

# **ENGLISH LEARNING LEVELS**

**Engineering Graduates**



**Annual Report 2011-12**

# Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Methodology	7
Executive Summary	9
I. Lexical understanding learning levels	11
II. Comprehension and structuring learning levels	16
III. Grammar learning levels	19
Appendix 1	22
Appendix 2	23

---

# Introduction

Language has played a paramount role in human history, enabling not only exchange of ideas but also higher-order thought. Of the thousands of languages spoken all over the world, English is the most widely used. Spoken in almost all regions, it is truly the language of the world. Its importance can be gauged from the fact that it is used as the standard language for communication, science, information technology, business, governance, etc., in most countries. This makes a working knowledge of English a necessity.

Recruiters and HR managers around the world report that candidates with English skills above the local average stand out from the crowd and garner 30-50% higher salaries than similarly-qualified candidates without English skills. The trends in India are no different, with English fluency being one of the key qualities recruiters look for during the interview process.

With research indicating that fluency with a second language — when the medium of academic instruction is built on that language—takes anywhere between four to seven years, there is an urgent need to focus on components of English, both oral and written, at the school level.

This report analyzes which specific areas of English skills are the engineering graduates most lacking in, and the implications of these deficiencies. This provides a more

comprehensive picture of the specific skill-gaps which require intervention. It also highlights how engineers are deficient in certain English skills taught at middle and high-school level. We suggest ways to bridge these gaps by interventions in the Indian higher education system to improve the English of our students.

All findings in this report are based on the objective test-attempt data of 55,000 engineering students who undertook AMCAT English, a competency-based standardized assessment of English developed by Aspiring Minds. Each item (question) in the assessment is mapped to a competency and the inferences for each competency are thus analyzed. This is by far the most comprehensive analysis of English skills of engineers in India.

We sincerely hope this report will be welcomed by educationists, policy-makers and industrial bodies, as it provides inputs on skill gaps, where to focus training, and how to make pedagogical changes to the education system.

At Aspiring Minds, we are committed to present this analysis every year to audit how our education system is faring in training our candidates in English.

“Our language is funny – a ‘fat chance’ and a ‘slim chance’ are the same thing.”

– J. Gustav White

**Varun Aggarwal**  
*Director, Aspiring Minds*

# Methodology

This report is based on tests conducted on a sample of more than 55,000 engineering students from 250+ engineering colleges across multiple Indian states. All these candidates graduated in 2011<sup>1</sup>. The analysis and findings of this report are based on the performance of these students in the English Comprehension module of AMCAT (Aspiring Minds Computer Adaptive Test), which is widely recognized as India's largest and only standardized employability test. The AMCAT English Comprehension section includes a vocabulary test, a grammar test, and a section on English comprehension skills<sup>2</sup>. The module is adaptive and its scoring-scheme is based on item response theory, a globally accepted statistical technique for assessing high-stakes exams. The test was conducted under a proctored and credible environment ensured by Aspiring Minds.

While designing the AMCAT English Comprehension test, the instrument design team at Aspiring Minds developed a competency framework to include the most relevant English language skills required by engineers for entry-level jobs in the knowledge-based industry in India. Based on this competency framework, items (questions) for the test were designed. Special care was taken to ensure items had good psychometric properties<sup>3</sup>. The competency allocation for each item was verified through a consensus by experts. The design of the competency framework for the Vocabulary section is discussed in detail in this report. After expert review on various parameters, the items were sampled on actual engineering graduates. Questions with ineffective statistical properties

were weeded out and item response models for the rest of the questions were developed, which were then delivered adaptively using Aspiring Minds' proprietary item-selection and delivery algorithms. The final assessment test showed reliability comparable to global standards.

In this report, our research team studied how engineers performed on each competency based on the response data on different items. For each item tagged within a particular competency, the percentage correct response-rates were determined. The consensus response rate of items was considered as the actual performance of engineers on the given competencies. Items showing consensus and those acting as outliers were studied by experts to understand their respective behavior. The validity of a minority of items was found to be influenced by biases such as elimination-strategy; such items were not included in developing an estimate of the performance of engineers on each competency. Apart from finding performance in generalized competencies, interesting trends found are reported for the interested audience.

This report is organized as follows: for each area of English, a list of competencies along with their definition is provided, followed by the percentage of total engineers who exhibited possessing the competency. This is followed by sample questions for different competencies to provide insight into the construct of the competency. Finally, for each area, we share some key observations that will be of interest to people involved in academics, English education, technology education, and policy making.

<sup>1</sup> The sample was statistically balanced across various parameters to be representative of the true technical graduate population. A carefully chosen stratified sample was used for the study.

<sup>2</sup> The detailed syllabus of the module is included in Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.aspiringminds.in/researchcell/articles/how\\_to\\_create\\_test\\_blue\\_print.html](http://www.aspiringminds.in/researchcell/articles/how_to_create_test_blue_print.html)

---

# Executive Summary

**More than 25% engineers do not possess the English comprehension skills to understand engineering school curriculum.**

Learning levels from both vocabulary and comprehension indicate that 25 to 35% engineers cannot even comprehend English used in day-to-day conversations. Since engineering education is in English, this represents a key concern for colleges; as this gap would inhibit students from grasping concepts in other subject areas as well. It would be imperative to assess this in the first semester of the undergraduate degree programs, identify the students with deficient skills, and institute bridge courses in the first semester and during semester breaks.

