

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS & EXPECTATIONS OF THE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY

Mr. B. Sanyasi Rao¹,

Research Scholar, JNTU,
Kakinada, EG, Andhra
Pradesh, India
Mail: talk2bsrao10@gmail.com

Dr. I.S.V Manjula², Professor,

Certified Trainer of Trainers
British Council,
International Examiner-Trinity
College, London

Dr. G. Suvarna Lakshmi³,

Associate Professor
Dept. of ELT, SDE,
EFL University, Hyderabad,
Telangana, India

Abstract: The advancement of Science and Technology brings a new scope for engineering courses and the importance of engineering has been gradually flowering in the contemporary world of industry. Engineering companies would like to have employees with good English communication skills along with admirable technical knowledge. Industry always whines about the poor communication skills of the engineering graduates. Engineering graduates with good command over English communication skills flavor the taste of success in the interviews than those, who are poor in such skills. In the age of globalization, students of engineering are required to better their English communication skills to equip themselves with employability in the job market. English communication skills along with technical knowledge, for engineering graduates augment their employability. Mere knowledge over core skills in the respective field does not guarantee them to secure a good job or to excel at the workplace arena.

Keywords: Engineering Graduates, Science & Technology, Communication Skills, Employability, Technical Knowledge, Core Skills and Engineering Companies.

Introduction: Many Engineering graduates in India are found to be unemployable due to their poor communication skills and lack of confidence. We are trying to analyze the mystery behind the low proficiency in English communication skills of the engineering graduates even though English is medium of instruction from the commencement of their academics. Though English has been an integral part of the Indian academic curriculum for decades and it plays a major role in getting a job, students are not up to the mark in acquiring language skills. It is seriously opined by the HR managers of the various

companies that English communication skills are important for successful professional careers but most of the engineering graduates do not have the ability to communicate in English language fluently. They earnestly opine that people with good communication skills can contribute more for the development of their organization and they play vital role in MNCs.

Problem Statement: At the time of recruitment, most of the companies / HR managers complain about the students' inability to communicate their technical knowledge in English language. The HR Managers, who involve in the recruitment process, often complain that nearly 50% of professional students do not possess employability skills (Dipthi Gupta 2013). Hence, it is proven that there is a gap between the industry expectation and the inputs given to the students as part of their four years professional course in the engineering colleges.

Aim of the paper: There is an evident gap between the language skills, acquired by the engineering graduates and skills set required by the industry. The aim of this paper is to ascertain the gap between the requirements & expectation of the industry and English language proficiency of the professional students.

Methodology: Understanding the concept of method and methodology is of paramount importance. It is absolutely necessary for a researcher to understand methodology to solve the problem identified. There are many research methods like Descriptive, Analytical, Applied, Fundamental, Experimental, Exploratory, Ex post facto, etc... This study has opted Survey Method to collect data required by executing a questionnaire with 36 HR Managers, who involve in the recruitment process from 25 companies. The questions are lucid and can easily be answered. Apart from, newspaper articles, agency reports, face-to-face interviews with HR Managers are taken into consideration for additional support.

Literature Review: English language is important for engineering students for many reasons. It will enable students to keep abreast of recent developments and trends in engineering areas. Majority of the employers exposed their dissatisfaction with engineering students' communication skills (Tong 2003). A global engineer must cross cultural and national borders. And English language skills only can help them surpass the borders (Riemer 2002). Many surveys like Aspiring Minds, NASSCOM Talent Shortage survey, etc... identified communication skills in English as one of the major setbacks of engineering graduates to find a job for themselves (Clement & Murugavel 2015). The times of India published an article with a title, "only 18% of engineering graduates are employable, says survey" (The Times of India 2014). Lack of proficiency over English language has been mentioned as one of the basic factors for graduates' unemployment (Sharif 2015). Inadequate communication skills and instructions of engineering courses serve to undermine the whole profile of the professional engineers. Eventually, it

influences the recruitment (Riemer 2007). Emerging Engineers must have effective Communication skills to get job (Sagar & Afzal 2019). Verbal ability of the students coated with communicative proficiency yields productive results (Sujani & Srinivasa Rao 2016). Mr. Srinivas, a project manager at MNC (IT) Company reiterates that there is no exposure to English language communication skills, which play a pivotal role in any profession. Though you have passed out from the premier colleges like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and National Institute of Technology (NIT) with excellent percentage of marks, if your communication skills are very poor, companies do not prefer you to recruit you (Srinivas, G. 2018). He further states that in any profession, communication skills of the person makes him recognized. Even though your percentage of marks is lesser, if you have good command over English language, companies would prefer you to hire (Srinivas, G. 2018).

