

A GLIMPSE OF A STRATAGEM FOR ENDORSING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN THE LINE OF ENGINEERING FOR CAREER EXCELLENCE

C.Kalaiselvi¹, M.Divya², Medithe Poornananda Rao³, G.Sai Krishnan⁴

^{1, 2} *Department of English, Rajalakshmi Institute of Technology, Chennai-600124*

³ *Department of Tourism, College Of Administration and Economics, Lebanese French University,
Erbil, Iraq*

⁴ *Department Of Mechanical Engineering, Rajalakshmi Institute of Technology, Chennai-600124*

ABSTRACT

Today's corporate world is increasingly suffered with inexpert manpower as graduate employees lack interpersonal skills which plays an indispensable role in bonding with other professional groups and broader community. Since, employers are now more focused on interpersonal skills rather than Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), it is an irrefutable fact that imparting technical knowledge along with the knowledge of communicative competence in English takes a lion's share in professional success. But the graduates are not ready to learn personality traits, behavioral changes, official demureness and decency to find a better place in their career. Proficiency in English communication does not come naturally to graduates in India as English is not their first language or the mother tongue. While inculcating English language, objectives and methods taught are mostly enabling the students to rewrite the learned or by hearted information and facts in written form of examination. It is painful to say that oral communication in English, a medium to express feelings and ideas, is not really given practice as the components to facilitate oral communication, although present, are not adequate. This can be achievable only through a proper strategy that is focused on imparting technical knowledge as well as improving effective communication and persuasive skills rather than emphasizing to incorporate a course on communication skills. This paper attempts to highlight such a strategy on communication skills for engineering students.

Keywords: communication skills, English language, engineering students, behavioral changes, personality traits.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast paced life, globalization persuades the needs of corporate sector for everything and in turn the global engineer must be able to traverse national and international boundaries without any issues. This further affects engineering education which requires a common code, communication. Whatever may be the recruiting parameters the corporate sectors such as I.T. sectors, public and private services, MNCs have in their agenda, it is crystal clear that a first class degree would not serve the purpose. In this current milieu, engineering graduates are in need to have a balanced liaison with the global environment in accumulating a wide range of skills, primarily, communication skills to excel in career. As the effectual performance is fully dependent on how competent they are in effective communication. Effective communication helps professionals in their several managerial tasks namely planning, organizing, executing, staffing and controlling. A recent newspaper report said that in every hundred interviews, only five are qualified for employability as they not lacked in technical skills, but they lacked in delivering that technical skills through the mode of communication skills.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Harmer, in Engineering education, skills such as problem solving, communication skills, interpersonal skills, lateral thinking and critical thinking skills should be promoted, not only for getting an employment as they are key traits that employers demand for but also a vital part of any tertiary education. A graduate should also be resourceful in individual and team work, interpersonal communication such as comprehending and writing effective reports and designing documentation, making effective presentations, advertising skills, understanding of economics, business and travel ethics, time management, stress management and leadership with a global view. The communication skills are not only having mastery over the language but also imply that students are able to analyze concepts and use their knowledge across the disciplines. The training in communication and professional skills are expected to transcend beyond its transactional function to reflective function. Also, engineering graduates are expected to be globally fit and have a sound knowledge of intercultural nuances. Undoubtedly, Engineering, which has international link, needs English, the premier global language and the only convenient means of professional communication for engineering professionals, acknowledged by both academic and corporate worlds. i.e., only the English communicative skills can authenticate the employment opportunity and the sustenance of the job. It would be a grand support to the establishments and students for a remote future, notwithstanding the academicians design courses for enhancing the soft skills of the students, it is the

right strategy that matters the most. For instance, engineering communication curriculum should provide the students an exposure on English for academic and career purposes whereas the strategy makes the exposure applicable in their routine.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT CURRICULUM

The objectives of the curriculum in many engineering institutions are to equip the students with the English language skills required for the successful undertaking of academic studies with primary emphasis on academic speaking and listening skills, to enhance the employability and career skills of students, to orient the students towards grooming as a professional, to make them employable graduates and to develop their confidence in attending interviews and making effective presentations successfully. (Objectives of Anna University syllabus) Even though these objectives are useful for professional and personal life, the engineering graduates are not giving enough importance to English language as he finds hard to go with the stream. In Indian education, even if, the second language English is being taught as a compulsory subject, syllabus at higher secondary level explores that most of the evaluation components are based on the assessment of written work and not spoken, In many educational institutions, it is acknowledged that molding the students in written and oral use of English language is the career of only English staff, not by other subject pedagogues. To the crest, in interpersonal skills, the success of the students is measured generally in written form, which is mostly plagiarized by the engineering students whereas to assess oral communication, however, the facilities afforded by the institutions. While the English native speakers counter challenges in writing skills, Indian students find it scary to speak correct grammatical English. In order to exhibit the issues of current courses of communication skills for engineering graduates, covers a wide range of oral and written exercises, an outlook with reference to the teaching scaffold as well as the stratagem has been given.

CURRENT TEACHING SCHEDULE

The first class of the course is started with theory and instruction on many basic concepts of communication, theories of communication, the barriers of communication and the feedback process. In the next session, nonverbal communication, mastering body language and handling stage fright are covered. The writing part of the same course deals with basics of job application, report and proposal writing. Instructions regarding individual presentations for 3- 5 minutes, Group discussion, interview skills are also taught as tutorial classes i.e. the students get three practical classes for Group Discussion in batch wise followed by two classes for presentation and one for interview session.

