



A Two day National Seminar



On  
**NEW VISTAS IN ELT: Empowering Engineers for Employment**



**17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2015**

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**Selected Papers from the National Seminar  
NEW VISTAS IN ELT:  
EMPOWERING ENGINEERS FOR EMPLOYMENT**

**Department of English  
PSNA College of Engineering and Technology, Dindigul-624622  
Tamilnadu, India**

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**About the College**

PSNA College of Engineering and Technology is a leading institution in Tamil Nadu. It was established by “Kalvi Thanthai” late Thiru.R.S. Kothandaraman in 1984. The institution maintains high standards in teaching, research and extension activities. At present, this prominent institution offers 7 UG courses, 8 PG courses in the Engineering in addition to MCA and MBA.

Our institution has made rapid strides in academic performance, infrastructure development, employability of its graduates, welfare of the staff, service to the society, strengthening industry-institution interaction, research and extension work. These efforts are well appreciated by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) and the College has been accredited for 5 years. The College has been ranked as STATE TOPPER at Tamil Nadu State Level for securing 157 and 159 ranks in the Anna University examinations 2013 and 2014 consecutively.

**Message from the Chairperson**

I am very happy to know that the Department of English is conducting a two day national seminar on “New Vistas in ELT: Empowering Engineers for Employment”. It is indeed very relevant title and the need of the hour as the engineering graduates are technically powered and they should be empowered in other domains like communication skills, soft skills and other life

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skills. I believe that this seminar will invite several scholars from several places and chalk out a right methodology in empowering the engines i.e. the engineers of the nation. It is also enlightening thing that the department is also bringing out a special online issue. My best wishes to the organizing committee of this event. Let such events take place in our campus regularly.

**Tmt. K. Dhanalakshmi**

**Chairperson, PSNACET**

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**Dr. N. Mahendran, Principal I/c.,** speaks about the National Seminar

Seminars and conferences are mandatory for the teaching society. In our campus, conducting such scholarly sessions has become routine. Every day, we have visitors from various institutions to attend seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. This is the turn for the department of English now. I am happy that the theme which they have chosen for the seminar is very practical. How to empower students for employment is a thousand dollar question asked by many educational institutions. Even though, the role of self has a major proportion, the role of the teachers does also have a significant proportion in tuning the students for their placement. Especially, the role of language teachers is crucial at present. Since, the students are technical smarter but lack with the employability skills. We must help them understand the need of the hour and inculcate all the necessary potentials. For such proposals, seminars, conferences will be of great help. I congratulate the efforts taken by the department of English in conducting this national seminar. I wish the event the grand success.

**Dr. N. Mahendran**  
**Principal, I/c.**  
**PSNACET**

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### **A Note from the Editors**

This is the first volume of the papers presented in the National Seminar NEW VISTAS IN ELT: EMPOWERING ENGINEERS FOR EMPLOYMENT held on 17th And 18th April 2015 in our college. We are thankful to the Chairperson of the College Tmt. K. Dhanalakshmi, Pro-Vice Chairmen of the College Rtn. MPH.F.R. S. K. Raguraam, Dr. R. S. K. Lakshmana Prabhu and Thiru. R. S. K. Sukumaran for their leadership and support which enabled us to organize this National Seminar. Our Principal, i/c. Dr. N. Mahendran's guidance and counsel helped us to conduct the Seminar successfully.

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Paper presenters of the Seminar came from all over India and their active participation in the sessions encouraged all the participants to pursue research and improve their language teaching methods. Students had the benefit of meeting with the scholars from all over India and their interest in learning and mastering English was further strengthened through this process.

This pdf document presents the selected of papers as a single volume. You can download the volume free of charge and save it in CD or in your computer for your personal use, not for distribution. If you want to download and print a specific paper or papers, you need to go to the HTML Page and click on the link for the paper.

Titles of the paper/s as well as the names of author/s are given in the List of Contents given below. This should help you to navigate easily. All the papers are given in pdf format so that it becomes easy to print and read.

With best wishes

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# Game Based Activities: Teaching of Grammar to the Technical Students

**S. Manivelan  
R. S. Dhivya**

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## **Abstract**

English is the language of communication, so to speak. Use of English is considered as a mark of greatness and so all people aspire to speak English. For many second language learners, learning grammar often means learning the rules of grammar and possessing knowledge on grammar. Teachers often believe that this will provide the generative basis on which learners can build their knowledge and use the language effortlessly. To show students that learning grammar could be fun and interesting, different activities like games should be used to teach English. The teaching of “grammar” through different activities like games is better than teaching grammar as a formal system that includes mere exercises in the textbook. Through the process of teaching grammar through game-based activities, one shall see many positive results. The paper aims and attempts to improve students’ sentence constructing, writing without grammatical errors and other such language skills and abilities through game based activities.

**Keywords:** Learning Grammar, Teaching Grammar, Game-based Activities

## **Introduction**

English as a foreign language has always occupied a unique position in the educational system. It continues to be a major language having a prestigious position in society. English was retained for various reasons, as it had been a medium of instruction, the language of administration and law and the main vehicle to communicate with the rulers. The importance of teaching English in India as a modern foreign language lies in its international importance. English claims to be the first rate international language. And its knowledge promotes international understanding. By extending the radius of a person’s horizon, it overcomes his prejudices, intolerance, and narrow mindedness. Thus, it is very helpful in fostering true internationalism and cooperation among the nations of the world. And the

educational English is important for statesmen, politicians, scientists, doctors, engineers, educationists, businessmen and research workers.

## **Language Skills**

Acquiring language skills is based on acquiring four main skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing (LSRW). Listening and reading may be termed as passive or receptive or recognition skills. Speaking and writing are termed as active or productive skills. The former two skills are also known as skills of comprehension and the latter are termed as skills of expression. A good teacher will concentrate on imparting all the four skills.

Listening is the fundamental skill of all the four skills. To listen means to pay attention to what is said. It is the beginning of the learning process. Listening is the first and foremost principle in language learning. Speaking skill is the basis for a good learning of the language. Speech precedes reading. Listening and speaking lay the very foundation for learning a foreign language. Listening to speak a language is the shortest road to learn, to read and write it. Reading is a process of looking at a written symbol and translating it into a sound. Skimming and scanning are the advanced skills of reading. Good reading depends upon a lot of practice of listening and speaking. Writing is putting speech in the form of letters. Through writing, a person can convey his/her thoughts to others. Teaching of writing is a complex process involving many of ideas being transformed into meaningful sequences and the expressing of thoughts and feelings with confidence and cause.

## **Problems in Language Learning**

Nowadays, English communication is a huge problem for the students. The students treat English as a subject and not as a language. They give less importance to the English language when compared to the other major subjects which they feel to be very important. So, the problem can be solved by developing their interest in learning the language. The teacher can impart the grammar by using game based activities and situations where the students can develop their skills, especially speaking and writing which are needed for communication. “We speak in sentences, not in words or in parts of words. Sentences are made up of patterns of arrangement of words, words, stress, intonation and terminal borders”. (Lado 142) This way of learning can help the students to learn and use the correct



grammatical structure to show their communication skills during interviews. These are the interviews through which students can get jobs easily in the future, if they can begin to communicate in English fluently with the knowledge of good vocabulary and grammatical structures.

### **Situational Language Teaching**

The aim of situational approach to language teaching is to teach practical command of the four basic skills of language, the goal it shares with most methods of language teaching. But skills are approached through structure. Through situation, concrete objects, pictures, and flash, together with actions and gestures can be used to demonstrate the meaning of new language items. The form of new word and sentence pattern is demonstrated through examples and not through grammatical explanation or description. It is made clear visually (with object, picture, action, and mime). Practical techniques employed generally consist of guided repetition and substitution activities, including chorus repetition and drills.

### **Role of Games in Language Teaching**

Games can help and encourage many students to sustain interest and work. In the whole process of teaching and learning through games, the students can take part widely and open-mindedly. To win the games each student or group should competitively answer the questions addressed to them by the teacher or other students or groups. Teaching grammar is clearly more than just presenting rules. It also includes a decision that words should teach the basics of how frequently they are used by the speakers of the language. Games are helpful for both teachers and students. The games relieve the students and the teachers from the burdensome routine. Grammar games are generally engaged in as a source of entertainment, but have been found to serve an educational purpose as well.

Games can be used at all stages of the progression from controlled to free practice, serving of one end of the range as a memory aid and repetition drill, at the other as a change to use the language freely and as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. They can do serve as a diagnostic tool for the teacher, who can note areas of difficulty and take appropriate remedial action (Hadfield 24).

Games can maintain students' motivation in grammar learning because they are amusing and interesting. In the relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better. Students tend to learn and retain grammar rules better when it is applied in a relaxed environment through games. Especially, labelling and displaying pictures depicting grammar is helpful, especially with beginners. Games can provide students with intensive and meaningful practice of language. "In fact most vocabulary games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms" (Lee 78).

But commonly and usually, the way of teaching makes the students lazy and bored. The teacher needs something different to make students interested because they get bored easily. Therefore, a teacher needs something interesting which can help motivate them. It is based on the characteristics and attitudes of the students, since they are curious and often seek something to make sure that the teacher notices them and shows appreciation for what they are doing. So, to motivate them teacher needs something new that can stimulate their curiosity. A current analysis on communication in teaching language reveals that using games appears to hold a solution for many teachers.

### **Advantages of Games in Language Teaching**

The advantage of using games in teaching is that students are interested in learning the material; they pay more attention to the given lesson. This condition gives a good chance for both the teacher and the students to introduce and learn. When the researcher delivered the material, the students understood what they learnt on that day. Games gave them more chance to understand the grammar and its function, because through playing games students grasp new words on their own.

Games and problem solving are task based and have a purpose beyond the production of correct speech. They are good examples of most preferable communication activities. The researcher argues that vocabulary games help students not only to gain knowledge, but also to apply and use that in mastering a language.

Games have the advantage of allowing the students to practice and internalize grammar and structure extensively. Students can do this because students are often more motivated to play games than they are to do desk work. Also, during the game, the students

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are focused in the activity and end up absorbing the language subconsciously. Use of games increases the cooperation and competition in the classroom. One can use games to add excitement through competition and games can create a longing among students to learn. Games motivate the students to learn a foreign language in a manner. Having such evidence, this paper recommends the wide use of games for grammar as a successful way of acquiring language competence.

### **Experimentation**

The process of teaching grammar through game based activities consists of many steps. One is the motivating strategy that is done by greetings. In this part the researcher always began the lessons by greetings. It was used for students to use English greeting expressions. The researcher included games to warm up the students to learn grammar. Here the researcher applied strategies to gain the students' attention.

Researcher was giving some clues which are related to the material and made students to guess the place; and the researcher also included presentation strategy. In this step, the researcher started to give explanation about the material. Researcher introduced materials to the students through games. For these games researcher gave rules of games, but the students learnt the rules of both grammar and games.

### **Findings**

For many students, learning grammar is a boring and a hard task. To show students that learning grammar could be fun and interesting, different activities like games should be used to teach English. The teaching "grammar" through different activities like games is better than teaching grammar as a formal system through striking exercise in the textbook.

### **Role of Teacher**

Teacher's function is threefold. In the presentation stage of the lesson, the teacher serves as a model setting up the situations in which the need for the target structure is created and modify the new structure for students to repeat. Then the teacher is required to be a skilful manipulator using questions, commands, and other uses to elicit the correct sentence from the learners.

During the practice section students are given more of an opportunity to use the language in less control situation, but the teacher is always on the lookout for grammatical and structural errors that can form the basis of subsequent lesson organizing review and this becomes a primary task for the teacher. Teacher is essential to the success of the method, since the text book is only able to describe activity for the teacher to carry out in the class.

### **Limitations of Games in Language Teaching**

Grammar teaching through games was interesting and made students active but they were too noisy and they disturbed neighbouring classes. Students actively participated in games but this activity made them to change their place often. Games always create some kind of competition between two groups. Those competitions create some kind of argument between them instead of playing games they started to fight each other so it breaks the unity and friendliness. The researchers took more time to explain the games than explaining grammar and its function. So teaching grammar through games needs more time because there are a lot of rules to learn. These were a few disadvantages of the method.

### **Conclusion**

Stern points out, “The learner of a second language should be able to use it as efficiently as they use their first language” (Sharma 30). This should be our goal, but it will take a lot of effort on the part of the teachers and students to achieve this goal. This research is based on the notion that although game means fun, it also has its educational value. And for this reason it is introduced in the language classes. Through games the students can realize their own as well as their classmate’s progress in learning language. This type of activity can be the perfect way for practice and learning a language, as it has included a variety of language sentences that student would later use in everyday situation. Consequently, a language game can be used for presentation, as a warm-up activity, for practicing and learning grammar, for improving language skills or simply as a break from drilling and finally a reward.

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# Being a Professional Teacher by Adopting a Reflective Approach in the Classroom

Joseph Edward Felix, MA, PGCTE, PGDELT

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## Abstract

There has been considerable pressure on the higher education system in India in terms of its' performance. The pressure arises out of a certain compulsion for substantial improvement in the education sector. There are hiccups and hindrances in the efforts channelized in this direction because of a lack of a professional attitude, chiefly among many teachers. This is further aggravated by an absence of an agreed model to enhance quality in education. Whatever it is, the focus eventually shifts to the teacher who is indispensable in any academic sphere. Teachers need to manage their own professional development and attitudes which will eventually percolate and will contribute to the body of knowledge and to the reputation of the institution they work with. In order to become a professional teacher and to teach professionally, a Reflective Approach to the curriculum and the pedagogy seems viable on many fronts. The Reflective Approach derives its values from the fact that it is based on how professionals develop professionalism and is therefore, 'grounded on a broad base of professional knowledge and experience' (Wallace 1991:165). Mainstream to professional development is the process of reflecting on one's own practice in the classroom. This involves not only collecting data about one's practice but also reflecting critically on the findings and using the data for professional development. This will mean teachers observing their own classroom practices, collecting data and using the same as a basis for self-evaluation and professional growth. This achieved with the right intention, will ensure the higher education system a definite facelift. The paper intends to look at the Reflective Approach as a means to ensure professionalism among teachers which will in turn ensure quality in higher education in India.

**Keywords:** Quality education, Reflective Approach, Professional Development, Teachers' Self-evaluation.

## Introduction

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India has the world's third largest higher education system. This is next to the United States and China. The era post-independence has witnessed remarkable growth in the existing education system in India. However, unfortunately, many pressing issues weigh the system down presently. A close inspection and interrogation into the quality of higher education together with the assessment of institutions and their accreditation becomes very significant and important. These issues are important for the country, as it is now engaged in the use of higher education as a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21st Century.

In an environment of global competitiveness it is important that Indian students of the higher education institutions are as competent as graduates of any other country, not only in their scholastic attainments, but also in terms of rich value systems and personalities. Unless the quality and the standard of Indian higher education institutions is enhanced zealously and sustained at a high level through innovation, creativity and regular monitoring, it seems to be difficult for the Indian academics/professionals to compete in the world scene. It is, therefore, of utmost importance that quality be paid a very close attention to from every dimension of the higher education sphere.

Quality has two chief connotations, namely an absolute connotation and a relative connotation. The idea of absolute quality propels the morale of any higher education system at the level of the institution. This also happens at the level of the learners. The dynamics for teacher preparation and the sustaining quality in teacher input, like: Designing innovative Curriculum, Developing productive Curriculum, Innovative Curricular practices, foregrounding pedagogic principles, Evaluating learners' performance and progress, Evaluating the curriculum, and, Quality management practices become crucial. In this context, Reflective Teaching becomes necessary, important and unavoidable.

