefore as ‘bilinguals’ we need to equip ourselves not only with pedagogical knowledge of the language, but more importantly to be proficient users of the language and to use the language effectively we need to develop ourselves in use of interpersonal communication skills, so that we can be proficient in social, professional and academic fields.

According to the third set of questions, experts identified different barriers regarding the interpersonal communication. Majority of the experts opined that the major communication barriers come from wrong assumptions, varied perceptions, differing backgrounds, wrong inferences etc. Many of the professionals said that teaching and learning English in India has academic and professional purposes, earlier the syllabus was framed as EGP (English for general purpose) for academic purpose, later it was modified for professional purpose, as ESP (English for specific purpose); further, when they questioned that why should engineers and scientists study technical writing or speaking, in fact their primary training and interests lie in technical areas, most science and engineering students successfully pursue their technical subject without extra writing courses? It might seem, then, that writing and communication are superfluous to technical education. This way they need to learn EST (English for Science & Technology).

In fact, scientists and engineers may be technically brilliant, and creative, but unless they can convince co-workers and supervisors of their worth, the technical skills will be unnoticed, unappreciated, and unused. In a word, if technical people cannot communicate to others what they are doing and why it is important, it is they and their excellent technical skills that will be superfluous. From this perspective, communication skills are not just handy; they are critical tools for success even survival in real world environments.

No doubt a great deal of scientific and technical communication is carried out by means of ordinary conversation – in the office, in the classroom, in the laboratory, in hallways at lunch, over the telephone, at conferences etc, it is probably safe to say that most scientific and technical communication takes place in this way. And this is not even taken

into consideration the amount of ordinary social communication that occurs through conversation - social communication that helps to establish good relations between co workers and thus helps make technical communication easier. Fifty percent of the experts said that for these reasons, it is well worth anyone's time to develop effective conversational skills. "One prominent feature of informal conversational language is the use of idiomatic expressions often have such restricted and unpredictable meaning", they said, "and those are to be learned through situational activities".

One of the experts stressed on the experimental approach of inter-disciplinarity which was suggested by Bull et al. (1986). Basically the most important feature of interdisciplinary approach is a belief in the value of the experimental method, which in itself represents the distinctive theoretical perspective of psychology.

An interdisciplinary field or multidisciplinary field of study that crosses traditional boundaries between academic disciplines or schools of thought as new needs and professions has emerged.

Originally these terms and multidisciplinarity were applied within education and training pedagogies to describe studies that cut across several established disciplines or traditional field of study. Many professionals' views were that when students come across with practical barriers to interpersonal communication, basically they face the problems of inadequate vocabulary, poor construction of sentences, mother tongue influence, translation problem, idiomatic usage, lack of discourse markers, lack of information and also non-verbal communication cues.

Further in the fourth set of questions, when professionals and experts were asked to suggest methods and approaches for resolving these issues, 80% of them suggested first to identify the problem of the interpersonal communication, whether it creates in academic environment or social environment, then it is required to find out the cause of the barrier, more over they stressed on the experimental approach of interdisciplinary by Bull et al. (1986).

One of the experts suggested to have modifications in grammar translation methods, because many of the non-native speakers have mother tongue influence in communicating a foreign language and also stressed to have native teaching faculty for certain period for teaching English to non-native students.

Other expert stressed on extensive reading of novels and stories, where they get the natural process of learning communicative English.

One more expert's views on effective communication was that there is a need to include communication approaches in school syllabi where they are able to learn through natural process of interactive learning and enhance and get familiarized with vocabulary, they need to use synonyms and same words repeatedly in different performance roles, moreover they may memorize them as per the requirement and they also felt that foreign methods of teaching should be brought in native speaking to correct their pronunciation and make the students practice different structural patterns. Following are some more guiding principles for language teaching that were also suggested.

- Maximize learning opportunities
- Facilitate negotiated interaction
- Minimize perceptual mismatches
- Foster language awareness

- Contextualize linguistic input
- Integrate language skills
- Promote learner autonomy
- Ensure social relevance
- Raise cultural consciousness
- (Kumaravadivelu 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

The perceptions and the suggestions of the experts and professionals would enable the new techniques and strategies for the professional which would help to make their communication skills effective. Communication acts as a powerful tool because it enables the communicator to use words in a practical context instead of limiting them to mere bookish and literary usage. The learning process, theoretically, might seem very complicated and involved but overall it proves to be very good learning tool. On top of everything practical usage helps learner acquire good vocabulary in the right context.

List of Professionals and Experts interacted for study:

Dr. Ghazala F. Hashmi, Prof. of English, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Richmond, USA.

Dr. Prakash Rao, Prof of English, Progressive College of Engineering, R. R. District.

Dr Shabana Tahniath, Asst. Prof. of English, MJCET. Hyd.

Dr. Khalid Mubashir Zafar, Assoc. Prof. Translation Dept. MANUU. Hyd.

Dr. Faheem Uddin Ahmed, Asst. Prof. Translation Dept. MANUU. Hyd.

Dr. M. A. Nayeem, Prof. of Electronics and Communication, DCET, Hyd.

Mr. Mohd. Abdul Sattar, Prof. in Electronics and Communication, NSAKCET, Hyderabad.

Mr. Sadat Ullah Hussaini, CEO, ABRIF Technologies, Hyd.

Ms. Rasia Nayeem Hashmi (Ph.D), Journalism and Communication Dept., MANUU, Hyd. and Journalist.

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