

A SURVEY OF THE ENGLISH COMMUNICATIONS
PROGRAM IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS TO ASCERTAIN THE CONTENT
AND THE DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE PLACED UPON THE
DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM BY
ENGLISH COMMUNICATIONS INSTRUCTORS AND
MEMBERS OF INDUSTRY

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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COMMUNICATIONS INSTRUCTORS AND
MEMBERS OF INDUSTRY

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the Faculty of Education
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Master of Education

by
John Patrick Coady

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to survey all English Communications instructors in Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools to ascertain what is being taught and the degree of importance placed upon the different components of the English Communications program. The study was also designed to survey members of industry which Newfoundland vocational graduates serve, in order to ascertain how they would rate the components of the English Communications program.

The data for the study was collected by means of mailed questionnaires on which instructors and members of industry were asked to rate topics as to degree of importance. Instructors were also asked to state the number of hours spent on each topic.

Mean importance ratings were obtained for each topic and the topics were then classified as being of major, moderate or minor importance. Mean time spent was also obtained for each topic.

It was concluded that:

1. There exists a significant variation in the time spent on the specific topics in the English Communications program by the various vocational school instructors.
2. There is considerable variation in the English

Communications program among the sixteen vocational schools in the province.

3. Members of industry do not perceive all the topics presently offered in the English Communications program to be of major importance to the tradesman.
4. As perceived by members of industry, a working knowledge of the fundamentals of the English language is a desirable skill for any tradesman.
5. As perceived by members of industry, the ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing are necessary skills for the tradesperson.
6. Given English Communications instructors and members of industry, there exists a significant difference in the rating of the specific topics as to the degree of importance.

A number of recommendations were made by the researcher for the improvement of the English Communications program in Newfoundland and Labrador vocational schools. There is, too, the need for further research.

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND

COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Committee on Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "A Survey of the English Communications Program in Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools to ascertain the Content and the Degree of Importance Placed Upon the Different Components of the Program by English Communications Instructors and Members of Industry" submitted by John Patrick Coady in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Education.

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Supervisor
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.....

Date.....

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Chapter I

THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM AREA

The role of the English Instructor has always been considered an important one in the Newfoundland Vocational School setting. Because of the non-existence of guidance personnel in most vocational schools, the English Instructor is considered by students as a source of guidance for personal problems and for general direction in student activities.

Until 1971, the English program in Newfoundland Vocational Schools was based primarily on the traditional type of English which included grammar, parts of speech, etc. In 1971, the Division of Technical and Vocational Education in consultation with Vocational English Instructors, met in a two-day seminar in an attempt to up date and improve the Vocational English program.

As a result of their deliberations, they decided that in order to give a new image to the program, the name should be changed to "English Communications". They also agreed that:

In addition to the student eventually being able to communicate effectively, it is also considered to be desirable for him to be able to solve personal, family, community, leisure and employment problems since this is important for successful living.¹

¹Division of Vocational Education, "Course Outline For English Communications, Pre-employment Program". St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1971.

A brief survey of the literature of writers on the uses of English Communications to the Vocational student in his work and community, will show the importance placed on the subject by those considered to be authorities in the field of vocational education.

Bassett and Rutledge, addressing prospective users of their book, Writing With a Purpose, state: "The ability to express yourself will not only make you much more successful in whatever vocation you choose, but it will also help you find much more enjoyment in life".²

In 1936, John T. Shuman wrote:

Remember that though two men may possess equal amounts technical knowledge and skill, the man who can organize and express his ideas effectively forges ahead while the other frequently remains where he is.³

Harry Shefter, in his book, How to Prepare Talks and Oral Reports, brings out very forcefully the importance of being able to communicate effectively. He states: "No learnable skill is more widely useful or pays bigger dividends in personal success and prestige than the ability to speak effectively in public".⁴

² John M. Bassett, M.A. and Donald G. Rutledge, B.A., Writing With A Purpose, Book I, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963), p. xiii.

³ John T. Shuman, English For Vocational and Technical Schools, Second Edition, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1954), p. 4.

