Chapter-IV

AN ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS COURSE FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS IN JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (KAKINADA)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Many higher educational institutions and Universities in India are seriously involved in enhancing the degree of quality in the system of education. Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (Kakinada, A.P.) has also placed its emphasis on training the students to acquire quality education by adopting some new changes to suit the present societal needs. The syllabus prescribed and designed by this University is aimed at developing the linguistic and communicative competence of the Engineering Students. The present study analyses various aspects of the textbook to examine whether the objectives are fulfilled and communicative skills are improved through the use of the present textbook; and the findings are presented with statistical data and reports.

4.2 NEED FOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

The word communication is derived from the Latin “communico” which means “to share;” it means to share the information or to share what one knows and to interact with others.

The need for effective communication tends to be increasing due to globalisation and information explosion. To keep abreast of the latest developments and trends in the field of technology, Engineering students must have good communication skills. Technology and communication should go hand in glove. Engineering students require
communication skills to enhance their technological knowledge, and thereby excel in their career. However, when they are unable to share their knowledge and fail to convince their colleagues or employers, their knowledge will go unnoticed, unused and unrewarded. Hence, a study is carried out to find out whether the Engineering students are able to communicate effectively, to their satisfaction, after undergoing the Technical English Course, during their first year. Nisha Fitter in her E-paper “Communicative Skills of Engineering Students” has cited the observation of Sushma Panniker, Communication Training Head, at Wipro, on the relation between efficient communication and success in one’s own career: “Globalisation is so rampant in India that one cannot afford to ignore communication. One can be technically sound but if he is unable to communicate that knowledge he ends up stuck, doing one thing and not growing” (2005: 33).

4.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

Based on the above mentioned expectations of the English Course, an attempt has been made to analyse the textbooks prescribed by Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Kakinada: 1) Learning English: A Communicative Approach, and 2) Wings of Fire by A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. The aim of the survey is to find out the attitude of the students about the language learning and methods employed for learning, teaching and testing. A review of these materials is done to assess to what extent these materials or the methods are in accordance with the reality, the needs, and expectations of the learners. Moreover, this thesis will analyse how far these materials minimise the conscious efforts in acquiring the language skills.
4.4 TECHNICAL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

The main focus of *Learning English – A Communicative Approach* prescribed for the I year B.Tech. students is to improve their Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. The other textbook *Wings of Fire* by A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has been prescribed to impart communicative competence to the learners. The Syllabus as well as the textbook is common to all the branches of the I/IV B.Tech Engineering course, as it is in the case of Acharya Nagarjuna University.

The syllabus of Technical English is organised into eight units. The prescribed lessons deal with topics from different walks of life. Lessons related to science and technology, space and the people who have travelled to space shuttle, the history of computer ethics and human values are aimed at familiarising the students with the knowledge essential at this level of study. The lessons have been chosen to improve the learners’ knowledge of the subject as well as to enhance the language skills.

Each unit consists of two sections: the first section is from the *Learning English: A Communicative Approach* textbook, the other is from the *Wings of Fire* by A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. The first one constitutes the main section to be tackled by the students, the next is as the support material meant for improving Reading Skills of students by way of encouraging them. The time utilised for working out the exercises given after each unit is also for supplementing the exercises, with authentic materials of a similar kind; for example, they are taken from newspaper articles, advertisements, promotional materials etc. However, though the emphasis, as per the syllabus, is always on skill development and on the adequate practice of language skills, they are not paid due attention as they are not included for testing.
With respect to each individual topic in *Learning English: A Communicative Approach* textbook, the break up sequencing is demonstrative of the approach known as PPP (Presentation, Practice and Production); and, is organised as follows:

1. A warmup listening task that introduces the unit topic and prepares learners for more difficult listening challenges by activating their schemata of content, grammar, and vocabulary later on.

2. The second listening task is based on the same pre-recorded input that is designed to cover a range of skills, such as listening for specific information, for gist listening, and for making inferences.