Every year, across the country 'more than 1,70,000 engineering students get graduated from engineering colleges in India, (Aspiring Minds National Employability Report – 2019). The number is more than China and USA engineering graduates. Around 30% of the engineering graduates get jobs where as the rest either takes up jobs that are not relevant or remains unemployed (content.wisestep.com). It doesn't mean that there are no jobs for them in the engineering industry. Industries look forward to hiring skilled manpower and they expect required language skills from the technical graduates. 'The skills highlighted most often by the employers are the capability of listening, writing & speaking efficiently. Successful communication skills are crucial in business (Randall & Katharine 2001). Most of the service sector and outsourcing sector expect strong communication skills from the graduates to be employed (Rajendra Babu, et al.). With India's fast growing economy and English becoming language of global business, Indian companies demand employees with good English language skills (Bairagi & Ashok 2016). Engineering graduates are expected to have the employability skills to help them practice their technical knowledge successfully well (Azami Jaharim & et al. 2012). Mr. Srinivas, a project manager at MNC IT Company, reiterates that there is no exposure to English language communication skills, which play a pivotal role in any profession. Though you have passed out from the premier colleges like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and National Institute of Technology (NIT) with excellent percentage of marks, if your communication skills are very poor, companies do not prefer you to recruit you. He further states that in any profession, communication skills of the person makes him recognized. Even though your percentage of marks is lesser, if you have command over English communication skills, companies would prefer you to hire (Sriniv, G. 2018). English communication skills for engineering students, is more important for getting involved in the process of searching for a job. Even after getting a job, they will have to communicate in English, as it is the medium of communication in those companies (Rup Narayan & et al. 2015). English communication skills is one of the top 3 skills, employers looked for

(India Skills Report – 2019). Hence engineering graduates are expected to have good technical skills along with sound English communication skills by the employers of engineering industry.

Along with technical skills of the engineering graduate, effective English communication skills are also desired as they are supposed to work in the global context (Rayappa 2016). Prof. Gurucharan Singh, Vice President – Corporate Affairs, HR & Training, Cambridge Institute of Technology says that globalization demands quality engineering graduates. It requires focus on progress of generic skills, application skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills and technical skills of the entry-level engineering graduates (www.linkedin.com). The Deccan Herald posted an article bearing the title, “Importance of English in employment”. It says that English Communication skills are greatly important for one’s professional development. The capability of communicating in English properly well both in written as well as in verbal is greatly necessary for the career development (www.deccanherald.com 2012). The Economic Times posted an editorial, stating ‘those who speak English fluently earn up to 34% more than others: Study’ (www.economictimes.com 2018). Aspiring Minds’ National Spoken English Skills (SES) Report discloses that 52% of engineering graduates are not employable for any position in the knowledge economy due to their poor spoken communication skills. The ability to use English language effectively is seriously required to remain employable. The ability to express fluently in both written as well as oral form of language is very much essential for the career growth (Meenu & Prabhat 2014). Many surveys of employers all over the world disclose that English spoken skills are positioned first amongst candidates’ potential job skills and qualities (National Educational Policy – 2019). English communication skills are required more for technical graduates than their subject-knowledge (Venkateswar Rao 2015). Whatever the career you wish for, whether it is Engineering or History, having a good command over English language will greatly augment your chances of success (Nagia, B. 2016). Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and Information Technology (IT) in India recruit engineering graduates, who are good at English communication skills (Barnali Chetia 2015). Communication is a very indispensable part of engineer’s professional life as they are supposed to spend much of their time in collaborating with peers (Lilian 2019). Employers seek engineering graduates not only with technical knowledge but with sound English communication skills also (Rayappa 2016). A great deal of rejection in interviews has been much attributed to the lack of communication skills and presentation skills alone. Employees with strong hold on communication skills are set high standards for the organization. Hence English communication skills are an important aspect of an engineering graduate’s academic excellence and future career (Jessy Koshy et.al 2012). Mere subject-knowledge in the selected realm of engineering does not guarantee for engineering graduates to secure a job for themselves or excel at the workplace arena (Albert P’Rayan 2008).

Result Analysis: The data was analyzed with cautious and mindful concerns. The data was sorted out with statistical experts to draw the conclusions of the research. I assure you that the findings are genuine and credible. No assumptions and hypothetical information was added to the data produced.

Importance of English communication skills for engineering students: The following list of questions targeted to know the HR Managers or recruiters' priority of English communication skills over technical knowledge of engineering graduates. 67.7% of HR Managers prioritize that English communication skills are significant for an engineer. 12.8% of HR managers stress that only technical skills are important. The rest of the respondents (19.4%) remained indecisive.

