

## Teaching Business Communication: Second Steps

Sushila Vijaykumar

*Assistant Professor in English (Business Communication)*

*Karnataka Sangha's Manjunatha College of Commerce, Thakurli, (M.S.) India*

### Abstract

This paper, in continuation with the previous paper *Teaching Business Communication: First Steps*, provides tips to new teachers employed to teach Business Communication in Commerce Colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai. A tentative schedule has been outlined with inputs on how to plan for lectures and tutorials and to some extent reflect on testing and evaluation. Based on actual classroom experiences and learner-performance over a certain period, the scope can be extended by the teacher in two ways: a) review and reform the syllabus by making it learner-centric and undertake remedial teaching for skill-building b) compare the syllabi of FYBCom/BMS/BAF classes and make suggestions to the Board of Studies.

**Keywords:** Business Communication, Teaching

### Introduction

It must be clarified at the outset that this paper provides an overview of what is expected of the Business Communication teacher in the first year of his/her profession. This paper is an extension of the previous paper *Teaching Business Communication: First Steps*, which provides tips to new teachers employed to teach Business Communication in Commerce Colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai. What this paper does is to offer guidelines on how to plan and prepare for lectures and tutorials by taking into account the number of available lectures and/or tutorials. The first

part outlines a tentative teaching schedule and a very brief reviewed booklist. Based on actual classroom experiences, inputs are provided for tutorial classes. The scope is limited to the teaching of Business Communication in the FYBCom class but the guidelines can be modified for FYBMS/BAF and SYBA classes.

**Required:** Copy of Syllabus, Copy of the Academic Calendar, if ready, Copies of previous year's Question Papers from one's own library or from the libraries of neighbouring colleges.

**Understand the objectives** Unless the teacher is aware of the learning objectives of

a subject, how can the teacher plan for the learning outcomes? Refer to the University Circular sent to the College. It provides an overview of the objectives, outcomes, syllabi and question paper pattern in Business Communication. This circular is normally marked to the concerned teacher or the Head of the Department, if any, and the librarian. Approach your HOD or librarian for a copy or go online and easily download the circular from the University website. Keep a copy in the library if it has not received the latest circular for ready reference by the learners and another copy can be retained with the teacher. If all these methods fail, refer to the books distributed by the publishers who make it a point to print at least the syllabus and the question paper pattern. Network with teachers in the neighbouring colleges and consult them frequently.

**Prepare a tentative Teaching Plan:** While preparing a tentative teaching plan for the entire year, it is necessary to have some idea about the number of teaching days, the time scheduled for Admissions, Examinations, Assessment, Results and Vacations. This will be available with the Academic Calendar Committee which plans out the schedule of holidays, teaching days and tentative Examination schedules. First, the allotted number of lectures for the various classes are as follows: FYBCom – 3 lectures and 1 tutorial per week, FYBMS/BAF – 4 lectures per week. Since the number of learners in the self-financing courses (FYBMS/BAF) consist of 60-70 learners, there are no prescribed tutorials. But the conventional FYBCom class has nearly 120 learners and each tutorial lecture is further

divided into four batches each consisting of 25-30 learners. So, a teacher teaching BC in FYBCom will be taking 7 lectures per division. If there are three divisions, then the teacher takes nearly 21 lectures and the workload is complete. If not, some lectures from Foundation Course are allotted. The teacher can prepare an estimate and make necessary adjustments to complete the syllabus taking into account the leaves (casual, duty and others) taken by them and after considering the capacities of their learners, the teacher can either extend or reduce the lectures required for completing a topic. Some lectures may be spent in dictating notes, especially in Colleges which have learners from vernacular medium.

