



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TECHNICAL ENGLISH SYLLABI OF ANNA UNIVERSITIES IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

The British Empire started offering engineering education to Indians during the later part of the eighteenth century. The first engineering college in Tamil Nadu was also started by the British and it was named Survey school. After independence, the Govt. of Tamil Nadu established Anna University in 1976. In the year 2002, the Govt. Of Tamil Nadu made the Anna University as the single affiliating body of all engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu. In the academic year 2007-08, two more Anna Universities were established . Although they inherited the name of their parent university, yet they were academically independent .In the year 2008, yet another Anna university was established at Thirunelveli. Two more universities bearing the same name were established at Chennai and Madurai. All of them were named Anna Universities of Technology. In spite of their commonness in name, they were functionally different. All engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu were affiliated to any of these Anna Universities of Technology. In the first two semesters of all engineering programmes, these universities offered a subject named Technical English I and II. This article makes a comparative study of the Technical English syllabi offered by these universities . The study is carried out in all the five aspects of the syllabi namely Grammar, Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking components.

INTRODUCTION

It was British Empire which started offering engineering education to Indians during the later part of the eighteenth century with the objective of training Indians to become Public Works Engineers. The first engineering college in Tamil Nadu was also started by the British and was named The Madras Survey School. It became first institution in Tamil Nadu to have introduced degree courses in mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Telecommunication and Highway Engineering in India.

The Anna University was established in Chennai in 1976. It started as a unitary type of University integrating four well – established prime centres of learning in Chennai. The Survey School established by the British later became the College of Engineering and a part of Anna University- Chennai. The Anna university- Chennai very soon became the largest University in Engineering and Technology in the country. A comprehensive picture of the University and its different courses will enable any one to understand that English as a language reigns supreme in its premises. In the year 2002, all engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu which were affiliated to several regional universities were brought under the control of Anna University- Chennai. Thus, it became the largest affiliating university in the country.

Anna Universities were established at Coimbatore and Tiruchirappalli in 2007-08 academic year. They only inherited the name of the parent university but not the curricula and the syllabi of the parent university. They were independent in most of the academic activities.



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Another Anna university was established at Tirunelveli in 2008 and two more were established in the academic year 2009-10 at Chennai and Madurai. All these universities were named Anna Universities of Technology. They were different from each other in their style of functioning and administration.

The engineering students in different colleges of Tamil Nadu become invariably students of any of these Anna Universities of Technology. They all study English subjects in the first year and the same is named Technical English.

English for Specific Purpose

The English Language Teaching branched off into various categories based on the needs of the learners. One such branch of English is named English for Specific Purpose (ESP). The purpose of ESP is to make the learners react to the target situation (i.e.) the one in which the learners use the target language. In short, ESP is an approach to language teaching to fulfill the needs of particular learners. The Technical English subjects offered at different Anna universities are meant to fulfill the academic and professional needs of the learners. Therefore, it is one aspect of ESP. The syllabi are different from traditional English syllabi. They are learner-centered and encourage participative approach. The syllabi followed by various Anna Universities of Technology for Technical English courses are mostly based on the syllabi followed by the parent university, of course with some changes.

The article attempts to make a comparative study of the Technical English syllabi offered by Anna Universities of Technology in Tamil Nadu. The comparative study is carried out in all the five aspects of the syllabi namely Grammar, Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening components. Separate tables are drawn for comparing each of these aspects of the syllabi.

The Comparative Study of Technical English Syllabi of

Anna Universities of Technology.

Grammar Part

The term Grammar means the rules in language for changing the form of words and joining them into sentences (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English 2005).

A comparative study of Technical English syllabi offered by Anna Universities is made based on the prescribed learning components. The learning components of grammar prescribed by these Universities are :

Table – 1: Grammar Part

S.No	Components	AU-C 1	AU-CBE 2	AUT 3	AUTH 4	AUM 5
1	Vocabulary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Changing from one form to another	✓		✓	✓	✓
3	Noun-Compound nouns	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Adjectives – Comp. adjective	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Prefix / Suffix	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Tenses	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	British / American Vocabulary		✓	✓		✓
8	Agreement	✓		✓	✓	✓
9	Voices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Gerund / Infinitives	✓	✓	✓	Only Gerund	✓
11	Cause / Effect	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Purpose / Functions					✓
13	Adverbs	✓	✓	✓		✓



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14	If conditionals	✓	✓	✓		✓
15	Error Detection	✓	✓	✓		✓
16	Linking Devices					✓
17	Spelling & Punctuation	✓	✓	✓	✓	
18	Wh Question forms	✓	✓		✓	
19	Modal verbs & Probability	✓	✓		✓	
20	Synonyms & Antonyms		✓	✓		✓
21	Numerical adjectives	✓	✓	✓		✓
22	Conjunction		✓	✓		✓
23	Preposition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	Clauses		✓	✓		✓
25	Noun / Adjective clauses		✓	✓		✓
26	S. I. Units		✓	✓		✓
27	Abbreviation / Acronyms		✓	✓		✓
28	Homonyms		✓	✓		✓
29	Phrasal Verbs		✓	✓		✓
30	Idioms		✓	✓		✓
31	Relative Clauses		✓	✓		✓
32	Imperatives		✓	✓		✓
33	Infinitive Structure			✓		✓
34	Adv. Cl of Time/Manner/Place	✓		✓		✓
35	Intensifiers					✓
36	Basic Patterns of Sentences S	✓		✓		✓
37	Different Grammatical forms of the same word	✓		✓		✓
38	Articles	✓	✓	✓	✓	
39	Foreign words & Phrases			✓		
40	Conjunctions used in adv. Ph. & Clauses			✓		
41	Phrases and Structures indicating use and purpose	✓		✓		
42	Cause & Effect Expressions	✓		✓	✓	
43	Reported speech			✓		
44	Using Connectives, Imperatives and should			✓		
45	Yes / No Question Form	✓				

Reading Part

Reading is thinking under the stimulus of the printed page (Sonnerschien 1982). Gray opines that when we read something we understand it at three levels. At the first level, we respond to the graphic signals only with little depth of understanding. In the second level, the reader recognizes the meaning and in the third level, the reader brings in his own experience and judgments to get influenced with the text.

