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MEEPA: AN ESP SYLLABUS DESIGN FOR THE ENGINEERING STUDENTS OF BIJU PATNAIK UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, INDIA

Biswanandan Dash

Dravidian University in Kuppam, and Faculty in Orissa Engineering College,
Biju Patnaik University of Technology, Bhubaneswar 752 050, India
E-Mail: bn.dash@gmail.com

Abstract. *This paper hypothetically discusses the impulse of a course development that purposely stands for "Mastery in English for Engineers Professional Achievement", and later pontificated to use an acronym "*MEEPA*". With the use of an acronym it is emphasized not as a sub-domain, but rather as a scholastic focus necessary for effective achievement by our engineers, either within language or communication pedagogy. It is envisioned as a contextual subset under 'applied linguistics'. The model of* MEEPA *originates from my own doctoral research in Dravidian University, which was surveyed at Biju Patnaik University of Technology, Odisha in India during 2008-2013. The finding of the paper shows how the global professionalism and the needs-oriented competencies are significant for mastery of Professional or Business English communication for future engineers. This research theoretically proposes to develop an ESP-based course across different engineering streams. Simultaneously, the present syllabus and the review of literature serve to keep the learners' needs in view and are regarded as an ESP course for engineering education. It also discusses important canons about engineering students within teaching-learning ecology which included a syllabus formulation, besides implementation and evaluation. This research can be used as an eclectic variation in the use of hedging between ESOL, ESP, ESL, EFL and ELT disciplines and can be disseminated in different ways in the field, or as a Booster to strengthen successful efforts in the future.*

Key words: *MEEPA (Mastery in English for Engineers Professional Achievement), ESP, ELT, Professional communication, Business English communication*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the present day scenario, globalisation has a major influence upon every aspect of life. It is full of wonder, amazement and delight. However, it also presents challenges to older generations just to imagine and concomitantly embrace our present and future citizens with many amazing opportunities, despite the need to navigate many pitfalls of this fast-evolving world. This extreme paradigm shift requires a large enhancement of skill sets and abilities so as to participate fully both today and tomorrow, and is becoming a global prerequisite. Competent English communication is crucial among these to leverage success and happiness in life.

Our modern education pattern has a past largely rooted in industrialism and has remained largely unchanged through the information age, and now in the integration age with the massive use of internet. It purports to produce economically viable products - employable citizens (Duderstadt, 2008: 2; Ottesen & Gronhaug, 2006: 101). Nearly all our adjustments to the system for the last several years are a simple attempt to ensure our

graduates are prepared to enter the global workforce. India is a land of multiple languages, albeit English is preferred as a dominant alternative and a social choice. However, many people still lack skills with spoken English, especially those students pursuing engineering streams who need to interact sociably with the people within this new linguistic zone. Duderstadt (2008: 2 & 70) and Gupta (2012) projected that an engineering student requires a gamut of skill-sets in order to succeed, apart from the biggest strength with technical knowledge in the career prospects. Undeniably, improper competence has lowered the employability of Indians by multinational companies. That is why they remain unemployed as they are unemployable. Their substandard skills cannot make them absorbed in this competitive market, thus leading to a shortage of certain skills in those graduates, reported *PurpleLeap* in a press-release (See, *The Economic Times*, 2012). Analytics says that the problem is mostly the deficiency in English communication, soft skills and the lack of creative independence.

1.1. Subjectivity statement

In a recent study a cognitive psychologist Lera Boroditsky finds how language organizes the way we think and relate to the world. Apparently, she asserted that the most fundamental dimensions of human experience, space, time, causality and relationships to others, could be constructed by complex knowledge systems that remain in the perception of the human mind and the thoughts we wish to express (see Boroditsky, 2011: 64). Likewise, the mastery of all achievements focuses on acquiring and developing competence and performance goals, which further focus on demonstrating one's competence by outperforming others. Mastery goals have been theorized by Dweck (1986) and Nicholls (1984).

Engineering students need mastery in English for the following reasons: for academic needs and for professional purposes or to upsurge their employability skills (Benesch, 1999: 313-315). Thus, the planning, teaching and learning in engineering programs need to be analysed so as to match the prescribed course. As per the prevailing situation at the Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT) based in Rourkela, Odisha, India, founded in 2002, it offers professional programs such as engineering, architecture, business management, to name a few (see BPUT web portal for details). It does have the prescribed syllabus for each course offered. However, the researcher encounters two latent problems during the study. First, under BPUT there are around 101 engineering teaching institutes/colleges (as per figure, 2010-11 sessions) but none has done a 'needs analysis' of their learners for more than 12 years of their founding. Second, the syllabus designed by BPUT has never been reviewed keeping in view the employability needs of the students, since 2008 until today.

