Chapter-III

AN ANALYSIS OF TECHNICAL ENGLISH COMMUNICATION SKILLS COURSE FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS IN ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Engineering and technical education in developing countries have witnessed enormous expansion during the last three decades. A majority of these Institutions of higher education have relatively good infrastructure and qualified teaching staff. However, the question of general efficiency and effectiveness in utilising these resources requires attention. Presently, the focus in Engineering education in developing countries is on teaching the basics of specific branches of learning in Engineering/Technology with the use of prescribed textbooks. Only a few institutions are keen on offering their students the knowledge and training pertinent to meet the needs of industry, as a part of their curriculum. Very few Universities have allotted, within the curriculum, time to be spent by students to gain employability skills. A clear vision regarding the global skills that the students require and the strategies needed by them to meet the needs of the industry are the need of the hour. Good communication skills in the global language i.e., English, is one of the most important skills that decides the future prospects of an Engineering/Technology students. Hence, there is an urgent need for radical change in perspective and in the methods used for establishing new curricula for the specialised fields of study, and more so, for English.
3.2 GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF ENGINEERING COLLEGES

The objective of any Engineering college is to impart Science and Technology based knowledge education and to develop the professional skills of a student for immediate employment which would help him to ultimately develop in his own technical field in the country.

Owing to globalisation, employment opportunities have multiplied, as many well-reputed companies have come to India in search of potential young Engineers/technocrats with excellent communication skills. A survey conducted by these companies revealed that a majority of the Indian youth (about 83%) are lagging behind in their Communication Skills in English. Technical efficiency with better Communication Skills benefits not only the employee but also the company. Hence Communication Skills are one of the prerequisites for obtaining employment. It has thus become indispensable for any Engineering/technology graduate to acquire English Communication Skills for getting selected for a job.

As most of the graduates in India desire to take up jobs immediately after obtaining their first degree from the University, they should have a complete grooming for a professional life by the time they walk out of the Universities. Hence the four year B.Tech duration of time they spend in a professional college should make them well rounded professional personalities. As communication skills in English have become imperative for getting selected for jobs, it is expected that the Universities fulfil these needs by offering well designed English courses to the first year students of professional courses. In this context, the present research analyses has taken into consideration, the English curricula of four Universities in the State of Andhra Pradesh; two of them --
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar and Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (Kakinada) -- are State Universities, and the other two – Koneru Lakshmaiah University and Vignan University, Guntur -- are privately managed Deemed Universities. As the prescribed textbooks are supposed to provide direction to the entire course of teaching English, a detailed, critical analysis was carried out to assess the effectiveness of the programme. Various aspects of the textbooks were analysed to examine whether the intended objectives have been fulfilled, and whether their Communicative Skills were improved through the use of the prescribed textbooks. Statistical data was collected and the analysis followed.

The present Chapter deals with the prescribed syllabus for the English course in Acharya Nagarjuna University College of Engineering and Technology, Nagarjuna Nagar.

3.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ENGLISH COURSE

There is a widespread assumption that Engineering students could obtain better knowledge and comprehension of their technical subjects if they possess good standard in English. Hence, it becomes necessary to analyse the Engineering syllabus called “Technical English,” to assess its usefulness during the course and later in the careers of the students.

An attempt has been made in this study to analyse the syllabus as well as the text books prescribed - *Objective English for Competitive Examinations* (Third Edition) and *Developing Language Skills–I* (Foundation books). This study attempts to find out the attitude of the students who hail from the two streams: Board of Intermediate Education (Andhra Pradesh) and Central Boards (CBSE and ICSE, New Delhi) towards the
textbook and methods of teaching and testing. A review of these materials was made to assess to what extent these materials and methods are in accordance with the syllabus as well as the expectations and needs of the learners.

3.4 TECHNICAL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

A career in Engineering demands relevant Communication Skills in English. A Textbook, instead of trying to instil all the nuances of English into the minds of students, could provide selected aspects of English to help them understand their other subjects through the medium of English, to carry out the tasks assigned to them.

The syllabus of Acharya Nagarjuna University is common to all the branches of the first year Engineering Course. The syllabus is graded thematically. It exhibits a task-oriented approach with a skill-based pattern. The two textbooks prescribed are *Objective English for Competitive Examinations* and *Developing Language Skills–I* respectively. The materials in the syllabus are organised under three units. Each Unit consists of different topics related to the General Communication Skills, Technical Communication Skills and Vocabulary and Basic Language Skills. The materials in the syllabus are arranged under the following three units.

