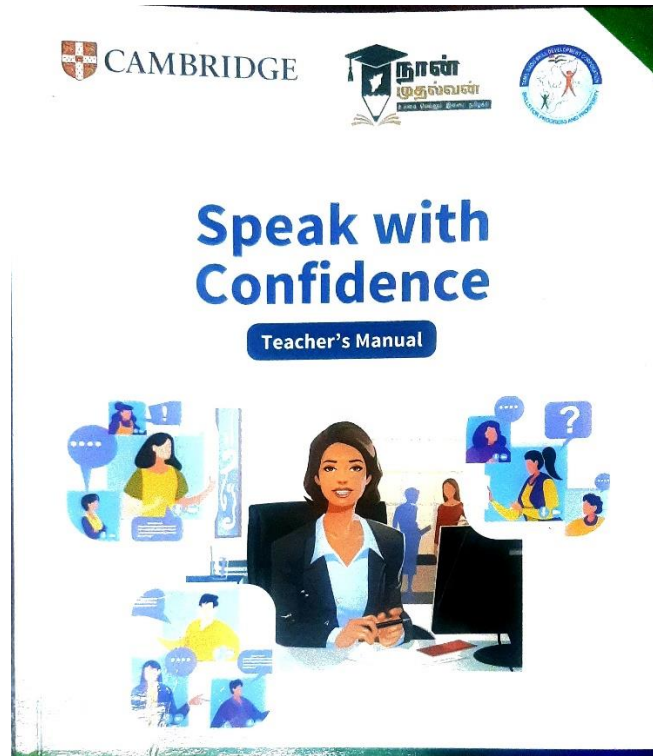


Review of Cambridge English Course “Speak with Confidence” under *Nan Mudhalvan* Scheme for I Year Engineering Students in Tamil Nadu

Dr. S. Latha Venkateswari

Professor of English
Government College of Technology
Coimbatore – 641013
drlathagct@gmail.com



Courtesy: Cambridge University Press

Introduction

Engineering relies heavily on collaboration and teamwork, making the idea clear that communication is essential for project coordination and problem-solving. The ability to articulate ideas, ask questions, provide feedback, and actively listen is vital for completing any tasks accurately and efficiently. Without strong communication skills, misunderstandings can arise, leading to serious mistakes and delays in project timelines. Hence, it is imperative

that engineering students invest time in developing their communication skills. Upon improving the skills, engineers can get professional reputation, build stronger relationships with colleagues, and contribute more effectively to the society.

Having witnessed the poor communication skills of the engineering students and the consequent drop in the placement graph, Tamil Nadu Government has introduced an initiative named “Nan Mudhalvan” to enhance the employability skills of the Engineering students. To make this endeavour an effective one, the government has collaborated with Cambridge English, which offers a wide range of services to English Language learners across the globe. As an English Professor at Government College of Technology, the author provides an in-depth analysis of the Cambridge English Course “**Speak with Confidence**” taught to the I Year Engineering students for a period of three months.

Nan Mudhalvan Scheme

The Honourable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu inaugurated a new scheme on 1.03.2022 to commemorate his 69th birthday. This initiative, spearheaded by the TN government, aims to increase the enrolment rate of students in higher education by fostering collaboration between school and collegiate education departments. The goal is to empower nearly 10 lakh youngsters across the State annually, providing them with the opportunities to showcase their talents, hone their skills, and access the best job opportunities available. The launch of the new portal, naanmudhalvan.tnschools.gov.in, demonstrates the government's commitment to meeting the needs of students and ensuring their success.

This scheme provides comprehensive training programs to students from the first year of their studies to their final year. It focus on both technical and non-technical skills essential for success in today's job market. By collaborating with industry partners, it is ensured that the training programs are aligned with current industry requirements. This scheme offers a diverse range of training modules to meet the specific needs of various sectors.

In addition to training, this scheme provides placement support through job fairs, career guidance programs, internships, and job opportunities. Financial assistance is also given to students who require support. More importantly, the incorporation of technology into online courses and virtual lab sessions gives dynamic learning experience to the beneficiaries.

Furthermore, students have the opportunity to do government-funded courses abroad. This scheme collects periodical feedback from both students and industry partners, as it helps improve and maintain high standards.

Objective

Cambridge English “Speak with Confidence” aims to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical application in the professional world. The focus given to enhance students’ communication skills, problem-solving skills, and overall confidence, equips them with the ability to succeed in their chosen careers. Additionally, students get a competitive edge in the global job market and become effective communicators.