3. A short, functional dialogue has to be completed with an attached vocabulary box designed for the students to engage in role-playing and controlled speaking practice with a partner. Students begin by practising the dialogue, just as it is presented in the text, and on the accompanying tape or CD. During the next phase they are gradually expected to become more creative in their dialogue by making substitutions from the choices provided, adding their own ideas, and then finally by closing the book and having a similar set of conversations of their own making.

4. Motivating pair-work tasks have been designed to gradually take the learner beyond simple exercises, “divergent tasks” or information gap activities to individual communicative exchanges in which the students are expected to produce the language points of each respective unit and truly use the material in a more meaningful fashion.
5. A language-check section designed for the review and consolidation of
grammar and vocabulary.

6. Communicative group work tasks designed for additional fluency improvement
and genuine production of the target language.

7. A final short activity on reading and writing.

The aforementioned linear organisation and sequencing of each topic is intended
to “recycle” or reinforce specific grammatical structures and vocabulary items as well as
various functions in an effort to assist learners to store them in long-term memory.
Through the use of these methods, the learners are encouraged to learn various items,
through exposure, in a progressive manner.

Although it appears that this calculated progression and schematised layout of
each unit is well-intentioned and firmly grounded in traditional second language
acquisition theory, this apparent strong point is also one of the gravest weaknesses as the
design or organisation of every topic is virtually identical to the next, creating monotony.
This tends to make the book seem simplistic, redundant, and even boring after the
completion of a few lessons, especially in cases where new and inexperienced teachers
might be relying on the text for most of their teaching ideas, strategies, activities and
lesson planning.

Another problem with the specific layout and design of each topic and their
accompanying appendices is the non inclusion of the tasks, expansion activities, review
unit's answer keys and tape scripts in the student books. Though not a serious problem,
this might still hamper the execution of lesson preparation by some teachers who do not
have access to any other complementary material. It might also be somewhat problematic for certain students who wish to use the book for independent and/or additional study.

An additional characteristic of the specific layout and design of each unit in *Learning English: A Communicative Approach* is: it is not only potentially problematic but also worthy of closer scrutiny on the conventional teaching model of presentation, controlled practice and production (PPP). The PPP approach is based on the belief that fluency automatically follows accuracy. Instruction at the outset is form-focused and teacher-centred, with a focus on grammatical accuracy. This presentation stage is then followed by practice activities that are designed to enable the learners to produce the material that has been presented. In the final production stage, opportunities are provided to use language freely, with an expectation that this would consolidate what has been learnt and would extend its range of applicability. Essentially, the teacher’s role is to present a new form to students while the student's role is to practice this particular form in activities that will display their mastery of it.

### 4.5 SAMPLE STUDY

The present study has been conducted on a sample of 180 students from the disciplines of Electrical Communication Engineering (ECE), Electronics and Electrical Engineering (EEE), Computer Science Engineering (CSE) and Civil Engineering (CE), at Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (Kakinada). A random sample was obtained to assess the LSRW and other skills of the respondents. Out of them, 160 respondents are from the State syllabus and 20 respondents are from the Central Board syllabus, in their X Standard.
4.6 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The same questionnaire that was given to the students of Acharya Nagarjuna University was circulated to the Engineering students in the College of Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (Kakinada). The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses that would help the research for analysis of the text. The responses to the questionnaire revealed that a sea change has occurred in the pedagogy of teaching English.

4.7 SYLLABUS

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (Kakinada) introduced a new module of Technical Communicative English in its undergraduate curriculum with an idea of using the Communicative Approach to language teaching for better results. So, the syllabus is designed to follow the Communicative Approach where emphasis is laid on improving the communication skills of the students. The syllabus prescribed for the first year Engineering Students in JNTU (K) is appended herewith (in Appendix-IV).

At the outset, the move towards introducing the text Learning English: A Communicative Approach appears to be a step taken in the right direction. But the survey and the resultant critical analysis revealed that this course is not successfully delivered.

4.8 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTBOOK

An analysis of the content was made to assess its capacity to motivate the learners and also considers 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. The last, but not the least, is the communicative aspect. Any Engineering
course for the second language learners should make them proficient in their communication.