**Unit-I**

**General Communication Skills:** This area exposes the learners to some standard varieties of linguistic communication.

1. Guided composition
   a) Paragraph writing
   b) Essay writing
   c) Confusable words
2. Reading comprehension

3. Letter writing

Unit-II

**Technical Communication Skills:** This area falls under English for specific purposes (ESP) which trains the learners in basic technical communication.

1. Report writing
2. Corporate information
3. Technical words

Unit-III

**Vocabulary and Basic Language Skills:** This unit offers the learners some basic aspects of language like vocabulary, structure and usage which are common to many contemporary tests.

1. Basic word list – a list of 500 words
2. Idioms and phrases and their use
3. Correction of sentences
4. Analogies
5. One word substitutes
6. Antonyms & Synonyms

The main objective of these prescribed texts for the B.Tech. English Course in Acharya Nagarjuna University is as follows: to make the learners “linguistically aware and communicatively competent.” It claims to have paid special attention to “the contemporary tests on language and industrial needs, keeping in mind the current societal demands.”
3.5 **SAMPLE STUDY**

One hundred and eighty Students from Electronics Communication Engineering (ECE), Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE), Computer Science Engineering (CSE) and Civil Engineering (CE) disciplines form the selected group from the Acharya Nagarjuna University College of Engineering and Technology. The survey was conducted through a three-point scale questionnaire given to the respondents to assess four main factors of Communication Skills -- Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). Of the respondents, 162 had State syllabus and 18 had Central syllabus up to their X standard.

3.6 **METHOD OF ANALYSIS**

A questionnaire was distributed to obtain the views of the students. The questionnaire contains questions related to their parental background, and the school board through which they have taken their school final examination etc. Opinions was gathered orally, from the students of Engineering College. Students were asked to share their views on the content, form, presentation and other aspects like the English language skills. A survey was carried out among the students of four different Engineering disciplines in Acharya Nagarjuna University College of Engineering and Technology.

3.7 **SYLLABUS**

Syllabus of the course is available to the students. The general perception of the students is that the textbooks contain the syllabus is very important. (The detailed syllabus of Acharya Nagarjuna University is given in Appendix–III.)
3.8 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTBOOK

The content is viewed to assess its capacity to motivate the learners and its usefulness in the form of providing information to them. The corporeal aspects are studied to see its usefulness to the students to gain and retain employment. As any English course offered to the students of Engineering should make them proficient in their communication, the most important aspect dealt with in the Survey is on the communicative aspect.

The analysis was done on the three components in the textbooks:

1. The Content Aspect
2. The Corporeal Aspect
3. The Communicative Aspect

3.8.1 Content Aspects

A textbook should motivate the students to get interested in the topics/lessons given in it. The questionnaire contains two direct questions on content aspect.

3.8.1.1 Improvement in Creating Motivation

The question posed to the students was,

Q. “Do the Textbooks create an interest in you?”

Response: The answers obtained for this question draw the conclusion that the content did not motivate all the students on the same level. The students who gave positive answer (8.33%) were from the urban and elite background and possess some idea about the topics. Many students who hailed from rural areas and vernacular medium (43.88%) of study did not feel that the content was interesting. 47.77% of the students felt motivation was provided “to some extent.”
Analysis: The textbook, *Objective English for Competitive Examinations* contains exercises on reading, writing and language focus tasks only. The other text *Developing Language Skills-I* covers mainly oral tasks, by which the teachers have a chance to plant the seeds of self-confidence in the learners.

A question arises whether the book provides necessary motivation to the learners as well as to the teachers. Motivation alone makes them go forward to achieve the intended objectives. Regarding the fulfilment of the objectives of the syllabus nearly all the teachers perceived that the textbook provides sufficient motivation if the students participate in the classroom activities.

The response of the student is a pointer to the need for change in the content.

3.8.1.2 Suitability of the Text to the Engineering Course

Q. Are the topics relevant to the Engineering Course?

Response: As far as the relevance of the topics is concerned only 27.77% of the students felt that the topics are relevant. The others seemed to be oblivious to the relevance and usefulness of the topics.

Analysis: A language textbook should impart skills in the target language, but it should also be relevant to the learners and the course. When the question is asked whether the concerned textbook is relevant to the Engineering course, a majority of the learners responded that it is not relevant (72.23%).

