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ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO STUDENTS FROM RURAL AREAS OF JAIPUR,
RAJASTHAN

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ABSTRACT

In the present scenario almost all the professions, including engineering are valued in English language, i.e. all types of communications are in English language hence it is becoming necessary for the employees and aspirants to learn the language. Apparently the student taking admissions in the respective engineering colleges are coming from various backgrounds and environments i.e. rural, urban, semi urban, etc. and they use to study the curriculum in the common language of English. The students coming from the urban and semi urban areas are efficiently coping up but the students coming from the rural areas use to face many problems in this regard. This present research paper tries to analyze the problems faced by the students from the rural background, during academic and professional life and its possible remedies.

Keywords- Engineering, English Communication, Skill learning.

Introduction

English is widely perceived in India as a valuable life and employability skill. Yet, the result of a global survey undertaken by EF Education First, suggests that out of a total of 54 countries that were surveyed, India ranked 14th under the English proficiency index with a third category level of “moderate proficiency” with countries above exhibiting “high” and “very high proficiency” levels. The quality of English teaching in India is a big question mark. David Graddol in his book *English Next India* argues that India has to keep pace with global development of English or it may lose its edge over other developing countries. According to him, the spread of the language is being hindered by a shortage of English language teaching in schools. His report says Indian universities fall far short of rival countries in the quality of teaching and research, and “poor English is one of the causes”. Also, the report adds, it is “impossible” to improve standards of English without addressing the problem of “very low levels of academic achievement” of students studying in government and private schools.

What comes out very clearly from the extensive research undertaken on this subject is that English language will continue to play an important role in India. It is the secondary official language of India and is widely used in national, political and commercial communication. However, the worrying factor is the relatively low quality of education with a huge gap between academic teaching and employability

requirement. Aspiring Minds, a company that focuses on assessing student employability, after having surveyed 55,000 students in 2011 found that not even 3% were employable directly without further training by information technology (IT) companies. They also said that about 78% of those surveyed struggled in the English language.

Significance of English Language in Engineering Education

Decades ago it was generally believed that engineers were to do technical things behind stage and therefore did not need any higher level of proficiency in English. The engineering curriculum therefore didn't give any emphasis to develop communication skills in English. As India is becoming a global economy and English being the language of global business, the Indian companies are increasingly focusing on English language skills of employment seeking candidates. Moreover, English is the medium of interpersonal communication in the corporate and therefore having good command on English language has become even more crucial. Engineers usually work in groups and this very nature of their work demands mutual cooperation and effective interpersonal communication within and outside the organization in order to understand and coordinate with co-workers and accomplish their projects. To be able to do so engineers need to possess high level of listening comprehension, speaking and reading fluency and good writing skills in English.

Literature Review

Curry, Sherry and Tunney (2003) report of a project to identify the transferable skills that graduates believed had been important to them in their careers since graduation. One of the main findings of the survey showed that oral communication skill was ranked as the most important transferable skill, ahead of presentation and writing skills.

Mohanty (2009) mentions about the importance that organizations place on 'good communication skills' in the global market. This aspect deals with the humanistic aspect of the need to be well grounded in 'soft skills' as these soft skills help groom the whole personality of the individual. A person who can communicate well integrates into a team more easily and effectively, resulting in an increasing level of efficiency and productivity. The purpose of the study conducted by **Yasin (2010)** was to investigate the English proficiency of Civil engineering students of a Malaysian polytechnic. A questionnaire, modeled after the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) approach and The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills report was developed and administered to 171 Civil engineering students. The post-industrial training survey, through the use of a self-report questionnaire, provided an important opportunity to capture crucial data from students regarding their English language skills. Findings of this study revealed that the students' frequency or ability of using the English language was low, irrespective of the type of workplace or level of study.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the importance of English language in engineering education, in the state of Rajasthan
2. To suggest ways and means for rural students in case of English learning, in the state of Rajasthan

Research Methodology

Sampling

Convenience sampling method is being used in this study; the total sample size of the study was 200 respondents belonging to different engineering institutes of Jaipur, Rajasthan. In this study, the respondents from the different engineering colleges of Jaipur city were included.