The analysis was done taking into consideration the three dimensions in the textbooks.

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

4.8.1 Content Aspects

Content Aspects play a key role in the analysis of a textbook. The primary objectives such as creating motivation and suitability of the text to the Engineering course were taken up for analysis. The questionnaire posed two direct questions to the students, in this respect.

4.8.1.1 Improvement in Creating Motivation

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

Response: The finding shows that only 10.56% of students found that there is motivation towards creative use of language, in the textbook. They are from the urban and elite background and possess some idea about the topics. A majority of the students (55%) felt that the content is uninteresting. 34.34% of the students felt that they were motivated, to some extent.

Analysis: Only 10.56% of the students said ‘yes’ to the question whether the text provides necessary motivation to the learners. More than half of the students, including students from the CBSE and ICSE streams were of the uniform opinion that the textbook was in no way a stimulant to their originality or creativity.
4.8.1.2 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 to the Engineering course is concerned, only 21.11% felt that the topics are relevant. 56.12% of the students are oblivious to the relevance and usefulness of the topics. And 22.77% of them opined that the topics provided in the textbook are relevant to some extent.

Analysis: A textbook should intend to enhance the communication skills in the target language; but it should also be appropriate to the age and mental level of the learner and should be close to the aims of the course. When the question was asked whether the concerned textbook is appropriate to the Engineering Course, almost all the learners responded by way of saying that topics such as Astronomy, Computer Ethics, and Climb to Annapurna etc. are inappropriate or irrelevant to their course.

4.8.2 Corporeal Aspects

The corporeal aspects consist of the skill and imagination enhancement of the learners. So questions are asked to extract their individual opinions on aspects like the cover design and some other factors in language learning.

4.8.2.1 Proper Design of the presentation of Technical Terms

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

Response: In the vocabulary section, there is a section on synonyms and antonyms in the two textbooks, Learning English: A Communicative Approach and Wings of Fire. Technical Terms related to Engineering students and their meanings have also been introduced. 8.88% of them are able to recognise the definition, whereas the 35% of the
students felt that they are okay and 56.12% of the students felt that the terms are not clearly defined. Nearly three fourths of the students are unable to comprehend the technical terms. Teachers also acknowledge that the definitions for technical terms are not properly presented.

**Analysis:** The syllabus for Technical English is designed to aim at introducing the technical terms to the students in a proper manner. From the observation made, it could be understood that the learners could comprehend the technical terms and their definitions apparently from the prescribed textbook *Learning English: A Communicative Approach*.

### 4.8.2.2 Promotion of Technical Knowledge or Language Learning

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

**Response:** The most noticeable effects are found for the question whether the technical materials help to increase the technical knowledge or to increase the rate of learning the language. Only 25.55% of students opined that it promoted the students’ technical knowledge and a very surprising response of 83.88% said that it increases their language learning more than the technical knowledge.

**Analysis:** This textbook contains technical topics with considerable number of technical terms. The aim of this material is very clear; it is expected to achieve the two targets of improving the communication skills in English, as well as the technical knowledge of the students. But the result is not encouraging as most of the students felt that it is not very useful to increase their technical knowledge.
4.8.2.3 Development of Creativity

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

Response: A majority of learners accepted that it provided creativity through various exercises; yet, around 40% found it otherwise. The students who hail from rural areas and are not exposed to such kind of activities felt that they could not take full advantage of the tasks as very little personal attention was paid to them.

Analysis: The contents in these books should give wings to the imagination of a student and develop creativity, apart from developing linguistic skills and providing knowledge. It is important, therefore, that the students develop a love for books, particularly textbooks, and have unrestricted access the various aspects outlined in their textbooks. Moreover, creativity is an important factor in the growth of one’s own personality. Providing a wide range of tasks to the learners could give them confidence to sharpen their inspiration and creativity.

