Discourse Analysis and Communication Barriers among First-Year B.Tech Students: A Study of English Language Challenges in Upgraded Academic Contexts

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Abstract

The study of discourse analysis as part of applied linguistics is the focus of language use at a higher level, beyond the sentence level, looking at the construction of meaning through interaction and communication patterns in academic settings. It examines the relationship between written and spoken language and how these are used by authors/speakers to create joint meaning, and finally how the discourse practices of a particular society affect understanding. Discourse analysis is particularly important in the context of academic communication for students to learn not only the competence to do technical things but also contribute to a wide variety of different types of communicative activities such as participating in group discussions, debating, presenting, reporting, and attending lectures. The use of discourse analysis also provides first-year B.Tech students, who are usually transitioning from one stage of education to another and learning the language and academic content simultaneously with having a different means for mastering effective communicative skills, with information about various barriers to developing their effective communicative skills. Engineering colleges are predominantly using English as the language of instruction. Many first-year engineering students find it difficult to communicate academically using English because English is their second language not their first. Some of the challenges these students face include grammatical issues and issues with pronunciation. This research specifically explores some of the discourse-related issues that first-year B.Tech students encounter while trying to communicate academically and suggests some viable solutions. Specifically, this research investigates how several discourse norms, such as participating in class discussion(s), producing written work that demonstrates linguistic competence, and adhering to academic formatting and argumentation guidelines affect students' ability to complete their written assignments and deliver effective presentations. In addition, this research examines how the influence of mother tongue, limited vocabulary, and lack of experience with academic discourse patterns impact first-year BTech students' ability to communicate effectively.

Discourse analysis gives a detailed way to understand and tackle these problems. By looking at language use asa whole, instead of just focusing on words or grammar, teachers can develop learning methods that meet real communication needs. Some effective approaches include assignments that focus on conversation, activities that help build vocabulary in meaningful contexts, exercises that involve working with classmates,and lessons onhow to communicate in technical education settings. These strategies help students deal with difficulties, enhance their communication abilities,and better handle the challenging academic demands of college. In doing so, discourse analysis not only helps first year B.Tech students understand language barriers but also provides practical ways to improve their academic communication and overall performance.

Keywords: *Discourse Analysis, Academic English, Communication Barriers, First-Year Engineering, Language Learning, Mother Tongue Influence*

Introduction

The study of language used for a range of purposes in access to basic information (spoken or written) and the types of interactions that people use in their everyday lives are referred to as discourse analysis. This approach takes an entirely different perspective than traditional linguistics, which tends to look at language use only through the lens of the grammar and structure of individual words and sentences.

The objectives behind conducting an analysis of how we create meaning are to gain insight into how people use language to create and develop meaning in a range of contexts that include negotiation, development of relationships, and cooperation within a community.

The field of applied linguistics considers how we create and develop relationships, negotiate benefits for all involved, and maintain social connections, and through analysis explores the different ways in which language usage relates to cultural identity, social power, value, and belief systems. structural aspects of language.

A key principle of linguistic discourse analysis is that there is no existence of language on its own, rather, social context and social situation play a significant role in influencing the meaning of anything that is said. For example, the use of the same sentence by different individuals at different times or places or to different audiences will have varying meanings. In addition to considering structural elements such as the coherence of texts, turn-taking in conversations, politeness strategies, and the performance of actions by using spoken language, analysts consider contextual elements as well when analyzing language usage in an effort to gain insight into what was conveyed and how it was communicated. For example, a teacher using certain words will positively encourage participation from students, while at the same time reinforcing his authority as an educator; whereas, the phrasing of interview questions may reflect or reveal the interviewer's assumptions regarding the candidate.

