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A Topical Study on the value of Communication, Communicative barriers for Engineering students of West Bengal and a subconscious realia-driven Language-acquisitive social-clime.

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Allen Louis defines *Communication* as, “...the sum of all the things, a person does when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of another. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding.”

Communication today, has become an integral part of human behaviour and symbolises Man's capability to convey opinions, feelings, information and ideas to others through words (spoken or written), body language or signs. Derived from the Latin word, *communis*, meaning 'common,' it is the most vital ingredient of an organisation.

In my paper, I have concentrated upon the significance of English Language in the 21st century, its necessity for engineering students particularly, and their acquisition of the language which is found to be a subconscious realia-driven occurrence. Having done a survey of the barriers to communication faced by students' across various engineering streams of West Bengal, I decided to write a paper which would reflect this severe unavoidable contemporary problem and I have also endeavoured to provide some necessary fundamental solutions in a lucid manner. I hope that the students would also learn how significant a role Communication plays is in the job market today.

Communication is the life blood of an organisation. However, many of us still find it difficult to converse fluently in languages, apart from our vernacular one, especially English. In front of public, many often fumble and shamefully look downwards. But the time has finally arrived to arise and awaken ourselves and emerge as impressive speakers of English! There are various methods which have emerged today to bring about such radical changes. One of them is PBL or Problem-based-learning.

Problem-based learning (PBL)¹ is a teaching process catered to students in which they learn about a subject through the experience of solving an open-ended problem. The PBL process also involves the development of other desirable skills and attributes. This includes

knowledge acquisition, enhanced group collaboration and communication. The process allows learners to develop skills used for their future practice. It enhances critical appraisal, literature retrieval and encourages ongoing learning within a team environment. The PBL tutorial process involves working in small groups of learners. Each student takes on a role within the group that could be formal or informal and the role often alternates. It is focused on the student's reflection and reasoning to construct their own learning. One must remember that Communication is meaning-based. One specialist has most appropriately pointed out that, “*the most immediate need for communication is to be able to refer to things in the real world, that is, to be able to name things, states, events and attributes, by using ‘words’*”. Words link ideas together which in turn creates meaningful sentences. They are the essential ingredients to a memorable speech. One interesting way to expand our own stock of words is to explore uncommon words say alphabetically. They could be words mostly required to describe that which we feel but cannot easily express and these could be collected in one place, explore their meanings and try to apply them in our everyday spoken language. Here is a list of words which might be unknown to many, especially engineering students –

1. With **A** – ‘*Ameliorate*’ – (make better a situation that was previously worse.)
2. With **B** - *Blandiloquy* – (Empty flattery is *blandiloquy*, or *blandiloquence*.)
3. With **C** - *Chagrin* – (If you feel *chagrin*, it means that you are embarrassed or distressed as a result of a failure.)
4. With **D** – *Debacle* - (A sudden or complete disaster.)
5. With **E** - *Egalitarian* – (Favouring social equality.)
6. With **F** - *Facsimile* – (An exact copy or reproduction.)

7. With **G** - *Galvanize* – (Stimulate to action.)
8. With **H** – *Harangue* – (A loud bombastic declamation expressed with strong emotion.)
9. With **I** – *Imbroglia* – (An intricate and confusing interpersonal situation.)
10. With **J** - *Jejune* – (Lacking interest or significance or impact.)
11. With **K**- *Ken* -(Range of what one can know or understand.)
12. With **L**- *Lachrymose* – (Showing sorrow.)
13. With **M**- *Macabre* - (Shockingly repellent; inspiring horror.)
14. With **N**- *Nadir* – (The lowest point of anything.)
15. With **O**- *Obfuscate* – (To darken; to confuse; to make confusing.)
16. With **P**- *Panacea* - (Hypothetical remedy for all ills or diseases.)
17. With **Q** - *Quandary* – (State of uncertainty in a choice between unfavourable options.)
18. With **R**- *Raconteur* – (A person skilled in telling anecdotes.)
19. With **S** - *Sacrosanct* – (Treated as if holy and kept free from violation or criticism.)
20. With **T**- *Taciturn* – (Habitually reserved and uncommunicative.)
21. With **U**- *Ubiquitous* – (Being present everywhere at once.)
22. With **V**- *Vainglorious* – (Feeling self-importance.)
23. With **W**- *Waftage* – (Transportation through water or air.)
24. With **X**- *Xenomania* – (Inordinate attachment to foreign things.)
25. With **Y**- *Yestertempest* – (Immediately preceding the last tempest.)

