ENGLISH DEFICIENCY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS IN KBK DISTRICTS OF ODISHA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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**Abstract**  - English is the modern Lingua Franca and it is used by more than 1500 million people worldwide. This paper highlights the deficiencies of English communication skills of the professional students in the districts of Kalahandi, Bolangir and Koraput of Odisha and the remedies. Most of the students in the technical institutes of these districts are from rural areas. It is always a challenge for the teachers to train these students on communication and improve their communication skills. This is the reason why these students are found to be unemployable due to their poor communication skills. It should be a collaborative activity of the teacher and students to make sincere efforts to participate in the teaching – learning process.

**Keywords** – Odisha, Communication, Professional, CALL, Language Acquisition, ELT, BEC Vantage, Grammar, Curriculum

I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW
Odisha is a state in the eastern part of India. West Bengal borders it in the north-east and the east, Jharkhand is on the north, Chhattisgarh is on the the west and north-west, Andhra Pradesh is on the south. Odisha has a total area of 155,707 km² and stretches for 1030 kilometers from north to south and 500 kilometers from east to west. Odisha has 480 kilometers long coastline. There are 30 districts in Odisha and Bhubaneswar is the state capital. From Balasore to Ganjam, it has a coastline of 485 kilometers (301 mi) along the Bay of Bengal on its east. Odisha holds 9th position in India area wise and it is the 11th most populated state in India. As per the 2018 census, Odisha has a total population of 46,143,782, out of which 21,201,678 (50.54%) are male and 20,745,680 (49.46%) are female. The female and male ratio is 978 out of 1000. Odisha has the 3rd most tribal population in India. Odia is the official and the most widely spoken language, spoken by 36.6 million people according to the 2016 Census.

Kalahandi, Koraput and Bolangir districts of Odisha are on the south western side of the state bordering Andhra Pradesh on the south and Chhattisgarh on the West. Kalahandi lies in between 19.3 N and 21.5 N latitudes and 82.20 E and 83.47 E longitudes and is situated in the south western part of Odisha, bordering Bolangir and Nuapada district to the north, Nabarangapur district, Koraput district and Rayagada district to the south, and Rayagada district, Kandhamal district and Boudh district to the east.
away by road and 623 km by train. The former undivided Koraput district has been divided into four districts – Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Nowrangapur in 1992. It has been surrounded by Nabarangpur from the North, Baster districts of Chhattisgarh from the west, Malkangiri district from the south and the districts of Srikakulam and Vizinagaram of Andhra Pradesh from the east. The state capital Bhubaneswar is about 470 Km away from Koraput by road. 70% of its population is the schedule tribe and schedule castes who speak different regional dialects and the most prominent dialect is “Saura”. (wikipedia.org/wiki/Odisha) The aim of the paper is to identify the English deficiencies of professional students in the three districts of Odisha namely- Kalahandi, Koraput and Bolangir along with the issues, challenges and solutions. The study mainly focuses around the Engineering, Management and Bachelor of Administration streams of the professional students of the above three districts. The education system of Odisha is witnessing a rapid growth since last two decades. The education system of Odisha is divided into two levels: the primary level and the higher level. This paper focuses on the problem and challenges of English deficiencies of professional students in the districts of Kalahandi, Bolangir and Koraput. Although the problems and challenges are almost same in the other parts of Odisha. As the mentioned three districts have always been discussed a lot for their backwardness and has been in news quite a lot of times, a special emphasis is given to these districts.

There are more than 20 Engineering colleges and Business schools in these three districts of Odisha. The department of basic sciences and humanities (BSH) which includes English as a major part of their curriculum is a main part of every technical and professional education. The Engineering colleges and Business schools affiliated to BPUT (Biju Patnaik University of Technology) follow the Business Communication, Communicative English and Soft Skills or the Professional Communication at the undergraduate level for the enhancement of English language of the technocrats and professionals. In some state universities or deemed colleges it is introduced in 1st or 2nd semester and it is a 100 mark paper for the undergraduates. (Sasidharan, Priya, 2012) There are summative evaluations for two-credit theory papers and for two-credit laboratory course, and the students’ performance in the laboratory is evaluated and sent to the University. (Sasidharan, Priya, 2012)

This study covers the teaching of English to the undergraduate level students in the different technical institutes of Kalahandi, Bolangir and Koraput districts of Odisha. The target students are mostly from the rural background as these three districts are mostly populated with the schedule tribe and schedule caste people. This paper also highlights the change in the teaching methodology to enhance the communication skill of the students. (Ganguly Sonali, 2017). In most of the colleges learning of English is taken casually by the students because passing the semester examination is only objective of the student. But an Engineering student’s success in the campus drive depends on his/her ability to use English effectively for communication during an interview. (Shamrao, Varsharani Mane, 2009). This paper is prepared by collecting survey questionnaire from students and teachers of different professional institutions of Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi districts of Odisha. Comments and suggestions are recorded and collected data are interpreted using software tools.

II. Questionnaire to assess proficiency in English of Engineering Students in three Engineering colleges of KBK districts of Odisha.