4.8.2.4 Importance of Eye-Catching Cover Design

Q. Is the cover design beautiful?

Response: The finding shows that except for a few students all the other students felt that the cover-design is not attractive. Nearly 47.78% of them, including Central Board students, opined that the cover-design is inspiring to some extent. 38.33% of the students felt that the cover-design is not inspiring.

Analysis: The cover design and the arrangement of the materials have to be taken into account in terms of its corporeal aspects. It’s true that a picture is worth thousand words and the book cover too contributes to this feature. In fact, one of the major factors that makes a reader attracted to read the textbook is also its cover page. The fact is that it
creates a long-lasting impression in the eyes of the booklovers. A book is mostly judged by its cover. The reason is that it indicates how creative and innovative the contents inside could be.

4.8.2.5 Language Usage in Other Situations

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

Response: The observations reveal that the students from the State Board find it very difficult to use the language given in other situations. On the whole, only 17.78% of students are able to use the language in other situations. Averages of 22.78% of students are unable to use new words successfully, while 59.44% are able to use them to some extent.

Analysis: The findings are very disheartening; students are unable to use the language in a proper way. The reason may be that the students have the anxiety of learning, but he/she find it difficult to perform in a stressful environment.

4.8.3 Communicative Aspects

Communicative Skills play a vital role in building strong relationships and fostering better understanding, both in the personal and professional lives of the students. To be successful in any field, one needs to know and understand how to communicate effectively. In an era of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation, good Communication Skills are the key to unlock the doors of success. Professionals having strong hold over Communication Skills are considered assets of any organisation. Such professionals set higher level of standards and add value to the organisational set-up. At
present, employers are on the look out for sound Communication Skills in Engineering graduates besides technical knowledge.

Thus, the professional profile of a qualified Engineer in the modern era should include good command over Communication Skills. Earlier researches revealed that most of the graduate Engineers do not have satisfactory command on the use of language and that they have failed miserably in the basic requirements of an organisation.

4.8.3.1 Comprehension of the Text

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

Response: Almost all the students were able to comprehend the textbook, as the topics are related to technology – ranging from Basic Science to Space Science. The topics were found to be in the ascending order of difficulty. 23.33% of them understood the text. 52.33% of the students though hailing from rural areas and having the State syllabus were able to comprehend the text. 24.44% of the students were found to be expressing their inability to understand the text. Even a few teachers found themselves unfamiliar with the scientific and technical topics given in the textbook.

Analysis: Though more than 50% of the students felt that the topics were relevant to their field of study, the real problem seemed to be with their delivery. Most of the teachers who hail from the academic background of Arts and Humanities find it both difficult and uninteresting to comprehend and teach the lessons with scientific topics and content.

4.8.3.2 Pictorial Presentations

Q. Are there adequate pictures, charts, graphs to understand the context/topics in the text-books?
Response: Approximately 30% felt that they are adequate. But about 70% expressed their dissatisfaction with the adequacy of pictures, charts, groups in the textbook.

Analysis: The topics given in the textbook are from different fields in Engineering and Technology; and these topics should have graphic representation for better understanding. The aids provided were found to be inadequate and two or three pictures given seemed to be even irrelevant. For example, the topic on Computer Ethics has the picture of a computer which is not at all helpful to understand the concept. If a tree diagram related to the hierarchy of procedures would have been more relevant.

4.8.3.3 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: 12.22% of students felt that they could succeed in the application of rule of grammar to the use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, word formation, tenses etc. 36.12% of them confessed that they are unable to improve their grammar. The remaining students, amounting to more than 50% said that they were benefited to some extent.

Analysis: A wide array of responses was elicited from various sects of respondents regarding the development of language aspect with respect to grammar. Nearly 51.66% of them responded that they had improvement in grammar, to some extent. In the textbook Learning English: A Communicative Approach, the exercises devoted to grammar are evenly distributed. But in most of the cases these exercises could be left under choice in the given examination.
4.8.3.4 Language Development through Tasks

Q. How do you rate these tasks?

Response: As is evident from the survey findings that except for a few students the tasks seem to be moderate and easy to all the other students; the slow-learners or the students from rural areas find it difficult to do the tasks. On the whole, 81.66% of students find the tasks moderate and 15% find them easy.

