

Communication Abilities Crucial for Student Placemet

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Abstract - Speech is dear as breath and is essential for employability. This paper (1) lists some of the factors responsible for poor communication skills of the students in engineering courses namely Learning a Technical Subject using a non-mother-tongue, Scope for practicing English speaking, A Non-Mother tongue generates uncomfortable vibrations in the body, A Non-Mother tongue affects the Breathing pattern, Lack of desire to master the English language, Lack of reading habit, Lack of tolerance, Fluctuating nature of Mind of the students, Lack of knowledge in Non-verbal or body language, Lack of Self-Control, Lack of knowledge of the technique of studying, Proficiency of Teachers of Technical Subjects in English and give solutions to some of these problems; (2) lists some of the factors in nonverbal communication the interviewers look for in a campus selection from the author's view and suggests tips for improving performance in selection interviews, (3) to suggest a core course on meditation common to all engineering students to improve the learning skills namely listening, seeing, reading and speaking, and writing.

Keywords: communication skills, soft skills

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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILL IS VALUABLE

The students, all of us, should realize the importance of communication and 'accept the speech dear as breath, for, communication (or speech) is "thought, mind, intelligence, giver of knowledge and victory, power, worthy of worship, immortal and double-headed,"¹ "the prompter of all,"² "all-pervading, eternal, lustrous, sublime and pleasand,"³ "the preserver of vedic verses ... enriched with knowledge, rich,"⁴ "divine, ignoranceremoving and penetrating intelligence,"⁵ pronounces words and overawes foes, ... dispeller of ignorance, and remover of evils, purify the religious-minded people,... the destroyer of ignoble character and the subduer of mean demeanour,"⁶ "remover of the weakness of ferocity, describes the twelve months of the year, ... remover of thieves and robbers, and the giver of noble offsprings, and abundant wealth, ... the killer of miseries, makes the worshiper obtain good qualities,"⁷ revealing the true nature of things, for the attainment of god, the lord of the universe, the knowledge of yoga,⁸ the bestower of knowledge, beneficial for people like women, .. through speech, in this world of knowledge, enabled to explore learning,⁹ the sweetness of speech like water gives calmness,¹⁰ gives enjoyment,¹¹ flowing from the inmost reservoir of the heart is incontrovertible by the thievish foe,¹² acquisition of three kinds of speech (are) precious like gold (and

are) beautiful,¹³ a General should with his oratory win battles,¹⁴ (i.e. oratory skill is a must for an army General), a King should be a master of speech.¹⁵

The importance of communication skill for any one needs no elaboration, yet a few statements emphasizing communication skills is worth mentioning. Ovvaiyar defined a that 'A tree is that person who is unable to communicate to an audience':

"With branches and Shoots they stand in the forest They aren't good trees; in the audience amidst

The person, standing, unable to read the text, can't know the idea

Is a good tree."¹⁶

The speech is so powerful it can show a bluff as a truth and its absence can make a truth look like a bluff: "with lies, the one by the power of speech; seems to be true; seems to be true,"¹⁷ "with truth, the one unable to speak; seems to lie; seems to lie,"¹⁸ and in a nutshell, "They better be unborn who, with education, shivers fearing an audience"¹⁹

THE POWER OF SPEECH IS AS ESSENTIAL AS BREATHING

“It is not eyes, but wits that see.”²⁰ Wit is acquired through education. Education revolves around acquiring knowledge in the languages, the vocations, the Nature (Cause and effect relationships), the Soul and acquiring the skill in using them for good. In the case of any language the essential skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing whereas the vocabulary and grammar form the knowledge. Acquiring knowledge of vocabulary used in a specialized or narrow field is called a ‘technical language’, e.g. Technical English which has the vocabulary (words) and mathematics (numbers) as its two eyes. The very purpose of education is to acquire knowledge and skills to be used for the benefit of the self through the benefit of all others. These days a student passing out finds employment (i.e. the opportunity to serve the self through the service to others) only if skilled in communication both verbal and non-verbal or body language.

WHAT ATTRIBUTES DO CAMPUS RECRUITERS SEEK?

The campus visiting companies normally follow a selection procedure consisting of (1) a group discussion in English (to see the communication skills in English), (2) a written technical aptitude test (to see the extend of knowledge and the skill to use them under pressure), (3) an in-depth technical interview, sometimes preceded by a screening through a preliminary technical interview, (4) a personal interview. The point to note is that the communication skills are used by all the companies either as the first criterion or as the second criterion to select the candidates for further screening. This shows the emphasis laid on the communication skills in English. It is quite correct when the Yajur Veda says, “accept speech dear as breath.”²¹

Some tips for effective verbal communication is found in the Indian Wisdom are: “Speak for pleasure, speak with measure, Speak with grammar’s richest treasure, Not too much, and with reflection –

Deeds will follow word’s direction.”

