

Teaching English to Engineering Students in India

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Abstract

In our country English is important for a number of reasons. India is a land of diversity. Different people speak different languages. A person of South India does not speak Hindi. So he can't understand Hindi of a person from North India. However he can understand in English. So English is a link language. Different people can communicate with one another with the help of English. Secondly, all advanced knowledge in science, technology and medicine is available in English. The results of the latest researches come to India through the medium of English. If we give up English, we will lag behind in the higher fields of study. Today the world has become one family. It is all due to English. English is an international language. English is the language of the Constitution, the Supreme Court, the High Courts and official departments. English is now firmly rooted in the soil of India. It has become a part of Indian life. Thus English has great importance for the integrity of India. It has to be second language in our country for the better development of the country.

In this paper I have tried to mention the problems faced by teachers of English subject, in teaching students of Engineering and Technology, at the same time problems faced by students in learning English. I have also mentioned some suggestions and ways to develop all skills related to English Language that might be useful for both-students and teachers.

1. Introduction

Language is a means of communication through which we transfer our ideas, emotions, and thoughts; express our love, anger and get understood by other persons. It is language that distinguishes human being from other species. It has been the common experience of all human beings that language is acquired in proper surrounding or situation. Acquisition of language is not like learning other subjects such as mathematics, sociology, history, economics, anatomy or electronic engineering. It is the language itself to be acquired and get the information about it. We know well that, for acquiring a language, just the realization of the grammatical competence is not sufficient; it requires the communicative competence as well. Psycholinguistics presents the theories of language acquisition and language use and, therefore, some psycholinguists argue that "*learning is entirely the product of experience*" while others suggest that man "*has an innate language learning mechanism which determines learning or acquisition of language*" (1) Language is a marker of identity and a tool for representing local values and culture. On the one hand, the right to study one's own language is now considered a basic human right. On the other hand, there is an urgent-felt need, particularly among the younger generation, to identify with the global world culture. The patterns of language use in Indian society point to the use of Hindi as the lingua franca in India. Hindi is used by most people in rural contexts mainly in addition to their local language. Similarly, while English is used for official written documentation and communication, Hindi and/or the local languages are mainly used for oral interaction in government offices. In the cities, only a small part of the population, the educated elite, uses English for their everyday communication, but, still as Prof. Jacob Tharu says, "*English is no longer some remote but a powerful mystery, lying hidden in the world of textbooks and examination.*" (2) The challenge is to maintain an appropriate balance in the choice of language-in-education among individual, societal and national development needs.

English is a compulsory subject for all the first-year students of Engineering and Technology studying at colleges in India. Candidates with good communication skills and soft skills taste success and those who lack such skills become depressed and get frustrated. Very often recruiters complain that about 50 % of students do not have employability skills. When they mention the word 'employability skills' what actually they mean is 'communication skills'. A number of educationists and HR managers have highlighted the importance of taking steps to enhance students' communication skills. In the introductory chapter to Technical Writing and Professional Communication For Nonnative Speakers of English [1] Thomas N. Huckin and Leslie A. Olsen, state: "*Scientists and engineers may be technically brilliant and creative, but unless they can convince co-workers, clients, and supervisors of their worth, their technical skills will be unnoticed, unappreciated, and unused. In a word, if technical people cannot communicate to others what they are doing and why it is important, it is they and their excellent technical skills that will be superfluous. From this perspective, communication skills are not just handy; they are critical tools for success, even survival, in "real world" environments*" (3.) The truth in this statement becomes even more pressing in view of the current increasing internationalization of trade, commerce and industry. As English has become the lingua franca of international relations, tomorrow's

engineers will need English language skills that are far above the skills that most engineering graduates have today. Improved English language skills will enable engineers to keep abreast with recent developments in engineering areas. This is important in a 'life-long-learning' perspective as it may enable engineers to develop competences needed in new areas of engineering and for job opportunities in an international environment. It is equally important for engineering companies to have an engineering staff with good English language skills. They not only make good representatives but may also become an important asset in meetings and negotiations with foreign companies.

The earliest engineering colleges were opened in India, in the late eighteenth century by the British Empire, whose sole motive was to train Indians to become Public Works Engineers. There is a remarkable increase in the number of engineering colleges in recent years to state support, as well as the entry of private players into the field of education, but there are no appreciable differences in curriculum between various educational and technical institutions teaching engineering related subjects. English syllabus for Engineering students in India comprises of the four skills as below--

- a) Listening
- b) Speaking
- c) Reading
- d) Writing

The subject title is "Technical English" or "Professional Communication", a theory subject and "Communication Skills Lab", a practical subject. The Communication Skills Lab is conducted for the first year students of the four years engineering degree course and the Technical English is taught in first or second year to same students.