### **What is Reflective Teaching?**

The understanding of Reflective Teaching is to understand that teaching is not only a complicated activity alone but an activity that should be dealt with great skill. It definitely requires the teacher or the facilitator to decide what needs to be done in any given scenario and how best it can be done so that maximum learning takes place among students. Therefore, it requires the teacher to be immensely resourceful, creative, dynamic and tactful

in order to take charge of the learning situation and to be able to call the shots on actions to be adopted in the classroom. In order that students learn well, they must be exposed to and granted well informed input from the part of the teacher. Therefore, for students to learn well high-quality teaching must be imparted. The foundation of Reflective Teaching is dependent on the existence of such professional expertise. Reflective teaching should be immensely satisfying and fulfilling for every teacher practicing it. The purpose of Reflective Teaching is to enhance the quality of education being imparted.

Reflective teaching means looking at what a teacher does in the classroom. She/he thinks about why it must be done and to what effect, if it works - a process of self-observation and self-evaluation automatically takes place. By collecting information about what goes on in one's classroom, and by analyzing and evaluating this information, the teacher may identify and explore his/her own practices and underlying beliefs. This may then lead to changes and improvements in teaching.

**Beginning the process of reflection can be done in the following ways:**

1. **Teachers' diary or journal:** One of the key elements of a teacher's pedagogical practice must be keeping a diary or a journal exclusively for teaching and this must be maintained on a daily basis of not on an hourly basis. Even an online journal will be effective. This will facilitate as a space to generate teaching ideas, to work out pedagogical problems, to reflect on successes and struggles in the classroom, and to put reflections which may be useful in the future while planning. The diary or journal becomes a record for all that has been done. It will also reflect how effectively a particular pedagogy was used in a class and how effectively the lesson was taught. It also becomes a pool of resources from which strategies and pedagogic practices may be adopted from for future use. This diary or journal is written as soon as possible after each class session. It keeps what happened during that class fresh in the teacher's mind. It may be composed of a summary of the class and the strategies adopted and how effective it was or the results yielded. It provides time to reflect on and evaluate how the lesson progressed. It must be kept with the teacher all the time so that at the spur of the moment ideas can be jotted down. It can also be used during class sessions—for example, to write down smart things students say. This may also be done by jotting down some questions asked by the students, or some points discussed while



taking classes in the margin of the book. It may later be transferred to the journal as an entry.

A teacher can only but improve the quality of classroom input by constantly reflecting on and writing about what transpires in the classroom trying to figure out what works, what doesn't, and so on. It can become a key to a teacher's success. Consistent practice and honest reflection can create a rewarding and useful document that will help the teacher for the rest of his/her teaching career. For example:

- a) If a lesson went well it can be described and the teacher can write why it was successful.
  - b) If a lesson was not very successful, it can also be described and the teacher can write why it was not successful
  - c) If the students didn't understand a point introduced, teachers need to think about what was done and why it may have been unclear.
  - d) The teacher can also reflect upon the kinds of interpretations given by students s/he may even list out the academic inputs and contributions made by the students in the teaching-learning process
  - c) the teacher can also introspect about the behavior of the students. What caused attention or took away attention. If students are misbehaving - what were they doing, when and why?
- 2. Peer Observation:** Inviting a colleague to observe an hour or two of one's classes will help in collecting information about one's style of teaching. This may be done in a simple manner by merely observing and/or through note taking. This may help one trace back to the area identified to reflect upon. For example, a teacher may ask his teacher peer observer to focus on which students contribute most during the lesson, what different patterns of interaction occur, or how the teacher being observed deals with questions raised by the learners.
- 3. Recording Lessons:** Video or audio recordings of lessons can provide very useful information for reflection. A teacher may do things in class that she/he is not aware of. It may also happen that teachers may overlook what may be happening in the class which she/he normally does not see.

- a) Audio recordings can be useful for considering aspects of teacher talk:
- How much does one talk?
  - What about?
  - Are instructions and explanations clear?
  - How much time does one allocate to student talk?
  - How does one respond to student talk?
- d) Video recordings can be useful in showing the teacher aspects of his/her own Behavior:
- a. Where does one stand?
  - b. Who does one speak to most part of the time?
  - c. How does one come across to the students?
  - d. How effectively teaching aids were used?
  - e. How effectively was eye contact being made with the students?
  - f. What kind of body language was used in the classroom?
  - g. What were the different kinds of gestures made in the classroom?
  - h. What were the teacher's movements in the classroom?

**4. Student feedback:** The stakeholders themselves may be asked about what they think about what goes on in the classroom at regular intervals. Their opinions and perceptions can add a different and valuable perspective. This can be done by asking them to write down anonymous notes about the teacher, teaching methods, suggestions and improvements. It may also be done with a simple questionnaire.

Once a teacher has some information recorded about what goes on in the classroom, the teacher can actually reflect and think:

- **Think about patterns adopted:** the teacher may have noticed patterns occurring in his/her teaching through the observation. The teacher may also have noticed things that she/he was previously unaware of. A teacher may have been surprised by some of the students' feedback. All of this together may already give the teacher some ideas for changes to implement.
- **Talking about ideas:** Just by talking about what one has discovered - to a supportive colleague or even a friend - one may be able to come up with some ideas for how things can be done differently. Discussion can be based around scenarios from the teachers' own classes.
- **Beliefs on teaching:** Teachers may want to use a list of statements about teaching beliefs. They can discuss which ones they agree or disagree with, and which ones are reflected in their own teaching, giving evidence from observing themselves.
- **Reading for academic ideas and input:** The teacher may decide that she/he needs to find out more about a certain area. There is plenty of information available to teachers from where they can find useful teaching ideas, or more academic articles.
- **Questioning and Inquiring:** Teachers must have the humility to learn always. The best way for teachers to learn will be to learn from and about the experiences from other fellow teachers. An online forum will prove beneficial enough. This will enable teachers get ideas from other teachers in order to be better informed.

## Conclusion

Reflective teaching is an ongoing process, because once one starts to implement changes, then the reflective and evaluative cycle begins again. As a result of one's reflection, one may decide to do something in a different way, or one may just decide that what one is doing is the best way. And that is what professional development is all about.

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# Second Language Anxiety – A Major Hurdle for Learners

**A. Hajira Banu, M.A., M.Phil.**

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## **Abstract**

High demand for communication skills is one of the factors that limit the employability of engineering graduates today. It may be due to the fact that proficiency in English tops the list of skills that are required to acquire and maintain their jobs, our students develop a kind of anxiety which is, to react in a nervous manner when it comes to speaking, listening, reading or writing in English. This paper aims at identifying the factors contributing to this anxiety and offering practical recommendations to overcome this issue. The paper goes on to highlight the collaborative role of teachers and learners in fighting to overcome the second language learner/performer anxiety successfully.

**Keywords:** Communication skills, proficiency in English, second language anxiety, nervous manner.

## **Introduction**

There is a dearth of qualified professionals for the employers to select and there is a dearth of jobs for the engineering graduates, who have spent four years waiting for something to happen as they walk out of colleges, degrees in hand. This depressing situation is a result of a drastic skill gap in the country. In spite of becoming academic geniuses in their own subjects, the acquisition of an adequate level of proficiency in the English language is one of the biggest challenges for engineering graduates in India today. A survey conducted by The Times of India, Mumbai states that of 1.2 lakh candidates surveyed across multiple states, 73.63% lack English speaking and comprehension skills. Irrespective of the number of degrees one might have acquired, technical qualification, industrial experience and so forth, not being able to communicate effectively in English is one of the greatest barriers to career growth. Therefore, there is a definite need to equip the aspiring workforce with communication skills in the English language.

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The high degree of importance accorded to English is supposed to create a very strong motivation for students to learn English. On the contrary, it leads to a kind of anxiety that hampers learning for many of the students.

### **Foreign Language Anxiety**

Wikipedia ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign\\_language\\_anxiety](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_language_anxiety)) defines language anxiety as a feeling of unease, worry, nervousness and apprehension experienced when learning or using a second or foreign language. These feelings may stem from any second language context, whether associated with the productive skills of speaking and writing, or the receptive skills of reading and listening. However, it is often felt that speaking is the most anxiety-provoking aspect in second language learning. Giving a short talk, lecture or presentation in front of the class, or even a small group of men and women induces language anxiety.

### **Symptoms of Anxiety**

The symptoms of language anxiety include rubbing the palms, perspiration, staggered voice, reluctance, less enthusiasm or willingness to speak, sweaty palms, increased heart beat, less eye contact, reading from the script while presentation, either too fast or too slow speed of speech, and so on. This language anxiety has been found to have a detrimental effect on the student's confidence, self esteem and level of participation.

“...I like English but I don't want to take part in speaking activity... because my English is so bad and my friends will laugh at me if I make mistakes...”

This must be one of the most articulated sentences used by most of our students who are unwilling to take part in oral activities. This kind of anxiety stems from the fear of making mistakes, and negative evaluation by their teachers, fear of appearing awkward, foolish or incompetent in the eyes of peers, and negative perception of their own ability. This apprehension acts as a mental block hampering their involvement or participation in a situation in which they are expected to use English.

### **External Factors Causing Anxiety**

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Other external reasons leading to language anxiety might be due to the fact that most of the candidates did not grow up in an English speaking environment and the other fact that most of them are first generation college-goers. They have minimum or no exposure to English in their day to day life outside their classrooms. Moreover, English is taught as a subject and not as a language of communication. In spite of studying English right from their 6<sup>th</sup> year or so, they become nervous while using English. Studying it as a subject is not problematic for the learners, whereas using it as a language of communication continues to be a setback for them.

### **Effects of Anxiety**

Anxiety levels of the students need to be brought down as there is an inherent link between anxiety and performance. Language anxiety is a result as well as a cause of insufficient command of the target language. It holds back the learning process. It leads to forgetfulness, avoidance of speaking the language, negative self image and feeling unsure of one's ability. Therefore, when they have to make any oral presentation, it is very common for the students to feel uncomfortable and they freeze and become unable to find words.

Some of the language teachers assume that the students lack motivation, or have an aversion to English or feel that the class is unimportant. At the teacher's end, understanding learner anxiety is important, in order to assist them in achieving the expected level of performance in English. It is the duty of the teachers to recognize that oral performance is a potentially stressful situation for some learners. They need to be sensitive to their fears and act as counselors in helping the anxious students to focus less on what they are doing wrong and more on what they are doing right. This should help them realize it is a widespread phenomenon, since many students find it tremendously helpful to know that their teacher acknowledges the reality of their anxiety.

### **Solutions to Reduce Anxiety**

Teachers can help by creating a friendly and informal learning supportive environment for language learning, through helpful and cooperative behavior. Ample opportunities can be created for group work or pair work before going for individual performance. They should concentrate on communicative success rather than formal accuracy. They should give learners a

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feeling of success and satisfaction when using the language. Most importantly, error correction should be done in a patient and friendly way without humiliating the learners. Positive comments and helpful suggestions such as listening to radio broadcasts, becoming members in Toastmasters Clubs such as the ones in YMCAs, to improve speaking abilities in English, and also reading aloud passages from English books, should be given to the students – these would greatly help lowering the potency of the factors creating the anxiety.

## **Conclusion**

Teaching, however powerful, cannot automatically lead to learning for the simple reason that learning is vastly controlled by the individual learner himself/herself. Hence the learners have to be encouraged to overcome the anxiety. First of all, it is important to know that they are not the only ones suffering from these feelings and it is reasonable to have such feelings. School teachers also have their part in this language learning of students, leading to good communication skills. The students must be given reading aloud exercises and pronunciation drills in class from their early years at school. Then college teachers can guide them to join speaking groups like the Toast Masters Club of the YMCA suggested earlier. Watching some good English movies would also help learning how to speak the language well. Listening to radio broadcasts in English would be of great help for a student who wants to communicate very well indeed. Elocution competitions and different activities of the Literary Clubs in colleges can help in developing their communication skills and thereby reduce anxiety levels. The students can also use some relaxation techniques like deep breathing before oral presentations which could make them feel less anxious during the activity. It is a good habit to form, and it does remain effective.

It is undoubtedly the collaborative role of teachers of English and the learners of English to fight this anxiety in order to achieve the desired level of proficiency in English. A few conscious and constructive steps such as informal talking activities, reading English books aloud in and out of the classroom can change the anxiety into deep interest. The process is quite challenging, but not impossible with honest and continued effort. Teachers can contribute their bit in making the engineering college community happy, efficient, employed and thriving.



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# Focused Teaching of English Grammar and Composition to Engineering Students: An Outline

C. Karthikeyan, M.A., M.Phil.

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## Abstract

Students of Engineering, after joining an engineering college, are exposed to technical English Grammar and Composition in their first year of study. Most of the students find it difficult to cope with English Grammar which they had learnt in school. The main reason is that the students learn English in schools only from the point of view of facing the examination. The schools are also bent on achieving 100% results. Consequently, the students are trained to memorize everything blindly, without knowing the meaning of the underlying text. They learn everything by heart and reproduce as it is in the exam. After coming to college, they follow the same method. But they fumble miserably as the syllabus does not contain prose and poetry that can easily be memorized and presented.

Students have to be trained in reading not only for pleasure, but also for the higher purpose of learning English language. Through entertainment, they can arrive at enlightenment. Since the reading habit is on the decline now, it has to be revived. Presenting the study of grammar and composition in an interesting manner would enable the pupils to read and understand English properly and enrich their vocabulary. It will also kindle their grasping abilities, enable them to express orally and write what they have read well. They would start enjoying their learning instead of looking down upon it with distaste.

This paper aims at presenting the methods and means in teaching English language effectively to students of engineering colleges, for the higher purpose of employing it in real life situations instead of teaching it for the sake of facing examinations. The class room sessions should be a preparation for facing the examination of life and emerging victorious.

**Key Words:** English Grammar and composition, examination, reading, enlightenment, vocabulary, grasping abilities, learning, real life situations, victorious

## Introduction

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English is accepted today as an international language and its importance is realized by everyone as it stands as a world language. The most important tasks in science, engineering, technology and other fields are being written only in the English language which is also a tool for communication purposes. But the importance of English is not fully understood by many students as most of them hail from rural areas. The schools teach them English with the intention of producing 100% results so that they might get good admission figures every year. The learners become competent only in the memorizing technique rather than learning the language. As soon as they enter an engineering institution, their hopes are shattered because they cannot apply the same method here as the entire English syllabus is based on Grammar and Composition. This memorizing method has resulted in instilling fear and inferiority complex in the young minds instead of any hopes of mastering the language. Hence the goal of language teaching and learning is lost. Consequently the students consider English language as an unwanted burden imposed upon them. Dr. K.M. Prabhu rightly declares:

Indeed the notebook and the classroom should serve as sources of inspiration for further learning and not act as hindrance to learning itself. (ELM: 181)

### **Reading Habit**

The reading habit is on the wane today among the younger generation. The learners should be trained to read English books not only for entertainment, but also for enlightenment. It is in the hands of the teachers to make the teaching interesting so that the learners may develop a taste for reading.

There are two types of reading – intensive study and extensive study. Intensive reading aims at concentrating on the language, whereas extensive reading concentrates on the subject matter. Intensive teaching in the class must be supplemented by extensive reading outside the classroom. Extensive study or reading has the advantage of learning English grammar.

