

Original research article

# Designing Remedial Course in English for Engineering Students from Non-English Medium Background

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**Abstract:** Engineering graduates in India belong to different fields of specialization. The prerequisites of the professions and the specificity of language functions required for a study of English offered at Engineering Colleges. The students who join professional courses like Engineering, half of the students come from Non-English medium Instruction. Careful analyses of these students' performance by diagnosing the areas of difficulty will help to plan and design a remedial course to teach the basics to communication skills in order to enhance and present according to their contexts and their academics. The engineering colleges in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have become mushrooms without maintaining any quality which should be suited to the industry requirement. The intention in preparing the paper is to point out what is lacking in engineering students and they are suited to the industry, their weaknesses, stumbling blocks, and measure to improve by suggesting with a remedial course in order to implement in engineering studies at the beginning of their courses.

**Keywords:** engineering studies, communications skills, remedial teaching

## 1. Introduction

Engineering graduates belong to different fields of specialization, comprising, Civil, Mechanical, Computer Science Engineering etc. The varied functions of English language in the field of science and technology pre-dominate its role and existence both in academic and professional areas. In this study, the concern is about the status of English in engineering colleges and suggestions for improving the English language skills of engineering students.

**English for Engineering Students:** The students who join the professional courses like Engineering, at least half of them are from Telugu Medium or Non-English medium background. In case of a few students, even though they did schooling through English medium, they were taught the lessons in their regional language. And the conversation between students and teachers was also in their regional language. But, they do write everything in English only. They face much difficulty with speaking skills and other skills. The prerequisites of the professionals and the specificity of language functions required for a study of English offered at Engineering Colleges.

**Background of Engineering students:** Students, who join engineering colleges will have different types of educational backgrounds. Every class in India is heterogeneous due to many reasons. Students with different backgrounds from cities, districts and rural areas join the courses. They pursued their school and junior college education with different media of instructions and syllabus. Their intelligence, capability and performance differ with background of their studies based on school studies, teaching staff, financial background of their parents and environment they grown up.

**Opinion of scholars on second language teaching:** English is as a second language has been a part of the curriculum right from the primary classes, or from middle school because of this often they face problem. According to A. Banik, in her paper writes, "The students from the regional medium of instruction often face difficulties while communicating in English. Their mindset lays a crucial role in this as the difficulty lies in the mind rather than in the task itself. The approach towards leaning English needs to be positive. Inertia is another stumbling block. The apprehension of failure and lack of confidence, present them accepting new challenges" (Banik, 2016).

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The studies in regional medium instructions made the students learn the English language in the same approach. Here this differs. As the teachers are also followed with traditional methods, this will not help in learning English language. She continues and emphasizes, “The greatest hindrance in the way of learning English as a second language is the student’s affinity to Hindi/ regional language. They learn English comparing it with the already set rules and standards of their mother tongue. This tendency compels them to translate words from their language into English. Translation is an inexact method to learn a language cause or create problem in learning the language”(Banik, 2016).

**Background of English Teachers:** Coming to the English teachers, they might have done their degrees in English literature or methodologies, but they may not have command on teaching of language skills. At the school level most of the do not have right qualification and skills to teach English. So the English becomes a monologue, with the teacher as the performer and the students as bored observers.

The students initially, when they join the professional (Engineering) courses, they face the problems are: They come from regional medium schools ‘or’ ordinary standard schools. The teachers have not concentrated on activities based on LSRW skills, pronunciation and vocabulary. They never heard the acronym LSRW. The teachers’ intention is to finish the syllabus and mug up students for the sake of examination.

- *The problem of Listening and Understanding:* As the students hail from semi-reputed and ordinary schools were not taught the skills on listening. Just it was only the lectures of their teachers and lecturers and there were no special exercises and training on listening and understanding.

- *Problem of Speaking Skills:* Conversation becomes problem for the students who came from non-English medium backgrounds and semi-reputed schools and rural areas. As in the Engineering the medium instruction is English, when faculty poses questions and interact with students, they become dumb. They cannot even express as usual expressions. A few students, who can communicate in English, are pointed out of their pronunciation.

Students from regional mediums face much problem in oral presentation like in Just a Minute Session, Extempore Topics or Group Discussions. According to the opinion of N. Morita (2000), “Oral presentation is a formal mode of communication that constitutes an integral part of the repertoire of skills required for graduate engineer; in both education and employment. Despite the importance of oral presentation as a measure of communicative competence, literature on oral presentation in English as a second/foreign language classroom is scant” (Morita, 2000; Ootshi & Heffernan, 2008).

Students often encounter the task of doing an oral presentation by practically making a presentation without any knowledge of what makes a good oral presentation. Sometimes students know about what makes a good oral presentation but fail to practice it during their presentation. This often results in students making amateur presentations.

