

The Changing Trends of Language Testing By The Corporate Houses: A Study

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Abstract-In a multilingual country like India, English language plays a crucial role during recruitment drives in the technical collages even today. For the past three decades, students' language was tested through written test based on testing of grammar rules along with syntax like, spotting common errors, sentence correction question, jumbled sentences and vocabulary. In this kind of testing pattern large numbers of students were selected based on the command over certain grammar rules but nowadays, due to cut throat competition among students for few jobs available in market, testing pattern has been changed to get the best product for the organization. Another issue which has become a key concern for cooperate industry is the lack of adequate language skills and drafting skills apart from technical skills among students despite learning language from Kinder garden level so the industry has forced to change recruitment patterns of language testing process. This paper highlights new patterns of language testing by the industries during recruitment drives in technical collages and the impact of the change on industry and student community in India with respect to language and success in recruitment drives.

Keywords: Technical Collages, Language Skills, Recruitment Drives.

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a sub- continent with large verities of diversities seen all throughout the country. The diversity is seen even in regional languages spoken in different nooks and corners giving a perfect example for rich cultural heritage of the Indian subcontinent and the worlds' first destination to huge young talented population under the age of thirty years. Its population has an edge over the world in terms of workforce with commitment and work ethics. The nature of Indian students in terms of technical expertise, dedication and commitments to work is known everywhere as a result of which most of world renowned multinational companies like Google, Microsoft, Pepsi-Co and ICICI bank have placed Indians at its top helm in the governing bodies. Indian human resource is highly sought after for many software and hardware industries over the years in domestic and international markets. Technocrats emerging from Indian educational institutions have become a potential talent for new global human resource environment.

After the advent of economic reforms in India under the leadership of former Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao many national and international companies established units in India. Economic reforms generated not only excess revenue for the country in the form of tax but also generated large number of jobs for its huge population, so in the beginning students were hired on the basis of technical skills and academic percentage scored by the industry and this pattern of hiring was done for almost two decades in India with main focus on skill set of students along with basic communicative skills needed to cater the business needs in industry.

II. RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE FOLLOWED TILL NOW

The blooming technological advancements and industries in the world have attracted student community of India to pursue technical education in order to start a career with blue collar jobs and get high perks in terms of bucks not only in India but also in other industrial countries of the world in the East and the West. These jobs also exposed students to different people with varied cultural and languages around the world and to excel in the above said jobs English have become back bone for communication among employees. This gave English an edge over other languages and gradually evolved as global language in the world.

To meet the above needs of students, many governmental elite technical institutions of higher education like IITs' and IIMs' were established in India in 1961. To cater technical education to the huge population in India, many private technical engineering and management collages emerged in different nooks and corners of the country making India a promising market for human resource and workforce in the world. According to Ministry of Human Resource Management, India has 6214 Engineering and technical institutions which are enrolling 2.9 million students every year. Gradually the number of students passing out from elite institutes of higher learning along with other private institutions increased in India. Chaturvedi, A. & Sachitanand, R (2013, 18 January) says according to The Economic Times Jobs survey "India trains around 1.5 million Engineering students every year which is more than the US and China combined." hence India is producing huge students market ready every year to cater the business needs of world

In India Technical and Managerial courses have become an easy passport to many greener pastures of life and career building making students opt for engineering after intermediate education. Gradually, every year on an average, 1.5 million students pass out from various engineering collage and with the rich technical harvest of students, industries and cooperate houses started recruiting Indian students due to cheap labour available with sound technical skills and knowledge compared with overseas students.

III. THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

For nearly three decades most of the graduates in India found it easy to get job in various industries located in India and abroad. Software and core industries increased tremendously all around the world giving access to many Indians to settle in developed countries like The USA, Germany, Britain, Australia and The United Kingdom. The job opportunities available in the entire world have spiked the numbers of job aspirants after graduation in India based on the following criteria.

- Strong knowledge in technological education and good command on academics.
- Logical reasoning and aptitude.
- Basic communication skills, mostly oral and written communication.

Most of the industries to recruit young graduates from campus and try to test strong technical knowledge of students acquired during the course of study. To face new technological challenges arising day by day in the work-space, students' strong knowledge in academics is needed so it is highly tested during hiring.

Apart from technological and academic command, students are supposed to have decent logical reasoning and aptitude skills to solve technical problem so during recruitment company tested analytical and critical reasoning.

To access social skills like communication skills, team-building skills, leadership skills and interpersonal skills a personal interview was conducted. In the beginning, while selecting students, command over basic communicative language was needed which include spoken language and negotiation of meaning during the conversation along with good accent? To test the above criteria's a common written test was conducted to test certain important grammar rules along with aptitude and reasoning. In addition, a personal HR interview was conducted to test the personality and fluency over second language of interviewee. Sometimes ,group discussions also conducted to test the above skills and in this

kind of testing patter many students were selected due to huge job requirement in market or sometimes students use to master certain grammatical rules and patterns which generally asked in most of the recruitment tests, More often students used to practice rigorously certain topics related to group discussions in advance and reproduced the same to get job but when practical needs raised in the work- place, these students failed to draft proper letter and reports in English along with basic communication skills to express ideas and views among the team at various instances. Companies are supposed to train students with latest technical tools and platforms but investing time and money on training basic communication skills has incurred huge burden on the organization unnecessary so to avoid such expenses companies have changes recruitment strategies.