2. The Problems Faced by the English Teachers:

The present day engineering students are not giving enough importance to English language and they give prior preference to their specialized subjects. So they lack basic language skills, in particular, vocabulary, spoken skills and usage of grammar. As a result, they are unable to satisfy the interviewers in job interviews. So, there is a need to develop their language through the most scientific methods of teaching especially through the newly advanced methods of using the multimedia and the Web. The English teachers of technical institutions face different and difficult problems either academically or non-academically. First of all, the time duration for the completion of the given tasks is not sufficient. The teacher finds few students completing the given task, before the time set, while the slow learners find it difficult to complete it and so expect the teacher to provide answers. The slower students spend three times as much time as the faster students. This is not conducive to learning. Secondly each class has a variety of levels of English proficiency, a variety of interests and a variety of paces of studying. So, it is impossible to lead the students through varied levels of learning, which make the students passive. For these reasons, we need to individualize the study of English in order to get more effective results.

Further, in India, the language background of a student is based not just on his/her mother-tongue, but also on whether s/he attended an English medium school. Proficiency in English has never been a criterion for admission to engineering programs in India. Engineering graduates in India face the prospect of substantial unemployment despite high corporate demand for their services. Despite the growth in international demand, India is facing a significant level of unemployment among its engineers. While statistics show high levels of unemployment among engineers, many large companies complain of difficulties in finding qualified candidates—a "vexing paradox". This increasing unemployment of engineers in India has been attributed to their limited communication skills and consequently, the teaching of English in engineering education has been under the scanner. English language proficiency in globalizing India is an essential component of one's cultural baggage, it is also a resource, that can eventually open doors into the world of professional employment in India and abroad. Thus, English is immediately linked to employability. The English language courses at the tertiary level in India are excessively knowledge-based instead of being skill-based. Despite the focus on communication skills in some of the recent courses introduced in universities and colleges, the courses are handicapped because the objectives are not well defined, and consequently, the teaching methodology, testing and evaluation are sketchy. Engineering graduates produced by Indian universities suffer due to lack of communicative skills to study in the world-class institutions or work in a global atmosphere.

Teaching-learning process in India is affected by so many factors and thus causing a variety of levels of English proficiency. The students in India can be categorized into two; the one is having the regional language as medium of study from the primary level and the other is having English as the medium of study. Hence, the problem of teaching English as a second language, to the Indian students starts from the pre-schooling. Further environment and family background play vital role in success of learning process. In India, where majority of the people are farmers, have the poor background in education. Moreover, the income of majority of the families is not adequate. Hence, the parents are not interested in giving good education background to their children. In contrast, they are willing to engage the children in some jobs in order to earn money. This is the very basic

reason and the affecting factor in teaching. *“There is an irony in the situation. English has been part of our education system for more than a century. Yet English is beyond the reach of most of our young people, which makes for highly unequal access. Indeed, even now, more than one percent of our people use it as a second language, let alone a first language But NKC believes that the time has come for us to teach our people, ordinary people, English as a language in schools. Early action in this sphere, would help us build an inclusive society and transform India into a knowledge society.”* (4) Secondly, the infrastructure, viz. school buildings – class rooms, labs, etc. is not adequate as required. The first category of the students is almost compelled to attend their classes under the trees even after several five year plans. Majority of the students are coming from village and also their parents are farmers and uneducated. If the nature fails, the survival of the farmers will be questionable. Hence, the students are mentally discouraged due to the family conditions. In the second category, the students are having enough background in basic education since their parents are educated and they do not depend on the nature much. Many of the students from second category are joining in English medium schools and hence, they do not find much difficulty in pursuing their higher education. Moreover majority of the families of second category are dwelling in towns and cities and hence, they have easy access of quality education. But, the first category of students score good marks in the examinations conducted. It proves that they are having good writing skill in English. The only thing is that they have to be given training in oral English communication also. Hence, a common programme for English Language Teaching must be framed in the pre-schooling itself