3.8.2 Corporeal Aspects

The corporeal aspects consist of the enhancement of the skills and imagination of the learners. So questions are set to extract their individual opinions on aspects like the cover design and some other factors in language learning etc.
3.8.2.1 Proper Design of Technical Terms

Q. Are the technical terms included in English Syllabus properly designed?

Response: The results show that the Central Board students are more acquainted with technical terms than the other students drawn from other Boards of study. 90.12% of State Board students have not agreed that the terms are clearly defined. Even the Central Board students are unable to comprehend the technical terms.

Analysis: The chief requirement, to get selected to a technical job, is the knowledge of technical terms and their usage. The response given above is not very encouraging and forces one to conclude that even the Technical English chunk is not properly presented, though the students hailing from the Central Board of Education are slightly better than those from State Boards. Even they are not very satisfied with the syllabus given under the heading, Technical English.

3.8.2.2 Promotion of Technical Knowledge or Language Learning

Q. Do the technical materials in the Textbook help the learners to increase the technical knowledge or to increase the rate of language learning?

Response: This question “whether the technical materials help the learners to increase the technical knowledge or to increase the rate of language learning” got very interesting responses. Only 35.55% approved that it promoted the students' technical knowledge and a very surprising response of 85% approved that it increases their language learning.

Analysis: The chunk given under Technical English is aimed at helping the students by increasing their prospects of employment. But strangely the response of the students is that it merely improves their vocabulary but it has not improved them in their technical skills.
3.8.2.3 Development of Creativity

Q. Do the tasks prescribed in the textbook encourage you to improve your creativity?

Response: The State Board students find the topics created impetus so that they can do the tasks creatively. Since the students were not exposed to such tasks earlier they feel that the tasks are creative. However 61.11% of Central Board students did not agree that they are creative and the teachers also expressed the same opinion.

Analysis: A learner should be provided with a wide variety of tasks in the prescribed textbooks, which could encourage his urge to learn and his creativity. Majority of Central Board students accept that the text Developing Language Skills–I encourages creativity through the various exercises the text provides, though, about 74.69% of State Board students find the text monotonous. Because the students hail from rural areas, they may not have been exposed to any kind of language activities and they might have felt that they are a little bit difficult to answer in a big classroom where they might not get personal attention.

Note: The responses for this question also show a considerable disparity between the Central and State Board students. While the Central Board students are thorough in such creative exercises through their English Textbooks of ICSE and CBSE streams, the State Board students have found them more interesting. However, the execution of these tasks by the teacher appears difficult because of the huge number of learners in a class. Hence this is reflected in the response of State Board students, who felt that they did not get enough help and personal attention to complete those tasks successfully.
3.8.2.4 Importance of Eye-Catching Cover Design

Q. Is the cover design attractive?

**Response:** The finding shows that except for a few students all the other students have felt that the cover design is not attractive. Nearly 77.78% of them, including Central Board students, opined that the cover design is not inspiring.

**Analysis:** A majority of the students have opined that the cover design did not arouse their enthusiasm.

3.8.2.5 Language Usage in other Situations

Q. Do you find it easy to use new words (vocabulary) in your interaction/in other situations?

**Response:** While collecting data orally for this question the survey found that the students expressed their inability to use the language in a proper way. The students from the State Board, particularly, find it very difficult to use English in other situations; and, hence the positive answers fell into a low percentage of 4.93; whereas, the Central Board students could make use of it as they had an early exposure to the language. On the whole, only 7.23% of students are able to use the English language. Though 72.77% students are able to comprehend the text it is not helping them in the use of English language in practical and real life situations. 20% of the students are completely unable to use the language in other situations successfully.

**Analysis:** One cannot deny the fact that if a person achieves competence in a language he/she must be able to apply it in real life situations. There lies the completion of language learning. Though the needed vocabulary and structures could have helped the students in their corporeal life, the method of using them is not shown. English is
universal; but a selection of prescribed lessons/books are made to ensure that the students master whatever is given. If the material is not given properly to them, even the best selection would have been done in vain.

### 3.8.3 Communicative Aspects

The mastery of any language depends mainly on the learning of the Basic Communication Skills such as LSRW. Without acquiring these skills one cannot become an expert in a language. Hence, for effective communication and mastery of any language all the four skills -- Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing are imperative. Along with these skills students need to have a good foundation in Vocabulary and Grammar. Robert Lado in his book, *Language Teaching*, has stated that,

> The correct order of teaching the skills is LSRW. It is a fact that reading and writing are partial skills and exercising them constitutes partial language experience where as speaking and listening included are total language experiences (1971: 48).

