



SRI RAMAKRISHNA ENGINEERING COLLEGE



Autonomous Institution, ISO 9001:2008 Certified.
Approved by AICTE and Affiliated to Anna University, Chennai
(All Eligible Courses Accredited by NBA)
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Grammar and Grammar Teaching: Changing Perspectives

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Importance of Grammar in Technical English

Ms. D. Ambika

English Grammar and Engineering Students

Engineering students, though good in their subject, often fail to get placement due to their lack of proficiency in English. This paper presents some useful suggestions relating to the implementation of the English syllabus of engineering colleges.

Usefulness of Grammar

Grammar is important because it is the language that makes it possible for us to talk about language. Grammar names the types of words and word groups that make up sentences not only in English but in any language. As human beings we can put sentences together even as children - we can all do grammar. People associate grammar with errors and correctness. But knowing about grammar also helps us understand what makes sentences and paragraphs clear and interesting and precise.

ESP for Engineering Students

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Importance of Grammar in Technical English

Till about 1990, Compulsory General English Course in Tamil Nadu was given to all students at the graduate level under ELT irrespective of the discipline students chose, Science or Arts. Later it was felt that science students, especially engineering students might demand a certain type of English which would be more useful in their career. So it became necessary to carve out a separate course on the lines of ESP (English for Special Purpose) in ELT.

Consequent on this inspiration, textbooks had been prepared to suit the needs of ESP. In prescribing a separate need-based syllabus to the Engineering students, emphasis was laid on science vocabulary and sentence structures more useful to technical students. Such syllabuses have been in vogue for more than a decade in various Engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu. There were many other studies in other regions too and they made similar recommendations. Some of them even evolved texts to be adopted for achieving these objectives.

For example, CIEFL, Hyderabad had prepared a package of materials under the general title “Enrich your English” to be used in 50 hours. It aims at developing a take-off proficiency in reading and writing skills. The focus is on the reading skills though speaking and listening skills are also given due importance”.

But there seems to be no perceptible impact on the nature of the English courses followed in Engineering Colleges.

Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is a prerequisite for developing materials and teaching strategies.

What Is Needed?

- a. Do students consider English an essential subject?
- b. Do they learn English because it is a compulsory subject or because they like it or it adds to their employment prospects?
- c. What sort of topics do they like best?
- d. Do they like to work in pairs or in small/large groups or individually?
- e. How would the students like to be assessed? By tests, projects and so on.
- f. Do they think that their teachers are aware of their students ‘needs’?

Student Participation

The questionnaire was administered to 500 first year Engineering students belonging to colleges of different Universities of Tamil Nadu. The samples constituted two groups, those who did

their schooling in the regional language medium and those who did their schooling in the English medium.

Nature of Questions

The first question involved the ranking of choices and the last question involved personal comments or suggestions. The questionnaire aimed at bringing out the learners' views on their purpose of studying English. In section A, the students were asked to rank six general ideas of learning English as a compulsory programme with regard to its importance. 400 of the 500 students gave the highest priority to speak and write in English more fluently and correctly. The second priority (100 of 500 students) was given to 'improve inter-personal relationships at working place through effective communication'. Only a few prioritized English "to face competitive exams and get a good job".

English for Engineering – Instruction to Teachers and Students

In Engineering, you will often be required to write lab reports and technical reports. As these form a major part of your assessment tasks, the ability to write clearly in correct academic English is important. This is not always easy, particularly for students for whom English is not their first language. These pages contain a series of grammar lessons on some common structures you will need to use when writing Engineering reports. Each unit begins with an explanation of the grammar point and rules for using it (with examples taken from actual Engineering subjects), followed by exercises to test your skill. A good follow-up exercise is to check how well you have applied the grammar point in a piece of your own writing, and correct it if necessary.

Communication Skills

Grammar gives language users the control of expression and communication in everyday life. Mastery over words helps speakers communicate their emotions and purpose more effectively. Otherwise, communication can sound like a toddler getting frustrated because she cannot express her thoughts. Written communication skills with correct grammar show professionalism. Employing inappropriate grammar in an e-mail to a boss -- such as using "LOL" or flawed subject-verb agreement like "we was" -- makes the message less effective because the errors will distract the attention of the reader from the intent of your communication.

Understanding basic principles of word, sentence and paragraph structures bestows writers with the flexibility to plan how they communicate a message, from a simple text to a presentation. If people can't successfully speak or write to one another, they cannot share their thoughts with each other. Some of these basic elements are presented below.

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Articles in Engineering Texts

Correct use of articles conveys precise meanings in Engineering. Deciding whether to use *a*, *an*, *some*, or *the*, or use no article can be confusing.

Example

Structural and stress analysis is a process used to study the distribution of forces through the members of a structure. Fibre reinforced plastic is an advanced composite material which has potential for the repair and strengthening of structures.

Passive Voice in Engineering

Passive voice is used frequently in technical writing, where the focus is usually on what was done rather than who did it. It is conventionally used to report experimental procedure and to avoid constant repetition of I or we throughout the report, paper or thesis. In order to use passive voice correctly, it is necessary to fully understand, and be able to recognise the difference between passive and active voices.

Past Tense in Engineering

Here are many different ways of indicating that an event took place in the past. When we write an engineering text, we can use the simple past, present perfect, present perfect progressive, or the past perfect progressive. All of these different past tenses have slightly different meanings in terms of the chronology - or the order - in which things happened.

National Standards

An important grammatical issue in schools today is its alignment with content standards. The Common Core Curriculum is a national standard of education implemented in many states. In the English Language Arts strand, 18 standards are related to grammar, including subject-verb agreement, punctuation, verb tense and parallel sentence structure. Standards are measured by standardized testing.

Conclusion

Grammar helps the students to speak and write English that will be understood by others, both within India and abroad. Basic grammar rules should be mastered by the Indian engineering students.

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It is not difficult to achieve this goal. Systematic selection, gradation and presentation will help better and faster mastery.

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