A close attention to the tentative plan given below will make us aware that there is a gap between the lectures prescribed and those actually conducted. One must consider the time spent on admissions, vacations (Diwali and Christmas), the leaves taken by a teacher, the number of non-instructional days or cancellation of lectures due to the conduct of various activities (extra-curricular, sports, guest lectures) in addition to the conduct of College Exams (internal tests, regular and additional exams) and TY University Exams. Some may compensate for lost lectures by taking extra lectures, whenever possible, some may prefer to stick to the trend of teaching according to the question paper pattern. Given below is a broad but tentative outline of the yearly teaching plan for quick reference so that the estimated and actual lectures can be documented in accordance with the different contexts of a college:-

Month	Sundays	Holidays (Approximate)	Leaves taken	Teaching Days for FYBCom	Available Lectures	Tutorials per batch
June	RE-OPENING AND ADMISSIONS					
July	5	1		24	12	4
August	5	2		25	12	4
September	4	1		24	12	2
October	Examinations, Assessment And Diwali Vacations					
November	4	12		14	06	1
December	5	6		19	09	3
January	5	1		25	12	4
February	4	1		23	12	2
March-April	Examinations, Assessment And Results					
May	Summer Vacations					

### Refer to Books, Journals and Websites

Published every year, some books are distributed to the teachers by the publishers (mainly Sheth Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Manan Prakashan and Vipul Prakashan) without fail at the beginning of each term. These books are written and edited by experienced teachers and it is generally observed that the teachers and learners use these books as textbooks. It would have been more informative if these books (except for the one by Vipul Prakashan) provided a bibliography. Each book is useful to the teacher and for the uninitiated, there are two workbooks (Sheth and Manan) as additional resources. The booklist provided below is purely subjective and the objective has been to focus on Indian Authors and fellow colleagues teaching the subject at Management Institutes or Commerce Colleges. Each book's significance may

vary in accordance with the requirements, capacities and usage of teachers and learners.

Bahl, Sushil. Business Communication Today. New Delhi: Response Publishers. 2004

Bovee, L. Courtland. Techniques of writing business letters. Mumbai: Jaico Publishers. 2005

Chaturvedi P.D. and Mukesh Chaturvedi. Business Communication: Concepts, Cases and Applications. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd. 2011

Das, Biswajit and Ipseeta Satpathy. Business Communication and Personality Development. New Delhi: Excel Books. 2007

Dutta, Suparna. Business Communication. Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited. 2013

Jain, Neera and Shoma Mukherji. *Effective Business Communication*. New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited. 2012

Kaul, Asha. *Effective Business Communication*. Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited. 2015

K.K. Ramachandran, Lakshmi K.K., K.K. Karthick and K. Krishna Kumar. *Business Communication*. New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd. 2007

Krishna, Mohan. *Developing Communication Skills*. New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited. 2001

Krishna, Mohan and Sharma R.C. *Business Correspondence*. New Delhi: Tata Publishers 2002

Monipally, Matthew M. *The Craft of Business Letter Writing*. New Delhi: Tata Publishers

Ron, Ludlow. *The Essence of Effective Communication*. New Delhi: Prentice Publishers. 2000

Roy, Sumita. *Mastering the Art of Business Communication*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers. 2008

Sen, Leena. *Communication Skills*. New Delhi: Prentice Publishers. 2004

Sethi, Anjane and Bhavana Adhikari. *Business Communication*. New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill Education Private Limited. 2010

If your college library subscribes to NLIST i.e. National Library and Information Services ([www.nlist.inflibnet.ac.in/](http://www.nlist.inflibnet.ac.in/)) which is an open library resource, you can refer to journals and reference books. The library

can additionally be asked to subscribe to subject specific journals like *Business Communication Quarterly* and *International Journal of Business Communication*. These journals will definitely help the teacher to focus on professional growth and give an idea of what is expected in terms of research and professional development. For improving learner performance, the teacher has to rely on the individual and social context and learner needs. There is no dearth of websites and blogs and free e-books on the subject, which will be dealt separately.

