



**ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS: DIFFICULTY AND DISPARITY
FACED BY KASHMIR PROFESSIONAL (ENGINEERING COMPUTER /
MANAGEMENT) STUDENTS IN THE PROFICIENT USE OF ENGLISH
LANGUAGE**

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we will focus on Kashmiri professional (engineering/computer/management) student community, who for their professional careers need English language at both local as well as global levels. This paper will first highlight the importance of English in today's multi-corporate world of trade and commerce visa-vis the need of such proficient learning/teaching and use of it for Kashmiri professional students. The main focus will be on the difficulty and disparity which the professional students face in their speech while using the English language. It will focus on the reasons; why professional students lack interest in learning of English language or communication skills. In that this paper will look what tentative pedagogies can be adopted to develop their interest in learning of English language? The present paper will also highlight the importance of English and how English can reduce the unemployment by learning communication skills. It will also help the people to attain a respectable job through communicative skills. It will look at the different ways of learning English/communication skills through communicative activities and dynamic solutions to ease the process of learning.

Keywords: Communication skills, professional (engineering / computer / management), proficient, proficiency, practical learning, native, listening skill, professional courses, communicator, context, difficulty, disparity etc.

INTRODUCTION

English is lingua Franca of international community: business, expertise and aviation. It has a great impact on professionals who are day by day getting influenced by the multiplex

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corporate world. The young Kashmiri professionals however lack certain important linguistic skills due to many reasons.

English language, which was once the language of speakers of Anglo-Saxon, has been the language of people of the entire world community irrespective of their nationality, community and ethnicity. English language has been globalized and its use has been widespread. People involved in diverse fields and professions use it as a means of communication to acquire knowledge and information to reach the summit of success in their endeavors. It has played key role to open the door of development and prosperity in our personal and professional life. It undoubtedly occupies a very significant position in professional (engineering/computer/ management) education also. The English language is being used as a common means of communication all over the world whether it is for acquiring knowledge from books or publishing research reports, or giving oral presentations or for presenting papers in the seminars and conferences etc.

It has many features of capturing the corporate and the markets. It makes its speakers self confident, self reliant and good communicators. For professional students whose native tongue is not English, proficient English is even more important, not only for their scholastic life but also for prospective career. Maximum professional students neglect the proficiency in English as its most important skill. There are several reasons responsible for why Kashmiri professional (engineering/computer/management) students lack interest in proficient use of English, as these students mostly are influenced by technology and technological products like in robotics, electronics, computers etc. They are less interested in the grammar, phonetics, pronunciation, literary usage, phonology, semantics etc of English language.

Being a Kashmir native speaker with the experience of teaching English/communication skills to young professional students in different colleges particularly in the '*University of Science and technology Awantipora kashmir*' I have observed so many problems which professional (engineering/computer/management) students face in their speech while speaking in English. It adds on my curiosity to highlight the importance of learning English as a key language in a technical world for the success, and the difficulties and disparity which they face in their speech.

English language is the current lingua franca of the international business, technology, aviation, diplomacy, banking, computing, medicines, engineering and tourism etc. About one fifth of people all over the world know more or less about English. It is spoken by 1.8 billion people in the world and 35% of total population of the world uses it on internet the number still increasing (British council, 2003). Almost every single university in the world is



conducting scientific studies in English. Maximum numbers of radio programs are broadcast in English, huge number of the content or address of mailing letters are written in English.

The International Perspective

English is becoming the world's language. Most of the world's population, (more than 70%) speak English, or understand it. And more than 80% of all stored information in the world is written in English or translated into it. Language skills of foreign languages particularly the English language, are a good tool for academics, tourism, or to build a career or promote one's own business, in various fields like mass media or in world technologies etc. A person who is fluent in English feels comfortable every where he visits. Having good proficiency in English language is an important criterion of admissions in reputed universities and institutes. A candidate's ability to master this ability brightens his chances of admissions to foreign Universities.

In many universities and multinational companies etc students are required to pass Qualifying English Test to assess their proficiency of English language. To a certain level where students are not able to qualify, they have to undergo for extra English to brush up their English.

The National Perspective

For kashmiri professional students, proficiency in English also is important. Knowing English allows people to enjoy their life and work no matter where they are. English language helps them to buildup strong relationships and better understanding which are vital in their personal and professional life. To be successful in any field professional students need to know and understand how to communicate proficiently and effectively. In the time of free speech, privatization and globalization, fluent use of language and good communication expertise are the keys to unlock the doors of success

Importance of English in Multiplex Corporate Times

When we talk about professionalism, which is often defined as the strict adherence to courtesy, honesty and responsibility when dealing with individuals or other companies in the business environment. This trait often includes a high level of excellence going above and beyond basic requirements. Corporate world these days does not want dummy but dynamic personalities efficient in multitasking. As has been seen in last recession time companies fire all those employees first who lack dynamic personality.