1.2. Research questions

Considering the issues with professional English learning by the engineering undergraduates and in order to explore to what extent is the communicative pedagogy included in the curriculum, this study sets the following questions:

1. What are the strengths and limitations of the present syllabus for their professional learning skills through the English course beyond academic purpose?
2. What changes should be brought about in the curriculum at engineering institutes to improve students' communication skills and to prepare them for the workplace?
3. What are the recommended strategies for developing a new syllabus (refers to *MEEPA*) as an integral part of ESP approach, so as to improve the employability of the technical professionals.

1.3. Research design and methods

The questionnaire used in this study was based on the information gained from three different groups, undergraduate engineering students, teachers and professional engineers who graduated from BPUT, Odisha, and the researcher's own teaching experience in an engineering college. Following Patton (2002: 556), the selected samples were randomly collected from 150 undergraduate students across different colleges affiliated to BPUT. Interviews of 50 subject teachers and 50 professional engineers who had graduated from these affiliated colleges were also conducted. The method referred to as a tailor-made taxonomy in view of the syllabus preparation is expected to suit the needs of the overall body of ESOL for any Indian university's ELT curriculum.

The participants were asked to respond to a quantitative-cum-qualitative questionnaire. Two different research instruments were employed in this study because, by employing a mixed method, the interpretation built upon triangulation was certain to be stronger (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 307; Creswell, 2009). The present study, therefore, adopted "concurrent mixed method design" in which both qualitative and quantitative questions were posed for collecting information so that the interpretation can be made for overall results (Creswell, 2009: 14; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003 see § 4.7 in Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010: 109; Cook & Campbel, 1979; Brown, 1988:21 as cited by Griffee, 2012: 43-44, 73).

2. Theoretical Overview

The growing ascendancy of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is reflected in the rising number of universities and graduate programs in ESP being offered to students, including the English speaking countries (Strevens, 1977 as cited by Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991: 297; Anthony, 1997). Therefore, the review of the syllabus and design is an important aspect of any education system. The syllabus design in many cases is largely disregarded by many professional institutions just by depending upon few textbooks as an exclusive syllabus. The process of designing the syllabus is time consuming and courses are often adequate only for general English where a suitable textbook exists. This amasses a foreseeable challenge before Indian technical education/institutes to moderate or redevelop the curriculum which can equip the students with the necessary English communication and other soft skills (Yuling *et al.*, 2002). The increased number of students, a shortage of specialised language teachers, the lack of teaching resources, inadequate linguistic maturity and overpopulated classrooms are likely to bring about poor results and consequently affect the competitiveness of graduates in the job market. In the Indian context, engineering students or the teachers are not the only ones to be blamed. The system, together with the syllabus and the source books, is the one that failed to keep up. Good communication is more than just a matter of grammar, structure and combination of words. The skills have not been adequately provisioned for. Therefore, proficiency in English is considered as one of the employability skills (Đurić, 2013: 61) and is referred to as 'life skills' or 'survival skills' in the twenty-first century (Rainbird, 2000: 183; Evers *et al.*, 1998) beyond specific educational or technical expertise.

According to Pit Corder (1973 [1963]: 10 & 135), the language and communication pedagogy are treated as sub-branches, under the umbrella of 'applied linguistics'. Similarly, Halliday's (2007) expansion of this paradigm to "… an evolving theme" within social context is increasingly significant. To this conjecture, the theory of language counts as an

autonomously pursued line of scientific enquiry that happens to have applications, including language and communication pedagogy, as Brumfit (1997: 92-3) emphasised. Linguists have consistently argued that the teachers who handle the language for the specific purpose should subtly convey the social, cultural and theory-building exercises at some distance from the science of language in isolation.

ESP involves teaching and learning of the specific skills of language which are needed by particular learners for a particular purpose (e.g. Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 19 & 53; Ayers & Van Huyssteen, 1996: 73; Dudley-Evans and St John 1998, emphasised). Engineering students are usually adults who have already been exposed to English knowledge and who are mastering the language skills that are relevant to the professional setting in order to perform the job-related functions. It is, indeed, a fact that the content of such course should reflect the needs and be pertinent to the requirements of the future working environment (Douglas, 2013: 367). Many ESP experts pointed out that the focus of the activities in a course book may be on the development of skills and it is different depending on what a particular group of learners must concentrate on (Jordan, 1997: 13-114 & 122; Rogers, 2000: 6; Belcher, 2006; McDonough, 1984). Hence, ESP practitioners ought to be sincere about their adequacies, especially in terms of the time and effort, so as to contribute to the course after having performed a needs analysis.

3. Sources and Procedure

Complex problems rarely have simple solutions. During many stages of the evaluation and finding a solution in the process, there are many opportunities to go wrong, regardless of whether the solution tends to be remedial or not. This delves into the basis for the integration related to the ESP curriculum and course design, the information and data obtained from the ‘learner’s needs’ (Gatehouse, 2001) and the 'need for communication skills’ (Holliday, 1995; as cited by Chen, 2009 [2005]) from the reviewed analysis.