**Only 57% engineers can write grammatically correct sentences in English.**

57% engineering graduates showing comfort with basic grammar indicates that an almost equal number (between 50-60%) are unable to construct grammatically correct sentences even for writing emails. This is alarming but expected, as the ability to write in a second language is a higher-level skill than the ability to understand it. Given the importance of English in the employment context, and the long gestation period to come to a reasonable standard in writing the language, effort to overcome this shortcoming should begin in the first year itself. Consistent effort over the four years would bolster command over all aspects of the language and make the student more employable.

**Around 42%-45% engineers demonstrate capabilities in English required for the knowledge-based industry.**

As we move to jobs that require a little more sophisticated command over the language, the learning levels from vocabulary, comprehension and grammar all indicate a similar percentage (between 42-47%) of engineering graduates who would be able to satisfactorily meet the job expectations. Similar to the first level, this gap in the remaining 53-58% engineering graduates can be bridged significantly through consistent training over the four years of graduation. Additionally, focusing on language and literature as a subject in engineering where students are exposed to and encouraged to read varied books would result in incremental benefits over and above instructional training.

**Not more than 27% engineers show capabilities in business English.**

The same consistency across learning levels in grammar, comprehension and vocabulary is also witnessed for the third competency level, representing a superior command over different aspects of the language. As the study reports, roughly 27% of engineering graduates are at this level and can be considered for research and analysis profiles in the Knowledge Process Outsourcing industry. This level of English competence is also required for those interested in pursuing higher studies. For the others, this level of language fluency cannot be developed in four years alone and the onus lies with schools to clear the basics and inculcate in students a love for reading and writing in the English language.

---

# I. Lexical Understanding

## Learning Levels

The importance of vocabulary has been questioned often and arguments ranging from rote learning, trainability, to its limited applicability in real life are advanced to devalue the need for a rich vocabulary. The criticality of vocabulary is exemplified in this statement by Wilkins, ‘Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed’.<sup>4</sup> A study by Qian shows a positive correlation between vocabulary knowledge and performance in an academic setting.<sup>5</sup>

It is also widely accepted that the number of words in spoken language is far lesser than that in written text, and given the increasing importance of written communication (emails, reports, studies) in professional contexts, lexical superiority in a candidate is an added advantage. Anderson and Freebody (1981)<sup>6</sup> reported the high correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension as a consistent finding in first language (L1) reading research.

Given this background, for the purpose of this report, learning outcomes were measured by two approaches: the frequency approach and the empirical approach through survey of industry personnel.

### ***Frequency Approach:***

Items in the vocabulary test measure whether students know antonyms and synonyms of words, and whether they can apply specific words in a given context. To ensure that the different words are objectively comparable across students, frequency count was utilized as the primary criterion for selecting words to be assessed. The frequency of the word indicates the number of times it appears in popular sources, and thus forms a more credible method of identifying important words. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA<sup>7</sup>) was used to identify frequency levels

---

4 Wilkins, David A. (1972). *Linguistics in Language Teaching*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

5 Qian, D. D. (2002), Investigating the Relationship Between Vocabulary Knowledge and Academic Reading Performance: An Assessment Perspective. *Language Learning*, 52: 513–536. doi: 10.1111/1467-9922.00193

6 Anderson, R. C., & Freebody, P. (1981). Vocabulary knowledge. In J. Guthrie (Ed.), *Comprehension and teaching: Research reviews* (pp. 77-117). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

7 <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>



**For the purpose of this report, we classified the words students were assessed on into three groups:**

**High frequency, low difficulty:**

These are words that occur with high frequency both in daily life and at the workplace and do not present any difficulty.

**Medium frequency, intermediate difficulty:**

These are words that occur less frequently in everyday conversation, but more commonly in business communication.

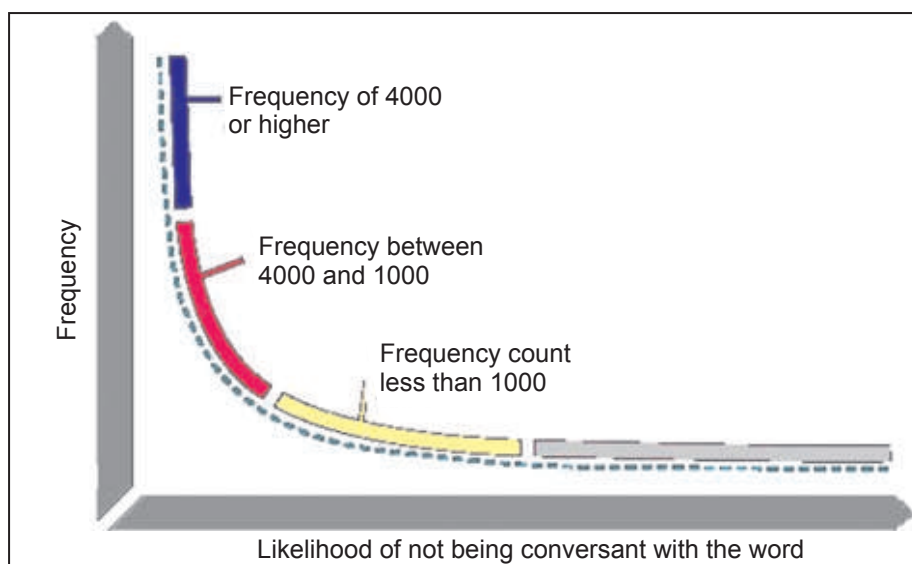
**Low frequency, high difficulty:**

These are words that are infrequent in common facets of life but are important for knowledge-based profiles such as research, business analysis, etc. These are also imperative in the academic context for students who wish to pursue higher education.