Discourse analysis has a number of different perspectives that are grouped together under the umbrella definition of applied linguistics, rather than being described as one particular method of doing it. Approaches at the micro- level of analysis, like Conversation Analysis, for example, examine how people take turns, how to repair an error or misunderstanding in a conversation, and how talk can be organized. Whereas, approaches at the macro-level of analysis, such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA),'scope of interest is more comprehensive, looking at how language is used to perpetuate or challenge social inequality or power relationships or how language reflects the ideologies held by people. For instance, CDA is frequently used to analyse power relationships in political speeches, discourse in the media, or in institutional documents, specifically looking at subtle ways that dominance or marginality are maintained through the use of language. AAA is another major category of analysis for understanding genres of auions in professional, academic and social contexts and has become an important resource to be used when teaching and learning a language.

Discourse analysis enables researchers in applied linguistics to better understand the ways that language acts as a social construct by examining not just the structure of the text, but also the context in which it is used, thereby demonstrating the many ways in which meaning is interpreted, established and communicated. The benefits of this type of analysis go further than just identifying ways to increase our understanding of the function of language within different types of environments (e.g., education, work, intercultural and society) through improved communication. Discourse analysis also creates an avenue between a language's written form, and its use as a medium of exchange.

One of the largest changes students will experience during their time at school is the change from using regional or vernacular languages when studying to taking courses at the higher level in English, particularly in the B. Tech. Programs in developed countries like India. Most students study in local languages from kindergarten to grade 12 and while this creates a strong conceptual foundation for their future studies, the transition to an English medium technical program creates significant linguistic, academic, psychological and cultural hurdles that students may encounter during their studies.

The main problem for students as they enter the new environment is their inability to communicate in English (the language used throughout the world for technical communication). This can make it challenging for students to keep up with lectures and textbooks, complete assignments, and succeed in exams, even if the student has a good understanding of the underlying concepts. The difference in language can make it difficult for students to feel like they belong, thus lowering their self-esteem and ability to communicate with their peers and/or faculty.

Students face different academic challenges due to differences in teaching and learning styles. For example, in most regions, the methods of teaching in regional languages are very different from technical education, where learning occurs through contextual examples or translations. In contrast, in technical education, students need to learn through self-study and critical thinking and express their ideas through academic English.

Students need to learn skills such as effective note-taking, report writing, presentations, and using advanced learning resources (such as research articles and online materials). Most of these resources are found in English, so to succeed in informal learning, students will need both language skills and adaptive learning strategies appropriate to a globalized academic environment.

In addition to the academic challenges associated with language, students face additional psychological challenges. Students may be afraid to participate in class because of the fear that they will make a mistake or be judged by others in the class who are more proficient in English. In group projects and class discussions, students with higher English proficiency usually dominate due to their fluency in English which creates an imbalance during these interactions. In contrast, overcoming these obstacles has allowed for the development of the ability to be resilient, adaptable, and have strong problem-solving skills for students from rural or provincial backgrounds. However, these obstacles may provide a transformative opportunity/training as long as institutions provide support and proper structure.

Students educated in their local languages could provide many positive qualities to a B.Tech program. Their fluency helps promote creative thinking, awareness of culturally diverse ways of doing things, and provide alternative perspectives while solving problems. Moreover, these students are also typically effective in memorisation (of materials), Logical reasoning, and develop strong study habits. Programs such as bridge courses; English support classes; peer tutoring; and confidence building activities will help them achieve success; in many cases Individuals from rural/provincial/town backgrounds may even achieve greater levels of academic success than their English medium colleagues.

Moving from high school education to B.Tech programs is an academic and personal milestone for a majority of learners as they change from taking classes in their local language into an English-speaking environment. For most students at rural and semi-urban locations, they complete primary and secondary schooling using their native

language—allowing them to develop a robust conceptual base. However, once they enter into a technical college, the transition to English being the primary form of instruction can pose a major obstacle for newcomers transitioning from a language-based support system to one that provides less support because they need to develop not only an understanding of the subjects they are studying but also the ability to read highly technical documents, write code for programming, generate technical report writing, create presentations in English, and communicate their ideas fluently in English.

