



PLACEMENT TRAINING IN ENGINEERING COLLEGES ENHANCE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

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1. Introduction

English is not a big issue for placement. It is just that we should know an optimum level of fluency. If we want to get a job in a good company we need to have good technical skills, and the English will help us to explore that good technical skill. Today most of the companies have an understanding that a candidate must be able to communicate with other as we are all global now. India may have a large number of youth but most of them are inadequately skilled in English Language to the required level for jobs. It's true in case of engineering education. IIT graduates sure have impressed the world with their strong technical and language skills but a large number of students from ordinary engineering colleges are not even employable. A study shows that Russians & Chinese engineering students are better than those in India. The blame doesn't lie with the students but the large number of engineering colleges mushrooming in the country in the past decades. These colleges often lack in infrastructure, faculty, old syllabus, outdated curriculum etc., Therefore I strongly believe that improving these things is not something where we see sudden results rather it needs a gradual growth in the priority of learning the globalized language 'English'.

2. Top Language Skills Needed For Placement

An 'international language' is a logical requirement in an area of worldwide information sharing and commercial exchange. For the better or worse, this role has fallen on English. The need for and the importance of teaching and learning English has to be measured today in terms of international values. Of all the languages in the world today, English is regarded as the world language; anyone who can read English can keep in touch with the whole world without leaving his own home. It can therefore be rightly said that English is a language which has become most useful to the welfare of mankind especially for their career.

I have visited an IT company and met a HR manager and a few IT professionals. I talked to them about their job responsibilities and asked them what the level of English at the workplace is and

what language skills are important for them at work? My task is to identify their language needs and I have identified the List of language skills prevailed there.

- speaking politely
- using positive language
- distinguishing between formal and informal speech
- speaking convincingly
- reporting
- breaking the ice before trying to talk to strangers
- delegating
- asking questions and handling questions
- suggesting
- recommending
- clarifying
- persuading
- active listening
- writing reports
- giving an oral presentation
- speaking to a group

It is crystal clear that, out of four language skills speaking skill has predominant role in IT companies and writing comes next. It states that the methodology adopted to teach English in schools and colleges should undergo rapid change according to the strategies and requirements in the present global scenario.

3. Conception about the Placement Process

3.1 Less priority of the Subject

Engineering students always have a feeling that their placement comes only in the Third and Final year and so they do not find any immediate need for English. Especially students of Civil and Mechanical Engineering have a strong conviction that the English language is not essential for them as they are going to work with machines and construction workers. Even in the First Year Pondicherry University exam schedule, English Examination comes as the last exam and the students are not given any gap for preparation as is given to other subjects. This directly or indirectly conveys that English is an easy subject and does not need any extra efforts to pass the examination. This also is based on possible assumption that the contents in the syllabus are not challenging for the students and so they can come to the exam hall without any practice or preparation. The evaluation system is also responsible for this misconception. Attempting all questions and filling in the pages will bring them at least the pass marks. That is how the percentage of passes in the English Papers is higher when compared to the other subjects.

3.2 Eligibility Filtration

The attainment of students' eligibility for placement can be brought out through their number of arrears in University Examinations rather than their English usage in real life situations. Here we should not blame the colleges but the IT companies have the vague norms in their recruitment process. The corporate world expects the candidate must be able to communicate effectively in all possible ways and simultaneously it expects they should be technically sound. But few MNCs

are very ready to pick out candidates with commendable language as they believe that they can be trained technically afterwards.

3.3 Placement Training

Placement training has gone through a dramatic evolution in the recent years and the onus of the learning has shifted predominantly to the learners. The primary focus is on oral communication activities to provide authentic and meaningful practice of the target language. In any group communication tasks, the learners must make multiple usages of the target language in order to develop both accuracy and fluency. The learners are required to negotiate meaning drawn from their own resources rather than merely reproducing and absorbing language. Language training by the placement trainer can sometimes differs greatly from the language teachers in the perspective colleges. An informal atmosphere has been maintained throughout the training program. Students are free to interact with the trainer and with the students' participants. In the communicative situation, the students are free to define the context and elicit responses. Emphasis is on real, meaningful communication rather than activity topics and artificial situations. The learners are encouraged to use more and more English while interacting with their classmates and friends. To establish a relaxed and informal relationship among participants the use of mother tongue can be allowed during the initial few days. Almost everything that will be done in the classroom is done with a communicative intent during placement training.