of words. Created by Mark Davies of Brigham Young University, COCA is the largest freely-available corpus of English language. The corpus contains more than 425 million words, and is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. It is updated regularly, making it the most relevant and dynamic corpus available today.

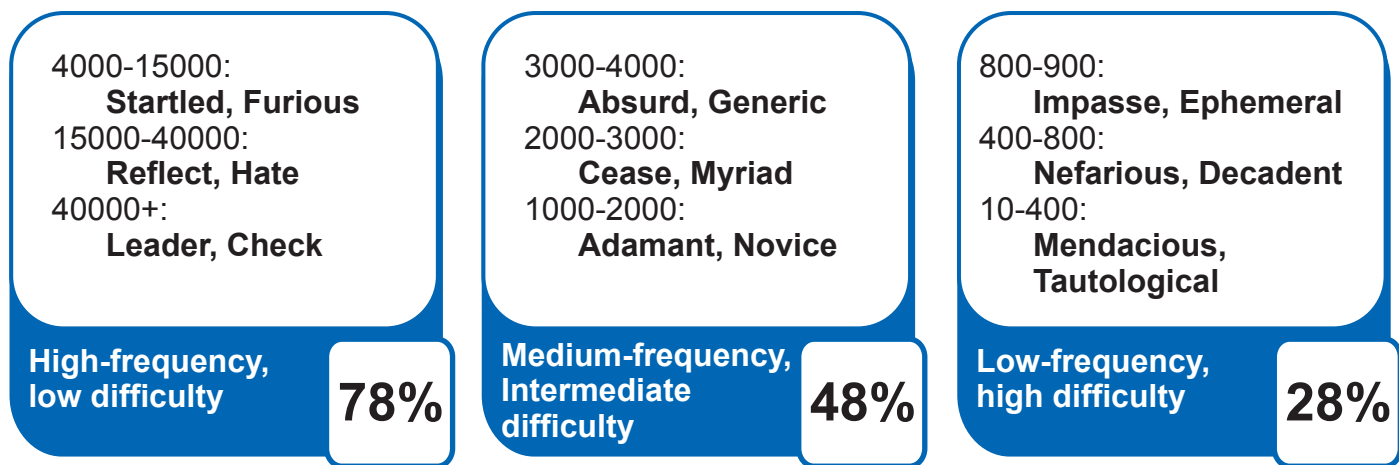
The frequency approach provides us a framework to not just construct a balanced test, but also to understand the ability of a person to, both, speak and understand English, given his/her vocabulary.<sup>8</sup> For instance, if the person does not know the meaning of highly frequent words, he/she may not be able to understand even conversational English used in day-to-day communication. Likewise, if the person knows the meaning of high-frequency words, but doesn't know words of mid- or low-frequency, the quality of writing may suffice only for informal written communication. The person may have difficulty in understanding formal documents and might require an external resource such as a dictionary.

In this manner, using the frequency of words, we get a framework to assign 'competency' levels to words and be able to intuit the ability of the person. It goes without saying that knowing the words is not enough; one also needs to know the nuances of language, sentence construction and grammar to derive the correct meaning. These will be discussed in subsequent sections of this report.



**Figure 1:** The long tail of English vocabulary. As the frequency falls, so does the likelihood of being conversant with these words

<sup>8</sup> Milton, James (2009), Measuring second language vocabulary acquisition, Multilingual Matters



**Figure 2:** Classification of vocabulary levels based on frequency. Sample words are presented for each category and percentages within the circles indicate percentage of engineering students displaying competency.

### **Observations: Word frequency classification:**

The analysis based on frequency classification shows:

- While comfort with everyday, conversational English words is high at 78%, only 48% of engineering graduates show aptitude for words commonly used in business parlance (such as those highlighted in medium frequency, intermediate difficulty). One may note that this comprises only the understanding of words and not other considerations such as grammar, sentence construction, etc. Thus, at best we can say that less than 48% engineers understand moderately sophisticated words in English.
- With English being the primary medium of instruction in all engineering schools, an inability to follow very high-frequency words has implications on the students' ability to understand the curriculum. The finding above indicates that 22% of engineering graduates fall in this subset, and consequently may not be well-positioned to comprehend the engineering coursework.
- The importance of English is even more evident at the workplace, and English is increasingly becoming the global language of communication. Given the findings, we believe that more than half of all engineers (52%) would not be fluent in a large majority of words that are used with regular frequency at the workplace.
- Overall 28% of engineering graduates show lexical sophistication (familiarity with low-frequency or 'rare' words). This percentage increases to 39% when these words are given in context. Knowledge of these words is required in writing jobs, be it technical, business or analytical writing. Such jobs are in abundance in the Knowledge Process Outsourcing sector in India, which is growing rapidly. It is also mandatory for those who wish to pursue research careers and do associated reading/writing. This means only 28% engineers may be able to pursue these career paths.