⁴ Harry Shefter, How To Prepare Talks and Oral Reports, (U.S.A.: Washington Square Press, 1973), p. back cover.

With regards to the life skills aspect of the English Communications Program, Merle E. Strong, in his book, Industrial Labor and Community Relations, states that the youth of today should gain knowledge and experience necessary to be competent in dealing with employers, unions, and fellow workers. A greater experience with community organizations and agencies is also required according to Strong, who says that studies have shown that the inability to get along with fellow workers and superiors was mainly responsible for an individual's failure to meet employment requirements.⁵

A more detailed description of research directly related to English Communications and the worker has been made in a later section of this thesis. However, the importance of the English Communications program to the Vocational School student is clear.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to survey the English Communications Instructors in Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools to ascertain what is being taught and the degree of importance placed upon the content of the English Communications program. The study was also to survey industries which Newfoundland vocational graduates serve to ascertain how they would rate

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Merle E. Strong, Industrial, Labor and Community Relations, (U.S.A.: Delmar Publisher, 1974), p. IV.

as to importance the content of the English Communications program. More specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions related to the English Communications program:

1. What topics are being taught?
2. How many hours are spent on each topic?
3. How do English Communications instructors in Vocational Schools rate the different topics as to importance?
4. How do industries rate as to importance the topics presently being taught?
5. What additional topics would industry like to have included in the program?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In order to gain a more comprehensive insight into the needs of the vocational school graduate in the area of English Communications, an understanding of what the employers of these graduates consider important is essential.

Since no survey of industry regarding this matter has been reported, it is hoped by the researcher that this study, in attempting to fill the need, will have the following significance:

1. This study should provide the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland; The Division of Technical and Vocational Education, Department of Education; and other interested groups with

information that will assist them in planning preservice and inservice training programs for English Communications Instructors.

2. This study should give English Communications Instructors a better understanding of industry's wishes regarding the content of the English Communications program.
3. Since the findings of this study reveal what industry feels relevant as to the content of the English Communications program, they should serve as a basis for the development of a detailed English Communications program for Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following terms have been defined:

Vocational Schools

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Vocational Schools are public educational institutions designed to prepare people for employment.

Vocational Pre-employment Course

A Vocational Pre-employment Course is a nine-month course of study consisting of trade theory, shop practice, and the related subjects of mathematics, science, and English Communications.

in trade and occupational courses.

Vocational School Graduate

A Vocational School Graduate is a person who has completed and successfully passed a nine-month pre-employment course in any of the vocational trade or occupational courses.

Trade Theory

The principles and methods associated with a particular vocational pre-employment course is known as Trade Theory.

Shop Practice

Shop Practice is the putting into practice the principles associated with a particular pre-employment course.

English Communications Program

An English Communications Program is a compulsory course which is related to the academic needs; and the life skills needed to solve personal, family, community, leisure, and employment problems of students in vocational trade or occupational courses.

ASSUMPTIONS, DELIMITATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Assumptions

It was assumed by the researcher that vocational school instructors placed varying degrees of emphasis on the topics presently in their English Communications Programs, without knowing what industry considered as important. It was further assumed that industry would be anxious to report their feelings on the subject.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the sixteen district vocational schools in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; and to the industries in the province with a work force of twenty-five or more. Industries of this size were chosen because it was felt that workers would be more carefully scrutinized as to the topics taught in the English Communications Program; than in industries with a smaller number of employees.

Limitations

The extensive limitations that accrue to data collection by means of a mailed questionnaire apply in this study. Wallace stated the weaknesses as follows:

1. The problem of non-returned questionnaires.
2. The possibility that those who answer the questionnaire may differ from the non-respondents thereby biasing the sample.
3. The validity depends, to a great extent, on the ability and willingness of the respondent to provide information.
4. The possibility of misinterpretation of the questions without this being detected by the researcher.
5. No follow through on misunderstood questions or evasive answers; no observation of apparent reluctance or evasiveness.⁶

⁶D.C. Miller, Handbook of Research Design and Social

Despite the known weaknesses, it was decided to use the mailed questionnaire to gather the needed data because it afforded an opportunity to effectively cover a wide geographic area at minimum expense. Consequently, an effort was made during the developing of the instrument, and during the gathering of the data, to lessen the influence of the weaknesses of the mailed questionnaire upon this study. By the use of a pilot study, as described in Chapter 3, an attempt was made to eliminate the possibility of misinterpretation of the questions. The apparent high interest on the part of those involved in the study and the follow-up routines that were implemented, realized a return of 100 percent of the instructors' questionnaires and a return of 95.4 percent of questionnaires to industry, assuring a wide and strong sample.