Salient Features

Pre - Assessment

Initially, students write diagnostic test to help teachers assess their English standard. Based on the diagnostic test results, students are divided into Basic (A1) and Advanced (C2) levels. Students in the Basic level (A1) focus on building a strong foundation in English language skills, such as grammar, vocabulary, and basic communication. They work on improving their listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities through various activities and exercises tailored to their level.

On the contrary, students in the Advanced level (C2) learn complex language concepts and practise advanced communication skills. They do discussions, debates, presentations, and other challenging tasks that make them acquire critical thinking skills and fluency.

By dividing students into different levels based on their diagnostic test results, teachers provide targeted instruction to cater to the individual needs. This personalized approach helps students receive support and guidance necessary to reach their full potential in English language proficiency.

Training

A total of fifteen units have been carefully crafted to enhance the LSRW skills of learners, depending on their English standard. These units cover a wide range of topics such as Breaking the Ice, Background, Achievement, News, Seeking Employment, Planning, Making Predictions, Abilities at Work, Purchasing, Leisure, Lifestyle, Natural Forces, Transportation, Language for the Workplace, and Consumer Society.

This curriculum integrates multimedia resources, online platforms, and interactive sessions to create an engaging learning experience. The focus of these units is on the practical application of English in real-life scenarios, business communication, and academic settings. By incorporating a variety of teaching methods, learners find it easier to develop their language skills.

Post-Assessment and Certification

After getting trained for a period of 3 months, students take up the Up Skill Test conducted through Cambridge App. Students login with their Username and Password to write the test. Within ninety minutes, students give their response to questions based on LSRW skills. Upon successful completion of this test, certificates are given to students to showcase their English language proficiency.

Merits

In an engineering institute, students get limited exposure to English language as there are only three periods of English classes per week. Honing the skills of second language learners within this limited time is insufficient. But with the introduction of Cambridge English course, the engineering institutes have got an opportunity to improve students' communication skills besides enhancing their career prospects.

Thanks to the learner-centred approach, students express their views without inhibitions. Brainstorming sessions encourage learners to do group discussions, presentations and role play activities with enthusiasm. In fact, second language learners take ownership of their learning process. More importantly, this approach fosters a positive and engaging learning environment where students feel empowered to take risks and explore new ideas.

Three continuous hours of this Cambridge English course every week for a period of three months proves to be sufficient to improve students' communication skills, build their confidence level, make them fit for jobs, get global recognition through Cambridge certifications, and make them perform better in exams like IELTS, TOEFL, GRE etc.

Methodology

Initially, teachers get training programme on how to make this programme appropriate to the students and channelise their potential towards grasping the content. Teachers observe

the demonstrations given by the subject experts and try their own methodologies through group activities. With a view to making teaching and learning effective, teachers get hands on experience for using learning resources and assessment plans accurately.

This programme is designed in such a way that students relate semantics to their real-life situations. Learning starts from basic level to challenging speaking activities. Besides, integration of technology into the programme motivates the tech-savvy generation to learn faster. In this process, students practise persuasive speaking that make them become “adept practitioners” of English language.

The role of teachers in imparting the required skills to the student community is crucial. Teachers must collect the relevant learning materials to supplement the content to be taught. This results in achieving the desired learning outcome. Further, every unit needs careful planning and the best possible efforts put in by the teachers will double the proposed benefits of the programme.

At the end of the course, Cambridge team selects teachers at random to evaluate how the course content was delivered, teacher-students’ interaction, methodologies adopted, difficulties faced, suggestions to improve the course content etc. This process helps government identify the pitfalls and bring in the necessary changes to make this course effective.

Cambridge experts use the following format for monitoring teachers who handle Cambridge English course. Cambridge reviewer’s detailed evaluation pattern of the course instructors gives space for identifying the strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, this evaluation gives a fresh outlook on the aspects to be considered while teaching and learning this course.

Monitoring Report Format

S.No	Aspects	Remarks
1.	Name of the Reviewer	
2.	Name of the Institution	
3.	Name of the Teachers monitored	
4.	Date of Monitoring	
5.	Duration of each monitoring (Observation + Review)	
	Overview	

1.	Planning and preparation Familiarity with the content of the materials provided. Well prepared with the materials required.	
2.	Use of interactive teaching methodology - Opening and closing the session effectively. Achieving the learning outcomes of the activity. Rapport with the participants. Classroom management (Instructions, setting up the activities, - of all participants, elicited ideas/responses from the participants).	
3.	Confidence Use of English confidently. Responding to questions confidently.	
4.	Management Creating opportunities for pair and group work. Monitoring group/pair activities effectively, giving feedback as appropriate. Strategies to deal with resistant participants. Positive and Constructive feedback to participants.	
5.	Key Strengths:	
6.	Key Areas for attention:	
7.	Comments of the review/feedback session with teachers:	

Impact of the Course

Considering the benefits of this course, students and teachers across the State have found it to be more beneficial. While teachers find this course to be the best way to impart LSRW skills, students realise how to use this medium to develop their skills effectively. The pre and post assessment results stand testimony to the improvement of students over the period of time.