English language is internationally accepted language. No other language is as widely accepted at social, economical and political levels as English is. Students realize its importance when good Multinational companies (MNCs) hesitate to absorb them due to their inefficient English language use or low communication skills. People with efficient proficiency in English language are considered as an asset for any organization, just because of the fact that they can be utilized in any job at any time. Students fail to realize that though technical knowledge is treasure but the key to unlock the treasure is efficient use of English language.

English communication competence plays an important role in the academic life and career of professional students. No matter how qualified and proficient they might be in their academic career, they need to possess high level of proficiency in English language. Engineering, computer or management professions are the biggest fields of study in the world. First of all English is a tool that significantly affects professional students in their academic life. While most of the theories in these courses are taught in English, it requires a good communicative competence. In academic life, these professional students have to attend the countless English lectures, tutorials, labs and write project reports and papers. Most of the professional course-professors in various universities are also conducting lectures in English. This is the most convenient internet source of information that provides most of the information in English. During the job seeking process in interviews, GD's, the proficiency in English language is of vital importance. In order to co-ordinate with the people who have different language background English is used as link or bridge language.

Place of English Language among Professional Students in Kashmir

Kashmir cannot remain behind from the changing scenario in the technological world. The impact of globalization in the international arena has also been visible in the professional education in Kashmir. The effect of globalization is now appearing in Kashmir. The quality and competence are the priority issues now. Unless Kashmiri professional students prove to be capable and competent in the global market, the situation is going to be much harder for them now and after.

Most of the professional graduates in Kashmir have some difficulties in English, which hampers their performance in securing their jobs in corporate and business world. Nowadays Engineering, computer courses, business management etc are most popular choices among aspirants for under-graduate courses. But maximum aspirants are not suitable for the jobs due to their bad spoken abilities. Undoubtedly Pronunciation and fluency are major barriers in their effective spoken English in Kashmir.



It has been after decades now the professional degrees in Kashmir have also included English language as mandatory in their courses and as open electives. But fortunately the students have realized the importance of English now. They are taking English or communication skills seriously to complete their degrees. Being the English language teacher to many professional students I have observed the importance given by these professional students to English language. They hardly care about their spoken English, pronunciation, fluency, grammar etc. These students lack right expression of their thoughts in both the communications i.e. spoken and written skills. Whenever it comes to express in spoken form, they fumble, they can't make the appropriate pronunciation gestures which sometimes becomes ambiguous and unintelligible to listeners. While in written form they also lose coherence, brevity and proper answer to the questions asked. Giving opinion on some topic in English is quite difficult for these professional students. Though they have to deal with wires, circuits, computers, accounts etc but still they need to express themselves and perform in the market.

Difficulties faced by Kashmiri professional students while using English language.

There are many reasons due to which Kashmiri professional students face difficulties in their speech in English. We will discuss these reasons here.

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- 1. Mother Tongue Influence:** A lot of mother tongue influence of Kashmiri is visible while a Kashmiri speaker is using English. This is also true with the professional Kashmiri students who are influenced by this MTI (Mother Tongue Influence) in their speech. There are many consonants which are present in Kashmiri but are absent in English language e.g. /t̪, t̪^h, d̪^h, ts, ts^h, c^h and /ɲ/*/. Although these sounds do not create many problems while speaking English yet sometimes certain sounds do come in the way e.g. many Kashmiri professional students of Kashmir use /t̪^h/ in place of /t/ in English. For example many speakers pronounce English word 'Thomas' as /θɔmas/ instead of /tɔmas/.

In Kashmiri language there are two sounds /f/ and /ph/ as a fricative and stop respectively. But in English /f/ is a fricative. Many Kashmiri speakers use /ph/ in place of /f/ as in English word *fruit*, fat, food, feet etc as /p^hru:t/, /p^hæt/, /p^hud/ and /p^hi:t/ but not as /fru:t/, fæt/, /fu:d/ and /fɪ:t/ Many other students use sound /v/ in place of sound /w/ as in words like woman, watch, walk, waste, while, wear, web, weather, word and wedge etc.

