

Examining Undergraduate Technical Students' English Language Proficiency in Campus Arrangements

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Abstract

Expansion of Engineering Colleges (2008): The All-India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) allowed numerous societies, academies, or trusts to establish engineering colleges across India in 2008. This led to a proliferation of engineering institutions.

Shift in Campus Placement Testing (2010 Onward): Post-2010, there was a notable shift in campus placement testing procedures. Companies began placing greater emphasis on evaluating the English language competency of engineering students.

Evolution of Testing Levels (2012): Initially, companies focused on testing basic grammar knowledge. However, over time, the testing standards were elevated. Some companies, like ADP and Accenture, started assessing language skills at the level of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) in 2012.

Paradigm Shift by TCS (2014): In 2014, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) introduced a significant change by testing students' writing ability through online, on-campus placements on a pan-India scale. Notably, the evaluation was performed by machines, marking a departure from traditional manual evaluation methods seen in tests like the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) writing module.

Challenges Faced by Students: Since these changes, students in every batch have faced challenges in coping with tests that assess English grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing ability.

Objective of the Paper: The stated objective of the paper is to report the most recent testing patterns in English grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing. The intention is to provide insights that can guide English language trainers in engineering colleges to align their training programs with industry demands.

Importance of Industry-Relevant Training: The study suggests that English language trainers in engineering colleges should tailor their training programs to meet the evolving demands of the industry. This underscores the importance of adapting educational curricula to align with the changing requirements of the job market, ensuring that students are well-prepared for the challenges of the recruitment process. In conclusion, the described changes highlight the dynamic nature of the engineering education landscape in India, particularly in response to industry requirements for strong English language skills among graduates.

Keywords: Campus placements, English grammar, Reading comprehension, Vocabulary, Composition, and Testing.

1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of campus placement testing procedures in engineering colleges in India, particularly focusing on the assessment of English language proficiency. The transition from basic grammar testing to more advanced evaluations, such as Graduate Record Exam (GRE)-level assessments and automated writing evaluations, reflects the changing expectations of companies recruiting from these colleges.

AICTE's Permission in 2008: AICTE permitted numerous societies, academies, or trusts to establish engineering colleges in 2008.

Initial Focus on Job Placement: Engineering colleges paid attention to providing jobs for their outgoing students.

Shift in Testing Procedures After 2010: There was a significant change in campus placement testing procedures in engineering colleges in India after 2010.

English Language Competency Testing: Companies started testing the English language proficiency of engineering students during campus placements.

Evolution of English Proficiency Testing: Initially, basic grammar knowledge was tested. Gradually, the testing standards were raised, with companies like ADP, Accenture focusing on GRE-level language skills in 2012. In 2014, there was a paradigm shift as TCS conducted online assessments, testing students' writing abilities. The evaluation was done by machines rather than human evaluators, akin to the TOEFL writing module. This information highlights the increasing importance placed on English language proficiency in the hiring process for

engineering students in India, with companies adapting their testing methods to assess a range of language skills.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This paper aims to bring out the latest testing patterns in the campus placements. The testing patterns have

been changing every year since 2010. This paper focuses on identifying the type of questions, types of testing patterns that are included in the tests. It will help the teaching fraternity to train the students as per the current standards set by the recruiting companies.

3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been little research done on English language proficiency testing for college placements. Although there has been a good deal of study on language evaluation, there is little attention paid to evaluating language proficiency during campus assignments. Likewise, research on hiring practices in businesses.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To identify, classify, and assess the English language testing process used in engineering colleges for campus placements in India throughout the current decade.

5. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As far as the researcher is aware, there hasn't been any legitimate research done on evaluating English language proficiency for college placements in India. On the other hand, there is a substantial body of literature on recruitment practices and English language testing. The primary goal of the researchers is to identify types, and languages that are evaluated for postings on campus. As a result, they have disregarded the research on linguistic evaluation and hiring practices in general.

Language Testing: According to Priscilla Allen, language testing is the practice and study of evaluating the proficiency of an individual in using a language effectively.