The fact that the respondents of both questionnaires participated in the study voluntarily was taken as an indication that their answers were likely to be valid.

There were also limitations related to the adequacy of the instrument. The topics presented in the questionnaire were derived from the Outline for English Communication,⁷ based on the assumption that this outline was being followed in the English Communication program in the province. An attempt was made to assure face-validity and relevancy of the specific

Measurement, (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 76-77, citing D. Wallace, "A Case For-and Against- Mailed Questionnaires", Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 18, (1954), pp. 40-52.

⁷ Division of Vocational Education, op. cit.

topics by conducting a pilot study as described in Chapter 3. No further claim as to the reliability or validity of the instrument is made.

The techniques used in the treatment of the data in this study were not standardized. No claim is made that a rating of 4 on the rating scale by one respondent indicated a topic of the same degree of importance as a rating of 4 by another respondent. Neither is it claimed that a rating of 4 for one specific topic by a respondent indicated the same degree of importance as a rating of 4 by the same respondent on another topic. An arbitrary decision was made by the researcher to classify topics by using the mean importance ratings. Topics with mean important ratings above 2.99 were classified as being of major importance; those with mean important ratings between 2.00 and 3.00 were classified as being moderate; and topics with mean important ratings of 2.00 and less were classified as being of minor importance.

Despite its limitations, mean important ratings and the classifications of topics were used because it provided a clear and concise way for the researcher to show in profile form the perceived importance placed on topics by the respondents.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 of the study has defined the problem, described its background and outlined general parameters of the study.

Chapter 2 focuses on a review of literature related to the views of industry and educators regarding the various skills

needed by tradesmen in order to live a productive life. Also included is a brief review of related programs offered in other provinces.

Chapter 3 presents the procedure followed in constructing the instrument and in gathering and treating the data.

The findings of the study are reported by means of tables, with explanations, in Chapter 4.

The final Chapter provides a summary of the study, the conclusions reached, and the recommendations made. A section is included in this Chapter to show the relationship of the findings of this study to the findings of similar studies.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

This review of related literature will emphasize the importance and necessity of the many skills that a person must possess if he is to be successful in the "world of work" and in his community. Studies will be cited which will show how members of industry and educators in the field view these particular skills. It will be revealed that industry and educators alike demand that prospective employees possess more than a knowledge of skills in their particular trade. In addition, they should have the ability to communicate effectively, possess a command of the English language, and have the general knowledge necessary for productive living.

The review of the literature will be reported using the following points as guidelines:

1. Communication - Oral and Written
2. Fundamentals of English
3. Worker's General Knowledge

Correspondence regarding English Communications Programs in other provinces will also be presented.

COMMUNICATION - ORAL AND WRITTEN

For a person to be able to take his rightful place in the "world of work" and in his community; and be capable of

participating fully in all the activities associated with modern living, he must possess the ability to communicate effectively. Roger Wilcox has the following to say on the subject:

...effective communication is vital in any human encounter ... for communication is the only means we have of asking questions, giving information, offering opinions, getting advice, showing feelings -- in short, satisfying our varying needs as functioning individuals constantly interrelating with others. Deprived of the ability to communicate, nearly everything that makes life worthwhile would be lost.⁸

It is quite obvious then that we spend a great deal of our time communicating. James H. Henning, in his book, Improving Oral Communication, tells us that approximately 75 percent of our communicative efforts are spent either as a speaker or a listener. Inherent in every speaking situation, he says, are the six universals of: thinking, words, voice, action, the speaker, and the listener. These universals, states Henning, affects the oral communication process in ways which determine its ultimate effectiveness and accuracy; and can be improved upon regardless of the present ability of the speaker.⁹

While the ability to communicate has always been important to the worker, it has been intensified in recent years by the many technological changes in business, industry, and government environments. The pressure of tighter competition,

⁸ Roger P. Wilcox, Communication At Work: Writing and Speaking, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977, Boston, U.S.A.), p. 4.

