Developing Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

Traditionally, engineers have focused on acquiring the technical skills of their field. Soft skills, such as communication, language proficiency, and cross-cultural experience, have not been a high priority. Due to a global economy, the need to be aware of the importance of communicating and mastering a second language has increased. Universities now realize the benefits students can reap from being exposed and held responsible for these value-added skills, such as becoming more language and communication proficient. A survey was performed on the students and staff in a university engineering department “to identify how cross-cultural language use potentially impacted academic and communication performance” (187). The results showed that students struggle with communication skills and the problems only increase when studying a second language. As suggested in the article “The Pragmatics of Making Requests in the L2 Workplace,” the problems with communication can be diminished when people realize the barriers that exist and how to deal with them. Both articles only further confirm the fact that our economy is much more global than in the past, and people need to adapt to this change by becoming aware of the problems and finding solutions to improve communication in the workplace. The article notes that prospective student professionals “will have a leading edge when seeking work with multinational corporations” if they focus on becoming “linguistically more competent and more cross-culturally sensitive and work at developing better communication skills” (187).