4. Problems Found In Learning English During Placement Training

English language also referred as International English has played an increasingly important role as the medium of communication among the people of India. India is a multi-linguistic country, the globalized language is used for the expansion of academic knowledge and it helps to transform the educational experience of numerous students. It paves way for the movement of professionals within nations and between nations. Though it is mandatory to learn English for placement part of the students are facing many problems during their placement training. They are:

4.1 Mother Tongue Influence

The main problems for the Pondicherry engineering graduates are in the influence of their mother tongue particularly in pronunciation and syntax. As the region is linguistically diverse and has varied cultural & social life which reflects through its different language by local inhabitants. The official language of this Union Territory contributes as follows:

Tamil – 89 %
Malayalam – 3.8 %
Telugu – 2.9 %
French – 1%

In recent years Hindi language also emerged as one of the prominent languages of the native population. This is the reason why the local inhabitant is finding it difficult to remember the rules & words in English compared to their mother tongue which instantaneous and spontaneous for them. Being a global language it has its own Received Pronunciation which is accepted

internationally. To reduce this problem in higher education it is vital that, while on one hand spoken English be encouraged and promoted, on the other hand such sound patterns as which are likely to be confused and faltered be identified and drilled. As a regular practice the teacher is seen as a model for correct speaking in the class room.

4.2 Grammar Hindrances

We have studied grammar only for the purpose of examination and mark and not for any other thing. But developing a solid foundation in English needs the knowledge of grammar which helps us to create our own sentences and make it easier to improve our communication skills in both spoken & written. Most of the language learners in placement training ignore to learn the grammatical side of the globalized language. For that they use to tell that we have learnt grammar in school & we have sufficient basic grammar to speak and to write. Obviously it is correct, because how to impart their sense without grammatical mistakes in large use is part of the learning process is a big tussle for them. Many feel nervous and use to say that “My English is poor”. Here the word poor they referred for poor grammar / poor in grammar. In total students are not aware about grammar, which has a positive effect on their literary ability and employability. Although spoken English without grammatical mistake continues to be an unresolved issue, rules of speaking seem an inextricable component of communicative competence.

4.3 Transliteration

It is the process of expressing the sound of how a word is pronounced in the same language is in the alphabet of the target language. The most popular use of transliteration is in the names, mobile languages and to learn music; whereas Translation is the art of expressing an author's intended meaning in another language, in which they are not fluent. Translation requires knowledge of language whereas Transliteration is more about the knowledge of alphabet. Engineering students find that coming out of transliteration of any sentence from one language to another is a formidable and challenging task. It pulls them back in the process of English language learning. Most of the students from remote area of this UT are not able to find the correct term to express their thoughts and feelings. They just manage the situation by using their transliteration. Moreover transliteration plays an important role in natural language applicable of engineering students. So they started to practice it in their technical sharing during projects exploration, exams and other such technical presentations.

5. Role of Teachers of Language during Placement Training

5.1 Teacher Should Be A Learner

Wherever willingness is great challenges are never great for the teachers of English in engineering colleges around Pondicherry, because the students are from mixed background and varied levels of language proficiency. Lifelong learning is a process that can be done in almost every aspect of life. A teacher is a learner to the extent that the teacher acts in the way that are favourable to the development of basic skills, understanding work habits, desirable attitudes, value judgement and adequate personal adjustment of pupils. It is a universal saying that the quality of education solely depends upon the quality of teachers. The current information and

technological age expects teachers to be fully hyper diversified themselves to play multiple roles in shaping the future of the students.

5.2 Teacher should be a Facilitator

The teacher should be a facilitator as he/she has look after each and every student and make them involved in using English. The following are some of the tips for the language teachers to be a facilitator.

- The teacher should enhance the students' language speaking skill by inculcating other skills so that the students' interest can be enriched towards English.
- The teachers' updated knowledge on current scenario of English (clichés and modern English) will indirectly make the students have an interest towards learning English.
- The usage of social media like whatsapp can also be used by the language teachers. The teacher can form a group for each of their class for formal or professional chats in which English only can be used, and corrections will be done by the teacher if needed. This will help the students to communicate better and also to know how to use English in practical situations.

5.3 Teacher Should Be a Parent

We cannot deny that parents are the sole, who lay a firm and unshakable foundation in the process of learning any skills by their kids. At the same time a lot of parents fail to pay attention to develop their language communications skills of their kids as they strongly believe the school teachers will do that wonderful job. So teachers are the sole person to inculcate excellent habits among the children to learn and to develop their inherent potentialities as children have to spent three fourth of their life in academic institutes. More than the general subject teachers, the language teachers are considered as very special to the students. Students have an attitude that the language teachers are reacting like a parent in schools in identifying the language status of the student and giving remedial measures or enhancement to the students because they also bother about the career of their children.

