

# English Communication Today: Problems and Perspectives on Communicating in English in the Technical Colleges of Tamilnadu

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## Abstract

The growing popularity of engineering education and seeking employment in MNCs have boosted the technical students to use English language for both academics and professional communication. This paper examines the prevailing academic and socio-ethnic influences on L2 learning and discusses about the problems and perspectives of the students and the efforts taken by the management, English and subject faculties in promoting English communication in the technical campus. Qualitative ethnographic case study approach is undertaken to comparatively analyze and discuss about how different instructional strategies and tools are used for creating English zone in the three technical colleges of Tamilnadu. The result shows that literally the students are not able to use English with greater accuracy and hence they favour bilingual teaching. But their strategy awareness towards seeking L2 helps them to use it for seeking knowledge and to engage in open tasks for facilitating interactional communication.

**Keywords:** English communication, bilingual teaching, interactional communication, open tasks, Limited English proficiency (LEP), Mother Tongue Influences

## Introduction

Communicating in English has become a prerequisite factor in both academy and profession. The significance of English language is recognized due to its massive use in global communication (Warschauer, 2000). English language has autho-

ritized its stand as a major resource pool for seeking disciplinary knowledge, academic literacy and professional experience. Eventually, the ultimate voice of today is to kindle the student masses to communicate in English. The present paper elucidates the problems and perspectives of technical students and the pedagogical efforts taken by language and subject faculties to develop English communication skills in engineering language education.

## Background to the study

English proficiency courses envisage at providing the means and ends of language pedagogy that cater to the needs of students in their academics and profession. Faculties need to adopt innovative practices for facilitating adequate tasks and skills for their language and academic performance (Black, 1991; Blanco, Pino & Rodriguez, 2010; Burke, 2011). Graham (1987) explores the specific needs of language skills for academic success. Berman & Cheng (2001) analyze the language skills that are necessary for academic studies are of different levels of difficulty. Schumann's (1978, cited in Stern, 1983) acculturation model explains the attitudes and social differences of the learners to learn target language and culture. As students hail from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds, the differences in extralinguistic factors affect their language ability (Jarvis & Stakounis, 2010). The students are also affected by their multivariable skills of personality too. The factors that lead to restricted level of competence may be either intrinsic or extrinsic or both. Consistent efforts need to be taken to reduce the confounding effects of the language background

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variable of the English language learning (ELL) students (Abedi, 2002).

Turner & Upshur (1995) relates the significance of grammatical accuracy with communicative effectiveness in interactive tasks. The appropriate use of grammar in extended discourse is vital for meaningful communication (Yi'an Wu, 2001). Though close ended tasks are much focused with formal grammar learning, the complex use of language in extended discourse is quite evident in open tasks. Language learning can be better facilitated through negotiation of meaning (Foster, 1998). Besides developing linguistic skills, the focus on developing interactional skills for discussion is vital in the present context of education (Lee, 2009). Interactional communication is widely inclined through the pedagogical challenges of adopting critical discourse in the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2006). The students need to adopt open ended tasks like oral presentations, discussions, debate for developing rhetoric skills and extended discourse.

Springer & Collins (2008) reflect on the use of classroom learning and real world interactional use of language for developing communication in both academic and social contexts. The need for communicating in English in both academics and realia is the basic requirements of the students. Jarvis & Stakounis (2010) stress on analyzing the needs of the students and urges to improve speaking skills in their social context. The students need to interact for developing social and pragmatic communication skills (Yi'an Wu, 2001). Chamot (2005), Graham (2007) and Grenfell (2007) reflect on the need of strategy based instruction for developing autonomous and collaborative language learning skills. Yogman & Kaylani (1996) examine collaboration and interaction of the mixed level students yielded a positive effect in increasing their proficiency level. This paper aims at understanding and analyzing the potentiality of the students to communicate in English in both academics and realia.

## Research Question

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What are the problems and perspectives of technical students on communicating in English in the technical colleges of Tamilnadu?

