

**Research Article**

## **Development of 'Eco-system for Teaching and Learning of English' in Engineering Colleges as a Paradigm Shift: A Proposition for Stakeholders' Conscious Involvement**

**"Language can best be understood as action, rather than form or function alone."**

-Aida Walqui in "Amplifying the Curriculum: Designing Quality Learning Opportunities for English Learners," 2012

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**Abstract**

It is a well-known fact, though harsh in nature, notwithstanding many a discussion and deliberations, the knowledge and competence of English among Engineering Students have remained far beneath the satisfactory level. Going down to the brass tacks, it is crucial to verify the ground reality of the eco-system of teaching and learning of English. In the Eco-System of teaching and learning of English in Engineering Colleges or elsewhere, the stakeholders obviously include Students, Teachers, the Pedagogical and the Curricular and the Cultural Ambience of the Classroom. Among the four stakeholders, the most conspicuously prominent are Students and Teachers and their Perceptions and Practices of LSRW skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing). At pragmatic level, keeping in view their substantial association with English, the verification of students' and teachers' perceptions and practices of teaching / learning English shall form the proper backdrop to initiate any paradigm shift thereof.

**Keywords:** Knowledge and Competence, Stakeholders of the Pedagogy of English, Perceptions and Practices: Eco-system of Teaching and Learning of English.

**Introduction:**

It is needless to reiterate that English has sustained and in fact gained further in its importance for academic and professional purposes in India against the backdrop of the Global Village Condition of the Contemporary World. English is the main language for global business and engineering. Engineers must share ideas clearly. They need to have knowledge and competence in the four basic language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW).

It is obvious that many engineering students have difficulties in making proper communication. It is ironic note that while being good at their core engineering subjects, many Engineering students have difficulty in expressing their competence subject matter. In a similar manner, there are another category of students, whose schooling and plus-two track records have had successful functioning, once they join engineering programmes, they are failing to achieve

similar success rate. In fact in substantial cases of engineering students, their class room existence / participation turn to be nightmarish because of poor competence in English since the everyday pedagogy of engineering subjects is conducted in English. Subsequently, the usual assignment works and presentations are done in English, and the semester-end examinations are to be answered in English. For effective performance in all these activities, reference books are to be consulted and they are in English. On top of all this, during the campus placements and on completion of engineering studies, the placements exercises are mostly carried out in English and the success depends on one's excelling in English, strengthened and reflected through the LSRW skills.

Hence the main cause for this retrogressive performance is the students' dismal competence in the cardinal LSRW skills:

"...students learn to do things with language when they participate in meaningful activities that engage and challenge them. Students will learn more English when engaged in the action of talking with other students than through typical teacher-directed activities designed solely to deliver content. Participation in oral activities has a dual purpose: it develops conceptual understanding and increases language use." (Hill: 2013)

In view of the foregoing, it is worthwhile to recall the rudimentary significance of these skills:

**Listening:** There is an assumption that "Listening" happens in a natural way even in one's own mother tongues. But the truth is that it is not the case. Perhaps what happens in a natural manner, provided one is not suffering from any hearing problems, is "hearing." So to listen to and comprehend one must have proper competence and practice, pertaining to comprehend what is being communicated with the prop of command over basic grammar and vocabulary. Consequently for engineering students to be able to follow and participate classroom proceedings and discussions, they need to be reasonably trained and grounded in this activity which is a skill.

**Speaking:** As attempted above, there is an impression that "speaking" happens by default. Perhaps speaking may appear to have happened by default. But effective speaking pre-requisites proper training and grounding in the activity called, "speaking" which requires command on basic grammar and vocabulary of a language, and the same can be acquired through practice since it is a skill. The same must be concerning the students of engineering for their speaking skill in English.

**Reading:** In the first place, "Reading" is a process and there are stages / steps to be followed. Secondly, depending on the requirement and the need of academics and examinations, one has to decide whether the Reading is done for skimming or scanning: "skimming" is a method of reading to get the gist of a text whereas "scanning" is a method of reading for proper understanding of a specific point without losing oneself in the vast reading of a text. Thirdly, as has been stated above, effective reading required pre-requisites of basic competence and command of a language, especially in English.

**Writing:** Writing like Reading is a process and there are steps and stages to be followed for developing a write-up: a Sentence, a Paragraph, an Essay, an Assignment, a Term Paper and a Research Proposal and even a Letter ( a formal / business or informal / personal) and so on. While being aware of these subtleties and categorization of Writing, one must be aware of the previously stated perquisites of command and competence of a given language, and in case engineering students concerning English.

