

Girl Students' Perceptions and Preferences Concerning Literature as Communicative Pedagogy

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Abstract: In present times, to some, gender inequality could be a thing of passé- be it their position, their status or their performance. While the fact is that the reality is far away from this myth belief. This difference between gender perspectives and performance manifests in day to day life. The proposed paper studies and analyze one area where girls have proved better than their male counterparts. With the help of data collected through an exhaustive questionnaire, this notion gets confirmed that girls are better with communication skills, soft skills and literary skills. They do excel and possess extraordinary skills to present themselves differently to prove their capability.

Keywords: Effective Communication, Gender, Literature.

Importance of Communication Skills for technocrats: A sufficient number of students are enrolled in different institutes in different parts of India to get quality technical education. Communications skills, rather quality communication skills play a significant role in their academic & professional world (2). In today's competitive and globalized world, communication has become an essential tool for everyone- be they students, academics or professionals. For technocrats and professionals, it becomes all the more necessary to acquire good communication skills as they have to communicate effectively with all their business and professional colleagues. They need a highly developed ability to communicate as they have to present reports, seminars etc. Even though they belong to technical fields, for presentation and persuasion they do require the abilities of effective communication as it is the life-blood of any business. So, when these students join business concern or corporations as employees, or when they themselves become the entrepreneurs, they need effective communication. Modern business activities are taking place with foreign customers as far as IT industries are concerned. For executing these activities technocrats with excellent communication skills are needed as the development of a nation largely depends on them.

Actual Scenario of Communication Skills among technocrats: The utter requirement of good communication skills among future technocrats has been mentioned above but the picture has got the darker side also (3). The national employability report for engineering graduates published recently by Aspiring Minds, a company that tests job seekers' employability, revealed that around 60% of engineering graduates fails to get jobs because they lack the required leveling of English. Add to that another finding- only 17 percent students who graduate from engineering institutions annually have the skill set the booming IT sector is looking for. Gone are the days when an engineering

degree was a sure-shot guarantee for employment. It has changed now. Poor knowledge of communication skills that lags behind in meeting the market standards is coming in the way of the employability of graduates. President of the Apeejay Stya group, Sushma Berlia, explains, "Apart from domain knowledge, we are also looking for soft skills. An engineer today has to communicate with the client, engage with the organization and its goals, work in a team and understand the dynamics of work place better. Finding the right candidate is a challenge" (4).

Reasons behind poor Communication Skills among Technocrats: Simply having good marks and completing a degree is not enough to get a job in today's rapidly changing economy. "Just graduating with good scores does not help. The schools do not teach students to use both sides of the brain, which is most important," says Kishore Biyani, CEO of the FUTURE group. India's former President Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam also rightly stated that India does not have a problem of unemployment, but of un-employability. Graduates lack skills besides the academic or technical skills. Few of them have sufficient knowledge of engineering domains but not of language that is helpful in learning soft skills. Few years ago, no one would have imagined that engineers could use their edge in English to pip competitors to top industry jobs. Today this is fast becoming reality. An increasing body of evidence from the field is suggesting that verbal and written communication, coupled with etiquette, has become as much of a hiring norm for the employers of fresh engineering graduates as the conceptual knowledge of engineering domains.

One of the fundamental skills needed for success is the ability to verbalize, write, listen, give presentations, facilitate discussions, and share knowledge effectively. One of the first areas other than appearance, that will form some ones first impressions, is how you communicate. This includes speaking as well as body language. (Albuquerque, 5) On the contrary our technocrats pay sufficient attention to their physical traits but not their mental and attitudinal skills. They do not try to learn grammar, dictation and accents, to write articles, features, or editorials, to get involved in discussions based on various current topics of national and international importance. Another thinkable reason behind poor communication skills is the mushrooming of sub standard private technical institutions. Such institutes do every unimportant effort to get their seats filled but do not pay attention towards student's quality education so as to make them capable and responsible engineers to contribute in the building of nation.

Girls exhibiting better communication skills: Along with the problem of present scenario of communication skills possessed by our engineering students, the skills possessed by the girl students cannot be denied. They possess better communication skills as compared to her counterparts, especially the male counterparts. This assumption is supported or made strong with reference to the questionnaire used for study. Girls are ahead in possessing better communication skills because they show full dedication, devotion and determination in doing a work. They are naturally gifted with softness, delicacy and sophistication in her deeds as well as in nature. Here this tendency of doing things naturally is

reflected in her studies also. Be it a vocation course, or a technical course or a professional degree, she brings smoothness and creativity in her work. Girls do a particular job with particularity and perfection if provided with an opportunity.

