

Language Problems of the Engineering Students of Rajasthan and its Remedies

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ABSTRACT

With various kinds of developments in different areas such as social, economic, political etc. language also gains importance. English is one such language among several languages of the world which has been gaining continuous importance due to increased interactions of the people among the world. The purpose of this paper is to focus on the problems of the engineering learners of Rajasthan with special reference to Hadouti area.

English language, Engineering students, Hadouti area, Solutions

Globally, India is stretching hard to change its image as a developed country. To bring the country up to the level of developed countries we need to work hard with the youth of the country. In the efforts to shape the youth of the country we should consider various dimensions which are related to ethical, scientific, leadership areas etc. and try to shape the inherent qualities they have. Amongst these qualities lies the ability to communicate and express their ideas and feelings in the best possible manner.

David Graddol quotes from the budget speech given by the President of India and formerly the finance minister Pranab Mukherjee,

“The demographic advantage India has - in terms of large percentage of young population –needs to be converted into a dynamic economic advantage by providing them the right education and skills.”(Graddol: 11, 2010)

He begins the discussion further by adding that only a few years ago, North America and Europe discovered that India could provide low- cost back office and call centre facilities. It looked as if India was finally able to monetise its British colonial legacy. The English language appears to be the key ingredient in a new, IT enabled, economy which is everywhere transforming Indian society. One of the most popular contemporary novelists and columnists Chetan Bhagat remarks in his work “What Young India Wants”,

“a person with decent English language skills can increase earning power by 400 per cent.” (Bhagat: 112, 2012)

It is at this juncture that the person realizes the need of developing better communication skills. According to the survey report presented in *The Times of India* dated 15th March 2010 India is one of the top five countries speaking English. Modern education and technological development has made English language as an integral part of new, complex, socio linguistic setting. Mengham in his work *Language: An intellectual Delight* points out that the link between money and words, always important has come to form an absolutely central strand in the fabric of modern society. But at the same time the modern education has bifurcated the society in such a way that we have on one side people receiving education in good English medium schools and on the other side we have the poor and marginalized mass who is away from the centre and these people are forced to occupy the side of fringes and they feel being excluded from the society. In this marginalized group there are also linguistically marginalized people.

In today's scenario almost everyone has recognized the importance of communication skills and especially in the field of engineering it has become an essential skill along with other soft skills.

To transform an ordinary engineering student into an outstanding professional engineer the student needs to think at a global level as her/his working level will be directly or indirectly related to the wider level only. To fulfill this purpose developing proper understanding and language skill is the only effective tool. If an engineer has problem solving skills, decision making skills, leadership skills or project management or mathematical skills, they can all be expressed properly only with the help of language. To communicate effectively with the people this skill is essential.

Now, referring to the core area of research i.e. Hadouti region, we need to have a brief survey of this part of Rajasthan.

Hadouti which was once known as Bundi Kingdom, is the south eastern area of Rajasthan state. It includes the districts of Bundi, Baran, Jhalawar and Kota. The area is popular from the point of view of education and business.

The dialect spoken by the people of this area is Hadouti. It is a language containing hard sounds. Thus when the situation comes to learn and speak a second language the mother tongue interferes. This interference is noted in the spoken ability of the teachers too. Hence the students whose ears are trained to listen to wrong English, their learning is hampered. Most of the teachers at school level speak English which is tinged with the effect of their mother tongue. So when the students come to pursue their under graduation initially their efforts are moreover consumed in understanding how the language is spoken and what is spoken in front of them. They remain both lost and disinterested or try hard to cope up with the language spoken in front of them as their understanding is not appropriate. Regarding language learning it has been well said that a language is caught and not taught.

Language starts with the ear. Thanks to the inherent gift of imitation with which man is born. Along with the age, (approximately 10 years or less) child's imitative ability starts deteriorating. That results into the problem faced by learner in learning second language with ease. With aging our linguistic habits become strong so they

seem to be difficult to break. The solution to this problem is that if they are really taught with an objective to catch the sounds of second language and train their ears accordingly the interference of the first language would lessen. For the better results the assessment of the listening ability of the students should be done at various levels.