3. The Problems of Teaching/Learning Tenses-

In the field of Technical English in Engineering Colleges, the teachers’ aim is to make the students acquire communication skills, listening skills, reading skills and for the use of English to meet the demands of business. This paper focuses on the difficulties of teaching and learning Technical English especially tenses. Communicative language teaching enables students to perform spontaneously, but it cannot guarantee linguistic accuracy. *“The learning of a language,”* Widdowson says, *“involves acquiring the ability to compose correct sentences. This kind of ability of the learner depends upon knowledge of the grammatical rules of the language being learned”* (5) Tense errors are the commonest and are difficult to remedy. The students are also confused about the use of proper tenses and are demotivated. Teaching language is viewed as a more difficult task than teaching literature. In literature, one has the freedom to explore into any genre and interpret it according to literary Language. But, when it comes to language, especially grammar, the instructor is expected to work within the rigid framework of the principles of grammar. The instructor always focuses his / her attention on the basic forms of grammar. As a result, his/her enterprise gets drowned. When the students join the first year of technical courses, they are already exposed to the theoretical nuances of English grammar. Of course, there are also students from vernacular medium, who struggle to speak and write fairly good English. The syllabus of their first year course of subjects includes English. It is called Technical English and the major part of their study is grammar. Communicative language teaching enables students to perform spontaneously, but it cannot guarantee linguistic accuracy. In learning grammar, students face a dilemma. On the one hand, they need to know the rules as that is what they are tested in their exams. On the other, there is a good need for effective communication in English. That is why; the instructors have to look out for the ways of combining form and meaning in teaching foreign language. Many of the students of technical courses are from vernacular medium and it is found difficult to explain the syntactic and semantic structural aspects of grammar. Out of curiosity, they usually raise a question, “How many tenses are there?” The instructor keeps counting his/her fingers and makes a mess of the class room. Tense errors are the commonest and are difficult to remedy. The students are also confused about the use of proper tenses and are demotivated. How can teachers of grammar facilitate learning in grammar and make the students discover on their own? Tenses are the jewels in the crown of grammar. Every sentence has a verb, without which, there is no sentence. The tense of the verb can be present, past and future, with other divisions in each tense. The use of tense depends on the time that the writer or the speaker wants to refer. The problem is that the students though know a great deal about the names of tenses, they find it difficult to understand the time aspect that each tense indicates. So, the focus is on the difficulties faced by an instructor and learner to understand the paradoxes involved in the study of tenses.

My experience is somewhat different. The fact that the purpose, the lay out, the discourse and the vocabulary of texts that deal with technically oriented subject matters are different from literary or newspaper texts, for example, these features justify the need for didactic approaches that are different from those applied to texts on general, social or literary topics. The term ‘Technical English’ is commonly used to refer to texts that deal with ‘technical subjects’ and to denote texts in which the discourse is different from that used in literary texts or texts on various social subjects.

Persistent use of first-language When teaching English as a foreign language, this is possibly the most common problem. As a teacher, it's important to encourage students to use English, and only English. However, if students begin conversing in their first language, move closer to the student. Ask them direct questions like "do

you have a question?" Another idea is to establish a set of class rules and develop a penalty system for when they use their first-language. For example: if a student is caught using their first-language three times, have them recite a poem in front of the class (in English). Remember, for the 1-2 hours they are in English class, it must be English only.

One of the characteristics or even a critical feature of teaching Technical English is that the course involves specialist language (especially terminology) and content. In the majority of cases teachers are not specialists in the students' professional fields. That is why the primary issue in teaching is the struggle to master language and subject matter. Teachers find themselves having to teach with texts whose content they know little or nothing about. In addition, the teacher happens to be the syllabus designer and is responsible for the teaching material and evaluation. The basic problem in designing a topic syllabus is that the syllabus designer is not a specialist in the specific area (e.g. engineering), consequently he/she is not capable of deciding by himself/herself which topics to include in the syllabus to provide the required terminology. It is also very difficult for him/her to arrange the topics in the most suitable order. Another problem is the text selection and adaptation. Not being a specialist in the specific area, the teacher cannot decide by himself/herself how to adapt the text that the most important information in terms of subject matter will remain. The decision has to be made about the texts: on the one hand, the texts must not be too difficult, because neither the teacher, nor the students have such a high level of professional knowledge; on the other hand, the text must not be too popular, because some learners have some confidence in their professional knowledge, and if the text is too easy for them in terms of subject matter, they tend to underestimate it in terms of language as well. In order to avoid such demotivation, the text should contain some challenges which can activate the professional knowledge of the students. The lack of close cooperation and coordination between content lecturers and the designers of the study programmes, is a problem that still exists. Content lecturers should have more responsibility for introducing students and training them in a particular discipline. Developing home assignment or oral examination tasks together with content experts could be a great help for teachers.

