



Listening Skills: A Key Component in the Placement for Engineering Students

Dr. Amol Ramesh Rao Bute,

Sr. Asst. Prof.

Department of Basic Sciences & Humanities

GMR, Institute of Technology, Rajam (Andhra Pradesh)

Abstract:

India is emerging as a major player in the world for Engineering Education. Indian engineers are contributing significantly to the economic and technological development of many countries. Indian Engineering Education represents one of the largest educational systems in the world. Currently, India has over 2300 Engineering Institutions, churning out more than 600,000 engineers yearly. Indian engineers have great potential but communication skills is the main hindrance. To overcome this every educational institution offering a subject named Communication skills or English. It involve listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The aim of the present study is to analyze the syllabus of Communication skills or English framed by various Indian universities for engineering stream and its impact on their placement. The data of the placement published by the engineering colleges have been analyzed.

Key words: listening skills, placement, engineering graduates, syllabus,

Introduction:

India is emerging as a major player in the world for Engineering Education. Indian engineers are contributing significantly to the economic and technological development of many countries. Indian Engineering Education represents one of the largest educational systems in the world. Currently, India has over 2300 Engineering Institutions, churning out more than 600,000 engineers yearly. Indian engineers have great potential but communication skills is the main obstacle. According to Kiran Karnik, the former president of the National Association of Software and Services Company (NASSCOM) only 25 percent of technical graduates are suitable for employment in the outsourcing industry because of their lack of abilities to speak or write well in English. (Karnik, 2007 as cited in P'Rayan 2008:1). The statement implies that Indian students can do better at the world level if they work on language. Language is a multifaceted tool that serves as a means of communication, expression, and understanding. Within the realm of language acquisition, speaking, listening, reading, and writing are needed. Each skill contributes uniquely to one's language proficiency but Bulley-Allen (1995) in Flowedew (2010:159) state that Listening is dominant activity in daily communication (40%), whereas 35 % for speaking, 16 % for reading, and 9 % on writing.

Statement of the research problem:

Most of the students choose the engineering stream for placement. There are many reasons behind it, such as perceived job opportunities, competitive salaries, technical skill development, industry demand, societal influences, personal interests in science, problem-solving, and many more. Generally, students appear for the placement after successful completion of the seventh semester of their engineering. Recruiting agencies follow a particular recruiting procedure for the placement. Commonly, it comprises written test followed by Group Discussion and Interview. The written test evaluate candidates' understanding of core technical concepts related to their field of study. Group Discussion provides employer an opportunity to find leadership qualities and ability to work in team in a collaborative way through the communication skills of the candidate. Group Discussion is based on the effective listening and speaking skills.

For making the students skillful, universities frame the syllabus by giving the importance to all the aspects. A syllabus is a document that states what will or should be learnt or taught within a stipulated time and particular course, which, though in different forms, is an indispensable choice for guiding the teaching-learning to the objectives. There would be many subjects for the particular stream. In Engineering stream, all Indian universities offer communication skills or English and design the syllabus focusing on listening, speaking, reading and writing. The aim of the present study is

1. To analyze the syllabi of Communication skills or English framed by various Indian universities for engineering stream.
2. To analyze its impact of the syllabi on the placement.

Hypothesis:

At the initial stage of the research, following were the hypothesis:

H1: Unequal weightage has been given to listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills in the syllabus framed for Communication Skills / English subject.

H2: Negligence towards listening skills.

H3: The placement gets hampered due to the negligence towards the listening skills.

Literature review:

Aristotle said, "Man is, by nature, a social animal." Communication is important for living in the society. For the communication, man is trying to learn the languages. There are main four language skills namely listening, speaking, writing and reading out of which listening plays an important role in language learning (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Dunkel, 1991; Rost, 1990; Rubin, 1994). It is the most essential language skill (Oxford, 1993). It is also "the least explicit of the four language skills" (Vandergrift, 2004, p. 1) because it is the most difficult to observe. Rankin (1930) started research on 'listening' and found that the listening is the most frequently used mode of communication amongst humans.

The acknowledgment of the significance of language learning strategies began in 1975. Since that time, a multitude of frameworks have been devised to systematically examine and evaluate the language learning strategies reported by learners. Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning, and O'Malley and colleagues' (1985) list of language learning strategies are two such frameworks. This study uses the description of language learning strategies put forth by O'Malley and colleagues (1985) and adapts it for discussing listening strategies in this paper.

According to Vandergrift (2004), listening skills are difficult to observe in a learning environment and equally difficult to define. Moreover, learning listening skills can be a very stressful experience for students learning a second language simply because they are often unable to process information quickly enough to understand (Goh & Taib, 2006). Nonetheless, studies on listening skills, whether in terms of 'listening comprehension' (Hadley, 2001; Lund, 1990) or 'listening strategies' used (Goh, 2002; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) have been conducted in real classrooms settings, or situations (i.e., tutorials) wherein teachers and students can interact face-to-face. The factor that distinguishes this study from earlier studies is that the students being taught and undergoing the learning process, are enrolled in study skills courses offered at USP by the distance mode. In short, the students that comprise the sample of this study were studying remotely and asynchronously.

