An International Peer-Reviewed English Journal Impact Factor: 8.16(SJIF)Vol-9, Issue-3(Jul-Sep),2024 Indexed in: International Citation Indexing (ICI), Cite factor, International Scientific Indexing (ISI), Directory of Research Journal Indexing (DRJI) Google Scholar, Cosmos and Internet Archives.

Language Curriculum in Engineering Education: Challenges and Perspectives

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> Paper Received on 09-8-2024, Accepted on 26-09-2024 Published on 27-09-24; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2024.9.3.622

Abstract

The rapid growth of engineering education globally, especially in non-native Englishspeaking countries like India, has placed a significant emphasis on English language competence. However, there is often a gap between language instruction and the communicative demands of engineering fields. This paper examines the current state of English language curriculum in engineering colleges, explores the challenges faced, and proposes a framework for improving English language teaching aligned with professional needs.

Keywords: Engineering education, English curriculum, communication skills, technical English, employability skills

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, English has become the global language of science, technology, and innovation. Engineering graduates are expected not only to excel in technical expertise but also to communicate effectively across global platforms. In countries like India, where English is a second language for many students, designing an effective English language curriculum is crucial. Unfortunately, traditional curricula often emphasize rote grammar learning rather than real-world communication skills.

This paper discusses the evolution of language curricula in engineering education, the existing gaps, and potential reforms to bridge the gap between academic training and professional demands.

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2. Review of Literature

Many studies have highlighted the importance of English proficiency for engineering graduates.

- **Kumar (ECE)** observed that a large percentage of Indian engineering students are unemployable due to poor communication skills despite their technical knowledge.
- **Rajiv**(**CSE**) emphasized the necessity of incorporating task-based learning and technical vocabulary instruction into the curriculum.
- **Anand (IT)** proposed a blended learning model that integrates language learning into engineering project work, making language acquisition contextual and meaningful.

These studies collectively suggest that the English curriculum in engineering needs to shift from theory-heavy teaching to interactive, skills-based approaches.

3. Methodology

This research follows a qualitative approach by:

- Reviewing language syllabi of ten leading engineering colleges in the Vijayawada region.
- Conducting semi-structured interviews with 20 English lecturers.
- Surveying 100 final-year engineering students regarding their perceptions of language training effectiveness.

Data were analyzed through thematic coding to identify major patterns and challenges.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Curriculum Analysis

- 80% of colleges still rely heavily on textbooks focusing on grammar and essay writing.
- Only 20% included modules on soft skills, technical writing, and public speaking.

4.2 Faculty Interviews

- Lecturers agreed that time constraints and rigid syllabi limit their ability to innovate.
- Many faculty members suggested introducing modules on "English for Specific Purposes (ESP)" tailored for engineering contexts.

4.3 Student Surveys

- 67% of students felt that the English classes were not directly helping them in realworld technical presentations or interviews.
- 75% wanted more practice in group discussions, report writing, and project presentations.

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5. Challenges Identified

- Outdated Syllabi: Lack of focus on industry-relevant communication.
- Limited Faculty Training: Many teachers are trained in traditional English literature, not technical English or ESP.
- **Student Motivation**: Students often prioritize core technical subjects over language learning.

6. Recommendations

1. Curriculum Redesign

The current curriculum must undergo a complete transformation to meet industry expectations. Technical English should be introduced to help students write project reports and research papers effectively. Business Communication modules must be made compulsory to enhance workplace correspondence skills. Soft Skills training such as teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal communication should also be included. This redesign will ensure holistic development of both technical and language competencies.

2. Activity-Based Learning

Learning should shift from theory-heavy lectures to active participation through real-world tasks. Students must regularly engage in debates to improve critical thinking and spontaneous communication. Presentations, technical report writing, and mock interviews must become integral to classroom activities. Such practices provide hands-on experience and boost students' confidence. Activity-based learning bridges the gap between knowledge and application.

3. Industry Collaboration

Engineering colleges must actively collaborate with industries to design language programs based on real job requirements. Industry experts can guide curriculum developers on essential communication competencies. Regular guest lectures, internships, and language workshops should be organized with corporate participation. Real-time exposure will help students understand professional communication contexts better. Industry-academic partnerships ensure graduates are better prepared for global careers.

4. Faculty Development

Continuous professional development programs for English faculty are crucial for delivering an updated curriculum. Faculty must be trained in teaching Technical English, Business English, and communication for specific purposes. Workshops and certifications like Business English Certificate (BEC) can enhance their teaching methods. Updated faculty will be better equipped to integrate real-world communication practices into classrooms. Well-trained faculty are the backbone of a future-ready language education system.

7. Conclusion:Language education in engineering colleges must evolve beyond traditional teaching practices. Given the dynamic global job market, engineering graduates must be

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equipped with strong communication skills alongside technical knowledge. An updated, practice-oriented English curriculum can bridge the existing skill gap, improve employability, and help graduates thrive in multicultural environments.

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How to cite this article?

Bujji Babu Velagaleti "Language Curriculum in Engineering Education: Challenges and Perspectives." *Research Journal of English (RJOE)*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2025, pp. 619-622. DOI: 10.36993/RJOE.2025.10.1.622.