It has been found that a number of technically-sound students have not been successful in job interviews just because of their lack of communication skills and there are cases of rank holders in engineering studies who could not go for higher studies to the United States and other English-speaking countries because of their lack of proficiency in English. Just because those students did not get score / band on their Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS), they could not make their dream of going to the countries for studies come true. A number of engineers employed in IT companies have been sacked because of their poor English communication skills. It is a question of planning, structuring and integrating various activities for the purpose of enhancing the students' learning. The English language skills areas comprise the abilities of understanding oral and written English and being able to use English orally and in writing adequately in different contexts and for various purposes. *"Speaking and writing are said to be active, or productive skills whereas listening and reading are said to be passive, or receptive skills"*(6) In my teaching I have focused on developing the students' written language skills within genres such as memos and formal letters, reports (of varying length), writing documentation (as in manuals, procedure and process descriptions), and writing brief articles for journals, magazines and newspapers. Although there are many varieties of how these documents are set up, conventions and various standards indicate a common lay-out that is widely accepted internationally. Oral presentations, Role Plays and Group discussions in meetings and negotiations are adequate activities for developing the students' oral skills.

4. Developing Text Comprehension Skills--

Normally, at work engineers will read a variety of documents on technical subjects. Authentic documents written by native English speakers can be obtained upon request from local, national or international companies or from the Internet. Authentic documents as those mentioned previously will illustrate the use of vocabulary, sentence construction and lay out, and will give the students the opportunity to study how these elements are used in various types of documents. They may serve as 'models', but should rather – to my mind – serve as resources and examples that illustrate how English can be used in certain contexts and for certain purposes. Text comprehension will require knowledge of lay-out, vocabulary and sentence construction. But comprehension can also be extended by asking students about the context of the documents and their purpose. Authentic texts in national language or written in English by non-native English speakers can be used for language learning purposes. By comparing these texts with texts written by native English speakers, students may become aware of differences between the national language and English. Such a strategy will not merely extend their vocabulary, but may also enhance their awareness of the 'cultural' aspects and differences between the two languages. Moreover, if authentic texts written by native English speakers are used as examples, the students may acquire vocabulary and sentences construction that they may apply when they are writing their own texts on similar subjects and in similar contexts or situations. Thus, learning English becomes an active acquisition of language

skills, and the differences between ‘classroom’ and ‘workplace’ activities may be reduced considerably which again may enhance the transfer of language skills from the classroom to the workplace

5. Teaching Listening Skills--

Listening skill is an essential element in improving the language proficiency and understanding. The student listens to oral speeches in English, then separates them into segments the utterances s/he hears, groups them into words, phrases and sentences to understand the meaning. In the laboratory, students listen during various activities for two purposes: to repeat and to understand. While listening to repeat, students imitate and memorize linguistic items such as words, idioms and sentence patterns. This is an important task in initial listening exercises.

However, it is listening to understand that is real listening in its own right. Techniques like developing cognitive strategies, developing listening by integrating with the other language skills, listening to authentic material, listening while using technology, listening for academic purposes, and listening for fun are all important to impart listening skills to the students. For this we need to use various material and activities effectively in the laboratory.

6. Teaching Speaking Skills--

It has been felt that developing good oral skills is a complex activity and probably the most difficult part of foreign language learning. It involves not merely being able to pronounce words correctly, using appropriate vocabulary, and developing a good fluency and sentence construction. The simplest activity for developing oral skills is to ask students to practice reading out loud in pairs focusing on fluency. This activity can be applied to texts, but should also be applied to reading symbols, equations and formulae used in mathematics, physics and chemistry, for example. It is my impression that teachers of English do not always give students time to practise this skill, and lack of fluency in this respect may cause misunderstanding. Basic strategies such as asking and answering questions, imitation and repetition, substitution, question-answer dialogues, day-to-day expressions, eliciting, guess and speak, directed dialogues, descriptions and role-play can be used to improve speaking skills in the laboratory sessions. Teaching pronunciation involves internalization of the articulation of consonants, vowels and diphthongs used in English language. The techniques of imitation, explanation, practice, comparison and contrast are found effective for improving pronunciation in the language laboratory. Sounds of the language, accent and intonation are taught by drilling the words, phrases and sentences with their books or tape scripts open in the initial activities. This helps the students to develop sensitivity on their own correspondence between pronunciation and spelling.