## Context and course of the study

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A pivotal classroom research is conducted at

Jayam College of Engineering and Technology (JCET), Dharmapuri, Maha College of Engineering (MCE), Salem and King College of Technology (KCT), Namakkal. As all these three colleges are affiliated to Anna University, a technical university of Tamilnadu, India they follow the same curriculum. The present language curriculum of Anna University is two-fold. One is a theory based Technical English course prescribed in the 1st year and the other is a practical oriented Communication Skills Course in the 3rd year of the course. Technical English course is specifically designed to develop structural and functional writing skills and Communication Skills course aims at developing language skills through interactional approaches and technology based learning. The main objective of the language course is to make the students to be more communicative with required skills to cater for the needs of employability.

All the three colleges provide engineering courses in the various disciplines like Electronics and Communication, Electrical and Electronics, Mechanical, Computer Science, Information Technology and Civil Engineering. With a massive strength of more than 1200 students respectively in each college, all the three colleges accommodate students from throughout Tamilnadu and also from neighboring states like Kerala. JCET can be particularly noted as its students hail from nearby states Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and the far off north eastern states like Nagaland and Mizoram. Though all these students hail from different heterogeneous, social and cultural backgrounds, their communication skills are still to be developed. As they lack sufficient language productive ability, they are not able to fluently communicate in English. As this research is specifically meant to scrutinize the communicative problems and perspectives of the students, respective colleges are taken as an individual case study and the observations are cross analyzed and compared to explore consistency in the findings.

Schools and engineering colleges in Tamilnadu have recently realized that the role of English communication is vital in both education and industry. The institutional management and academic heads of engineering colleges seems to be an avant-garde in their spirit of refreshing and promoting the sophisticated use of English for communicative purposes. They always concern about making their institution to facilitate effective English commu-

nication skills and force the students to communicate only in English (Peng, 2007). A qualitative ethnographic case study research is undertaken in all these three colleges located in the three different districts of Tamilnadu. The observations are comparatively cross analyzed to understand the real L2 scenario. Students mixed ability and skills towards learning and communicating in English are prevalent in almost all the colleges of Tamilnadu. The results are found to be the same and factual and hence the research survey can be treated as a comprehensive whole in context to Tamilnadu.

## Participants

The stakeholders involved in this study are the engineering students, English faculties, subject faculties, guest faculties and the language experts who are invited to facilitate communicative skills and personality development programs as an add on course in the college. As this research is basically concerned with the emic perspectives and grounded with the socio ethnic influences, the engineering students of respective colleges are randomly selected and taken as a major source of research inquiry. In the faculty participants, including me and my colleagues of English department (3), subject faculties (7), heads of department (6), Principal (3) and Management (3) of the respective colleges, guest faculty (2), and language specialists (2) are involved to motivate and solve the issues and are much concerned in promoting English communication in the college premises (Peirce, 1989).

## Study design

The English faculties employed various strategies like conducting short term intensive courses, inviting experts to deliver guest lectures, conducting extra coaching classes, establishing language and communication laboratory, facilitating open tasks for developing English communication activities (Tuan & Neomy, 2007). Besides the regular classroom tasks, to foster public speaking skills, collaborative open tasks like oral presentations, group discussions and mock interviews are conducted (Yu-Chih, 2008). All the engineering students are exposed to language education in their twelve years of formal school study. Still, they hesitate to use English as they lack sufficient productive skills to express their ideas (Peng, 2007). The subject faculties adopted code switching and bilingual teaching

in English and Tamil to make ease understanding of their subject. With gaining the self-reflections of the students, this study progresses about how they react and respond to the English only zone. It also focuses on English and subject faculties' contribution and institutional measures in establishing L2 environment inside the campus.

## Data collection and analysis

This research study basically commenced and proceeded with my service of 4.6 years at JCET, 2.6 years at MCE and 3 years at KCT. With a long span of 10 years from 2003-2013, this large scale based research involved all the students hailing from different heterogeneous backgrounds. With the ethnographical perspectives, all the stakeholders are formally and informally consulted to analyze their learning experiences while communicating in English (Flores, 2005). As this study explores on the personal, academic, social and cultural constraints of all the engineering students in communicating in English, every student's notion of understanding and use of English is mandatory for analyzing the research query (Oanh, 2007). The students are randomly selected to analyze their learning experiences through casual conversations and formal and informal discussions (Nakatani, 2010).