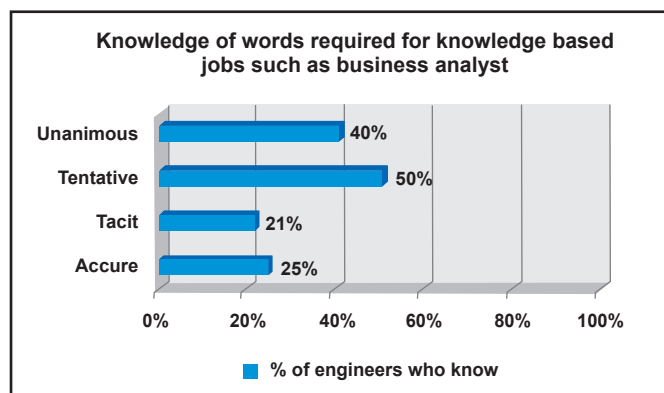
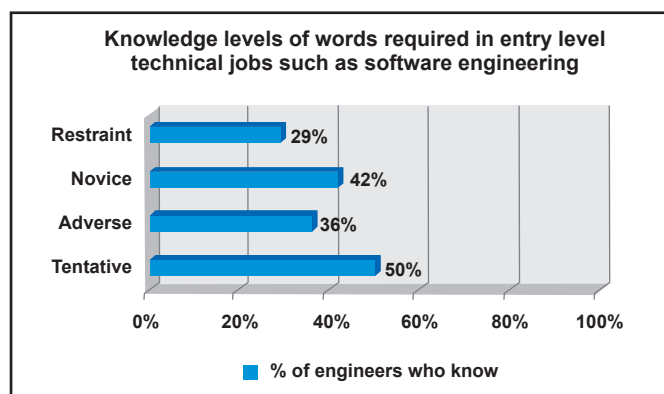
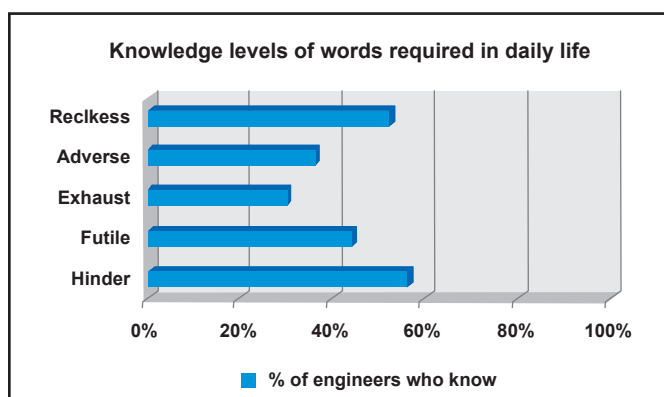
## Industry informed Empirical Approach:

In order for the findings to be more relevant to the employment context, we conducted a survey of mid- to senior-level managers across organizations in the knowledge-based industry. We asked them the relative requirement of knowledge of different English words in daily life, entry-level positions such as software engineer (English for internal communication) and that of a business analyst (English for business writing and client interaction).

Only those words that were unanimously endorsed by these industry professionals as being imperative for different aspects were considered. Indicative words along with knowledge levels are represented in the charts below.

While overall lexical comprehension is poor, words which find usage in professional contexts are understood by even lesser number of engineering graduates.

These would have a direct bearing on job performance and employability, as larger organizations in each field would consider such words mandatory.



**In conclusion, the English vocabulary levels of engineers are quite low. As far as the knowledge-based industry is concerned, less than 50% engineers show adequate lexical command for job suitability.**

Taking a conservative view (after removing outliers), 40% engineers demonstrate knowledge of words that were unanimously voted to be required for daily life whereas the percentage for technical and knowledge-based jobs was 30% and 20%, respectively. On taking a more lenient approach and assuming that knowledge of 75% of words would suffice while the rest can be looked up, the percentages rise to 50% for everyday words, 40% for technical profiles and 35% for knowledge based profiles (Refer to Table 1).

The estimates of the empirical approach match those of the frequency approach: internal communication English with mid-frequency words and Business English with low-frequency words. With regard to words of daily usage, it seems that the industry personnel believe that in addition to high-frequency words, mid-frequency words are also required for day-to-day English conversation. This could be due to the growing importance of sophistication in English in all spheres of life in India, apart from job context.

Vocabulary Level	Percentage of Engineers Possessing the Skill	
	Conservative View	Liberal View
Daily usage	40%	50%
Internal Communication in knowledge based industry	35%	45%
Business writing and client interaction	20%	35%

**Table 1:** Comparison of English comprehension skills, based on a conservative and liberal analysis of empirical data.

## II. Comprehension and Structuring Learning Levels

Comprehension has come to be viewed as “the essence of reading” (Durkin, 1993). In all areas of life, active reading of material is considered necessary for the individual to be able to understand what is being said and to be able to work with the information. In the work environment there are several ways in which this information is used – drawing out key points or data from the information, synthesis of information to draw inferences, and the ability to assimilate information from various sources to arrive at the larger picture.