**Plan for Lectures and Tutorials:** At the outset, it must be clarified that tutorials supplement the lectures and are expected to be used to enhance the Communication Skills of the learners. Since the tutorials are normally conducted after four lectures, it is possible that the attendance is low. The teacher must persist in utilizing the tutorials to help the weaker students to improve their oral and written Communication Skills. It is required to gauge the capacities of one's learners and make the learning experience context-specific. This is a necessity in suburban colleges for many learners come from a vernacular background and continue to grapple with the English language.

Depending upon the availability of the classrooms and teachers as per the workload, each class can be divided into four or five tutorial batches. For the convenience of the learners, they can be asked to attend any one of the tutorial batches if they are unable to attend a specified slot due to unavoidable reasons. The teacher has to plan and ensure that the same topic is covered in all the batches, with some variations. Plan for at least 8 to 10

tutorials for each batch and the topics covered could be as follows: I Term - Self-Introduction (1), Remedial Grammar only basics (3), Comprehension Skills (2), Paragraph-Writing Skills (4); II Term – Presentations (2), Mock Interviews (2), Mock Meetings (2), Group Discussions (2), Summarization (2). In case the learners are good in language, one can also practice a Book Review.

### **Reflect on Testing, Evaluation and Remedial Teaching**

It is strange that many teachers first think of completing the syllabus and then plan the question paper. In fact, if a teacher refers to the previous years' question papers, they will get a fair idea of the prescribed question paper pattern as laid down by the University to maintain uniformity across the affiliated colleges. A smart teacher can plan well by preparing a tentative question bank as per the paper pattern so that the teacher is clear about the objectives and outcomes of testing.

As per the existing pattern of continuous evaluation, the Term End Question paper for FYBCom is divided into Internal (25 marks) and External (75 marks) and the paper pattern and mark distribution have been clearly specified. Before setting the question papers, the teacher should ideally confirm the pattern with the Examination Committee or with Colleagues, preferably in the Cluster Colleges. Setting the question paper requires a grasp of the keywords to be used based on Bloom's Taxonomy and one can refer to <http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/goals-objectives/writing-objectives> which provides a tabular and pictorial list.

With respect to assessment, it is necessary to prepare a model answer paper with distribution of marks so that the examiner and the moderator get are clear about the assessment scheme. In keeping with the nature of the subject, it is precision and effective communication which should be the focus. Do not fail to consider the suggestions of the Exam Committee for your assessment (both internal and external) is related to the future intake of learners in subsequent classes. Also register the responses of the learners and try to document as to where they are unable to articulate their responses. This will enhance teaching and the attention of the learners can be drawn to the problems that a teacher faces during assessment and prompt guidance can be provided to them. This exercise will of course fail if the classroom attendance is low. Train the learners to write the expected answers, provide them a tentative question bank, three times of the question paper and clarify the marking scheme besides creating awareness about the Continuous Evaluation Process and the Exam pattern -I and II Term Regular, Additional and ATKT Exams.

If the teacher assesses more than 100 answer papers, then the Examination Committee invites a moderator from the Cluster Colleges. Additional care must be taken in view of the recent trend wherein xerox copies of the assessed answer papers must be provided to the learners if they wish to get their papers re-evaluated on paying the prescribed fees. A senior Examiner from the Cluster Colleges is invited for re-evaluation. Set aside idealism and leave the decision of gracing and internal resolution, if needed, to



the Examination Committee which takes decisions keeping in mind the broader interests of the learners and the College. Refrain from commenting on the decisions amongst the learners, although one may discuss the repercussions amongst colleagues.

As a follow-up to the Evaluation process, with a view to helping the weak learners to clear their doubts and reappear for additional or ATKT Exams, each college is expected to undertake remedial teaching. Remember to be task-oriented and learn to compress the syllabus in line with your testing and assessment pattern and provide all the guidance that you can. Provide them with previous question papers, question bank, marking scheme and lend them your notes/books. Do bear in mind that if a learner gets a cross KT, he/she may lose a year.