Speak what lies in your commission Speak with careful composition

Grammar and good ethics seeking, ‘Tis as if myself were speaking.”²²

“One (with etiquettes) will not speak in haste, will not repeat the statements many a times, will not spread the lies or rumors, will not create, add and expand the lies, will speak (if the audience is qualified) (after knowing the right or appropriate timing) at the right time briefly in a few meaningful sentences showing all the facts in an integrated way or holistic view).”²³ The flow of speech has been

beautifully described in Yajur Veda as, “From the inmost recesses of the heart, purified by mind, flow together our speeches as streams flow to the ocean. These waves of knowledge pour swiftly like the deer running through the fear of a tiger...Just as rushing down the rapids of a river, fall swifter than the wind the vigorous currents, just the swift fleeting horse, breaking aside the battlefields, fall upon the enemy, watering the earth with perspiration arising out of his endeavour to kill the foe, so do the exalted speeches, full of knowledge, fall on the audience from the mouth of a preacher.... Just as women of high character, of one mind, gently smiling, incline towards their husbands, so do the speeches of pure knowledge, glowing with apt use, meaning, and relation of words, reach a learned person, who enjoying them attains to brilliance.”²⁴

Generally the recruiters look for the following qualities in the non-verbal or body language of the candidates in a group discussion and interviews: (1) Interest of the candidate, (2) Confidence, (3) Love for the work, (4) Succeeding nature, (5) Friendliness, (6) Knowledge, (7) Honesty, (8) Hesitation or fear to speak, (9) Command over the language or the flow of speech, (10) Effectiveness of the language, (11) Composure, (12) The body language or non-verbal communication, (13) Tolerance level, (14) Respect for others, (15) Courtesy, (16) Selfrespect.

CHALLENGES STUDENTS FACE IN ENGLISH COMMUNICATION

Some of the problems found in the students are listed below with possible and suitable solutions,

Studying a technical topic in a non-native language

The modern sciences and professional courses have developed and are being taught in English as the medium of instruction giving birth to a specialty called Technical English. The basic assumption of the Indian Universities in any Engineering and other professional courses at the point of entry is that the students are good in using English language, the medium of instruction. All the students can be grouped into two categories: the first category are those students who had their pre-university education with English as the medium of instruction and the second category are those who had their pre-university education in a language other than English. For the students of first category there is not much of a problem in learning or acquiring the knowledge through the English medium. But for the second category of students the problem of difficulty in learning or acquiring the technical knowledge stands tall simply because these students are not used or habituated to English as the medium of teaching, learning, thinking, speaking and writing. Thus it is crystal clear that if excellence in professional education is desired then it is possible if the students are made proficient in English before the point of entry itself. This does not mean that the

students with non-English pre-university education can not excel in their course in English. Of course it is quite possible though difficult resulting in poor performance in the initial semesters at the least.

The engineering courses have been developed in countries where the medium of instruction is their own mother tongue itself or in English throughout their pre-university education. Hence they do not face any problem with technical English unlike the students learning in a non-English pre-university education system and then switching to English medium. The students will be able to learn technical subjects in English 'naturally' only in their mother tongue. The students learning technical subjects in any non-mother tongue will be learning only 'unnaturally' and hence difficult resulting in poor performance. The role of mother-tongue factor will be obvious if one sees the learning process. The body of the human being starts its life as a single small cell and grows into a bigger physique of a system of many millions of cells formed into may well coordinated subsystems functioning regularly and precisely. A human being gets educated for many years during which the person's head is never opened and nothing is put into it from outside. What happens is that when the person focuses his or her mind on the concept or word uttered or taught by the teacher the person understands the idea. Since nothing is put into the system from outside and since the student gets the meaning from within, irrespective of the height of education, it only goes to show that 'education is the manifestation of perfection already present in man.' This 'perfection' is present in a human being in their own mother-tongue since all the knowledge found in a person has been transmitted from his parents who received the same from their parents who, in turn, received the same from their parents and so on so forth. Thus it is easier for any one to open the knowledge files in one's own mother-tongue. This may explain the phenomenal success in sciences in Japan, England, America, France, Germany, Russia, etc where the medium of education is their own mother-tongue.

Since the medium of instruction is English the students with non-English tongue find it difficult to understand, thus unable to write and speak in English. There is no substitute for the mother-tongue, hence there is no solution for this problem.

