

## **Designing a Model “Professional Communication Skills” Syllabus for Engineering Students**

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### **Abstract**

As far as need of the Communication Skills is concerned it is multi-dimensional. It is not only preparing a syllabus but simultaneously preparing them for the challenging career they are going to face in the near future. However the entire process includes training of teachers. Teachers are the backbone of this entire teaching- learning process. Unless they take up entire Communication Skills as an essential subject for engineers, it would be a Herculean task to translate it into the desired objective for Engineering and Professional graduates. Teachers teaching communication skills need to do research and development. They should move towards finding out changes and updated methods of examinations held in the recent past. Accordingly they should prepare their course and conduct examinations accordingly.

**Key words:** Communication, syllabus, teaching, learning, professional, engineering

### **Introduction:**

As we know learning language is not a matter of a year. In a country like India as it our second language it takes many years. But especially in case of an engineer it takes at least three years as said by students and the Ex students to whom the questionnaire was given. Here, students start appearing in the above mentioned examinations from the first semester with Communication Skills as a course. It means if we include another 3 years of advanced Professional Communication Skills as career development course, we would be able to help them in making an appropriate career. As we know our teachers they belong to arts stream or general stream. The lecturers or assistant professors who join as Communication Skills teachers or EST practitioners in these engineering colleges are either Masters in English Literature or Masters in Language with Literature background. Therefore specific training programmes and workshops for teachers and trainers of English communication skills are highly essential.

For a detail analysis of the preparation of an innovative model of Communication Skills or Communicative English curriculum for particular target groups and to ensure that it is more flexible and responsive to the changes in engineering education criteria and professional demands, the following methodologies are to be introduced:

- Reviewing of related literature and publications concerning English and communication studies, and existing courses in ESP and EST
- Review of books
- Review of journals and conference publications
- Review of communication skills improvement article published in news paper
- Review of relevant documents related to CLT

This will definitely provide further endorsements about the importance of Communication Skills for highly professional and qualified engineers in the 21st Century and will create the possibility to identify key activities required in the field of engineering. It will provide the ground to carry out comprehensive needs analysis in order to determine the appropriate content for Communication Skills curriculum, which is designed to meet the specific communicative needs of learners.

### **Relevance of Subject knowledge:**

It is now universally observed that the Communication Skills teachers should not be expected to be an expert in all necessity of the English Language and Communication Skills in Engineering Technology. However, it has also been stated that it falls within our professional requirements to be at least interested in the subject, either for purely intellectual or more practical reasons. What normally happens in a teaching situation, as common in many Communication Skills situations, is that teachers of English in Communication skills have amassed a considerable amount of information about the students' specialty. There is no reason why this knowledge should not be put to use in the English classroom; in fact, our students usually appreciate it as a sign of both our interest in their subject and our recognition of the relevance of their field of study. However, it is now understood that although our specific knowledge may be used to advantage, it should be handled carefully in the Communication Skills classroom.

### **Course Materials for Communication skills:**

As we go deep and into the study, this work will suggest a sample of the kind of teaching materials that can be used in Communication skills, which may clearly illustrate the shortcomings referred to with regard to methodology. It will also try to show alternative ways to exploit the material, bearing in mind students' wants and learning needs. The views and suggestions for tasks are not intended as a set of procedure for all the materials used in different situations. On the contrary, flexibility should be the key word for classroom activities, and teaching materials should positively allow for changes in order to accommodate different circumstances. In this research work, model Syllabus formation in Communication Skills would focus on basics. Thus preparing students for the following challenging career perspectives are going to meet the needs of the engineering and professional graduates:

- i. Graduate Aptitude Test for Engineers (GATE)
- ii. Graduate Record Examination (GRE)
- iii. Graduate Management Aptitude Test (GMAT)
- iv. Management Admission Tests (CAT, XAT, MAT, SNAP)
- v. Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)
- vi. Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC)
- vii. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

After going through the detail analysis of the course structure of all competitive examinations listed above, the following common points are observed in these examinations:

Analogy, Reading Comprehension, Paragraph formation, Critical Reasoning, Presentation Skills, Public Speaking, Dialogue Delivery, Psychometrics Skills, Emotional Quotient, Emotional Intelligence, and Technical Writing,

At present most of the Engineering & professional graduates start preparation for competitive examinations in the 6th semester itself. And normally English language & Communication Skills at

Engineering and professional curriculum is offered at either the first semester or the second semester. This states that a rigorous courseware and a systematic teaching approach in EL and CS can make a noteworthy difference. Here, all training modules of verbal section and grooming section begin with vocabulary sessions. Unless students have sufficient word power and an approach to learn new words, they can't improve their Communication Skills. Therefore, almost all examinations emphasize upon testing of vocabulary skills.