For example, in extensive reading, the pupil comes across the same word a number of times in association with other words and thus he comes to know of its various shades of meaning. While reading about Nuclear Energy, he notices many words related to the subject

matter like nuclear reactor, nuclear fission, nuclear power, nuclear fuels, nuclear plants, nuclear wastes, nuclear physics, nuclear radiation etc. and he learns many words. Many good readers know little grammar and yet they can speak and write English correctly. Owing to the reading practice, they automatically develop this skill. K.L. Sharma explains:

The specific aims of teaching English grammar and composition must be the following: 1) to increase their knowledge of English language and 2) to increase their knowledge of the technical subject matter and to enrich their intellect. (MTEI: 45)

### **Analysis of Text**

So, teaching must depend on analyzing the text and explaining every word with its meaning and grammatical implications. The multifarious aims may be as follows:

- To enrich their vocabulary
- To learn English grammar and its implications
- To enable the students to read English passages loudly with proper pronunciation
- To help them comprehend the passage and grasp its substance
- To enable them to express orally and in writing what they have read
- To test their abilities and skills in the language which are applicable in the study of the passage
- To compare and contrast ideas, incidents and events under study
- To lay emphasis on the context or draw their attention to specific reference

Thus the teacher would play a pivotal role in achieving the above multifarious tasks. In the words of Dr. Babita Tyagi:

... the role of a teacher is very vital. He acts as course designer and material provider, collaborator, researcher, evaluator and as a practitioner. (ESPIRTTESP: 3)

### **Strategies to Adopt**

With a view to achieving these aims, the teacher has to adopt the following strategies for better results. The teacher has to consider and plan the following:

**Use of Audio-visual aids:** English, being an alien language, can be taught effectively with proper aids. These aids verily create interest and help pupils grasp the meaning of the text.

**Understanding Previous knowledge of the pupils:** Before actual teaching takes place in the class, the teacher should know what the students already know and then proceed to utilize their previous knowledge to impart new knowledge. New knowledge must be disseminated in the light of previous knowledge, learning and experience of the learners.

**Introducing the lesson:** Here the actual task of the teacher begins. He/she puts forward questions on the basis of the previous knowledge of the pupils to introduce the lesson. The main objective of introducing the lesson is to revive their previous knowledge and to prepare them mentally to receive new knowledge. The success or failure of the lesson largely depends on this introduction.

**Statement of Purpose:** The teacher states clearly and briefly before the class what he/she is going to teach so that the pupils come to know what they are required to do. Both the teacher and the pupils can proceed in a particular direction to achieve the specific aim.

**Presentation of material:** The teacher presents the material and language to the pupils. Since it is the major part of the lesson, the teacher should take special efforts to present the material in a tangible way. As English is a foreign language, the pupils easily get tired and the session becomes monotonous if special efforts are not taken to sustain their interest. The teacher instead of sticking to the lesson, can refer to examples and illustrations related to the subject matter from real life situations, from literature, from history and so on.

**Participation of Pupils:** The teacher must interact with the students every now and then to attract the attention of the students. He can ask questions and make them answer in simple sentences. He can ask them to summarize the lesson at the end of the class. This will not only make the pupils take active part in the session, but also act as a motivation booster. Instead of pointing out the mistakes in their utterances, the teacher can encourage them to talk in English. P. Prasad states:

We handle people by speaking to other people. There is no other way than talking to someone in order to get a work done. Therefore, we must learn how to handle human beings who are not creatures of logic but creatures of emotion... (CSFEP: 47)

**Assignment:** Assignment or homework is given at the end of the lesson. The following assignments may be given:

- To give the meanings of words and use them in sentences
- To explain words, phrases and sentences
- To write the summary of the passage
- To fill in the blanks
- To match the words with their meanings
- To identify the parts of speech in a sentence
- To write synonyms and antonyms

## **Conclusion**

All the above mentioned points contribute towards making things more meaningful and worthy of attention to the learners, than the conventional teaching method. Students must be taught to use the English language in real life situations. But students learn English language only to pass the exam. Prof. Ranu V. Vanikar and Aarthi R. Majumdar point out:

A wide gap seems to exist between the English taught in the classrooms and the English to which they are exposed outside classrooms. (MWLMD: 147)

Both language teaching and language learning will become fruitful and interesting if the methods discussed above may be implemented and this wide gap will gradually vanish. The pupils will show some sign of interest in studying grammar and composition. As a result, learning will become a very pleasant experience to the learners. Like all other abilities, language abilities and skills are also a matter of growth. Hence English should be included in the curricula of Engineering for the entire four years. It will indubitably help the students keep in constant touch with the English language and they will pick it up gradually. At the

end of the fourth year, they will emerge very good communicators catering to the technical needs of the modern corporate and MLCs. The learning of English language must center round the specific purpose of getting employed in reputed MLCs and carry out the work place tasks effectively.

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# **L2 in L1 Teaching in Dindigul-Based Rural Areas**

**N. Moorthy, M.A., M. Phil., DPD., Ph.D.**

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## **Abstract**

Students learning English in India, especially in rural villages (at the college level), lack competence in English. The teaching of English in India at all three levels is still fraught with a multitude of difficulties and obstacles. Reasons are many. When a child enters school at the primary level, he or she is being taught English language as a subject not a language, and they are taught the alphabet only in LKG when they are 4 years old. Then they begin to memorize every question and answer till they reach the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. When the medium of learning is not English, the school teaches English as one of the subjects and students do not learn the second language properly. When these learners enter the secondary level they are competent enough in writing and memorizing English class answers, and this is cramming, not any learning based on creativity. To overcome this language learning barrier, teachers need to find a way to help students understand academic concepts and to learn the L2 academic language properly. This paper will attempt to study the mother tongue influence upon the learners of the English language, and show the resulting interference of mother tongue L1, Tamil upon the acquisition of the second language L2, which is English.

**Key words:** Teaching English, Learning Language, Memorizing English, Learning Barriers

## **Introduction**

Even after twelve to fifteen years of learning English, learners in India at the college level lack competence in English. The teaching of English in India at all three levels, primary, secondary and college level is still fraught with a multitude of difficulties and obstacles. Realizing the demand and importance of English, in almost all the states of India, English is taught as a compulsory language from the very first standard. Yet the outcome is totally unsatisfactory. Here I am not questioning the intelligence of the learners, they are intelligent enough, showing good results in other subjects, but feel uncomfortable with the English

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language. And those who show excellent results in the English exams, totally depend on cramming and rote learning.

### **Barriers to Language Learning**

Apart from a lack of instructional resources – a general problem in a number of developing countries – many other problems have often been the bane of the Indian education system. Class size is most often very large comprised of a wide range of initial proficiency and learning needs. Over-centralization of educational policies, academic inflexibility of the system not only stifle innovative and pragmatic deviation, but also create a flow with the current, pacifistic resignation among resourceful and well motivated educators. Teachers have very little say in the designing of the curriculum, in the choosing of the materials and textbooks, or in the developing of assessment technique.

### **Mother Tongue Influence**

Second language learners seem to accumulate structural entities of the target language, but demonstrate difficulty in organizing this knowledge into appropriate and coherent structures. When writing or speaking the target language L2, second language learners are inclined to depend on their native language L1 grammar and structures to produce a response. If the grammar and the structures of the two languages are distinctly different, then one could expect a relatively high frequency of errors to occur in L2, thus indicating an interference of L1 on L2 acquisition.

### **Study and Findings**

The data substantiating the discussion came from an empirical study of errors in descriptive essays written by 2<sup>nd</sup> year students in 3 colleges in Dindigul. The findings of the study indicate that in spite of having gone through 12 years of learning English in their schools, the learners were still having difficulty in writing.

Students start their education in their L1 the language they know best. They learn to read and write in L1 and build their confidence in using both oral and written L1 to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

Students begin learning oral L2 at the same time that they are learning to read and write in L1. Then, with their good foundation in speaking, listening, reading and writing L1 plus their growing confidence in using oral L2, they are ready to begin L2 literary studies.

Students begin using L2 as one of the subjects of study starting in Grade 2 or 3. As students continue to build confidence to using “everyday” L2 they also need to begin learning “academic” L2. The language they will use to learn abstract concepts as they move into higher grades.

### **Teachers’ Role**

Teachers need a way to help students understand academic concepts and to learn L2 academic language. In the “L1-L2-L1” approaches described below, teachers.

1. Introduce a new concepts in L1
2. Introduce a new L2 concepts in words
3. Summarize the lessons in L2 and then
4. Check comprehension in L1

The timing for introducing L2 as one of the languages of instruction will be different in each context, depending on the facts such as whether the school is an English medium school or mother tongue medium school. The above formulae are suggested steps for two kinds of L1-L2-L1 lessons. The first two could be used by school teachers in grades 1 and 2 who have L1 “activity books” but no L2 textbooks. The 3rd and 4<sup>th</sup> could be used in schools where the students have L2 textbooks starting even from LKG, or the 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

### **Conclusion**

English was introduced in colonies like India basically for the study of the literature and culture. However, English for professional purposes like facing interviews, writing resumes, writing reports, conducting campaigns, writing letters, participation in meetings, seminars, conferences and discussions, etc. are now required. English for communication is the mantra everywhere. So, we need to reconsider the focus of learning English and change our syllabus suitably.

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# Role of Humour in Language Teaching

Dr. A. Muthu Meena Losini

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## Abstract

Humor is the most genuine and universal speech act which distinguishes man from animal. The employment of humor in second language teaching provides significant advantages to both the language teacher and the learner. It reduces the affective barriers in the way of language acquisition. Humor as a special pedagogical tool illustrates and teaches cultural and pragmatic components of language which is necessary for communicative competence. Humor is an important element in teaching and it has been an effective tool in creating second language classroom. In this affective environment, learners are emboldened to take risks and use their second language. Students must be encouraged and praised for their efforts to use their second language in the class room as well as outside. Humor instills confidence in each student and they become bold enough to face ridicule or negative criticism coming their way. Humor provides positive environment for learning. Dickinson states his opinion regarding the use of humor in the classroom: "Classroom in which laughter is welcome helps bring learning to life."

**Keywords:** Humor, Second Language Teaching, Communicative Competence, Language Acquisition

## Definition of Humor

*Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines humor as 'the mental faculty of discovering, expressing or appreciating something that is comical, amusing or absurdly incongruous'. Humor, to a large extent, depends on the parties involved in a discourse. In a multicultural country like India, the complexity of cultures brings one to learn much only with a sense of humor. Deducing meaning from humor should be based on the cultural interpretation of the environment. Cultural orientation is germane to the success of humor in the teaching of ESL. For instance, students

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have to be taught some idioms of the English language that humorously say some ordinary things. For example, if a student cannot understand that ‘I’m sick of lectures’ means ‘to be tired of lectures’, then a language culture which involves such expressions could be difficult to understand and/or learn.

### **Use of Humor in the Classroom**

Humor is a human trait and it is a self-effacing behavior. It invites the shy or timid student in our classes to participate with the group. Properly used humorous expressions allow students to feel a part of the class and they can then participate without losing face, feeling exposed or vulnerable. It is of prior importance in the communicative classroom. Humor has a way of reaching out to students who are too afraid or nervous to attempt expressing themselves in their second language. Humor is as human and as authentic as the need to communicate. It plays a vital role in our everyday social interaction. Hence, one should make it a regular part of our everyday classroom learning. And humor, or laughing at oneself easily, is not natural for us Indians, and has to be learned.

Using Humor in your classroom, proper preparation is the key in language teaching. Proper preparation leads to a proper delivery. Let humor arise naturally, encourage it and it may be the most amusing part in the teaching. Humor is to be delivered considering the fact that each individual has come with different tastes towards learning. Humor should never be used in demeaning or in a sarcastic way against the language learners. Teachers must make healthy humor as an integral part of their class. Humor works best as a natural on-going part of classroom learning. With practice, one may develop a style of humor, and get to a comfort zone with the usage of humorous expressions, in their speaking style, interaction, and learning.

The use of humor depends on the content the teacher is teaching and the availability of appropriate humorous material. When humor is planned as a part of the teaching, a friendly environment is established. There is an attitude of flexibility, of *camaraderie*. The communication between student and teacher is that of freedom and openness. It reduces the authoritarian position of the teacher. It allows the teacher to be a facilitator of the learning

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process. Fear, and anxiety are natural emotions growing out of the new and unknown situation which becomes less of a threat, as it develops a partnership between the student and the instructor. Humor is used to solicit dialogues, create conversations and improve vocabulary. Humor can relax and re-energize the students for class. It can also prepare them to converse in their second language. To help the students shift from their first language to their second language, they should be encouraged to enjoy discussion and debate. The humor must be comprehensible, with themes that students can relate to their subject or content.

### **Views of Provine, Loomax and Moosavi**

Laughter helps us forget about ourselves, our problems, our fears and allows us to use ourselves momentarily. Humor in the communicative classroom must be well prepared and must have a specific objective in the process of learning and teaching. Provine in “The Science of Laughter” *Psychology Today*, states that both sexes laugh a lot, females laugh more. Therefore, the women in the class seem to enjoy more the humor used in the classroom. Males appear to be the initiators of humor. He also states that using humor as human trait is a self-effacing behavior. Properly used humor allows the students to feel a part of the class and it erases the nervousness of students who attempt to express themselves in their second language. Loomax and Moosavi point out the use of humor in an article, saying that humor is an extremely effective tool in education. They suggest that the use of humor in the classroom reduces tension, improves classroom climate, increases enjoyment, increases student-teacher support and facilitates learning.

### **Humor as a Positive Environment in Learning**

In the environment of second language teaching, the students are not willing to participate and take risks in using their second language in a classroom. Students have to overcome their inhibitions and tension in using the second language for communication. Humor allows such students to face the situation without fear and ridicule. Humor prepares the possible

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ways for the students to step up to the front. It changes the formal, prosaic environment into an informal, casual and an amiable environment for the learners. Hence, it is important for the teacher to create such a positive atmosphere for learning. As humor decreases anxiety and stress, it contributes to the positive classroom, to class unity and learning.

Learning a second language requires positive classroom atmosphere. Students reported that jokes help them pay more attention during class time; they pointed out that humor helps learning difficult material. Humor has a positive effect on language teaching and it increases motivation and success. It is the teachers' responsibility to make their classrooms more inviting and conducive to learning.

### **Teacher's Role**

Teacher's role is to create a relaxed positive attitude in the teaching environment and students learn more and have more fun if they are in a safe atmosphere. Humor discussed here does not require any humoristic skill of a teacher, but it refers to simple humoristic remarks that enhance the communicative teaching of a second language. Humor improves the classroom messages. Learning induced through humor strengthens the learning and memory power. Students appreciate and enjoy learning with the teacher who uses humor. Lectures with more concept related humor helps students do significantly better on recalling texts of learnt concepts. In order to motivate and have more receptive students, humor is essential to teaching as well as learning.

### **The Benefits of Humor to Learners and Teachers**

Humor has noted beneficial effects on the second language classroom. Using humor helps shy students to participate with the group. It aids students' confidence to grow in expressing personal opinions in English. Jokes create enjoyment in the language situation. Humor not only enables teachers to create an affective positive environment, but it is also a source of enjoyment for students and teachers alike, regardless of culture and educational setting.

Humor is uniquely and ideally suited to serve as a vehicle for classroom illustration and

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instruction of specific linguistic and cultural phenomenon in the second language. Humor helps the teacher making the learning process easier, understandable, vivid and memorable for the learners. It disallows the usual way of memorization of concepts for the learners.