Opportunity for practicing spoken English

The first category of students have had ample scope for practicing English speaking at least during their preuniversity education. Whereas the second category of students who have had pre-university education in a nonEnglish language lack the opportunity to practice English speaking at home or at schools or with their associates. This contributes to the students' difficulty in learning technical subjects in English, thus difficulty in speaking English. The practice of English speaking means training one's tongue to English or creating a habit to speak in English where the tongue had been trained

or habituated to another language. It is not possible to create a habit of English speaking in one semester or two. Moreover the old habits (including the habit of speaking in one's own mother-tongue) die hard. Changing a long time habit of speaking mother-tongue and creating a new habit though are possible take a long time. One can obviously observe the tinge of mother-tongue in the Spoken-English of even experienced senior professors and principals. The Pancha Indriya Meditation of the World Community Service Centre ²⁵ would help the students in increasing the sensitivity of their five sensory organs. This will also result in better control over the tongue in speaking English.

Speaking a non-native language, creates bodily discomfort due to vibrations.

Moreover speaking a language is generating vibrations in one's own body. A human body should be used to a particular set of vibrations to be comfortable and healthy. For instance, the body of the second category of students is used to the vibrations unique to their mother-tongue and when they try to read or speak in a language other than their mother-tongue then the vibrations generated by this language may not be acceptable and thus may create discomfort. The only solution is to make the body get used to the vibrations unique to English by continuous practice of listening, reading, speaking, writing and thinking.

Using a non-native language alters the breathing rhythm.

Speaking is simply generating sounds by controlling the breathing pattern though the respiration in an involuntary act. A student is used to a breathing pattern peculiar to his or her mother-tongue. When the student voluntarily tries to speak another language the breathing pattern is changed and this change affects the respiration to varying degrees. When the change in the respiration pattern becomes unacceptable then the involuntary respiration function automatically takes control of respiration immediately overpowering the voluntary action of the student. This change in breathing pattern may act as an obstacle in effective speaking in English. The only solution is to make the body get used to the breathing pattern unique to English by continuous practice of listening, reading, speaking, and thinking.

Absence of motivation to become proficient in English.

Many a times the students from non-English education lack the strength of the desire to master the English language, hence their poor communication practice and thus communication skill in English. A treasure of knowledge, the prospect of big money, threat to survival, opportunity to practice English language in terms of time, scope, people to practice with, and money may create desire in students.

Absence of reading routine.

The habit of reading good literature in English and scholarly writing is lacking in the students more so in this internet era and this results in the lack of knowledge of stylish and effective writing and speaking in English.

For,

“For men of sense, good poetry And science will suffice: The time of dunderheads is spent In squabbling, sleep and vice.

A thrill

Will fill

The wisest heart When flow

Bon mots

Composed with art Though fe- Males be

Removed apart.”²⁶

The only way is to develop a taste for reading in the students. Improving the tolerance level of the students may help in this regard. Practice of meditation may help the students in increasing their tolerance level.

Absence of patience.

In this modern era of revolutions like machines, computers, information, entertainment-explosions there is a general tendency of the tolerance level of students declining. Tolerance reference to a persons capacity to bear or tolerate pain of three types namely bodily pain, mental pain, thought-pain caused by various factors. For instance, sitting in one place in the class room from 8.30 am to 4.00 pm with two short recess and a lunch break causes pain to the body, a lecture in a ‘dry’ subject for an hour is a mental-strain or pain, negating one’s belief is a thought-pain (e.g. remarking that cricket is a idiot’s sport to a student who loves cricket causes thought-pain). It is essential to understand the process of pain to increase one’s pain-tolerating level. “In reality all the sensations, whether pleasing or painful, are caused by the process of conversion and consumption of the biomagnetism which is spreading wave of life-energy. The objects with which a man comes into contact through his senses do not by themselves cause pain or pleasure. These objects of contact merely increase the conversion of bio-magnetism which gets transformed into pressure, sound, light, smell and taste. When the level of conversion of the bio-magnetism does not adversely affect the molecular structure of the sense-organs and when the expenditure of the bio-magnetism is harmonious and is felt as pleasure. When the conversion of the biomagnetism increases more than the tolerance-limit of the sense-organs, or when the exhaustion of the biomagnetism goes

beyond the minimum critical level required for the maintenance of the body, such experiences are uncomfortable and are felt as pain.”²⁷

The ways to increase the tolerance levels in a student are (1) to get used to pains (e.g. boxing causes extreme bodily pain, yet boxers tolerate a lot of pain for a longer time more than others because of the practice of suffering pain); (2) since it is the mind which feels the pain through the five sensory organs, diverting the mind to something other than that causing the pain; (3) practice meditation. The meditation techniques called Agna, Thurium, Thuriatheetham of the World Community Service Centre would be of great help in this regard; (4) do physical exercise and plays sports; (5) since a human being normally emulates others all the elders should practice and exhibit tolerance for others to emulate.