We used expert consensus to classify reading comprehension questions into three competencies based on the skill being tested:

### Competency categorization of English Comprehension and Restructuring

#### A. Ability to comprehend, organize and paraphrase from content expressly

This competency measures whether a person can understand simple written English, such as in newspapers, magazines and simple books. It represents the most fundamental learning outcome related to reading comprehension and sentence restructuring and is reflective of the following:

**69%** have competency\*

- ◆ Ability to assimilate and reorganize data given explicitly in a body of text.
- ◆ Ability to understand and paraphrase theme, tone or purpose explicitly mentioned in the text.
- ◆ Ordering short sentences to construct a logical and meaningful passage.

#### B. Ability to intuit the tone or crux of a body of information and sift out the data to identify the most relevant information:

This competency represents an ability to analyze text and accurately identify its pith. This includes:

**42%** have competency\*

- ◆ Ability to organize and synthesize information given in the text to determine the best answer.
- ◆ Ability to understand, infer and paraphrase theme, tone or purpose mentioned implicitly in the text.
- ◆ Structuring medium-length sentences with a few low-frequency words into meaningful passages, based on context cues.

\* Highlights the % of engineering students who possess the competency

**36% of engineering graduates would be unable to read official reports and transcripts and derive information out of them, even when the information is explicitly stated.**

### C. Ability to comprehend the essence of the information and infer what is not being expressly mentioned, along

This competency measures whether the test-taker possesses the aptitude to decipher information, understand the import of what is being said and use it to extrapolate inferences which are not explicitly stated. It is further broken down into:

**26% have competency\***

- ◆ Ability to assimilate, reorganize and infer data from a body of text.
- ◆ Ability to understand, infer and extrapolate theme, tone or purpose.
- ◆ Structuring longer sentences with high number of low-frequency words into meaningful passages, using strong reading and comprehension skills.

## Observations

- ◆ A little more than two-third of engineering graduates are able to comprehend and follow smaller bodies of text including single sentences, or small passages comprising short sentences and high-frequency words. By reading the sentence or passage, they are able to logically determine its structure and flow. However this number drops to 64% when a larger body of text (essay) is given. B. Tech graduates seem to falter here even when the information is clearly mentioned in the passage. This is consistent with findings in the vocabulary section, where 78% of graduates showed comfort with stand-alone high frequency words: the percentage dips when reading comprehension is being assessed, as it requires more than just knowing word meanings.
- ◆ Engineering graduates find it easier to structure sentences instead of phrases. While an average of 86% were able to correctly organize short sentences into coherent passages, only 58% were able to do the same with a single sentence broken up into phrases. We hypothesize that this is so because phrase ordering involves elements of both grammar and comprehension, whereas sentence ordering relies essentially on context cues based on reading comprehension alone.

Sample Questions	Example of phrase ordering	Example of sentence ordering
	<p>People P: at his dispensary Q: went to him R: of all professions S: for medicine and treatment. What is the correct order?</p> <p>(a) QPRS (b) RPQS (c) RQSP (d) QRPS</p> <p><b>53% of engineers got the order right.</b></p>	<p>B: Ms. Parasuram started a petrol pump in Madras. E: Thus she has shown the way for many others. P: A total of twelve girls now work at the pump. Q: She advertised in newspapers for women staff. R: They operate in two shifts. S: The response was good. The correct order is:</p> <p>(a) BQSPRE (b) EQSPRB (c) BSPQRE (d) ERPSQB</p> <p><b>75% of engineers got the order right.</b></p>

**Engineering graduates can better comprehend information related to their field of knowledge. Cognizance and inference levels fall from 35% to 26% when other topics are included.**

Given the text: "Akhila Sivadas, Centre for Advocacy and Research, Delhi, feels that the PCPNDT Act (Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques - Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) is very well conceived and easy to use. The need of the hour is legal literacy to ensure the law is implemented", 44% of engineering graduates were unable to answer this:

**What is Akhila Sivadas's opinion on the PCPNDT act?**

- (a) The act is inconsistent.
- (b) The act needs reform.
- (c) The act encourages demand for feticide.
- (d) The act is sound but needs reinforcement.

