

Impact of English Language Proficiency on the Quality of Job Execution of Engineers in and outside Nepal: A Study at a Glance

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Abstract: The present research article attempts to explore some facts about the importance of English language proficiency on the execution of engineering jobs all over the world in general and in Nepal in particular. Based mainly on the review of literature available in the internet and some other local resources, this paper highlights that English language proficiency is indispensable for the engineering graduates both outside and inside Nepal in the present day situation for the successful execution of engineering jobs. The findings reveal that mere technical knowledge about core engineering subjects may not suffice in the engineering area unless engineers are well-equipped with sufficient communication skills in English as engineering has inherent intimate relationship with English language as a medium worldwide.

Key words: Engineering, English language, proficiency, impact, career, job execution

1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, English language is unquestionably the sole medium of international communication which has linked the entire world implanting the impression in the minds of the people worldwide that the huge world has now shrunk into a miniature global village easily accessible to anyone living in any part of the world. Originated in England as the native language of Anglo-saxon people several centuries ago, English language has extended its reach all over the world proving itself as an indispensable means of classroom instruction, library, media, trade, tourism, science, technology and research in every country in the modern world no matter whether the country is large or small, advanced or backward and rich or poor. In this context, Nepal, a newly established Federal Democratic Republican Himalayan Country lying on the lap of the world's highest peak Mt. Everest capable of attracting millions of mountaineers, adventurers and tourists every year, cannot stand aloof from this global scenario. The influence of English language is as deeply-rooted in Nepal as anywhere in every sector. The influence of English language in the educational sector in Nepal is even more unshakable and irreplaceable.

Engineering education, which is one of the most attractive areas of academic fields flourishing

luxuriantly in the present day Nepal, has also adopted English as a single common medium of classroom instruction, examination, library, publication, and research innovation. Engineering graduates rely fully on English language for their academic, administrative, and communicative activities in Nepal so far as their international and inter-organizational communication that they need to conduct in their career as engineers is concerned. For the engineering graduates there is a great significance of English language proficiency in every step throughout their career as students, internees or employees engaged in any engineering institution or organization.

For the engineers employed at an engineering organization associated with the multinational companies, the sole medium of communication is English. Even in some engineering organizations affiliated to Nepal government, the basic medium of official and administrative communication is English. Our national lingua franca, Nepali, is mostly used only for unofficial communication. The proficiency of English language is necessary for them right from the moment they step into the world of engineering and they need to adopt it throughout their career. Both the oral and written communication skills in English are of vital importance for the engineers. Without sufficient proficiency in English language, the engineering education may prove inadequate and incomplete for the effective and successful execution of engineering jobs in global as well as local context.

2. Objectives

2.1 General Objective

The general objective of the present research is to find out the importance of English language proficiency on the quality of job performance of engineers in their workplaces both in Nepal and outside in the modern world.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are:

- a. to explore the importance of English language proficiency in the performance of engineering jobs in the contemporary world
- b. to find out the significance of proficiency in this language in the performance of engineering jobs in Nepal, and
- c. to explore what specific communication skills the engineering graduate need.

3. Methodology

The present research is based primarily on the secondary sources of data collected through the review of existing literature available in the internet websites and some locally available resources including books and journals from the reputed scholars.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Definition of Communication

The term ‘Communication’ has been derived from Latin word ‘communicare’ meaning ‘to share’. Therefore, the fundamental meaning of communication is to share the feelings, experiences, thoughts, ideas, pains and pleasures between the participants in the process of communication. In every situation where communication takes place, there are at least two participants: sender and the receiver. The sender may be either speaker or writer as we generally use two types of modes of

communication known as spoken and written. The spoken communication involves the exchange of messages through spoken utterances or speech and written communication involves exchange of messages through written or printed visual symbols.

4.2 Communication in Professional Field

The importance of communication in the professional field can hardly be exaggerated. The relation of profession and communication is so intact that we cannot imagine the success of any profession without communication. In other words, it is quite impossible for any profession to sustain and flourish without communication as it is an integral part of human society in which there is direct or indirect involvement of human beings. There are some people running the organization as employers and some are working there as employees. For making the organization function, communication between the people of different status and sectors is very essential. Raman and Sharma [9] have rightly remarked, "Communication is essential for the existence of our society and it plays a prominent role in the functioning of different professional organizations" (p.3). Communication for the organization is like water or oxygen for human beings. It is hard to think about the survival of any organization in the absence of communication. Raman and Sharma [9] add, "It would not be an exaggeration to say that organizations function through communication; without communication, there would not be any organization" (p.3). It reveals how strongly intertwined they are.

To make any organization successful in achieving its goals, the professionals or the people working in those organizations as employees need to be capable of holding not only the inter-personal but also the inter-organizational communication. A significant amount of their time at their workplaces is spent on communication held with their counterparts, working as partners, employers, shareholder or co-workers. It justifies the importance of communication in the organizations. Lata and Kumar [6] suggest, "The necessity and importance of communication skills can be gauged from the fact that professionals spend nearly three-fourths of their working time in communicating their ideas, views, and plans to others" (p. 2). Today's world is the world of competition. There is competition in every field whether it is trade, tourism, politics, or profession. In this competitive world, survival of any person, company or organization is determined by the survival value they can achieve. For their survival, they are compelled to compete with their rivals. In order to achieve their survival value, effective communication plays a vital role. Konar [5] opines, "In today's competitive and globalized world, communication has become an essential tool for everyone-be they students, academics or professionals" (p. 2).