The Reading components prescribed in the syllabi of Anna Universities is shown in Table-2



Table - 2: Reading Part

S.No	Components	AU-C 1	AU-CBE 2	AUT 3	AUTH 4	AUM 5
1	Skimming	✓	✓			✓
2	Scanning	✓	✓		✓	✓
3	Inference				✓	✓
4	Context Based Meaning	✓	✓		✓	✓
5	Statistical Interpretation					✓
6	Intensive Reading	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Sequencing of Sentences	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Predicting Context	✓	✓		✓	✓
9	Interpretations	✓	✓		✓	✓
10	Inference from the text	✓				✓
11	Inferential Information					✓
12	Implications					✓
13	Critical Interpretation	✓	✓		✓	✓
14	Reading brief notices, advertisement					✓
15	Sequencing of words		✓			

Writing Part

Writing is a challenging task because it seems to require more effort in terms of care, and in terms of thought, than speaking does. Speaking is spontaneous in most cases, whereas writing always carries with it the notion of correctness of grammar use, of appropriateness of expression, and of comprehension on the reader's part.

The Writing components included in the syllabi of various Anna universities are shown in table-3

Table -3: Writing Part

S.No	Components	AU-C 1	AU-CBE 2	AUT 3	AUTH 4	AUM 5
1	Descriptive Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Transco ding Bar chart / Flow chart & Tabular column		✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Scientific Writing					✓
4	Formal Letter Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Letter Writing to the Editor			✓	✓	✓
6	Permission Letter	✓		✓	✓	✓
7	Accepting Declining invitation			✓	✓	✓
8	Letter of Application	✓		✓		
9	Comparative and Contrastive Writing (Analytical)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
10	Single line Definition		✓	✓		
11	Extended Definition		✓	✓	✓	
12	Paragraph Writing			✓		
13	Essay Writing	✓	✓		✓	
14	Preparation of Proposal	✓	✓		✓	✓
15	Talking Down Minutes of the meeting					✓
16	Descriptive and Persuasive writing					✓

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17	Preparation of Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Technical Reports					✓
19	Process Description	✓	✓	✓	✓	
20	Recommendation	✓		✓		
21	Instructions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22	Check List	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	E-Mail Communications	✓	✓		✓	
24	Co-relating verbal & non-verbal communication				✓	
25	Note – taking		✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Letter of Invitation				✓	

Speaking Part

Effective communication through speaking takes place when all aspects of a language has been integrated into a single sentence. The engineering students are to be exposed to English through clearer pronunciation, slower pace, simple structure and common vocabulary.

The Speaking skill components included in the syllabi of various Anna Universities are shown in table-4.

Table – 4: Speaking Part

S.No	Components	AU-C	AU-CBE	AUT	AUTH	AUM
1	Listening and transfer of information		✓	✓	✓	
2	Creative thinking and Speaking			✓		
3	Conversation Techniques		✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Persuasive Speaking	✓		✓	✓	
5	Group Discussion			✓	✓	
6	Oral Reports		✓	✓	✓	
7	Speaking about future plans	✓				
8	Presentation of problems and solutions	✓				
9	Planning of an industrial visit					✓
10	Self Introduction					✓
11	Presenting Arguments					✓
12	Commenting on any issue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Presenting a common problem and suggesting solutions					✓
14	Presenting a particular problem to higher officials and offering solutions					✓
15	Asking for solutions					✓
16	Asking for clarification					✓
17	Oral presentation of any topic					✓
18	Accepting other views / idea					✓
19	Arguing against others views / ideas					✓
20	Interrupting others when they speak					✓
21	Pronunciation / Stress / Intonation	✓	✓			✓
22	Oral Instructions			✓	✓	



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Listening Part

Listening is the first activity in the complex process called interaction with the external universe. Learning cannot happen without attentive listening and intensive listening. Learning to listen actively will make a person to learn more.

The Listening components included in the syllabi of various Anna universities are illustrated in the table

Table - 5: Listening Part

S. No	Components	AU-C	AU-CBE	AUT	AUTH	AUM
1	Listening and Transfer of information	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Listening and Note taking	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Listening – Co relating verbal & Non verbal communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Listening and understanding British and American accent					✓
5	Listening to news – understand and present problems, Critical analysis – Implication					✓
6	Listening to lectures / seminars / workshop					✓
7	Listening stress / intonation			✓		

Summation

The term syllabus has been regarded as the content of the course, the Subject matter to be covered. The comparative study of the Technical English syllabi of the Anna Universities enables us to understand the content of the syllabus as well as the subject matter covered by the syllabi of each Anna University. Moreover, the comparative study also enables us to understand that the Anna universities of Technology at **Coimbatore, Tirunelveli** and **Chennai** follow almost identical syllabi whereas the Anna Universities at **Madurai** and **Tiruchirappalli** follow different syllabi.

List of abbreviation

1. AUC-Anna University of Technology- Chennai
2. AUCBE- Anna University of Technology-Coimbatore
3. AUT- Anna University of Technology-Tiruchirappalli
4. AUTH -Anna University of Technology-Tirunelveli
5. AUM -Anna University of Technology-Madurai

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