

***Enhancing the Professional Communication Skills of Engineering Students through four (LSRW) skills.***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Communication is a most important skill. Communication skills are not only needed in daily personal life, but also required in the profession, workplace and in business. Communication is the life blood of all the organizations. You can't be successful without great communication skills in professional life or in business. This paper explains the importance and purpose of Professional Communication taught to engineering students. Oral and written communication proficiency is an important professional skill for engineering graduates. However, developing these skills is integrated into the engineering curriculum. It's a one-year integrated approach to developing professional competence in oral and written communication, which has been implemented in the engineering program. It is considered that students who have good Professional Communication have a successful career and personal life too. Engineering education communities have recognised that graduates not only need to possess technical knowledge in their chosen disciplines, but also need to be better educated in communication skills, teamwork, leadership, creativity, problem solving and a host of other human factors. Laboratory courses like Communication Skills and Soft skills Laboratory Based and Interpersonal Skills Laboratory courses offered in Engineering colleges enhance the core competences among students and promote their capability, employability, productivity and sustainability in personal, professional, and social life. Here we discuss why Professional Communication is important for engineering students and how it benefits them. Hence, it is very important for students to develop Professional Communication to pursue employment and business opportunities.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Professional Communication, a course for undergraduate engineering and technology students studying at colleges, plays a significant role in enhancing the skills of engineering students. It comprises of the four skills of learning – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing in addition to their theory. "**Professional Communication Lab**", a practical subject and training is given with the assistance of Networked Computers and specially designed software.

## **PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE**

An engineering student's success in the "on campus recruitment" is mainly based on their skills. An English language Lab is a facility where a student can learn a language with the help and guidance of a teacher through a system, to improve his / her speaking, Reading, listening and Oral capacity. This Lab can receive inputs from recorded tapes, audios and videos, CDs, etc. The lab develops among the students a habit of listening and speaking with accurate pronunciation. Students can record their own voice and play back for self-evaluation. It acts as a platform for learning, practicing and producing language skills through interactive lessons and communicative mode of teaching. Language laboratories are for drills and for listening comprehension. It is also used for consolidating the learning. **Professional Communication Lab** may have the following objectives, purposes, functions to work upon.

## **WHAT ARE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS?**

Professional communication refers to the oral, written, visual, and digital forms of delivering information in the context of a workplace. Effective professional communication is critical in today's world. Most problems in an organization arise as a result of poor communication. Effective communication ensures a smooth flow of ideas, facts, decisions, and advice. This way, employees eliminate hindrances in achieving the organization's target. By mastering professional communication, the potential for misunderstandings occurring can be minimised. When you work in a team, you need to be able to regularly communicate with others. You need to listen to other people's ideas, whilst being able to clearly and effectively communicate your own. On the other hand, poor communication may lead to the loss of time, money, opportunity, energy, and even good will in any enterprise. It is, therefore, essential to understanding the various features of professional communication. As a result, you will be able to foster growth and development in the organization.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE**

Professional communication Lab focuses on the production and practice of sounds of language and familiarizes the students with the use of English in everyday situations and contexts.

- To expose the students to a variety of self-instructional, learner-friendly modes of language learning.
- To enable them to learn better pronunciation through stress on word accent, intonation, and rhythm.
- To train them to use language effectively to face interviews, group discussions, public speaking.
- To initiate them into greater use of the computer in resume preparation, report writing, format- making etc.,.
- To maintain good linguistic competence- through accuracy in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.
- To enrich the discourse competence, to prepare the learner to be able to produce contextualize written text and speech.

## COMPONENTS OF THE COURSE

- Importance of listening and Types of Listening.
- listening to TED Talks, lectures, etc.
- Listening to motivational speeches, music and poetry.
- Listening- to gather information such as facts, directions, news or instructions.
- Critical Listening- listening to examine and evaluate the message for logic and truth - televised debate, election campaign.
- Empathetic Listening – paying attention to another person with empathy – listening to problems and issues (videos).
- Reading Articles from journals
- Reading Abstracts of Projects.
- Writing a description of a graph or chart.
- writing summaries.

## THE WAYS TO ENHANCING THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In the Indian context, an engineering student's success in the "on campus recruitment" is mainly based on their demonstrations of communication skills. This Lab has a facility where a student can learn a language with the help and guidance of a teacher through a system, to improve his / her Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing capacity. These skills can help you during the job interview process as interviewers look for applicants who can work well with others. They will also help you succeed in almost any job by helping you understand other people and adjusting your approach to work together effectively. Employers will be looking for workers who can both perform technical tasks with excellence and communicate well with colleagues. Enhancing students skill-set will give their career a boost. These are some ways,

- Reading professional journals, books, Websites or blogs related to the industry you want to move in always gives the insight and knowledge that will keep you ahead during the discussions and interview.
- Taking classes and attending seminars in areas you need to improve on.
- Making yourself available to assist with projects or other tasks will help you gain skills.
- Opportunities to develop leadership skills may not always be available at work, but there are other ways to gain them. Look to your community for volunteer positions. Become involved in clubs, non-profit organisations, etc. Not only do these activities offer opportunities to build your leadership skills, they can be personally gratifying as well.
- Do not forget your technical skills, as building these can qualify you for new positions and opportunities. While returning to classes or reading new literature may be hard (in a work-life balance), the benefits are satisfactory. Doing part-time courses can support your stagnant position in the organisation. Upgradation on the latest technology will also be helpful if one had done a particular course long back and

never used the same.

**other desired skills such as:**

- Enthusiasm
- Team work
- Confidence
- Commitment
- Time management
- Initiative

Thus, students have to dedicate themselves to improve their professional and technical skills to be successful.