Data are collected through unstructured interviews, observations, students self reports, formal and informal discussions (Jones, 1992). Unstructured interviews are conducted with the feasibility and the availability of students during and after the class hours. Students are periodically interviewed in the class committee meetings too. Observations are independently done by all the English faculties in classroom and practical sessions; casual interactions are done by the English and other faculties after the official hours and formal and informal discussions are constantly held with the students and faculties. Formal discussions of English faculties with other faculties resolved to stabilize bilingual teaching in the classes (Cummins, 1984). Language specific discussions are specifically held in the meetings with the colleagues, other faculties, HODs, Principal and Management to scrutinize both the teachers and students difficulties and experiences in communicating in English. The discussions held in class committee meetings, staff meetings and departmental meetings are recorded in the minutes to update the progress of the research agenda.

Self-report of the students are found to be in-

strumental as it guided how far the students are motivated and needs to be counseled in their problematic areas of communication (Hyland, 2003). The positive and negative responses of the students on the institutional policies and planning, English and other faculties' effort in exercising innovations are observed as general reflections on understanding the college culture. The ongoing interactions and continuing observations of English faculties, other faculties, HODs, Principal and the management at different junctures confirmed their commitment, involvement, active participation and support in revealing the students' reflections on communicating in English.

In this research paper, qualitative ethnographic case study approach is undertaken to analyze the data. This article proceeds with the emic perspectives and reflections of all the stakeholders involved in the research. The personal, academic, social and cultural problems of the students, their response to the University curricula and academic culture and their feedback on self improvement and teachers initiatives are thematically summarized (Cheng, 2006). Further, the experimentation and contribution of the English faculty and other faculties in promoting English communication and the consequent changes and effect that occur in each college culture is briefly compared and discussed as a cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Flores, 2005).

## Results and Discussion

### *At JCET*

The JCET management is more research oriented in conducting communicative need analysis and exploring the background English knowledge of the students. As most of the students hail from the vernacular medium Tamil, the students have little exposure to communicate in English. The English departmental faculties conducted informal discussions with the students to understand the real status of students in confidently using English for academic communication. It is overall realized that the students are motivated to learn English and few students have even thought of doing overseas studies for their post graduation. Most of the students admitted that they are applying strategies for improving communication skills by reading news papers, watching English TV channels and even watching English films to understand the accent of US English.

The college management is keen to prepare the

students to use English throughout the campus. It has been mandatory that neither the faculty nor the students should use L1 as they are very serious concerned that all the classes need to be taught in English. Their vigilance for teaching learning process is so severe that they have located cameras to observe the actual pedagogical process occurs inside the classroom. This has made the faculties to use more strategies and techniques for making the students to easily understand their teaching and the students to speak only in English. Though formally both the teachers and students communicate in English, they are not able to extend their talk outside the classroom in English (Springer & Collins, 2008).

The students always look forward to easily understand their subject through L1 and any clarifications and discussions led are entertained in it. It can be observed that both the student and the faculty are resistant to use English after the formal teaching hours. One subject faculty spoke about the difficulty in teaching English,

The management will monitor us speaking English. But they need to realize the potentiality of the students too. For the management we need to handle the classes in English and for the slow learners we need to teach bilingually.

Another subject faculty revealed about the students inclined interest in learning through L1,

If the student co-operates us to use English, it is fine. We go to their level, to raise them to our understanding. But they seem to be more casual to adopt L1 despite our efforts.

The subject faculty does not want to lose his rapport and understanding with the students. They want to be more flexible and adoptable with the students. The management is anxious to make the entire college as an English speaking zone. The English department highlighted the restricted use of English in the campus. The formal use of English in classroom and the cultural and social use of Tamil (vernacular language) outside the classroom gradually affected the use of English as the students are socially and culturally more captivated than exercising English for academics (Jones, 1992). With several discussions in faculty meetings, it is suggested that both the students and faculties need to be exposed to motivation programmes, and especially for the students with limited English Proficiency (SLEP), English Proficiency Courses needs to be conducted.