- 2. Consonant Clusters:** While coming to consonant clusters there are lot of problem Kashmiri students face in their English speech. In Kashmiri language we do not have many consonant clusters which are present in English language. For example sk, sl, kl, ml, lp, ks, kd, gs, ts, bl, sp, pl, st and lk. While using these consonant clusters most Kashmiris

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speakers decluster them by inserting a vowel in between them. See the following data:

Skill	/sɪkɪl/
slip	/sɪlɪp/
clif	/kɪlɪf/
Milk	/mɪlɪk/
Help	/heləp/
Socks	/sɒkəs/
Logs	/lɒgəs/
School	/səku:l/
reports	/rɪpɔrtəs/
Plate	/pəleɪt/
Stay	/steɪ/
Supports	/səpɔtəs/
Sports	/səpɔtəs/
Texts	/tekəstəs/
institution	/ɪnɪstɪtʃʊʃən/
constitution	/kɒnəstɪtʃʊʃən/
Blood	/blʌd/
Stray	/streɪ/

3. Difficulty in using vowels: A lot of Kashmiri students often get confused while using certain vowels. They cannot make the difference between them because of their mother tongue influence. Here are some examples:

1) Most of the students use sound /a:/ in place of sound /ɔ/.

e.g words like 'water' is pronounced as /wa:tər/ instead of /wɔtər/

'Walk' as /wa:lk/ instead of /wɔlk/

'Watch' as /wa:tʃ/ instead of /wɔtʃ/

'Talk' as /ta:k/ instead of /tɔk/

'On' as /a:n/ instead of /ɔn/

'Call' as /ka:l/ instead of /kɔl/

'Salt' as /sa:lt/ instead of /sɔlt/

'Cot' as /ka:t/ instead of /kɔt/

'Caught' as /ka:th/ instead of /kɔ:th/

'Hot' as /ha:t/ instead of /hɔt/

'Hall' as /ha:l/ instead of /hɔl/



- 2) Front half open long vowel /eɪ/ is used for the English /æ/, as in *black, catch, sack etc.* they will use /bleɪk/, /keɪtʃ/ and /seɪk/ instead of /blæk/, /kæɪtʃ/ and /sæk/.
- 3) Sometimes students use sound /e/ in place of sound /ə/ e.g in words like 'alone' they pronounce it as /elɜ:n/ instead of /əlu:n/ and word 'ago' is pronounced as /egəu/ instead of /əgəu/ etc.
- 4) They have difficulty in using diphthongs as well, many students use wrong diphthongs at times e.g in word 'goat' they pronounce it as /gɔ:t/ instead of /gəʊt/, in word 'sow' they will pronounce it as /sɔ:/ instead of /səʊ/. These students have also difficulty in diphthongs like /ɪə/, /eə/ they get confuse where to use which diphthong e.g in terms of words like:

Here and Hair
Ear and Air
Their and There

Remedies suggested

This paper suggests certain remedial measures for the Kashmiri professional students to overcome their difficulties while performing at work places especially when they use English language. Following points are as under:

- 1 One of the major issues which hinder learning of communication skills and proficient use of English language is that professional students do not prioritize English language as the main key for successful career.
2. Apart from professional responsibilities of teachers they should take more efforts to provide their students more language exposure to achieve communicative competence. (The students when forced to learn communication on their own, find it difficult. So, they expect assistance and warmth understanding from teachers).
3. Specialized teachers should be employed for the professional students, who are aware about the current trends and advanced techniques of English language teaching, phonetics, phonology, correct pronunciation etc.
4. There should be a proper collaboration of practical utility** of the subject with the study material. Professional students are not able to cue up the knowledge they take in class with the day today language use necessary to comprehend the practical utility of the English.
5. It is expected that after including some English phonetic capsules and pronunciation in the prescribed syllabus, professional students will improve their communication skills and proficiency in English language.



CONCLUSION

The necessity if one has to be a part of corporate world one requires to have knowledge and be fluent in English language. It plays key role to open the door of development and prosperity in one’s personal and professional life. The use of English language is widespread in the career of the Professional students in both the global and local contexts. English language being the sole language of communication in the international arena, there is no other alternative language that the professionals may opt for. No matter whether they are at the stage of studying engineering, computer, management etc at a local university, or trying to seek job opportunity, or in the process of winning scholarship for pursuing their further studies in better international university in an advanced country, they need to prove that they are sufficiently capable enough to communicate in English language. They need the English language to listen to and understand the teacher’s lecture and write notes, follow textbooks, use resource centers like library in a proper manner, to get involved in the process of job seeking, winning scholarship and executing their duties. For the students of professional courses, English is like blood in our body. As our body cannot function without blood, the professional students cannot survive without English in the present global as well as local contexts.

Notes

/ɲ/*: This is a palatal nasal sound which is present in kashmiri phoneme inventory but not in English language. For the articulation of this sound, a closure is formed in the mouth between front of the tongue and the hard palate. The soft palate is lowered to allow a free passage of air through nose. During its articulation vocal cords are also held loosely together and they vibrate. So, the sound/ɲ/ produced is voiced palatal nasal sound. E.g.

	Kashmiri words	English meaning
Initial sound	/pɔ:ɲ/	water
Medial sound	/sɜ:ɲ/	ours
Final sound	/da:ɲ ɪ/	paddy

Practical Utility:** practical utility in this article are treated as particular items of lexicon used by a particular group or class in a particular use of register of the language. (Bashir, Varieties of English in Asia)

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