⁹ James H. Henning, Improving Oral Communication, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, U.S.A., 1966), p. 4.

labor demands, consumer groups and governmental regulating agencies have imposed more rigorous demands for communication that is clear and accurate. With the use of participative styles of management, not only information from employees but also their ideas are increasingly looked for and welcomed.¹⁰

Peter Drucker, a management consultant, has put the ability to communicate effectively at the head of the list of requirements for success. He says:

As soon as you move one step up from the bottom, your effectiveness depends on your ability to reach others through the spoken or written word ... In the very large organizations, this ability to express oneself is perhaps the most important of all the skills a man can possess.¹¹

A.G. Smith, Personnel Supervisor with Iron Ore Company of Canada, has the following to say about the worker who does not possess the ability to communicate effectively:

He may go into vocational school and graduate as an 'A' student, but unless he can communicate effectively both orally and in writing, he will always stay just a tradesman, he will never move ahead.¹²

The need for training in communicative skills by vocational school students is quite evident. Wilcox citing a survey conducted in Southern Illinois University concerning the nature of communication problems as seen by businessmen, revealed that:

¹⁰ Wilcox, op. cit., p. 3.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 3 citing Peter F. Drucker, How to Be An Employee, Fortune, May, 1952.

¹² A.G. Smith, Personnel Supervisor, Iron Ore Company of Canada, St. John's, Nfld., Interview, April 23, 1980. Permission to quote secured.

...all but nine of the 112 persons interviewed said communication caused trouble for them, and 75 persons (88 percent) ranked communication first, or second, as a source of trouble.¹³

If these people, who as a rule have more academic qualifications than most people entering vocational schools have problems with communication, then it is fair to assume that the tradesman would also encounter communication difficulties.

Wilcox cites another survey which was carried out in Pennsylvania State University among managerial and supervisory personnel of industry. It showed: "effective written communication and effective speaking at the head of a list of needs felt by management to be most important for their subordinates".¹⁴ And in a study reported by the Harvard Business Review on "What Helps or Harms Promotability", "ability to communicate" received the highest rating.¹⁵

Problems directly related to written communication and the necessity for concern in this area is evident in the results of a questionnaire given to top executives at General Motors in Germany. This questionnaire asked what they liked and disliked about memos and reports submitted to them by their subordinates. The following is a list of their responses revealing practices

¹³ Wilcox, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁵ Gordon W. Bowman, "What Helps or Harms Promotability": Harvard Business Review, Vol. 42, pp. 7-26, 184-186.

they were unhappy about:

	Yes	No
1. Are specific problems and objectives of the project clearly stated?	3	10
2. Is introductory information free of irrelevant material?	2	8
3. Are individual sections adequately introduced, logically developed and appropriately concluded?	0	11
4. Are data in most convenient form and location for the user?	2	10
5. Does concluding information usually fully answer the investigated problem?	1	10
6. Is concluding information effectively organized?	0	10
7. Are subdivisions clearly labeled for easy use and comprehension?	0	9
8. Would it be better for you to receive a one-half page abstract rather than a lengthy report in most situations?	13	0 ¹⁶

The importance of written communication is again emphasized in the results of a survey by Harold B. Erickson at Wisconsin State University. In this survey, 379 questionnaires were sent to industries in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota to determine the English needs of their technicians. In addition 14 interviews were conducted with businesses in Wisconsin and Minnesota. The results of this survey showed that:

86.0 percent of the respondents listed 'Report Format' as a desirable skill. Complaints in the discussion of technical writing ranged from a lack of neatness in penmanship to a lack of spelling and

vocabulary.¹⁷

While many believe that there is little they can do to improve their speaking and writing skills after they finish regular schooling, the fact is that much can be accomplished in this area if the person has the desire to improve. Dr. John Kirkman states:

I have yet to meet a man who had made a conscious effort to improve his communication ability, but has not succeeded ... half the battle to improve skills is won when we recognize the difficulties that exist. The worst communicators are usually those who fail to understand the nature of the communication process.¹⁸

It must be remembered, however, that people in vocational schools are preparing for the job market and will not be going on to higher education. Therefore, their writing and speaking needs differ from the traditional student. Albert C. Yoder has the following to say regarding vocational students and the program they should be offered:

They require practical English. It is thus inappropriate to have the technical student take traditional Freshman English with its emphasis on the imaginative, on creative assignments 'to discover one's voice', or literature. They need English courses and texts designed especially for the functional needs of the technician.¹⁹

¹⁷Harold P. Erickson, An Effective English Program For the Technical School, (unpublished Master's Thesis), (Wisconsin State University, 1968), p. 25.

¹⁸Dr. John Kirkman, "Short Courses on Effective Communication", Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, Vol. 4, No. 1, Winter, 1974, pp. 23-32.

¹⁹Albert C. Yoder, "Technical English and The Future", Journal of Technical Writing and Communication, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1978, p. 359.

FUNDAMENTALS OF ENGLISH

Without a basic knowledge of the fundamentals of English, it is very difficult for a person to effectively communicate either orally or in writing. He must have a working knowledge of these principles before he can formulate his ideas and communicate them in speech or in the written form. Although the vocational student has studied these principles before, there is the necessity to review them again. Margaret W. Baird, in her article, "Building Vocabulary 'Ain't Easy'", emphasized the fact that the more these areas are reviewed, the better equipped the student will be to use them correctly. She says:

Most of us find that spelling, grammar, vocabulary, etc., must be taught again and again in order for the student to have a working knowledge and an employable skill in these areas.²⁰

The importance placed in this area showed up very forcefully in the Wisconsin study previously cited. Erickson reported that: "of the seven Wisconsin technical schools that responded to the survey, five were donating 30 percent of their time to teaching parts of speech and punctuation".²¹ While 30 percent might be considered quite high, nevertheless, it does demonstrate the need that must be felt by educators to improve students in this area. A.G. Smith has the following to say regarding the

²⁰

Margaret W. Baird, "Building Vocabulary 'Ain't Easy'", Journal of Business Education, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1977, p. 46.

²¹

Erickson, op. cit., p. 2.

fundamentals of English and how they apply to the workers he hires:

Many of our apprenticeship graduates eventually become foremen, and at least 25 percent of a foreman's job involves written communication. Without a solid foundation in grammar, his ability to function would be greatly reduced.²²

Erickson also states that a knowledge of words and how to use them is required by the vocational student. He says that: "a strong preparation is a must in the skills of basic vocabulary building. ...75.4 percent of the industries indicated vocabulary as a desirable skill".²³ Again, McQuade and Atwan write:

No matter what we are going to write about, we begin with words ... Words, we need to remind ourselves as we work with them, are not simply handy building blocks to be fitted into their proper places, but are, rather, powerful activators that continuously shape and reshape our thinking and writing.²⁴

Based on his findings in the Wisconsin study, Erickson concludes that:

Spelling and vocabulary lists should complement the technical programs ... This will assure a meaningful substance to this phase of the English program and reinforce technical subject matter as well.²⁵

²² Smith, op. cit., interview.

²³ Erickson, op. cit., p. 31.

²⁴ Donald McQuade, Robert Atwan, Thinking in Writing: Structures for Composition, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., N.Y., 1980, p. 3.

²⁵ Erickson, op. cit., p. 35.

WORKERS' GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

According to some writers, in addition to possessing the ability to communicate effectively, the worker of today also requires a good general knowledge in order to lead a productive life. Industry demands that their employees possess the proper attitude, be safety conscious, and have the other qualities necessary for successful living.

