

Challenges Faced by First-Generation Learners in Learning English in Engineering Institutes

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Abstract: *The English language is used as the main instructional tool in engineering institutes, which is a key factor of academic performance and career growth. It is however, also very challenging to first-generation learners especially those whose backgrounds are not English and those whose backgrounds are socio-economically deprived. Such learners usually have a problem of language acquisition, understanding technical knowledge as well as effective communication. This paper explores linguistic, psychological and institutional barriers that impede their learning of the English language basing on the English studies and diasporic literature. The paper is a qualitative study involving secondary data and literature to examine the major problems which included low exposure to English, lack of confidence, cultural displacement and poor institutional support. It also examines the role of these challenges in the development of identity conflicts and poor performance at school. The results deliberate the significance of inclusive learning, student-focused instruction, and the incorporation of the language support systems in the engineering programs. There is also the need to interfere at the policy level to fill the gap between linguistic diversity and academic standards. The research ends with the statement that English proficiency should not be regarded as the technical competency but as an empowerment that would allow the first-generation learners to reach success in their academic tasks, social mobility, and professional development*

Keywords: First-generation learners, English language proficiency, engineering education, linguistic barriers, inclusive learning

I. INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant language of instruction in engineering education across India and many other non-native English-speaking countries. It is not only the medium through which technical knowledge is delivered but also the primary language used in textbooks, research publications, classroom interactions, and professional communication. In today's globalized world, proficiency in English is often considered essential for academic success, employability, and participation in international knowledge networks. However, this dominance of English creates a significant challenge for a large section of students, particularly first-generation learners who enter engineering institutes without adequate exposure to the language.

First-generation learners are typically defined as students whose parents have not attained higher education. These students often come from rural, semi-urban, or economically disadvantaged backgrounds where the medium of instruction at the school level is predominantly a regional or vernacular language. As a result, their familiarity with English is limited to basic reading or rote learning, without sufficient emphasis on communication or comprehension skills. When such students enter engineering institutes, they are suddenly exposed to a highly technical and English-intensive academic environment. This transition can be overwhelming, as they are expected to understand complex concepts, follow lectures, write assignments, and communicate effectively in a language they are not fully comfortable with.

The challenge is not merely linguistic but also cognitive and psychological. Engineering subjects involve abstract thinking, problem-solving, and the application of theoretical knowledge. When students struggle to understand the



language of instruction, their ability to grasp technical concepts is also affected. This creates a dual burden: they must simultaneously learn the subject matter and improve their language skills. In many cases, this leads to confusion, reduced academic performance, and a sense of frustration.

Moreover, the lack of English proficiency often results in psychological barriers such as low self-confidence, fear of speaking, and anxiety in classroom settings. First-generation learners may hesitate to ask questions, participate in discussions, or engage with peers due to fear of making mistakes or being judged. This further limits their opportunities for interactive learning, which is crucial for both language development and academic growth. The classroom environment, which ideally should encourage participation and dialogue, can instead become intimidating for such students.

Another important dimension of this issue is the socio-cultural context. English is often associated with urban, elite, and privileged sections of society. As a result, first-generation learners may experience a sense of cultural alienation or inferiority when they compare themselves with peers who have studied in English-medium schools. This creates an identity conflict, where students struggle to reconcile their linguistic background with the expectations of the academic environment. In this sense, their experience can be understood as a form of internal displacement, similar to themes explored in diasporic literature, where individuals navigate between different cultural and linguistic identities¹.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Bourdieu (1991), language is not a simple instrument of conversation but a type of symbolic power, as it mirrors social inequalities and strengthens them. In his concept of linguistic capital, those who speak dominant languages are at a better place to gain access to educational and economic resources (like English). This framework is very relevant when it comes to the engineering education because English is the most commonly used academic language. First-generation learners do not possess this linguistic capital, which is normally learned among students of privileged backgrounds at a young age by studying English as a medium at school. This imbalance brings about unequal learning level in the classroom where language mastery turns out to be a competence level. Consequently, first-generation learners have developed a perception of being less competent not as a result of intellectual deficiency but transpired as a result of language disadvantages. In this way, the Bourdieu theory can be used to understand how language acts as a gate keeping institution in higher education which has the effects of determining academic success and social mobility².