Tool for Data Collection

The tool for collecting relevant data was the following questionnaire.

Questionnaire

Section I

1. Name of the candidate:
2. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
3. Approximate monthly family income:
 - a. 10k to 20k
 - b. 21k to 30k
 - c. 31k to 40k
 - d. 41k to 50k
 - e. 50k or more
4. Medium of education up to 12th standard
 - a. Hindi
 - b. English
 - c. If any (please specify)

Section II: Learning status of the students

Note: Section II contains the questions based on five point scale; you are required to put a tick for any one of the points. The abbreviation for the following [HD Highly Dissatisfied, D Dissatisfied, M Moderately Satisfied, S Satisfied, HS Highly satisfied]

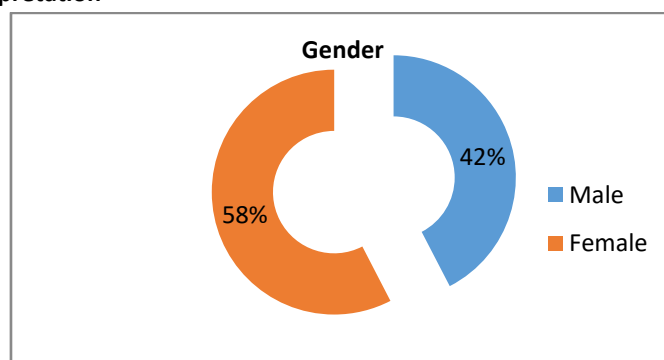
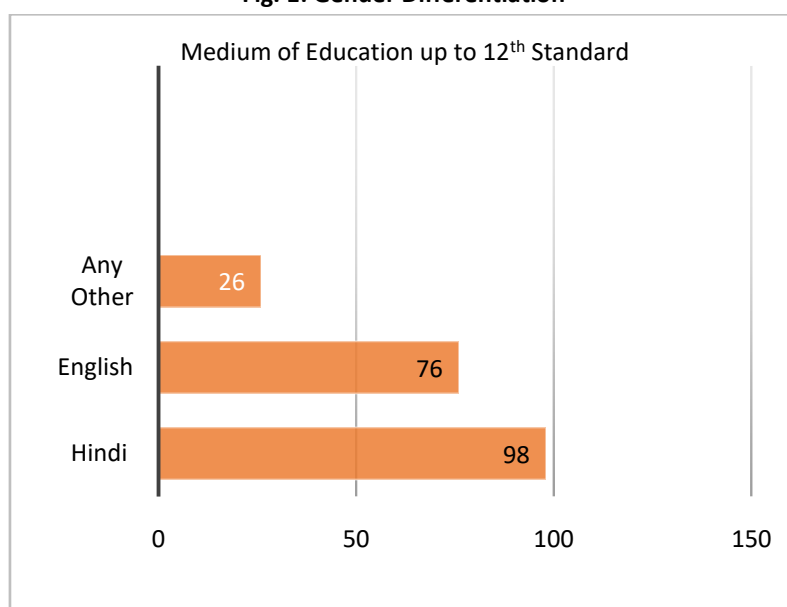
| | | HD | D | M | S | HS |
|-----|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| Q1 | The environment at the institute of your last education has supported English learning | | | | | |
| Q2 | Satisfied with your proficiency | | | | | |
| Q3 | Time devoted by the trainers is sufficient | | | | | |
| Q4. | Learned basics of spoken/written English till date | | | | | |
| Q5. | Number of students in a batch does not affect the system of learning | | | | | |
| Q6. | all the students of your batch are from the same level of education | | | | | |
| Q7. | Your repo with your batch mates is good | | | | | |

Data collection

Both the primary and secondary sources of data are being used in the study, secondary data was used to prepare the base of the study and the primary data was collected directly from the respondents using a detailed questionnaire, as given in the above description, it includes the questions type like, open ended, closed ended, dichotomous, scale based, etc.