Analysis: The textbook, *Learning English: A Communicative Approach*, specifies a number of tasks like skimming, scanning, match the following, vocabulary, synonyms, close-reading passages, note-taking, summarising and correction of sentences. When the Engineering students are monitored to do these tasks, they must be able to write them down properly. The success of this lies in their active participation and involvement. As these items could be avoided, due to the choice given in the pattern of the examination paper, most of the students seemed to take advantage of leaving them out for choice.

4.9 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT BOOK WITH REFERENCE TO LANGUAGE SKILLS

The textbook, *Learning English: A Communicative Approach*, contains content materials based on Engineering and technical themes and the tasks given are related to communication skills. The following table (4.1) presents the status of distribution of tasks in both the texts, *Learning English: A Communicative Approach* and *Wings of Fire*.

As language skills are always understood through the four important skills they advocate, the following information is only an explanation on how these four skills have been focused.
Table 4.1
Analysis of Number of Tasks for each Language Skill in 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>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prescribed Textbooks

Since the textbook is aimed at the development of the basic skills (LSRW) involved in language learning. It becomes necessary to analyse the skill aspects of a textbook. The findings show that the textbooks impart enough language skills to the students the number of tasks are also adequate in developing their basic skills.

Figure 4.1
Analysis of Number of Tasks for each Language Skill in Prescribed Textbooks

Source: Prescribed Textbooks.
4.9.1 Listening Skill

Listening is the foundation of any language -- teaching/learning process. But unfortunately, listening is one skill that is given the least importance in the process of teaching/learning English language. According to some scientific studies a new born baby can recognise the sound of the doorbell or the ringing of the phone in his/her home as s/he must have heard it many a times in the womb. Good Listening Skills can make a student an excellent speaker and a person who has patience can imbibe/learn more through listening.

Language teachers focus on this skill and succeed in getting attention of the students by adopting many creative and innovative approaches. For teachers of English in the professional colleges located in cities, the situation is somewhat congenial because of the advantages of a Communication Skill Laboratory. For example, Listening can be made an interesting and enjoyable activity, through the use of audio-visual clippings made available to the students, in the laboratory.

Table 4.2
Overall Improvement in Listening Skills through the Textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>State Board</th>
<th></th>
<th>Central Board</th>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30.63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>51.87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>65.00</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>03.75</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey
Table 4.2 shows that the overall improvement in Listening Skills was found to be ‘very good’ in 31.11% of the students, and ‘good’ enough in 53.33% of the students. Thus, it is evident that there is a significant improvement in the Listening Skills of the students after getting trained in Communication Skills Laboratory through the tasks given in the textbook.

**Figure 4.2**

*Overall Improvement in Listening Skills through the Text Book*

*Source:* Survey
4.9.2 Speaking Skill

Speaking skills are more sought after in the present context and not only are the students in professional colleges trying to improve their Speaking Skills, but also the students in other educational institutions, at all levels, are trying to enhance their speaking capability. The syllabus prescribed for the students of professional courses includes some exercises which are meant for practising. This type of training is always recommended by a teacher.

The role of Speaking Skills in getting a job and its contribution to personality development has to be explained to the students. As Dale Carnegie, a trainer in personality development says, “Great speakers are not born, they are trained”. The target of the teachers when it comes to imparting Speaking Skills is to enhance the ability of the students who lack speaking proficiency. The teachers try to encourage them, more so to shed off the shyness, which is natural and yet requires all attention.