*Even when the information is explicitly given in the text, almost half of engineering graduates were unable to identify it.*

- ◆ While at lower competency levels, engineers have better grasp over sentence ordering and restructuring as compared to comprehension, at the medium competency level this difference ceases to exist. The reason for this can most directly be attributed to knowledge of vocabulary. Although sentence and passage-length remain similar as in the basic level, the sentences and passages include a few lower-frequency words, which graduates seem to find difficult to comprehend.
- ◆ Exploring competency (ii) in further detail, it was found that as the candidate is required to do tasks such as reorganization of information or inferring author's message with less evident answer options, the percentage declines from 69% to 42%. This level of ability to assimilate and infer data would have a direct bearing on job performance. These skills would differentiate a good performer from an average one and since this competency is hard to train in the short-term, companies would look for candidates at least at this level of learning, which reduces the employable pool size to about 40%.
- ◆ A dismal 26% of engineering graduates display ability to comprehend the essence of the text and infer what is not being expressly mentioned. They exhibit a strong command over such vocabulary as would be most often used in scientific and technical journals and publications. This level of English proficiency is required for business or research analysts.
- ◆ Where the text is related to an area of comfort for the engineer, such as technology, social networking, etc., the comprehension levels are significantly higher. Cognizance levels go up from an average of 26% to a high of 35% in the most advanced competency level, coming close to the standards noted in competency (ii).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, more than 30% engineers cannot understand elementary English. This implies that they would have difficulty in following instructions from their managers, would not be able to communicate with colleagues and clients, or even understand day-to-day work emails. On the other hand, 42% would be able to sift out information from written text, requiring the ability to *study* a document, derive essence (a summary) out of an article/essay and synthesize information from various sources. This is commonly required for self-learning new concepts (technical or otherwise) and to synthesize knowledge out of reports, articles, papers, etc. to put together a commentary on a subject. For gaining proficiency at a technical job or presenting oneself for a job in the Knowledge Process Outsourcing sector, this competency is indispensable. Unfortunately, less than 50% engineers demonstrate this ability.

### III. Grammar Learning Levels

Grammar is the sound, structure, and meaning system of language. Oral communication is easier between people who speak the same language because they are familiar with the rules (i.e. grammar) of making meaning. This same skill has to be transferred to written language as well, to be able to communicate effectively with people in or across geographies.

A simple example would suffice to highlight the importance of grammar in written communication and how imperative it is to convey the intended meaning:

“First you toast the bread then you slice some tomatoes while it’s toasting and slice some cheese when the toast is done you put some sliced cheese on top of the toast and put the tomatoes on top of the cheese, then you sprinkle with garlic salt, and oregano. Put the toast with the tomatoes. And cheese in a toaster oven turn the temperature to 350 degrees and bake. For 10 minutes until the cheese is melted.” This recipe, if followed to the letter, would be a failure.

In the job context, grammar plays an even more critical role, as the business community across the world is becoming unified, and increasingly more amount of information is being disseminated through written channels, be it email, chat, articles or reports. A superlative command over the rules of grammar would distinguish the top performers from the average ones. Poor grammar can completely distort the meaning of the information, a mistake that can take monumental proportions in the corporate world.

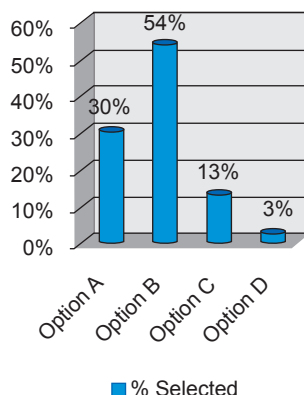
To assess learning levels of engineering graduates on the rules of English grammar, competencies were organized according to the class they are imparted in the CBSE board curriculum. Overall grammar constructs are found to be extremely weak, with only 47% engineering graduates showing some competency for grammar.

*Fill in the blank:*

*Did you \_\_\_ cereal for breakfast?*

- (a) Had
- (b) Have
- (c) Ate
- (d) Having

Answer options selected



Almost one-third of engineering graduates believed ‘had’ to be the right answer, highlighting the poor grasp over grammar.



Some furnitures arrived for you this morning.

- (a) Furniture arrived
- (b) A furniture arrived
- (c) Some furniture arrived
- (d) None of the above

There is a dearth of woman doctor in our state. We may have to recruit some from the other states.

- (a) Women doctor
- (b) Woman doctors
- (c) Women doctors
- (d) None of these

For many teachers, having the freedom to teach what they desire most, is more important than drawing a handsome salary.

- (a) to have the freedom of teaching what they want most
- (b) having the freedom to teach what they desire most
- (c) having the freedom of teaching what they desire most
- (d) to have the freedom to teach what they desire most

The test items were categorized into three levels:

### 1. Basic

This is a level students are expected to be proficient in by Standard VI.

**For instance:** nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, simple tenses like simple present or simple past, regular singular/plural where a singular word is converted into a plural simply by adding -s or -es, etc.

#### Learning level

An average of 57% of engineering graduates demonstrated proficiency at this level.

### 2. Intermediate

A class VII student is expected to be conversant in these competencies.

**For instance:** tenses like past participle, regular singular/plural with spelling rules like knife/knives, quiz/quizzes, etc.

#### Learning level

47% of engineering graduates were at the learning level expected of a Standard VII student.

### 3. Advanced

This level of competency is usually acquired through regularly communicating in English and reading books in the language. It indicates a command over the nuances of the language, which is acquired over a period of time

**For instance:** tenses like past perfect continuous, irregular singular/plural like mouse/mice, woman/women, third-person singular -s, such as “she loves painting”, etc.

#### Learning level

Expectedly, the learning level is abysmal. However, it is shocking to note that only 27% of engineering graduates are at this level of comfort with the English language.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, only around 50% engineers demonstrate grammar competencies equivalent to those imparted in class VII. This level of grammar is required for being able to express oneself in an error-free and comprehensible manner, and be able to write day-to-day work communication/emails. It is imperative for any kind of client interaction.