A short term English Proficiency Course is con-



ducted for two consecutive weeks with an objective to develop English proficiency and communicative competency to cater with the English communicative needs of the students. A comprehensive package of grammar, vocabulary and phonology was specified along with the mechanism of spelling and punctuation. Students are given much pace to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Jassem & Jassem, 2002). Interactional tasks like role play, mock interviews social conversations are conducted to develop their speaking and listening skills. As one student exposed the need of interacting in English,

Basically we need to know grammar. As we are to speak compulsorily in English, we feel, we are benefitted. Somehow, we manage to discuss, argue and chat with our friends in English. Sometimes, speaking with friends in English is fun. But it helps us to confidently speak with our teachers.

With the detailed discussions conducted with the students, it is realized that besides teaching language items, they need to be motivated to develop their soft skills for personality development. Leading language specialists in the field are called for guest lectures to teach the students to develop their English communication skills. They insisted that social and cultural influences of language are to be more exposed in training (Nkosana, 2008). When the English faculties, guest faculties and the language specialists discuss about the process of language learning, a leading language expert analyzed,

It can be observed that in class hours, the students are immersed in learning the subject only in English. But this little affects their comprehending or productive ability.

One guest faculty advised on the need of compulsorily using L2,

The students need to use both L1 and L2. But gradually, L2 progress needs to be monitored. Though the students hope to communicate, they actually need to communicate. It is the subject faculties, who need to initiate more effort on students' L2 performance as they handle more classes when the language faculties are hardly given 1.5 hours to spend in the whole day.

The feedback of JCET subject faculties, guest faculties, language specialists and the students stressed on to employ performance based teaching methods. The core relevance of the course is to make the students to feel comfortable in using English even in social and cultural dominated situations. Though the students initially showed their mixed

level of understanding in using English, they realized its significance in workplace (Yogman & Kaylani, 1996). The students slowly indulged in using English for social communication though their cultural influences are seen widely prevalent throughout the course.

### *At MCE*

MCE treated the problem of limited English communication in three ways. One is conducting special coaching at evening after the working hours. The second is using technology as the aid for communication. The third is conducting open tasks for interactional communication.

In the special tutorial hours, language teaching is specifically oriented towards teaching structures. The intake of MCE is moderate mixed level students. Though most of the students reveal to be hailing in English medium schools, their level of language comprehension and production is not convincing. The MCE institutional management forces the English faculties to adopt grammar translation method so that the student could translate what they say in the vernacular language. Students feel tedious with this conventional approach as they are not able to relate their grammatical knowledge to translate and understand the meaning, form and function of the language items (Yi'an Wu, 2001).

The English teachers also face great challenges in mending and molding the students' linguistic and communicative behaviour. Neither the students nor the subject teachers truly attempt to converse in English. Subject faculties argued that the students get low marks because of their poor writing skills. In giving explanation for producing poor result, one Chemistry faculty reported,

We teach our subject in English. But the students are not able to interpret what we teach. Again, they do not write as it is given in the book. They are not able to memorize in English.

Another science faculty added,

They lack writing skills. They commit lot of spelling mistakes. They are not able to write even short definitions. They should improve vocabulary skills.

An engineering faculty extended to the notion of imposing charge to the English department,

The English faculties need to give exercise on dictation skills. They need to provide a bank of vocabulary and should ask them to spell the word properly. Our subject is vast; we need to cover the syllabus. Hence the English facul-

ties need to help the students to develop their technical vocabulary skills.

The MCE subject faculties specifically insisted on English faculties to create the bank of domestic and technical vocabulary to enrich the students' general and technical use of language. The English faculties too cannot balance the situation whether to put forth adequate grammatical knowledge or to strictly facilitate interaction or to teach only the prescribed syllabus content and just to concern only with their academic results. A list of definitions, extended definitions, and word derivations is included with the purpose and functional tasks, and process description tasks are practiced to define and describe the technical processes. Again, the students are asked to demonstrate the graphical representations of the technical processes through pair and group work.

