

CHALLENGES IN TEACHING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH AMONG UNDERGRADUATE ENGINEERING STUDENTS

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Abstract

Communication skills in English are essential for engineering graduates in today's globalized and technology-driven world. Despite the inclusion of English communication courses in engineering curricula, many educators face significant challenges in teaching these skills effectively. This paper explores the major challenges encountered in teaching English communication skills to undergraduate engineering students. It discusses learner-related, teacher-related, institutional, and curriculum-related factors that affect the development of communication competence. The paper also suggests practical strategies to improve English language teaching in engineering education.

Keywords: English Communication Skills, Engineering Students, Undergraduate Education, English Language Teaching, Communication Competence.

Introduction

English has become the global language of science, technology, business, and higher education. Engineering graduates require effective communication skills to succeed in academic, professional, and social environments. However, teaching communication skills to undergraduate engineers is often challenging because students come from diverse educational, linguistic, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Many students possess technical knowledge but struggle to communicate confidently in English.

This study examines the major challenges faced by English language teachers while teaching communication skills to undergraduate engineering students and proposes possible solutions.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the challenges faced in teaching English communication skills to undergraduate engineering students.
- To examine factors affecting students' communication competence.
- To suggest strategies for improving communication skills instruction in engineering education

Review of Literature

Previous studies indicate that engineering graduates often lack adequate communication skills despite technical proficiency.

- David Crystal (2003) emphasized the importance of English as a global language.
- H. D. Brown (2007) highlighted communicative language teaching as an effective approach to language learning.
- Jack C. Richards stressed learner-centred communication activities for language development.

Challenges in Teaching English Communication Skills

•Diverse Linguistic Backgrounds

Engineering classrooms consist of students from different regions with varying levels of

English proficiency. Teachers find it difficult to address individual learning needs.

• **Lack of Student Confidence**

Many students hesitate to speak English due to fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers.

• **Mother-Tongue Influence**

Frequent use of regional languages limits opportunities for English practice and affects pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy.

• **Limited Classroom Time**

Communication skills require continuous practice, but engineering curricula often allocate limited hours to English language courses.

• **Examination-Oriented Learning**

Students tend to focus on passing examinations rather than developing practical communication abilities. At the age of sixteen to seventeen years diploma engineering students are not matured enough to understand the objectives of learning English. They consider it as a 'subject' to be learnt and passed in the examination for good credits. They are addicted to cram the grammar rules and answers of the prescribed questions. Such an attitude takes them to a wrong turn of the road. They are unacquainted with the consequences of this approach in their career. They get satisfied with marks but will not satisfy the need of employers.

• **Large Class Size**

The teacher of any language finds problems in handling huge number of students with diversities in the same class room. As a teacher of English, it is more difficult to attend every student having one's own distinction. Managing speaking activities, presentations, and group discussions becomes difficult in large classrooms.

• **Lack of Interest and inattentiveness**

The ignorance for English in technical education field decreases the interest of the students in it. The less interest of any subject makes the learners passive in the class. Even inadequate knowledge of globalized language is also responsible for inattentiveness and lack of interest. The teacher can make the class of language interesting and live creating healthy atmosphere. One can relate the topic with real life. So it becomes meaningful and appealing. The students should be motivated to participate in various learning activities and games to make them active.

• **Limited Exposure to English**

Students often have minimal opportunities to use English outside the classroom, reducing real-life practice.

• **Lack of Motivation**

Many engineering students prioritize technical subjects and underestimate the importance of communication skills.

• **Assessment Challenges**

Evaluating speaking, listening, presentation, and interpersonal communication objectively remains difficult.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges identified, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the teaching of English communication skills among undergraduate engineering students:

▪ **Adopt learner-centered teaching methods:**

Teachers should use communicative and activity-based approaches such as role plays, group discussions, debates, presentations, case studies, and project-based learning to encourage active participation.

▪ **Strengthen English language exposure:**

Institutions should create an English-speaking environment through language clubs, public speaking forums, seminars, workshops, and extracurricular activities that promote regular use of English.

▪ **Integrate technology into language teaching:**

Digital platforms, language-learning applications, online discussion forums, podcasts, and virtual presentations should be incorporated into classroom instruction to provide students with authentic learning experiences.

▪ **Provide continuous assessment and feedback:**

Communication skills should be assessed through presentations, interviews, group tasks, and speaking activities rather than relying solely on written examinations. Constructive feedback should be provided regularly to help students improve.

▪ **Offer bridge and remedial courses:**

Students from regional-language backgrounds should receive additional support through foundation courses, remedial classes, and language laboratories to strengthen their proficiency in English.

▪ **Enhance teacher professional development:**

Faculty members should receive regular training in modern English language teaching methodologies, educational technology, and communication skills assessment to improve instructional effectiveness.

▪ **Promote industry-academia collaboration:**

Engineering institutions should collaborate with industry experts to organize guest lectures, mock interviews, internships, and communication workshops aligned with workplace expectations.

▪ **Revise the curriculum:**

Communication skills should be integrated across all years of the engineering programme rather than being confined to the first year. Subject-specific communication tasks, technical writing, teamwork, and professional communication should be incorporated throughout the curriculum.

▪ **Encourage self-directed learning:**

Students should be motivated to read English newspapers, journals, and technical articles, watch educational videos, participate in online courses, and maintain reflective learning journals to improve their communication competence.

▪ **Develop a supportive learning environment:**

Teachers should foster an inclusive and encouraging classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of criticism or making mistakes.

Conclusion

Teaching communication skills in English to undergraduate engineering students is a complex yet essential task. Challenges such as diverse language backgrounds, limited classroom interaction, lack of confidence, and curriculum constraints hinder effective learning. However, innovative teaching methods, learner-centered pedagogy, technology integration, and continuous

practice can significantly enhance students' communication competence. Engineering institutions should strengthen English language programs to improve graduates' employability and professional success.

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