Research Methodology:

The present study uses mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a thorough analysis. Qualitative methods are primarily employed for collecting and analyzing prescribed syllabi of communication skills/English from various Indian universities. This approach helps for an in-depth exploration of the content, structure, and emphasis of the syllabus. In contrast, quantitative methods are used for comparing the syllabus and placement statistics of one university and its affiliated colleges with others. The quantitative analysis enables the researcher to identify patterns, trends, and statistical relationships between syllabus components and placement outcomes. The published data of the selected colleges and universities serve as secondary data sources for this comparative analysis. Descriptive methods are then applied to present the collected data in a clear and organized manner, facilitating easy interpretation and understanding. These methods aid in drawing meaningful conclusions based on the analyzed data, thereby informing the research findings.

Discussion:

Universities have been formed to impart the knowledge and make the people skillful. For this reason, many streams have been formed like, Arts, Commerce, Science, Medical, Agriculture, Engineering, Education etc. under which separate branches have been designed. Considering Engineering stream, there are many branches/courses like Mechanical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Computer Science and Engineering, Civil Engineering and so on. Each course has particular duration. For example, engineering courses, in under graduation, are for four years i.e. in 08 semesters. Arts courses are for three years. Achieving the goal, the university introduces some specific subjects for each semester. Students need to clear the syllabus and move to the next semester one by one and finally they meet their basic objectives and get the degree. Every semester and its syllabus plays an important role in the life of the students to achieve the targeted academic goal.

To study the syllabus of English, prescribed for the Engineering degree course, three reputed universities of various states of India have been selected. Out of three, Aryabhata Knowledge University, Patna (Bihar) is offering English for one semester of first year either semester one or semester two and for some branches in semester three or four and five or six. Bikaner Technical University, Bikaner (Rajasthan) is offering Communication skills for one semester for 03 credit dividing into the

theory (02) and practical (01). Anna University, Chennai (Tamil Nadu) offers communication skills for both Semester 1 and 2 for 08 credit dividing into the theory (06) and the practical (02). Considering the syllabus of English prescribed for semester one or two by AKU, Patna has been divided into 10 units including theory and practical but the syllabus of Communication Skills in BTU, Bikaner and AU, Chennai has been divided into theory and practical consisting 05 unites each.

The syllabus commonly distributed in six categories: Listening skills, Reading skills, speaking skills, Writing skills, Grammar, and Vocabulary as shown in the table 1.

Sr. No.	Name of the university	Weightage					
		Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Grammar	vocabulary
1	Aryabhata Knowledge University, Patna (Bihar) / Bihar Engineering University	6	19	13	25	25	12
2	Bikaner Technical University, (Rajasthan)	10	20	30	20	20	---
3	Anna University, Chennai (Tamil Nadu)	12	40	12	12	12	12

Table 1

Different weightages have been given for the topics in the syllabus by different universities. Much importance has been given to Grammar and Writing skills in AKU, Patna. These two skills cover 50% of syllabus. Listening skills is neglected and given only 6% weightage in the syllabus. Reading skills and Vocabulary got 13% and 12% weightage respectively (Image 1). Allocating 30% of weightage to reading skills in the syllabus, BTU, Bikaner provides highest priority to the reading skills but on the other hand allocating 10% weightage; the university neglect the importance of listening skills. Equal 20% weightage has been given to writing skills, Speaking skills and Vocabulary (Image 2). AU, Chennai is offering Communication Skills to both the semester that is 1 and 2. In the syllabus, 48% weightage has been given to Reading, Writing, Grammar and Vocabulary. 12% weightage has been given to listening skills and remaining weightage has been given to Speaking skills. Important point to be mentioned that the syllabus of the communication is in AU, Chennai is for two semester and therefore the weightage given to listening skill will be doubled that is 24% (Image 3).