Ramanathan (2005) analyses the importance of English education in India and the inequalities that are ingrained in the system of education. In its study, it highlights that students are exposed to great challenges in their quest to acquire higher education in English medium, especially in other professional courses, such as engineering. Such learners are also found to have difficulties in understanding, writing, and communicating orally that impact directly on the performance of the learner. Ramanathan also claims that the prevalence of English in higher education turns into a gap between urban and rural students, which strengthens the socio-economic disparities. This is more complicated by the fact that most institutions do not adequately support learners in language and the first generation learners are left to struggle on their own. This does not only impact their performance at school but it also affects their confidence and their engagement in classroom activities. The study highlights the necessity to support languages and policies inclusive of multiple language groups to close the disparity between heterogeneous language groups and higher education requirements³.

Bhabha (1994) has introduced the term cultural hybridity, which is an effective approach to explain the linguistic experience of learners with first-generation linguistic background. Hybridity is a process of bargaining among various cultural and linguistic identities, which will lead to the formation of a third space where new identities will be formed.

¹ Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*.

² Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*.

³ Ramanathan, V. (2005). *English education in India*.



With the English learning set up, the non-English learning students are usually torn between their native language and the dominant academic language. This may result in an in-betweenness where the two language worlds feel like they do not belong to either of them. Although such hybridity is potentially a provider of creativity and adaptation, it may also lead to confusion and insecurity and, in particular, in academic institutions. The first-generation learners can find it difficult to speak fluent English and, at the same time, cannot identify themselves with the native linguistic image. The theory of Bhabha therefore brings out the dynamic and intricate essence of language learning as a process of culture and identity⁴.

Spivak (1988) dwells upon the problem of voice and representation, especially in the situation concerning the marginalized population. The term, as suggested by her, the subaltern, are people who are not included in power structures and people whose voices are not taken seriously. This concept can be implemented among the first-generation students who experience language barriers in English-based education. Such students can be rather unable to express their ideas and thoughts clearly, engage in discussions, and demonstrate their scholarly knowledge because of insufficient proficiency. Consequently, they can be viewed as inactive or less informed in spite of their firm conceptual grasp. The framework created by Spivak attracts attention to structural inequalities that silence such learners and restrict their academic activity. It also focuses on the necessity to establish the space in which the voices of the marginalized can be heard and appreciated. In this regard, language education should extend beyond skills acquisition to cover the areas of inclusion, representation, and empowerment⁵.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is based on three significant theoretical frameworks that assist in elucidating the difficulties of the first-generation students in learning the English language in the field of engineering. These involve the notion of linguistic capital, the social constructivism theory, and the identity negotiating perspective of learning a language. These frameworks, combined, offer an in-depth insight into the dynamics between language, learning, and identity in the development of students in academic life.

The initial theoretical approach is the linguistic capital, the focus of which is the idea of the importance of language as a social and cultural resource. Linguistic capital is the skill to efficiently perform on language in its socially appreciated situations especially in education and employment. English is the leading language in the institutes of engineering and students who are well versed in English are more likely to perform better in academics as well as in social aspects. This type of capital is however not always available among first-generation learners; that is because they are not exposed to this at an early age in their education. Consequently, they are at a disadvantage to comprehend lectures, discuss and articulate their thoughts. This imbalance brings an unequal opportunity in the classroom where language proficiency becomes an indicator of academic success and not intellectual talent. Therefore, linguistic capital is essential in determining access to knowledge, confidence and opportunities in future.

The second is grounded on the social constructivist theory, which considers the process of learning as an interactive and collaborative one. This view holds that knowledge is created by the social interaction, communication and shared experiences. Language is the key component in this process since it is the main tool of sharing and comprehension of ideas. To learn the language effectively, students require chances to communicate in the form of discussions, question and answer as well as interaction with others. However, first-generation learners are usually challenged with some obstacles that restrict their involvement, which include fear of errors, a lack of confidence, and being excluded by the peer groups. As a result, their language development competency is limited without active interaction. This forms a vicious circle with the lack of language skills leading to diminished engagement and the lack of engagement leading to

⁴ Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*.

⁵ Spivak, G. C. (1988). *Can the subaltern speak?*



diminished language skills. Thus, it is necessary that an inclusive and favorable learning atmosphere should be provided to promote meaningful engagement and increase language acquisition and academic insight⁶.