5.4 Teacher Should Be a Well-Wisher

Language teachers in engineering colleges have a strong belief that English communication becomes a paramount one and it is considered as a career skill. If they make teaching English as a process then students become employable. As a well-wisher of their students they should have a mission to provide sufficient occasions for developing all the four language skills of English.

5.5 Teacher should be a Trainer

A student, especially professional student can guarantee that there is always a teacher or trainer who is one of the major influences in their life. They may also be a loved one, who was fulfilling the role of a parent. These two most influential careers have ever been created. They expect that the teachers should act as a language trainer to some extent, because

- A teacher needs to possess extensive knowledge on language, great hands on skills and a strong, healthy attitude, whereas a great trainer does not possess these skills; instead they just know to use them all effectively.
- The result of language teaching usually long time away and it is result oriented, whereas the effort of language training have influenced soon in career.
- An average teacher basically teaches language and provides information, but a better trainer can teach both skills and knowledge about language.
- Great teachers know the value of attitude and teach it because they can make the emotional connection. Great trainers never make the emotional connection and without it they may make changes in individual.

6. Placement Training In Engineering Colleges Enhance English Language

School teachers make the students to memorize and repeat the content of English Language in the examinations. The college language teachers are trying to change their language learning style. But the placement trainers blend all the three domains such as language, style and their deliberation. This is not happening since even in some colleges where the English language is taught as a subject. The engineering college which has vibrant language training for students during placement training fructifies it in their increasing number of placed students.

Placement training creates interest towards learning English. Giving lectures always in the class may make them feel boring. Taking continuous classes may lead to lose the interest of the students. The different activities during placement training can keep them engaged in their learning process and it will improve their LSRW skills.

There is ***no paradox on the part of the English teachers***, as” what we say and what we do” during placement training.

- They take students to Language Lab which helps the students to practice phonetics and familiarizing students with voicing of the language using recordings made by native speakers.
- They insisted students to listen the repeated activities with individualized learning will help them to speak correct English pronunciation.
- Listening to audios and videos will pave the way to learn the right usage according to the situation.

There is ***no injustice in classroom language teaching***. Because the English language classroom offers heterogeneous background and the English medium students and non-English medium students are bringing a variety of factors into the classroom. During placement training teachers and trainers are not ignoring or neglecting any part of their class. They are not catering to the needs of any one particular section of their class. They are giving training only in general tone and bringing the integrity among them.

Advanced Technologies are helping to Enhance English Language during placement training. The advent of internet and growth of social media have certainly allowed the teachers and

trainers of English to enrich the English language of students during placement training. The online tools, multimedia reading program and language-learning software applied during placement training helps the students to learn and hone basic language skills which they can later apply in authentic social settings. They like writing on the computer better than writing with a pencil/ pen. Students under placement training absolutely benefit from these sorts of technological training for language. An array of technology helps to engage students the structured one-on-one English practice they need. Technology is providing a supportive environment for the language learning, and the parents and teachers are overwhelmed by this new influx of language learning. Employers strongly recommend and recruit the candidate who has both commend over language and strong technical content which they acquired through technology.

It is true that all teachers are language teachers, because they use some language to communicate and impart their technical knowledge in the classroom. ***Content Teachers are the one who teaches their specialised subject in English.*** In EST contexts like engineering colleges in India, English Language is the basic language to teach their technical content. Hence the content teachers come to the rescue of English teachers in providing sufficient time and opportunity to their students in learning language. Technical Knowledge and command over Language are the prerequisites to a profession which maximise the chances of success in interview as well as to be remain employable. Therefore the content teacher is also playing a vital role in enhancing the language of budding engineers.

7. Conclusion

Teaching and learning the English Language take place with enormous materials and methods, but mastery of English communicative skills seems to depend more on the curiosity and commitment of the learners. Trainers face a difficult task when many students are not wholly motivated to master English. They face challenges such as less time provided for training, irrelevant syllabus taught by the English subject teacher, heterogeneous media of instruction backgrounds of students, varying levels of English language competition, lack of motivation. The basic requirement of the placement trainer is, they should have command over English Language and they also need to continuously improve their communicative skills in English. Best slogan for all of us could be: “Don’t stop with teaching alone, create a compulsory English speaking environment for the students so that instilling communication skills in the English Language becomes feasible.”

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