Initially, this language disparity can lead to feelings of apprehension, shyness, and in some cases even isolation from classmates who are more proficient in English than they are. Communication skills are important for participating in group discussions, interviewing, and doing internships, all of which require additional support for learners with regional backgrounds to adjust. To assist these groups of learners, many academic institutions have implemented bridge courses, language labs, and experiential-based training programs in an effort to help students build on their English skills. With continuing institutional support, encouragement from peers, and continued practice, they gain confidence and the ability to adapt.

Barriers can become pathways for tremendous development as they prepare individuals with skills essential to both successfully dealing with others on a global level and developing technical knowledge for the workplace. The purpose of communicating goes well beyond speaking the same language as someone else. Any gap in communication can have an adverse impact on learning, feedback provided, and participation in classrooms, whether it is a gap in communication between teachers and students, between peers, or within the institution. Clarity of instruction and consistency in feedback are both critical to help students adequately grasp the concepts presented by their instructors; without these attributes, students can become hesitant to ask for further explanation, which reduces their confidence level and overall performance. Students often experience passive learning due to feeling fearful of being misunderstood or judged in class and thus choosing to participate as little as possible.

Communication is critical in defining personal identity and creating social belonging or relationships with peers. When students receive positive recognition and support from their teachers through effective communication and they receive appreciation and recognition from their peers, these interactions help define how students view themselves. When there are communication barriers, however, students often will feel excluded, undervalued, or disconnected to the academic community, which can detract from both their academic development and career growth. When combined with the language barriers and cultural differences between individuals, students can experience an increase in their feelings of isolation.

Effective communication encompasses the act of passing along knowledge but also creating opportunities for students to feel included, empathized with, and fully involved in the classroom experience. An open forum promotes clarity and opportunities for discussing how individual students have grown academically, socially and personally. However, by removing barriers to communication, educational institutions will ensure that each student has the chance to experience an education that is empowering and life changing.

One way to analyze if the classroom dialogue supports critical thinking, inclusivity, and active participation—as opposed to primarily teacher driven and limiting—is to look at the language used within the communications. Working collaboratively with peers is essential to becoming an effective learner; by working together with peers, learners are able to solve problems, clarify misconceptions and enhance their overall social and cognitive development. To support this process, instructors must look at how learners interact, the dynamics of peers regarding participation, and the overall use of language to facilitate collaboration and inclusivity. Doing these things will create equitable opportunities for students to communicate in a collaborative manner, and in turn, will increase the overall effectiveness of collaborative learning. In addition, the language of student assessment is a major factor in the student's level of motivation, self-confidence and general academic success.

When examining the assessment process thoroughly and deeply, we can see that Assessment serves two purposes - to assess a person's performance, and also to give them information on how to improve their performance. When combining all aspects of the assessment, this includes instructional practices (classroom), collaborative practices (peer), and language used to assess student's abilities, we create a 'whole' picture of the learning environment. This information will allow the educator to identify barriers to effective communication; work toward eliminating any inequalities; and modify their approach to teaching to achieve better results. Focusing on assessment will lead to a more student-centered, inclusive and reflective approach to learning, using language as not only an instrument of teaching but also as a vehicle for developing thought processes, creating relationships and facilitating lifelong learning.

Discourse Analysis has been presented as a way to analyze language(s) for meaning, social context, and interactional patterns beyond the analysis of sentences and beyond the use of language in such texts. Norman Fairclough indicates that language is used to create ideas/construct meaning and develop critical consciousness; Michel Foucault argues that language is a vehicle for power and knowledge; Brown and Yule analyze the forms and functions of spoken vs. written discourse; and James Paul Gee describes how discourse creates our identity and influences our social behaviors.