Provine (2005, p.24) argues that humor is closely related to memory as it is easier to recall an experience that occurred within a humorous context. There are many benefits to using humor in the classroom; it creates a cooperative atmosphere helping students to better relate to one another and it makes them focus more effectively. It adds a cultural frame to language by presenting a tone, expression and context to the materials, thus increasing cultural knowledge.

Humor facilitates the acquisition of vocabulary and helps distinguish figurative from literal meaning. It helps develop visual memory and improves the capacity to solve linguistic problems. The devices that one can use to add humor to a language class range from idiomatic expressions, riddles, proverbs, pronunciation, games, comics, the use of jokes and typical grammatical errors.

## Conclusion

The role of humor in the language classroom offers the greatest potential for pedagogical impact. Humor contributes a great deal in the second language classroom and it creates an effective and positive atmosphere both for the learners and the teachers. It becomes a source of enjoyment for the teachers and the students. Humor strengthens the mind of the learners, develops the confidence of the students, directs them towards developing a positive attitude and reduces stress, anxiety and nervousness. Humor energizes the mind of the learners as the rain revitalizes parched ground.

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# “Illogical” Rules of English Grammar

Dr. D. Nagarathinam & Prof. L. Lakshmanan

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## Abstract

One of the major problems in learning English Grammar is the ever changing rules. Grammar rules are not laid down once and for all. They ‘EVOLVE’. You, no longer use ‘thee’ and ‘ye’ in everyday language. You no longer say ‘thou art’ or ‘mine eyes’ or ‘it raineth’. If language did not develop people in Britain, might still be speaking the Middle English of Chaucer, or something even older. Here in this paper, we’ve chosen some of the disputable points which we consider *the most illogical rules of English grammar* that have been flouted by good users of English.

The factors in dispute: Split infinitives: Infinitive with to, Infinitive without to, Without subject, Post-posed prepositions; Double Negatives; It’s me or It’s I?; Sexist languages gender-neutral language in English (he or she); Prepositional verbs; and Ambiguity.

**Keywords:** English Grammar, Ever-changing Rules, Split Infinitives, Double Negatives, Gender-neutral language.

## Introduction

“Flouting the rule: and a number of modern writers have been equally happy to flout the traditional rule. None the less for all the squalor and gore facilities of syntax, are what the book aspires to the full of”---**Martin Amis - The Observer.**

English is an International language. Grammar, being a mechanism of language, takes a vital role in the English language. The grammar of a language has to be put to use with cleverness, involving all the nuances of the language. The logical and illogical rule of English language is described as follows:

## Logical / Illogical

**Question tag:** Logical is positive statement (+) ends with Negative tag (-)

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Negative sentence (-) ends with positive tag (+)

Eg: She is a dancer, isn't she?

She is not a dancer, is she? (Logical)

I'm honest, amn't I? (Logical) - But, it is not accepted by modern writers.

I'm honest, aren't I? - accepted. This seems to be illogical, doesn't it?

**Article:** Similarly, with the article 'a' and 'an'

Eg. a eagle-→an eagle; a-one-rupee-coin; a university

Here, in order to avoid the clash between the two vowels the weakest consonant 'n' is added between the strong sounded letters. This is for the convenience of the tongue.

Let's probe into some of the disputable logical/illogical points here:

### **Split Infinitives**

E.g. "To boldly go where no one has gone before" opposed "to go boldly where no one has gone before"

### **The Infinitive with 'to'**

**Without subject:** 'The best thing would be to tell everybody'

**With subject:** 'The best thing would be for you to tell everybody'

### **Infinitive without 'to'**

**Without subject:** All I did was hit him on the head

**With subject:** Rather than John does it, I'd prefer to give the job to many.

### **That's the man we sold it to'**

'**That's the man to whom we sold it'** (this is grammatical but very formal and very formal – and using very formal grammar in a less than formal setting represents a lapse of appropriateness if not a lapse of grammar.

'What's that you are looking at?'

Corrected: '**What's that at which you are looking?**

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Shifting the preposition from the end can be particularly clumsy or confusing when the preposition then becomes separated from the word it relates to.

**To whom are you referring, may I ask?**

**For whom was he looking?**

Others however sound absurd.

**About what's your book?**

**On what does it depend?**

It is more or less impossible to avoid end prepositions after exclamations containing 'wh'- words.

**E.g.: 'what an embarrassing thing about which to talk?'**

**In to what a fine mess you've got us?**

Other structures to think about:

Final prepositions are natural even un-avoidable

**'We were looked after' (prepositional verb)**

The whole question needs looking in to. Consider also constructions with an adjective plus to infinitive.

**She is lovely to look at.**

**'He is impossible to live with,'** or with an indefinite pronoun plus to infinitive.

**That's something to look forward to.**

**I've got nobody to talk to.**

**Is there anyone to write to?**

In formal relative clauses and some questions in particular, an earlier position may / will be preferable.

**Do you know the girl on the deck whose father's ship Alec stowed away?**

**You know the girl whose father's ship Alec stowed away on the deck of ? 'Do'**

And longer prepositions such as during and throughout, and multi-word prepositions such as with ‘regard to’ and ‘because of’ usually sound very awkward with end position.

**Which country did the renaissance take place in during/throughout?**

**‘That’s the scandal he resigned because of’**

### **Post-posed Prepositions**

Normally a preposition is followed by its complement. Sometimes it doesn’t happen. Because the complement takes first position in the clause or it is absent.

### **Wh-questions**

e.g.: **‘Which house did he leave it at?’**

**‘At which house is he staying?’ (Formal)**

**Relative Clause:** ‘the old house which he was telling you about is empty.’

**E.g. About which I was telling you; (Formal)**

**What did you - ‘On what did base your prediction? (Formal)**

**What did you base your prediction on?’ (Informal))**

### **Double Negatives**

The double negative: for example produces a positive sense (- x - = +) in modern English (in earlier forms of English, and in some other languages, a double negative simply reinforces the negative sense.

**‘I wouldn’t say that he isn’t telling the truth’**

Consider these sentences:

**‘I barely knew anyone at the meeting’.**

No judge but the most stony-hearted could deny the ice-dancers anything but full marks.

**‘No head injury is too trivial to ignore.’**

Near negative units such as hardly, barely, scarcely, rarely and seldom are usually ungrammatical with fully negative words. So the finish sentence should read like this.

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**‘I barely knew anyone at the meeting’.**

Negative sentences are usually thought of as containing not, no, none, never, nobody and so on. But they can be made in other ways too, as by the use of ‘**un**’ ‘**without**’, ‘**unless**’, ‘**ignore**’, ‘**deny**’, ‘**fail**’ and ‘**miss**’. These words can cause real confusion if carelessly combined with the usual negative words.

Even an apparently simple sentence such as the third of the examples above, ties itself in knots when it mishandles negatives. Analyze it carefully, and you will see how misleading it really is. The supposed meaning is properly conveyed by any or the following versions:

**‘No head injury is too trivial to treat.’**

**‘No head injury is trivial enough to ignore.’**

**‘No head injury, however trivial should be ignored.’**

**‘All head injuries, however trivial, should be treated.’**

**It’s me or it’s I? :**

The most controversial question about pronoun is whether to use the subject or object case after **is**, **was**, and other forms of the verb **to be**.

Modern Standard English remains undecided about what to do here, but the fact is that most people nowadays say it’s me and was that her? .This is an acceptable usage for everyone except the most formal and traditional. As always you can rephrase things to avoid the problem entirely. In answer to the question ‘who’s there?’ You do not have to stay either **it’s I** or **it’s me**: you can say uncontroversial, ‘I am’ instead.’

Note that if a ‘who’ - clause follows the personal pronoun; Standard English usually prefers a subject form for example:  
e.g.: ‘It’s I who does the shopping’.

**Sexist Language - Gender-neutral language in English (he/she)**

The most vexing problem concerns 'he', 'him' and 'his'. As with man, these terms are often used neutrally-

**'If anyone here wants to upgrade his computer, he should remember what Mrs. Murray told him'**. In this particular example you could easily devise a non- sexist phrasing by applying one of two standard techniques. Either you could use the second person forms 'you' and 'your'.

**'If you want to upgrade your computer, you should remember...'**or you could recast the sentence in the plural.

'If anyone here wants to upgrade his or her computer, **he, or she** should remember...'**using she or her, hers** instead of **he, him, his**, or alternating the two sets) tends to look very contrived. So too does one and one's: and all the more so does the use of new terms such as 'herm' (**'her, or him,)** or **s/he (she or he)** and to use **they, their, them** after anyone, each, or the like is to fly in the face of strict grammar.

### Prepositional Verbs

The preposition in a prepositional verb must precede its complement. Hence we can contrast the prepositional verb call on (visit) with the phrasal verb call up (summon).

They called on the man	They called up on the man X
They called on him	They called up him. X
X They <i>called</i> the man <i>on</i>	<b>They called the man up</b>
X They <i>called</i> him <i>on</i>	<b>They called him up</b>

On the other hand, the prepositional verb allows an inserted adverb after the verb and a relative pronoun after the preposition:

They called early on the man	They called early up the man X
The man on whom they called	X the man up whom they called

In general, prepositional verbs, such as *call on* or *look at*, plus their prepositional complement differ from single word verbs plus prepositional phrases, as in

They called on the man-----who (m) did they call on?

Where did they call? X

They called at the hotel (or after) lunch---what did they call at (or after)? ---Where did they look?

X

They called at the hotel (or after lunch) where did they call at? X (or after)? ---where(or when) did they call?

Many prepositional verbs allow the noun phrases to become the subject of a passive transformation of the sentence:

They called on the man--the man was called on

Visitors did not walk over the lawn

The lawn wasn't walked over (by visitors)

**Visitors can't walk over the lawn**

Like phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs vary in their idiomatic set up. Highly idiomatic combinations include go into (a problem), 'investigate', come by (the book), 'obtain'.

A sentence like *He looked at the girl* can be given two analyses: In one, there is an intransitive verb (looked) followed by a prepositional phrase (at the girl) functioning as adverbial. In the other analysis, implied in the previous section, the prepositional verb *looked at* is a transitive verb and *the girl* is direct object.

**\*Stood near** Why is this here?

The two analyses are equally valid ways of looking at the same sentence, and account for different aspects of it. In this chapter, in which we are concerned with complementation of the verb, we adopt the second analysis and consider prepositional verbs to be transitive verbs.

## **Ambiguous Sentences**



Ambiguous statements or words create vagueness and that constitutes the basis of unintended comedy. Ambiguity is found in the use of word choice. Ambiguity means the use of words, which have several different layers and meanings. For e.g.:

“He loves his pet dog more than his wife”.

## Conclusion

The English language is a living one - the earlier Grammar books are incomplete. Flouting the rules of any language is a healthy attempt. The spelling of ‘woman’ is changed ‘womyn’ / wimin /. This is accepted by oxford by the influence of feminists. What does it mean? Basically, English language teachers are communication facilitators and they are incidentally grammar explicators.

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# **Elements of Humour in Teaching Technical English to Engineering Students**

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## **Abstract**

The present study throws light on the favourable aspects of using the elements of humour in the English teaching classroom. It also confines and sets boundaries within which a teacher can have effective teaching and make the students enjoy the experience of learning. Within the prescribed syllabus of Anna University for the Engineering college students, the present study focuses on the scope of using elements of humour in teaching Technical English. And some sites for language games are also suggested that can be used during the orientation programme. This paper attempts to show the many ways in which elements of humour can help the students of Engineering Colleges to learn English with interest and desire.

**Key Words:** Elements of Humour, Classroom Management, English Grammar, Technical English

## **Introduction**

Teaching English to professional students is quite a challenging task, as it involves no prose or poetry piece. Functional English, improving vocabulary, basic grammar and usage of idioms and phrases find a major part in the prescribed English Workbook-I&II. Amidst the hectic practical periods, much laborious laboratory hours, problematic core papers and exhaustive theory lectures, the only one hour left for them to stop, study, and learn in a relaxed manner is in the language class room. But, the paper being a technical one, having no literary piece to read and relish, the task of making the classroom interesting and interactive becomes a very challenging one. To make the students skilled in English and make the class simultaneously lively, a teacher necessarily has to be seriously humorous!

## **Importance of Humour**

Humour increases the students' attention and facilitates interaction. It decreases the anxiety level and motivates attention and involvement. Humour sets a comfortable environment to learn and has a positive effect upon the learning retention. Humour in the classroom need not be considered as a diversion or a digression from the lecture. It can be blended into the teaching method. For teaching any particular grammatical item, the teacher can give the rules to be applied in the grammatical pattern first, and while giving examples she can add a touch of humour.

### Teaching Conditional Clause

The teacher starts by explaining the three types of 'if conditional' sentences with different pairs of tenses and different meanings. The rules to be followed are given as follows:

Condition	Structure	Meaning
Type I Open or factual condition	Simple present in the 'if' clause → Simple future in the main clause	Shows probability
Type 2 Hypothetical or unreal condition	Past tense in the 'if' clause → Present conditional in the main clause	Shows improbability
Type 3 Impossible condition	Past perfect in the 'if' clause' → perfect conditional in the main clause	Shows impossibility as it talks about things that did not happen in the past.

Now, the teacher can give her own examples. They can be constructed with some humour in them:

a) If you get leave tomorrow, you can/will watch the cricket match.

b) If I dressed up neatly, I would be the centre of attraction.

c) If you had recharged my number I would have called you.

**Some exercises can be given to the students such as:**

A) If I were Mr. Madras, -----

b) -----, I will get good marks in the semester.

c) If I had scored good marks in the Higher Secondary Exam, -----

**The answers got from the students could be:**

a) I would propose to Miss. India

b) If my friend helps in the exam hall

c) I would have joined a good college

**A Chain of response from the students that was received while teaching If clause, Type I:**

If it rains, I will go out to enjoy myself.

If he goes out, I will complain to the principal.

If he complains to the principal, he will be given the T.C

If the principal gives the T.C, he will leave the college.

If he leaves the college, we all will be happy.

**Teaching Cause and Effect Expressions**

Tension can be relieved through humour. When a teacher senses tension, a humorous remark or telling a funny story will help a lot.

The teacher explains the casual relation between two actions that can be shown by using connectives **like because, since, as, therefore, as a result, due to, etc.**

**Examples can be given by an interesting narration as follows:**

As Mr. Hopkins was walking down the street, he noticed a small boy. The boy was standing outside a house **since** the door was closed. He was trying to ring the doorbell but **owing to** his short stature he could not reach up to the bell. He wanted to ring anyway; **therefore** he got a book out of his school bag and stood on it. The bell was still too high up for him to reach **because** the book wasn't thick enough. The man felt sorry for him **as a result** he decided to go and help him. He walked over to the door, **consequently** rang the door bell three times.

Then he turned to the boy and said kindly, 'so now what, little man?' 'Now,' the boy replied, 'we run away as fast as possible'.

### **Teaching Different Forms and Uses of Words**

The teacher explains the words that can be used both as noun and verb. She/he explains how in speech, the difference in usage is brought out by placing the stress on different syllables. While using the word as noun, the stress is usually on the first syllable. On the other hand, when the word is used as verb, the stress is on the second syllable.

Some interesting examples can be given which could stir up the students' minds to think in that way and come out with their own examples.

### **Examples**

- Don't **watch (v)** the **watch (n)** in my class.
- **Change (n)** is the only thing which cannot be **changed. (v)**
- How dare you **park (v)** the vehicle in the **park (n)**?
- **Look (v)** at her. Her **looks (n)** are completely changed.
- **Message (v)** me as soon as you reach the place. I will wait for your **message (n)**.