Among the four skills, Speaking and Writing are called productive skills, whereas Reading and Listening are called receptive skills. The textbooks under study are analysed in this backdrop.

#### 3.8.3.1 Comprehension of the Text

**Q.** Are the topics easy to understand, through the support material provided in your text?

**Response:** A majority of the students, about 68.33% of them are able to understand the text, to some extent. Even the students, who hail from rural areas and from the State Board, are able to comprehend it to some extent. This is the authentic value of the syllabus design. Some teachers might be unfamiliar with the scientific and technical
topics, but this data has proved the usefulness of the textbooks in this aspect. As the topics are taken from the prescribed books for competitive examinations, the students find the text useful to some extent.

**Analysis:** As the topics start from General Communication Skills to Technical Communication Skills and finally to Vocabulary and Basic Language Skills, majority of the students are able to comprehend the textbook. The following are the findings from the first year students of Engineering Courses for the question whether the topics are easy to comprehend. To supplement the above question the following question is designed to collect the actual data from the students.

### 3.8.3.2 Pictorial Presentations

Q. Are there adequate pictures, charts, graphs to understand the context/topics in the textbooks?

**Response:** From the collected data 72.22% of the respondents expressed that there are pictures, charts and graphs which help to understand the context in the text-books are inadequate.

**Analysis:** The textbook appears to be simple in Language presentation as the majority of students found it comprehensible. But their response was unenthusiastic to the question related to the presentation of pictures, charts and graphs. The Textbook for Engineering Students should have these aids as they deal with them in their optional subjects. Moreover “information transfer” from one medium to another is an important skill. Hence converting the text into a picture or graph or representing the material studied in the form of table improves not only the skill of the learner but also stimulates the learner
to use his imagination. The course designer should have taken this point into consideration.

3.8.3.3 Development of Language with respect to Grammar

Q. Do you think that your language has improved with respect to Grammar through the material provided in your text?

Response: To interpret the rough scores, the following data was analysed. Nearly 11.67% of them responded that they had improvement in grammar. Some exercises, in the textbook *Objective English for Competitive Examinations* are exclusively meant for improving their grammar; helping the students to achieve the application of grammar in spotting errors. 80% of the students confess that they are able to improve their grammar only to some extent. The remaining 8.33% of them are not sure of their improvement or they could not understand the question at all.

Analysis: To create a contemporary context, usually the excerpts and selections in the texts are used from articles, newspapers and magazines. The text *Developing Language Skills-I* reveals the tasks related to real life activities such as advertisements, conversations etc... For example, the advertisement given here teaches various aspects of grammar:
Oil is one of the most important items in our life. We need it to travel in cars, buses, trains, aeroplanes and ships. We need it to produce electricity for our lights and to run our factories. We need it to cook food. But in spite of the importance of oil, people waste it carelessly. And unfortunately there is only a limited amount of oil in the world.

P.C.R.A. (Petroleum Conservation Research Association) is working to save your friend, Oil. We need your help too.

Here are three things you can do to help save oil:
1. The gas burner in the kitchen should be turned off when it is not being used.
2. Walk to school, if it is nearby.
3. Turn off the lights and fans when they are not in use.

These simple ways and many more like it will help your friend Oil, to stay with us longer.

Petroleum Conservation Research Association,
306 Shehi Bhawan, 7 Rajendra Place,
New Delhi-110 008.

Oil isn’t going to last much longer. Use it with wisdom.
In the textbooks, the following tasks are given to the students on the basis of the above advertisement --

- Oil is represented by a drop. What are some of the other ways in which oil can be represented? Discuss with your group and make a list.
- Is this advertisement meant for people who live in villages or people who live in towns and cities? Do people in cities waste more oil than people in villages? Discuss in small groups and justify your opinion.
- Look at the word “carelessly”. It has been formed by forming two suffixes to the word “care”: care+less+ly. Similarly “unfortunately” is made by adding a prefix and suffix to the word “fortunate”: un+fortunate+ly.
  
  a) Pick out the prefixes and the suffixes in the following words:
     needlessly     walkable     traveler     simplify
     importantly     reproduce     disuse     reporter
     unlimited     helpless     wasteful     mismanagement
  
  b) Make as many new words as you can by adding prefixes / suffixes to the following:
     limit     help     important     work     friend     break

- Explanation is provided to the students as to how they can use contracted forms, in spoken English.