Moreover, in order to check the effectiveness of the professional English curriculum (Chambers, 1980: 25-33; Belcher, 2006) as offered by the BPUT, Odisha, the views were collected through the questionnaire from the undergraduates (2nd and 3rd year students), those pursuing their respective engineering branch who have completed it as the compulsory subject at their first year of the four year program 2008-2011, professional engineers (ex-students), and ESP practitioners (the subject teachers). Their suggestions were considered with the intention to bring out the changes in the course curriculum to meet the global importance in the engineering sectors (Đurić, 2013: 61). The questions about the evaluation of their curriculum were administered in the same questionnaire for each group, in order to have a hassle free data collection and to suggest a remedial course of action besides formulating a rational model syllabus within the framework.

Aside from dealing with the prescribed course of instruction on the skill-based approach regarding the specific needs of students for their future career (Stojanovic, 2014: 30), the ESP practitioners are supposed to perform the following five key roles under the ESP protocol. These are notably the teacher, the course designer and the materials provider, collaborator, researcher and evaluator, as emphasised by Munby (1978) and Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998).

4. Evaluation and Discussions

One useful method here needed for support is the 'needs analyses'. It is the way to solve a specific problem as requisite (see e.g. Richard West, 1994 cited in Dash, 2013: 42-43). Pragmatically, a design problem arises when a situation involves two differing things in the same context. It assesses the performance in order to know if the analysis has been carried out to find the gap for achieving the anticipated results (Stojković & Živković, 1993). The response was given by the stakeholders (undergraduate students, professional engineers and ESP subject teachers) and proposals were made for formulating a new skill-based syllabus, in a way that is universally applicable to all streams of engineering education.

The suggestions given by the students are presented in a 2D bar chart (see, Figure 1 below).

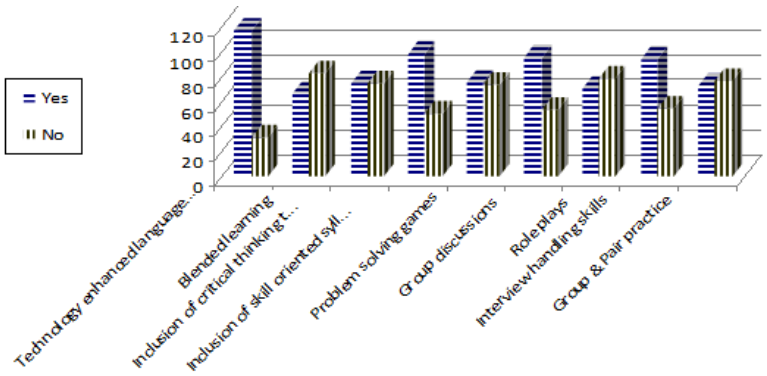


Fig. 1 Changes that undergraduate respondents would like to see in the professional English curriculum

- Undergraduates, overall 47 (31%) respondents, indicated that the syllabus needs improvement in many pertinent areas. Soft-skills, such as interview handling skills, group discussions, presentation skills, interpersonal skills should be listed, as indicated by 38 respondents (25%). Some of the 28 respondents indicated that there should be more teaching hours and practice sessions for delivery of the professional course curriculum.
- 118 (79%) respondents said that the technology-enhanced language learning is relevant and useful for them. Therefore, it should be made compulsory. Nearly 45% of the respondents said that blended learning (combination of face-to-face and technology based learning) should be incorporated.
- Nearly half of the sample population indicated that critical thinking tasks should be incorporated into the course because it is now important for placement and much required for the workplace.
- 99 respondents (66%) expressed that the course content should be modified to a skill oriented syllabus. The students were even willing to design their curriculum and said that they should be allowed to select the reading texts and suggest tasks of their own. Therefore, the idea of treating students as partners in the learning process was welcomed by students. Some respondents suggested that problem-solving games, group discussions, role plays, group and pair practice and interview handling skills

should be made a regular feature of their course. They want the course to be designed in such a way that it can reflect the corporate needs or expectations.

As to *what changes should be implemented in the professional course in order for their engineering curriculum to meet the future corporate needs (*for future relevance see Figure 2), the graduate alumni made the following suggestions:

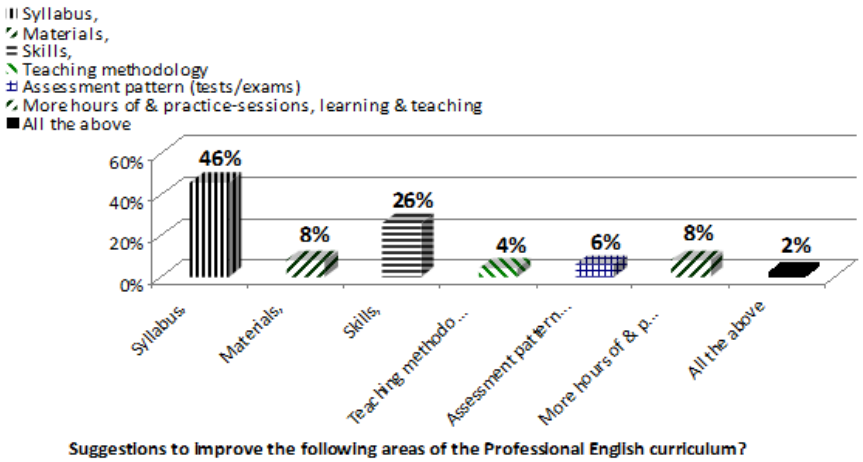


Fig. 1.2 Views of graduates on the areas which need some improvement

About 23 (46%) graduated respondents indicated that the changes should be implemented in the syllabus. They indicated that the syllabus should include more project oriented assignments; grammar should be restricted to the minimum as most of them are aware of the basic grammar which they learnt throughout high school. Some of the respondents also indicated that the course should focus on practical sessions and instruct them about how interviews are conducted, and that it should also address the participatory role in group discussions.