### **Teaching Homonyms & Homophones**

The teacher explains homonyms as words with same spelling, but having a different pronunciation. And homophones are explained as words which have almost the same pronunciation, but different spelling and meaning.

### Homophones-Examples

- **Check** the amount filled in the **cheque**.
- We eat **meat** whenever we **meet**.
- **Write** your name in the **right** corner.
- Where is the **steel** pipe? I didn't **steal** it.
- **Know** God - **No** worries; **No** God - **know** worries.

### Homonyms –Examples

- **Lead** the workers. They work with **lead** pipes.
- The **wind** is blowing heavily. **Wind** up the materials.
- Hit the **bat** with your **bat**.
- He **ground** all the nuts into a powder, but it fell on the **ground**.
- Come fast from the **bank**. I will wait on the river **bank**.

### Teaching Types of Sentences

For teaching Direct & Indirect speech the teacher has to explain the types of sentences such as Assertive, Interrogative, Imperative and Exclamatory sentences. The teacher can use the class room atmosphere to give examples and in the voice modulation a false anger can be expressed.

### For example:

When the teacher starts with a sentence like,

**This is the noisiest class I have ever seen-**

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The students get shocked for a while.

Then, the teacher explains this is **Assertive**.

The students feel cool.

The teacher raises her voice again and says, **Can't you keep quiet?-**

The students are again confused.

The teacher explains, this is **Interrogative**.

**Keep Quiet or Get out** - The teacher shouts.

And at once explains, this is **Imperative**

The students feel happy and the teacher says,

**How sweet you are! You kept quiet.**

And explains, this is **Exclamatory**.

The students enjoy and laugh. When the laugh ends, the teacher asks,

**Do you understand the types of sentences now?**

The students reply, "This is **Interrogative** sentence Madam"

The teacher laughs now and says "**we shall go to the next grammar item**"

The students reply" Madam, this is **Imperative** sentence.

The teacher enjoys and laughs and says, "**Really you are all good students**"

The whole class cheers, "This is **Assertive** sentence"

## **Humour as a Starter Tool**

Sometimes, to bring the students to our English class lecture could be a difficult task. Their mind and thought might remain in the previous class. Or they might be greatly bored with grammar so much, so as to zone out altogether. Some puns, riddles or jokes can serve as starters. Below are some examples.

### **A Joke on Ambiguity in Stress and Intonation**

- How do you make a cat drink?
- Easy. Put it in the liquidizer.

(Cat 'drink - drink for a cat

‘Cat drink - drink out of a cat) (Language of Humour, 10)

### Joke Using Morphology

What is a small book called?

A booklet.

So what is the baby toy called?

Toylet?

One who drives? Driver

One who cooks? Cooker? (Language of Humour,15)

### Joke Using Syntax

Time flies like an arrow

S V A

Fruitflies like a banana

S V O

Police found drunk in shopwindow

S V O

Police found drunk in shopwindow.

S V C

Do you serve frog's legs?

D.O

We serve anyone who is able to pay. (Language of Humour, 23)

I.O



## **Joke Using Punctuation**

Come, let's eat grandma.

Come, let's eat, grandma

## **Tensionless Tenses Teaching**

Once it happened in the Literature class room that, when a girl quoted, "I fall upon the thorns, I bleed", immediately a boy quoted, "If winter comes, can summer be far behind?".

Now such lighter moments can happen while teaching Tenses.

After teaching tenses, boys used to give examples such as:

'I love you'- **simple present**

Immediately it would be followed by girls' reply

"I will kill you" - **simple future.**

And when a student gave an example as,

"I shall have married by next year"

It could be followed by a comment, - "wow! **future perfect**"

## **Remarks Related to Humour Used in the Classroom**

There is a substantial body of literature devoted to the use of humour in educational settings. Those who study and write about humour in educational settings are quick to identify the benefits associated with teacher's humour use. For example, when the teachers use humour the students learn more. (Davies & Apter, 1980) Additionally, teacher humour has been recognized as an effective classroom management tool with the power to establish or dissolve boundaries of a group, encourage creativity, motivate individuals, control conflict and relieve stress (Wallinger, 1997). But, before utilizing humour as an instructional tool, it is important to understand more about how humour operates in the class room.

## **Suggestions for Using Humour Effectively in the Classroom**

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The teacher need not undergo any particular workshop or be skilled in humorous talk to be humorous in the class room. Examples from life situations, usage of jokes, puns, riddles, funny stories and humorous comments can help a lot. Teacher must be very careful to avoid sexual, hostile, nonsensical humour. She/he must be careful about the characters involved (student, teacher, other) in the examples cited. It has to be checked whether the humour involved is self-disparaging, student-disparaging, or whether the humour deviates from the content. There are sites in the internet like esljokes.net, vocabulary.co.il, word games and puzzles that can be well utilized during the orientation programme.

## **Conclusion**

The paper presented here provides an overview of way of teaching grammar to the Engineering college students of Anna University, with a touch of humour. Teachers can be more creative in their own way and make the class interesting, effective and interactive. It can be vividly seen that the participation and interaction of students has increased in the class room. They may feel comfortable in clarifying their doubts and try speaking out boldly and open with their answers.

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# **Newspapers in Language Classrooms: A Tool for Professional Success**

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## **Abstract**

With the advent of globalisation and the changing demographics in many of the world's leading countries, business environment has expanded to various geographic locations spanning numerous kaleidoscopic cultures, demanding effective cross cultural skills and professional expertise. Cross-cultural competence and knowledge of business ethics is a pre-requisite to build long term value in an increasingly complex and dynamic work place and proficiency of English entails it. Language newspapers in English 'being readily available and being a relatively cheap source of discourse in English' (Rajaretnam, 2002) can support today's global citizens to learn across curriculum, cultures and promote higher level thinking skills. Our paper proposes to use 'newspapers in English classrooms' as a teaching tool to meet the diverse demands of language learners. This paper suggests some innovative approaches to language learning, provide need based knowledge, knowledge to develop professional skills for employability. Ultimately, the paper focuses upon strategies to use newspapers in classrooms to promote innovation, nurture teamwork, global awareness by providing learning opportunities to update proficiency in English.

Key words: Newspapers, crosscultural competence, learning across curriculum, strategies to use newspapers in classroom.

## **Introduction**

In a developing country like India, English newspapers being readily available to all at a relatively low price, have a major role to shape and affect the linguistic abilities of people for positive outcomes. Newspapers in India have the largest reading public and are the primary link across the regions. Being accessible to the young and old, newspapers remain a great teaching source to be used in the language classrooms. These 'living text books'(as rightly termed by NIE) expand curriculum in language classes and are very helpful in remote

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areas where teachers are expected to be resourceful. In the words of Thompson, ‘every part of the newspaper furnishes some new and valuable information.’

### **Advantages of Using English Newspapers as Teaching Tool in Language Classrooms**

- Ensures better connectivity with the world
- Enables the students to look beyond the news
- Supports learning across curriculum, cultures and promotes higher level thinking skills
- Makes learning a fun-filled and enriching experience
- Acquaints the students with newer trends of language that comes with quick connectivity
- Provides best models of clear, concise writing
- Encourages ‘participative learning’ through ‘participative journalism’
- Accelerates reading skills
- Promotes mutual understanding and acceptance of differences in a multicultural and multilingual societies
- Meets the emotional and socio-cultural demands of language learning
- Provides need based knowledge to develop life skills
- Meets the diverse demands of learners
- Provides a cost-effective method to the process of teaching and learning

### **Multi-cultural and Multi-ethnic Classrooma**

The growing multicultural and multiethnic nature of the present classrooms demand a revolutionary change in the entire educational scenario including re-modelling language classrooms with the inclusion of newspapers to encourage participative learning to foster cultural values.’ The basic reason of selecting English newspapers as a teaching tool is very pragmatic as English newspapers cover an array of information and knowledge and that too within the reach of our students’ wallet.’ (Mehta, abstract)

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‘The ability of teachers to organise classrooms and manage the behaviour of their students is critical to achieving positive educational outcomes. Although sound behaviour management does not guarantee effective instruction, it establishes the environmental context that makes good instruction possible. Reciprocally, highly effective instruction reduces, but does not eliminate, classroom behaviour problems.’ (Emmer & Stough, 2001)

### **Classroom Activities**

Classrooms are the best preparatory grounds for learners where grooming of interpersonal skills, life skills for employability can take place through various interactive and innovative sessions with newspapers as a teaching tool. Creative application of newspapers in language classrooms can lead to enrichment of experiences through learning by experience projects, group discussions, role play etc.

Schwartz and Bromberg (1984) have devised a newspaper course for older students that helps prepare them for effective citizenship in an interdependent world, providing instruction in global concepts such as economic interdependence, the migrations of people, environmental independence, cultural diffusion, the communication revolution, and cultural diversity. The emphasis of the course is on reading, writing, and reasoning ability; and it requires students to classify and organize materials, to identify cause and effect, and to make judgments using sound reasoning.

Here are some activities with newspapers in classrooms which have been found fruitful in inculcating in the students intellectual curiosity and humanistic values.

### **Newspapers for Sale and Marketing**

A variety of promotional tools like television programmes, newspapers with sales and marketing advertisements are of great help to students to plan out their own advertisements of products. The learners are acquainted with the various kinds of classified and display ads in newspapers. Newspaper cuttings dealing with varieties of display and classified ads like situation wanted, matrimonial, sale and purchase are shown to students enabling them to distinguish between ads, their language and purpose. Then the students are asked to make their own advertisements keeping in view the purpose ‘to publicize some product or service’,

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‘designing the product for commercial purpose’ with colourful and lucid language. Proficiency in Business Communication entails expertise in sales and marketing. Such approaches provide the students with opportunities to practice their varied skills in the natural school environment and reinforces students positively for not only displaying their marketing abilities inside classrooms but also developing in them preparedness for professional success.

### **Developing Written Communication through Newspapers**

Newspapers being a source of lively, contemporary English could be used to develop writing skills in students where various examples from newspapers encourage them to write with clarity, fluency and accuracy to meet the needs of everyday situations and formal occasions. The language used in the newspaper is functional and pragmatic. So the students get to know and use functional English from the editorial page of newspapers. The classrooms can be divided into groups, where the students are given a copy of newspapers. They are asked to prepare a report on a subject of topical reference from the given newspaper. The teacher may ask the students to write a report on the cited incident in news daily, for example ‘writing on cyclone affected areas’, ‘road accident’, ‘fire in factory’ etc. Students are taught the difference between reporting events as an individual and reporting for newspapers. Business writing wants precision and clarity. So various articles in newspapers can be a source to teach summarising and note making skills to learners. The present topics for example ‘India’s performance in World Cup’, ‘Femina Miss India Contest’ may be interesting to teach the students skills of note-making where the students need to learn the techniques of surveying, skimming, questioning, critically reading and reviewing the texts. Students learn to write sentences logically and cohesively linked together.

### **Newspapers for Multi-culturalism**

Byram, Gribkova & Starkey feel that ‘language teaching with an intercultural dimension continues to help learners to acquire the linguistic competence needed to communicate in speaking or writing, to formulate what they want to say/write in correct and appropriate ways. But it also develops their intercultural competence i.e. their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to

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interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality.’(9)

Howard M. Miller suggests that one very simple way for all teachers to add multicultural ideas and content to his or her curriculum is to build a classroom library of multicultural literature. (88) Newspapers can be an important part of multicultural library because they present different political and cultural perspectives which could be used as a tool to enable students to have an insight into others’ cultures and customs.

Rhoades and Rhoades (1985) provide ways teachers can use newspapers to teach comprehension and critical thinking and to help students develop sensitivity and awareness of the self, the community, the nation and the world.

Various photos from the newspapers depicting different international figures, cultures, customs, dresses, cuisine, flags of varied geographic locations can be collected to cultivate in the students cross-cultural awareness.

Very often we find the language used in the newspaper pays a price for linguistic acculturation: for not remaining a’ guest or friend’, but, to use Raja Rao’s words(1978:421), for becoming ‘ one of our own, of our own caste, our creed, our sect and of our tradition.’ (Kachru 1984:309)

So, students need to be acquainted with various vocabulary items in newspapers so that they develop insight into various cultures and write English which is intelligible in a multicultural context. Lexical items on cooking, sports, films, regions can broaden their vocabulary pertaining to various cultural connotations.

Newspapers, no doubt, broaden horizon, expand vision, enrich mind and provide learning experiences for application in real life situations.

## **Conclusion**

In the words of U.S. President, Barack Obama



*'Our very survival has never required greater co-operation and understanding among all people from all places than at this moment in history when we open our hearts and our minds to those who may not think like we do or believe what we do- that's when we discover at least the possibility of common ground.'*

The above lines of the U.S. President seem to be reflecting upon the importance of English newspapers as the common link between masses to foster multiculturalism striving for global peace. Thus newspapers in language classrooms have a significant role to promote mutual understanding and acceptance of differences in a multicultural and multilingual society meeting the emotional and socio-cultural demands of language learners.

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# Creation of Super-casual English Expressions in/and Stroking Fond Memories

Dr. S. Robert Gnanamony

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## Abstract

The impregnable notion of the eighteenth century British that English language should be fixed for ever, nay frozen in time, gets a nasty beating on all fronts in these contemporary times. Media especially pooh-poohs it. More than the daily-users of the English language, it is the print media and the electronic media that go at a break-neck speed, coining new expressions, new phrases and new collocations to the amusement and enrichment of readers and listeners. The birthing of such new expressions reaches its peak in number especially when a great event - sports or calamity or war - is witnessed.

Thanks to its inherent flexibility and durability, English language has evolved into a dynamic communicative medium over the years. Even though there are purists and detractors who argue otherwise, language change is unavoidable; if there is no change, language will be stifled and the growth will be stunted like the bonsai. Whether one likes it or not, English language is changing not only at a rapid pace, but also at a phenomenal creative way. This paper makes an attempt to show how, in the media, especially in the print media, English language helps sport writers in popular newspapers to create fresh expressions and interesting collocations to cover their stories in the most enthralling manner. In order to fully enjoy the newspaper stories, the modern reader has to have a wide reading and exposure to modern communication mediums like YouTube.

The writer of this paper wishes to add that it is not his intention to trace the events of the World Cup Cricket 2015 in the chronological order, but rather to highlight the phrases and idioms old and new that the sports writers of **The Times of India** have used and created in order to bring the sports story engrossingly alive before the audience.

**Keywords:** English language, dynamic communicative medium, inherent flexibility, language change, print media

**Stoked a New Fire in India**

World Cup Cricket 2015 “stoked a new fire in India”. **The Times of India** in its Sports Page on February 26, 2015 used this phrase. The phrase was used by Harsha Bhogle, a popular cricket Commentator in his article, “Cover Drive”. The meaning of this phrase is quite obvious to every Indian reader. He also used the word “positivity”, which I believe is a comparatively new-comer.