**ACTIVITIES IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION LAB**

The scope of activities in the Professional communication lab can be categorized into following levels

**LISTENING**

- Listening for understanding and information.
- Listening to TED TALKS/Interviews/TV News Programme/Discussions/Debates/Brief Lectures/Conversations.
- Listening to basic sounds of English.
- Listening to fill up missing information.
- Listening to British, American, Australian and neutral accent of Indian English.

**ORAL FLUENCY**

- Speaking about oneself-
- articulating simple thoughts and ideas with clarity
- participating in conversations-chats-dialogues.
- Group Discussions
- Mini Presentations on technical themes, non-technical themes and business themes
- Transcode graphics orally
- Participating in Debates-expressing individual opinions on current issues.

**READING & WRITING**

- Writing Agenda and minutes of meetings.
- Writing daily/periodic reports.
- Writing business /professional letters.
- Business E-mail - Writing an Email Announcing a Meeting.
- Writing a description of a graph or chart.
- writing summaries.
- Reading Articles from journals.

- Reading Abstracts of Projects.

### **ENGLISH FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

- Advance Vocabulary for GRE/TOEFL/IELTS/BEC.
- Correction of errors in Examinations like Civil Services, UPSC.
- Verbal ability- Troublesome Verbs, Pronouns, Adverbs, Adjectives and Prepositions.
- Idioms and Phrases.

### **SOFT SKILLS**

- Attitude
- Communication
- Etiquette
- Teamwork
- Leadership Traits
- Emotional Intelligence
- Professional Ethics

### **INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY**

- S.D. (Self-Introduction & Description)
- JAM (Just A Minute session)
- Oral presentations-prepared and extempore
- Describing objects –persons-places etc.
- Pick and talk, short talks on any event on topics
- Activity on Idioms and Phrases.
- Persuasive speaking
- Demonstrative speaking – Demonstrate a process using visual aids (charts, graphs, maps, pictures, etc.)
- Phonetics practice

### **PAIR ACTIVITY**

- Exchange of dialogue
- Role-play
- Telephoning conversation

### **GROUP ACTIVITY**

- Debate
- Group discussion on general topics
- Seminar
- PPT (power point presentation)
- Conferences etc

### **ON COMPLETION OF THESE ACTIVITIES, STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO**

- Recognize the importance of listening by various proposed listening activities
- Familiarize themselves with the need to speak effectively in different environments
- Develop reading and writing skills to meet the needs of global scenario
- Face national / international language testing modules
- Recognize and establish dynamic corporate communication and relationship.
- Make effective presentations
- Participate confidently in Group Discussions.
- Attend job interviews and be successful in them.
- Develop adequate Soft Skills required for the workplace

### **ADVANTAGES OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION LAB**

- Students are attentive in the lab than in the theory class.
- Gives freedom to students to learn at their own pace.
- Builds self-confidence.
- Enhances the listening skills of students.
- Active participation
- Helps the students to acquire comprehension skills after listening to a text.
- Meets the employers' demand - communicative competence in English.
- Trains students to face interviews, group discussions and public speaking.
- As students are asked to work in pairs & groups, they can speak English with confidence.
- The shy learners can get more benefits as they are monitored individually by the monitor.
- Trains the students in soft skills, decision making, business communication and pre-placement training.

### **THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTOR.**

- He must also be aware of the latest technologies, methods and approaches of language teaching, explore new ideas and having a certain amount of specialization in the concerned subject.
- It is the responsibility of the instructor to drag the students' attention and concentration skills to the maximum extent and make them good listeners.
- The English language teachers can also organize mock interviews, oral presentations to motivate and sharpen the speaking skills of the learners.
- He is expected to play the roles such as – counselor, motivator, communication skills trainer etc.

Thus, the Language Instructor helps the students in overcoming their fears about communication and motivate them to develop more positive perceptions of communication activities.

## HOW TO IMPROVE OUR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION OTHER THAN LAB CLASSES

### These are the following ways to improve your Professional skills:

- Get training. Attend a workshop, take a course, read an article or book, observe someone who excels at the skill. ...
- Practice. Consider ways you can deliberately.
- Get feedback. Assess your progress, identifying areas where you have improved and areas for continued growth.
- Grow your skills and Career
- Turn job applications into job interviews
- Build your Professional Network
- Focus on your Soft Skills
- Think Outside the Box

## CONCLUSION

In today's competitive and evolving market, where technology is changing at a very fast pace, one has to be on one's toes to meet the market dynamics. Still there are some common skills that are looked for into by the companies. Hiring teams often use electronic scanners to rank candidates using keywords to search resumes from their own database and job portals. The terms employers generally use for the search are: problem-solving and decision-making skills; oral and written communications; customer service or retention; productivity improvement; leadership; technology awareness; team-building; and project management. Certain weightage is assigned against each point depending on the type of industry and type of profile. In the current competitive period teaching English to the Engineering and Technology students is a great challenge. Professional skills among these said students can be developed by rigorous training programmes and lots of practice work. It requires tenacious efforts and imperative on the part of students to master them. As teachers of English, it is incumbent upon us to help students discover the astonishing power of the English language and it is our bounden duty to play a pivotal role in developing the skills of English language among the students of Engineering and Technology.

Students must keep in mind that, "Where there is a will there is a way", and "Success often comes to those who try". They may come across the hindrances in their path but they are not to discourage them but to improve their quality of excellence. The excellence is never a chance but it is a result of hard and sincere efforts. In this modern era the advance technology is at their disposal. If they do not take benefit of it who are at fault?

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