Language testing is of eight kinds:

- 1. Direct Testing:** The instructor asks to write an essay or speak on a topic given. This type of testing is called direct testing.
- 2. Indirect testing:** In this type of testing, a student is asked to pronounce the words provided to him/her, and the instructor checks his/her pronunciation ability.
- 3. Objective testing:** Multiple choice questions are part of this type of testing. The scores of the students remain the same, although an evaluator is replaced with another.
- 4. Subjective testing:** Depends on the evaluator, the scores of the students vary in subjective testing. For example, instructors are asked to evaluate an essay of a student, and the score awarded by each evaluator differs.
- 5. Discrete point testing:** Each component of language is tested in particular, and the result of the student varies from region to region. The questions may be objective or true or false, but each item or component of language is tested one after another.
- 6. Integrative testing:** A few of the questions in the IELTS exam are part of integrative testing. A test-taker needs to listen to a conversation, take notes on it, and answer a cloze test.
- 7. Non-referenced testing:** Instead of testing a student's language ability, this test tests his/her performance. The score decides his/her rank in the test.
- 8. Criterion-referenced testing:** A task is assigned to a student, and if he/she passes the test, his candidature is considered satisfactory and vice-versa.

There are six different types of tests

- 1. Placement test:** This test is assigned to a student who wants to get admitted to an institution. His receptive and productive skills are tested, and he will be placed in the right classroom based on his/her score in the test.
- 2. Diagnostic test:** The instructor of a course conducts this test to his/her students before the instructor starts delivering the course content. This test lets the instructor know the strengths and weaknesses of his/her students on the course and can plan his lecture subsequently.
- 3. Progress/Achievement Test:** This is a direct test and tested during the course. It lets the teacher know how closely the students follow the lectures and their comprehension ability.
- 4. Final Progress/Achievement Test:** This test is given to the students at the end of the course. Based on the marks of students in the test, the teacher will notice how far the objectives of the course are met.

5. Proficiency Test: IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, GMAT, etc., are a few types of this test. This test measures the overall language skills of the students but not based on the courses they underwent.

6. Aptitude test: It tests the student's ability to learn. The tests students take during their recruiting process are a combination of different kinds and types of tests. It is a difficult task to judge that each test is limited to one class or/and type of test.

6. ANALYZING TESTING IN CAMPUS PLACEMENTS

The researchers and their colleagues have been actively involved in preparing undergraduate technical students for campus placements over the past decade. The emphasis has been on making students employable by training them in communication skills, especially focusing on listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

The role of language teachers on campus is highlighted, as they conduct various sessions to enhance students' employability. The placement drives often involve companies seeking trained, knowledgeable, and industry-ready candidates. The testing process typically includes assessing reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar skills, with some companies also evaluating composition skills.

An interesting development mentioned is the shift in the process of test creation. Initially, companies assigned paper setting to experts, but after 2010, third-party companies like Cocubes and Aspiring Minds entered the industry. These companies are now responsible for conducting tests on a nationwide scale, making the recruiting process more efficient for top-notch companies in India.

The testing companies have evolved over the years, initially focusing on beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. However, they have now set standards comparable to international English proficiency tests like TOEFL, IELTS, GRE, or CAT in India. This shift in standards suggests a growing alignment with global testing practices.

It's also mentioned that since 2014, there has been a custom of students adapting to new ways of testing as they understand the question formats in examinations. This could imply that students have become more familiar with the testing methods, which might impact how they prepare for and approach placement tests.

In summary, the narrative provides insights into the evolution of the placement testing process, the involvement of third-party companies, and the adaptation of standards comparable to international proficiency tests in the context of campus placements for technical students in India.