IV. CURRENT REQUIREMENT PATTERNS

India engineering graduates had enjoyed the leverage of getting job easily for almost three decades due to conducive global economic growth and projects available with multinational companies but gradually due to globalization, frequent economic and financial turbulence forced the recruiters to be more skeptical while hiring students. The global economic turmoil and cut throat competition forced companies to cut-short expenses incurred to increase profit. According to SidharthaBarvani (as cited in Chakrabarty, 2016) . The country's economy also plays a major role for employment generation. Industry insiders says that in a stained economic condition, companies do not want to spend much on training and would prefer candidates with some skill sets so that they can be made billable soon.

The mushrooming engineering collages and technical institutions in different nooks and corners of the country have concentrated only on profit making due to which quality of technical education and expertise delivered at the educational institutions has come down drastically making huge number of students unfit to join company due to lack of skills and technical knowledge. The above reasons have lead companies to recruit the best talent pool available in the market to reduce training expenses and time, so the current strategy of companies have brought down the hiring numbers in the job market in India. A startling report according to "India Today" says that "As many as 97% of graduating engineers want jobs either in software or core Engineering. But, only 3% have suitable skills to be employed in software or product market and only 7% can handle core engineering tasks."

Today most of the companies are interested in hiring students from only top urban Tire I collage rather than Tire II

and Tire III collages. As pointed by Barvani (as cited in Chakrabarty, R. 2016) “The companies are prone to visiting only top collages to recruit potential employees. Thus, resumes from relatively unknown collage do not get shortlisted.” so this has created a gap between various engineering collages in India in-terms of rural and urban collages and preferences are given mostly to urban collages rather than rural ones by increasing the probability of unemployment. According to News 18(2016, January 25). “The best engineers are come from Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttrakhand and Panjab having a percentile of more than 75% while Andhra Pradesh, Tamil-Nadu and Chhattisgarh are ranking low with 25% percentile.” Indicating southern states engineers are less competent when compared with northern states in terms of technical expertise and soft skills.

One of the reasons could be many institutions are promoting rote learning among students giving little scope for the students to use creativity and innovation in thinking and deeds. The same idea is expressed by Sidhartha Barvani vice president Jetking Infotrain Limited (as cited by Chakrabarty, 2016) “The traditional education sector in India has not evolved at the same pace as the industry. The companies have found in their candidates and the skills that the engineering graduates bring in do not match.” Students are seen unable to apply knowledge in practical applications due to rote memorization during studies.

For strong academic foundation, it is not necessary to multiply number of institutions rather strive to increase the standards of academics on par with renowned technical institutions of the world. The same idea was expressed in one of the articles published in the national newspaper “The Hindu” by National Employability Report (as cited by Reddy, R.R, March 27 2012) states that “The need of the hour is to focus on not opening more collages, but improving the quality of Education in existing institutions, The report further highlights that “among these five lakh engineer only 17.5% are employable for the IT services sector, while a dismal 3.5 % are appropriately trained to be directly employed on projects. Only 2.68 % are employable in IT companies, which require greater understanding of computer science and algorithms.”

Adding further, English Language skills has become an Achilles’ heel for most of the students in India during recruitment drives. Though it is a second language for most of the Indians but despite learning English for more than 16 years students find themselves struggling with basic language skills. According to one of the reports published by Aspiring Minds (as cited by Ghose, M. 2015) states that “Only 18.43% of all engineers are eligible for a software engineer’s job in India.

And the worst part is that such incompetency has nothing to do with their engineering skills: it’s their proficiency in English language & soft skills which make them lose out an opportunity.” The dismal performance in English language skills has a huge impact in getting a job and career growth, as per one of the studies 97% of the Indian engineers cannot speak English which is one of the mandatory requirements for working in IT firm. In fact, 67% of all engineers do not possess any English language skills (reading, speaking and comprehension) which are required for a high end jobs in business consulting, software, IT and other knowledge processing jobs.

The above revelations from various surveys has given clear cut indication that English has become a crucial parameter for industries to chose or reject a candidate in recruitment drive. The inability of engineering executives to perform basic responsibilities like communication among team members and proper drafting skills in English has made all corporate companies to change the recruiting patterns in general and for English language in particular during recruitment. To test holistically all the necessary skills required, industry has now changed the strategy totally. Some of the recent strategies which have been introduced to test Language skills are as follows

1. Essay writing.
2. Picture Perception.
3. Psychometric test for Soft Skills.
4. Typing skills in English.

V. ESSAY WRITING

In recent recruitment drives held in some Tire II cities, rural collages of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have witnessed new testing patterns for language skills. Previously along with reasoning, aptitude, technical skills and some basic grammar skills were tested to select students for software jobs by various companies. To access communication skills of students companies mostly relayed on group discussion and personal interviews. In this pattern, students use to master few topics related to group discussions and perform aptly on the day of interview, later in the course of time in the organization these students use to face so many challenges in communication and language skills in doing day to day business at work place.