The right approach to develop listening skill is the natural one which should be developed first. It helps the reader to cultivate appropriate speaking skills thus these skills are interrelated. Skills like reading and writing can be introduced later.

“To communicate well in any language a person needs to first listen to what others speak. He should then try to speak others without any inhibition. That is the reason why children learn languages fast.”(Menon: 26, 2011)

remarks Dr. M Sudha Menon in an article.

A lot of practice in listening and speaking definitely helps in cultivating good reading habit. A person with adequate speaking skills will not face any problem while reading. The habit of reading must be inculcated in the child right from the school days which seems to be a challenging task in Rajasthan especially in Hadouti area where the students are not made aware of the importance of reading. Thus it becomes the duty of English language teacher to develop interest of the students towards learning.

Reading has been defined as a complex, purposeful, social and cognitive process in which readers simultaneously use their knowledge of the topic of the text and their knowledge of their culture to construct meaning. It is not an acquired skill but it is a developmental process.

Dr. A. Sandhya Reddy writes in “Inculcating the Habit of Reading – A Challenge for the English Teacher in the Engineering College”,

"reading helps us gain knowledge about things happening around us. In fact reading shapes our thoughts and enables us to think better. Reading gives us an edge over others in both professional and social circles. There is a pedagogic reason to the emphasis of reading skills: readers write better.” (Reddy: 16, 2011)

Technology could be best used to enhance various skills of language learning. But technology which appears to most of us like a land of dreams appearing so various, beautiful and new has been creating a lot of negative impact in the present social environment. We feel that it could be best used for remedial courses but it is observed that students moreover like to use it for the purpose of social entertainment rather than for self study.

The problems related to reading of Hadouti region and especially those students who have passed their secondary and senior secondary do not have a solid reading background as they are rarely provided with this kind of practice; on the other hand the students in this educational city are so much engrossed with the preparation to seek admission in nationally acclaimed engineering and medical colleges that they hardly pay attention to the beauty of language and its intricacies. . Whenever the students are questioned regarding their reading background their answer is that they have hardly read a literary work and sometimes not even a single

library book till they passed senior secondary. It would be appropriate to note here that the condition of libraries is extremely poor in most of the schools. As a result the development of vocabulary is limited. The pressure of getting into top colleges of India creates accountable stress in the mind of the students. This affects their expressive power. The other area where most of the students are weak are spellings rules, concept related to the sequence of tense, sentence constructions, direct-indirect narration etc. If they are given enough practice right from the school level regarding pronunciation, pause and rhythm this problem can be solved.

The students' habits of reading with a purpose, predict, skim, and scan, extracting, recognizing the functions of various parts of speech, deducing meaning from the context is essential to develop. It will further help him/her to enjoy and understand the given content.

To activate such learners, the English teachers along with syllabi designers also need to re-conceptualize the relation between language and culture and the course can be designed in this regard. At the initial stage the inclusion of translated works from Indian literature would also help them to learn better. Technology should also be best and meaningfully used for enhancing remedial courses.

Regarding the speaking and writing it is appropriately remarked that a good speaker is always a good reader.

To communicate effectively a speaker must have exercised enough listening practice; he/she should have sufficient storage of vocabulary, grammar, aural comprehension, reading etc. which are directly or indirectly involved in the writing skill. Without covering and polishing these areas it becomes difficult to learn and teach writing. Nancy Arapoff explain regarding the nature of the development of writing skill explains,

“Writing is much more than an orthographic symbolization of speech; it is most importantly, a purposeful selection and organization of experience. By experience I mean all thoughts – facts, opinions and ideas- whether acquired first-hand (through direct perceptions and/or actions) or second-hand (through reading or hearsay). This includes all kinds of writing from poem to the scientific experiment, for all have a purpose and an organization body of selected facts, opinions or ideas. How clear the purpose, how relevant and well-organized the facts, determines the effectiveness of the writing.” (Arapoff: 200, 1978) Whereas when a learner learns grammar and spoken English, a teacher tries to form a habit. This tendency often comes in a way when a learner learns writing. In the process of selection and organization of the facts, ideas and opinions the learner has to undergo a kind of mental activity. The problem with the teaching of writing is to know whether the learner has some details in his mind to share or not.

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