DESTRIBUTION OF THE SYLLABUS (AKU)

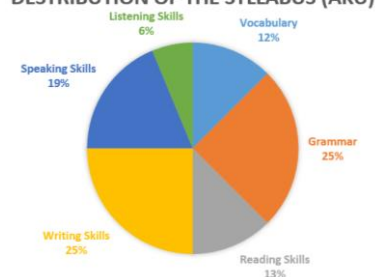


Image 1

DESTRIBUTION OF THE SYLLABUS (BTU)

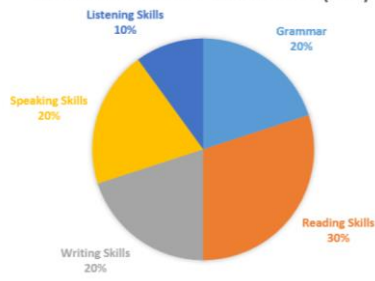


Image 2

DESTRIBUTION OF THE SYLLABUS (AU)

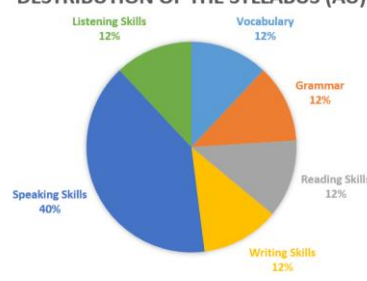


Image 3

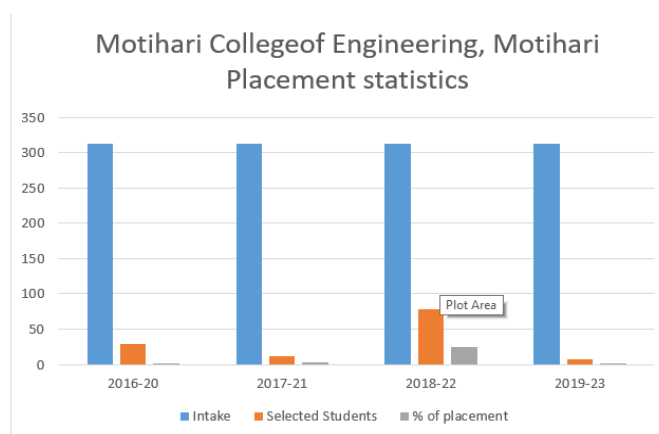
Findings:

To study the effectiveness of the syllabus, the placement data of the affiliated engineering colleges of AKU, Patna, BTU, Bikaner and AU, Chennai has been analyzed. Motihari College of Engineering, Motihari and Muzaffarpur Institute of Technology, Muzaffarpur are affiliated to AKU, Patna. 312 and 360 are the intake capacity for these colleges respectively.

Out of admitted students from Motihari College of Engineering, Motihari in 2016-20 batch, 29 student placed successfully. In comparison with the intake of the college and total placement, it is 9.29%. In 2017-21, 2018-22 and 2019-23, 11, 78 and 07 students were placed respectively. In terms of percentage, it is 3.52%, 25% and 2.24%.

Motihari College of Engineering			
Year	Intake	Selected students	% of placement
2016-20	312	29	9.29
2017-21	312	11	3.52
2018-22	312	78	25.00
2019-23	312	07	2.24

Table 1

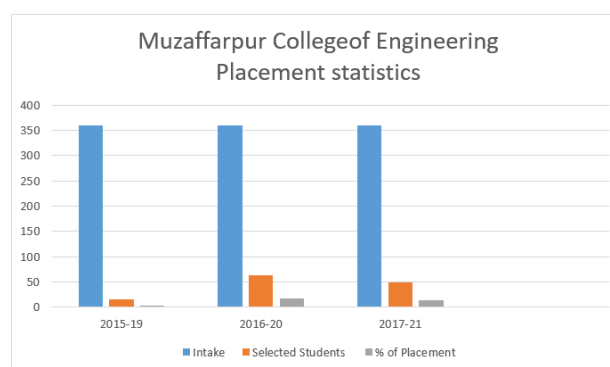


Graph 1

In 2015-19 batch admitted in Muzaffarpur Institute of Technology, Muzaffarpur, 15 students got placement which is 4.16%. In 2016-20 and 2017-21, 64 and 50 student got placement respectively. In terms of percentage, it is 17.77% and 13.88%. No data is available for the year 2019-23.

Muzaffarpur Institute of Technology			
Year	Intake	Selected students	% of placement
2015-19	360	15	4.16
2016-20	360	64	17.77
2017-21	360	50	13.88

Table 2

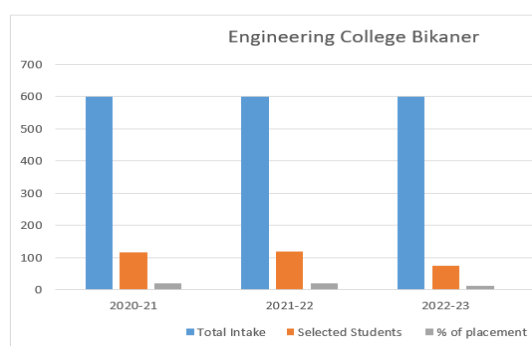


Graph 2

Engineering College Bikaner and Mahila Engineering College Bikaner are affiliated to BTU, Bikaner. According to the data published by Engineering College, Bikaner, the intake capacity of the college is 600. In 2020-21 batch, out of admitted students, 117 got placement. In terms of percentage, it is 19.5%. In 2021-22 and 2022-23, 119 and 75 students achieved success in the placement respectively. In terms of percentage, it is 19.83% and 12.5%. Table 3 and Graph 3 provides the detail information.