Look at the word “Let’s”. It is a combination of two words, ‘Let ‘and ‘us’. Contracted forms should not be confused with possessive nouns, which denote possession or something that belongs to the person mentioned, e.g.: Priya’s bag, Sunil’s book.
Given below is a list of contracted forms. We can ask them to expand them to their full form and practice saying them aloud:

I’m, you’re, it’s, can’t,shan’t, we’re, I’ll, you’ll, don’t, he’s, here’s, I’ve, you’ve, isn’t, won’t, they’re, that’s, wasn’t, shouldn’t.

The main idea of presenting the above advertisement as an example is to show how grammar teaching would help the learners internalise the structures taught in such a way that they can be used in everyday communication. The learners have to be provided with opportunities to practice the structures taught in the classroom through different activities, first under given conditions, and then under more normal communicative situations. Grammar rules should help the learner in understanding the language, giving them the feeling that they can understand and control what is going on. Through some of these activities learners can discover more about the facts, rules and choices involved in using grammar.

The exercise given to work out grammar is very interesting like the sample given here. But, as it is included only for teaching and not for evaluation, the teachers seem to pay not much attention to this aspect. As students usually prepare themselves for the examination according to the question paper pattern, they do not bother to pay much attention to these exercises. As most of the students lack proficiency in English these exercises will go a long way in improving their language skills.

3.8.3.4 Language Development through Tasks

Q. How do you rate these tasks?
Response: The finding shows that the tasks promote learning in a sequential manner. Except for a few students, to all the other students, the tasks seem to be not very difficult and easy. The slow-learners or the students from rural areas find it difficult to do the tasks, which amounts to a percentage of 8.33. Overall 83.88% of students find the tasks moderate and 7.77% find them easy.

Analysis: The textbook lists out a number of tasks, such as reading comprehension, paragraph and essay-writing, vocabulary, synonyms, one word substitutes, and spotting the errors. When the students are asked to do these tasks, they must be ready to take them up and not remain passive. The success of these exercises lies in their active participation and involvement. The latest methodology of language teaching does not believe in mere error-analysis. ELT experts feel that the time spent in discussing errors may be more gainfully and meaningfully spent in speaking the right forms. Hence, correction of sentences may be deleted from the list of language tasks.

3.9 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTBOOK WITH REFERENCE TO LANGUAGE SKILLS

The following table presents the status of distribution of tasks in the text, Objective English for Competitive Examinations (Third Edition) and Developing Language Skills–I. The tasks are given to improve the learners’ Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills, by providing them focus on English Language learning.
### Table 3.1

Analysis of Number of Tasks for each Language Skill in the Prescribed Textbooks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language focus</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of tasks</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of tasks</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of tasks</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Prescribed Textbooks.

### Figure 3.1

Analysis of Percentage of Tasks for each Language Skill in the Prescribed Textbook

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**Source:** Prescribed Textbooks
The textbook, *Objective English for Competitive Examinations* aims at the development of the basic skills (LSRW) of language. *Developing Language Skills–I*, on the other hand, provides review exercises and a variety of practice exercises that assist the development of students' proficiency with Grammar, Reading, Writing, Spelling, Vocabulary, and Speaking; they have an enormous potential for classroom use or for homework assignments. Therefore, it becomes necessary to analyse the component skills dealing with in the textbook. The findings in the above pie diagram No. 3.1 shows how the textbooks impart the four skills to the students, for developing their language - the focus seems to be more on Speaking and Writing and less on Listening and Reading.

### 3.9.1 Listening Skill

Listening Skill, though a receptive skill, requires considerable practice, as listening is a prerequisite skill to Speaking. Normally, a listener can pay 100% attention continuously only for 10 minutes as it involves the entire attention of the nervous system. It is not only a cognitive understanding but it includes the analytical ability to understand the main theme, style, etc. in a given lesson or text. There is a need for an active involvement of the learner for effective performance of listening. But in the curriculum of the Engineering syllabus of ANU, one finds that Listening Skill is not given its due share along with the other skills.

In the textbooks *Objective English for Competitive Examinations* and *Developing Language Skills–I*, compared to other skills less attention has been paid to Listening Skills. The listening tasks amount to “nil”, even though the total number of tasks are 420. It is surprising to note that among these 420 tasks listening tasks do not find a place.
Listening, in a second language learning situation, is training the ear, for, listening plays a significant role as a prerequisite skill to speaking. It has the following advantages:

i. It increases concentration on the use of language.

ii. It provides attention on different items of language.

iii. It improves comprehension ability.

iv. It provides information.

v. Listening demonstrates how a language is spoken: the pronunciation, the structures, the usage, the intonation and how the vocal aspects are manipulated to reflect various emotions of the speaker. Hence, the verbal and vocal aspects can profitably be learnt by a second language learner if he gets adequate exposure to listening.