7. Teaching Reading Skills--

Reading can be done in four different ways, depending on the purpose of reading a text: Skimming, scanning, intensive reading and extensive reading. Reading is a developmental phenomenon. It has three phases in acquisition of the skill, they are (i) Beginner’s Reading (ii) Intermediate Reading and (iii) Advanced Reading. Various aspects of teaching-learning reading skill are illustrated under these three phases. The interactive nature and storage capabilities of the computer are the features that may serve as a foundation for the creation of unique electronic reading environments as it influences cognitive processing during the reading process. Computer-mediated texts enhance readers’ options for acquiring word meanings during independent reading. Reinking illustrated that computer-mediated texts provide readers with several options for assistance during independent reading.

8. Developing Oral Comprehension Skills--

At the end, developing comprehension skills with respect to oral discourse is the most important part of foreign language learning. Oral communication is fast and will require not only a rich vocabulary and knowledge of sentence construction, but also some cultural knowledge about the people you are listening to. As spoken statements are very dependent on culture, situation and context, they should be understood or interpreted within the context they are spoken. Using videos (e.g. TV programmes on technical subjects, companies or product presentations) or sequences from films may give the students knowledge and examples of how language usage is culturally and contextually conditioned. TV-programmes and films in English with no translations or dubbing of what is spoken may be challenging, but is rewarding. The sequences may need to be played several times during which students should be asked to take notes in English and present briefs either in pairs or in front of class. Cultural aspects may be subject for discussions in class.

9. Teaching Writing Skills

The engineering profession – as with most other professional activities – is becoming increasingly ‘writing-

oriented'. It is for this reason important to focus on developing the students' writing skills. Engineers will have to proofread, correct or edit documents written by others, and they will have to be able to write these types of documents themselves. Writing exercises –and preferably short one - should be given frequently and should be on relevant technological subjects (e.g. brief summaries of research article, newspaper articles, technical reports, minutes of meetings, product presentations). Process-oriented collaborative writing where students work in groups of 3 – 4 students will activate students as much as possible and allow them to learn from each other. In groups larger than this, some students may become passive. During the writing process, the groups write, revise and edit the documents several times in line with responses from teacher, peers or peer-response groups. Avoid giving long lectures or talks in class. Instead, allow the students to explore material and inquire or seek information with respect to the problems they have. If the students are working with documents (e.g. a user manual) written in their native language, they may be asked to render – not to translate – the contents of documents in English. This activity gives the students a bit more freedom to paraphrase than a 'word-by-word' translation. As a follow-up, they may be asked to use the rendered text to write a similar document as the original one in the national language using the appropriate writing conventions. The final stage may be to study, collect and apply relevant vocabulary from similar documents written by native English speakers in their own document. This series of activities will make the students focus on the language used by native English speakers and the context and purpose of their own document.

In my classes I do not teach grammar 'for grammar's sake'. The students lack the 'meta-knowledge' of grammar and are in general mainly concerned with getting their language 'correct' without having to learn about grammar as such. Teaching grammar for grammar's sake will have no effect on developing their oral or written skills: *"The study of traditional school grammar has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. ... it will ... do them a gross disservice..."*. [7]. Instead, the teacher should encourage students to use 'interactive grammar exercises' available on the Internet individually to improve their formal language skills. If teachers want to support their language instruction on grammar, a 'comparative or contrastive grammar' method may be used to highlight and create awareness of differences between national language and English.

10. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Multimedia

No change can be brought without a change in the teaching methodology. Presently, our teachers seem to have exhausted with the methods and techniques of teaching. Today our teachers and students want a totally novel methodology. They want a methodology that is modern and effective. Considering these demands, the only way out seems to be the computer. Already, attempts have been made to teach language and literature through the computer. This new field is called Computer Assisted Language Learning and Computer Assisted Literature Learning. *"The complexity of teaching and learning – is a systematic research .The technical details of the mouse are simple but the teaching principles are complicated; for that reason we need to consider the effectiveness of learning through multimedia"* (8) Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is a relatively new and rapidly evolving academic field that explores the role of information and communication technologies in language learning and teaching. It provides fertile ground for leading edge, innovative and highly creative thinking and scholarly work. Because of the multiplicities and changeability of the field which include the emergence of new theoretical, methodological and learning paradigms, special understanding and expertise is required to assess the quality and the depth of such scholarly activities. Today, CALL activities exploit improved technology to produce highly interactive learning environments, providing effective support for the acquisition of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. High- speed networks allow access to authentic cultural materials and link learners to speakers around the world. When integrated into pedagogical plan, these new technologies enhance learning opportunities beyond anything previously possible. The number of variables associated with language learning and the difficulty in controlling those variables, in a second language learning setting is not so tedious, but it is to be designed according to the students attitude.