13 (26%) respondents indicated that their soft skills should be enhanced, with special attention devoted to interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, reasoning skills and verbal reasoning skills. As a result of confluence, soft skills are more important to them with respect to the needs of the corporate scenarios.

Other respondents indicated that, apart from the teachers engaged to teach them, the professional engineers and technocrats should be involved in designing the syllabus. The graduates also emphasised that teachers should encourage students with interesting activities involving more English communication practice in order to improve their fluency in the language, rather than to just make them pass the subject at the end of semester exams (see, Figure 1.3 below).

The alumni were further asked to state *what additional activities, according to you should be incorporated in the curriculum to make the students corporate friendly.* Out of 50 respondents, 21 indicated that students should be taught how to handle interviews. They should be trained about the questions which are generally asked during the PI session by the HR personnel beside the technical know-how. 11 respondents indicated that role plays which would help them learn how to deal with group activities and also enhance their

English fluency should be conducted. Only 10 (20%) respondents emphasised group discussions and the remaining 8 (16%) indicated that problem-solving skills should be enhanced (see, Figure 1.3 below).

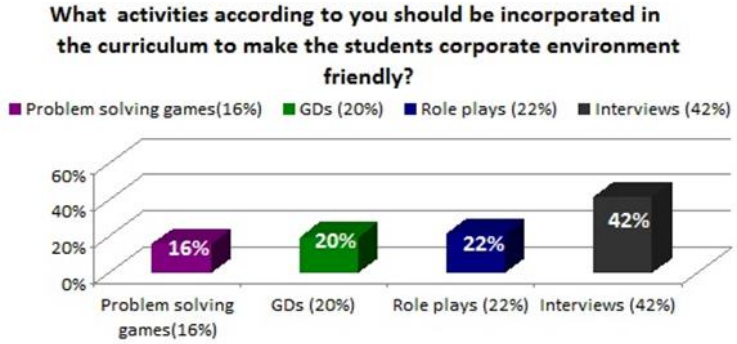


Fig. 1.3 Views of graduates on the areas which need some improvement

Apart from undergraduate students and graduates, the teachers who are ESP practitioners were being approached to give their views on the professional English course and syllabus, books that they used, and activities they usually conducted because teachers and students play an integral role in a successful educational system and this research is not an exception.

They answered both qualitative and quantitative questions. The researcher hopes to maintain confidentiality regarding qualitative questions. Their views expressed here have been marked using the alphabet, not personal names. Some excerpts of the interview have been presented under each question.

Are the teachers feeling comfortable with the course/syllabus? Does the course/syllabus fulfil the needs of the students' competence development? Does the course/syllabus prepare the students for corporate requirements or to pass the semester exams? Are you happy with the course books?

About half of the teacher respondents, 25 (50%), agreed that they are happy with the course/syllabus that is being taught to the engineering students, while the other half said it was lacking practical activities. They think that the course is more focused on the theoretical aspect of language and grammar skills.

On another point, 32 (65%) respondents criticized the course and said that the syllabus does not fulfil the needs of the students' competence level, while the remaining 18 subject teachers gave an affirmative answer. The teachers who disagreed said that the students should be prepared for formal situations, such as presentation skills, critical reasoning skills, verbal reasoning skills, etc.

Regarding the question *whether the course prepares the students and meets the students' needs for corporate requirements or whether the contents of the subjects are there just to make them pass the semester exams*, 30 respondents agreed that it helped the students achieve corporate requirements to some extent. They also emphasised that the course only enhances the theoretical learning of the students' writing, listening, reading and speaking skills. However, the 20 respondents who disagreed were indicating that the course does not address the students' soft skills. According to them, efforts should be made to enhance professional soft skills at an undergraduate level so that they can face the challenges in the future professional world (see, Figure 1.4 below).