### Table 3.2

**Overall Improvement in Listening Skills through the Textbook**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Grade</th>
<th>State Board</th>
<th>Central Board</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17.28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26.55</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>51.85</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Survey
As per the above survey, the overall improvement of Listening skills through the use of the prescribed texts was such that only 3.89% of students could be ranked as ‘excellent’, 16.66% as ‘very good’, and 27.22% as being ‘good’. Only 4.32% of the State Board students were found to be ‘excellent’ in listening skills. The response of the students to the question on Listening Skill clearly indicates that they are totally unaware of the importance of Listening in a Language Learning Programme. If only the Textbook had given due importance to this skill, the students also would have not only learnt to
improve their listening skills, they would have also continued their listening practice for further improvement more vigorously.

3.9.2 Speaking Skill

The word communication itself denotes that it is interactive; that means it is an exchange of ideas and thoughts. It denotes interaction between two or more individuals. The speaker should convey the message with clarity, brevity and with the correct choice of words and with right, intelligible pronunciation. The mastery of Speaking Skill enhances one’s confidence. It is a systematic technique employed by a speaker to express his feelings and thoughts. So, it is an active, productive and creative skill.

A person who has acquired Speaking Skill in English has to possess the ability to produce the characteristic English speech sounds and sound patterns. He should know how to use the appropriate stress and intonation patterns, and the use of appropriate words and structures, to express the intended meaning. He should be able to recall words and spontaneously organise his thoughts and ideas in a logical sequence and adjust his speech according to his audience, situation and subject matter. In brief, he should know “what” to say and “how” to say it.

The supplementary textbook Developing Language Skills-I consists of a number of speaking tasks in the form of oral communication and reading comprehension under Part–I of the book. Practice tests on oral communication and reading comprehension constitute Part–III of the workbook.

The tasks for practice in Oral Communication: Speech Patterns are practised by learners in the classroom as role-players. For example, the first student has to assume the
role of a college student; he has to prepare a list of dialogues to greet the following people at the following time and place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Person to be greeted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College Compound</td>
<td>10.00 a.m.</td>
<td>your friend Rakesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff - room</td>
<td>10.30 a.m.</td>
<td>your English teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal’s room</td>
<td>12.00 p.m.</td>
<td>your college Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verandah</td>
<td>2.30 p.m.</td>
<td>your classmate’s mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
<td>3.00 p.m.</td>
<td>an old schoolmate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College gate</td>
<td>6.00 p.m.</td>
<td>your sports teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports field</td>
<td>6.30 p.m.</td>
<td>your team - mates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second student has to assume different roles such as his friend, his English teacher and so on. To any student who involves himself and plays his role sincerely, this would provide an opportunity to promote his Speaking Skill. Because he has to be creative in answering the questions, he should be interactive, maintaining the relationship as he talks and obviously he should come out of his timidity and express his ideas freely and boldly.

Thus, such role-playing and other group discussions make the learners improve their Speaking Skill. But a question arises: “How far can this be accomplished?” Among the total 420 tasks, 124 tasks are related to the Speaking Skill. They are relatively simple and involve creativity on the part of a learner.
Table 3.3
Overall Improvement in Speaking Skills through the Textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Grade</th>
<th>State Board</th>
<th></th>
<th>Central Board</th>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>50.62</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>50.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35.19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.78</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>34.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey

The above survey conducted on the improvement of Speaking Skills through the use of the prescribed textbook has revealed that “Speaking Skills” do not find a place in either the syllabus or the examination, though the prescribed textbook, *Developing Language Skills-I* has an entire unit and workbook devoted to oral communication and speech patterns. This defeats the very purpose of the prescribed textbook. The above table reveals that the overall improvement in the Speaking Skills of the students has been fairly good (50.56%). It would have been much better if the “Speaking Skill” component in the prescribed textbook, *Developing Language Skills-I*, found a place in the syllabus as well as the examination.
Figure 3.3

Overall Improvement in Speaking Skills through the Textbook

From the figure 3.3, it can be understand that the learners have been exposed to oral situations and they have participated in all of them. Though the learning situations are provided through the 124 tasks, they do not provide the necessary impetus, when compared to reading and writing. Non inclusion of these tasks in the examination may be the chief reason for the indifference of the teachers and students towards this skill.

