

Teaching Soft Skills for Undergraduate Engineering Students in Indian Classroom – A Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to highlight the necessity of training Soft Skills to graduates in order to frame their professional career for future prospects. In addition, even the management of the Indian institution supported to develop the language skills of university students. The researcher's focus is on undergraduate engineering students who learnt Soft skills for vital needs. Defining Soft Skills, "Communicating, conflict management, human relations, making presentations, negotiating, team building, and other such ability, defined in terms of expected outcomes and not as a specific method or technique such as statistical analysis." The teacher's problem is to teach the students through her/his analysis that how to train, how to collect material, what should be taught, what the purpose to teach is, why Soft Skills has become essential in higher educational institutions, why to introduce Soft skills in the syllabus, and what is the need to inculcate and improve Soft Skills in young minds. The prescribed syllabus plays dynamic role in terms of teaching-learning process for qualified students. The learners in due course realised the value of the course, and paid attention to the subject like their core subjects. The eventual objective of every student is to settle in life either through job or higher studies, whatever aspect may be, the candidate has to clear the entrance/competitive exam to take up a job or to go for higher studies. Hence, no choices, he/she has to master Soft Skills to develop professional career. Thus, Indian educational institutions show interest in introducing Soft Skills or including Soft skills in regular curriculum.

Keywords

Soft Skills, training, teaching-learning, syllabus, plan, methodology, evaluation, result

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Introduction

The syllabus is focused on Writing, Communication, Mass Communication, Social Media, Presentation, Etiquette, Social Interaction, and Time Management, but for research, just the first three topics are selected to work on. The title of the syllabus is Introduction to Soft Skills. The lesson plans of 1. Writing, 2. Communication and 3. Mass Communication follow:

1. Writing

- Writing on current news topics
- Responding to News articles
- Movie Review
- Book Review
- Mind Map

2. Communication

- Letter Writing for making enquiries
- Registering complaints
- Asking for information
- Giving information
- Placing orders
- Sending replies

3. Mass Communication

- Design of Posters
- Advertisements
- Notices
- Writing formal and informal invitations

Methodology

I a. Writing on current new topics:

Lecturing and delivering some information, next, instructing the pupils to carry on with class exercise.

Directions:

1. The Student must select current topics from any one social media
2. The impact of the topic
3. To analyse the topic
4. Writing a summary
5. Editing, revising and submitting

The learners selected, felt the impact, analysed the topic, and wrote summary. Their work will be evaluated with suitable remarks. The evaluation criteria:

- Topic = 3 marks (originality and recent)
- Analysis = 4 marks (skills)
- Grammar = 3 marks (proficiency)

The total mark for Writing on current new topics is 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for excellent answers that stand for accuracy, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level answer with many mistakes. The average mark shall be awarded for moderate answer with some errors.

I b. Responding to news articles

Instructing to visit library inside/outside the campus, this is an outdoor activity.

Directions:

1. The learner could select any one English newspaper, and choose an article from the paper
2. Recent newspaper, restricted to that day's paper or the previous day's paper
3. Find out an article with social message
4. State the reason (why) for the chosen article
5. Analysis
6. Enumerate 10 points.
7. Comments
8. Use of the news in present era.

The students selected, enjoyed library ambience, and started working. It is a pair work. The evaluation criteria:

- Selection = 2 marks (trend)
- Reason = 2 marks (thought-provoking)
- Analysis = 3 marks (perspectives)
- Grammar = 3 marks (proficiency)

The total mark for Responding to News articles is 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for finest and unique answers, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level answer with more inaccuracies. The average mark shall be awarded for moderate answer with some mistakes.

I c. Movie review

Taught in the class about the review for movies, and how to write reviews, Afterwards, suggesting go for a sample exercise, finally, watching a decent movie, and drafting a review for the seen movie.

Directions:

1. Select any one movie (sample exercise)
2. Watch the movie and write comments (model)
3. Choose a movie for Movie Review exercise
4. Watch the movie
5. Learn the full details of the movie
6. Write a review
7. Submit

The young boys/girls were excited, selected, watched and submitted their review papers at the earliest. The evaluation criteria:

- Sample exercise with comment = 3 marks (way of selection, thought process)
- Selection (original) = 1 mark (taste)
- Review = 4 marks
- Grammar = 2 marks

The total mark for Movie Review is 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for finest selection and comments, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level answer with inappropriate comments. The average mark shall be awarded for moderate comments with a few mistakes.

I d. Book review

Communicated to review a book, for example, reviewing a short story in a story collection book. Generally, the students will have interest to read a story, perhaps, reading is for pleasure. After reading the story, they have to put pen

to paper, their commentaries will give details of the author and story (plot and characterisation).