A set of questionnaires comprising ten questions were distributed to 30 students of 3 different Engineering colleges of 3 districts in KBK. The list of questionnaires are as follows:-
A. Questionnaire for assessing importance of English in Engineering Education.
   1. Why should Engineering graduates speak English?
   2. Do you get Scope to speak in English inside as well as outside the class room?
   3. Do you like to speak in English or in your mother tongue?
   4. How important is speaking in English comparing to other skills. (LRW)?
   5. How often do you speak in English?
   6. The amount of time you spare to speak in English is enough.
   7. What tasks have you carried out in your schools/colleges to develop your English?
   8. Do you feel confident while communicating in English?
   9. State the places /context where you use English the most.
   10. Do you think you need a training to develop your English Proficiency?

B. Responses for assessing importance of English in Engineering Education.
   1. Out of four skills of English, Speaking skill plays a vital role in placements comparing to LRW skills.
   2. We speak English rarely.
   3. We never get a chance to communicate in English outside the classroom
   4. We unanimously responded that they badly need English training to improve their deficiencies in English
   5. We speak English rarely in different situations of communication. They prefer to speak in their mother tongue rather to speak in English.
   6. The amount of time is less to communicate in English. We need more practice session which we do not get.
   7. We learn English for placement.
   8. Focus on task and an activity during the college level was less to develop English.
   9. We feel nervous/ diffident while responding or communicating in English.
   10. They use English the most inside the classroom when the teacher forces them to speak the answer in English.

The students of three different Engineering colleges were distributed questionnaires along with randomly distributed answers for the questionnaires. Students were advised to tick as well as to match the correct answer from the random ones. The list of questionnaires along with the random answers has been enumerated below and responses matched with the questionnaires have been shown in Table.1.

Table 1 Questionnaire for assessing importance of English in Engineering Education collected from three Engineering Colleges of KBK Districts: GIET University, Gunupur; GIACR, Rayagada; MITS, Rayagada
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No. (Q.)</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
<th>Sl. No. (R.)</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Why should Engineering graduates speak English?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>We learn English for placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you get Scope to speak in English inside as well as outside the class room?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>We never get a chance to communicate in English outside the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you like to speak in English or in your mother tongue?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>We speak English rarely in different situations of communication. They prefer to speak in their mother tongue rather to speak in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>How important is speaking in English comparing to other skills, (LRW)?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Out of four skills of English, Speaking skill plays a vital role in placements comparing to LRW skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>How often do you speak in English?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>We speak English rarely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The amount of time you spare to speak in English is enough.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>The amount of time is less to communicate in English. We need more practice session which we do not get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>What tasks have you carried out in your schools/colleges to develop your English?</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Focus on task and an activity during the college level was less to develop English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do you feel confident while communicating in English?</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>We feel nervous/ diffident while responding or communicating in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>State the places /context where you use English the most.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>They use English the most inside the classroom when the teacher forces them to speak the answer in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do you think you need a training to develop your English Proficiency?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>We unanimously responded that they badly need English training to improve their deficiencies in English.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q. – QUESTIONNAIRES , R. – RESPONSES**

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire (Fig. 1), it has been found that training and placement are the major components because of which Engineering graduates speak in English. Around 20% of the students show their interest to undergo training to develop their proficiency in English.
III. CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH TEACHING-LEARNING

Analysing the above data it has been found that the professional students of KBK districts encounter the following challenges while learning English and the remedial measures have been suggested to overcome the same. In the technical and professional institutes of Kalahandi, Bolangir, and Koraput districts of Odisha more than 75% students come from the rural background and most of them are passed out from the vernacular language medium schools. Undoubtedly they possess the necessary qualification for higher education but English becomes a major obstacle in every walk of their life.

i) BACKGROUND OF THE FAMILY:

A classroom is an amalgamation of students from different demographic conditions and different learning abilities. It has been observed that students whose parents are literate and belong to the upper middle class have a better understanding of English communication than that of those students whose the parents are illiterate and belong to the lower middle class background. The fact of the matter is that literate parents provide a better exposure to English as they are self aware about the importance of English for career development. (Shamrao, Varsharani Mane .Ms. 2009)

ii) LACK OF TRAINED TEACHERS:

In most of the institutes the teachers who deal with communicative English do not possess the requisite teaching skills and they are unaware of the current methodology of English Language Teaching (ELT). The condition remains same in both Government and private institute of higher education. Most of the times the English Language Teaching Process is Exam oriented. (Das, Shruti .Dr., Mahapatra, Paramguru Bishnu. 2014)

iii) ENGLISH, AS A SUBJECT, NOT AS A LANGUAGE

Most of the teachers teach English as a subject not as a language for communication. The basic target is to make the student secure good passing marks in the examination. (Sasidharan, Priya,2012). So the focus is mostly given to rote the answers without having a proper understanding of the concept. Again these exam oriented students give more importance to their technical competencies of writing the answers perfectly rather than communication competence. (Clement, A., Murugavel, T. 2015)
iv) EDUCATION SYSTEM

