



Monitoring and Evaluation: Effective Tools for Teaching English to Engineering Students

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Abstract

The complexity of teaching English language and university curriculum for the technical students has created the need for research and a holistic approach towards English language teaching. English is majorly perceived as the language of literature. The perception widens regarding quality English speaking means, applying all grammar rules and an accent means fluent English.

For qualitative and effective teaching, evaluation is a wonderful tool that comes to the aid of assessment. For enhancement in student performance and teaching, evaluation provides a platform for continuous learning process. The outcome of this approach leads to student assessment and self assessment. Ignorance towards need-based education and a traditional method of marks and grades has resulted into degradation of exam system and appropriate usage of language. Skand Shukala (2012,5), "there are instant fix solutions like coaching classes, crash courses, personality development classes etc. these classes turn out to be merely money making businesses for monetary benefits and the actual learning never takes place".

Present paper aims to discuss the monitoring and evaluation, as effective methods for teaching of English language to the engineering students. To enhance employability and job security of technically competent students, teaching students English as per the industry standards and students needs is discussed in length. The paper also aims to focus on innovative teaching of English language to map the relevance of language usage in student's life.

Keywords: Evaluation, Monitoring, Performance, Curriculum, need based teaching, Enhancement, employment, communication, Indian context, Industry standards,

In India English is studied from the tender age of three. Effectively students study English for 10 years. Irrespective of studying this language for prolonged years, the proficiency level of communicating and writing remains challenged. The reasons are,

1. In Indian context, achieving a degree is more important over competence. As a result, there is lack of emotional involvement and acceptance to critical thinking in the current language training programs.

With the legacy of colonization and admiration for the West, English teaching remains irrelevant to the context with its traditional approach of teaching.

2. The teaching methodology applied lacks clarity and goals. It is taught as a language of literature and focus remains on grammar and accent. Functional use of English language, individual capacities, multilingualism and need based education remains ignored in the curriculum. Evaluation of language learned is done using traditional methods of marks and grades.

3. Prof. Z. N Patil and Yeasmin Sultana cited in (2012,9-12) "in the Indian classrooms, both English and vernacular medium, English language is treated as a dissectible commodity. The four skills of L, S, R, W are ignored and taught through writing skills like, essays, figures of speech, report writing, question answers etc. Amalgamation of the basic LSRW skills for use in daily routine is completely missed out".

4. At undergraduate level, students are expected to know fundamental English skills. These expectations fail miserably as the practical applications of the language is not known. From here the blame game begins. Colleges blame schools and state government for not providing reforms, trainings and infrastructure. Schools blame children and parents for not showing the concern. Parents and students blame college for not teaching effectively and interestingly. For engineering students, at the time of their placements, the corporate requirements expect students to have good communication skills. Here good communications skills imply, grammatically correct and complete sentences, vocabulary, punctuations, proper use of tenses and articulation.



5. Skanda Shukala cited in (2012, 2) "the lingo used on TV, radio, social network wing sites is very casual and full of slangs". College students mostly incorporate this speaking style to impress. The realization to improve English speaking dawned at the time of placements or presentations. As a result, instant fix solutions like coaching centers and crash courses of spoken English are opted.

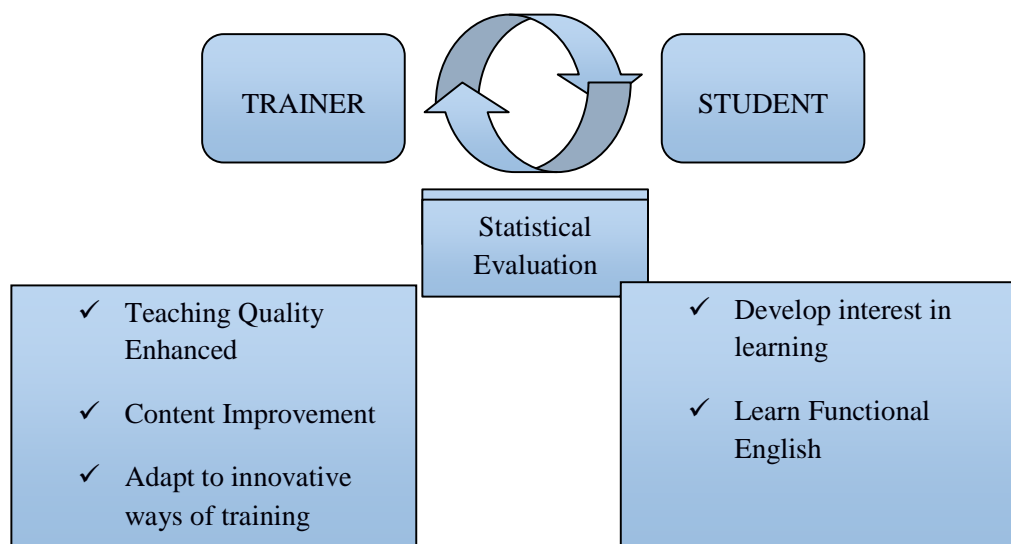
6. India, being a multilingual country, English is a second language and taught in isolation; hence it remains irrelevant to the context. Generic teaching is always ineffective. The Quality of project reports, answering patterns, SMS language sets the platform to structure functional language teaching. Consistent evaluation of the student performance and training staff, provide a way to learn and understand the language effectively.