S.No	Questionnaire Item	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Indecisive (%)	Total
1.	English Communication Skills are important for successful professional careers.	98%	2%	0%	100%
2.	Vernacular language skills are enough to provide services successfully in a company.	33.3%	50%	16.6%	99.9%
3.	Employees with good technical skills work more efficiently than those with good English Communication Skills.	33.3%	16.6%	50%	99.9%
4.	Technical knowledge is important as they learn English Communication Skills while working.	75%	8.3%	16.6%	100%
5.	People with good English Communication Skills can contribute more for the development of our organization	75%	0%	25%	100%
6.	English Communication Skills play a key role in Multi-National Corporations.	91.6%	0%	8.3%	99.9%
Average		67.7%	12.8%	19.4%	99.9%

Table – 1: English communication skills for engineering students

Use of English language for engineering students: The table of questions is targeted the opinion of the HR Managers or recruiters on Practice or language use by the engineering students after the completion of the four year engineering course. 62.7% of HR Managers deny that the engineering students are good at English communication skills and speak English language fluently. Though they appreciate the comprehensive skills of engineering

students, they deny the proficiency of the oral usage of the language. 17.2% of them agree that the engineering students are good at English communication skills. 19.9% of them remain indecisive.

S.No	Questionnaire Item	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Indecisive (%)	Total
1	They can't easily understand what we instruct them in English language.	8.30%	66.60%	25%	99.90%
2	They lack sufficient vocabulary in their speech	66.60%	0%	33.30%	99.90%
3	They don't have clarity of pronunciation in their speech	75%	0%	25%	100%
4	They are using their mother tongue at their workplaces.	97%	3%	0%	100%
5	They fail to manage the workplace situations in English language.	66.60%	16.60%	16.60%	99.80%
Average		62.70%	17.24%	19.98%	99.92%

Table – 2: View of HR managers on language skills of engineering students

The below set of questions are posed to know the HR Managers 'satisfaction with the language skills of the engineering graduates. Only 22% of them agree that they are satisfied with the language skills of the students. Majority of them 41.6% opine that engineering students are not good at communication skills and 36.1% of them remain neutral.

S.No	Questionnaire Item	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Indecisive (%)	Total
1	We are happy with the English language skills of the candidates selected.	25%	41.60%	33.30%	100%
2	We are happy with their writing skills.	25%	50%	25%	100%
3	They are confident in speaking in English language.	16.60%	33.30%	50%	99.90%
Average		22%	41.63%	36.10%	100%

Table – 3: View of HR managers on the use of language

Discussions & Findings: The collected data was analyzed carefully and the results were drawn. The result of the table – 1 shows that English communication skills are very much required for professional students. Mere knowledge over subject knowledge in the respective field does not enough to secure a good job or to excel at the workplace arena. The result of the table – 2 exposes that HR Managers or the recruiters are not satisfied with the language skills of the engineering graduates except the comprehensive skills of them. They are not satisfied with the communication skills of the professional students.

Conclusions & Recommendations: The existing communication skills of the Engineering fail to meet the expectations of the industry. The capability of using English language effectively is absolutely required to remain professional students employable. English communication skills play a vital role for the employability of Professional students for their career excellence. If engineering students are poor in English communication skills, they have lesser scope of employability. It is concluded that there is an evident gap between the requirements & expectations of the engineering industry and the existing communication skills of the professional students.

Future Research: The study opens doors for further research to be conducted on the reasons for their lagging behind in reaching the expectations of the industry and the possible ways to better English language teaching learning process in engineering colleges so as to enhance the language skills of the professional students to bridge the gap.

References:

- Albert, P'Rayan. (2008). 'Engineering English: A Critical Evaluation' Annamalai University, Chennai, India.
- Aspiring Minds National Employability Report – 2019 (P. 13, 17, 20 & 21)
- Azami Jaharim & et al (2012). 'Engineering Employability Skills Require by Employers in Asia' *Proceedings of the 6th WSEAS International Conference on Engineering Education*, Malaysia, 195-201.
- Bairagi Patra & Ashok Kumar Mohanathi (2016). 'Importance of English for Engineering Students: An Evaluation of the Prevalent Teaching – Learning Systems in the Indian Context' *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)*, 6(4), 21-34.
- Barnali Chetia (2015). 'Technical Communication for Engineering Students Relevance in the Indian Context' *International Journal of Management and Applied Science*, 1(2), 17-19.
- Clement, A. & Murugavel, T. (2015). 'English For Employability: A Case Study of the English Language Training Need Analysis for Engineering Students in India' *English Language Teaching, Canadian Center of Science and Education*, 8(2) 116-125.