**Document and Review:** At the end of the year, each teacher will have gauged the requirements of the learners and the actual time spent on teaching, dictating notes or conducting activities in the class. It is necessary that the teacher keep a log-book or document the classroom activities so that one can review, analyse and set targets for the next year. Agree that it is idealistic, documenting at least part of the activities will accelerate the teacher's creative faculties and the classroom can be made more interactive. It is recommended that one should reflect on the teaching practices as well as learner-performance, self-review classroom interactions and plan for improvements, wherever possible without deviating from the prescribed guidelines.

The teacher can plan for bridge courses, additional skill development courses, if possible, in consultation with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell of the College. This is what the National Assessment and Accreditation Council expects from the department. One will have to plan for innovative courses every five years. Prepare a manual or workbook if your learners can afford to pay extra for it. Prepare power point presentations or transparencies on various topics, rewrite the notes that you dictate, prepare hand-outs or worksheets for various topics. Plan for quiz contests in the subject. Think of starting a newsletter or a Bulletin Board or a House Journal or Magazine of your College. Start a Business Communication Club and keep an exclusive notice board for it. Identify good learners who can perhaps assist you during your tutorial activities and initiate peer-learning. Gather all the books that you have received from the publishers and if possible, start a departmental library of your own. Appoint a few learners who can manage the departmental library. If there are space constraints, then gather a set of books of all the subjects and donate it to NSS or to a needy learner at the beginning of the year. After a few years of experience, do write to the Board of Studies regarding your actual classroom experiences and the difficulties encountered in not covering but uncovering the syllabus.

**Professional Development** Attend orientation courses within the first three years of your joining the college. Later on attend refresher courses and short term courses. These are conducted by the Academic Staff Colleges of various

Universities. Each ASC uploads the tentative plan of UGC approved courses from July to September. Check these sites. Remember, it is mandatory that the college grant official duty leave (with pay) to the teacher for attending these courses – 24 days for completing an Orientation Course which must ideally be completed within the first three years of joining the college and 18 duty leaves for attending a Refresher Course. The teacher must reschedule his/her teaching plan in accordance with these courses and make all possible adjustments and take a few extra lectures so that the learners are not at a loss.

Start reading articles and research papers in your subject, become members of professional bodies like ELTAI (English Language Teachers Association of India), ELTIF (English Language Teachers Interaction Forum), English Language Teachers Association, Association of Business Communication Teachers, IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as Foreign Language) and many others. Contribute papers to the online and print journals, undertake minor or major research projects depending on the status (2F and 12B) of your College. Refer

#### **Webliography:**

1. [www.mu.ac.in](http://www.mu.ac.in)
2. [www.nlist.inflibnet.ac.in/](http://www.nlist.inflibnet.ac.in/)
3. [www.conferencealerts.com](http://www.conferencealerts.com)
4. [www.allconferences.com](http://www.allconferences.com)
5. [www.eltai.in](http://www.eltai.in)
6. [www.eltif.in](http://www.eltif.in)
7. [www.iatefl.org](http://www.iatefl.org)
8. <http://teaching.uncc.edu/learning-resources/articles-books/best-practice/goals-objectives/writing-objectives>

to the various circulars displayed on the College Staff Notice-Board for information on various national and international seminars organised by Colleges and Universities. Do refer to [www.conferencealerts.com](http://www.conferencealerts.com) or [www.allconferences.com](http://www.allconferences.com) for these websites have an exhaustive list of worldwide conferences one year in advance giving the teacher time to plan for a research paper. At the end of the year, fill in the PBAS (Performance Based Assessment Scheme) form and hand over to the administrative office which will forward it to the Principal. Check whether the office has prepared your Service Book and ask for a copy for your reference.

**Concluding Observations** As mentioned above, this paper is an attempt to outline some guidelines for the benefit of the new Business Communication teachers at FYBCom level and to some extent FYBMS/FYBAF levels. Suggestions are in the form of a teaching plan, a context-specific booklist, a few inputs for the conduct of a tutorial class, some general insights for question paper setting and assessment and post classroom activities which will aid in enhancing teaching.