Role and Need of ESP in Engineering Education: A Case Study of Status in Odisha, India

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ABSTRACT

Communication networking has enabled and strengthened human resource to grow and attain full potential and fulfillment. It is the sonum-bonum of existence and execution. The need and relevance of English in India as a medium of instruction in fast growing since the post-colonial era. “English” has been cited as the and link cynosure Language of internal business the corporate world for top managerial meetings, high negotiations, inter and intra class discussions, as communication today is very important not only for smooth running of a business enterprise but is also equally important for the success and growth of individual executives and professionals and in excellence for academia. In the present day workplace individuals require a range of occupational specific knowledge skills, soft skills, interpersonal skills, personal attributes and qualities and above all the ability to transfer and disseminate knowledge and skills to different situations. This Paper deals with the real necessity of English as a technical Subject (ESP) in India and specifically in Odisha. Its status, Problems, challenges and inhibitions faced the heterogeneous L2 learners and suggestions for improvement. It also projects the temperaments, issues related to ESP in Odisha graphically. The paper is substantiated with the help of surveys, questionnaires and case studies.

Keywords: ESP, ESL, Business English, LSRW Skills

INTRODUCTION

Communication has enabled and strengthened human resource to grow and attain full potential and fulfillment. It is the sonum-bonum of existence and execution. The need and relevance of English in India as a medium of instruction in fast growing since the post-colonial era. Highly specialized technological inventions, splendid discoveries, milestones and breakthrough in arts and science have a limited value unless it is transmitted and transferred effectively to its intended audience and communicated precisely for specific purposes.

“English” has been cited as the and link cynosure Language of internal business the corporate world for top managerial meetings, high negotiations, inter and intra class discussions, as communication today is very important not only for smooth running of a business enterprise but is also equally important for the success and growth of individual executives and professionals and in excellence for academia. Recruiters want their employees to have convincing soft skills other than their technical and hard skills as the present day workplace demands occupational specific knowledge skills, soft skills, interpersonal skills, personal attributes and qualities and above all the ability to transfer and disseminate knowledge and skills to different situation.

In 1986 National Policy on Education and programme of action (NPEP) was constituted. It recommended the establishment of rural schools, colleges, training teachers with the objective of identifying and promoting excellence. The UGC has set up the Curriculum
Development Centre (CDC) in 1987 to review the place of English teaching in India. For example CDC in English at CIEFL, Hyderabad recommended that a more learner-oriented or enquiry –oriented teaching method should be introduced so that the learner may involve himself/herself in creative thinking and divergent thinking and open new avenues of communication, productive work as well as innovation through games and project work. The proposed curriculum suggested the shift of emphasis from teaching to learning. It aimed at student motivation to learn rather than teacher’s ability to lecture. Further, the curriculum should be so designed that it would make education more meaningful to the needs of the students as well as to make it socially relevant.

So this policy really tried to change the trend from teacher centric to student centric classroom. It led the path to real communicative language teaching.

THE ORIGINS OF ESP

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a domain, approach of Teaching English Language including Business English, Technical English, Scientific English, and English for all technical registers. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is known as a learner-centered, centric approach to teaching English as a foreign or second language. It addresses and meets the needs of (mostly) adult learners who need to learn a foreign language for use in their specific professional fields, such as science, technology, medicine, leisure, and academic learning.

As mentioned by Fiorito (2005): ESP students… have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job related functions. An ESP program is therefore built on an assessment of purpose and needs and the functions for which English is required….ESP concentrates more on language in context than on teaching grammar and language structures. It covers subjects varying from accounting or computer science to tourism and business management. The ESP focal point is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world (or wishes); instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners”.

In a nutshell the characteristics of ESP can be summed up as:

1. ESP has specific goal and needs and is need based.
2. ESP has specific content related materials.
3. ESP is learner-centric.
4. ESP is centered on particular language function, skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading), English components (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary) or activities.
5. ESP is perceived as relevant by the learners.

The ESP materials, in turn, should keep these principles: Need Based, (2) Inclusive of coverage area of language skills, functions, grammatical structures, vocabulary, and (3) discourse types, also special features of the related content subject (business, nursing, engineering, biotechnology, etc.)

THE OBJECTIVES OF ENGLISH IN TECHNICAL ENGINEERING COLLEGES

The goal and objective is to provide the students with necessary qualification and competence to function in job internationally and nationally where they will be able to:

1. To express and share their experience, knowledge, ideas and thoughts in an effective manner for the common benefit of the society.
2. To aspire a bright academic career growth, to secure a higher level of position in the related jobs.
3. To attain timely promotion and other benefits at their working place.
4. To lead the team from the front and to develop a very healthy working environment and interpersonal communication skills.
5. To harness a better understanding and harmony and to pursue advance or higher level of studies.
6. To effectively work in a globalized and multilingual culture and to sharpen presentation, writing, negotiation, intrapersonal skills etc.