## **Vocabulary**

Analogy is entirely based on rich word power. So, for language acquisition, learner should take vocabulary as the first step. When the students do not find themselves comfortable with L2, language learning can be made interactive and interesting with the introduction of appropriate vocabulary exercises. It gives a detailed explanation of the various methodologies that can be included in the teaching of vocabulary items in a language classroom. In fact, many well-known persons and linguists have written books on the necessity of vocabulary for classroom teaching. Edward L. Thorndike published a *Teacher's Word Book* in 1921 as an extended guide to word frequency in language. When students travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries. Acquiring more vocabulary will help the learners to learn a language. Building vocabulary that is adequate to the needs of one's reading and self-expression has to be a personal goal for every writer and speaker.

As we know, learning a language means learning the rules of the language system and its use. In other words, it is learning to use vocabulary and structures in meaningful situations. Just knowing the mere meaning of a word is not enough. It means:

- To know a word is to know its spelling, pronunciation and meaning
- To know a word means to know the degree of probability of encountering that word in speech or print.
- To know a word implies knowing the limitations on the use of the word according to variations of function and situation.
- To know a word entails knowledge of the network of associations between that word and other in the language.

In this way a careful selection of vocabulary and grading by the teacher will have a great effort on teaching the lessons and the revision work at a later stage. Effective vocabulary sessions need in depth knowledge of origin, suffixes and prefixes. The most basic foundation for vocabulary can be called a root. Therefore it's quite necessary for the teacher to decide what vocabulary and structural items he/she intends to teach.

### **Current Teaching Methodology**

The novel approach to the teaching of vocabulary in engineering colleges is far from satisfactory. In the teaching and learning process, due to various reasons learners are not absorbing many words for use. Of course sometimes it is the students' mistake that they are not putting effort on learning new jargons. But what could be the main reason for the lack of vocabulary in the students mind in spite of having done many courses, is that it is much complicated to teach vocabulary to the students? Teaching words is not an easy task. A number of teachers have said that they are not impressed with the efficiency of textbooks and workbooks. And the best way for someone for improving their vocabulary is by reading words and using them on a regular basis. The student has to be exposed to these words multiple times. There is no guarantee that textbooks and workbooks can ensure retention. A teacher does not depend on only the textbooks but he also has to the methodologies of reading books that would in turn expose the learners to new words. Most of the students these days do not have much vocabulary; because, for they concentrate on other subjects, not on vocabulary. In CAT/GRE/GMAT/TOFEL/Campus Placement and other examinations, the students secure very less marks in vocabulary and reading comprehension; particularly, because they do not pay attention to learning new jargons. Reading skills plays an important role in acquiring more lexicons or vocabulary. Vocabulary knowledge is critical to reading comprehension, rather it is important that those working with young readers help foster their development of a large 'word bank' and effective vocabulary learning strategies.

### **Criterion**

Criterion for the selection of vocabulary should be like the following:

- Word frequency

- Structural Considerations
- Material Association
- Environment Applicability
- Universality
- Productivity of words
- Range of Applicability

Word frequency means how many times a word is used in normal reading material. We know that some words will be repeated several times and some words would be rarely used. The teacher should remember the points when one wants to prepare the words for the students.

#### **Guide line to the Teacher:**

- To provide a guide book that contains guidelines about the entire curriculum and objective of the course.
- To provide supplementary materials to make changes as per the need to make sessions more interesting and informative.
- To provide advice on the methodology of teaching and evaluation system and process.
- To give theoretical orientations
- To provide key to the exercises

No modification can be brought without a change in the teaching methodology. At present our teachers appear to be fed up with the traditional methods and techniques of teaching. Hence they are looking for a totally novel methodology of teaching. They want to adopt a methodology that is modern and effective.

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