### **Form Slump**

In the World Cup, until the West Indies’ match with Zimbabwe, and winning the match with 73 run victory, Gaye didn’t score much. And **The Times of India** Commentator wrote, “Despite form slump, Chris remained positive” (**Times of India** Feb 25, 2015). I think “form slump” is a new collocation. “Slump” is normally used in connection with sliding stock market indices or falling in prices of a stock. In the same page, **Times of India** published boldly, “Windies Marauder Clobbers First Double Ton of the World Cup to Silence His Critics”. Gayle’s 215 runs against Zimbabwe fire-fuels – (well, yes, “fire-fuels” is my coinage) the Sports Writer to coin this phrase. “Marauder” is usually associated with animals human beings that attack fiercely and plunder the others; “clobbers” means “hitting somebody very hard”. So the phrase aptly describes Chris Gayle’s devastating form that day against Zimbabwe. Partha Bhaduri, another Cricket Writer on the same issue, commented that Chris is “Arguably the last great West Indies Cricket legend still standing, can blow hot or cold, be a rum-swiggling, reggae-blasting, party-loving, hash-tag-triggering hedonist or a serial rebel with a cause”. I think Gayle’s powerful come back with a couple of tons, triggers such interesting new phrases as “rum-swiggling”, reggae-blasting” and hash-tag-triggering”. The phrase “still standing” is reminiscent of Arvind Adiga’s second novel **The Last Man in Tower**, where the school master Yogesh Murthy, the central character, is the last man still standing.

### **Eden Will be Hot as Hell**

This expression is found in the sports page of **The Times of India** on March 23, 2015 when the World Cup Cricket teams New Zealand and South Africa would be facing each other for the second time at Eden Park cricket Stadium, Auckland. It is the largest and the most iconic stadium in New Zealand. The ground has been home for the Auckland team since 1910. Interestingly, the phrase prods our memory back to the days of the Creation of the

Garden of Eden and the first Man and Woman there. Garden of Eden became very hot with the arrival of God's adversary Satan. Just as two rival forces fought for the possession of Man I mean, God and Satan, the semi-finals in Auckland's Eden Park would be fought with all vigour. The same writer also used the expression, "cauldron of Kiwi cricket" to refer to the Eden Park. Ironically, Garden of Eden too was turned into a virtual cauldron due to Man's disobedience to God and God had to throw His own children out of the Garden.

### **A Sea of Blue**

Shrinivas Rao, the sports writer of **The Times of India** used this phrase in his article referring to the impending semifinal encounter between India and Australia in the famous Sydney Cricket Ground on 24 March 2015. The writer mentioned that all the tickets had been sold out and most of the tickets were hogged by the Indian fans. It would be a packed crowd and most of the Indians would be sporting their blue jersey and so it would be "a sea of blue". It is a common sight to see the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) painted blue as Indian fans virtually take over the venue whenever an Indian-Australian encounter would take place.

### **South Africa's Comedy of Errors is No Laughing Matter**

The phrases "comedy of errors" and "no laughing matter" are found in the sports page of **The Times of India** in its March 26, 2015 edition. The phrases "Comedy of errors" and "No laughing matter" are not new phrases, but the way they have been brought back from literature and language is new. The phrase—**The Comedy of Errors** is the title of one of William Shakespeare's early comedies. It is his shortest and one of his most farcical comedies. In Shakespeare's play the comedy is created due to the Syracuse Merchant's mistaken identity of his twin sons and the confusion caused by it. The matter is further complicated by the twin boys' twin slaves. The Semi-final match against New Zealand on 24 March 2015 and the South Africa's four wicket defeat in a rain-affected clash at Auckland's Eden Park - the fourth time that Proteas had made it to the last four and the fourth time they hadn't reached the final. In 1999, the South African team was defeated due to Australia's superior net run-rate. But this time a selection decision might have hampered South Africa even before the match started. The other phrase—"No Laughing Matter" brings back to our memory a 1986 book titled **No Laughing Matter** brought out by American Postmodern Novelist Joseph Heller and Speed Vogel.

### **The Stroll in the Park**

Sports Commentator Shrinivas Rao coined this phrase to refer to the ease with which India thrashed Bangladesh by 109 runs on the Melbourne Cricket Ground on March 19, 2015. It was in this match India's Suresh Sharma made a classy 137. It was the quarter-final encounter and with this win, India would play Australia in the Semi-final. Indians' performance against Bangladesh was "like a stroll in the park".

### **To Lick One's Wounds for a While**

In one of the high-profile league match World Cup 2015 encounters between South Africa and India, South Africa was beaten by an embarrassing 130 run defeat, and a dejected South Africa captain AB de Villiers said to the media, "We'll have to lick our wounds for a while" (**Times of India** February 23, 2015). The phrase evokes in our memory of the dogs licking their wounds with their front paws. The tongue's moist and soft surface makes it naturally an effective wound cleaner. It has been discovered that a dog's saliva contains ingredients that act as a mild antibiotic on wounds. The antibiotics help heal a dog's wounds when they are applied through a dog's licking action.

### **From Penury to Stardom**

Sports Writer Ruchir Mishra used this phrase to write about the rise of the Vidarbha Pacer Umesh Yadav and his inclusion in the World Cup squad in **Times of India** February 8, 2015. When he was practicing Cricket as a boy, he didn't even have a pair of bowling shoes or even a mobile phone. In 2008, the youngster had no idea that his life was about to change forever. Umesh Yadav's meteoric rise is strongly driven by self-belief, conviction, persuasion, practice and a passion for the game.

### **Miracle Worker**

Ajit Bezbaruah, Sports Columnist for **The Times India** used this phrase to write about the elevation of Ravendra Jadeja from ignominy to stardom in the February 7, 2015 edition. Son of a security guard, and living a poverty-stricken life in his boyhood days in the by-lanes of Navagam Ghed in Jamnagar, Jadeja had to struggle a lot. He was even contemplating quitting cricket when his mother died in 2005. He was virtually shattered and needed a lot of cajoling from his sisters to continue playing Cricket. He became a different

person altogether from then onwards - more focused, more disciplined and more hard-working. He impressed all with his courageous brand of Cricket and was cruising along fast. IPL I in 2008 catapulted him into the big league of glamour, name and fame. A guy, who couldn't even buy a decent cricket gear once, now commands a staggering 2 million dollars in the IPL. On the field, he is a livewire, a cunning bowler and a handy batsman, and no doubt a miracle worker for the Indian team. The phrase "the miracle worker" evokes in our memory a cycle of 20<sup>th</sup> century dramatic works derived from Helen Keller's autobiography **The Story of My Life**. Each of the various plays describes the relationship between Helen, a deaf-blind and Anne Sullivan, the teacher who introduced her to education, activism and international stardom.

### **Rebel to Reliable Foot Soldier**

This is how JAC Gladson describes Indian Cricketer the Hyderabadish stylish batsman Ambati Rayudu in **The Times of India** February 6, 2006 edition. In the phrase there is an alliteration of the consonant "l" sound in the words "rebel", "reliable" and "soldier". Rayudu had his debut entry in 2013 at Harare in Zimbabwe in the India-Zimbabwe encounter. He is called a rebel due to some unhappy event he was involved with the KSCA Tournament in Bangalore a few years ago. Rayudu has had a pie in all forms of Cricket—Ranji, Irani, Duleep, Deodhar, IPL and CLT20. "Foot Soldier" evokes the English movie, **Rise of the Foot Soldier** in which, Carlton Leach the hero catapults from football hooliganism to unbounded power as one of the most feared and respected men in Britain. I must hasten to add that Carlton is respected for the wrong reason, but Ambati Rayudu for the right reason.

### **The Game Breaker**

Partha Bhaduri of **The Times of India** gave this scintillating title to India's opener the cocky, confident, convivial, moustache-twirling, tattoo-exhibiting, cover-driving meteorite Shikhar Dhawan, whose arrival on the international scene was described as a breath of fresh air. The Game Breaker is a popular video game in which you see a gun-wielding guy having extreme fire-power, high accuracy and a high ammo capacity. The Indian team management knows his worth as a game breaker and how much crucial he is for India's plans; that's why he has been kept in the team in spite of his poor form at the moment of composing this article.

## **Gilly the Bully Squashes Sri Lanka**

The reader would be amused to read this sentence for various reasons. **The Times of India** in its Sports page on 1 February 2015, nostalgically remembered the feat of Adam Gilchrist in 2007 World Cup who came up with 149 (104balls, 13x4s, 8x6's) against Sri Lanka. The audience in India know that Gilly is the name of Actor Vijai in the box-office hit of a movie with this title; in the movie, the hero Vijai smashes the villain and his cronies. Interestingly, Gilly is the endearing term of Adam Gilchrist. The 'Bully' has no negative tinge here because the ones getting beaten were the opponents, in Gilly's case the Sri Lankans.

## **Cracks in the New Wall**

It is plain knowledge to every cricket-loving fan that the Indian cricketer Rahul Dravid is the "Wall", who would stand firm on the crease without showing much emotions under any difficult situation and is reliable. Chateshwar Pujara, a new Indian entry is thought to be heir-apparent to Rahul Dravid. **The Times of India** described him as the "New Wall" and since his weaknesses have been diagnosed by cricket pundits, **The Times of India's** Partha Bhaduri wrote in his column on January 5, 2015, "Cracks in the New Wall". He is thought so, as his overseas Test average is as low as 29.40 and that has dented the reputation of Pujara as Dravid's replacement.

## **Stop to Smell the Roses**

Reporting the four wicket win against South Africa in the semi-final, **Times of India** reporter wrote: "Post win, Kiwis stop to smell the roses" (26 March, 2015). The phrase, "Stop to smell the roses" is an idiom which means, to relax; to take time out of one's busy schedule to enjoy or appreciate the beauty of life. The idiomatic sense of the phrase is positive, telling one to take a break at one's own pace and enjoy life.

## **They also Missed the Bus**

Referring to the non-inclusion of players in the World Cup Squad—Mohit Sharma, Robin Uthappa, and Murali Vijay, **The Times of India** (January 7, 2015) reported - they also **missed the bus**. The idiom means to fail to accomplish or achieve. Among the fifteen who



matter, these players along with a couple of others could not make it to the final squad. The idiom is salvaged from the heap of old idioms and used with a new fervor.

### **The Middle Path to Glory**

**The Times of India** sports writer K. Srinivasa Rao in his article on March 25, 2015 used this phrase. He contrasted the high octane performance of the Aussies' openers in Cricket and India's recent success story through the perseverance of their middle order batsmen sticking to the crease until the very end and hitting deep and earning runs. In other words, the Australian strategy seems to be to give full rope to the opening pair to go after any bowler and break his back and India's is to rely on the middle order batsmen. The phrase is resonant of Thomas Gray's Elogy, "Elogy Written in a Country Churchyard". Here it goes,

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.  
**The paths of glory** lead but to the grave.

Even though Thomas Gray's Elogy has a negative feeling of fatality, the phrase "the middle path to glory" doesn't emit any such negative philosophical sentiment.

### **Don of New Era**

**The Times of India** Sports writer used this phrase in his article on Virat Kohli on January 6, 2015. He titled his article, "**Kohli, Don of New Era**". The etymological meaning of "Don" is "Lord" or "Head of Household". Nonetheless, the immediate meaning that comes to mind is the name of Australian Cricket legend, Don Bradman, widely acknowledged as the greatest Test batsman of all time. Bradman's career Test batting average is 99.94. No other cricketer has rivaled this record yet. The comparison of Don Bradman to Virat Kohli is not a good one, since Kohli has not achieved the same Test batsman fame. But then, nothing wrong, and all is well if Kohli is called a Don (leader) of Indian cricket.

### **Conclusion**

Quality newspapers these days come with a low price tag. Every single newspaper in our country is the cheapest commodity to buy. Some of the newspapers come to us with less than the price of a glass of tea. And invariably, these newspapers not only carry interesting

stories, but also freshly created interesting phrases. If a reader makes it a habit to buy and read newspapers, that person's vocabulary will improve at a phenomenal rate if that person has an eye for new phrases, new coinages and new collocations. Teachers in classrooms can introduce newspapers to their students and in the Library hour, they can help the students not only to read stories but also to look for fresh phrases and the coinages that hide a story or myth behind.

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# English Language Learning Skills for Undergraduate Engineering Students

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## Abstract

The paper focuses on the need to teach English language as a skill-based subject. The fact is that brilliant students with excellent academic scores are unsuccessful in the international examinations. Their poor performance is strange but true. So it is pertinent that English teachers of engineering students should equip them with extra language skills so that lacunae can be filled and that would help the engineering students to become world class citizens.

**Key words:** speaking, listening reading, writing, skill-based subject, engineering students

## Introduction

Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) Skills must be acquired in the process of learning a language. LSRW skills are interwoven and each one complements the other. The purpose of English language teaching is to foster the LSRW skills and aim at ultimately leading the students to critical thinking and appropriate expression with potential to produce research inputs in every field of study. This alone fulfils the aim of English language teaching; otherwise, it becomes merely a mechanical endeavour for statistical purposes.

## The Need for Effective English Laboratory Training for Engineering Students

To train engineering students, English laboratories are using platforms such as K-Van solutions or Globarena, which is loaded into computers. Exposure to these platforms enhances their listening skills. In spite of this, most of the students of engineering colleges are not getting the desired grades in international examinations such as IELTS, TOEFL, and GRE. Hence, it is pertinent here that engineering students should be exposed to listening exercises and evaluated through credit system to make them accountable. The whole exercise should be performed to improve their comprehensive skills in the English language.

## **Skill Based English Language Teaching to Engineering Students**

### **Listening Skill to Familiarize with Speaker's Attitude/Intonation**

Listening, which is an auditory activity, is the sensory activity through auditory organs. Listening Skill is an important area of testing in all the international tests. For instance, in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), listening material is four to six lectures, and each piece of passage is three to five minutes duration and each one varies from five hundred to eight hundred words per passage. The number of questions per lecture is six and the time duration is sixty to ninety minutes. The ETS Official Guide suggests the Listening section measures your ability to understand spoken English from North America and other English-speaking countries of the world. In academic environments you need to listen to lectures and conversations. Listening materials in the new test include academic lectures; the speech sounds very natural. You can take notes on any listening material throughout the entire test.<sup>1</sup> (ETS: The Official Guide to the New TOEFL IBT (2007)). The TOEFL IBT test in listening skills can be successfully attempted, when the Indian students study English language as a skill-based subject.

In India, English language, as L2, is taught by Indian English teachers. Most of these teachers are not trained in teaching or testing listening as a skill. The listening skill is tested to assess the students' achievement in terms of the college degree requirements and to assess whether students have mastered the sub-skills of listening. The gravitation is towards identifying the voice tones and other cues and the speaker's perception of the spoken topic. Hence, it is relevant to train teachers to make the students to sit before an audio system in colleges to make them listen to educational programmes. This type of frequent listening exercises/sessions enhances the confidence of the students.

Kamala Nanda, an English trainer of comprehension, enumerates the processes involved in listening. John Erwin and Marjorie Rosenberger have identified four steps in the listening Process (1) hearing (2) understanding (3) evaluating and (4) responding<sup>2</sup> (Kamala Nanda, 1989).

Thus, teaching the listening skill and ear-training from the I year to the IV year will help the students gain the advancement to go for further studies.

### **Speaking Skill to Enhance Communication**

Language is, by far, the distinguishing feature of human beings. Second Language learning is the instinctive nature of a human being, and an involuntary action. Though Listening begins more or less at the same time for all students, Speaking begins at different time periods for different students depending on the intensity of exposure to the language. Speaking is an articulation skill, which will not get consolidated from the mere stages of uttering technical jargon in engineering courses.

Thus, the teaching of English as L2 should ideally be started from the I Year to the IV year for the engineering students.

Of the four skills required to acquire proficiency in a language, the first two skills for example, Listening and Speaking should start at the I Year, making use of the potentiality of the students to pick up a language quickly. In this context English must be introduced from the I Year, and students should be exposed to both Listening and Speaking environs in all the colleges, irrespective of their prior medium of study. Speech is a process of social activity, and its improvement depends on the training in listening and practice in expression.

