

The Basic Challenges in Front of Rural India Students in Engineering

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Abstract— The major function of language is to communicate. Majority of students in Engineering come from rural area with great knowledge, but they are unable to express themselves due to lack of communication skills. The students from the rural area mostly fail to understand the lectures and practical due to their inability to understand the language spoken in the classrooms. The rural students mostly study through vernacular mediums; it means their medium of education is a local or native language. English is considered as the universal language, but it is the biggest phobia for rural area students. Rural area students don't have the proper resources and exposure to learn English. There have been many problems with the English language learning process in rural India. Rural area students are not only facing the language problem but social, academic, cultural, and emotional problems. This paper highlights the main issues faced by the rural area students in engineering and it will give the possible solutions for the same.

Key words: Communication Skills, Vernacular Medium, Resources

I. INTRODUCTION

Once Mahatma Gandhi said, "The future of India lies in its villages". Majority of India still lives in villages and so the topic of rural education in India is of utmost importance. A survey named called the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), shows that Eighty-seven per cent of the schools in India are in the country's villages even though the number of rural students attending schools is rising, but more than half of the students in fifth grade are unable to read the languages properly. In villages mostly students study through their mother tongue. The teachers in rural area rarely speak English in front of students. Many English teachers are unqualified; they teach English in bilingual way and summarize everything in mother tongue. Students are not getting the opportunity to listen English. This is the biggest reason that students don't understand English in a proper way because there are very few resources available to learn English other than schools. The growing concern is English become the phobia for vernacular medium students. When phobia gets severe students give up learning it. English is a universal language and it is used in almost every field of education. Adequate knowledge and field related skills are must but they are not sufficient when it comes to progressing up the ladder.

The city based students are experienced many methods of learning English, they have ample resources, facilities, newspapers, Televisions, cyber cafe to learn this foreign language. On the other hand students from rural area face lot of problems when they come in cities to pursue their dreams of higher education. They fail to understand the language used in the classrooms. They are not able to comprehend the information, understand the message because of language, speed, accent, tone, vocabulary, pronunciation etc. Most of the engineering faculty members find that students from rural India even do not understand the teaching if they teach only in English. The local students who communicate in English fluently around rural students that creates inferiority complex among them. They used to prefer to sit, to walk, and to talk with vernacular medium students only and this practise deteriorate their dream to learn English. Going away from English is not an option because English is a window through which we grab the knowledge from every field.

II. MAJOR FACTORS, RESPONSIBLE TO MAKE RURAL STUDENTS WEAK IN ENGLISH

Rural background students learn through their mother tongue, they learn English as a second or third language. In villages majority of parents are illiterates. They cannot communicate in English with their children. Students learn English in classrooms only but they don't pay their attention towards the language as they find it difficult as compare to their native language. With this fear and phobia students never focus on English. They don't discuss anything with faculty members; even they feel shy to share their problems with anyone.

Students from rural area always hesitate to speak with any one in English because of low confidence. They feel that if they start to communicate in English they may make mistakes and their friends or teachers may laugh on them. Learning English in vernacular schools implies basic learning of grammar rules and memorizing the textbook material without actually understanding, which practically never allow them in developing their communicative proficiency.

In remote corners all villages do not have schools. Very few parents are sending there wards to other villages for education. They are not financially strong so they prefer to send their wards to earn something for fulfilling their daily needs. Quality and access to education is the major concern in rural schools as there are fewer committed teachers, lack of proper text books and learning material in the schools. There is lack of basic infrastructural facilities. Though Government schools exist, but when compared to private schools then quality is a major issue. In Government schools strength is a major issue and teacher

student ratio is hardly maintained. One teacher has to control more than hundred student's class. It is not feasible for him to pay his attention towards all the students seating in front of him.

Rural area students generally ignore the techniques to improve English i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They do not listen and read English that's why they have poor vocabulary. First they always think in their mother tongue and try to translate it in English but lack of vocabulary they don't get success. This failed attempt forces them to give up learning this language.

Translation method is widely used in rural area to teach English because most of the students don't understand English completely. Translation method helps students to understand content to pass in an exam but because of this practice students don't develop their communication skills.

III. COLLECTION OF PRIMARY DATA

Collection of primary data is the basic need of this paper. Data was collected from various sources. Around 200 rural students from various Engineering colleges in Mumbai have been interviewed. Some of data was also collected from parents, faculty members, friends, and staff. The collected data was systematically arranged and analysed.

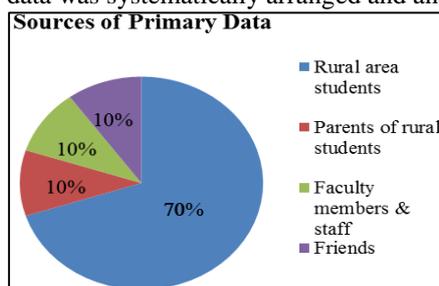


Fig. 1: Pie chart: Sources of primary Data

Following questionnaire is used to collect the data:

A. Questions asked to collect the data from rural area student

- 1) What are the basic problems you faced here?
- 2) Are you understand the teaching in classrooms?
- 3) What are the major factors responsible for your fear?
- 4) Why vernacular medium students suffer from English phobia?
- 5) What kind of efforts you take to remove this phobia?
- 6) How many hours in a day you spend on listening, speaking, reading, and writing English?
- 7) Do you want to pass exams or do you really want to develop your English?
- 8) Do you have confidence when you speak English in college campus?
- 9) How city based students behave with you?
- 10) What are the resources you use to improve your communication skills?