Directions:

1. Selecting a short story with major and minor characters
2. Read the story
3. Critically analyse the story
4. Check plot construction
5. Study the use of characters in the story
6. Climax
7. Comedy or tragedy
8. Summary

The trainees love reading short stories instead of novels. They are inspired to read the story, and without strain, they justified the title, plot and characters in the short story. The evaluation criteria:

- Reading the story = 2 marks
- Techniques = 3 marks
- Review = 3 marks
- Grammar = 2 marks

The total mark for Book Review is 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for justification, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level answer with unsuitable remarks. The average mark shall be awarded for justification with a few details and some mistakes.

I e. Mind map

Addressed students, and shared valid information on Mind Mapping exercise. It is an activity-based exercise, while teaching; they interacted, and understood the exercise.

Directions:

1. Select a word/phrase/theme
2. Draw the branches of the chosen word/phrase/theme
3. Sequencing
4. Tree diagram
5. Revise

The students grasped the exercise; they opted for brainstorming, thus, to complete the exercise. It is a group work. No evaluation process, as this was a class exercise, most of the procedures were done orally in the class.

Ii letter writing

Lectured Letter Writing exercise with suitable examples, thereby, educated the structure of business/official letter. The simplest approach of this exercise created enthusiasm for the learners to write types of letters. The types of business letters:

1. Making enquiries
2. Registering complaints
3. Asking for information
4. Giving information
5. Placing orders
6. Sending replies

The learners are divided into groups, each group consists of six members, and every member should write one type of letter. The six members will brainstorm the different types of letter, later; each will write a letter of his/her own

selected type. During submission, all the members must submit all the six types of letter (of course every one shared the content). The evaluation criteria:

- Structure of the letter = 3 marks
- Content = 5 marks
- Grammar = 2 marks

The total mark for Letter writing is 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for a good letter, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level letter with suitable remarks. The average mark shall be awarded for a fair letter with some mistakes.

iii a. Mass communication

Shared views on Mass Communication and displayed video clippings, the content of video clippings proved examples for Mass Communications. On students' perspective Mass Communication is highly invited, and they tried to communicate through modes of Mass Communication.

Instructions:

1. Study the concept on Mass Communication
2. Do one exercise on Mass Communication
3. Draft the responses of Mass Communication
4. Submit the copy

All the students (particular batch) used Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, Blog Writing, and Instagram, even the teacher and students had whatsapp group chat id to carry academic messages. This exercise was quite interesting; consequently, the teacher enjoyed the messages of students. Some exercises were indeed interesting when linked with real-life situations. The teaching is also focused on real-life situation for doing exercises, further to develop language skills, as a result, improved Socio-Cultural Linguistic aspects while sharing information. The evaluation criteria:

- Use (purpose) of media = 4 marks
- Content = 4 marks
- Grammar = 2 marks

The learners posted social messages, their core ideas were Environment, Language (communication), Science and Technology. In Blog Writing activity, they created blogs and posted messages, after posting, they have to send the blog links to the evaluator for evaluation. Their attempt was remarkable and amazing, scored better in Mass communication exercise than other exercises. The total marks for posting messages are 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for the best message, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level message with some errors. The average mark shall be awarded for a fair message with mistakes.

The other activities on Mass Communication follow:

1. Design of Posters
2. Advertisements
3. Notices
4. Writing formal and informal invitations

1. Design of Posters

The learners are advised to prepare a poster using chart, and to work on designs with themes. The themes may be based on society, academics, current affairs and country (India).

Instructions:

1. Select a theme (subject)

2. Prepare a chart with designs
3. Paste paper cuttings/pictures/ images
4. Below every picture, write the relevant information with dates and time
5. Use dark colour pen to write information
6. Practise active verbs
7. Underline the words stating theme
8. Present (spoken) your chart in the class

The students liked to gather sources, adored to paste pictures, and using colour pens to write the content, selected contrasting colours, hence, prepared the chart in pleasant way. Their presentation was equally good like chart preparation. The evaluation criteria:

- Theme selection = 3 marks
- Chart presentation = 4 marks
- Sounds of Language = 3 marks

The total marks for Poster are 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for the best content and chart preparation, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level message with fair presentation. The average mark shall be awarded for a good presentation.

2. Advertisement

This activity is bit difficult. Instructions were given in the class, but it took time for students to gain confidence.

Directions:

1. Select one social theme or any product
2. Select and draw a logo
3. Depict the qualities of the product
4. Use active verbs and stick to active voice expressions
5. Apply short expressions, such as discount/offer/hurry up
6. Canvassing
7. Demonstrating

This spoken exercise motivated the young people to speak with imagination. They exhibited their originality and ascertained their creative sense while completing the exercise. The evaluation criteria:

- Best demonstration = 3 marks
- Best product/theme = 3 marks
- Short expressions = 1 mark
- Sounds of Language = 3 marks

The total mark for Advertisement is 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for the best presentation, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level presentation. The average mark shall be awarded for a good presentation. As a whole, the performance was authentic and students scored marks. In this exercise, the undergraduates were competent, but had healthy competition. This activity shows a suitable sample for real-life situation in selecting themes and products.