At college level, if priority is given to Speaking, it helps develop proper communication; the very purpose of teaching English should be to use it for everyday communication as a link language within the nation, particularly in a multilingual and multicultural society such as India; and, for the students, as a library or auxiliary language with the important purpose of learning the language. This involves presenting communication contents to inculcate receptive understanding. There may be grades of presentation and grades of reception depending on knowledge, skill and command of the language on the part of the teacher and the student.

Being highly creative, language cannot be learnt by a student just becoming well versed in the rules of grammar. The very assiduity of a language is thoughtful and communicative. This communication is bound to be active in terms of Speaking and Listening with social functions fastened on to them. Hence, the teacher at college must provide the needed exposure to English and make the students comfortable in communicating through English. Therefore, teachers cannot afford to be lackadaisical in their teaching methodology and in imparting the LSRW skills, which are basic ingredients to acquire an ability to use a language. They must be innovative in introducing the language so that the students develop a zeal for learning it. The college environment should be replenished with the environs conducive to speaking in English. The moment the students enter an engineering college, they should be exposed to higher language items such as vocabulary, grammar, Reading and Writing, connecting them to use and usage.

The problem with the second language arises with the sound system of that language. No two languages are identical in their sound systems. Part of the role of the teacher is to help students perceive the right sounds. Learners have a tendency to equate the sounds of the second language to the sounds of their native language. In this context Joanne Ken Worthy observes in his book *Teaching English Pronunciation* suggests that some sounds of English do not occur in other languages. Sometimes learners will be able to imitate the new sound, but if they cannot, then the teacher needs to be able to give some hints which may help them to make the new sound(s)<sup>3</sup>(Joanne Ken Worthy, 1987).

Often, learners themselves cannot tell if they are pronouncing correctly and they may make inaccurate assumptions about the way English words are pronounced, because there is little coordination between phonology and orthography in English. The role of the English teacher is crucial at this stage. The teacher has to pronounce correctly and the pupils who listen to the teacher and learn the right way of speaking. Many recorded conversations are available if the teacher is not so skilled.

### **Reading Skill to Become Independent Readers**

The next important skill is Reading. Students like play and the pedagogy can make a potential use of play for better results. This type of flair for reading should be cultivated

during the college course. So, the textbooks which are prescribed form a base for the future social life of students.

At college level, the students are independent readers. It is essential that during engineering studies, in spite of heterogeneous students across the nation, the primordial purpose of studies is to make them to become independent readers. It is to be developed as a habit and a hobby rather than flogging the students to read. The teachers of the engineering course must prepare the students mentally to listen to the text or read the text. The interaction between the book and the students can be established through glossary and notes, besides other aides to comprehension. The subject English is studied for language and for communication skills. To refine the students' communication, it is natural to introduce group discussions, seminars, literary and quiz competitions. To provide command over the language, the students must be exposed to vocabulary. With the Explanation Words and Transition Words the students tend to move towards Reading. Advanced and academic reading skills and vocabulary levels, and quizzes with target structures and language functions, give the target students an edge over others. At this point of time, both the intensive and extensive Reading skills should be cultivated. The students should be groomed in intensive reading to impart the skills that are needed to understand and interpret the text. The extensive reading should be regularly practiced. The contents should include simple reading material with gradual increase in difficult level both in vocabulary and structures.

Wilkins was the first linguist who proposed the maximum role to vocabulary either in the spoken or written form of expression. He says "explicitly without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (Lewis, M., 1993).

The hesitation of the students to speak in English or their frequent practice of "floor crossing" which they adopt during conversations in English, prove this statement. If vocabulary is not available to the speaker, it is impossible to convey anything. Stating the importance of vocabulary in general, H.G. Widdowson says: "The more one considers the matter, the more reasonable it seems to suppose that lexis is where we need to start from; the syntax needs to be put to the service of words and not the other way round." <sup>5</sup>(Lewis, M., 1993)

Both the teachers and students are supposed to understand that reading texts have been arranged to have more “focus” on “learning” than on “teaching.” The teacher is the facilitator, but the student is at the doer of action, the learner of language. If the Reading is gripping, it will herald the effort to read independently. The savoury technique of self-study unfolds the attempt to encourage the student for developing independent Reading Skills.

As Reading is very important for learning English for the Second Language (ESL) students, the competitions conducted in school should reserve a chunk for testing reading abilities of the students. Co-curricular activities through English should be encouraged. These activities help the students to develop both language skills and their own ideas and opinions; this helps them in aptitude tests that are held for jobs later. Suitability of the competition is graded according to the students’ levels. These competitions develop their inherent talents and abilities. The conduct of competitions should take into account the students’ abilities, aptitudes and talents so that, they could be nurtured intellectually from a tender age. When competitions are held, Reading Skill must be given considerable priority. When the students study English language in engineering courses, Reading should not intimidate them.

Hence, of all the four skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing - Reading skill must be encouraged in the L2 situation. While Listening and Speaking in English help social interaction, Reading and Writing help the individual to develop the intellectual capabilities as well as to serve the society in a progressive way. Between Reading and Writing Skills, Reading is more pervasive. It enhances imagination, enriches vocabulary and establishes the complex structures of the language in the reader’s mind. It leads one to explore the knowledge about the unexplored world. It provides immense pleasure to the reader. Hence, more time should be spent profitably in teaching and testing the Reading abilities of students.

### **Writing Skill to Become an Independent Writer**



A skilled independent reader has the potential to become an independent writer also. Writing is a thinking process, and it is much more than an exercise of transcription or copying. It involves three kinds of abilities.

- a. Penmanship that is the capability to shape the letters of the alphabet properly, also known as graphics;
- b. The ability to keep the letters in the right combination, that is spelling and the final ability; and,
- c. Ability to express himself /herself through the written word coherently.

Budding engineers are professionals and technical people. This need not essentially mean they are good technical writers. Dan Jones, a professor of English at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, offers technical writing workshops to engineering groups. He doesn't believe that technical people are good at technical writing. He believes that "any kind of writing for that matter comes naturally to anyone," he says. He also says "Some people are better writers than others, but their skills are typically acquired over a long period of time with much practice and hard work." <sup>6</sup>

Hence it is pertinent here that the English teachers cannot be lackadaisical in classrooms which are their fertile research fields. They can use different innovative techniques such as Classroom assessment technique, Cooperative learning strategies, Case-study, and Conference style <sup>7</sup> (Z. N. Patil, 2012) making the nascent engineers promising, potential and professional writers.

In addition to academic responsibility S. Pushpa Latha, English faculty of an engineering college remarks, "Written communication is vital for engineering students, since not only text, but also calculations, plots and figures which are to be communicated in documents such as laboratory reports, progress reports, user manuals, journal articles. **An engineer with well developed written communication skills will be successful in his/her career.**" <sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

Every individual has intelligence and imaginary layouts; but the practicality of bringing out the potential is different and difficult. English Language Skills create a progressive and productive independent thinking of the individual who will contribute to the development of the intellectual and social dimensions of the global community. Language Skills help them develop their aptitudes and attitudes which are needed for success in today's competitive world to build a humane and just society.

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# Learner Autonomy from the Perspective of a Language Teacher

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## Abstract

The present paper aims at bridging the gap between the traditional teaching methods and the current learning trends. It proposes that the language teachers may have to help the language learners identify their own learning styles and strategies, to make them independent learners. In the process, the paper lists the popular learning style models and language learning strategies, and some of the difficulties faced by the second language learners. The paper suggests that by nurturing learner autonomy the present problems in language learning can be effectively addressed.

**Key words:** language learning styles, language learning strategies, learner autonomy.

## Introduction

The present paper aims at bridging the gap between the traditional teaching methods and the current learning trends. It proposes that the language teachers may have to help the language learners identify their own learning styles and strategies, to make them independent learners. In the process, the paper lists the popular learning style models and language learning strategies, and some of the difficulties faced by the second language learners. The paper suggests that by nurturing learner autonomy the present problems in language learning can be effectively addressed.

In the context of changing global scenario, there are many desirable and undesirable changes taking place in every sphere of life including the field of education. It is true in the field of English language teaching and learning in engineering institutions in Tamil Nadu also. Education should prepare the learners for life and work. It can be made clear that:

1. All students are capable of learning, just at different levels and
2. Traditional teaching methods do not adequately take individual student mastery and achievement rates into account.

In this context, the present paper tries to help bridge the gap mentioned above by making the language teachers and language learners understand the learning process better,

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which in turn could reinforce the language learning, resulting in the learners gaining better language proficiency. In a way it can be said that in spite of the recent advances in the field of technology, human resource in the classroom can never be matched or replaced because of many major reasons like economy, personal concern and consistent regular updates and so on.

## **Objectives**

The main objective of the paper is to bring out the importance of the role of the learner in the process of language learning. And it also tries to prove that using inventory questionnaires of learning styles and language learning strategies, language teachers can collect and analyse observable (and researchable) behaviours of the learners and promote self-organized, self-regulated learning in the language classroom more effectively.

## **Facts of Language Learning**

It is a fact that the learners today do not stop with mere classroom learning. They use a wide range of media for learning the language outside the classroom as well. Some prefer to learn by watching a TV program or video available on internet. A few of them learn by listening closely and a few others try to imitate and speak like the person they admire in the video and a few more try to write like the model they have recently read. The study suggests steps to find out which one of these various forms of media attracts most of the learners alike and tries to bring the same to the classroom teaching as a teaching aid. It is believed that such an attempt would surely make classroom teaching more interesting and effective. In order to find out the preferences of the learners, a reliable questionnaire is very essential.

## **Learning Styles**

A detailed survey was undertaken to find out what has already been done in a similar situation elsewhere and how they have identified the preferred learning styles of the learners. The researchers and scholars in this field have used a number of learning styles inventory questionnaires though many of them were not designed for the purpose of identifying language learning styles. However, these questionnaires have been used by the researchers with a view to read the minds of the learners and explore the process of learning. The recent researches in the area of language learning use the reliable and time tested research tools to

observe and record the language learners' preferences of language learning for further analysis and eventually the findings lead to the emergence of a few universal patterns of language learning. The following is a brief list of learning style models (Graf, 2007) and their inventors:

S. No.	Learning Style Models	Inventors
1	Personality Types	Myers – Briggs
2	Serialist / Holist / Versatelist Model	Pask
3	Deep, Surface and Strategic Learning Approach	Entwistle
4	Three bipolar dimension Model	Grasha - Riechmann
5	Cognitive style and brain lateralization Learning Style Model	Dunn and Dunn
6	Mind Styles Model	Gregorc
7	Experiential Learning Style Model	Kolb
8	Learning Style Model	Honey and Mumford
9	Whole Brain Model	Herrmann
10	Learning Style Model	Felder-Silverman
11	Perceptual Learning Styles	Reid

Though learning styles indicate the preferred styles of language learning, the specific strategies used for the same have to be identified to make sure whether the particular learner has chosen a suitable strategy that matches the person's preferred style of learning. Similarly, for identifying the strategies used frequently by the learners there are a number of strategy

inventory questionnaires. The following is a list of types of language learning strategies (Hismanoglu, Vol. VI, No. 8) and their inventors:

S. No.	Types of Language Learning Strategies	Inventors
1	Three types of Language Learning Strategies	O'Malley et al. – 1985
2	Direct and Indirect Strategies – I	Wenden and Rubin – 1987
3	Direct and Indirect Strategies – II	Oxford – 1990
4	Five groups of learning strategies	Stern – 1992

### Variables and Constants

The study suggests that the learner's personal perception about one's own learning styles and strategies used for language learning to be assumed as variables and all the other factors like curriculum, syllabus, infrastructure, human resource and the methods of teaching / delivery / facilitation to be assumed as constants.

Variables	Constants
<p>The learner's personal perception about one's own:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Learning Styles and</li> <li>• Strategies preferred and used for language learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum,</li> <li>• Syllabus, and</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Human resource and</li> <li>• The methods of teaching / delivery / facilitation</li> </ul>

Now, by changing one of the variables the changes in the behavioural patterns of the learners may be observed and recorded. A close monitoring of these observable (and researchable) behaviours of the learners reveals the major, minor or neglected learning styles and most or least preferred language learning strategies. Grouping the learners into one of these categories further unveils interesting information regarding their general language proficiency and helps the researcher understand the underlying principles of their proficiency. Further research based on the learners' gender, background, exposure and similar external factors form the basis for a better plan of action.

## Strategies Vs Styles

It should be noted that more than styles, the strategies used by the learners play an important role in the process of language learning. Meanwhile, the study does not favour any particular learning style or strategy as the best or the suitable one to be prescribed to other learners, it only attempts to show that some learners are comfortable with a set of learning styles and prefer to use a set of strategies. This knowledge about the learners, if identified by administering any one of these styles and strategies questionnaire, will promote both language teaching and learning in general and produce desirable results. As a facilitator, the teacher may examine the available facilities suitable for a set of learners and accordingly design modules suitable for them. The learners with the proper guidance can develop on their own, the art of self-governance to become independent learners and proficient users of the target language.

## Problems of the Language Learners

One can feel the effect of the paradigm shift from the teacher to the learner in this era of information explosion. For an active smart learner, the classroom instructions just serve as a starting point for a journey in that direction. Here the learner is in a sort of well-protected environment where the learner enjoys the guidance and support of the teachers ensuring the development of accurate and appropriate usage of the items being learnt. But, today most of the independent learners, in order to have an edge over others, do use a number of latest media as tools for language learning. In fact these over-enthusiastic learners may miss the track completely and get totally engrossed in the particular media selected, because of lack of control or supervision.

Besides, the learner may have several unfavourable situations or problems like

- ✓ lack of exposure
- ✓ lack of self-interest
- ✓ lack of background knowledge
- ✓ lack of self-sustained motivation
- ✓ lack of opportunity to practice the language skills learned / acquired
- ✓ lack of recognition / nourishment or appreciation and / or
- ✓ lack of support, supervision / guidance / control.

## **Learner Autonomy**

This study is based on the thought that ‘Learner Autonomy’ (Thanasoulas & Holec) is the only solution for all language learning problems. The cyclical nature of autonomous learning process involves different stages like identifying learning process, setting goals, planning learning, selecting resources, selecting strategies, practicing, monitoring progress, and assessment and revision based on self-reflection, self-motivation and interaction(Reinders). The autonomous learners could assume greater responsibility for and take charge of their own learning.

However, in order to make the learners assume greater control over their own learning, the teachers can step in at various stages into the cycle of learner autonomy. Particularly, it is important to help the learners become aware of and identify the styles and strategies that they already use, or could potentially use. But individual learners will always differ in their learning habits, interests, needs, and motivation and develop varying degrees of independence.

## **Conclusion**

The impact of the changes caused by the outbreak of information explosion has an effect in turning even the art of language learning and teaching into a scientific one to some degree. Based on a few time-tested tools in the field of language learning data can be collected from the learners for further analysis and discover the styles of the learners and identify the strategies frequently preferred or used for language learning. The findings of the study may give a sort of deep insight into the minds of the language learners including the specific problems that they encounter during the process of language learning. Such information in turn may open up further venues of research to read the minds of the learners and finally making them proficient users of English.

Learning a language makes the learners ready to face life and work with confidence to accomplish their tasks more easily and effortlessly. As Language is life, more than subject knowledge, the knowledge of one’s own language learning styles and strategies will surely make the learners feel more confident, feel better prepared to face the challenges of life and work. To achieve this end, language teachers can explore and use the available resources that



may best suit the learners' preferred learning styles and strategies which in turn may help the learner become more independent or gain autonomy in learning.