Students can get a detailed information and instruction from the teachers but their confidence point cannot be accomplished due to many factors such as lack of attention, interest, distractions and even the influence of mother tongue. During practice sessions, mostly, the students are indulging themselves in making efforts to overcome their hesitation and nervousness due to their discomfort with language. The analysis of the group discussion topic and comprehending techniques remain an inaccessible dream for many students. To be precise, the chances that students get to understand the taught, assimilate them in their behavior and demonstrate during assessment are inadequate. Even though they obtain feedback by the staff after their performances, they do not get enough chances to work on that feedback. Because of these drawbacks, students concentrate on rote learning, reproduction of facts and replication from the internet. On the whole, in higher semesters, the emphasis is given on emerging oral skills in the third semester; knowledge on receptive and productive skills in the fourth semester, and awareness on reflective and analytical skills in the sixth semester, as already mentioned, Indian students face more difficulty in oral communication.

DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF A LANGAUGE

Researchers have identified different aspects of conversational language: Expressive language is a conversation which reveals as much about the speaker. It is necessary to use gestures when helping a speaker understands the meaning of a word that symbolizes an object or an action, to use pictures to reinforce and review the vocabulary that has been taught. It includes role play/ conversational activities such as telephoning, interviewing and telling jokes, which are used to develop co-operative learning and oral language activities. Since the transactional and interpersonal languages are concentrating the conversations that involve the discussion of personal and social relations. These conversations have direct involvement in students' real life as it teach the speaker to explore the circumstances when, where and how to use appropriate expressions. After comprehending these aspects of a language, it is unambiguous that the engineering students are evaluated according to these expressive, transactional and interactional language capabilities. But the students' notion is that their evaluation is based upon what they reproduce on the paper in the examination, by hearted topic contents for presentation, group discussion, and prepared static answers to interview questions.

A DESIGNED STRATEGY IN ACCOMPLISHING THE DEMANDS OF CORPORATE

It is clearly revealed by Nunan that efficient oral communication involves: (i) adequate quantity of fluency, (ii) transactional skills, (iii) skills in taking extensive and small speaking turns, (iv) skill in organizational interactions, (v) negotiating skills meaning win-win, (vi) routine listening

skills, (vii) skill in knowing about and negotiating purposes for conversation, (viii) using appropriate conversational formula and fullers. Furthermore, it is clearly stated by Finocchiaro and Bonomo (i) to select what to say, (ii) to choose the pattern going to be used (iii) to pick the words suitable to the pattern and transmit meaning, (iv) to ensure that what the speaker to say is appropriate to the situation. In accordance with the expectations of the industry the current strategy can be re-strategized as follows: For presentation, the student should analyze various current topics and choose a topic on his own without any external force. Besides, the deliverance of presentation should be in an effective, novel way. The student should be highly energetic and enthusiastic from starting to finishing, while giving the presentation. He should highly focus on keeping the audience always in his speech-loop. For instance, the student can involve his audience to be attentive by interacting with them through questions, satisfy their curiosity and clarify their doubts, crack jokes occasionally and share humorous quotes. Group discussions on current topics help developing students' critical thinking abilities. During discussion, influencing others is the first priority and found to be satisfactory in all aspects to be selected by the competent authority. For influencing others, a student has to impress his co-partners by his knowledge in the subject. Usually, group discussions are conducted to assess if the applicants have the expected qualities. It could be social or official gatherings where an engineer is requisite to speak. Fortunately, public speaking can be learnt and improved. Irrespective of whom the student is speaking to, the topic or the span of presentation and his capability to communicate powerfully with the public and involve them directly reflects on his company and himself. The student should have attention holding devices such as statistical facts, anecdotes, everyday experience and allusions to catch interest of the audience. During communication classes, lab module with proper software can be introduced, to provide extra assistance to the students. In the labs, a consolidated communication package may be offered where the students can select the package from beginners to advance level in order to avoid any feeling of inferiority. After a few self-study sessions, all the students may be asked to clear a common test which may be conducted as per the level of the students. Written exercises such as basic principles of writing technical documents, letters along with the basic formats of memos, reports, proposals and reviews on movie, hotel, literature and book may be introduced and taught. Review writing of research papers related to their discipline, analyze them orally in the groups where the peer feedback may be encouraged. Every individual student should be motivated to maintain blogs. The blogs should be updated at regular intervals and the blog holder should speak about it for two minutes every week, to improve their oral and written communication skills. The group working skills can be recognized and improved through peer feedback which helps the students develop group dynamics, oral communication skills, social and interpersonal skills. In

this evaluation, the focus may be equally shared to spoken and written segments. Last but not least, a viva-voce can be a chief part of evaluation as viva encourages students to study a concept on a deeper level. This will help them to develop their skills in management level.

CONCLUSION

Once the students have attained oral and written ability, the exposure can be transferred to develop critical thinking skills and global competence issues such as entrepreneurship, leadership, intercultural communication, business ethics, etc. It helps students understand transactional as well as reflective functions of the language. As the engineers have international job markets, they are in need to establish that they are deserving candidates for capturing those job opportunities. In course of executing this, the engineers are required to exhibit their high caliber in communication in English.

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