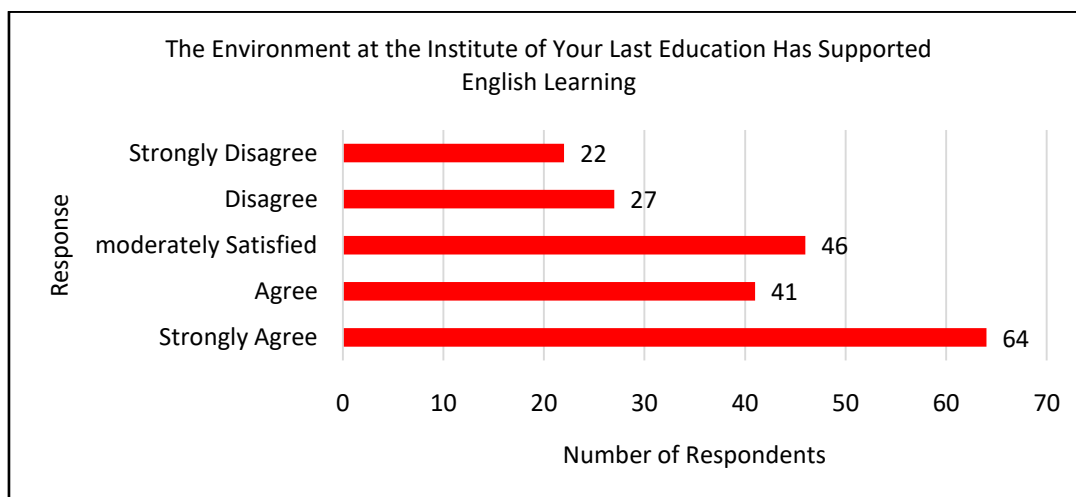
Measures

Scales were used for measuring responses. Each scale was a 5-point scale with '1 = not at all true' to '5 = very much true'.

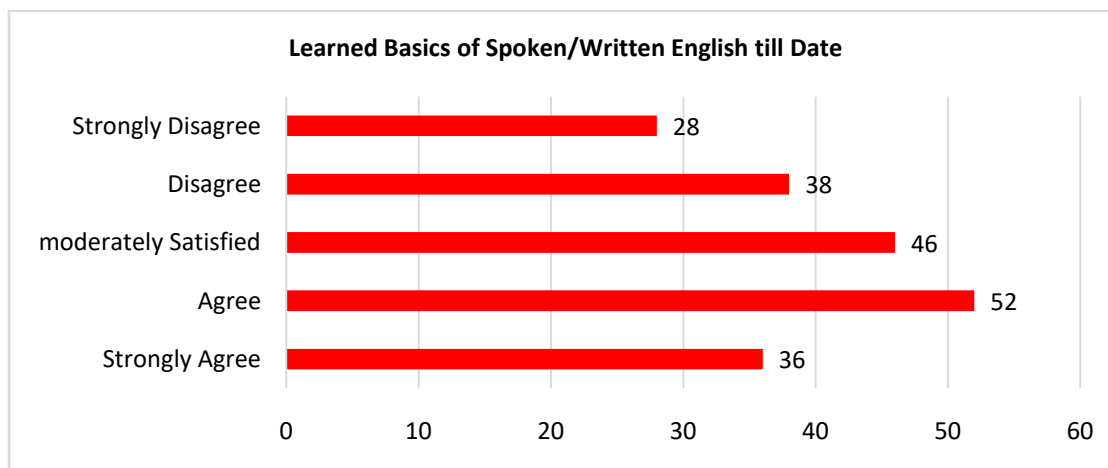
Data Analysis and Interpretation**Fig. 1: Gender Differentiation****Fig. 2: Medium of Education up to 12th Standard**

Interpretation

- Only 33% of the respondents were found to be from the background of English medium, though they reported that the environment at the school level was not supportive enough, as far as English learning is concerned.
- On the other hand the 49.4% of the respondents were from the background of Hindi medium.