English language learning depends on four skills of the language i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). (Shamrao, Varsharani Mane .Ms. 2009). But the students are normally trained on reading and writing since ages whereas listening and speaking is ignored and neglected. These four skills of the language are interconnected. Listening is the first skill acquired by human beings. Speaking becomes possible only through active listening. The best example is the language acquisition by a baby. A baby learns a language by listening the language first. (Shamrao, Varsharani Mane .Ms. 2009). The only reason our students are poor speakers of English is because our teachers neglect the skill of listening.

v) UNAVAILABILITY OF EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH COMMUNICATION

Students who belong to the rural areas do not get exposure to English communication at home, in the society as well as in the colleges and university. As a result the best brains perform poorly in the personal interview due to poor performance in communication skills, soft skills, and interpersonal skills and have instances of rejection. (Das, Shruti .Dr. Mahapatra, Paramguru Bishnu. 2014) Students don’t get enough opportunity to speak in the class room as more than 60 students are there in the same class room. Sometimes the good speakers dominate the class rooms and never allow other students to speak at all.

vi) ABSENCE OF WELL EQUIPPED LABORATORY

Most of the colleges don’t have a well equipped laboratory with equipments like movable chairs, headphones, ICT enabled computers, relevant software. Here the teacher centered instructions without proper speaking exercises cannot attain the target response. Most of the time TTT (Teacher’s talk time) is more than the STT (Student’s talk time). (Das, Shruti .Dr. , Mahapatra, Paramguru Bishnu. 2014). The average learners cannot prosper in the regular class room and they need extra time which the teachers are unable to provide due to various administrative and academic reasons.

vii) STUDENTS ARE DEPENDENT ON THE TEACHER

Students in the Engineering colleges and Professional colleges are too much dependent on the teacher for their English Communication. They believe it is only the responsibility of the teacher to make them speak English. The students forget that language acquisition is solely dependent on the practice of an individual and the teacher is only a guide and mentor. (Clement, A., Murugavel, T. 2015)

IV.REMEDIAL MEASURES TO OVERCOME COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

i) DESIGN OF A REVISED SYLLABUS

A new curriculum must be designed looking at the need of the students in different institutions. Instead of a single-size-fits-all approach, curriculum designers must look at the demographics of students and frame the syllabus according to the need of the student. (Priya S. 2015) The curriculum must be based on ESP (English For Specific Purpose). More importance should be given to the practical usage of English rather than theoretical approach. The curriculum must be activity oriented and should enable students to use the four skills of the language.

ii) COMPULSARY TEACHING OF GRAMMAR

Grammar should be taught in the form of application. Students must know how to frame sentence in English by using different rules of Grammar. They should be asked to compose short stories by using tenses, syntax and grammar. (Debata Pradeep K) As most of the speakers are second language user of English, they must know it is necessary to learn English grammar for communication.
iii) VALUE ADDED COURSE

In order to enhance the communication skill of students, organizations must introduce value added courses like BEC Vantage so that students will be trained on the four skills of the language. (Das, Shruti .Dr. , Mahapatra, Paramguru Bishnu. 2014). Students must be encouraged to take BEC examination to test their skill of competence.

iv) LABORATORY SET UP

Most of the students are bored with the traditional method of teaching in the class room and are more interested in doing exercises on a computer rather than by hand. The CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) is an interactive software which helps students to learn communication skill. Students must be exposed to different on line videos, word games, vocabulary exercises, accent training programmes which will help them to hone their communication skills. (Mohanty, S. 2009).

v) CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT

It is difficult for a teacher to train more than 60 students in a classroom where each student hardly gets 2 minutes of time to enhance his/her communication skills. The large size classroom must be divided into small clusters of 20 or 30 students, so that more focus is given to each and every student. (Das, Shruti .Dr. , Mahapatra, Paramguru Bishnu. 2014) Teacher should inspire the students to communicate in English in and around the class room so as to facilitate the students to enhance their communication skills easily. (Shamrao, Varsharani Mane .Ms. 2009)

vi) LITERARY ACTIVITIES

Debate competitions, Group Discussion, Extempore, Role Plays, Individual Presentation, Group Presentation, PEP talks should be organized by the colleges and institutes on regular intervals of time and motive students to participate in the above competitions to improve their speaking skills. (Das, Shruti .Dr. , Mahapatra, Paramguru Bishnu. 2014)

vii) READING NEWS PAPER, MAGAZINES

Students should be motivated to read news papers, journals and magazines in order to develop their reading habits and vocabulary acquisition. (Shivender Rahul,2016) Reading paragraphs should be introduced in the laboratory classes where students should be asked to read news papers and magazines. It will not only improve their pronunciation as the teacher can monitor but also it will help them to improve their vocabulary. (Shivender Rahul,2016)

V. CONCLUSION

English communication skills are necessary for academic life and career development of a professional student. It requires an integrated approach by both the teacher and students to practice and hone their communication skills. Students who are from the rural areas must collaborate with faculty members in exploring new possibilities of learning English. They must be encouraged to utilize the resources like the laboratories, books , journals in enhancing their communication skills.
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