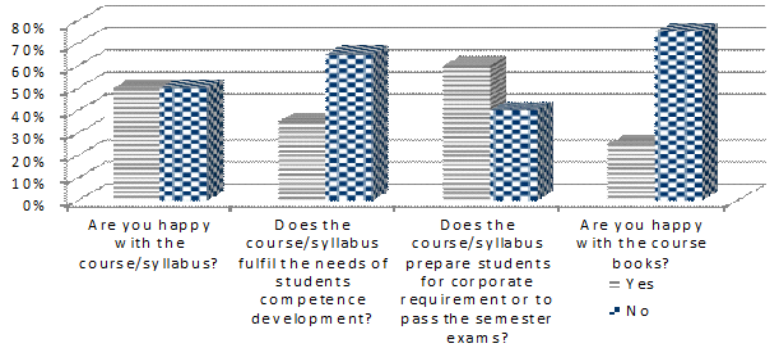


Fig. 1.4 Teachers' views on professional English course

37 (75%) respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the course books and the remaining 13 (25%), however, said they were satisfied.

Do you, as a teacher, *carry out the "needs analysis" before you start teaching*? And, *would you suggest improvements to the quality of the syllabus and exam patterns*?

All the 50 (100%) subject teachers specified that they usually conduct the needs analysis before they start teaching the syllabus. The needs analysis is done by analysing the prevailing situation of the students to understand the content of the professional English course for the engineering curriculum.

Ms. G said that the "Students should be exposed to reading texts not only given in the course, but from two other books relevant to the context. They can consult e-books or pick the books from the college library, according to their choice. This freedom will help them analyse the texts critically so that they can apply them in practical situations". Mr. R added that "Measures should also be taken to enhance the students' writing skills. They should be asked to write applicable assignments, essays, and blogs. The teachers should check these assignments and correct all mistakes".

Mr. J indicated that "More opportunities for speaking English should be given to the students. They should make oral presentations and present them in front of the class, which would induce confidence in them. This practice will gradually reduce their stage fright when speaking in public".

Regarding the examination patterns, nearly 60% of the teachers indicated that only the midterm examination should be conducted, and the scoring pattern should be based upon in-house presentations, assignments, role plays, models, etc. Other teachers, 40%, did not fill in any comment as they were newly joined to the teaching profession and have no relevant experience (see, Figure 1.4 above).

As a teacher, *do you think the faculty should be associated with the University curriculum designing in the course you teach*?

The opportunity to be associated with the university curriculum designing for the professional English course was mostly welcomed by the majority of teachers. Proportionately, 37 respondents (75%) strongly expressed their willingness by ticking 'yes', but the other 13 (25%) disagreed (see, Figure 1.5 below).

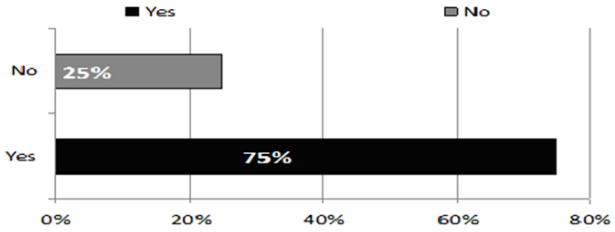


Fig. 1.**5** Teachers' views on whether the faculty should be involved in curriculum designing

5. Professional English Syllabus: Challenges and Solutions

Earlier, we found a praiseworthy taxonomic model syllabus preparation and curriculum evaluation postulated by Benjamin Bloom (1956). He suggested that the ultimate goal of any curriculum should be to build competence for the workplace as competence is the ability to apply knowledge, skill and attitude to the standards required in employment in both routine and non-routine situations (Bloom, cited by Krathwohl, 2002: 212-213). Andrew Zekeri, who eloquently stresses the competence-based approach to the University education system, says that it can be feasible to meet the workplace demands by incorporating a more "hands-on" activity in the classroom teaching (Zekeri, 2004: 413). "Hands-on" is directly related to the "follow-up activities that take place in the language laboratory, where further dialogue and drill work is carried out" (e.g. Richards and Rodgers 2001, 64–65; Rodgers, 2000: 7). Zekeri examined the curriculum in a multivariate analysis and indicated that, despite the technological changes occurring in places of work, the curriculum is not changing accordingly (see Zekeri, 2004: 414-418). Therefore, the framework refers to the needs analysis and can be extended to curriculum development. The investigation starts from an analysis of communication and learning needs and spirally proceeds through the iterative stages of curriculum development (Douglas, 2013: 368-370). 'Evaluation', in the view of Hutchison and Waters (1987: 96), "is a matter of judging the fitness of something for a particular purpose". In a similar view of Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), it means "to judge the quality or value of something".

It is, therefore, the researcher's intention to gather information about the efficacy of the Professional English curriculum delivery from the colleges affiliated to BPUT. The purpose of the evaluation focuses on what has been going well and what changes need to be made in support of the claims. In fact, there might be a number of different views which emerge as to which modalities of change or focus can be made upon those needs. For example:

- Learners' view: more support for learning needed and reduction of the amount of study material;
- Teachers' view: better grasp of socio-pragmatic use of language by learners;
- Academics' view: better preparation for curriculum studies needed in terms of reading and writing skills;
- Corporate view: better preparation for employment required in terms of basic communication skills for professional context.