A.G. Smith states that industry is becoming more selective in its recruiting of employees, mainly due to the availability of large numbers of tradesmen in all trades. Concerning the students graduating from vocational school, Smith states:

He can get 90 or 95 percent in his exams, but if he has a bad attitude, we don't want him. Attitude is the most important aspect we look for from a student coming into our organization. He has to be able to get along and communicate with people.²⁶

J. McCarthy, area representative for Dove Whitten and Associates reiterated Mr. Smith's comments when he said: "There is no place in our organization for a person with an improper attitude".²⁷

Smith also comments on what safety means to the company he represents. He says: "Safety is considered a top priority

²⁶ Smith, op. cit., interview.

²⁷ James A. McCarthy, Area Representative, Dove Whitten and Associates, St. John's, Nfld.

with our company. A safety conscious person is considered a very important asset to our organization".²⁸

Because unions play an important part in the life of the worker, a knowledge of how unions operate is essential according to James O'Grady and Michael O'Reilly, who state that:

A knowledge of how wages, hours and working conditions are determined for people covered and affected by negotiations is important if they are to accept collective bargaining as a viable process.²⁹

Other writers state that the ability to conduct oneself properly during a job interview is a skill which the worker needs. This is one of the more important skills, as it may result in the difference between the applicant obtaining employment or not. Vickey Stinespring, an instructor with the Guffer-Spalding County Area Vocational Technical School, Guffer, Georgia, did an interview with employers. She reports that:

Not once did employers encourage us to spend more time on the skills which we usually consider all important, but they did strongly suggest that more time could be spent on stressing the importance of an interview.³⁰

A.G. Smith confirmed the necessity for training in this

²⁸Smith, op. cit., interview.

²⁹James P. O'Grady, J. Michael O'Reilly, "Mock Negotiations: A Labor-Management Experience", Journal of Business Education, Vol. 52, No. 4, 1977, pp. 180-181.

³⁰Vickey Stinespring, "Are Employment Interview Skills That Important", Journal of Business Education, Vol. 52, No. 8, 1977, pp. 368-369.

area. He stated that out of a class of sixteen vocational school students he interviewed, very few were adequately prepared.³¹

In 1977, A.J. Donahue, Supervisor of Instruction at Burin District Vocational School, did a survey of the English Communications Program in Newfoundland and Labrador vocational schools. The purpose of his study was to identify the course content and Burin District Vocational School graduate's reaction to and achievement in the three previously mentioned areas: (1) Communication - Oral and Written; (2) Fundamentals of English; (3) Worker's General Knowledge. (Donahue made no attempt to contact industry.) The "Course Outline for English Communication" from the Division of Technical and Vocational Education was used for the study. As a result of questionnaires sent to English Communications instructors in all vocational schools in the province, and to thirteen students who had graduated from the Burin District Vocational School, Donahue found that:

...in the opinion of instructors, students have an average interest in most of the blocks in the course; however, instructors describe student interest in "Telephone Communications", "Obtaining Employment", and "Discussions" as high; while interest in "Conferences" is described as low. Student achievement is considered to be average in all blocks except "Telephone Communications", "Obtaining Employment" and "Discussions", these blocks being designated as high achievement blocks.

³¹

Smith, op. cit., interview.

Although only five of the thirteen questionnaires sent to graduates were returned, the following blocks received a high mean usefulness rating by all:

Grammar (Parts of Speech, Sentence Structure,
Paragraph Writing, etc.)

Spelling and Vocabulary

Report Writing

Trade Unions

Description of Tools, Instruments, etc.

Obtaining Employment.

Students also had the following suggestions regarding the program:

...that more emphasis be placed on "Report Writing", "Trade Unions", "Tool Description", and "Oral Communication"; and that "Debates" would increase student interest.

Donahue also reported that he found considerable variation in the trade communications course among the various vocational schools in the province, and suggested that some form of standardization be attempted.³²

In 1975, the Association of Vocational School Administrators of Newfoundland formed a committee to investigate ways and means of improving the area of related academic subjects in the vocational school system. After a series of meetings and discussions and by correspondence with various

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A.J. Donahue, A Study of the Communication Curriculum for Pre-employment Trade Courses in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador (unpublished paper), 1977.

groups and departments on a national basis, the committee came up with fourteen recommendations. Recommendation 7 stated:

That the generic skills philosophy and approach be applied to the area of academic support for Vocational Education Programs and that all available Learning Activity Packages be obtained, ratified and localized especially in the area of Math and Communications.³³

Generic skills are defined by Kawula and Smith as "those behaviors which are fundamental to the performance of many tasks carried out in a wide range of occupations".³⁴ They include communications skills, reasoning skills, and interpersonal skills. The committee felt that this approach would enhance the English Communication program as related to any occupation.