Several meetings are convened to all the faculties to stress the importance of teaching in English, so that the students can be made familiar with the available vocabulary of their subject. It is also stressed that in all the classes they need to communicate in English and create campus without English deterioration. It is also convinced that all the subject faculties should work along with the English faculties to improve the overall communication skills of the students. As students need to study fundamental and engineering sciences in English, they need to comprehend and understand in English. Oral and written assignments are given to practice comprehending and productivity skills. Further seminars are conducted to elucidate technical content and to develop presentation skills.

A well equipped Communication lab is established with both the components of language lab and interactive lab. Software equipments and an interactive console in language lab aided the students to improve listening and reading skills. Video presentations of group discussions and debates are also provided through the software. And again, inbuilt self assessing technical tools and language exercises are provided. The students confidently worked in the language lab for exercising grammar and vocabulary. They are able to refer online dictionaries too. But, this point of exposure to technical aided language learning has little contributed to their productive ability. After working for a long three hours in the language lab for several weeks, the students are unprepared to interact with their peers in English. Though they attempt to converse in English, they are able to speak only two or three formal sentences. As they formally communicate inside the

lab, they are not able to participate in extended discourse (Liming, 1990). As their productive ability is not satisfactory, they need to be given interactional tasks to share and provide sufficient information (Watanabe & Swain, 2007).

To make the student to use compatibly English in interaction, interactive lab is established along with the provision of conducting oral presentations, group discussions and seminars. The students are asked to select and prepare their topics to perform in pair or group oral tasks. At times, when the student has prepared the topic with adequate information he/she performs to the mark. But, when they have not preplanned about the topic and not exposed to sufficient reading on the topic, they hesitate to perform as they lack sufficient preparation for the task (Holme & Chalauisaeng, 2006). This is due to their sheer negligence for the subject as they aim to score for only just passing, or they are under pressure to follow more on their disciplinary subjects, or due to their inconsistencies in extensive reading and referencing skills or due to their incapability of collecting sufficient materials for preparation from library and internet resources.

Most of the educational institutions put up a slogan and demand the students to communicate only in English (Auerbach, 1993). Notices will be posted and pasted in the entire campus for creating students' awareness to use English language for communication. In MCE too, notices bearing, 'Communicate only in English' have been pasted in every corridor to create awareness among the students to communicate only in English. And in the other instance, the institution took pride in creating English Zone in the campus.

The average students' level of enthusiasm towards English communication in the campus is not as favorable as it needs to be. Students understand the importance of English communication, but they cannot withstand restricting themselves in speaking English (Stern, 1983, cites Schumann, 1978). Some of the students violently react for speaking only in English and they are in turn strike or tore the templates and notices and ultimately disobey the order. There are some students who are found in extreme level to hate communicating in English. These students neither try to develop their linguistic knowledge nor do they have any ambition to seek a job in industry. They often assume as to be self employed and hence they seldom entertain to develop their English communication skills. Some of the students even tore the notices labeled with 'com-

municate only in English' from the notice board or over write 'speaking in mother tongue is essential' and 'Speak Tamil, Save Tamil'. With a mood of revolt, most of the students opposed the authoritarian sense for dictating to speak in English,

It is important to speak English. O.K. But in no way it means we should not speak in Tamil. How can I share my personal things with my friend? Even if I want to speak English, I don't know how to say my feelings in English. How far one can expect us to discuss only about the subject? With teachers, it is O.K. But with the friends, we speak personal. I try to discuss in English, but I am not able to speak completely. I cannot speak continuously too. I don't like people commanding us to speak in English. It should not be a rule that we should speak only in English. I don't want any job in MNC. I will start my own company. So, I don't want to speak English.

The Principal of MCE felt so anxious with the indifferent attitudes of the students that he requested me to monitor the use of English in all the subject classes and to evaluate the instructional practices in English in the classroom. It is found that the students lack active listening skills (Ferris & Tagg, 1996) as they often presume to be passive listeners and incomprehensive as they are unable to reflect answers when the faculty interrogates on the subject. While discussing about their routine studies and home work, they confess that they are not preparing the subject at the regular intervals of the exam. While scrutinizing their writing skills in assignment tasks and terminal tests, it is found that they are not productive with their own understanding of the subject (Liming, 1990). As they lack adequate receptive and productive skills, they are not able to discuss on the subjects and seems to be apprehended with communicative ability (Dzulkifli & Alias, 2012).