The students’ mind exhibit variability.

The mind of any is fluctuating in its nature. Because, “in all sensual activities, the bio-current is activated to rise in its conversion-level according to the degree of force and quality of the object with which you get contact through the senses. All such perceptions are imprinted in the brain-cells and again and again when there is no other engagement for conversion, the imprints reflect according to the degree of force and quality of the objects that you perceived before. Whatever you perceive, you take the same degree of force and quality of the objects For instance, you see an elephant. By conversion of a particular amount and degree of your bio-current, you assume the shape and qualities of the elephant. After the elephant leaves the place or when you close your eyes, the elephant is within you whenever you think of it. Who is there in the shape of the elephant? Only you at present.”²⁸ Whatever the perception that is enjoyed or experienced, that duration of time becomes the strength of that quality in the personality, proportionate to the span of life. All such perceptions and experiences condition the behavior, character and quality of the person.”²⁹

The capacity of the students in listening, reading, writing, in general, has been declining now a days due to the lack of the knowledge and the skill to arrest the fluctuations of the mind and to stabilize it at will. The process of arresting fluctuations and stabilizing the mind or attention is called as concentrating the mind. This is also known as meditation. Thus the only solution to arrest the fluctuations of mind is to practice meditation. The meditation techniques called Agna, Thurium, Thuriatheetham of the World Community Service Centre would be of great help in this regard.

Absence of understanding in non—verbal communication or body language.

Non-verbal communication is equally important like the verbal communication. For, “An ox can understand, of course,

The spoken word; a driven horse Or elephant,
exerts his force;

But men of wisdom can infer

Unuttered thought from features’ stir For wit
rewards its worshiper. From features,
gestures, gait,

From twitch, or word, From change in eye or
face

Is thought inferred.”³⁰

Yet there is no course content in the syllabus for the professional courses imparting the knowledge about the non-verbal or body language. Some tips are listed below on the non-verbal communication to perform better in an interview.

The quality sought by the interviewers listed above can be communicated by the candidate by the below mentioned acts within the parentheses. (1) Interest of the candidate (serious preparation of the candidate, cleanliness of the candidate, clipping the nails, clean shaven, punctuality, formal dressing nicely, combing the hair, polished shoes, pay undiverted attention to the interviewers statements, i.e. do not ask them to repeat, put on clean, fresh and non-stinking socks, wear mild perfume); (2) Confidence (shake hands firmly but not too loosely nor too strongly, look at the interviewers directly face to face shortly, look at their eyes briefly first and while speaking); (3) Love for the work (care given to the body of the candidate by the candidate, i.e. if the candidate does not care for his own body then logically the candidate will not care for anything); (4) Succeeding nature (presence of positive thinking); (5) Friendliness (smile briefly at them); (6) Knowledge (be loud enough and clear, be brief yet complete by using the most apt words); (7) Honesty (say ‘I do not know’ politely if the answer is not known. For, acceptance of a deficiency or ignorance is the clear symptom of an open mind ready to learn. Besides bluffing (i.e. not knowing the answer but trying to say something) amounts to cheating others and a clear refusal to accept one’s ignorance signifying the absence of learner’s attitude); (8) Hesitation or fear to speak (think about the points to speak on the given aspect, do not keep thinking or worry about the result of the interview); (9) Command over the language or the flow of speech; (10) Effectiveness of the language (clarity, volume, tone, tenor, pitch, stress, intonation, etc); (11) Composure (realize that the interviewer with whatsoever designations are also human beings just like you to make you feel at ease, walk into the place normally, sit normally, i.e. do not dump yourself, look relaxed and friendly, sit erect, do not sit at the edge of the

seat); (12) The body language or non-verbal communication; (13) Tolerance (do not get irritated, do not interrupt the interviewer); (14) Respect for others (seek permission before entering); (15) Courtesy (greet the interviewers first on seeing them, thank them for the seat offered, thank them for the opportunity before leaving), (16) Self-respect (take your seat only when offered, till then wait patiently).

Absence of self-restraint.