The third theoretical approach aims at identifying negotiation and adaptation of identity in language acquisition. Language is a source of communication as well as a significant identity. When students acquire a new language they usually experience a process of identity change, they need to balance the cultural and linguistic backgrounds they have with the requirements of the new language. It can be especially difficult with the first-generation learners. They might have a feeling of profane between their native language and English causing them to feel alienated or insecure. Meanwhile, they can also seek to adjust themselves by forming a hybrid identity of the two languages. This bargaining of identity is determined by the social perception, peer relations and institutional demands.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach based on:

4.1 Secondary Data

The current research uses a lot of secondary data to address the issue encountered by first-generation learners in the acquisition of English proficiency in the engineering institutes. The secondary data will involve already published academic research like books, peer-reviewed journal articles, governmental reports, and surveys conducted in educational establishments. These sources effectively offer a good theoretical as well as a factual basis to comprehend the linguistic, socio-economic and institutional aspects that influence language learning. The secondary data is especially suitable in this study because it permits the extensive analysis of the current research without the necessity of conducting time-consuming fieldwork. It also allows the researcher to make conclusions on a variety of contexts such as national and international views on language education. The research is also credible and profound in its findings through the analysis of established studies. Moreover, secondary data can be used to define common trends and frequent difficulties among first-generation learners, which will benefit the overall perspective of the problem in various educational organizations.

4.2 Literature Analysis

The literature analysis is one of the central elements of the research methodology as it is aimed at critical analysis of the scholarly works connected with English language learning, higher education, and socio-cultural theory. This will be carried out by examining the most significant studies, the theories, and the scholarly debates and defining the primary themes and gaps in research. The analyzed literature is based on the works on linguistics, education, and postcolonial studies, which offers an interdisciplinary approach. The research finds that such issues as the absence of exposure, language inequality, and identity conflict are prevalent among first-generation learners through systematic assessment. The literature analysis assists also in the comparison of the various perspectives and theoretical approaches such that the researcher may develop a well rounded argument. The synthesis of information to use a variety of sources makes the study have its conclusions based on the established academic discourse. This does not only enhance the validity of the research but also gives a systematic structure in the interpretation of the challenges in a combination of a wider socio-educational background.

4.3 Theoretical Interpretation

The research uses theoretical interpretation to explore the research findings using existing conceptual frameworks. These include the implementation of the pertinent theories including linguistic capital, social constructivism and identity negotiation to comprehend the experiences of first-generation learners. Theoretical interpretation enables the researcher to take his work beyond the descriptive analysis and give more information on the causal factors of the challenges that the students encounter. The study has connected empirical observations with theoretical notions by

⁶ Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*.



describing how language serves as a means of power, how learning is mediated by social interaction, and how identity is created by language acquisition. This approach facilitates the establishment of meaning and organization of the data and makes the analysis not a vacuum but related to the larger academic theories. Moreover, the theoretical interpretation improves the analytical richness of the study, which will allow it to make a contribution to the current scholarly debates on the topic of language acquisition, inequality, and educational inclusion.

V. CHALLENGES FACED BY FIRST-GENERATION LEARNERS

5.1 Lack of English Exposure

One of the major problems that the first-generation learners experience is the inability to be exposed to the English language early. Majority of these students attend schools in the regional or vernacular medium institution where English is only studied as a subject and not as a medium of communication. Therefore, they end up learning only grammar rules, textbooks and they are not put in any real-life learning. The result of this is poor vocabulary, sentence structure as well as understanding of spoken English. Once these students join engineering institutes, they are faced with immediate transition to English-mediated instruction that introduces a difference between their already acquired knowledge and academic requirement. They are not always able to follow the lectures, get to know technical terms and read reference materials. This deprivation is not only useful to their academic achievements but also it makes them less confident to engage in classroom activities. The lack of knowledge of English, therefore, serves as a basis of a barrier in their general learning process.

5.2 Socio-Economic Constraints

The notable socio-economic factors are very important in determining the language learning experience of the first-generation learners. Students with low economic statuses usually do not have access to the necessary learning tools like a private coach, English courses, and computer-based learning. They might not be exposed to English at home, through media and books and technology as their urban counterparts. They can also be limited by financial constraints to subscribe to more training programs that would help them improve their communication skills. Moreover, on the one hand, these students have pressures to study and work part-time or support family and have little time to develop languages. Such limitations do not allow English proficiency to improve and practice regularly. Consequently, the socio-economic inequality has a direct influence on their competitiveness academically and socially in the engineering institutes⁷.