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# Get the Winning Edge by 'Toning and Tuning' of Your English Language Use

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## Abstract

The changing business scenario in India and abroad demands the use of language which would reveal the writers' attitude and the consciousness of the person to whom the documents are addressed to. So, the communicative ability of the engineering students using appropriate "tone" and 'point of view' in business documents should be enhanced. An attempt is made in this paper to identify the components of 'tone' and 'point of view' and applying them in meaningful communicative contexts through tasks. Toning and tuning of language according to the tone and tune of the audience and customers, becomes spontaneous and natural by following Maslow's sequence of needs and ADAM's method. Suggestions and sample activities are dealt with in this paper which can be developed intensively, using creativity and special efforts, by the trainer to equip his/her students.

**Key words:** Tone, Point of view, Maslow's sequence of needs, ADAM's method, Inference, Euphemism, Communicative Ability

## Introduction

*Accounting is the program that has the highest percentage of students attending college, after graduation.*

*The Auto Mechanics program had 100% placement by April 15.*

*The Computer Assisted drafting seniors had the highest average entry-level hourly wage this year.*

Which of these three sentences would be the most convincing to learners? All three are; all of these are considered persuasive statements. They can convince three different types of incoming students to consider, or even register for these programs.

The student who is more attracted to a business program may be more likely to investigate accounting. This course often becomes a spring board to a business career or leads to further

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education. A student needing a career immediately after graduation may be more interested in Auto Mechanism than other trade programs. The person motivated by money will surely look into Computer Assisted Drafting instead of programs with lower pay. Of course, there are many more factors to consider when choosing a program, but these statements plant a seed – they appeal to a specific need.

### **Work Culture of Engineers**

The changing business scenario in India and abroad demands the use of language which would reveal the writers' attitude and the consciousness of whom the documents are addressed to. So, the communicative ability of the engineering students using appropriate 'tone' and 'point of view' in business documents should be enhanced. An attempt is made in this paper to identify the components of 'tone' and 'point of view' and apply them in meaningful communicative contexts through tasks.

After completing their courses, the Engineering graduates will find placement in different positions such as sales manager, production engineer, area sales manager, quality control engineer, purchase manager, and so on. Thus, they play different roles in different situations. Sometimes, the company, at its discretion, can transfer an engineer holding a position to some other position. For instance, the production manager can be transferred as area sales engineer. Hence, an engineer is expected to perform different roles in a company.

As an engineer holding a position in a company, one has to be conscious of his position, the addressee's position and the situation in which he writes a business document. He would be able to achieve the goal of writing business documents only if he uses appropriate 'tone' and 'point of view'. The purpose of teaching English would be served only when students of Engineering learn to use suitable 'tone' and 'point of view' in business documents. There is an urgent need to enhance the functional efficiency of Under Graduate students in Business Documents Writing with special reference to 'tone' and 'point of view'.

## **‘Tone’ and ‘Point of View’**

‘Tone’ and ‘point of view’ are abstract and are embedded in language. A careful study of the business documents reveal that they get concretized through the use of appropriate words, structure, cohesive devices, sequence, and so on. The engineering students’ career needs inclusive expression of scientific and technological facts in precise and clear terms. Further, writing effective business documents in English, using suitable ‘tone’ and ‘point of view’ is also the responsibility of the engineering professionals. Naturally, the students need adequate training in this area to be successful engineers in the future.

English Language Teaching, in the last two decades, has made a significant contribution both to content and methodology of English Teaching. The need-based syllabus design focuses on specific areas of language. For example, EAP (English for Academic Purpose) and ESP (English for Specific Purpose) concentrate on specific structures (usage) relating to expression of facts. But, the knowledge of English language equips the Engineering students not only in the expression of facts, process, cause-effect, purpose-function, etc., but also in business, especially in business letter writing. Adequate training in this area would enable the Engineering students respond to all business communications much better than before in their professional careers.

## **Persuasive Language**

Toning and tuning of language is everywhere. It constantly bombards us through advertising on billboards and television, in newspapers and magazines. Politicians campaign to win votes. Pizza parlors put flyers in mail boxes and coupons on doors to get people to try their delivery. Teachers convince students to use safety equipment; parents urge kids to clean their rooms. All these demands are expressed through sweet toned and tuned words. On the job, persuasion is used every day. The co-worker who wants to trade days off, uses persuasion. Personnel departments use pay incentives for better attendance. The boss wants the best job done and uses persuasion to accomplish this purpose. Each of these situations shows the use of persuasion. Persuasion, then, is the effort to influence attitudes or behaviour. Persuasion may also

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result either in a direct action, or it may not succeed. But, the person who persuades makes a push, and that push may cause change.

Writing messages, news, letters and ads which are free from grammatical errors is just not enough in today's business scenario to push written or oral messages towards desired direct actions or at least give a push that may cause changes. So, toning and tuning of language is in the air everywhere, in every field, in every walk of life.

To give a warming up session to the students, especially to make them learn the importance of toning and tuning their language, an exercise similar to that given below can be assigned as a starter to the main course of refining their language:

### FINDING EVERYDAY PERSUASION

Think about the events of the last 48 hours. When did you find yourself being persuaded? Make a list of all these persuasive attempts and explain how the persuasion was done.

#### PERSUASION EXAMPLE

#### MEANS OF PERSUASION

Waking up

Alarm clock.

Paying car installment

Collection letter in the mail.

Buy a new suit

Job interview scheduled.

### Emotional Touch

The author's credibility, reasoning and appeal to emotions are the keys to successful toning and tuning to reach the winning edge. Showing some knowledge of the subject will cause a favourable reaction. Displaying how to perform a task will also encourage success. An

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effective presentation also shows competence. Cheap stationery, typing errors and misspellings do not impress. These ethics need to be incorporated in the minds of the students while teaching technical English language which would contribute much towards refining their language while writing, as well as speaking.

The person who persuades with appropriate words and style is more likely to gain credibility if he or she shows care and concern about the subject. Therefore, the tone and tune of language needs to be focused on the subject, as people are always more willing to accept a change when they feel that their own interests are being served. For example, X's friend Y has highly praised the user-friendly software she just bought. She is more likely to influence X's purchase of the same software than the salesperson at House of Rom. Y genuinely likes the software. The salesperson is more likely to emphasize the product and X's need for it. The commission won't be emphasized at all. That way, the salesperson is more likely to make the sale. Therefore, persuasion directly stands on the support of interplay of effectively toned and tuned words in the process of communication.

### **Personal Impression**

Just toning and tuning of language is not sufficient to make the cut. Tuning and toning of one's character and personal impression is to be paid due attention. This is more so, because many people assume that what they see is what they get. Most credibility is built through the overall personal impression that an individual creates. Therefore, engineering students, being no exceptions, should be trained and tuned to maintain high standards of moral conduct, avoiding unethical behaviour as gross exaggeration, lying, misrepresenting the truth, and so on. This can be inculcated by making the students read real life experiences of great and successful personalities and find out the tuning and toning factors responsible for their success and popularity. Moreover, students need to be taught to determine and analyze their audience/customers to give the best personal impression. The toning and tuning of language has direct association with the audience's / customers' needs. So, the students need to be tuned to identify the needs of their audience / customers according to Maslow's sequence of needs, namely physical needs, safety needs, love needs, esteem needs and psychological needs. Once

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they get trained to acknowledge these needs, the selection of words and styles for presentation becomes easier. This can be done through classroom activities such as the one given below:

#### IDENTIFYING THE AUDIENCE'S NEEDS

The following persuasive arguments refer to job situations. The arguments' appeals are based on Maslow's sequence of needs. For each argument, identify the need or needs.

- You are moving to our new store, along with 80% of our present employees. You'll still be able to socialize and eat lunch with your friends. Please, make the move.

Take this new job. The perks are terrific. The employer provides wellness benefits: annual physical, exercise equipment reimbursement, and payment for health club membership.

Toning and tuning work best when the writer uses language to affect emotions. The words chosen can create a persuasive effect. At the same time, words that make a person feel uncomfortable and cold must be carefully avoided. This knowledge of carefully choosing and avoiding certain words can be easily and effectively imparted to students through simple exercises as given below:

Compare the advertisements given below and note down the appeals they make:

After considerable research and expense, our company has developed a great broccoli treat

BROCSKINS

You won't be able to keep enough BROCSKINS in the cupboard! Our new broccoli treats have a potato chip flavor that kids love. But parents love BROCSKINS treats for their low sodium and high vitamin C content.

Selection of words and styles corresponds to the area of conflict in the audience/customers. So, the students should be made aware of different types of conflicts – pseudo conflicts, content conflicts, values conflicts, ego conflicts, etc. Once the students become aware of different types of conflicts, they need to be taught to use appropriate assertive, persuasive and negotiating words and sentences. This can be done through simple group activities such as the ones given below:

In the following situation, there is conflict. In small groups, discuss the disagreement. Then write the reason for the conflict. Using the guidelines for managing conflict, how could you resolve the differences?

The engine is ping-ponging in your five-year-old, low-mileage car. You just replaced the transmission and the tires, and the body is in good shape. The mechanic tells you that you need a rebuilt engine. You feel you should sell the car, but you can't afford a new one.

Tuning and toning of language to motivate the audience / customers becomes spontaneous and easy if it is appropriately connected with the ADAM Approach in which A stands for "Attract Attention", D for "Create Desire", A for "Appeal to Needs" and M for "Move to Action". This ADAM method is used in all advertisements and an initiation towards this method can be done by making the students listen/watch different commercials in the Communication Lab and asking them to fill up the questionnaires consisting of some of the following questions:

- What is the product or service being advertised?
- What first attracts your ATTENTION? Explain.
- What need (DESIRE) is the commercial trying to fulfill? Explain



- How does the Commercial APPEAL to the unsatisfied needs?

The ADAM method motivates the audience to use the product, creating a great impact on their minds. But, when the message is organized to produce specific results, persuasion is more likely to take place. Evidence can best prove the proposition. The statements of evidence do not have to be facts, but they should support the goal. Evidence can appear to be logical and not be a fact. It would then be what is known as an inference. An inference seems natural and obvious, but it can be a prediction or a guess based on facts. Therefore, careful and meticulous choice of words while providing evidences, giving opinions, providing facts and drawing inferences should be done. Misusing and misplacing of words in sentences can mislead customers to entertain wrong manipulations. Therefore, engineers of today should not only speak / write English which is free from grammatical errors, but use a language which is properly toned, tuned, skimmed and scanned meticulously. The young engineering students can be equipped with this skill by exposing them to simple activities in the Communication Lab such as the ones given below:

#### DETERMINING FACTS, OPINION AND INFERENCE

Identify each of the following statements as facts, opinion or inference:

- Luke is the fastest runner in our school.
- He can beat South's runner easily.
- It is a terrific day to go fishing.
- The bass have been biting at the bait.

Choosing apt words, specific piling of the facts, figures and charts can possibly bombard audience/customers with evidence enough to change. But, the “mine better than yours” comparisons by itself will not work always with audience/customers opposed to the persuasions,

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who always tend to stick on to their views, again upholding the slogan - “mine better than yours”. In such circumstances, an engineer must not just learn to choose words, but also train himself to be specific and accurate. Toning and tuning to be specific and accurate can be acquired if examples such as the ones given below are projected:

A flyer for an office store supply reads:

Our store is outstanding in serving your office supply needs.

This ad does not really inform the uninformed. To sell it – say it:

Our store is outstanding in serving your office supply needs.

More locations.

More salespeople.

More complete catalogue.

More delivery trucks and more products in stock.

Apart from selecting the right words, the students should be trained to be always positive and use motivating language. For instance, words –“Send your payment no later than Monday.”- might project a stern, threatening and solemn tone, which can be made motivating, effective and assertive through words such as – “Send the payment by Monday.”

Sometimes, plain language may not be the best choice if the words sound offensive to the audience. However, students should be trained not to fall into the trap of using euphemisms. Euphemisms are “good sounding words that substitute for unpleasant or awkward subjects. Going to “the little girls’ room”, substitutes the word “toilet”. An euphemism for dying is “passing away”. An “outplacement centre” provides job-seeking assistance for employees who are laid off. Such words, though sweet and stylish, may tend to mislead or confuse people. In such situations, writing directly is more advisable than using a polite euphemism. Therefore, students can be saved from making euphemistic statements, both while speaking and writing, if

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they are trained to use a language that is to the point, without being crude. The exercises given below can empower young engineers to be polite and direct, assertive without a threatening tone, motivating without confusing and persuasive without misleading:

SAVINGS TO BE HAD!  
WALK, DON'T RIDE.  
SAVE THE EARTH—SAVE HEALTH – SAVE\$\$\$.

Enhancement of tone and tune in writing business letters, especially collection letters is an area in which young to-be engineers need to have good command and mastery. The students should be well trained in beginning their business letters with a general comment to promote goodwill. For instance, a collection letter commencing with a general comment:

*I hope that you are enjoying your new Sounder component stereo system. If you have any questions about the system, please either contact me or your local Sounders store.*

It can propagate ripples of goodwill rather than the words given below:

*I am really trying to control my anger over your not paying our account. You owe Bethany Bathtubs \$302.14. We want it now! The account is two months overdue. We have also sent you two letters. You haven't responded. It's very irritating. Did you forget to send your payment?*

Statement of the problem in the letter with the following words:

*Your account requires a \$ 40 monthly payment, due on the 20<sup>th</sup>. Sounders has not yet received your June payment.*

It makes a reasonable and a firm appeal rather than the style and tone followed as given below:

*You probably have the check in the mail. Why haven't you sent the \$302.14? Are you trying to cheat us? Well, Bethany Bathtubs won't stand this. We have no use for a seven-foot custom-made red bathtub, but we'll jerk it out of your house if don't pay.*

Firmness in appeal without harassing the customers can be extended through the well tuned and toned sentences as given here:

*I trust that you will contact your local Sounders store immediately. Penalties add to the cost of your payment.*

Instead of embarrassing statements like:

*You said you liked it. Well, if you do like the tub, or even if you don't, pay this immediately.*

Letters well begun with catchy headlines can have an enchanting effect on the customers. Strong opening paragraphs blended with unusual and creative ideas can allure the customers. Eye catching claims to solve problems such as:

*ACES is your ticket to the Honor Roll!!*

*ACES is your passport to high SAT and ACT scores!*

*ACES is the way to make your parents smile!*

*ACES is the key to the future!*

It can have great and positive impact on the readers/customers. In the example quoted above, the repetition of the name of the company is the best way to advertise. Closing the letter with an attention-getting statement mixed with confidence and positive attitude can render a positive and everlasting impact on the readers. For instance, a closing paragraph such as:

*Just call 1-880-GET-ACES today to sign up for a free 30-day trial offer or fill out the enclosed card. But HURRY – the offer is limited to the first few callers only.*

It guarantees a galactic and positive impact on the readers. The impact of a catchy closing caption or statement such as – Today is your ACES day!!! – can stamp an invaluable impression.

Therefore choosing the best method to persuade is important. Audiences reading or listening to the persuasion with questions in mind can be motivated by using the ADAM method effectively. Therefore, young, soon-to-be engineers should be frequently given opportunities in the lab sessions to practically adapt and adopt this method to real life day-to-day conversations, so that its blending is allowed to acquire naturalistic and realistic touch in speech/written forms.

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