A great majority of the human beings, especially the students lack self-control now-a-days. Self-control refers to one’s own control over one’s own sensory organs and functional organs. Even if the students like to sit tight in the class room and learn, ears refuse to hear, body becomes restless or tries to take rest by sleeping, mouth talks to the neighbors during the lecture. Control over one’s organs, both sensory and functional, is possible only controlling one’s mind, for, “Five organs of cognition, emanating from their common source, the mind, like five rivers speed onward to speech. The flowing speech, in its dwelling place, the mouth, becomes fivefold.” The only solution to increase the self-control in the students is the practice of controlling the mind through meditation. The Pancha Indriya Meditation of the World Community Service Centre would help the students in increasing the self-control over the five sensory organs

Not being familiar with effective study techniques

Forgetfulness is the main problem of the students. Because they forget they may not speak out. If only they know the process of recording information in a human being they would be better able to remember or retrieve information at will. Just like a transistor radio receives the broadcast message only when the radio is turned to the particular broadcasting frequency, the perceptions from all the sensual activities (e.g. seeing, hearing, etc) are received and stored in the brain-cells which keep vibrating continuously in a certain frequency. The information stored will be retrieved only when the brain-cells vibrate in the frequency in which they were stored and the information can not be retrieved or remembered in any other frequency of the brain-cells. It is found that the brain-cells vibrate from 14 to 40 cycles per second (cps) in our day-to-day normal activities, when a person is excited and taken over by anger then the brain-cells vibrations keep increasing towards 40 cps. When the brain-cells vibration is brought to a range of 08 – 13 cps one reflection process is heightened, one’s intellect is sharpened and this is good for comprehension, the range of 04-07 cps is good for research, in the range 01-03 one attains the state of total desirelessness and fearlessness.

The solution lies in the students’ practice of modulating one’s own brain-cells’ vibrations at a standard frequency which is easier to attain in a short time. The meditation techniques called Agna

(08-13 cps), Thurium (08-13 cps), Thuriatheetham (01-03 cps) and Shanthi of the World Community Service Centre would be of great help in this regard. Daily 'proper' practice of these techniques with determination can help the student 'live' in the standard frequency. In the standard frequency what ever is sensed can be retrieved easily at will.

The competency of technical subject teachers in English.

The students learn by imitating others especially the teachers. Therefore, the proficiency of the students' in English depends not only on the Teachers of English but also on the proficiency of the teachers of technical subjects in English. Meditation techniques of the World Community Service Centre would help the teachers in teaching in a great extent.

A PROPOSAL TO INCORPORATE A FUNDAMENTAL MEDITATION COURSE.

The Indian wisdom claims that 'One should try soon in the present to do meditation since (one can) achieve all the desired (objectives).'³¹ From the preceding section it can also be seen that many of the problems of the students in communication, such as practicing English speaking, reading habit, tolerance, fluctuating mind, selfcontrol, technique of studying, can be solved by the practice of meditation. Beside this the practice of mediation will increase the self-confidence of the students and the teachers as well. Hence in the interest of the students, and thus in the interest of India, a core subject on meditation, with one period in a week at the least initially, can be introduced in the curriculum of Engineering education common to all branches. All the present teachers at all levels may asked to undergo the various courses and complete the master's course in meditation at the World Community Service Centre. Completion of the Master's course at the World Community Service Centre may be made an essential requirement to teaching profession at all levels.

Notes

- 1 Devi Chand, p-63.
- 2 Devi Chand., p-64.
- 3 Devi Chand., p-64
- 4 Devi Chand., p- 64.
- 5 Devi Chand., p- 64.
- 6 Devi Chand., p- 72.
- 7 Devi Chand., p- 72.
- 8 Devi Chand., p- 129.
- 9 Devi Chand., p- 149.
- 10 Devi Chand., p- 218.

- 11 Devi Chand., p- 218.
- 12 Devi Chand., p- 268.
- 13 Devi Chand., p- 414.
- 14 Devi Chand., p- 79.
- 15 Devi Chand., p- 463.
- 16 Seenivasan, et al, p-97.
- 17 Seenivasan, et al, p-73.
- 18 Seenivasan, et al, p-73.
- 19 Aravaali, p-285.
- 20 Arthur Ryder, p-199.
- 21 Devi Chand, p-148.
- 22 Arthur Ryder, p-247-248.
- 23 Manickavasagan, p-45.
- 24 Devi Chand, p-269.
- 25 The World Community Service Centre is Head Quatered at 26, 2nd Seaward road, valmiki nagar, tiruvanmiyur, Chennai 600041. Phone: ++044-24411692
- 26 Arthur Ryder, p-219.
- 27 Yogiraj Vethathiri Maharishi, p-3.
- 28 Yogiraj Vethathiri Maharishi, p-6.
- 29 Yogiraj Vethathiri Maharishi, p-6.
- 30 Arthur Ryder, p-24.
- 31 Puliur Kesigan, p-106.

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