Source: Survey
There may be other reasons also for this situation. The first problem is fear of committing mistakes, coupled with the diffidence of students. Compared to a child, an adult learner, like the first year Engineering student, has a pattern of learning and a few prejudices regarding second language speaking. Therefore, it is really tough on the part of a teacher to motivate and to convince him. Another problem is related to pronunciation.

The significant question to be answered in this context is: Whether the teacher is competent enough to train the students to speak well, with appropriate pronunciation? Even if the teachers are very committed and willing, there are no sources to train themselves in good pronunciation. It is hoped that the task method at least makes both the learners and the teachers realise where they stand in acquiring the speaking skill.

3.9.3 Reading Skill

Reading skill, which is called a receptive skill, is very important to the learners of a second language. Reading comprises three stages known as, Recognition, Structuring and Interpreting. In the first stage, the learner recognises a spoken word in a written form. In the second stage, the learner sees the systematic relationship between the items and thereby understands the structural meaning of the syntactic units. In the third stage, the learner comprehends the significance of a word, a phrase or a sentence in the overall context.

Reading Comprehension tasks included in the Objective English for Competitive Examination textbook are arranged from simple to difficult or familiar to unfamiliar concepts. The explanatory note on techniques of IEI (Informative, Elimination and Inference) Formula, MLE (Motive, Location, Elimination) Formula and MIEI (Motive, Informative, Elimination and Inference) Formula, lend a helping hand to analyse the
Reading Comprehension. The textbook, *Objective English for Competitive Examination* (Third edition), provides the necessary material to enhance the learners’ ability to comprehend the questions. The primary aim of the questions is to test the comprehending ability of the learner. The other textbook, *Developing Language Skills-I*, also contains many passages for Reading Comprehension in Part-I of the textbook and the learners are instructed to read them and answer the related questions.

Later, towards the end of the textbook, *Developing Language Skills-I* there are many exercises given in its workbook which require a slow reading. Both the textbooks provide exercises in skimming and scanning. The teaching materials are sound, providing many opportunities to the students to improve their Reading Skills. The data also proves this fact that a majority of learners have benefited by these tasks.

**Table 3.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Grade</th>
<th>State Board</th>
<th>Central Board</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24.69</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>45.68</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15.43</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14.20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Survey.
From the above Table 3.4, it can be understood that nearly half of the students (46.11%) were found to be ‘very good’ in Reading Skill, that they have more improvement in Reading Skill than all other skills. 26.11% were found to be ‘excellent’, while only 12.78% were found to be ‘average’. From the above data, the inference can be made that through the 53 tasks they were drilled to improve their reading comprehension exercises, the students’ performance was found to be satisfactory. A variety of tasks were administered to the students to make them think critically, make them analyse, give titles to the paragraphs and to argue and justify their answers.

**Figure 3.4**

*Overall Improvement in Reading Skills through the Textbook*

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

**Source:** Survey
3.9.4 Writing Skill

Writing skill is essential in many social and professional situations and this is one of the productive skills. Especially it is an everyday requirement to an Engineer. He should be able to put together words in the correct word order, use the correct form of verbs, vocabulary, style, distinct ideas and make the text coherent. As Tim Bowen and Jonathan Marks have rightly put it, “Writing is an individual effort but is more rule-bound” (1994: 52).

According to T.C. Baruah, writing is an extension of all skills.

Being a different mode of communication, writing also serves another pedagogic purpose in second language teaching; it can be used to fix the structures and vocabulary already taught (2004: 245).

The very process of writing consists of three stages, namely, manipulation, structuring and communication. These three are parallel and correspond to the three stages of reading: recognition, structuring and interpretation. Development of all these stages will take the learner to proceed forward, ultimately leading to the art of self-expression in writing mode.

In the textbook, Developing Language Skills-I, one can observe many writing tasks. They include narrating past events, describing objects/places/people/processes, transferring information, making applications and answering advertisements etc. When the question is asked on what is the position of Writing Skill, among all the skills in language learning, many students have stated that it has the first place. The data is tabulated below.
Table 3.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category Grade</th>
<th>State Board</th>
<th>Central Board</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>42.60</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25.92</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18.52</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Survey

The Table 3.5 and the Diagram 3.5 show that the second language learners have benefited more through writing because of the conducive atmosphere in the classrooms. 55.55% of the Central Board students secured an ‘excellent’ grade for the improvement in their Writing skill. Approximately, a majority had improvement in the Writing Skill and an average of 43.89% had learnt to write, with better organisation and in the correct form.
3.10 EVALUATION OF LEARNERS’ SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH THE PRESCRIBED SYLLABUS IN ENGLISH