5.3 Psychological Barriers

Psychological barriers play a very large role in determining how the first-generation learners learn the English language. Most students have fear, hesitation, and anxiety over the need to speak or write in the English language more so in a formal academic environment. This fear is usually based on the lack of self-confidence and the fear of being discriminated and laughed to death by the peers and teachers. These negative emotions form a block in the mind of the students that does not allow them to engage in classroom discussions or ask questions. This avoidance behavior over time keeps them exposed to the language hence even more limited to learn. Their cognitive functioning also is subject to anxiety, where they can hardly focus their attention, analyze information, and remember acquired ideas. The mood of the learners is an important factor in language learning where stress causes lack of motivation and interest at high rates⁸.

⁷ Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*.

⁸ Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis*.



5.4 Cultural Alienation

One of the challenges that the first-generation learners experience in the engineering institutes that use English as a medium of instruction is cultural alienation. English is commonly thought of as one of the signs of modernity, prestige and high social status. This can lead to the students who are non-English speakers to lack a sense of belonging to the prevailing academic culture. They tend to make comparisons with their peers who are fluent in the English language and have a background of privilege and affluence, and they end up feeling inferior and excluded. This feeling of alienation is not only linguistic but cultural as students find it hard to cope with new standards of communication and expression. They might feel that the academic environment does not value the native language and cultural identity. These experiences may make them less confident and willing to engage in classroom interactions⁹.

5.5 Academic Difficulties

First generation students tend to experience a lot of academic challenges because they have low levels of understanding English which is the major language of instruction in the field of engineering. Technical subjects demand high levels of comprehension of complicated concepts and terminologies as well as critical thinking, which are all expressed in English. Students who have a problem with the language will not be able to track the lectures, read textbooks, and understand the questions in exams. This poses a hindrance to learning since they are compelled to work extra hard to learn the language before they can know the subject matter. As a result, their performance in school can decline not due to their inability but their language problems. They can also experience difficulties in writing tasks, reports and working on projects, where clarity and accuracy in language is necessary. Such circumstance may result in frustration, lack of motivation, and inadequacy in academia¹⁰.

5.6 Identity and Self-Esteem Issues

Language also has a strong connection with who an individual is and how one perceives themselves, and in this case, the English proficiency is a significant element in defining the confidence level of the first-generation learners. Lack of proficiency in English by students usually creates a sense of inadequacy and low self esteem in them, particularly when they cannot communicate their thoughts effectively in school. This may cause them to start doubting themselves and thinking that they are not as well able as their counterparts even when they have sound intellectual capacities. Consequently, they might not be willing to engage in classroom activities, group discussions, and presentations. This decreased participation, over time, may restrict their learning processes and their general academic development. Moreover, the process of continuous comparison with the fluent English speakers can increase the sense of inferiority. It is thus a tool of language and factor of identity and self worth¹¹.

5.7 Social Inequality in Language Learning

Access to resources, power structures and social context hugely affect language learning. Marginalized and poor students usually have a big disadvantage as far as learning the English language is concerned. They might not have access to English at home, in school and in their social life as is the case with their privileged counterparts. This puts a level playing field, in which by some students have an upper hand in entering higher education with complex knowledge of language and other students who cannot communicate effectively. There is also an influence on social inequality in levels of confidence and students with disadvantages in background might have inferiority feelings or fear to interact in the academic setting. Also, access to quality learning materials and education is limited and this continues

⁹ Lahiri, J. (2003). *The Namesake*.

¹⁰ Coleman, H. (2010). *Teaching and learning in India*.

¹¹ Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy*.



to widen the gap. Such inequalities are solidified in the learning institutions, where English proficiency is presumed instead of being upheld¹².

5.8 Linguistic Dominance

The prevailing dominance of English in engineering education is establishing a hierarchical language system at the expense of the local and regional languages. It is a common knowledge that English is considered the language of knowledge, technology, and world communication, which makes it superior to other languages in education. This hegemony exerts force on the first-generation learners to learn English fast, usually at the expense of their language identity. The students might be pressurized to use their mother tongue less in a bid to assimilate into the academic setting thus feeling out of touch with their cultural heritage. In addition to that, preference of English in classrooms, assessment, and professional communication restricts the application of multilingual strategies that could facilitate learning. This language asymmetry does not only influence the understanding levels but also leads to stress and anxiety in learners¹³.

5.9 Educational Marginalization

The educational systems that put emphasis on English as a single medium of instruction usually lead to the marginalization of students who do not have mastery of English language. The language policies in most of the engineering institutions presume that all students have some degree of competence concerning the English language, and this is not always so with the first generation learners. Consequently, such students are not able to participate in the whole process of academic material, classroom discussions and evaluation. This exclusion is further enhanced by the fact that there is no other language support or bilingual instructional methods. Linguistic barriers may make students to struggle in silence as they cannot access a source of help. In the long term, this exclusion may result in low educational achievements, demotivation and dropout in the worst situation cases. It is not only a personal problem, but a systematic problem because the institutional framework does not fit the linguistic diversity¹⁴.