Updating the curriculum and bringing changes is a continuous process for the educators since, in the last two decades, much attention has been paid to either the 'learners' view' and/or 'corporate view' with respect to the professional or technical courses, such as

engineering, medical, nursing, management or law, to name a few. Keeping this in mind, the higher education system should understand which aspects of employability skills are most needed by graduates (Evers & James, 1996: 276-278; Ottesen & Gronhaug, 2006). Providing the appropriate skills will make them confident and give them a positive attitude towards performing the tasks at the workplace and the curriculum should be amended accordingly (Crebert *et al*., 2004: 148 & 165; Đurić, 2013: 61).

As noted earlier, regarding the prescribed syllabus, the Professional English course is common to all engineering branches for the first year of study at BPUT. The aim of the course is to encourage learners to have a participatory learning throughout the English course and to help them in acquiring good communication skills. This course comprises two parts: (1) *English Communication Skills*; (2) *Business Communication*, which is taught during the first and the second semester, respectively, under the BPUT system.

Therefore, the present research uses the 'needs analysis' model in order to create a more focused course for the stakeholders. Hence, they were asked to evaluate the syllabus relating to the content, skills taught, teaching input, assessment system, teaching hours and language laboratory practice sessions on the scale of 1 to 5 where 1 corresponds to low and 5 denotes excellent (see Pareto, Figure 1.6 below).

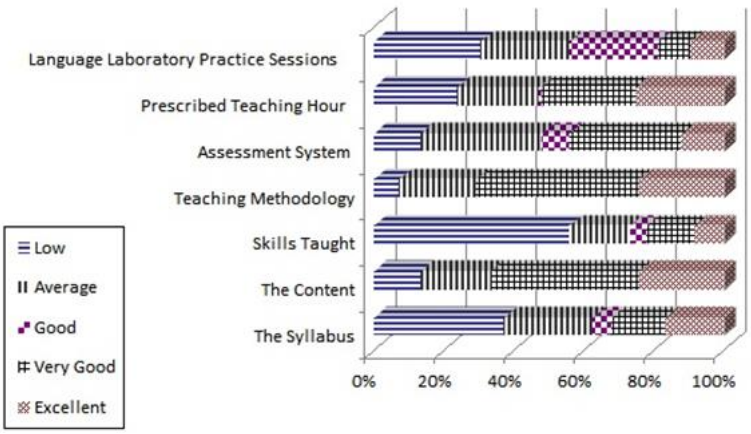


Fig. 1.6 Evaluation of parameters related to professional English syllabus

- When they were asked about the syllabus, most of the respondents expressed their displeasure. 56 respondents rated it as low and 38 respondents rated it as average. 56 (37%) respondents cumulatively rated it as good or just above average.
- With respect to the content in the prescribed books, 64 respondents indicated that they were very good and 36 respondents indicated that were excellent. 50 respondents indicated that they were below average and uninteresting.
- Most of the students were dissatisfied with the way the varieties of skills were taught. Among them, 84 respondents rated it low and 26 rated it average, which corresponded to a cumulative 73%. The remaining 40 respondents rated them as good and expressed satisfaction.
- With regard to the teaching hours, half of the population seems dissatisfied with the 2 hours per week class while the other half feels satisfied. It is found that the prescribed

30 hours per semester in actuality remain unfulfilled as most stakeholders find the semester closing within 18-22 hours. Therefore, the teachers were compelled to teach the most important topics which are likely to arise in the examination paper.

The course also includes laboratory practice sessions where the students are supposed to do role plays and take part in group activities. When asked, *if the students were satisfied with the skills learnt*, 84 respondents rated them below average and the remaining 66 respondents seemed satisfied. This could be due to the fact that Lab Practices are converted to general Theoretical lessons in order to cover up the syllabus.

6. Effectiveness of the Professional English course

When asked, *if the Professional English Course met the present and future needs of the recruiting company*, the majority of graduated respondents indicated that it was not satisfactory to prospective employers and, therefore, needed many improvements.

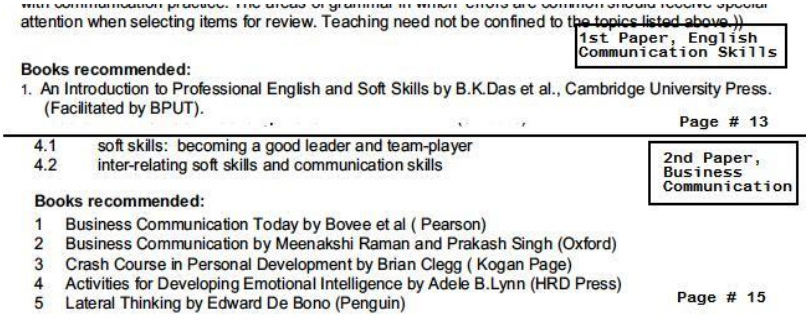
In the view of 81 (54%) respondents, the Professional English course did not prepare them for on-campus recruitment and placement. The limitation of the course includes undue focus on grammar, not enough focus on speaking, listening, thinking and problem-solving skills, little practical exposure, no-project oriented preparedness.

