

Challenges in acquiring English as a Second Language (ESL) for Vernacular Medium students in Engineering Colleges

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Abstract:

English as a second language in Engineering colleges is in its scientific design for making functional English in the corporate sector. Functional English is to be made up by the engineering graduate professionals in all communicative competence. The regular expectation is that their knowledge of functional English is to be infallible because they could afford no mistakes in sending technical messages, technical seminars and technical presentations. In that case it will entail the pain of sustaining severe damage to the interest of their company and their professional career as proficient engineers. In this context it is imperative that the Vernacular Medium students as freshers in the engineering courses are to be dedicated in learning English. It is by making allowance to their incapacity to use English in practical situations. They are to be the experts in the communication skills of LSRW. What is required of them is, sufficient will power to learn the nuances of functional English or ESP with which to send or receive communication in the global arena. This paper is to analyze the need for accommodating such Vernacular medium students by special academic planning with real interest of learning English as a second language.

I. Introduction

Mostly speaking as well as writing of functional English is directed towards sending more straightforward communication with no inhibition as caused by the ill- supposed foreignness of English. The Vernacular Medium students are to get over this fear of alienness of English. There should be no fear for them in using English in practical situations according to the Task based syllabus. They have to achieve the expertise of functional English unflinchingly with no fear or favour. The students in the engineering colleges have turned themselves as users of English in their engineering classes and not as learners of English in all academic drudgery. The question of using English for these students depends upon their proficiency gained in school education. There are two categories of students hailing from rural and urban areas. Their learning experience varies. In

contrast the urban students do learn English for all the twelve years of their secondary course where the rural ones are to learn it for six years. The result is that the academic situation in the classroom is not amenable for uniform teaching by the teachers in English.

II. Constraints in acquiring communication skills(LSRW) in classroom

There is a great divide in the same engineering class as segmented into regional Vernacular Medium students in majority and the English medium in minority. It is necessary to segregate the Vernacular Medium students for giving them the benefit of special coaching classes. It is for understanding English grammar in its grass roots. Their standard of understanding English in respect to using the four language skills such as LSRW are in low profile. It is so for the simple reason that they learn their language English in school by rote or memorization. The urban students are found sailing in the same boat in the sense that they are no better than their rural counterparts with Vernacular Medium. The major reason is that neither of these two segments of the same class is found with practical experience with English in use. It is truer of the rural students coming from the backward areas with no exposure to urban culture with industrial environment.

III. Grammar – A dangerous zone for Vernacular Medium students

Invariably, the Vernacular medium students will make it their easy choice to go in for audio-lingual method of learning English. This method is mostly based on the humanistic orientation. It is characterized by the proper grammar translation method of learning and teaching. Such students learn English as a foreign language by making translation of A-2 (Tamil) to A-1 (English). It is followed by the hypothesis test. Instead of using this process Vernacular medium students are to get into the right spirit of linguistic learning in all freedom of mind. They have to get themselves trained in the art of thinking in English first and foremost. English is to be made into a science language in the best interest of the students of engineering sciences. These students are to cultivate the reading habit in the hard way so as to speak and listen to English fearlessly and effortlessly.

IV. Positive attitude to acquire Functional English in classroom

The students will have to use language laboratory with no inhibition or anxiety fear or other Affective factors. Grammar and phonetics are not to be insisted upon. The students are to get trained in knowing more intimately about interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Errors that are

committed by the backward students while in the learning process are to be considered indulgently as the tell-tale evidence of their real standards of their ability to make use of English. This will facilitate self - evaluation forthwith. In this context they can afford to have self-motivation undiminishing while seeking clarifications of their genuine doubts in the hands of teachers and ego free fellow students. They can feel comfortable with other students during Group Discussion and other professional exercises.

The urgency is in its focus on rehabilitating of the Vernacular medium students in the engineering colleges mostly with English medium. The modern view on education is for treating the student as central figure in the scheme of things as related to the learning teaching context. How to inculcate into these linguistically backward students the necessary self confidence and will power so that they will be assertive to play the role of partners in the educational enterprise? In this context the teachers are to exchange their role identity. They are to be purposely tactful while training their backward rural students on how to be users of functional English rather than remaining dormant learners of English.

V. Conclusion

This is an age of globalization with all tie-up arrangements of economic and commercial collaboration on global scale. In this context learning English is with richer prospect of linkages everywhere. It will be a privilege for the Vernacular Medium students, who will get special training in learning functional English by extra-curricular channels of information and instructional practice. In all fairness to the situation at hand, it will be in a recourse to the principle of pacify and academic equality and justice. Moreover functional English is a subgenre of ESP with its in built design to use English for specific purposes like employing functional English in its tailored version of applied English in all frugality of words. It does not ignore the other linguistic affinities like gender distinction, protocol and cross cultural barriers. Presently there is a paradigm shift from unqualified endearment of regional language to dispassionate realization of practical value of English as the winner of professional competence. Employability is secured in all fronts. The Vernacular Medium students will be with practical sense to support credentials of English to be the medium of construction until the time is up for the vernacular to take over. Sanity is to prevail over emotional luxury of linguistic fascination; ultimately the Vernacular Medium students will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

Thus the Vernacular Medium students are to take advantage of these extra-curricular projects to educate them in the art of thinking in English ahead of using English as the future skilled professionals with communicative competence.

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