5.10 Institutional Challenges

The language learning of first-generation students is greatly influenced by institutional constraints. Most of the engineering institutes presuppose the sufficient level of English speaking and knowledge among the students and, that is why, they do not offer the systematic support systems. There are no facilities like language laboratories, bridge courses and remedial classes or these are not adequate. The instructional approach is usually lecture-oriented and not much is done in terms of communication or interactive learning. Consequently, learners with poor English language skills are left to learn on their own, a factor that impacts their academic results as well as confidence. The lack of the institutional support calls on systematic interventions to help the learners overcome language barriers¹⁵.

5.11 Communication Barriers

The first-generation learners in the engineering institutes have a significant problem with communication barriers. As a result of the poor level of English, students may get used to not contributing to the presentations, group discussions, and interaction in the classroom. The latter may struggle with clarity of expression, organizing their thoughts, or rely on suitable technical terms. Their performance during the interviews and the placement processes is also similarly impacted by this inability to communicate as in those cases, proficiency in English can be anticipated. This can lead to

¹² Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and language learning*.

¹³ Canagarajah, A. (1999). *Resisting linguistic imperialism*.

¹⁴ Mohanty, A. K. (2010). *Languages, inequality, and marginalization*.

¹⁵ Sharma, R. (2018). English learning challenges in engineering students.



the situation when even intelligent students can have problems demonstrating their knowledge and skills. Learning how to communicate effectively is thus a key to academic and professional development¹⁶.

5.12 Financial and Academic Pressure

Learners who are first-generation are usually under a great financial and academic strain and this makes the process of learning even more difficult. A good number of the students belong to poor backgrounds and might be required to work part time without their studies. This cuts short the time of practicing language and academic preparation. Also, stress and anxiety can be caused by the necessity to be good at school and fulfill family demands. It is hard to juggle between the financial obligations and the hard work required in an engineering course, particularly when there are language barriers there already. The combination of all these pressures may affect concentration, motivation and overall performance of the students adversely making it difficult to perform well¹⁷.

5.13 Employability Concerns

The proficiency in English is a very vital aspect in the measure of employability especially in technical and professional sectors. The first-generation learners with poor English skills are usually disadvantaged when it comes to their placements in campuses and even during employment interviews. Employers usually focus on the candidates who are able to communicate, put forward ideas, and interact in English without fear. Due to this, students who do not possess these skills might not get employed opportunities even though they know their technicals well. This makes a discrepancy between academic success and professional success.

VI. DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE LEARNING

Diasporic approach can help in explaining the experience of the first-generation learners in English-medium engineering institutes in a meaningful way. Just like the members of the diasporic communities, these students face a feeling of displacement when they find themselves in a new linguistic and academic setting where English is the dominant language. They usually find it difficult to conform to new communication patterns, educational demands and cultural standards. The effect of this process is the emergence of hybridity where learners start blending their language with English in an attempt to adapt with the environment. Although this hybrid identity can be a flexible factor, it can also lead to confusion and insecurity. Also, students often experience identity conflict when they have to reconcile their cultural background and English-dominated academic environment.

VII. IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The academic performance of first-generation learners in engineering institutes is directly and strongly affected by language barriers. As most of the learning is taught in English, the students who do not speak it fluently usually face difficulties in learning technical subjects, which imply the need to focus on the clarity of the concept and the knowledge of the specific terms. Learning challenges in comprehension impact their lecturing following ability, making competent notes, and reading learning resources. Moreover, lack of strong language skills is an impediment of academic writing, and it is difficult to write and put assignments, reports, and examinations together in an accurate and coherent manner. It also influences classroom participation because students might be afraid to ask questions or participate in a discussion because they lack confidence. Such limitations do not allow learners to show their intellectual capacities fully¹⁸.

¹⁶ Gupta, S. (2019). Language barriers in technical education.

¹⁷ Mishra, P. (2020). Socio-economic factors in higher education.

¹⁸ Yadav, K. (2021). English proficiency and employability.