Observation

This course has been conducted for the past two years for a diverse group of learners, including first-generation learners, students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and those from rural areas. Also, language teachers give special attention to those who face inhibitions. Through repeated spoken activities, these students have been able to overcome their stage fright and gain confidence. Brainstorming sessions have encouraged independent thinking, effective presentation skills, and a willingness to seek feedback from peers in order to improve.

These students have also recognized the importance of lifelong learning in both academic and professional settings. While efforts have been made to support these learners, they express a desire for more assistance from language instructors. Hence, many teachers have developed content with multimedia materials that are easy to understand.

Despite the demanding schedule of three continuous hours of class each day, English language teachers are dedicated to ensuring that the desired learning outcomes of this program are achieved.

Challenges

Students from urban and semi urban areas can take up this course effectively. In contrast, internet connectivity, access to smart devices and other gadgets may be difficult in the case of rural areas. So, programme organisers have to ensure the availability of the necessary gadgets.

Supporting and mentoring the students throughout the learning process can help them navigate the complexities of the second language. This effort of teachers not only makes students retain the information that they learn but also pushes them to apply it to real-life situations. Thus, they continue to grow and develop thereby adopting life-long learning approach.

Making students participate in group activities may be at times testing the patience of teachers. Yet, teachers must be willing to encourage disinterested students, motivate them and plan activities on the spot to get their involvement. Managing such situations needs understanding and tolerance.

Strategies to Enhance Cambridge English Programme

Teachers have to create customized lesson plans based on the assessment of the diagnostic tests. This personalized approach allows students to progress at their own pace. It also builds a strong foundation for understanding the nuances of the second language.

Teachers who attend training programme on Cambridge English course have to work with their colleagues to explore new methods of teaching. Besides, institutes must encourage teachers to get Cambridge English Teaching Certifications like CELTA – Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. This can give them a wide exposure to provide the students with the right knowledge.

Language learning will be more effective and engaging when teachers incorporate videos, interactive exercises, and language learning apps. This method encourages active participation and practical usage of English language.

Teachers need to focus on continuous assessment by giving regular quizzes, assignments, and practice tests. This ensures the progress of the students. Similarly, they ought to give constructive feedback on their performance. In addition, creating a collaborative learning environment can encourage students to have self-assessment and get benefits through peer reviews.

Giving maximum support and motivation can inspire students to remain focussed on language learning. Similarly, when teachers build a supportive and encouraging classroom environment, students engage actively in the learning process and persist through challenges. Also, it fosters a sense of community and collaboration among the learners, which leads to a successful learning experience.

The course content has some unfamiliar cultural contexts that might hinder students' understanding. In such cases, teachers must reconstruct the context by bringing in ideas suitable to the background and interests of the learners. Using case studies and examples that resonate with students' experiences can also be beneficial.

This programme holds more significance when it is practised out of the class room hours. Teachers can encourage students to create conversation groups wherein they can practise spoken English in an informal setting. Language events such as debates, speech competitions and storytelling sessions organised through the literary clubs that function in the institute can make English language learning more enjoyable to students.

Generally, teachers ought to get reviews on the teaching methodologies so as to identify the problematic areas and rectify them at regular intervals. Alongside, collecting and analysing

the feedback from students will help teachers change the teaching methodology, which leads to better learning prospects.

When educators focus on the above-mentioned aspects, Cambridge English Course through Nan Mudhalvan Scheme can be highly effective in enhancing the English Language proficiency of the learners and qualify them for any position in the job market.

Conclusion

The collaboration between “Nan Mudhalvan” and “Cambridge English” proves to be a milestone in the lives of the first-year engineering students. Indeed, it promises to augment the employability rate of the Engineering students by providing them with the tools that they need to thrive in their professional lives well and make a positive impact on the world around them.

References

1. <https://nanmudhalvan.tn.gov.in>
 2. The Hindu dated 2.03.2022
 3. *Speak with Confidence: Teacher's Manual*, Cambridge University Press & Assessment India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.
-
-