- *Problem of Reading skills:* Students are unable to choose what sort material or text they should read and are not interested in reading other books in enhancing their skills and knowledge. They should also be aware of reading techniques like skimming, scanning, labeling, predicting etc. But they are not familiar with these skills.

- *Problem of writing skills:* It is common problem for students, due to their backgrounds. Heterogeneous environment is a common phenomenon in today’s classrooms. Students become frustrated and show reluctance in participating writing skills. They unable to put words on paper. There two reasons: one as they have ideas they are unable put on paper due problem of vocabulary, spelling, grammar and handwriting skills. The other they are able to put on paper but ideas are lacking.

- *Problem of vocabulary:* Vocabulary is treasure of a language. As students have not done any practice during their schooling or post-metric level, becomes a burden in expressing both in written and spoken way.

According to Cambridge dictionary, vocabulary refers to “all the words in a language the entire vocabulary of language” (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, n/a).

The students have not equipped with minimum vocabulary to express orally or written form.

- *Problem of Grammatical skills:* A set prescribed rules for using the language. They are not thorough with basic elements for spoken and written practice like tenses, articles, prepositions and punctuation. The students are least bothered about punctuation in writing sentences and paragraphs.

After a pre-look at the profile of both the students and teachers the need for teaching or learning of English in engineering colleges and its relevance of the present scenario of

English language teaching is very essential. There is a need to design a remedial course for these students to avoid their stumbling blocks.

## 2. Materials and Methods - Designing as a Remedial course

The main object of the course is to help the students in an easy way of understanding and learning English language for the development of the language skills and for easy learning of other subjects. According to N Krishnaswamy & L. Krishnaswamy (2006), “The four skills are referred to as LSRW and all the four skills go, obviously, with understanding without which no language can be used effectively. Moreover, without listening, no speaking is possible; so on order to speak, one has to listen. Similarly, without reading, no writing is possible; so one has to read in order to write. The four skills can also be represented in terms of perspective versus productive and aural versus the visual”.

The following are the topics. I want to execute in the preparation of the course under the following headings:

- *Listening Skills:*
  - o Playing CDS. Showing Videos with help of projector from you-tube etc.
  - o Specially design around small passages, give exercise numbers, play them and give questionnaire filling up blanks, yes/no questions, options like a/b/c/d in order to get feedback about their listening.
  - o Listening games like reading about 30 words related one area and asking them tell at least 15.
  
- *Functional English:*
  - o Providing basic and suitable vocabulary for learning and framing sentences with expression banks.
  - o Basic sounds - 44 (phonetics) and pronunciation of words
  - o Using a dictionary learning meanings, stress, pronunciation
  - o Greeting and leave-taking sentences
  - o Introducing ourselves/others
  - o Pair work and activities
  - o Providing short sentences for speaking and for immediate response
  
- *Situational Grammar:*
  - o Verb forms - List of verbs Present-V1, Past-V2, Past Participle-V3, Present Participle-v4
  - o Sentences - Negative, positive and interrogative
  - o Tenses - Tense and time
  - o Question Tags
  - o Active and Passive Voice
  - o Direct and Indirect way of speaking
  
- *Writing Skills:*
  - o Providing the phrases ‘or’ linkers in construction of sentences ‘or’ paragraphs.
  - o Providing topics and getting related matter or points
  - o Describing objects / Process writing
  - o Paragraph writing
  
- *Reading Skills:*
  - o Reading paragraphs, comprehensive passages and short stories etc.
  - o Telling a few techniques like scanning, skimming, labeling, inferring etc.

More practice on comprehensive passages help in understanding any text it is given. In the same way to develop the habit some good books they have to select to gain interest and for learning.

According to Dr. Innyasamma Gade, a scholar opines, “The present generation is exposed to an over abundance of reading material. But it is necessary to direct the youth to select the right kind of material thereby indirectly enhance their reading skills”(Gade, 2016).

## 3. Others important points to be implemented

- Skill is not like knowledge which gained just reading or observing something but it should be learnt through practice. So more and more practice on each skill should be done, especially on speaking skill.
- When a student is given a choice to speak, give him/her own topic to speak. They feel convenient, get interest and encourage them to do with other topics to perform and make them continuous practice.
- Apart from above all the students be taught of soft skills like motivational skills, confidence building, self-esteem, non-verbal skills to get enthusiasm, curiosity, and confidence in doing about things.

#### 4. Conclusions

The course which I proposed is suitable to come out the problems and enhancing their skills and join others of their class. When it is implemented in the beginning of the I year I semester or at gap level, after diagnosing the students' weakness and stumbling blocks and they should be divided into group and taught the skills accordingly.

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