The following tables 3.6 and 3.7 with bar diagram show the overall evaluation of the Textbook Analysis. It indicates how far the objectives have been fulfilled. The objectives are: comprehension of the text, improvement of language, learning grammar, improvement of language through tasks, and learning of communication skills.
Table 3.6

Level of Satisfaction of Learners' Second Language Learning through the Prescribed Syllabus in English in Content and Corporeal Aspects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C O N T E N T</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Highly Satisfied %</th>
<th>Satisfied %</th>
<th>Dissatisfied %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement in Creating Motivation</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>47.77</td>
<td>43.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suitability of the Text to the Engineering course</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td>72.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C O R P O R E A L</td>
<td>Proper Design of Technical Terms</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>11.66</td>
<td>86.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of Creativity</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>68.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Importance of Eye-Catching Cover Design</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>17.77</td>
<td>77.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Usage in Other situations</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>72.77</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey

Content Aspects: When it comes to the Content Aspects, though 47.77% of the students were found to be satisfied with respect to the textbook/syllabus creating motivation, 72.23% of them were found to be dissatisfied with the suitability of the text to the Engineering Course, hence the suitability of the text needs special attention.
Corporeal Aspects: The learners’ satisfaction in Language usage in other situations was found to be satisfactory. The other Corporeal Aspects such as Proper Design of Technical Terms, Development of Creativity and Importance of Eye-Catching Cover Design require extra attention.

Figure 3.6

Level of Satisfaction of Learners' Second Language Learning through the Prescribed Syllabus in English in Content and Corporeal Aspects

Source: Survey
Table 3.7

Level of Satisfaction of Learners' Second Language Learning through the Prescribed Syllabus in English, in Communicative Aspects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Highly Satisfied %</th>
<th>Satisfied %</th>
<th>Dissatisfied %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension of the Text</td>
<td>18.88</td>
<td>68.33</td>
<td>12.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language learning through grammar</td>
<td>11.67</td>
<td>80.00</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language through Tasks</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>83.88</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening skill</td>
<td>20.56</td>
<td>27.22</td>
<td>52.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking skill</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>50.56</td>
<td>34.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading skill</td>
<td>26.11</td>
<td>46.11</td>
<td>27.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skill</td>
<td>43.88</td>
<td>25.55</td>
<td>30.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey.

Communicative Aspects

Several of the objectives when it comes to the Communicate Aspect have been realised. The majority of informants stated that they could understand the text, and only a few could not comprehend the text. In the objective of language learning, with respect to grammar, most of the students feel that they have gained improvement in grammar. It is pertinent to note that while the students have improved in Grammar, through the tasks assigned, there were still grammatical mistakes in their expression. Among the four skills, observed earlier, there has been a total neglect of Listening Skills and then Speaking Skills exercises were provided, but not practised, whereas 70% of them
improved their reading and Writing Skills to a satisfactory level. But the learners need to improve their use of language in other situations.

**Figure 3.7**

**Level of Satisfaction of Learners’ Second Language Learning through the Prescribed Syllabus in English in Communicative Aspects**

Source: Survey

A small percentage of students are confident of using language in other situations while the various levels of language proficiency achieved by the respondents/students show their improvement in some aspects of language, it does not mean that they are able to use the language in other situations. So one may conclude that,
i. The course design for the first year Engineering students does not take into consideration the entry level behaviour of the students.

ii. The English course is not comprehensive enough to impart all the language skills, assigning due importance to each of them.

iii. The mistakes in English or the language deficiency of the students is not paid attention to.

iv. There is no judicious attention to all the skills of language.

The analysis also reveals that

i. The students are unaware of what skills their future careers demand.

ii. The teaching is to a larger extent examination-oriented and not skill-oriented.

iii. A majority of teachers feel that they need intense training in delivering the prescribed syllabus successfully and also in supplementing the deficient syllabus of English Courses.

3.11 COMMUNICATION SKILLS LABORATORY

The B.Tech. students of Acharya Nagarjuna University have the additional advantage of the Communication Skills Laboratory, with its special emphasis on LSRW skills, during their II and III year of study. Further they are exposed to soft skills, during the Second Semester of the II year of the course. An analysis of the advantages of a Communication Skills Laboratory and the use of Soft skills was made, and it has been observed that 73.34% of the I year students expressed the need for exposure to the Communication Skills Laboratory in the I year of the course itself.