Spoken, written, classroom and institutional forms are four different discourses. Discourse provides information on how language indicates both identity, culture and power. As a result, by exploring discourse, your skills will improve in terms of how to communicate successfully, think critically, create coherence and ability to work with others collaboratively. First year B.Tech students frequently find it hard to communicate in English due to the transition from learning in their first language to learning in an English Medium environment. This transition causes

problems with speaking, listening, reading, and writing which results in a lack of classroom presence. Some students will remain silent, Code switch from English back to their native tongue, or struggle with developing logical organisation when thinking, presenting and participating in discussion.

These issues usually occur because students often have limited vocabulary, are embarrassed to make mistakes and lack English fluency. Since this affects their confidence and willingness to create and participate in activities, teachers typically use the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) pattern when teaching by asking questions, students answering questions, and teachers providing feedback; however, when students engage in peer discussion, they are able to think more critically and collaboratively build knowledge. Additionally, within a technical environment such as engineering, report writing and presentation delivery are essential to communicating one's ideas and engineering concepts; however, students will suffer from difficulties in grammatical errors, limited vocabulary, and/or fluency problems when trying to communicate with the written or speaking medium as their mother tongue influences their ability to effectively communicate using English. To address these issues through focused language practice and structured language support is critical for aiding engineers to develop the confidence needed in order to improve their communication skills when communicating in both academic and professional settings.

Discourse analysis allows for a clear view of issues surrounding communication in spoken and written forms. Through the examination of pragmatic aspects including; turn taking, politeness strategies, and the use of speech acts; the ways in which people control social interaction can be illustrated. For example; violating norms of turn taking or utilising impolite language may cause individuals to be confused when trying to communicate and also prevent others from wishing to participate. In the written domain, weak connections between ideas; inappropriate linking devices; and fragmented sentences will create obstacles for readers in understanding the text. The examination of genre conventions, specific to different components of academic or professional writings (e.g., laboratory reports, technical presentations) also illustrates that the completion and comprehension of texts may be reduced by not being familiar with the structure and/or style of the specifctype of writing being performed.

Media used to support communication will depend on the following factors; one's level of language proficiency, one's identity, and, most important, the role of the English language as the global common language. By conducting a discourse analysis of these factors, it is possible to obtain information on the structural and social barriers to effective communication. If language education favours authentic conversational practices, then this will provide students with the opportunity to develop real-life communicative competence, and be more than just practicing grammar and vocabulary. For engineering students, this may result in giving them the ability to participate in the same type of discussions as those that would be expected in the workplace, through group discussions, debating, note-taking, and role-playing.

Group discussions boost critical thinking and argumentation, whereas role-playing replicates professional situations like business meetings so that students learn to work together and use problem-solving techniques. Participating in note-taking exercises helps students organize their thoughts, while debates develop persuasive and logical reasoning skills. Together, these experiences help students move from classroom discussions to professional communication within the field of engineering.

While these pedagogical methods are very effective for helping students succeed, there are still many barriers facing students who are struggling in academic environments. Many students struggle with understanding a lecture due to a teacher using complex or rapid-fire speech patterns. Many students also refrain from asking questions out of fear of being wrong or ridiculed, therefore limiting their participation. Among the challenges that many students experience while writing are adhering to the conventions of technical versus academic discourse, resulting in vague or poorly designed arguments.

Some students may use code-switching or translanguaging, which is the use of multiple languages or dialects, to overcome barriers in language or comprehension. Although these strategies may assist students in the short term, ultimately they highlight the gap between the students' language skills and the requirements of academic communication. To address these issues, we need to use teaching methods that will lessen the language barrier, foster active class participation, and help students develop competence as academic writers.

Engineering education and engineering career success are affected by social, educational, and various other types of inequality. For example, if students have very little English experience prior to enrolling in an engineering program, they will face challenges with respect to participating in the classroom environment, understanding what is being taught, and having confidence in their ability to be successful in an engineering-related subject area. Due to these inequitable barriers, individuals are unable to complete their studies in a manner that enables them to secure meaningful employment due to their inability to communicate effectively.