The textbooks, *Learning English: A Communicative Approach* and *Wings of Fire* by A.P.J Abdul Kalam, provide a number of tasks to practise speaking in the form of oral practice, role-playing, group discussions, etc. Out of the one hundred and forty five tasks given in the prescribed textbook, twenty seven are devoted to speaking/oral skills. They are relatively simple and involve creativity on the part of a learner. But a question arises as to how far the objectives of the syllabus have been fulfilled. As per the data (Table 4.3) given below, the overall improvement of Speaking Skills in 55% of the students was found to be ‘very good’.
Table 4.3

Overall Improvement in speaking Skills through the Textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</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>18</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>53.75</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>02.50</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey

Table 4.3 indicates that the learners have been exposed to oral situations and they have also participated in them. Learning situations were provided, in the Communication Skills Lab through the twenty seven tasks suggested in the prescribed textbook, such as, phonetics/phonetic transcription, use of stress and intonation, role-playing, use of situational dialogues, oral presentations, JAM, describing objects/situations/people, information transfer, debate, telephonic skills and giving directions etc.
4.9.3 Reading Skill

Reading is significant in the process of acquiring a second language and the purposeful use of the supplementary text, Wings of Fire enables the students to develop their Reading Skills. The teacher of a second language should have a thorough understanding of the techniques and sub skills of reading. It can be done in the following

**Source:** Survey
manner. As an initial exercise, the teacher can read a few lines and then let the class repeat and progress, stage by stage, until the students reach the end of the chapter. Involvement of the students in such exercises gives them the opportunity to get trained in pronunciation and the proper use of stress and intonation.

Reading the supplementary text, *Wings of Fire* by A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, involves many skills that are useful to learn a language: perception, recall, reasoning, evaluating, imagining, organising, application and problem solving. In words of Henry Peter Smith and Emerald Dechant (1977: 237), the goal of all reading is the comprehension of meaning and absorption of the content in order to make use of it when the need occurs. Effective reading includes not only a literal comprehension of an author’s word, but also an interpretation of his mood, tone, feeling and attitude.

Lillian Gray and Dora Reese are of the opinion that the understanding of a textbook happens on three levels. First, the purely literal level, responding to the graphic signals only with superficial understanding; the second level at which the reader recognises the author’s meaning; and, the third level is where the reader’s own personal experiences and judgements influence his response to the text. These three levels can be summarised as “Reading the lines, Reading between the lines and Reading beyond the lines” (1957: 339).

Reading aloud *Wings of Fire* makes one feel that it is an ideal text for supplementary reading. As Miles V. Zintz and Zelda R. Margaret have stated in their book, *The Reading Process: The Teacher and The Learner*, “the ‘real-life’ purpose of reading aloud to others is to convey information to them, to entertain them, or to share a good story that they have not read” (1989: 425). This text could be used both for reading
aloud and silent reading. Silent reading is considered to be a “see and comprehend process” rather than a “see, say and comprehend” process. Guy Thomas Buswell (1947: 521-26) noted that silent reading should be a process of association between perceptual stimulation and meaning “without a mediating vocalisation” (1947: 521-26). Silent reading focuses on comprehension, based on background information, some visual data, and predicting and confirming strategies.

At the end of each chapter in Wings of Fire, many questions, which require slow reading, are given. Thus one of the prescribed texts provides an opportunity to learn both skimming and scanning. Therefore, the teaching materials provide ample opportunities to improve their Reading Skill. The data also proves this fact that Reading Skill has acquired the first place among the four skills and a marginal of learners are benefited by the tasks.

**Table 4.4**

**Overall Improvement in Reading 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>89</td>
<td>55.62</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28.75</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>03.13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Survey*
As per the survey (Table 4.4), 55.56% of the students had an ‘excellent’ improvement in Reading Skill. Very few learners (3.33%) had an ‘average’ improvement in their Reading Skill. From this, it can be inferred that even through the tasks provided to do are less in the prescribed text *Learning English: A Communicative Approach*, the reading comprehension exercises in the lab and the prescribed non-detailed textbook *Wings of Fire* provides enough opportunities to improve the students’ Reading skill.

