

## Challenges of Teaching English in Engineering Institutions in Tamil Nadu - A Study

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### Abstract

English is important because it has emerged as the global lingua franca for all types of transactions. It is the language of education, science, technology, business, industry, commerce, and the law, among other things. It serves as a link language in a country like Tamilnadu's multicultural and multilingual social setting, and it also has a strong association with higher education, career advancement, and global employability. Teaching English to students from various social and cultural backgrounds in engineering schools is a significant challenge for language teachers. Problems such as mother tongue interference, a lack of

motivation to learn, and other sociolinguistic factors are examples of these. This paper focuses on the major issues that impede achieving the desired results in language classrooms, as well as the techniques that can be used to overcome them.

Keywords: Teaching, Engineering Colleges, Tamilnadu, Employability

## Introduction

English has received significant attention in academic and professional settings over the last fifty years, and it is a valuable asset for those seeking to improve their interpersonal communication skills in the international arena in order to advance in their careers. It has emerged as a global language, and today's youth pursuing professional courses must become fluent in the language to ensure a successful career and a bright future. The socio-cultural explanation considers how people from all over the world, from all walks of life, have come to rely on English for economic and social well-being [2]. The English language has made significant inroads into international domains such as politics, business, safety, communication, the media, entertainment, and education (Crystal, 2003, pp. 29-30). As a result, English has emerged as a language that is required to strengthen global human relations and foster international growth [4].

## Cultural Context in Language Acquisition

Learners of English can grasp and appreciate the language's multicultural perspective and interpret it in terms of their own culture, promoting a broader understanding of the language. "Culture is a system of beliefs and values about what is desirable in a group of people, as well as a set of formal or informal actions to support those values," according to Wikipedia (Javidan & House, 2001, p. 292). Language acquisition is a social phenomenon that exposes the learner to the culture of the target language while simultaneously assisting in the

identification of the distinctiveness of the learner's home culture [3]. This method of instruction can also produce global learners who have a better grasp of the world around them, as well as the ability to adapt to the multicultural setting of the language classroom and appreciate cultural differences from a new perspective. When learning a language, there must be an underlying reason for doing so. In the community, the language must serve some internal social role. People who do not have a common mother tongue in multilingual states may communicate using another language. The second language is placed in a clearly defined social context or setting in this orientation. The sociocultural context encompasses the socio-historical aspects that contribute to a country's adoption of a foreign language for internal communication (Kuchdekar, 2002, pp. 37-38). Academics and researchers in Tamilnadu must be fluent in the language in order to compete on the global stage by bringing technological developments and discoveries to the fore through scholarly articles and research initiatives [1].

Engineering Institutions in the Present Communication is a multidisciplinary activity, and mastering the four abilities of hearing, reading, writing, and speaking is required to become proficient in the English language. To improve their employability and perform well in their academic programs, engineering students must master these four abilities. Employers believe that emerging engineers lack this critical skill, namely, English language fluency, which is a barrier not only to gaining placements but also to professional advancement.

Engineers have been discovered to lack public speaking, debate, group discussion, analytical, and interview skills as a result of their linguistic inefficiencies. Picking up a language, or developing the ability to use it in natural communication contexts, is the process of learning it. "Knowing the rules, having a conscious knowledge of the grammar" is what language acquisition entails [5].

One of the major issues experienced by engineering students in Tamilnadu is their inability to absorb the language and apply it in their daily interactions. This is due to a variety

of variables, including sociocultural influences, a lack of desire, inefficient learning and teaching methods, and a negative attitude toward the language. Despite the fact that a great number of engineers are created, their employability is limited due to poor quality. As a result, focusing on the learners' professional competency by mixing hard and soft skills into the academic curriculum and pushing them to increase their language proficiency with a positive attitude is crucial. It's also worth noting that students in vernacular medium schools have weak English skills [6]. Teachers in these schools use code swapping and provide pupils with simplified notes and handouts, i.e. material to pass exams without learning anything.

Learners need a lot of visual and contextual exposure, as well as an interactive learning environment where they can make mistakes, which is a crucial part of the learning process [7]. Their peers with higher proficiency levels and from other socio-cultural backgrounds can also act as a channel for clarifying ideas and instructions, which is an incentive in and of itself in learning the language.