Also to:

7. Translate and combine technical and commercial research project results, knowledge into practical application in project development, solution of technical problems. To expose them to business language and culture, and to develop their critical approach analysis.
8. Be a part of managerial and teamwork function with people of multicultural backgrounds.
9. To advise market, negotiate and communicate in technical areas in English, proving their professional, methodological, and communicative competence.

Hence the syllabus of engineering colleges in Odisha is also designed to fulfill this course objectives i.e.

1. To provide learners with the basic strategies for day to day communication this is general in nature and to make them understand the Basics and importance of technical communication.
2. To enhance their ability in Listening comprehension, by drills and to train them in professional speaking by imparting the knowledge of various speech/presentation situations they have to face as technical students later.
3. To equip them with professional writing skills by giving training in writing various tasks like Reports, Proposals, Projects, Business memos / Email, Editing, proof reading, referencing and so on.
4. Make the fluent communicators of English and to Increase their LSRW skills.
5. Help them be placed at campus recruitment in good companies.
6. Enlighten their sensibility and confidence and highlight their soft skills to make them extrovert and eradicate their stage /public speaking phobia
7. Make them efficient employers in the competitive job market and for cross cultural communication.

Qualities of an ESP Teacher

Who are ESP teachers? Almost always he or she is a teacher of General English who has expectedly found him/herself required to teach students with special purposes

Tickoo (1988) suggest that there are three techniques recommended to the teachers to cope with ESP materials.

I. Become familiar with the ESP course materials
II. Become familiar with the language of the subject (especially the vocabulary)
III. Allow the students to correct the teacher in the matter of the subject (not errors in English components, of course) Along with these the teacher should also have:

a. Love for English Language and Literature, Broad vision and outlook
b. Understand the Learner
c. Mastery over the methods of Teaching in English
d. Sense of Humour, Democratic attitude
e. Command over the vocabulary, Fluency in speaking
f. Knowledge of evaluation techniques

ESP TEACHER’S ROLE

There is a shift from Pedagogy to Andragogy.

To quote a survey conducted in a research journal; these are some of the roles listed of an ideal ELT teacher:

The roles listed by the teachers and examples of the teacher’s role

Behaviouristic roles: Organizer, Instructor, Controller, Task-related roles: Facilitator, Counsellor, Participant, Expert, resource, Evaluator

Interpersonal roles: Creator of conditions, Conducive to learning, Friend, Socializing agent

Special roles: Motivator, Learner

THE PRESENT STATUS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN ODISHA

The Teachers

Teachers are the architects of student’s future. The teachers of English in Most of the technical institutes are Mostly MA or M.Phil. in English and mostly of literature background. Some also have ELT specialization and are selected by an expert Committee to enter into the teaching profession. But nowadays AICTE has been strict in recruiting quality teachers having PhD or NET qualification, which many are is lacking. Many teachers have to leave job in order to make a higher career, and hence students suffer. The student’s feedback on individual teacher is taken and teacher’s performance is closely monitored every time. With the advent of nearly 150 engineering institute in the entire state, dearth of well qualified trained and talented teachers is rampant. Teachers who have joined the profession out of compulsion are much more than who have joined it by choice. Therefore the psychology of the teachers is merely to finish off the course and syllabus rather the full potential development of the student.

Some of the teachers are also actively engaged in research works and undertake projects for their own career and development, giving little valuable time for the student’s bright academic pursuit. Secondly teachers without the proper qualification are given a contractual and temporary post thereby decreasing their zeal of teaching and motivation.

The Technical Student

The students that come to the first year college are 17-18 years of age and a completely heterogeneous group having different abilities and capabilities. Most students come up from the vernacular based school that have a fear psychosis for this foreign language and try not to use it unless extremely necessary. Most students ‘do’ their English with the main aim to pass their examinations and they are able to do so with the help of rote-learning. Even most teaching is geared to prepare the students for the examinations rather than to enable them to
learn the language. It tests their memory rather than their domain knowledge. Most students, therefore, when they come to college, suddenly realise that they need English if they wish to go for engineering or medicine, at least as a library language. They are frustrated when they are confronted with lecture-method teaching of English in the college classrooms if it is lecture based. Most students suffer from the Mother Tongue Interference, and have a very rural accent, and the teacher has to literally churn his/her brain to bring about Accent neutralisation in them. They are provided with lot of remedial exercises to come to the normal accent.

**Common Hurdles Faced by the Students**

- When taken a random survey of 120 students, The proficiency level of Odisha students in the LSRW skills was found out to be:
  - a. 1\textsuperscript{st} = Reading (40%),  
  - b. 2\textsuperscript{nd} = Writing (31%),  
  - c. 3\textsuperscript{rd} = Listening (17%),  
  - b. d. 4\textsuperscript{th} = Speaking (12%).