With the help of above questionnaire, observations and interviews different kind of information was collected. The collected information was analysed and it was found that fear of English, uneducated background, financial weakness, phobia, English grammar, vocabulary, accent, unqualified teachers, lack of resources, method of teaching, lack of confidence etc. These factors are responsible for the weak communication skills of rural students.

Sr. No	Barriers To Communication Skills	Found in Students (Interviewed)
1	Fear and phobia of English	200
2	Bias and prejudice	190
3	English grammar	150
4	Financial weakness	100
5	Unqualified teachers	100
6	Poor Vocabulary	150
7	Lack of resources	200
8	Translation method	100
9	Uneducated background	120
10	Homophones & homonyms	180

Table 2: Barriers of communication skills

IV. PROBLEMS FACED BY RURAL STUDENTS

A. Academic Problems:

The students from rural area used to face the academic problems when they come in cities for their higher studies. The biggest hurdle is their inability to understand the language used in classrooms. They do not grab or summarise the content taught in the classrooms. Sometime they do not understand the accent of faculty members. Some of the students from villages are really brilliant, as they have a wealth of practical knowledge and know how to survive even in very harsh conditions of life. But again the problem is how to present the knowledge in exams without the efficiency of English.

The phobia or anxiety of English looses the confidence of rural students. Difficulties in using English grammar, understanding of technical words, homophones, homonyms, jargons are the basic problems. Lack of practice of four techniques makes them feebler. They always afraid to speak in front of class, they used to avoid to go on stage, participate in group discussions, presentations, meetings or any communication situation.

B. Psychological Problems:

Rural students have the fear about English from childhood only. They considered that English is the most difficult language to learn. People around them used to talk about the difficulty of English language in front of them that creates the bias towards this language. When rural students come in city with this prejudice that never allow them to go forward and take initiative to learn or understand English. Hence this psychological depression results poor performance at the end of semester.

C. Emotional Problems:

The atmospheres of villages are totally different than the urban area. Mostly students belong to joint families. When they come in cities either they live alone or with some new room partners. At the first semester of engineering students from rural area try to fulfill this gap by creating new friends. Again the problem is their inferiority complex because of poor communication skills they hesitate to speak with anyone that creates an emotional gap. Because of this emotional gap they cannot concentrate on their studies.

D. Cultural Problems:

The greatness of the culture of India is universally acknowledged. There is unity in diversity in India. We can see various types of cultural differences in India. Each and every state, religion, region, caste has its own culture. There is difference between urban and rural culture. This factor creates lot of problems when students from rural background come in engineering in cities. They hardly overcome the shock they get at the first week of their engineering. They are mesmerising with new atmosphere, college infrastructure, the appearance of boys and girls, their frankness, their knowledge, their interest in all fields, the way they live, the way they talk and the way they use new technologies in day today life. They see that mostly students are following western culture. They feel that they are so backwards.

V. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

This study explored some of the challenges in front of us to improve communication skills of rural area students. Faculty members of colleges have to take responsibility and focus on the practical sessions rather than just completing syllabus. It is found that very few faculty members genuinely take listening, reading, speaking and writing practice. Faculty members should not play the role of teachers only but they should be facilitator, motivator for the students. They should create the healthy, friendly atmosphere and provide opportunities for students to participate in various communication situations.

Practice of four basic skills is very important. Students are deprived of speaking abilities because they have not been properly guided in listening skill. This may be the proper reason why they have not been able to speak in English in a proper manner. Without listening no one can communicate in that language. But unfortunately it is found that there is no practice of listening activities in the classrooms. Faculty members should use the well equipped language laboratory to enhance listening skills of rural students. This practice also helps these students to reduce the impact of their mother tongue in their communication. They can improve their pronunciations, accent if they practice regularly. Students should develop the habit of reading books, newspapers, magazines, journals etc. Teachers should understand the level of students according to them they should first built their confidence and encourage them to speak in English.

Public speaking and role play techniques are also quite helpful for rural students. They should take day today situations and try to make dialogue with someone. They should come forward and speak in front of the students from the stage. This practice helps students to remove stage fear, inferiority complex, shivering, fumbling etc. Faculty members should develop their interest in English and encourage them to think in English rather than their mother tongue. Participation in group discussions, meetings, presentations are really helpful for such students. Faculty members should talk with them personally and ask about their study, family, and their native place such practice reduces the emotional gap of the students.

VI. CONCLUSION

Language communication is said to be the most important skills for human survival because one needs it to maintain contact with the world. It is part and parcel of everyone's life. However, the degree of its effectiveness depends upon one's command on language communication skills. Thus, we can say that rural students also improve their communication skills by will power, continuous practice, hard efforts and use of resources properly. Faculty members need to be helpful, facilitator, motivator and friendly with the rural students to accomplish their dream to become good communicator in English.

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