When asked, *if the respondents were satisfied with the assessment system*, 78 respondents rated it as good or better; while other 72 respondents rated it as below average. Nearly half of the sample was not satisfied with the assessment methodologies that were generally adopted for them.

Furthermore, the stakeholders were asked *to give their opinion on the test and the examination pattern being carried out by the university*. The comments obtained were that the listening and speaking skills were not assessed properly, examinations were not challenging and students with poor English could score good marks easily. In general, the respondents were least satisfied with the evaluation process at mid-term and end-term examinations conducted by the university.

6.1. Role of books and materials

The course books enlisted under the content of each syllabus are not "prescribed". They are rather "recommended" cumulatively (see Figure 1.7 below) from the common syllabus for the first year B.Tech students (BPUT, 2008 & 2010, available at BPUT web portal):


attention when selecting items for review. Teaching need not be confined to the topics listed above.))

1st Paper, English Communication Skills

Books recommended:

1. An Introduction to Professional English and Soft Skills by B.K.Das et al., Cambridge University Press. (Facilitated by BPUT).

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4.1 soft skills: becoming a good leader and team-player
4.2 inter-relating soft skills and communication skills

2nd Paper, Business Communication

Books recommended:

1 Business Communication Today by Bovee et al (Pearson)
2 Business Communication by Meenakshi Raman and Prakash Singh (Oxford)
3 Crash Course in Personal Development by Brian Clegg (Kogan Page)
4 Activities for Developing Emotional Intelligence by Adele B.Lynn (HRD Press)
5 Lateral Thinking by Edward De Bono (Penguin)

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Fig. 1.7 Recommended books in the BPUT syllabus (Excerpts, pp. 13-14)

Despite numerous critical discussions, the books enlisted for student use in the course were analysed and many flaws and weaknesses were found. Some of the drawbacks are listed below:

1. Regrettably enough, the major drawback found is that the books are "recommended" and not "prescribed" and there is no mention of other "references". All these books are not provided with a complete "bibliographical citation" for references. Probably in order to hide the asserted year of publication which may show the university's lack of syllabus moderation.
2. The syllabus was last updated in the year 2008 and thereafter repeatedly carried out with no change.
3. The books are very old, published prior to 1998, except BK Das, *et al*. (2009), see under "References") and again reprinted in 2012 with a new cover. This specific book is also used as a Textbook by BPUT and has its copyright reserved, thereby can be called authentic, whereas other books are not such.
4. The books other than BK Das, *et al*. (2009) (and to some extent "Business Communication" by Meenakshi Raman and Prakash Singh) are not used by the teachers. Very lengthy elaborations are found to be irrelevant for the students due to the time constraint.
5. The books lack a broader perspective and are focused more on reading and writing, and there is not enough focus on speaking and listening. Moreover, the practical aspect of the "Sounds of English" module is not covered by any other books except the BK Das, *et al*. (2009).
6. Specifically, few books mentioned are designed prior to introducing the syllabus, such as (1) "Crash Course in Personal Development" by Brian Clegg; (2) "Activities for Developing Emotional Intelligence" by Adele B. Lynn; (3) "Lateral Thinking" by Edward De Bono.
7. The books do not encourage complex cognitive processes with foresight and ethical relevance. Students at high level of academic efficacy are willing to take on difficult tasks and demonstrate more flexibility in learning. On the other hand, students with low self-efficacy tend to carry out simple tasks by reading or referring to some of the books. Possibly the syllabus was designed just to complete the task quickly. The books are insulated practical exercises rather full of theoretical discussions and thus cannot be recommended.

To sum it up, it is not evident whether the ESP courses offered to the students have seriously been examined for their specific needs as there are very few reports on the needs of the engineering students available. Most of the focused problems are about undesired English courses that exterminate the actual needs. Hence, what we address is that ESP as "English for Specific Professional", is meant for engineers, doctors, nurses or managers pursuing any course before getting into the profession.

A range of proposals made by many researchers and scholars in this field, such as Munby (1978); Nunan (1988); Richards and Rodgers (2001: 223 & 64–65); Posner and Rudnitsky (1994), for experiential structures in general, analogized again in Brumfit (1984); Van Ek and Alexander (1980); and Belcher, (2006) is available to guide the knowhow proposition of designing and planning a syllabus in our context.

Furthermore, while formulating the aims and objectives of the syllabus, the model scheme for instruction and instructional materials prescribed by AICTE should be kept in mind (see AICTE, 2012b: 25-26 & 77-78).

7. PROPOSAL FOR A "*MEEPA*" SYLLABUS

Organizing the ESP course is a very important step in achieving a satisfying goal in the context. There are many factors that are playing a crucial role in organizing the ESP course. A modest attempt has been made to outline a "rational" and "functional-skill-based" syllabus, which can promote and provide a supplementary remedial teaching for future consideration to the engineering students' necessity. This has purposefully been formulated with a new title: *MEEPA* "Mastery in English for Engineers Professional Achievement" in order to fulfil the specific English needs (See Dash, 2013: 150-153).