3. Notices

Lectured the content, henceforth, taught to write notices

Instructions:

1. Learn the methodology to send a notice
2. Think twice before sending a notice
3. Concentrate on subject of notice
4. Make sure of purpose
5. Write precisely
6. Mention name of sender, receiver, date and time

The learners prepared the formal notice; they need to read the samples, and to think over the subjects for notices. It is an individual exercise, but they discussed and wrote the notice. It was an assignment for them to score marks. The evaluation criteria:

- Structure of notice = 1 mark
- Purpose of notice = 2 marks
- Content = 4 marks
- Grammar = 3 marks

The total marks for Notices are 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for a notice with adequate information without errors, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level notice. The average mark shall be awarded for adequate information with some mistakes.

4. Writing formal and informal invitations

The students were taught to write formal and informal invitations in classroom. They practised the exercise with the aid of web sources. This is an assignment, so, it is to be submitted. The score was ideal and submitted on time.

Directions:

1. Select a subject
2. Relevant information
3. Follow the methodology
4. Revise
5. Share the information

The learner's approach was exact, and worked sincerely. Their efforts were highly appreciative, and deserved to score good marks. The evaluation marks:

- Content = 4 (2+2) marks
- Relevancy = 3 (1.5 + 1.5) marks
- Grammar = 3 (1.5 + 1.5) marks

The total mark for formal and informal invitations (5+5) is 10, the maximum mark to be awarded is 8, average mark is 5, and minimum mark is 3. The maximum mark is to be awarded for invitations with satisfactory information without errors, and minimum mark to be awarded is for below average level performance. The average mark shall be awarded for fair invitations. The performance was original and answers were unique. This exercise enhanced the writing skills of students; therefore, they learnt to write for a suitable aim, and how to convey the formal communication, ultimately drafting precisely to state the purpose.

Statistical Study

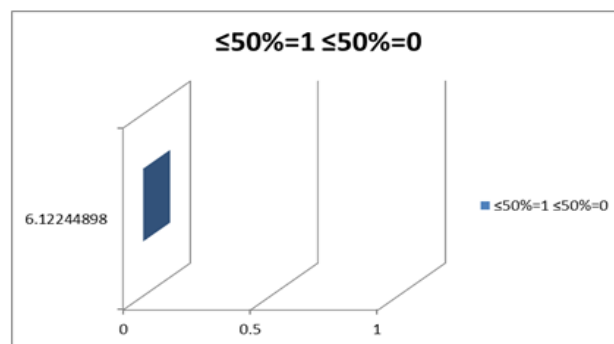
Next to teaching methodology and assessments, the performances of students are evaluated, thereby analysed the level of learning of students. The total assignments are segregated into three categories, 1. Writing – 10 marks, 2. Communication – 5 marks, and Mass Communication – 5

marks, the average marks (ten marks converted into 5 marks) of students are selected from every category. The level of learning is divided into three kinds, Preliminary stage, Medium level, and Advanced level. The below average students are few and average students were moderate, and above average students were some. The two slots students' marks were calculated to assess the level of learning of undergraduate students in university.

SLOT – D1+TD1, Class Number	Sample Nos.	C MARKS (5)	MC MARKS (5)	W MARKS (10)
1080	1	3	3	6
1080	2	3	3	6
1080	3	3	3	5
1080	4	3	3	6
1080	5	3	3	6
1080	6	3	3	5
1080	7	3	3	6
1080	8	3	3	6
1080	9	3	3	6
1080	10	3	3	6
1080	11	3	3	6
1080	12	3	3	6
1080	13	3	3	5
1080	14	3	3	6
1080	15	3	3	6
1080	16	3	3	6
1080	17	3	3	5
1080	18	3	3	6
1080	19	3	3	6
1080	20	3	3	6
1080	21	3	3	6
1080	22	2	3	6
1080	23	3	3	6
1080	24	3	3	6
1080	25	3	3	6

1080	26	3	3	6
1080	27	3	3	6
1080	28	3	3	6
1080	29	3	3	6
1080	30	3	3	6
1080	31	3	3	6
1080	32	3	3	6
1080	33	3	3	6
1080	34	3	3	5
1080	35	3	3	6
1080	36	3	3	6
1080	37	3	3	6
1080	38	3	3	6
1080	39	3	3	6
1080	40	3	3	6
1080	41	3	3	5
1080	42	3	3	6
1080	43	3	3	6
1080	44	3	3	5
1080	45	3	3	6
1080	46	3	3	6
1080	47	3	3	6
1080	48	3	3	6
1080	49	3	3	6