Present paper provides a gateway to teach and learn English practically using monitoring and Evaluation as effective tools of analysis.

1. Monitoring & Evaluations

Engineering students are technically competent, but majority times lack the ability to express. Corporate standards expect these students to be technically competent and presentable. With this context, University of Pune proposed the syllabus for functional English under the subjects, communication skills and soft skills. The proposed syllabus expected a task based teaching and task based learning, using topics like presentation skills, group discussions, mock interviews etc. All the mentioned skills had a common base of using functional English. This kind of teaching needed a continuous and detailed evaluation of the student's verbal and written performance. At the same time teacher's teaching also required evaluation to meet the needs of the students. It was observed that, the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the teaching staff resulted in the staff evolving the training methods incrementally to be more effective. This proved to be effective. Figure below explains how evaluation and monitoring cycle turned effective.

Figure 1. Evaluation and Monitoring - Cycle.



2. Problem Analysis

To understand exact reasons for weak communication and enhance English language proficiency the researcher conducted a survey. A mixed group of students from English medium background and vernacular medium background was selected from third year Information technology engineering branch as subjects. Marks scored in English language in their X, XI and XII were collected. An aggregate of all the three was collected. It was observed that majority of the scores were between the range of 70 and 90%. To measure the actual language proficiency for verbal skills, situational questions and extempore were practiced. This pattern of evaluating and monitoring was observed for two years. In the first year scores



were considered in the form of credits and the second year there were actual scores to review their overall performances. The **parameters for measuring the verbal proficiency were,**

- 1) Sentence construction
- 2) Articulation of thoughts
- 3) Pronunciation and accent
- 4) Proper use of tenses
- 5) Number of words used.

Each point was rated out of 10 calculating the scores to total 50 points. The observations were as follows:

A) The average scores were between the range of 25 to 35 and the highest scores were 36 to 45.

B) Students were weak in sentence constructions and tenses.

C) They lacked the varied contextual use of vocabulary.

These findings clearly indicated that marks scored in their X, XI, XII were achieved through mechanical memorization for the theory. All the evaluation done in schools was done for the theory and lacked the assessment of verbal skills. With this input the teaching pattern required modifications. For individual participation students were initially reluctant to talk. So students were shifted in groups and ask to speak. Students communicated effectively when paired in groups. Peer assessment gained more participation and were proved effective for communications. Students realized themselves that articulation of thoughts was very important especially for students from vernacular medium. Students from vernacular medium were lost in the process of translating their thoughts from mother tongue to English language. As a result there was an imbalance in sentence construction and grammar used.

3. Methodology

Based on the marks, AHP (Analytical Hierarchical Processing) techniques were used to define the groups and it was ensured that every group had similar skills. Enhancement areas for individuals within the group and the entire group were decided. Planned efforts were taken by students and teachers for every group. Students reviewed each other's performance within the group at various stipulated intervals and specific skills. To focus on the functional side of language usage, exercises like role play, group discussions and story-telling sessions were used extensively. Vocabulary games, puzzles were also used effectively. Teachers ranked every student within the group. Statistical techniques and high end computing algorithms were used to define the progress made by every student based on the ranking done by both student and teacher. Next plan of action and milestone for individuals and group were decided based on the rank result and not only marks. The process was intenerated for a span of two years i.e the first year and second year of Engineering. After continuous observations and suggestions from students and industry expert's, syllabus alterations were made, which was followed by teaching the student, topics that were in line with the industry requirements. This was implemented in the third year of the engineering. Simultaneously a feedback about the training staff was conducted using a 360 degree feedback technique. Both the trainer and student got evaluated and monitored. Effective output was measured. The individual and the groups showed significant progress as compared to non-scientific and legacy ways of training.

4. Observations

1. With this kind of evaluation, areas for improvement were mapped individually. This paved the way for individual attention and their needs getting addressed.
2. Alignment of syllabus to the real life to focus objective training.
3. Individual strengths and weakness mapped at a micro level.
4. Monotony disappeared due to group assignments ensuring every individual within the group has a primary and secondary set of responsibilities for learning and implementing.
5. Language learning occurred naturally as rules were not taught first. Students were explained the rules using role plays and situational talks.
6. Exercises and Activities conducted gave active participation. Students when provided with case studies to present technical interpretation. They applied comprehension skills without memorizing the grammar rules.
7. Role plays helped students to develop their information elicitation skills and presentation skills. Students applied tenses and social vocabulary jargons.



8. E-mail etiquette improved in terms of articulation of thoughts, tenses, and précis writing.
9. Telephone etiquette proved effective in terms of listening, speaking. Also voice modulation and punctuations were applied while communicating on phone, presentations, general discussions and group discussions.
10. Word games like word maps, word chains, word pyramid helped students to enhance vocabulary.
11. Story building session helped in the sentence constructions. Further tools like MS word, Synonyms, spell check, grammar, and usage of online dictionaries like Lexipedia, Free dictionary.com, and puzzles website made the assignments interesting and complete on time.

5. Conclusion:

The researches approach and techniques ensured learning English was fun. Students actively participated in every session. With the innovative approaches course contents got reformed and structured to the micro level of teaching. The evaluation model though has a few drawbacks. No historical and literature view, standardized accent cannot be achieved; time consuming and tedious evaluation, needs of the focus group would be evolving and hence no consistent syllabus. This background provides a further scope of study.

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