Multimedia computers have to be adopted as a better option, which are configured with the right software, permitting the students to view websites, to listen to T.V. or Radio programmes, to read the world's great literature, to facilitate person to person communication through e-mail, chat, internet phone, low- end video conferencing and many more. Voice recognition software allows the students to choose and to practice better idea of their accuracy. If an institution has electronic classrooms, the instructor with a laptop, demonstrates the orientation features and a good instruction sheet will take care of the rest. If the students have not finished at the class time, they can continue their work at home. I believe that computers should be used to make classes more effective. There are two ways to use them. One way is for the teacher to present pictures, videos and written text with or without sound. The presentation can be programmed in advance or handled manually. The other way to use computers is to have students use the computers themselves. It has been found that the second method of using computers lead the students a better understanding of computers as well as language learning. In this method, the students work individually on their own interest. The computer provides materials to study and

students can interact with the computer as if they are doing with a tutor or a library. The students here are encouraged to do the work either in groups or in pairs, so that they can get a spirit of cooperation and confidence in finding the answers. Interaction among the students is as important as that with a computer in learning. The students work at a computer during the class, can do assignments drills, tutorials, games, simulations and even reviewing and preparing for the class. Using computers give way to their knowledge and promotes the nature of independence. The researcher is of the view that the computer education is a beneficial one for both the slow workers and the advanced students, as it encourages working at their own pace. Slower workers can catch up, and advanced students can do extra assignments. *“Students think materials are new and fresh, if they are presented on computers, and they are often interested even in routine tasks such as learning to type. They seem to be willing to spend more hours and do more exercises on a computer than by hand”*.(9) Learning can be individualized using computers. Students can study materials related to their individual goals and interests, with the appropriate difficulty level and at their own pace. Computers can analyze the problems of each student and the teacher can help individual students with their problems based on the analysis.

Role play is another activity that students love to do and may be applied to many different situations and settings (e.g. working in pairs like ‘guide’-‘tourist’, ‘instructor-apprentice’, ‘visitor-information officer’). Role play requires role cards; information that the students will need to act out a particular character. Role cards may contain information about the characters (e.g. age, educational background, job position, situation, context), but students may also be asked to add more information or invent their own characters. Using role play as an activity may give teachers a means to create different ‘cultural contexts’ in which students may practice their language skills and cultural competence. As most other ‘classroom’ activities, role play cannot replace a ‘real life’ situation, but it may give students an opportunity to prepare for such situations. *The ideal authentic setting and context for learning activities within engineering would be to allocate students to a workplace that is relevant with respect to engineering area and to ask students to participate in some of the normal activities of the workplace. This is suggested by Anne Blakeslee.*(1)

Offering our engineering students the opportunity to develop adequate and comprehensive English language skills is increasingly becoming a necessity. Failure to do so is doing our students a disservice as they will need these skills in their studies as well as in their future profession. Various strategies have been launched in this respect. Although bilingual instruction or lectures in English are feasible alternatives for developing English language skills, the two methods are primarily ‘subject-oriented’. In order to develop the language skills of our engineering students, a compulsory English language learning programme be incorporated in their studies. The language programme should have as its overall aim and focus the development of the language skills that engineering students will need in their future profession as engineers. As engineers will communicate – orally and in writing – for different purposes and in different contexts and situations, the language programme should allow for activities that are as close to authentic, real life situations as possible. As Language skills are developed for communicative purposes, teachers should focus on teaching an English that may be understood and used worldwide, ‘a world standard English’(or International Standard English) which in Tom McArthur’s words is an *“ad-hoc balancing out of a variety of practices. It is ‘a fuzzy edged subset drawn from all the Englishes’It will be the norm and level to which millions will aspire.”*(11) Similarly, the use of authentic learning material may enhance their language acquisition and offer the students an opportunity to develop a language competence that they may further refine in their professional life.

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