#### Engineering Institutions in the Present Situation at Tamilnadu

Communication is a multidisciplinary activity, and mastering the four abilities of hearing, reading, writing, and speaking is required to become fluent in English. Engineering students must master these four skills in order to improve their employability and academic performance. The process of 'picking up' a language, or developing the ability to utilize it in natural communication contexts, is known as acquisition [8]. Learning a language is defined as "understanding the rules and being aware of the grammar" (Kudchedkar, 2002, p. 96). One of the most serious problems that engineering students in Tamilnadu confront is their inability to absorb the language and use it in everyday situations. This can be attributed to a number of issues, including sociocultural influences, a lack of desire, inefficient learning and teaching approaches, and a negative attitude toward the language. Even though a large number of

engineers are produced, their employability is limited due to low quality. As a result, it's critical to focus on the learners' professional competency by incorporating hard and soft skills into the academic curriculum and encouraging them to pursue language proficiency with a positive attitude. It's also worth noting that students in vernacular medium schools have a limited command of the English language. Teachers at these schools employ code swapping in the classroom and provide students with simplified notes and handouts, i.e. material that allows them to pass tests without actually learning anything. Due to their inability to carry their cognitive processes in the target language, students at such schools are unable to express themselves in English, both written and spoken [9].

The learners need a great amount of visual and contextual exposure and an interactive learning environment where they can make errors, which are an integral part of learning. Their peers with higher proficiency levels and different socio-cultural backgrounds can also act as a medium to clarify the ideas and instructions, which in itself is an element of motivation in learning the language.

#### Teaching English as a Second Language in different Settings

In the different setting of ESL classroom, the language instructor may face challenges, and as he or she nurtures and interacts with this diversity, he or she must incorporate action and provide enough practical exposure to the pupils. The first hurdle is the language itself, which is not the teacher's mother speech or native tongue. As a result, the instructor will have to deal with cultural shock, adjust, and encourage students to change. The expansion of the English language has two sides. On the left are those who are from English medium schools, while on the right the students who studied in Tamil Medium [10]. When English is utilized in this way, teaching English as a second language becomes more challenging. The instructor

must also account for the multicultural atmosphere of the classroom and the students' various levels of English ability.

The language teacher must also deal with the diverse accents and pronunciations caused by mother tongue influences, which are difficult to correct since they are deeply embedded in the learners' minds. Students may have difficulties understanding the teacher's tone, accent, speed, pronunciation, and pitch, so the teacher must be aware of all of these factors when conducting the English class. To engage students from varied backgrounds who have a strong connection to their mother tongue and are motivated to learn English by utilizing it, the instructor must use a bilingual teaching approach. Due to issues such as accuracy, fluency, adequate vocabulary, and faultless pronunciation, students can become upset when learning English, causing tension and worry and discouraging them from learning the language.

The content studied can be difficult at times because the cultural implications may not be compatible with the learner's own culture, generating misunderstanding. Learner norms and beliefs fluctuate based on their cultural background, posing a severe challenge to language acquisition. As a result, language teachers in engineering colleges must be trained in how to use course books in the classroom to meet the objectives for which they were designed, guaranteeing that students study with enthusiasm. Teachers should concentrate on improving four skills, including LSRW, using various strategies and appropriate technology. Students should be encouraged to establish the habit of reading newspapers, which can then be followed up with a quiz and general discussion [12]. This will also aid in the consolidation of their linguistic skills. In order to develop students' pronunciation skills, adequate listening and speaking practice sessions should be held in the classroom, as well as pupils becoming familiar with the phonetics of English sounds.

The Poor students should be included in these discussions, and their speaking abilities should be improved through healthy relationships to decrease inhibitions induced by cultural

differences. Students can use everyday situations in class to improve their clarity and fluency while also piquing their interest in the language [11]. Teachers in professional schools specialize in business English and have vast experience in letter writing, report writing, document preparation, presentation preparation, and email writing, among other things. They also provide hands-on training in interview skills and group discussions to help students improve their employability. Even the weakest learners come out and engage as a result of this instruction because they create a desire to study in a motivating setting. The use of technology can help to improve the problem because colleges provide abundant English exposure in well-equipped language labs that provide intensive training in LSRW skills using the most up-to-date software.

### Conclusion

As a result, language learners in engineering institutions can be guided to overcome cultural inhibitions and hesitations in learning a foreign language, which is a prerequisite for professional success. Learning can be aided by a positive attitude, a pleasant and motivating classroom atmosphere, and the inclusion of technology. Teachers can promote universal ideals in a multicultural atmosphere and use a variety of teaching strategies in language classes to boost learning and instil interest in students, resulting in better future professionals.

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