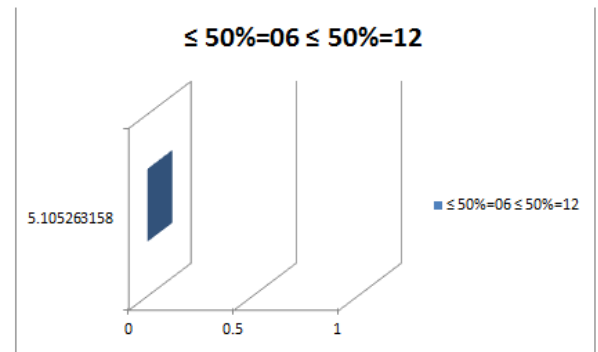
3.061224 3.061224 6.122449
 $\geq 50\% =$ $\geq 50\% =$
48 49 $\geq 50\% = 49$
 $\leq 50\% = 1$ $\leq 50\% = 0$ $\leq 50\% = 0$



SLOT – D2+TD2, Class Number	Sample Nos.	C MARKS (5)	MC MARKS (5)	W MARKS (10)
1081	1	3	3	5
1081	2	3	3	6
1081	3	3	3	6
1081	4	3	3	6
1081	5	3	2	5
1081	6	3	3	6
1081	7	3	2	6
1081	8	3	3	6
1081	9	3	3	6
1081	10	3	3	6
1081	11	3	3	6
1081	12	3	3	6
1081	13	3	3	6
1081	14	3	3	6
1081	15	3	2	5
1081	16	3	3	6
1081	17	3	3	6
1081	18	3	3	6
1081	19	3	3	6
1081	20	3	3	6
1081	21	3	3	6
1081	22	3	3	6
1081	23	3	3	6

1081	24	3	3	6
1081	25	3	2	5
1081	26	3	3	6
1081	27	3	3	6
1081	28	3	3	6
1081	29	3	3	6
1081	30	3	3	6
1081	31	2	3	6
1081	32	3	3	6
1081	33	3	3	6
1081	34	3	3	6
1081	35	3	0	0
1081	36	3	3	5
1081	37	3	3	6
1081	38	3	3	5
1081	39	3	3	6
1081	40	3	3	0
1081	41	3	3	5
1081	42	3	3	5
1081	43	0	0	0
1081	44	2	3	6
1081	45	2	3	6
1081	46	2	3	6
1081	47	3	3	6
1081	48	3	3	6
1081	49	3	2	6
1081	50	3	3	6
1081	51	3	2	6
1081	52	3	2	6
1081	53	3	2	5
1081	54	3	2	6
1081	55	3	2	6
1081	56	2	3	5
1081	57	3	3	6

3.052631579 3.052632 5.1052632
 $\geq 50\%=51$ $\geq 50\%=45$ $\geq 50\%=54$
 $\leq 50\%=06$ $\leq 50\%=12$ $\leq 50\%=3$



Result Analysis

The test results of two slots (D1+D2) validate the performance of Soft Skills students, their level of learning is assessed, evidently, two possibilities occur, less than/equal to \leq , and greater than/equal to $\geq 50\%$. The two tests were conducted for 5 marks, and the last test was conducted for 10 marks (marks depend on the quality of exercise). The D1 slot students are ESL (English as a Second Language) students, and a few from D2 slot students are EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. The highlighted students (blocked-from serial number 47 to 55) are Chinese students, and English is a foreign language for them, they study in Indian university, especially for English, and respective core subjects. The Foreign Language students' scores also will be similar to Second Language students; there won't be ample dissimilarity between them. The outcome states that students come under two categories, average and above average, the students who scored zero are absentees. Therefore, the level of learning is justified with two levels through mark statements and charts, average and above average levels. It is to be noted that students through regular trainings can excel in Soft Skills, but university/college students have to learn English at least one semester in a year to build confidence and acquire language skills to face the Socio-linguistic and materialistic world through communication.

Conclusion/Suggestions

The study of this paper helped the researcher to analyse the tendency of students in terms of Communication Skills. The exercises were mainly focused on Writing, Speaking and Reading. In many instances, the learners were confused with written English and Spoken English. They were guided to use British English for writing assignments and use either British or American English for spoken exercises. The American English was encouraged to get exposure, on the other hand, to distinguish British English with American English. The attempt of the teacher verified to be better, and the same trend can be followed for the next semester with respective syllabus of Soft Skills. The trainer should be a helper to trainees in understanding the concept. Outdoor activities (going to library (review article), industrial visit

(Business English), going for a trip (visiting places and witnessing arts and culture) shall be adopted for the benefit of students, so as to expand the teaching method for students' exploration. Building teacher-student cordial relationship is mandatory to develop personality development of both. Finally, Soft skills are fragments of our daily life, besides to be followed diligently for self-improvement.

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