Engineering College Bikaner			
Year	Intake	Selected students	% of placement
2020-21	600	117	19.5
2021-22	600	119	19.83
2022-23	600	75	12.5

Table 3

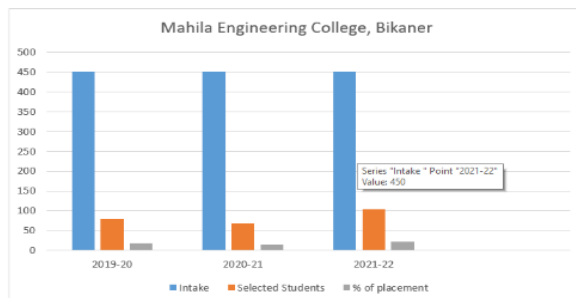


Graph 3

The intake capacity of Mahila Engineering College, Bikaner is 450. In 2019-20 batch, out of admitted students, 79 got placement. It means that 17.55% is the placement. In 2020-21 and 2021-22, 68 and 103 student got placement respectively. In terms of percentage, it is 14.88% and 22.88%. No data is available for the year 2022-23.

Mahila Engineering College Bikaner			
Year	Intake	Selected students	% of placement
2019-20	450	79	17.55
2020-21	450	68	14.88
2021-22	450	103	22.88

Table 4

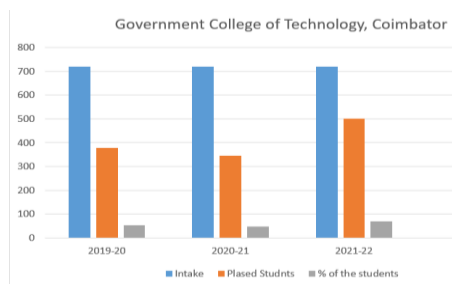


Graph 4

Both, Government College of Technology, Coiminator and Government College of Engineering, Salem, are affiliated to Anna University, Chennai. Intake capacity of Government College of Technology, Coiminator, is 720. In 2019-20 batch, out of admitted students, 379 got placement. It means that 52.63% is the placement. For the subsequent years, in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 batches, 346 and 500 students secured placements, corresponding to placement rates of 48.05% and 69.44%, respectively.

Government College of Technology, Coiminator			
Year	Intake	Placed	% of intake with placement
2019-20	720	379	52.63
2020-21	720	346	48.05
2021-22	720	500	69.44

Table 5

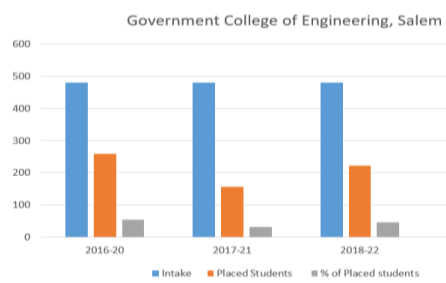


Graph 5

On the other hand, the intake capacity of Government College of Engineering, Salem is 480. In 2016-20 batch, out of admitted students, 258 secured placement. It means that 53.75% is the placement. For the subsequent years, in the 2017-21 and 2021-22 batches, 157 and 223 students secured placements, corresponding to placement rates of 32.70% and 46.44%, respectively. No data is available for the year 2022-23.

Government College of Engineering, Salem			
Year	Intake	Placed	% of intake with placement
2016-20	480	258	53.75
2017-21	480	157	32.70
2018-22	480	223	46.44

Table 6



Graph 6

Conclusion and recommendations:

Placement is depend on various aspects. The candidate should have the basic knowledge of this core branch. He should have acquired good marks or grade in the examination. One more important is communication skills therefore universities are offering the communication skills subject in the engineering curriculum. After analyzing the syllabi and the placement data of various colleges, it may state that the placement ratio is high for those affiliated colleges, which are giving the priority for teaching listening skills. Anna University has framed the syllabus of communication skills by giving the priority to listening skills. The placement of the Government College of Technology, Coimbatore and Government College of Engineering, Salem are affiliated colleges to Anna University. These colleges are following the syllabus prepared by the university. In compare to other colleges, these colleges have good placement ratio. Therefor based on the study it is strongly recommended that priorities should be given to teach listening skills.

Limitation and scope of the Research:

This study is the study of only few universities and their few affiliated engineering colleges in India. Many governments and private universities are involved in providing the technical education in India but only three government universities have been selected for the study. For the analysis, the placement statistic of six affiliated engineering colleges of the selected universities have been considered. This research has been carried out only to find out the effect of the communication skills especially of listening skills on the placement.

Further study may include all Indian Technical Universities. It may be the collaborative research work with the foreign researchers.

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