#### *At KCT*

The KCT management aimed at producing 100% academic results and providing 100% placements for all the final year students. KCT recruited experienced English faculties to promote better results in end semester examination and to aid students to acquire language proficiency to get through the campus interviews. Hence, teachers are more result oriented and concerned in making the students to get through the exams within the stipulated period.

The students expose their language skills but

they often found to be hesitating or troubleshooting with grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation and pronunciation (Foster, 1998). The student community faced a lot of stress and is overburdened with their academic assignments and examinations and hence they are not able to provide ample time to practice language skills. Though they learn English, they are confined to practice only for the sake of exams. They tend to read and write the textual questions but they are not given adequate practice to use their own language and expression (Lee, 2009).

The students who are familiar with the language items felt that learning grammar is boring and hence they preferred language learning through interaction. As most of the students favored and expected the communicative use of learning language, grammar is put to secondary importance (Turner & Upshur, 1995). Most of the students felt satisfied with the interactional approach and performance based evaluation when compared to routine academic exams and results. Even the slow learners felt relaxed while working with peers in open tasks (Calder n, 1999). They eagerly participated in pair and group oral tasks. English faculties observed that the students are more benefited with their peer assistance and class response during the task in action. Collaborative interactional activities, self and peer scaffolding, teacher's feedback and subsequent counseling helped the students to self check and examine their performances (Watanabe & Swain, 2007; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2003).

In class committee meetings, students confess that they are not able to understand the lectures delivered in English. With citing the students' interest and demand for their easy understanding of the subject in both theoretical and practical sessions, the subject faculties feel comfortable in bilingual teaching. The students are given just 50 minutes of exposure in English communication during their English classes in a whole day. Though the students are willing to communicate in English, they are not able to make it due to the attitudinal differences found in the students with limited English proficiency. It is also realized that the teachers' limitation in using English language has restricted them to follow bilingual education. Some of the students even complain that the teachers with limited English proficiency (TLEP) are not creating English speaking environment in the classes. The following quotes reported through informal interviews and class committee meetings illustrate this skeptical view,

As they are not fluent in English, they avoid English speaking students and they are often instructed to remain quiet in the classroom.

Good English speaking students are suppressed in the classroom. They are usually found conversing only with the Tamil speaking students.

These students are not even given space to clarify their doubts. They are responded only if they speak in both English and Tamil.

These self reflections reveal the teachers' constraint in understanding, comprehending and interpreting in English. Though they are potentially good in their subject, they are underestimated for their low L2 proficiency. The students whose L1 is Tamil, they are generally benefited with code switching and bilingual teaching. And the students' whose L1 is other than Tamil, resume to follow collaborative learning as they are not able to comprehend the code switching in Tamil. In pursuit to self understand the subject, some intrinsically motivated students adopt self-regulated learning to keep pace with the faculty (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2001, cited in Cassidy, 2011). The medium of instruction is English in the paper and pen, but the bilingual environment resumes being dominant throughout the campus. Technical English is taught in English, though the other subjects are handled bilingually. The students are encouraged to speak in English only in the English classes. Though the management expects to create the whole campus as a English communication zone and fosters to develop English speaking skills in both the staff and students, the social ethnic backgrounds impedes them to communicate in English at all times.

### *A comparative analysis - Exploring English communication scenario in the three technical institutions of Tamilnadu*

Students and the English faculties are constantly blamed for not making it possible to create an English communication environment within the campus. The institutional culture and environmental factors play a major role for developing communication (Jarvis & Stakounis, 2010). Even though in some engineering colleges communicating in English is made compulsory, it is not completely prevalent. The various levels of English communication from different quarters differ too. Peer group communication, student - teachers' interactional communication, fellow-faculties group communication, faculties-principal, student-principal, and principal-other officials' interactional communi-

cation varies distinctly according to their academic background and professional instinct towards English communication. It is widely understood that an unstable English speaking environment is prevailed, despite the efforts of institutional policies and planning.