Questionnaire for the study: As the present paper deals with the issue of girls being more creative and proficient with communication skills. The thesis proposed in this paper is based on an exhaustive questionnaire that leads to field study focusing the communication skills of boys and girls studying in technical institutes. The questionnaire was divided into four sections, each asking purpose/goal of possessing good communication skills. The First section of the questionnaire entitled as “Need of Communication” comprises questions on the requirement of good communication skills in a professional degree. One can try to achieve a certain goal if one knows the importance of that goal. The same is true of communication and life skills. First the students must realize the importance and need of these skills in their curriculum then only they will strive hard to achieve them.

The second section of the questionnaire high-lights the situation and level of communication at individual level. The questions falling under this section asks the students to tell about their present communication situation or where and how do they rate themselves in the possession of these skills. The questions in this section make the students to think upon their current communication skills and help in realizing wherever they lack. The third section has the questions about the 'solutions' with which the students can remove the short comings of their communication skills. These solutions in the form of reading newspaper, magazine, journals, participating in debates and discussions can improve their present situation of communication skills. The students while giving answers to the questions in this particular section thought about the solutions which can improve their communication skills. The last and the fourth section of the questionnaire throw light on literature as communicative curriculum of professional degrees. They have been provided with many options in the form of questions as to include different literary genres in their syllabus to get endorsed with quality communication skills. Certain questions like “How does literature help in building your confidence?” “Do you agree that literature reflects society and society creates new literature?” “What makes the students to think rationally about the role or contribution of literature in developing students' communication skills?” Have been responded positively by girls' students leading to the inference that girls possess better communication skills as compared to the boys.

The present paper endorses the hypothesis that girls are sincere soft spoken and possess better communication skills. The findings of all the four sections show girls' unbelievable interest in learning varied forms of literature and this has helped sufficiently in increasing their communication skills. To illustrate the thesis, two questions from each section of the questionnaire of the study have been analyzed in detail. Girls prove better if given a chance to prove themselves. While answering in all the four sections, girls have showed their in exhibited interest in learning varied spectrums of literature and this has helped sufficiently in

increasing their communication skills. To emphasize my point of view, I would like to select two questions from each section to authenticate the idea that girls possess better communication skills as compared to boys.

The data referred here has been collected from 17 different technical institutes/ universities being located in NCR and other than NCR. A total number of 680 students answered the questionnaire out of which 481 are male and 199 were females. Through this questionnaire, the main idea is also being emphasized i.e. study of literature helps in building/developing technical student's communication skills. Girls have shown interest in studying literature along with the curriculum. They leave behind their male counterparts in the exhibition of these communication skills.

Graphical Interpretation and discussion of the questionnaire below- Section 1: "Need of communication"

Q. Is there any need of communication skills for professionals?

The above question is a yes/no type question. Considerably a good percentage (as shown in Fig.1) selects the option 'yes'. It helps in strengthening the notion that professionals can prove better if they possess impressive communication skills. 97.4 % of the girls favour the same as compared to 96% of boys.

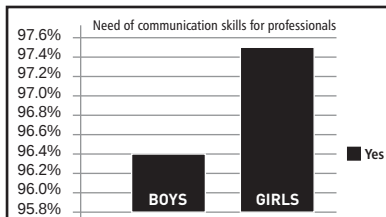


Fig.1 : Need of Communication Skills

Q2. How much importance do you give to communication skills?

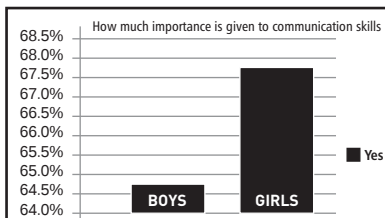


Fig.2 : Importance of Communication Skills

This particular question carries three options i.e. Very Much, Much & Average. Although boys and girls opted the same option but the percentage of girls i.e 67.75% as compared to the 64.75 of boys, is more that favours the first option. This (Fig.2) shows that girls are more interested in possessing good communication skills.

Section 2: "Individual communication situation" - This section highlights the individual situation for professionals; the questions asked in this particular section are of the same nature.