- content.wisestep.com (2015). 'Industry Expectations from Engineering Graduates'. <<https://content.wisestep.com/industry-expectations-from-engineering-graduates/>>
- Dipthi Gupta. (2013). 'Teaching English to Engineering Students in India' *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4(11), 131-138.
- Jessy Koshy, Fathima Samana, S. & Rajesh Gopinath (2012). 'Functional English as a Subject in Technical Courses' *International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL)*, 2(2), 19-24.
- Lee Fui Tong (2003). 'Identifying Essential Learning Skills in Students' Engineering Education' Monash University Malaysia. <http://surveys.canterbury.ac.nz/herdsa03/pdfsref/Y1111.pdf>.
- Lilian Maria de Souza Almeida (2019). 'Understanding Industry's Expectations of Engineering Communication Skills' Utah State University, Logan, Utah, USA.
- Meenu Pandey & Prabhat Pandey (2014). 'Better English for Better Employment Opportunities', *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach and Studies*, 10(4), 417-426.
- Nagia, B. (2016). 'Prominence of English Language for Career Development', *Language in India*, 16(4), 34-42.
- National Educational Policy – 2019 (p.90).
- Rajendra Babu, V., Sai Krishna, K. & Radhika, (2012). 'English for Engineering Graduates to enhance employability Skills'. *International Journal of English Language and Literature*, 2(1), 23-30.
- Randall S. Hansen & Katharine Hansen (2001). *Dynamic Cover Letters: How to Write the Letter That Gets You the Job*, Ten Speed Press, California, the USA.
- Rayappa, D. (2016). 'The Obstacles of Communication skills in (LSRW) faced by engineering graduates as per statistical analysis of cosmopolitan cities in India' *The ELT Practitioner, A Quarterly On-line Journal, English Language Teachers' Association of India (ELTAI)*, 3(1), 1-13.
- Reimer, M. J. (2002), 'English and Communication Skills for the Global Engineer', *Global Journal of Engineering Education*, Australia, 6(1) 91-100.
- Reimer, M. J. (2007). 'Communication skills for the 21st Century Engineers' *UNESCO International Centre for Engineering Education (UICEE), Global Journal of Engineering Education*, Australia 2(1), 89-100.
- Rup Narayan Shrestha, Bharat raj Pahari and Jai Raj Awasthi (2015). 'Impact of English on Engineering Students: A Brief Overview in G(local) Context' *Journal of the Institute of Engineering*, 2(1), 182-188.

- Sagar, N. & Thahiya Afzal. (2019). 'English Language Teaching through Eclectic Approach for Engineering Students', *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering (IJRTE)*, 7(5S4), 755-758.
- Srinivas, G. (2018). 'The question, Are colleges like Narayana and Chaitanya good or bad?'. [www.quora.com. < at: https://www.quora.com/Are-colleges-like-Narayana-and-Chaitanya-good-or-bad>](https://www.quora.com/Are-colleges-like-Narayana-and-Chaitanya-good-or-bad) (Aug. 12, 2017).
- Sujani, T. & Srinivasa Rao, V. (2016). 'Teaching English for Engineering Students: A Challenging Task' *Journal of English Language and Literature (JOELL)*, 3(spl.1), 53-57.
- The Times of India (2016). 'Only 18% engineering grads are employable, says survey' [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Only-18-engineering-grads-are-employable-says-survey/articleshow/38438996.cms>](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Only-18-engineering-grads-are-employable-says-survey/articleshow/38438996.cms) (Jun. 16, 2014).
- Venkateswar Rao, D. (2015). 'Teaching English Communication Skills for Professional Students' *Indo-Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IAJMR)*, 1(2), 125 – 131.
- [www.deccanherald.com](https://www.deccanherald.com/content/249714/importance-english-employment.html) (2012). 'Importance of English in employment' [<https://www.deccanherald.com/content/249714/importance-english-employment.html>](https://www.deccanherald.com/content/249714/importance-english-employment.html) (May. 16, 2016).
- [www.economictimes.com](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/those-who-speak-english-fluently-earn-up-to-34-more-than-others-study/articleshow/28426329.cms) (2018). 'Those who speak English fluently earn up to 34% more than others: Study' [<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/those-who-speak-english-fluently-earn-up-to-34-more-than-others-study/articleshow/28426329.cms>](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/jobs/those-who-speak-english-fluently-earn-up-to-34-more-than-others-study/articleshow/28426329.cms) (Jan. 05, 2014).
- [www.linkedin.com](https://in.linkedin.com/in/gurucharan-singh-04607618) (2018) 'Gurucharan Singh, Vice President – Corporate Affairs, HR & Training, Cambridge Institute of Technology' [<https://in.linkedin.com/in/gurucharan-singh-04607618>](https://in.linkedin.com/in/gurucharan-singh-04607618) (Dec. 09, 2009).