**Figure 4.4**

Overall Improvement in Reading Skills through the Textbook

![Bar Chart](image)

**Source:** Survey
4.9.4 Writing Skill

Writing is a complex skill and needs special training in conveying the intended message through the written text. More often Engineering students’ aptitude for writing is low as very little attention is paid to train them in writing. In everyday business, the modern world demands skill in effective writing. Wilga Marie Rivers in her book, *A Practical Guide to the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language*, has observed that motivating the students to write is, thus, a challenging task for the teacher. Some need considerable help in developing a smooth and effective presentation; others seem intuitively to take off and create interesting patterns of their own (1978: 297). If the students are to write spontaneously, opportunities to acquire confidence in writing must be provided to them. Except professional people like writers, journalists, lawyers, teachers etc., others have very few occasions to practise writing.

Writing also fulfils a pedagogic purpose in second language teaching. It is used to fix the structures and vocabulary already learnt. The student who learns to write in English has not only to cope with the mechanical problems connected with the script of the language but also with the problems of ease and fluency of expression, of grammatical and lexical accuracy and of the appropriateness of the style of writing, as demanded by the occasion or situation. Tim Bowen (2004) explains how difficult the process of writing is:

> Writing is more an individual effort than speaking, while at the same time more rule-bound and therefore more error-prone . . . the speaker does not have to pronounce each word exactly according to one standard of pronunciation or one model of structure, while the writer is expected to produce according to one model of spelling and usually a reduced range of structures, with cent percent accuracy.
In the textbook, *Learning English - A Communicative Approach*, one can observe that thirty four out of one hundred and forty five tasks are devoted to different items of writing: Paragraph writing, Essay writing, Letter writing, Description, Report Writing, Note-taking, Note-making, Advertising etc.

### Table 4.5

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>State Board</th>
<th>Central Board</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
<td>No. of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.87%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>6.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.13%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>17.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.63%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>25.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>49.37%</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Survey

Table 4.5 shows that the second language learners tend to improve better in receptive skills because they always have such an atmosphere in the classrooms and in the language laboratory. 50 percent of the students were found to be ‘average’ in improving their Writing Skill. Roughly, a minor percentage improved in the Writing Skill and an average of 6.67% had learnt to write better.
Figure 4.5
Overall Improvement in Writing Skills through the Textbook

![Chart showing overall improvement in writing skills through the textbook]

**Source:** Survey

4.10 EVALUATION OF LEARNERS’ SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH THE PRESCRIBED SYLLABUS IN ENGLISH

Evaluation of Learners’ Second Language Learning involves an analysis of the fulfillment of the objectives stated in the syllabus. The objectives are - comprehension of the text, learning grammar, improvement of language through tasks, using second language in other situations and learning of Communication Skills etc. Tables 4.6 and 4.7 show the overall analysis of the textbook.
Among the specified objectives only some of them seem to be fulfilled. In terms of its content-analysis, the majority of informants understand the text and only a few cannot comprehend the text. Among the four skills seen earlier they lack in Listening and Writing skills whereas about 70% of them have improved their Reading and Speaking skills. A few of the informants are unable to use the language in other situations.

**Table 4.6**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT</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>10.56</td>
<td>34.44</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suitability of the Text to the Engineering Course</td>
<td>21.11</td>
<td>22.77</td>
<td>56.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORPOREAL</td>
<td>Proper Design of Technical Terms</td>
<td>08.88</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>56.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Development of Creativity</td>
<td>18.89</td>
<td>52.78</td>
<td>28.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Importance of Eye-Catching Cover Design</td>
<td>13.89</td>
<td>47.78</td>
<td>38.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Usage in Other Situations</td>
<td>17.78</td>
<td>59.44</td>
<td>22.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Survey

**Content Aspects:** The syllabus appears, on the whole, to have been unproductive in motivating students to pay due attention to its content. The students had also expressed that the objectives specified are not satisfactory.
**Corporeal Aspects:** Corporeal aspects specified within the text received only a lukewarm consideration by the students. Most of them are unsure of their advantage and answered vaguely that they are “satisfied.”