**Fig. 3: Environment of Your Last Institute****Interpretation**

Surprisingly there are more number of females in the learning centers as compared to males, the percentage of male respondents was 57.6% and 42.4% were female respondents.

**Fig. 4: Learned Basics of Spoken/Written English till Date****Interpretation**

- 61.2% of the respondents were found to be agree with the point in question that they have learned the basics of spoken/written English till date.
- 48.8% of the respondents were either disagree or moderately agree to the point in question.

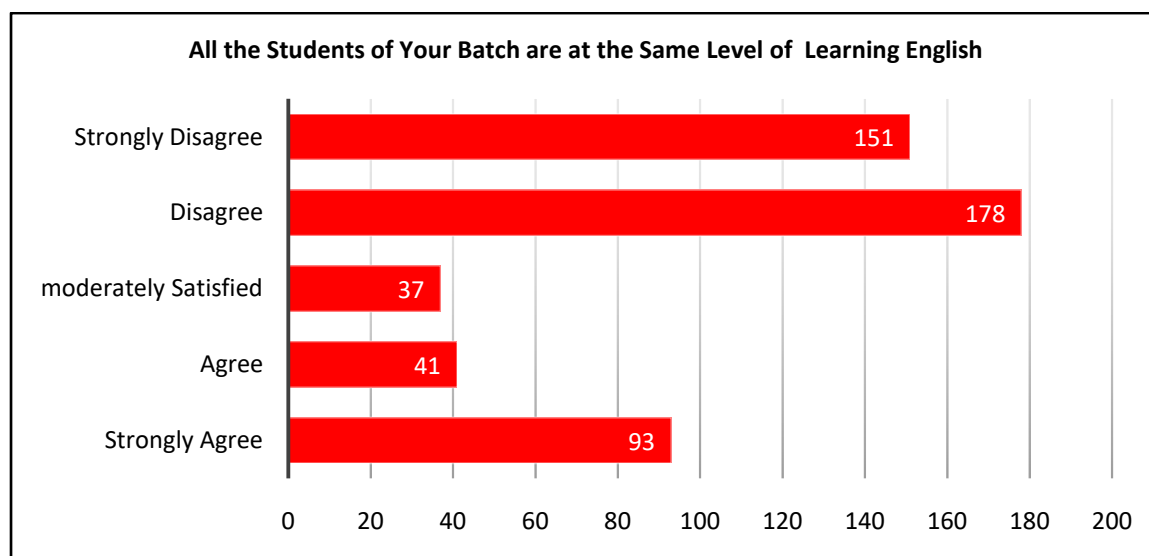


Fig. 5: Level of English of Your Batch mates

Interpretation

- 34% of the respondents agree with the point in question that the level of education in the respective batch is same,
- Other 66% of the respondents either disagree or moderately agree with the point in question.

Conclusion

The student's learning problem is compounded by the lack of appropriately trained English language teachers at all levels. Focus on improving English language proficiency of the teachers could help in improving the situation as students may have very little to learn from their teachers if they themselves are not truly proficient. The English proficiency of teachers in rural areas and even in various English medium schools is far from satisfactory. A mere university degree in English or a degree in education does not really guarantee proficiency of the teachers in English language teaching. Besides university degrees, graduate/post graduate, the teachers must qualify benchmarked proficiency tests in order to be considered eligible as teachers of English because the need of the hour is to teach English as a foreign language. Teachers of other subjects should also be asked to take language proficiency tests because, student's learning of English is not necessarily restricted to English classes but will have to happen through various subjects which are part of the qualifying examinations.

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