Though it is a well-known fact that the basic knowledge and competence of English usage are pre-requisites, it is worthwhile to recall the same for whetting our argument through this paper. Many a time it has been found and stated that Engineering students need to have possessed these pre-requisites to excel during the period of their studies and later on as professionals.

Notwithstanding this seminal requirement many an engineering student are found to be suffering from severe lacunae in this regard. It is needless to state that it is hampering their performance in day-to-day functioning. Consequently the same is positioning them in a weak ambience for meeting their future professional purpose.

As has been stated already stated the eco-system of teaching-learning English in Engineering Colleges includes the perceptions and practices of teaching English, especially perceptions about teaching and learning LSRW Skills. Any attempt to gauge the perceptions of students and teachers about LSRW Skills will contribute to strengthening eco-system of teaching and learning English in Engineering Colleges.

## **II. Literature Review**

Experts agree that LSRW skills are the building blocks of language learning."Language acquisition does not happen by just studying grammar rules. It happens when learners use the language in real-life listening and speaking tasks." ( Richards and Rodgers :2014). The observation aptly foregrounds the practice aspect of listening and speaking. In fact the same shall be the case with two other cardinal skills, Reading and Writing.

When engaged in the discussion of LSRW Skills in the context of Engineering Students, it is self-evident that Writing Skill stands foremost which pre-requisites Reading Skill. It is almost obvious that expertise Reading and grasping of the same leads to successful Writing. In fact, in the life of Engineering students, the demand for writing is evident in the form of Report Writing and Observations, Presentations and Interactions: "Engineering graduates often lack soft skills. Employers want good speakers and listeners, not just good coders" Patel: 2019.

Students often perceive (think) that reading and writing are easy because they see them in textbooks. They perceive speaking as hard because they feel shy. In practice, students spend most of their time reading exam notes. They spend very little time speaking or listening to native English audio.

### **Discussion and Analysis:**

#### **Development of Eco-System for Effective Teaching-Learning English: Perceptions and Practices on the Part of the Stakeholders—Students and Teachers.**

In view of the established importance of nurturing LSRW Skills and the need of the development of eco-system, the role of students and teachers thereof warrant critical verification. In accordance with the same, a query may be raised whether students and teachers have different views about " the perceptions and the practices" of teaching-learning English in Engineering Students.

In the first place, the most important question may be raised to the effect that should we bother about the views of Students and Teachers about the perceptions and the practices of Teaching English in Engineering Colleges. When addressed to this issue, a positive responsive emerges since students of Engineering Education begin their academic pursuit as almost adults and with about 12 years schooling behind them by the time they join Engineering Programmes.

Having established the need, and in the incomplete availability of verified worthwhile information, it is good to explore whether there shall be more number of research proposals and carrying out the research thereof. Further as the present paper assumes both students and the faculty of English shall be the stakeholders in the project to be taken up should also be established.

In this process of involvement and verifications, research questions concerning whether LSRW are considered as skills by students, if yes, to what extent and in what manner the students are considering the same shall also be verified. This inquiry will bring out the fact of students' and faculty's awareness and conscious participation in the teaching-learning of LSRW Skills. This process of verification, there shall be pertinent questions to elicit whether students are under

the impression of acquiring LSRW skills in a by default manner without ever making a conscious and informed attempt.

To strengthen the necessary eco-system for developing teaching-learning of English and particularly the LSRW Skills thereof, it is worthwhile to verify which of the LSRW skills is considered the most important by students and similarly that of by the faculty. In continuation of the same pursuit, what is to be verified is whether all students and faculty are having uniform idea of perceptions and practices of LSRW. When the differences are found in the perceptions and practices, what are the reasons for the differences thereof.

While sustaining in this enquiry and verification, an inclusive and participating verification proves will be developed. This itself will be the beginning of the development proper eco-system for the development and enhancement of teaching-learning of English among Engineering Students because this process avoids top-down system and indulges in horizontal system of involvement.

### **Conclusion and Findings:**

The paper in the first place has precisely argued for the development of "eco-system" wherein students and teachers of English will have a prominent participatory and contributory role to play. The paper establishes that students, notwithstanding their learning status, will be capable of contributing by way of pointing out their perceptions and practices of teaching and learning of English and gaps thereof. In fact this participation and contribution of students of Engineering have potential to develop reliable eco-system. Further, the proposal for the development of eco-system for effective teaching-learning English in engineering colleges will lead to replace the top-down method of imposition of curriculum concerned. In a similar fashion, teachers' role will be prominent in the development of healthy and viable eco-system for efficient teaching of English. More importantly the paper attempts to reiterate that a holistic approach alone will be pragmatic means for development proper eco-system for successful and functional teaching of English.

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