To avoid these challenges among students in organization many industries are testing practical second language usage during the recruitment drives at campuses. Some of the practical ways of testing languages is testing essay writing skill in student.

After the arrival of smart phones, students are becoming tech savvy by using applications like What's App and Facebook but students have forgot typing. To focus writing skills, one of the fifth best IT companies in India, Capgemini has changed the testing patterns for students by introducing Essay writing online test for English. The test is quite sophisticated as students have to write the essay on the given topic with a minimum word limit of 300 words within half an hour. This kind of test generally tests the command of student in English language in written skills, drafting skills along with good typing speed. In essay writing section nearly 90% students were eliminated from one of the elite engineering collage located in rural Andhra Pradesh while urban students of have outperformed in the same. Here, students have little scope for learning by rote grammar and essay topics as they need to perform these two tasks simultaneously with practical usage of language.

VI. PICTURE PERCEPTION TEST

To assess the natural thinking capability in English some of the IT industries in India have adopted Picture Perception Test pattern to test language command of students. One of the recruiting companies Tech Mahindra has made a significant change in the testing pattern related to English. To get the best talent from the institution, students need to be good not only in technical skills and academics but also be impressive in using second language English with ease at workplace in expressing ideas and thoughts clearly without any hiccups and doubt. Tech Mahindra has included in its testing patterns a new topic named "Picture Perception Test" which includes a picture to be observed carefully followed by description of the picture.

It is an online test pattern followed after aptitude and reasoning test. Here student is given a picture on the computer screen with a time and word limit of 20 minutes and 200 words respectively. In this kind of testing, students have to use creativity in expanding thoughts and views by analyzing the pictorial image. Students are supposed to stick to correct English writing skills along with correct grammar, vocabulary and punctuation along with decent typing speed to qualify. In this testing pattern most of the students struggled to qualify because they need to keep a decent pace in language, time, construction of a story and typing speed. In this testing pattern, most of the students could not complete the story within 20 minutes so disqualified in recruitment drive and only a few students qualified. To select bright students having the skills to be employed in companies found this pattern as an ideal.

VII. PSYCHOMETRIC TEST

The multinational companies are concentrating not only on technical and language skills but also on soft skills while recruiting students. In the recent drives, it is seen that companies are also assessing behavioral skills of students by administering a psychometric test. This test generally access "Emotional Quotient" of students. Behavioral skills or social skills comprises skills like Communication skills, team building skills, time management skills along with group dynamics which play a major role in the organization. In this test most of the rural students struggled due to inhibitions and lack of awareness, whereas urban students with bold thinking find easy to answer the tricky questions.

VIII. TYPING TEST

Now a days student are tech savvy and the technical expertise is assessed by the kind of sophisticated gadgets they carry with them. These gadgets could be a laptop, I-Pads or even smart 4G phone. It is good to keep in touch with the latest gadgets but among students, it is seen that they get addicted to these devices and almost forget the regular way of typing. Technical students want to get connected with friends, so they use What's App and Facebook chatting in SMS language and in long run these students get habituated to write most of the documents in SMS language only. The SMS language has a huge negative impact on the spilling and writing skills which is clearly seen during the essay and picture perception test conducted to recruit students. This testing is also made mandatory because it is seen in the organization that students fail to draft certain basic documents grammatically correct with no spelling mistakes. A few examples for the mistakes committed by students are as follows.

1. Infosys, Bangalore: An employee applied for leave as follows: "Since I have to go to my village to sell my land along with my wife, please sanction me one-week leave."
2. From H.A.L. Administration dept.: "As my mother-in-law has expired and I am only one responsible for it, please grant me 10 days leave."
3. Actual letter written for application of leave: "My wife is suffering from sickness and as I am her only husband at home I may be granted leave".

To avoid above mistakes most of the companies have changes the testing patterns in order to filter out the best students from the educational institutions. Moreover now, the cut throat competition among companies has reduced the numbers of projects with different companies in the entire world so companies are very specific and particular in choosing the best candidate for the company with sound technical, logical and English language communicative skills.

The ministry of human resource is also very keen in sorting out these issues from the grass root level as according to one of the articles published in the Times of India (as cited in Gohani,M.P 2017) says that “ more than 60% of the eight lakh engineers graduating from technical institutions across the country every year remain unemployed as per one of the reports of The ALL India Council for Technical Education” this shows that there is a huge variation in standards of technical colleges in the country, majority of whom churn out graduates who are not employable and to buck this trend, the ministry of human resource development is planning a major revamp of India’s technical education. The most important strategy is rolling of common National Entrance Examination for Technical Institutions(NEETI) from January 2018 which also includes linking of annual teacher training as a must for the approval of the institution, mandatory induction training to enroll students and annual revision of curriculum.

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