**Figure 4.6**

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

*Source: Survey.*
<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>23.33</td>
<td>52.33</td>
<td>24.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language learning through grammar</td>
<td>12.22</td>
<td>51.66</td>
<td>36.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of language through tasks</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>81.66</td>
<td>03.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening skill</td>
<td>12.11</td>
<td>31.11</td>
<td>56.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking skill</td>
<td>12.22</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>32.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading skill</td>
<td>55.56</td>
<td>28.33</td>
<td>16.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing skill</td>
<td>06.67</td>
<td>17.78</td>
<td>75.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Survey*

**Communicative Aspects:** In this context, the chief aim of an English syllabus has been stated as improving the Communication Skills. But the survey has shown that there is a poor response to this aspect. A majority of the students opine that there is hardly any improvement in their language-learning and they also felt that they were not given the appropriate tasks. In the individual assessment made also, except in the Reading Skill, no significant improvement could be recorded in the other three major skills of the students. It is indeed a matter of grave concern that needs immediate attention since a syllabus that claims to improve the students’ communicative skills on all four fronts has been found to be ineffective in actual practice.
Figure 4.7
Level of Satisfaction on Learners' Second Language Learning through the Prescribed Syllabus in English in Communicative Aspects

Source: Survey.

4.11 English Language Communication Skills Laboratory (ELCS Lab)

The present English course for B.Tech. students of Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (Kakinada), was introduced in August 2006. The main objective of the course is to develop students’ communication skills and prepare them for future recruitment. As it is observed that many students have speech anxiety, at the beginning of the course, effective measures have been taken to help students overcome problems of apprehension by introducing communication skills lab. The topics that are covered in the syllabus and the information given to the students through each topic are given below.
1. Introduction to sounds

Some Linguistic experts assume that correct pronunciation is a natural gift which cannot be achieved by practice. However, it is only practice that helps any individual to gain reasonably good pronunciation. Only when the students consider acquiring the correct sounds of English, particularly vowel and consonant sounds, their articulation would improve. The teacher has to pay special attention to difficult sounds in order to make the student gain the necessary command over pronunciation. All these sounds are taught and practised in the ELCS Lab.

2. Stress and Intonation

Even at the professional level, many students are ignorant of stress patterns and English intonation. The English lab provides practice to the students in these items. They are also taught by their language teachers about the syllabification of words to follow the stress and intonation.

3. Role Play and Situational Dialogues

Activities meant for role-playing and the use of situational dialogues have been made integral to language classes, where the students are also taught the theoretical aspects of these two items; but actual practice is given in the lab to improve their skills. The students are asked to perform different roles on the mock stage.
4. Oral Presentations

In the English language laboratory, the students are encouraged to come out with oral presentations. The students are also provided with some audio-tapes of great speeches of world leaders, scientists and statesmen.

5. JAM (Just A Minute)

Just a Minute Session is another device for the students in the lab syllabus given to improve their skills in oral presentation. Learners are trained in giving an extempore presentation (a one-minute speech) after they are given a topic.

6. Describing Objects/Situations/People

Some students find it really difficult to describe people, situations and objects fearing that they do not possess required structures and vocabulary to do so. Such students are supplied with the necessary software and are made to enrich their Speaking Skills through frequent practice.

7. Information Transfer

Audio-Visual effects go a long way in language-learning. The use of pictures, charts, graphs and the whole world of information and knowledge made available through the use of the computer, have been some of the advantages of the language-laboratory.

8. Debate

There are students who always fear to participate in any kind of debate on a given topic, on the stage; for such students the Lab is a suitable place to shed their fear. This is
not only conveyed to them by the teachers, they also made to actively involve in a Debate, on a given topic.

9. Telephonic Skills

Telephonic Communication is one of the important skills to be learnt thoroughly. In the globalised world ninety percent of business is carried on through distance conversation. The students are made to play take on different roles in telephonic communication. All the practical knowledge required for improving the Telephonic skills is imparted to the students in the lab.

10. Giving Directions

This is one among the exercises in the English Language and Communication Skills Laboratory that involves the teacher giving information in the form of route-maps to the students and asking them to use them in appropriate situations.

It has been observed that the practical exercises given to the students in the Language Lab have brought out perceptible changes in the Communication Skills of the students.

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