Q. Do you possess good communication skills?

This question has two options only i.e. 'YES' and 'NO'. Both boys and girls admit that they possess good communication skills (as shown in Fig.3) but around 51% girls said 'yes' and only 46% boys said 'yes' on the question of possessing good communication skills. The reason behind is

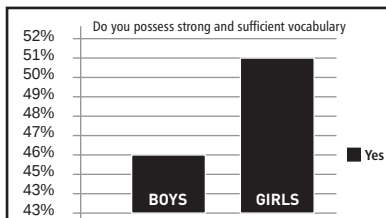


Fig.3 : Importance of Vocabulary

that girls are more appreciative to literary pieces and receptive to life skills.

Q. Do you really enjoy reading a literary work?

The graphical interpretation (Fig.4) clearly shows that 70% girls said 'yes' whereas only 59% boys said 'yes' as compare to the percentage of girls. It again indicates towards their possessing of good communication skills.

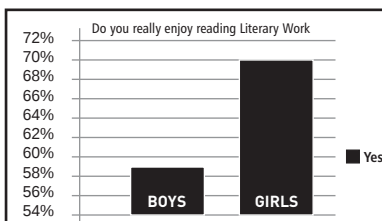


Fig.4 : Reading of Literary Work

Section 3: “Solutions”

Q. Which is your favorite literary genre?

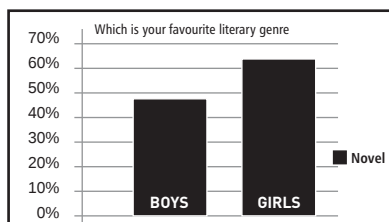


Fig.5 : Favourite Literary Genre

Following options were given for the question i.e Novel, Drama, Poetry, any other (specify). For this question, both selected the same option i.e 'Novel' but again the 63% girls told 'Novel' as their most favorite genre where as 47% boys put 'Novel' as their favorite genre. This again gives the comprehensive proof that reading of literary pieces

naturally improves one's communication skills.

Q. Do you agree that reading/ watching literature helps in critical thinking?

This is again a 'YES/ 'NO' type question and both opted the same option but the percentage of girls is more in accepting the statement that reading / watching literature helps in critical thinking.

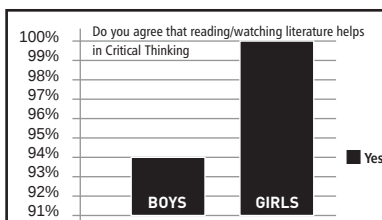


Fig.6 : Literature & Critical Thinking

Section 4: “Inclusion of Literature” - This section discusses literature as an important component in developing communication skills, question in this section are as follows:

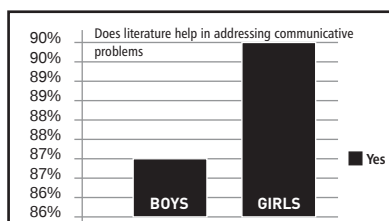


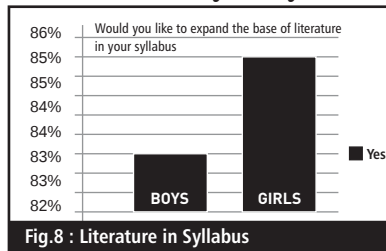
Fig.7 : Literature as a solution to comm. problems

Q. Does literature help in addressing communicative problems?

Again it is a 'YES/'NO' type question. 90% girls are ahead of 87% boys in accepting the role of literature in addressing the communicative problems.

Q. Would you like to expand the base of literature in your syllabus?

Regarding this more percentage of girls is in favour of expanding the base of literature in their syllabus i.e it also proves that reading of literature makes technocrats better professionals and moreover good human beings.



Conclusion:

Modern education has multidimensional facets. In that, technical education is playing a vital role by giving/preparing batches of engineering students to contribute in the building of nation. They can contribute if they are skilled and knowledgeable. Proficiency in soft skills is the need of hour and our technocrats can be made well versed into these soft skills with the help of literature as part of their syllabus. For that they are to be given balanced exposure of technical subjects as well as literary genres. Moreover girls are ahead in possessing better communications skills as they exhibited more interest in going through literary pieces. Hence, inclusion of literary pieces may be recommended to make our future engineers well-conversant and well-established.

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