26. With **Z- Zephyr** – (A slight wind.)

Communication in short, is the process of transfer of ideas and expressions from one person to another, a kind of self-expression. Yet the reality is that, several factors frequently prevent the message from reaching the target recipient and these factors could be placed under an umbrella term , ‘*barriers.*’ Barriers could be of various types –

- a) **Semantic barriers** – The word semantic denotes ‘*meaning.*’ Different people assign different meanings to one specific message. This happens as a result of different interpretations of meaning, significance and the sending and reception of the meaning and content of the message.
- b) **Organizational Barriers** – This kind of barrier develops as a result of problems with physical distance between people with respect to their functional specialization of tasks, power, authority and status relationship, values held and ownership of information.
- c) **Interpersonal barriers** – These barriers are based upon relationships, values held and attitudes of the participants in the process of communication.
- d) **Individual barriers** – Also known as psycho-sociological barriers, this barrier arises due to differences in individual competencies to think and act, which might include physical ailments or handicaps. It also occurs due to inadequate individual skills such as poor listening and improper reading skills and adverse psychological conditions.

e) ***Cross-cultural or geographic barriers*** – This sort of a barrier is usually happens due to time, geographic locations, and the effects of time upon reception of the message and other related cross-cultural factors.

f) ***Physical barriers*** – Physical barriers could include factors such as distance, noise or channel and the media used in the process. That is to say, it is best to convey a message face to face than through writing.

g) ***Technological barriers*** – These barriers arise due to technological advancements in the field of communication. Technology generates a lot of information which sometimes is beyond the capacity of the recipient to absorb fully and meaningfully.

However, there could be measures to overcome all these commonly faced obstructions through the following measures –

a) Fostering good relationship between two parties or more, involved in any project in order to avoid misunderstandings.

b) The focus should be given on the meaning of the message conveyed so that the receiver must not feel obfuscated.

c) There should be proper coordination between superior and subordinates for effective communication.

d) It is better to avoid technical language, also known as *specialized language*. Efforts should be made to use that language commonly understood by the receiver and sender of the message. In short, there must be least use of technical jargon in the communication process.

- e) Feedback is very important in this respect. The selective perception of receiver should be minimised through proper feedback. The drawback of the selective perception should be explained to minimise the barriers.
- f) There ought to be accuracy in the message to be transmitted between the sender and receiver to improve its effectiveness.
- g) There should be clarity in the message to be transferred without any ambiguity.
- h) There is something called '*Communication of organisational philosophy.*' Efforts have to be made in a planned way to sensitise people with the organisational philosophy. Employees should be properly communicated about it to enhance effective day-to-day communication.
- i) Any organisation should possess clear-cut and simple structure. Tall, hierarchical structures should be replaced by flat ones to avoid excessive control of information. Incorrect information or data transferred to anyone in the organisation could prove detrimental. This kind of a status gap could be easily removed by proper redesign of organisational structure.
- j) There should be proper division of labour between people in order to reduce information overload and prevent delay in transfer of information.
- k) Organisation policies is an important factor in bringing about effective communication. Policies should be formulated by any organisation in such a way that, it will give full advantage to all members. It should be easy and flexible to implement. The goal of the organisation must be clear. Everyone must clearly know about his position, in the organisational communication process. The network must be fully developed such that no such type of barriers exists. Moreover, there must be consistency when messages are conveyed from the sender/s to the receiver/s. It is better not to introduce any personal view in the message. It must be lucid and understood by one and all. The deadline should be clearly mentioned as well to avoid miscommunication of any sort.

l) Semantic issues should be minimised. People have a tendency to use either the same word in different ways or different words in the same way. It is surprising to know that there are 15 different meanings in the English language of the word, 'charge.' Barriers also occur when people use jargon or professional shorthand which they expect others to understand, or use language which is beyond the province of others' vocabulary.

m) There should be the creation of proper communication channels. In order to get immediate action, one must avoid sending a lengthy discussion report. One could simply instruct the plan of action via phone. If a picture is worth a thousand words as they say, in this age of computer graphics, information could be produced more quickly in this way too.

Thus, we need to overcome all barriers as well as acquire skills to improve our communication abilities.

Perhaps a Language Laboratory is one of the best learning means to enhance our speaking power. Technically, a language laboratory is an instructional technology tool consisting of a source unit that can disseminate audio materials to any number of students at individual seats or carrels. Language Laboratory is such a platform which permits *collaborative learning* through tasks or activity-based activities. The students will be able to demonstrate competence in Listening, Speaking, and Understanding abilities. While communicating, they will eventually show critical and innovative thinking. They will articulate ideas using complete and spontaneous expressions. They will learn how to effectively use *Paralinguistic* features. Paralinguistics² are the aspects of spoken communication that do not involve words. Invented by George L. Trager in the 1950s, the clues of Paralinguistics are volume of voice, speed of voice, intonation, tone, pronunciation, articulation, pause, punctuation marks and so forth. Again students will be able to execute group discussions using effective strategies of team-working, turn-taking, creative intervention and so on. The language laboratory indeed aids in sharpening public speaking of engineering students with confidence.

7. **Rita Mae Brown** (born November 28, 1944) is an American feminist writer, best known for her coming-of-age autobiographical novel, *Rubyfruit Jungle*. Brown was active in a number of civil rights campaigns, but tended to feud with their leaders over the marginalising of lesbians within the feminist groups. Brown received the Pioneer Award for lifetime achievement at the Lambda Literary Awards in 2015.

LINK - [en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Rita_Mae_Brown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rita_Mae_Brown)

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