VIII. PEDAGOGICAL CHALLENGES

The issue of pedagogy is a major factor that denies the first-generation learners in the engineering institutes the opportunity to develop the language. Conventional instructional practices are mostly lectures and pay much attention to content delivery as opposed to interaction of students. These practices tend to believe that the level of English comprehension of all the students is the same one and this is not true in linguistically diverse classrooms. Subsequently, the struggling learners experience problems in following the lectures and being active learners due to the language barrier issue. It is observed that there is an absence of interactive learning activities like group discussion, presentations, and group work that may be used to assist the student to enhance his/her ability to communicate. Also, instructional approaches that concentrate on language are seldom built into technical courses, and students do not receive any systematic ways of building their level of English proficiency. Inclusive teaching methods (simplified language, visual aids, individualized support, etc.) are also few.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction of Bridge Courses

Engineering programs need to introduce bridge courses in the introductory years due to the fact that a first-generation learner would need to enhance his or her proficiency in basic English. Such courses may be centered on grammar, vocabulary, understanding, and abilities to communicate, so students would adapt to the instruction in English. Bridge courses help ease the first year shock and instill confidence in the learners by offering a solid ground. They also provide the students with a warm-up period assisting them to be ready in technical subjects and generally to become better prepared in school overall.

9.2 Development of Language Labs

Language laboratories fitted with audio-visual equipment can go a long way in enhancing the ability of students to listen, talk, and pronounce sounds. These laboratories offer interactive educational experience in which students are exposed to practice English via programmed activities, software and guided activities. Language labs with regular use will enable the students to be confident and develop fluency in the long run. These facilities prove particularly useful with the first-generation learners as they provide them with the hands-on experience with the English language that they might lack in the conventional classrooms.

9.3 Use of Peer Learning Methods

The peer learning techniques promote group work among students and provide them with informal language learning. Group discussions, team projects, as well as peer tutoring enable the learners to communicate in an unthreatening way. In experiencing initial learners, it is possible to observe and interact with learners who are more proficient in language. It helps in mutual learning, lessening the fear of being judged, and developing communication skills. Peer learning is also effective in gaining confidence and creating a feeling of belongingness into the academic community.

9.4 Teacher Training in Inclusive Pedagogy

Teachers are very essential in facilitating students who have different lingual backgrounds. The faculty and other staff members should be trained to teach inclusively and strategies to include the faculty include making language easy to understand, teaching with visual aids and involvement. Instructors ought to be sensitized with the issues that first-generation learners are experiencing and they should embrace practices that support the various learning requirements. Inclusive pedagogy makes sure that every student is actively involved in the learning process and assists in providing the positive and supportive classroom atmosphere.



9.5 Integration of Communication Skills in Curriculum

The engineering program should include communication skills in addition to technical courses. Speaking, writing, and professional communication courses can assist students in achieving necessary competencies of language. Practical exercises like presentations, group discussions and writing of reports ought to be incorporated in order to offer a hands-on experience. This integration guarantees that the students do not only acquire technical information, but also acquire communication skills that they need to achieve academic success and become employable in the workplace.

X. CONCLUSION

The challenges that face the first-generation learners in engineering institutes regarding English language learning have a broad spectrum of reasons that are a result of linguistic, socio-economic, psychological, and institutional problems. These issues are closely intertwined and impact greatly on the academic life of students. This is because the exposure to English in early education is limited, which forms a weak base and thus learners find it hard to understand the technical subjects taught and communicate effectively. Meanwhile, socio-economic factors limit the availability of resources and opportunities that would aid language growth. Fear, anxiety, and a lack of self-confidence are other psychological barriers that do not allow active engagement in academic activities.

These challenges do not just limit to academic success, but they also affect students identity and self-esteem. Most first-generation learners feel inferior and culturally alienated in English-dominated settings and this may lower their motivation and involvement. In most instances, they are unable to portray their potential because their intellectual capacity makes them unable to express themselves in terms of language. This underscores the necessity to take note of the fact that language proficiency is not just the skill but it is an important concern in the provision of equal access to education.

There is need to solve these challenges in multi-dimensional fashion. Learning institutions should implement inclusive pedagogical models that take into account the linguistic diversity and offer facilitating learning conditions. Bridge courses, language labs, and communication-oriented curricula can be introduced to improve the language competency of the students. Also, in teacher training programs, emphasis should be placed on teaching techniques that are inclusive in order to serve the needs of learners with varied backgrounds. On the policy level, the changes should be made to ensure fair access to language learning, as well as to minimize systemic disparities.

In summary, proficiency in English must not be used as a hindrance to prevent students to achieve academic success. Instead, it must be considered as the means of empowerment that will allow first-generation learners to achieve their educational objectives, gain confidence, and find more viable career opportunities.

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