4.3 Communication for Engineering Profession

Engineering is a very popular professional area which has gained recognition and fame not just in the periphery of an engineering organization but also around a big expanse of the world; In other words, engineering is an area of international recognition, popularity and relevance. As an internationally recognized profession, it attracts the engineering graduates from all over the world. The stakeholders, employers and employees associated with an international or multi-national engineering organization are the people of diverse social, ethnic, linguistic and cultural background. In such an organization, there is an immense role of communication. The organization of this type can neither stand non-flourish without communication. Patil [8] strongly holds the view, "communication is the life-blood of all the organization" (p.37). An engineer employed in this type of engineering organization of inter-cultural nature is required to communicate with the people of

different ranks and socio-linguistic background. He/she is required to communicate not only with the co-workers, but also with supervisors, and clients. In order to be able to communicate with the people of different tenor and tendency, he/she requires having good communication skills. It is absolutely appropriate to mention the remarks of Chetia [1] who states, “Engineering profession is highly dependent upon communication skills. Engineers must be able to report their ideas and designs clearly and succinctly to their subordinates, co-workers, supervisors, and clients” (p. 17). Engineers may be competent in their fields. There is no doubt that they may possess exceptionally big quantity of knowledge in their subject area and may exhibit exceptional efficiency in the work related to their technical field. But it does not always mean that they are equally perfect in communication skills. Which requires many things including good command over language they use for their communication, pronunciation, politeness, etiquettes, vocabulary etc. Vicius [12] holds the view that, “Engineers may be technically competent; however, they often lack good communication skills that are necessary in order to transfer information and reasons” (p.19).

5. Importance of English for Execution of Engineering Jobs in Global Context

The importance of communication skills in English cannot be underestimated in the overall engineering career. No matter whether it is in the career of engineering students or those graduates who have already completed their engineering study in any faculty and area of engineering and are preparing to seek jobs and work for certain engineering organizations within or outside the national geographical boundary, it is undoubtedly of a paramount significance. English language which is widely known as a means of global communication used as a common language or lingua franca all over the world to maintain strong bond of relationship between or among the trans-regional as well as trans-continental arena for the successful operation of the project related to construction, management, communication, trade and commerce being launched by the multinational companies either in their sole ownership or in joint venture. Latha [7] claims that “English is used as the operational language on large extent” (p.123). Raman and Sharma [9] have similar opinion regarding the application of English language. They hold the view, “English is now the most widely used language in a large number of work places” (p.4). During the study period, the students of engineering need to use English language for a large number of purposes. In the colleges and universities, the most commonly used medium of instruction is English language itself. The teachers dealing with engineering subjects generally use English language in the classroom instruction, demonstration and explanation of the subject matters as they find it more comfortable to explain the engineering topics which they have studied from the books and journals published in English language. To enable themselves to catch up with the teachers and grasp what they have explained in English as a medium, the students are required to possess sound knowledge of English language. Joshi [3] opines that, “English is a tool that significantly affects engineering students in academic life. While most of the theories in engineering are taught in English language, student is required to have a level of proficiency in English language” (p. 50).

6. Importance of English for Execution of Engineering Jobs in Nepalese Context

Nepal cannot remain isolated from the rest of the world in today’s globalized twenty-first century world. Being a newly institutionalized Federal Democratic Republican country after a decade-long political instability followed by a long transitional phase of uncertainty, Nepal has recently begun to follow the stable and unidirectional course of national prosperity implanting the aspirations and expectations in the hearts and soul of the broader populace of the war-torn nation. The new

constitution of Nepal promulgated in 2072 (B.S.) or 2015 (A.D) has settled most of the unsolved political problems providing the Nepalese people with freedom, equality, rights and privileges and the first Federal Democratic Republican government has put forward the popular slogan: 'Prosperous Nepal: Happy Nepali'.

In order to make the dream 'Prosperous Nepal: Happy Nepali' come true, engineering education in Nepal has a vital role to play as it is linked directly with this national goal. Prosperity cannot be possible without development and development is not possible without proper kind of engineering education that can face the contemporary challenges of technological backwardness helping the backward nation to move ahead following the path leading to prosperity which is the ultimate goal of the nation. In this context, there is an urgency of making engineering man-power of our country well-equipped in every way. For making them well-equipped, the first and foremost necessity of the nation is to impart high quality engineering education sufficient enough to sharpen their engineering skills of all kinds. For meeting the needs of modern world, the quality and standard of our engineering education requires to be enhanced and uplifted by importing the necessary scientific and technological knowledge as well as skills from the advanced countries in the contemporary world. For achieving this goal, English language has a great role to play. Khanal [4] emphasizes, "English language serves as a primary medium of instruction for science and technology in our country. Without this language today, no Nepali student can acquire modern science and technology. In a word, the whole part of national development will remain seriously hampered" (p. 36). It is definitely true that acquiring the modern scientific and technological knowledge, English language is the single most convenient tool for us. It is so because there is no other international language used commonly in academic, scientific and technological field and can be easily accessible to the people like us. Besides these, English language has a really important role to play in helping the modern engineers to execute numerous varieties of jobs in their professional life. Some of those functions of English language in the field of engineering as profession have been discussed below:

6.1 For Seeking Jobs

For the job seeking processes also the role of English language is very vital in the country like ours. During this process, the engineering candidates are required to undergo different tests such as interviews, group discussions etc. Latha [7] most appropriately remarks, "During the job seeking process in interviews, Group Discussions (GDs), it is mandatory to achieve mastery in English proficiency" (p.123). While being interviewed and taking part in Group Discussions, the candidate is evaluated in terms of his/her speech. Fluency, accuracy, correctness and confidence are observed very closely. If they are found weak at oral presentations like these, they may not be selected. Thaky [11] mentions, "Lack of sufficient communication skills serves only to undermine the image of the engineer" (p.1). It may lead not only to losing the chances of obtaining the job, but it may also give negative impression about the engineering candidate that he/she is not sufficiently qualified enough. Seeking job in engineering field also involves looking for the advertisement of vacancy announcements which require the candidate to be proficient enough in English so as to read the advertisements published in English language and understand what basic qualifications, and other requirements have been mentioned there. Reddy [10] states, "Even job advertisements in local markets require English knowing people" (p.18).

6.2 For Writing Application Letter and Resume

After the engineering graduates find a job advertisement and see the requirements that the

candidates are required to meet, they decide whether it is suitable for their qualification and if they are going to submit their job application letter or not. Since their letter of job application and the resume may also be one of the basis for judging how qualified the candidates are, they need to write these documents in as much perfect language as possible. The choice of language they make at this moment is definitely English.

6.3 For Interacting with other People

The engineers may require exchanging their views and interacting with their staff as well. In order to communicate with such international people, they need to be efficient speakers of a common language that they can understand. In such a case, English language can be the most suitable choice. Joshi [3] holds the view that, "Today's engineer has to communicate with more number of his/her counterparts across the globe" (p.51).

6.4 For Co-operation

In order to be a successful engineer, one is required to possess sufficient skills in maintaining harmonious relationship and co-operating behavior. For this, they need to be perfect communicators capable enough to convince the co-workers and others. As Latha [7] suggests, "In order to harmonize with the colleagues, engineers have to speak fluent English" (p. 123).

6.5 For Co-ordinating

For the candidate who is not sufficiently proficient in speaking the international language particularly English, the task of co-ordinating with the staff of diverse culture and language may prove to be a big challenge. Joshi [1] holds the view that, "In order to understand and co-ordinate with their colleagues and accomplish their projects fluently, engineers have to speak good English" (p.50).

6.6 For Presentation

On many occasions, they are also required to give presentations of their reports prepared by themselves on the progress and accomplishment of their projects. This requires very good communication skills especially in English language because engineering seminars and conferences are generally held in English. For giving good presentations, the engineers are required to be fluent speakers. Dasaradhi [2] points out, "Indeed, oral communication and presentation skills are considered one of the best career enhancers and to be the single best biggest factor in determining a ... career success or failure" (p. 300).

6.7 For Research Publication

Those engineers involved in high level academic activities keep conducting researchers on their respective academic area, write research reports, articles and papers regularly. They may want to publish their research findings and work in the world's highly popular journals. For publishing their research documents also they need to possess high level writing skill in the language like English which is widely used as the language of common use worldwide. Weakness in written communication in engineering may often lead to misinterpretation causing problems. Dasaradhi [1] points out, "Ineffective and poor written communication in engineering workplaces were found to lead to misinterpretation, inefficiency and time wastage thereby adversely affecting problem resolution" (p.301).

7. Conclusion

Right from the beginning of their career as the students of engineering subject until they get retired from their profession as engineers, they need proficiency in English language for the effective execution of their jobs in this sector. During their engineering study, they are required to use English language proficiency for the numerous purposes including taking down notes from the teacher's lectures, textbooks, reference books, writing their assignments, and taking examinations. Even after the completion of their study, they need to possess good proficiency in English for seeking jobs which involves reading and understanding job vacancy announcements, applying for the vacant position, and taking part in both competitive oral and written examinations. During this moment, their chances for being offered the job heavily relies on the level of their proficiency in communication skills in English as the medium the authorities of international or multinational engineering companies normally opt for is English. After being offered the job in most of these engineering organizations, the engineering graduates need to perform their official, technical as well as administrative jobs through English language. As engineers employed in international or multinational engineering organizations, they are required to hold meetings, seminars, prepare documents like notice, minutes, letters, memos, proposals, reports, contract papers, agreements, bids and many others in perfect English language. In order to execute their engineering jobs of all these kinds, the engineers are required to possess very good proficiency in both written and spoken communication skills in English. Lack of sufficient proficiency level in English language is proved to be a serious handicap in the career of engineers.

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