6.1 English Grammar

At first, there was very little emphasis on grammar assessment during campus placements. In its 2014 "E-mail writing" test, TCS advised candidates to pay close attention to punctuation. That was the start of it. Components like articles, prepositions, and tenses were added to the list of testing items year after year. Over the previous four years, Not only was error detection examined, but also voice, degree of comparison, and stated speech knowledge. The multiple-choice options offered in the tests are nearly identical. The candidates taking the test have begun exercising caution while responding to them after that. The subject-verb agreement was the prime focus when questions on spotting errors were given in the placement tests initially. Besides it, there were few types of questions on prepositions, errors based on singular and plural, or pronouns. Nowadays, students need to practice the mistakes related to all the parts of speech at an advanced level. Students must know the types of errors possible with each piece of speech in spotting errors and have to be focused. The language trainers/instructors should focus on dealing with identifying the errors based on each part of speech. Hence, their respective students can do better in the tests. There is the latest update in testing spotting errors. The traditional way is identifying errors out of the four parts in the sentence. Now, four sentences are provided and labelled as A, B, C, & D. Students ought to detect the number of sentences containing errors and choose the correct option out of the four provided.

Students should focus on improving their sentences as well. Tenses testing is the main focus. A sentence must have a phrase changed to one of the suggested alternatives. This is an advanced level statement with occasionally two or more pronouns, and the following relative, choose the appropriate pronoun or antecedent from the list of possibilities. Students have a difficult task ahead of them and educators must provide pupils numerous exercises on the subject to help them get ready to respond to them.

6.2 Vocabulary

When the companies conducted a recruitment test, the focus was more on synonyms and antonyms a few years ago. They were questioned at three levels. Except for two or three

companies, most of them tested the knowledge of three-starred words. It was purely a memory test. Testing on vocabulary has also undergone tremendous changes over time. Antonyms are seldomly tested now. Synonyms are checked through sentence completion. A contextual clue is provided in a sentence, and the test-takers must pick up the right option out of them. Despite not knowing the meaning of a word, a test-taker can answer the question if he/she has practiced similar examples. More than memorizing the synonyms, the test-takers must learn root words, suffixes, and prefixes to identify the right option. Teachers need to polish students' critical thinking skills too to identify the right choice. In addition to them, one-word substitutions, phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions are also tested now. Memorizing such a long list is a difficult task. The Cloze test is another component of testing. The blanks contain both grammar and vocabulary. Teachers should train students based on these criteria.

6.3 Reading comprehension

The conventional method of teaching reading comprehension is widely recognized, and it is also feasible to provide coaching for those areas. According to the most recent version, test-takers don't concentrate on assessing open-ended questions, reading for information questions, or testing inferential questions. Long test passages are no longer the main focus. A brief paragraph introducing an unknown topic—one that is outside of their field of study—is given. It is necessary to determine the passage's subject or tone. These kinds of inquiries may be uncommonly observed in the conventional testing methodology. Additionally, a brief paragraph is given with an unfinished ending, and the test-taker must select the correct option from the four available.

6.4 Composition skills

The recruiting process had a paradigm shift once TCS introduced a test on E-mail writing in campus placements in 2014. As it is essential to correspond vertically and horizontally and outward and inward in a company, the plan to test e-mail writing ability is quite reasonable. As part of testing, ten hints/phrases are provided based on a situation. The test-taking aspirant should write a mail online in ten minutes, and the mail should not exceed fifty words. Anyone can write a mail, but writing within the word limit mentioned in the stipulated time on the given situation has certainly become a nightmare to most of the test-taking aspirants. Only a few companies test the composition skills of the students. A student may prove orally proficient; however, being proficient in writing needs sound knowledge of grammar, structures, and

syntax. While developing any type of report, one has to showcase his ability in writing—companies like Capgemini, ADP, Accenture test students' composition skills. Students who take the Capgemini placement test have to write an essay. The topic on essay, along with six to ten keywords, is provided. They need to write an essay in not more than two hundred words. The essay should be written in twenty-five minutes. Two essays must be written. Teachers need to train students on these lines.

7. CONCLUSION

The researchers have spent years preparing students for internships. They intend to share their information with other teaching fraternities after noticing improvements in the placement tests. The purpose of this study is to pinpoint the modifications between current and previous placement tests. This research is not centered on effectively recognizing the different kinds of questions and their levels of difficulty for different placement exams that the businesses administer. Moreover, this study has not concentrated on a review of the literature on Testing for English proficiency during placements on campus.

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