Some sample questions indicating learning levels:

Sample Questions	Competency Level		
	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
	<p>Did you _____ cereal for breakfast?</p> <p>(a) Had (b) Have (c) Ate (d) Having</p>	<p>(A) Do the roses in your garden smell / (B) more sweetly / (C) than those in ours? / (D) No error</p> <p>(a) A                      (b) B (c) C                      (d) D</p>	<p>(A) The meeting adjourned abruptly / (B) by the CEO after / (C) about three hours of deliberation / (D) No error</p> <p>(a) A                      (b) B (c) C                      (d) D</p>
	<p><b>50% were right.</b></p> <p>Even a basic-level question where the correct tense needs to be ascertained was answered correctly only by 50% of engineers. This highlights the poor levels of English learning even in schools and universities where primary medium of instruction is English.</p>	<p><b>45% were right.</b></p> <p>The question checks for knowledge of forms of adjectives. In this case, “more sweetly” is grammatically better represented as “sweeter”. It should be noted that the question did not ask for the correction, but only identification of where the error</p>	<p><b>0% were right.</b></p> <p>Engineering students are unable to understand the implication of nuanced changes in the sentence. While ‘the meeting adjourned abruptly’ is the correct usage, with the introduction of the subject (the CEO), it changes to ‘The meeting was abruptly adjourned’ or even ‘the meeting was adjourned abruptly’. These subtle differences of the language are mastered through practice – both in speech and reading.</p>

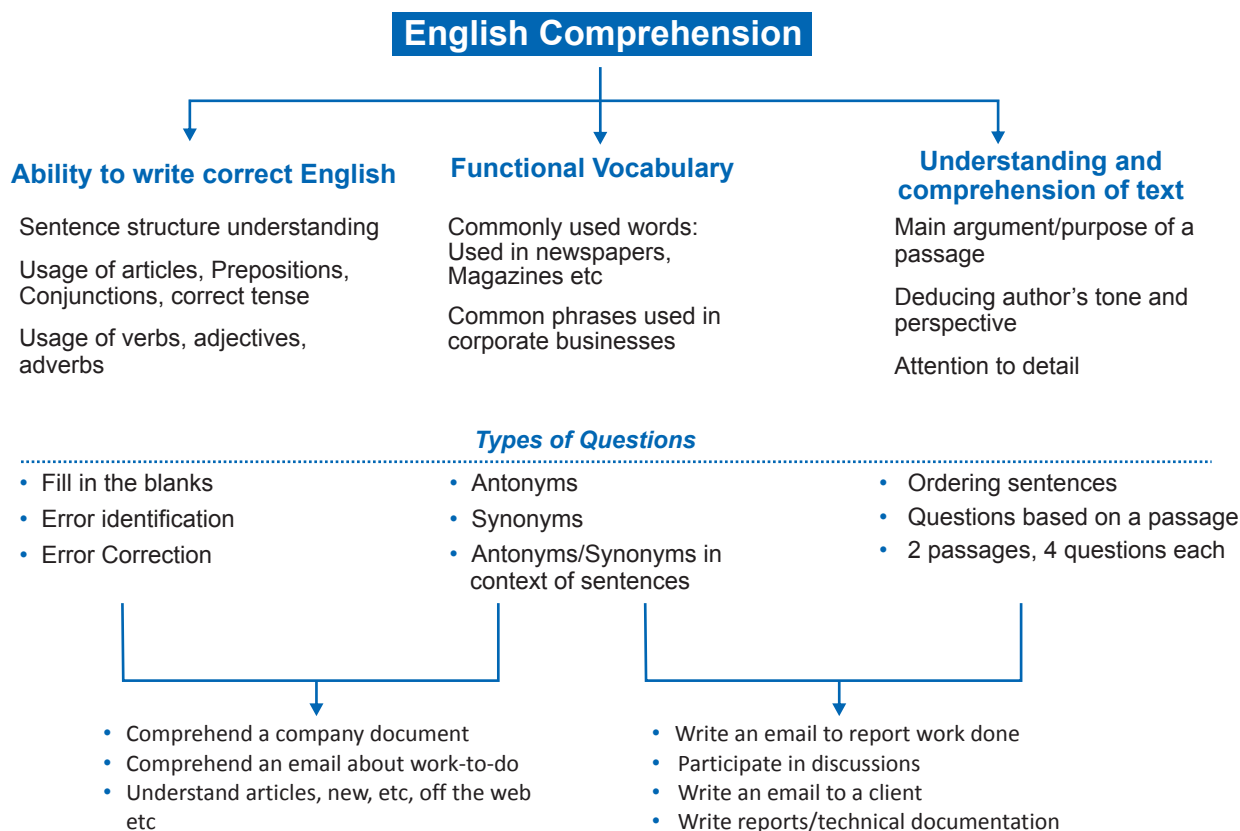
# Appendix 1

## AMCAT English Comprehension (technical): Structure and Design

Familiarity with English language in its various nuances is an essential skill, especially in the current climate of global networking. Ideally, any recruitment should involve a test of skills in handling the language in ways that promote the objectives of a company and establish desired rapport.

