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Differences in the Board of Education and its Impact in the Writings of Engineering Graduates

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ABSTRACT

Learning English as a second language is a complex and complicated one for most of the Indian students even though they are learning the language for almost 14 years of schools education. Education, in general, itself is becoming complex because of the various boards of education and difference in their curriculum and teaching-learning process. This influences the students when they go for higher education. Writing technical documents is a necessity in technical higher education and due to the difference in their learning boards, the learners suffer when they write a technical report. This becomes a problem for the language teacher in a technical institution to address the difference in the learning capabilities of students from different boards of school education. This article is a study on the differences in the writings of technical graduates from different boards of school education and its impact

Key words : Boards of Education, English Teaching, Academic Writing, Impact in writing.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is a language taught as a second language in India more than a century in all levels of education. India, known for its many challenges and one of its biggest challenges is making students to write and speak in English fluently. Students in this country start learning English at their kinder gardens and continue until under graduation. Despite the fact that they learn a language for almost 17 years, the result is always a big disappointment to students and teachers as well. [5]

Students face the challenge when they begin their higher education. Until school, language proficiency tested only through examinations where they are expected to reproduce what they were taught in every academic year. Language proficiency tests are designed to check their knowledge in bits and pieces and the students are not taught to write a discourse or to speak impromptu. [4]

Language taught in bits and pieces and tested for the language at the application level; the students when they hit their graduation face a huge difficulty where they are expected to produce contents on their own. Here comes the challenge when they need to write articles for publications and reports for their projects. Publication houses and journals with remarks on language accuracy return most papers from the technical degree aspirants. Reports submitted by students are said to have discourse deficiencies at various aspects of language. [7]

There are many reasons behind the errors committed by students who are in engineering under graduation. Language teachers who get students from different parts of India with a mix in their socio-economic status would definitely come across problems with a heterogeneous group of students. The difference in their board of education and difference in the curriculum is one of the major reason for the learners to struggle at their graduation to make a composition. [6]

The main objective of this study is to find whether the difference in their board of education makes a change in their writing. Project reports from engineering students taken for study to identify the occurrences of different errors. The students' school education identified to see how they make a difference in their writing and error distribution.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

School education plays a major role in language education. Indian students learn English as a second language right from their kindergarten to senior secondary education.

An article from edsys states, "A state syllabus will be more of a generic kind and very easy for a student to follow despite his aptitude. But when it comes to cracking entrance exams, these students will have to put in some extra effort in specific subjects."[1]

Error analysis in the writings of technical graduates would be a solution to improve their writing competency in English. Richards et.al (1985:96) states that error analysis is a tool to find the language proficiency of the writer, to find the methods of the learners learning a language and to find the difficult areas where they tend to make more mistakes. [2] Corder (1974, p.125) stated, "The study of errors is part of the investigation of the process of language learning. In this respect, it resembles methodologically the study of the acquisition of the mother tongue. It provides us with a picture of the linguistic development of a learner and may give us indications as to the learning process."[3]

The data from error analysis along with the data on the school background of the students whose reports were taken for the study will provide a big understanding of the patterns of errors made by them.[8]

3. METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this study is to find the impact of the difference in school education in the writing skills of students through central and state boards. The target group for this study is the Engineering students at VIT University, Vellore. VIT is a deemed to be university located at Vellore in India, which houses more than 30,000 engineering graduates. The student population at this institution is known for its diversity in language, culture and most importantly a huge heterogeneous group from various boards of education like CBSE, ICSE and State boards of various states.

The project reports submitted by the students as a part of their course requirement are the corpus for this study. Project reports from five major engineering departments namely, Mechanical Engineering, Computer Science Engineering, Information Technology, Electrical Engineering and Electrical and Electronics Engineering were selected for the study through a convenience sampling method.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

The project reports were collected as soft copies from the faculty members from the five major disciplines who were accessible to the researcher. Twenty samples from each discipline were taken for the analysis, which makes one hundred as the sample size. The project reports were analysed for the errors and repetition of errors in each category. Then the errors analysed were categorized in a table.

The background details of the students whose projects were taken for the study identified through the profile data. Through this data, their educational backgrounds were identified and recorded. Having the data on the errors committed by the students and their school education boards,

it is now possible to identify students from different boards of education and their share in the percentage of errors committed. It is now possible to identify which are the boards of education that motivate their students in academic writing and which are not.

The table below shows the record of the background data of the students whose reports were taken as sample for the study. There were 50 students from CBSE schools, 3 students from ICSE schools and 47 students from different state boards in India.

Table 1: Errors as per school education background of the students

Board of Education	No. of Students	No. OF Errors
CBSE	50	2104
ICSE	3	136
State Boards	47	2840

The following figure shows the data per person as per their educational backgrounds. It is evident from the data that the students who have taken education from CBSE and ISC committed less number of errors when compared to the students from State board education.
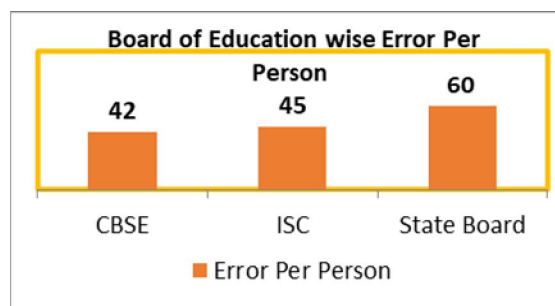

Figure 1: Error data as per school boards

The error data collected from each project report were recorded in a table with no of errors on each category and the total number of errors committed by each individual was identified.

The pie chart in Figure 2 shows the overall percentage of errors collected from the samples. A count of 5080 errors in total recorded from the one hundred samples. Errors in articles hold the major share with 1706 occurrences followed by the typographic conventions with 1095 occurrences. The pie chart presents the categories and the percentage share of the errors.
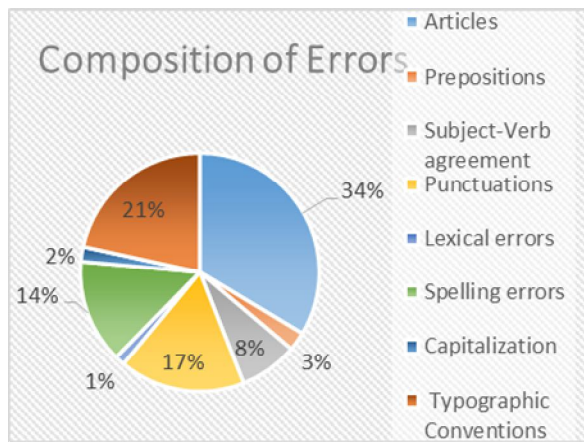
Figure 2: Category wise distribution of errors

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5. FINDINGS, RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The data and its presentation in the previous section give us some key information. The information from the data presented in Fig 2 states that the engineering aspirants need training in the usage of articles and drafting a technical document without typographic convention errors. Practice in the use of punctuation is also needed to be given to the technical graduates to perfect their writing skills.

The data from Table 1 and Fig 1 shows that the errors committed by the students from central board school education make comparatively lesser errors than the students do from state board school education.

This study has given some data from which we can say that the language curriculum in central board schools is better than the state boards. There is a scope for further research in this area on comparing the central and state board syllabuses in English to understand the differences and incorporate necessary changes. This can benefit the students who take engineering graduation when they prepare academic discourses.

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