The objective of the syllabus is to achieve an overall refinement of the students' perception, which is not just confined to the skills or profession, but at the same time creates an intellect which reaches the level of composite creativity, rhythm of life and balance.

Title of the papers/subjects:

(1) Professional English Communication Skills,

(2) Embedded Business Communication.

Contact: 2 Lectures (plus 1 Lecture, if tutorial facility is not given),
1+1 Lab (30x2 students); Credits: 3 (in each Semester)

Guidelines for course execution and rationale:

As a task-based instruction, this subject may be classified into two papers in order to introduce students to the ways of the theory of information, the concepts of English language, communication strategies, verbal and non-verbal communication, and the four-fold skill based English knowledge and development.

Students must be taught job-hunting skills, which include writing for an enquiry, job application letters and curriculum vitae, as well as preparing and attending job interviews.

Besides writing reports, inter-office memoranda, circulars, agendas, minutes, writing business letters and e-mails, students may be assigned proposals and projects in order to learn to collect data on the topics related to their career.

The following ways help the students stay up-to-date with the new developments and get used to the language of business: knowing how to use the language for a range of different communication purposes and functions; knowing how to vary the use of language depending on the setting (e.g. when to use formal and informal speech appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication); knowing how to maintain communication, despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g. through using different communication strategies); mastering the writing skills, such as reports and making oral presentations, in order to learn how to collect, integrate and present information within a time frame by team work and group interaction.

The students should understand the phonological aspects of English and the ways to use them. The use of phonological units like stress, accent, style, rhythm, pause, tone, degree of delivery, turn taking, frequency of expressions and voice modulation should be given adequate contextual practice to improve the spoken skills.

7.1. Strategies for course execution

There is more to this process than meets the eye. Prior to the course execution, a teacher should acquire extensive background knowledge of their students by doing a 'needs analysis'. Furthermore, the following are some important strategies that can be used:

- The topics must be conveyed through plenty of examples. Lecture classes must be transformed into lecture-cum-tutorial classes.
- It is a course that aims to develop skills. It is, therefore, "practical" in orientation. Various kinds of graded exercises must be done by the students both inside and outside the classroom activity.
- For practice in listening, audio-visual equipment can be used if there are language laboratory advanced facilities available.
- The teacher must function as a mentor and creative monitor in the classroom.
- The teacher must not depend on a set of two to three books and materials. For exhaustive use, one can freely choose varied materials from diverse sources.
- Keeping in view the students' requirements, the teacher may have to prepare some teaching and exercise material. Likewise, very minimal time should be spent in teaching grammatical uses and phonetic symbols, stress, intonation, etc. The aim should be to build the students' confidence level to enable them to find out the correct means of pronunciation from a learner's dictionary. In teaching speaking skills, the emphasis should be on clarity, intelligibility and reasonable fluency, rather than on "correct pronunciation". Classroom presentation and group discussion sessions should be demonstrated for more such development.

7. Conclusion and Implications

Distinctively, the research findings are, to some extent, always inconclusive, but practices unsupported by research are even riskier (Swaffar & Bacon, 1993: 143 as cited by Griffee, 2012, 18). This evaluation gracefully illuminates the aspects of satisfaction and success of our proposed syllabus designing. The design process with the current evaluation of the Professional English course reveals a number of indictments that help further improvement. It also shows that the communicative classes in the university are non-communicative in nature. It has undeniably affirmed that the course books do not foster collaborative learning and critical thinking, that they are rather too theoretical, too knowledge-based, too artificial and less experimental for the real needs of corporate expectations. The assessment system is not up to the mark and does not test the students' proficiency accurately.

Language activities should be more lexical based, including collocation and functional use of language and should incorporate less grammatical structures than General English. Pronunciation is another important area, especially the ability to break up the speech into appropriate phrases (phonological chunking) and the use of stress patterns. More language activities should be done diagnostically. Feedback slots must be used for checking, correcting and developing the language skills.

There must be a negotiated syllabus which must not follow any 'main' course book, although the selection of course books and other materials may be prescribed. The classroom tasks and texts are to be personalised, as per suitability of the students.

A good evaluation puts more emphasis on the successful aspects than on the unsuccessful ones. The class hour is also an important issue. Most instructors have a lot of ground to cover over the semester and for this reason they may not have enough time for all.

Oftentimes, a lack of understanding for educators concerning the English language learners places their education in jeopardy. Therefore, my stake in this study has been a modest formulation of prospective ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) syllabus;

"*MEEPA*", i.e. 'Mastery in English for Engineers Professional Achievement' for the Indian students but, in an international perspective, it may perpetuate the gap and requirements. Affirmatively, this can accrete the potential synergy linking theory to practice, present to future, text to task and wider initiative in the field. Hopefully, the findings of this study can serve to improve current practices by embracing this as a guideline in designing the syllabus and the textbooks, as well as offer a substantive understanding for the employability of engineering graduates.

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