![Figure 1. The LSRW skill chart](image_url)

**SURVEY AND ANALYSIS**

A questionnaire was prepared and a survey was collected from 120 students to find out what is the role of English in their B. Tech curriculum:

Therefore we see the students want this subject to be made practical, and competent teachers should handle it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Affirmative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Can’t say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think English should be taught at B. Tech level?</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think only special language teachers should teach it?</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree that teachers of English in engineering colleges need a special set of competencies, other than those of General English teachers?</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you want the teachers of EST to explain to you theories of language learning?</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you want the teachers of EST to be facilitators, who know the strategies of modern classroom teaching, who give you lot of activities in the classroom and make you an active participant?</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you love this subject?</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANALYSIS
From the Table 1 it is clear that, 98.9% of the students want teachers should be competent in English language and have special set of expertise to teach the subject, and most of them want to have it pre placement practice.

REASONS OF INHIBITION
Students were asked to disclose their language learning problems and sufficient time is given to think over on it. The next day, the brainstorming sessions were conducted where the students have listed problems. The most important problems are:

1. Fear of Criticism by the peers for being unable to use the language and being ridiculed
2. Disinterestedness for the subject as they consider it to be a foreign language whose usability is less in real life.
3. Fear of using the language with faulty grammar and pronunciation.
4. Poor practice
5. Low vocabulary stock making them deficient of using the language appropriately.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON THE PRESENT SYSTEM
No system is flawless, so the entire educational system of Odisha has some deficiencies like:

1. Lack of charisma, motivation, inadequate pedagogical skills, lack of proper lesson planning, on the part of English teacher.
2. Dearth of trained teachers, teachers not joining by choice, but by compulsion as the rate of unemployment is quite high these days.
3. Parroting habit of teacher, not facilitator, but a performer for captive and passive audience,
4. Tiresome stretch of class hours: English is generally the last class in the time table and the students are really tired and bored towards the end of the day.
5. Faulty system of evaluation: Memory instead of application is tested in the examination
7. Disinterestedness for the Subject: students are engrossed in the technical subject more.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT
For Teachers

1. The teachers should be well qualified and should have a passion for teaching and should be preferably ELT trained.
2. They should regularly attend symposium, conferences, and workshops in ELT to keep them updated about the recent developments.
3. They should be skilled and patient as they have to develop the skills among their students.
4. They should be actively engaged in research and publication works.
5. They should make the classroom student centric than teacher centric.
6. They should be very keen observers, observing every student minutely and giving them proper feedback.
7. The teachers should be given due recognition, and not be underestimated as English teachers, within technical education.
8. They should introduce new techniques in the classroom and make the students well motivated. And make the Class should be activity based and not theory based.

For Students
1. Vernacular medium students should eradicate the phobia for English
2. They should be voracious readers of all types of books, articles, journals.
3. Listen to speeches or watch movies or documentaries in areas they aren't familiar with are fun tips on improving English.
4. Although less fun, learning grammar is an essential tool for English. Knowing English grammar inside and out is one of the top tips on learning English. This should be tackled at the same time as both reading and listening exercises so that one understands how the sentence is constructed, and can manipulate it later to suit the needs.
5. Read a book, newspaper or journal in English that is just above the current level of reading with a dictionary. This will help to learn new vocabulary words in a fun way. This is also a great tip for improving English in a technical field. Even by spending a mere 15 minutes a day, skills can improve drastically.
6. When, one feels ready, go for total immersion. This means surrounding oneself by English speakers. Of all English tips, this one will test the skills.
7. Do lots of activities on LSRW skills and should discourage Mother Tongue interference while speaking.
8. Prepare for TOEFL and IELTS examinations.
9. They should try for accent neutralisation.

CONCLUSION
To conclude, English in India has, indeed, come far from its original uses in the colonial times when it was mostly used as the language of the government. Nowadays, English has spread into many new domains, also the more personal ones, such as the family and friendship. English has, also, acquired new functions, including the self-expressive or innovative function. Today, in fact, it is hard, almost impossible to think of English as it is used in India only simply as another foreign language. English was first introduced as a Subject in the Engineering course curriculum to give the students a taste of humanities, but the purpose saw a metamorphosis with the passage of time where it took up the flight being completely functional, communicative and Business oriented helping students to develop competency in the LSRW sub skills of language, and hence fetching a good job for them in the campus placements, and surviving in the corporate job market thereafter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
Words cannot express gratitude, but still the author would like to thank her employer, students, case study group, parents and colleagues who supported her in the best possible way and made this paper possible.
REFERENCES