In MCE and KCT, the non – language faculties stand under the shelter of bilingual teaching and explain that teaching in English only does not help the students to understand any subject (Auerbach,1993). In JCET, though the faculties are deemed to teach in English, they are empathetically concerned to use L1 outside the classroom. Though the institutions fosters at teaching engineering subjects in English, the faculties progress in bilingual teaching to maintain their affinity with the students and to make them easily familiarize with the subject content (Cummins, 1992). Even the language teaching faculties desire to be more flexible in their approaches in teaching and communicating in L1, but with restricted use.

In all the three institutions, it is constantly reported that as students are not even aware of the basic grammar and general vocabulary, they lack sufficient word-power to reveal ideas and to construct error free sentences (Grenfell, 2007). Though they would have studied structures throughout their schooling, it has not sufficiently prepared them for higher level education (Allen & Widdowson, 1979). The students' limited knowledge and use of general and technical vocabulary impedes them to indulge in social interaction and restricts their technical presentation skills too.

With the constant awareness given through guest lectures and motivation programmes, students are taking initiatives to develop their English language skills. The students who hail from English medium Matriculation schools seems to be better in exhibiting their English language skills than the students who hail from the vernacular state medium schools. Students repeatedly state that they feel to display their English communication skills but as they lack verbal skills and generally commit grammatical and spelling errors, they often feel reluctant to speak and write (Berman & Cheng, 2001). Their level of fluency is not improved due to their limited use of English and reserved attitudes. It is also found that most of the students try to adopt themselves to communicate in English but their spirit seems to be easily diminished as they often found to be retired in their social contexts of speaking in L1.

The faculties insist on English speaking but



they could not promote only with formal communication (Burke, 2011). Students need to communicate in English in both academic and professional purposes, but still it is found that their actual viability is to socially communicate with the peers. As they are adopted to use English for formal communication only, the major proportion of informal communication is left filled with other vernacular languages. This gap of contextual influences resulted in restricted English use. The trend of formal use of English and its limited use in personal and social circles has created an intangible demarcation in the role of English in academics (Black, 1991).

## Conclusion and Implications

Educational and technical institutions are found to be very influential in promoting the use of English for academic and professional communication. Schumann's (1978, cited in Stern, 1983) acculturation model is found to be more influential as most of the students either adapt or reject to learn target language and culture. English language pedagogy in Tamilnadu has seen through split language learning ideology where an optimistic and moderate learning student community understands and recognizes the importance of English language learning and practices communicating in English (Pakir, 1999). In contrast to this view, some extremist student community who are really socially unprivileged, culturally conservative, literally hesitant to learn technical education and reluctant to enter into MNC, stick on communicating only in L1. As they are resistant to learn and communicate in English, they need to be motivated and counseled by revealing the global use of professional communication (Warschauer, 2000).

Besides academic influences, the institutional environment is most determined by social and cultural factors. The attitudinal considerations are revealed through the social constructs of mutual regard and understanding (Chamot, 2005). It is realized that the students expect the faculties to use L1 for not only understanding the subject but also to provide moral support to them (Cummins, 1992). It is also analyzed that to make ease of their task to complete the syllabus and to keep rapport, the faculties too wanted to use L1. It is implied that the faculties need to be consistent in provoking English speaking environment through considerably practicing English for pedagogical and social purposes (Pakir, 1999).

This paper highlights the importance of English communication today and relates how language pedagogy should focus on creating awareness and interest among the technical students to use English for communicative purposes (Peirce, 1989; Warschauer, 2000). Though the preference and use of L1 can be considered, it also needs to be realized that the increased use of L2 needs to be sustained for successful L2 communication (Cummins, 1992). Bilingual teaching can be commended for academic achievement, but it needs to be taken care to gradually augment L2 influences in personal, social and academic communications. Innovative instructional practices need to be employed by the faculties for the constant improvement of the students to engage in interactional communicative activities in the classes. The restricted use of English for only classroom pedagogy needs to be considerably extended to personal and social communication to foster its extensive use in both inside and outside the classroom (Stern, 1983; Auerbach, 1993).

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