As engineering becomes more internationalized and culturally diverse, employers are looking for graduates who can work effectively in multinational teams, communicate their ideas clearly, and adjust easily to various global work environments.

To prepare students for future employment and improved employability through the integration of communication skills into the B.Tech degree programs of engineering schools, it is essential that engineering programs incorporate communication skills training/ courses on technical writing, soft skill development, and using language in conjunction with engineering courses. Through the incorporation of these curricular modifications, students will be able to be successful in both academic and industry environments and corporations.

Conclusion

Communication problems in academic and professional jobs are found through the use of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis also helps instructors and students figure out why attempts at communication were problematic by looking at how people use language, recurring patterns within the language and the context surrounding the use of language. Discrepancies can occur due to sociocultural factors, including cultural stereotypes, group dynamics and distinctive means of communication or due to language-related issues including having insufficient vocabulary or poor grammar. Problems with communication are likely to impact the capacity for comprehension and collaboration when engineering students are attempting to collaborate on a project that includes complex concepts. Educators can find instances of communicative breakdowns, lack of vocabulary or lack of effectiveness in argument structure by analyzing classroom discussions, peer communication and presentations. Through a discourse analytic approach, researchers can find communicative barriers that go far beyond simple measures of their students' ability to communicate. Instructors will also be able to develop instructional strategies tailored specifically to help their students resolve problems with their communications before they become significant barriers. Improved communication skills result in greater success both academically and professionally.

Communication is important to effective communication as well as accuracy in spelling. Effective communication is achieved through critical thinking, explaining concepts in a manner that is clear and comprehensible, and altering the content of messages based on the audience being reached. To illustrate, engineering students are required to show clarity of thought and confidence when providing technical information such as reports, presentations and working as part of a diverse team of peers.

In addition, effective communication in professional contexts plays an equally large role in your potential as a leader, your ability to work in a team, and the advancement of your career. A student who is an effective communicator is more capable of articulating their thoughts and ideas clearly; more capable of collaborating with others; and contributing positively to group work. Moreover, focusing on the development of communication skills within students promotes critical reflection and thus creates opportunities for students to reflect upon the what, the how, and the why of communication. This type of reflective practice fosters confidence in students' ability to communicate and the ability to adapt their communication to a variety of settings.

The use of discourse-based teaching strategies provides many advantages for engineering programs. The traditional course of study will primarily teach students the technical aspects of how to do something, such as how to deal with engineering problems, rather than giving equal weight to the importance that effective communication skills play in the prospect of finding a solution. By embedding communication-oriented discourse strategies into the core curriculum of an engineering program as opposed to treating communication as an ancillary strategy, organizations can aid in developing students' language and interaction skills. The use of speaking, reflective writing, peer feedback exercises and debate to help students engage with language enhances their ability as a tool for thought, learning and creation of an idea.

These principles are consistent with today's modern educational priorities that require transferable skills, cross-disciplinary collaboration and holistic student development; thus allowing engineering programs to provide graduates that are technically capable and fluent communicators; also allowing them to perceive and communicate effectively through complexity and value in their contributions to both the academic and industrial settings. By integrating discourse-based instruction into the engineering educational process, students develop language and cognitive skills necessary for success in a highly interdependent and rapidly changing society - where the ability to communicate clearly is as important as the technical skill set.

Discourse analysis can be considered one of the most useful methods of promoting effective communication; specifically, it addresses the deeper issues associated with effective communication rather than just surface issues related to correctness. By using focused/disciplined educational approach(es) on an individualised basis, students will build confidence in their ability to effectively communicate complex material and develop collaboration skills. It is imperative that discourse-based approaches are embedded within the engineering academic culture; this ensure that engineering graduates have both technical knowledge and effective communication skills - creating a culture of thoughtful, effective communication which will lead to successful, sustaining outcomes.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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