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**Teaching Communication skills for  
Tamil Medium Engineering Students**

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**Abstract**

This paper describes the development of teaching communication skills for engineering students. The development is seen as moving from the notion of liberal studies through communication skills, eventually to the concept of integrated studies. The idea behind integrated studies is described and the benefits and problems of engineering students in engineering colleges are discussed.

**Introduction**

Communication is sharing of information through speaking and writing. It is the exchange of ideas and views between two people. A communication skill includes, besides the other commonly known skills, lip reading, finger-spelling, sign language, for interpersonal skills, in interpersonal relations. A communication skill is the ability to use language (receptive) and express (expressive) information. Communication skills are the set of skills that enables a person to convey information so that it is received and understood. It refers to the repertoire of behaviors that serve to convey information for the individual.

There are two types of communication, namely, **verbal** and **non verbal** communication. Verbal communication is where we use **voice** and **words**. While Non-verbal communication means:

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- postures
- body movement
- facial expression
- gestures
- body language and
- eye contact.

Communication skills are effected through a definite sequential process involving discrete elements.

### **Communication Cycle**

In the 1990's the computer made a remarkable growth in communication and the language of computer came to be known as "communication". Communication system evolves a cycle.

For example:

- THE SENDER
- THE RECEIVER
- THE MESSAGE
- THE CHANNEL
- THE FEEDBACK.

### **Necessity of Communication via English for Engineering Students**

English is very important because it is widely spoken all around the world. For Tamil medium students in engineering colleges whose mother tongue is not English, basic English is even more important, not only for their academic life but also for their bright career. We the teachers of English in Engineering Colleges, have to take Tamil medium students into account as they come from a background where English is not generally used for communication in the classroom. They find it difficult to understand English in the engineering college because most of the professors' lectures are in English. Hence Tamil medium students should be enabled to have the basic ability in English to deal with lectures in English.

After becoming a professional, a Tamil medium student usually works in a group since the task can seldom be solved by an individual. His work determines that being an engineer he has to cooperate and communicate with different types of people around the world. In order to understand and coordinate with his colleagues and accomplish the team projects these students need good communication skills in English. The Tamil medium engineering students should try hard to improve their ability in English, which can help them to make their career more successful.

### **Developing Communication Skills**

*Communication Skills Laboratory* (GE2321), a compulsory course for engineering and technology students studying in colleges affiliated to the Anna University, Tamil Nadu, was introduced in November 2006. It is offered to all third-year students. The main objective of the course is to develop students' communication skills and prepare them for placement / campus recruitment.

Communication skills can be developed by rigorous training programmes and a lot of practical work.

Extra time, during free hours or after college hours or even during holidays if possible, can be allotted by the staff to train weak students and bring them to a comfortable level.

The engineering class consists of both English medium and Tamil medium students in the same section. So, the teachers must bear in mind never to point out the Tamil medium students in the class as this can further demoralize them. We all know that the students require persistent motivational efforts. It is possible to increase their motivation by applying various methods, discussion in the classes, studying famous speeches, mastering the art of oral presentation and by active participation in presentations, seminars, workshops, conferences, group discussions, etc.

The following measures will prove to be fruitful in the learning of communication skills at the under-graduate and graduate levels.

### **Benefits of Classroom Activities**

Teacher should conduct multiple classroom activities for developing communication skills like presentations, group discussions, role-play activities, LSRW activities (listening, speaking, reading writing).

### **Presentation Skills**

Presentation is considered an art. Engineering graduates are expected to give oral presentations as part of their work. Presentation skills encourage oral communication for engineering professionals and provide them a suitable platform to transform their information, ideas and knowledge. It also helps to develop confidence level and reduce hesitation.

Tamil medium students in Engineering Institutions may be motivated and coaxed if necessary to make presentations on easy topics like:

- Myself
- My hobby
- A rainy day
- My favorite film/ actor/ singer/game

And so on. If needed as we have also done in our classes, a bright student, good in English with good skills to speak in Tamil can be assigned the task of mentoring the students in his free time. A word of appreciation or a small token awarded in front of the whole class, to both the students at the end of one such exercise, will go a long way in bringing about the desired results.

### **Role-play Activities**

Role play activities help to build team spirit and students get the chance of learning things by doing this activity. Role play is an integral part of personality development. This activity helps students to pretend being another character and helps them overcome shyness. Role play will encourage self-awareness while role reversal will contribute to the students' understanding of empathy, of knowing how the other side perceives engineers.

### **Group Discussion**

A group discussion is essentially a process of interaction among various participants. Consequently, it assesses the overall personality which includes physical appearance, mental potential, knowledge, power of communication and leadership abilities of the members of the group.

### **Conclusion**

In the Indian context, an engineering student's success in the on-campus recruitment is mainly based on their demonstration of communication skills. Teachers of English have a responsibility to help their students in overcoming their fears about communicating and to assist students in developing more positive perceptions of communication activities. The department of English has been given the responsibility of developing the students' communication skills

Communication is an art which every professional has to adopt in order to transact his day to day work efficiently. Engineers need to be able to communicate their thoughts, ideas and plans to many other specialists in many different fields. Engineers work in teams with people from different backgrounds. Therefore communication skills are crucial for engineering students to ensure a secure placement and a comfortable life.

With deliberate exercises devised to help Tamil medium students, these students also can be enabled to achieve good skills in using English. In fact, success of this category of students in receiving job offers through campus recruitment clearly shows that given adequate training these students will achieve great success.

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