Our English test uses a variety of internationally standardized resources for framing questions aimed at determining the candidate's ability to understand (a) the written text (b) the spoken word and (c) communicate effectively through written documents. The test broadly covers the following areas:

1. A wide-ranging vocabulary to work with general and specific terminology.
2. Syntax and sentence structure, the incorrect use of which distorts meaning and becomes a communication hurdle.
3. Comprehension exercises designed to test a candidate's ability to read fluently and understand correctly.
4. The ability to understand and use suitable phrases that enrich the meaning of what is being conveyed.



## Appendix 2

When it came to promoting its new video-game console, the Wii, in America, Nintendo recruited a handful of carefully chosen suburban mothers in the hope that they would spread the word among their friends that the Wii was a gaming console the whole family could enjoy together. Nintendo thus became the latest company to use “word of mouth” marketing. Nestle, Sony and Philips have all launched similar campaigns in recent months to promote everything from bottled water to electric toothbrushes. As the power of traditional advertising declines, what was once an experimental marketing approach is becoming more popular.

After all, no form of advertising carries as much weight as an endorsement from a friend. “Amway and Tupperware know you can blend the social and economic to business advantage,” says Walter Carl, a marketing guru at Northeastern University. The difference now, he says, is that the Internet can magnify the effect of such endorsements.

The difficulty for marketers is creating the right kind of buzz and learning to control it. Negative views spread just as quickly as positive ones, so if a product has flaws, people will soon find out. And Peter Kim of Forrester, a consultancy, points out that when Microsoft sent laptops loaded with its new Windows Vista software to influential bloggers in an effort to get them to write about it, the resulting online discussion ignored Vista and focused instead on the morality of accepting gifts and the ethics of word-of-mouth marketing. Bad buzz, in short.

BzzAgent, a controversial company based in Boston that is one of the leading exponents of word-of-mouth marketing, operates a network of volunteer “agents” who receive free samples of products in the post. They talk to their friends about them and send back their thoughts. In return, they receive rewards through a points program – an arrangement they are supposed to make clear. This allows a firm to create buzz around a product and to see what kind of word-of-mouth response it generates, which can be useful for subsequent product development and marketing. Last week BzzAgent launched its service in Britain. Dave Balter, BzzAgent’s founder, thinks word-of-mouth marketing will become a multi-billion dollar industry. No doubt he tells that to everyone he meets.

Sample questions from Reading Comprehension competency “**Ability to comprehend, organize and paraphrase from content expressly presented**”:

**According to Peter Kim, what happened to Microsoft’s marketing campaign for Vista?**

- (a) It succeeded
- (b) It succeeded with some hiccups
- (c) It failed
- (d) None of these

Sample questions from Reading Comprehension competency **“Ability to intuit the tone, deeper objective of a body of information and sift out the data to identify the most accurate information”**:

**What can we infer from Walter Carl’s statement?**

- (a) Amway and Tupperware are products where word-of-mouth marketing could be used.
- (b) Amway and Tupperware are consumers who appreciated word-of-mouth marketing.
- (c) Amway and Tupperware are companies who use word-of-mouth marketing.
- (d) None of these.

Sample questions from Reading Comprehension competency **“Ability to comprehend the essence of the information and infer what is not being expressly mentioned, along with strong grasp over vocabulary”**:

**What is the tone of the passage?**

- (a) Neutral
- (b) Biased
- (c) Celebratory
- (d) Critical

# About Aspiring Minds

Aspiring Minds is India's leading employability solutions company, headquartered in Gurgaon. Aspiring Minds offers scientific assessments with an innovative large-scale sourcing model analogous to a GRE-for-job concept. The state-of-the-art assessment tools developed by Aspiring Minds have been used across industry verticals to help recruit the right people, develop profile-wise employability benchmarks and assess workforce health.

Aspiring Minds' intelligent adaptive assessments span across Language, Cognitive skills, Domain knowledge and Personality. A strong in-house research and development team with alumni from IITs and MIT form the development back bone of the patent pending assessment tools.

AMCAT® - the flagship product is India's Largest Employability Test. Conducted across the country throughout the year, AMCAT has been taken by over 750,000 candidates in 1300+ campuses, spread across 23 states. Tens of thousands of candidates secure their dream jobs every year through AMCAT.

Powered by a highly dedicated management team drawn from the IITs and IIMs, over 180 full-time employees, and a pan-India operational presence, Aspiring Minds has helped leading brands across verticals to improve their recruitment process efficiency and the quality of talent they hire. Aspiring Minds products and solutions have been adopted by leading corporates including HCL, Genpact, Accenture, L&T Finance, Keane, Mphasis, Infosys, Ericsson, Sapient, John Deere, Tavant, Tally, among others.

**Corporate Office:** 323 Udyog Vihar, Phase 2, Gurgaon, Haryana 122016

**Voice:** 0124-484 2777 Fax: 0124-4148027

**E-mail:** [info@aspiringminds.in](mailto:info@aspiringminds.in)

**Visit us at:** <http://www.aspiringminds.in> | [www.myamcat.com](http://www.myamcat.com)



**aspiringminds**  
*Employability Quantified*