ENGLISH COMMUNICATIONS OFFERED TO PRE-EMPLOYMENT STUDENTS IN OTHER PROVINCES

As part of the research for this thesis, the researcher corresponded with professionals in other provinces to determine what was being offered in their English Communications course at the vocational school level. Letters sent to all provinces sought to obtain information regarding the course outline, philosophy, etc., of their programs. Although some of those who responded were in the process of updating their programs,

³³ Association of Vocational School Administrators of Newfoundland Curriculum Committee Report, May 1976.

³⁴ Kawula, Walter J. and Smith, Arthur De W., Generic Skills Handbook of Occupational Information, Training Research and Development Station, Department of Manpower and Immigration, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, 1975.

It was obvious that the core of any vocational communications course should contain the following:

1. Listening and Speaking Skills
2. Writing Skills
3. Job Search and Job Holding Skills
4. Labor Relations Skills
5. Human Relations Skills

While the length of time spent on the various skills varied, the importance placed on all skills was quite apparent.

The Wascana Institute of Saskatchewan, in stating the objectives of its English Communications course, echoed the expectations of the others as to what they hoped to achieve from their programs. The Institute has a two-semester program. The course outlines state that in the first semester the program "is designed to provide learning experience which enable the student to develop his/her ability to communicate openly, honestly, and effectively".³⁵ In the second semester the program "is designed to provide learning experiences which enable the student to expand his/her skills of interpersonal communication and interviewing".³⁶ It was apparent from those who responded to the correspondence that emphasis is being placed in these two general areas.

35.

Wascana Institute, Saskatchewan Continuing Education, Communication Skills Course Outline, Semester I, 1980.

36.

Wascana Institute, Saskatchewan Continuing Education, Communication Skills Course Outline, Semester II, 1980.

Chapter 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

SYNOPSIS OF THE PROBLEM

This study was designed to ascertain the content of the English-Communication Program in Newfoundland Vocational Schools and the degree of importance the English Communication Instructor placed upon the topics included in their programs. The study also attempted to ascertain the degree of importance industry placed upon the topics being offered and to obtain suggestions for any additional topics which industry felt should be included in the program.

THE INSTRUMENT

Development

The instrument used to gather data for this study consisted of two questionnaires. These questionnaires consisted of topics derived from the Outline For English Communications,³⁷ which covered the following areas: Oral Communication, Written Communication, Fundamentals of English, and Life Skills. One

³⁷ Division of Vocational Education, "Course Outline For English Communications, Pre-employment Program". St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1971.

questionnaire asked English Communication Instructors to state the number of hours spent on each topic, and also to rate each topic as to importance. The second questionnaire, which contained an overview of the problem area, requested members of industry to rate as to importance the listed topics. Space was provided on the questionnaire for the participants to write in and rate specific topics that were not included by the researcher.

Pilot Study

To insure that the specific topics in the questionnaires were unambiguous, and to maximize face validity, a pilot study was conducted.

The questionnaire was administered to a jury consisting of eight trade instructors in the Burin District Vocational School. The jury was given the following written instructions:

1. Using the black ink pen provided, answer the questionnaire as though you were an employer and had just received the questionnaire in the mail.
2. After answering the questionnaire, please go through it again making any recommendations you feel might add to the validity and improvement of the questionnaire. Use the red ink pen provided.

The purpose of having the members of the jury answer

the questionnaire, in addition to making recommendations, was to provide the researcher with a check for misinterpretations or ambiguities that the jury members might not notice.

As a result of the pilot study, minor changes were made in the information sheet. A copy of the questionnaires has been included in Appendix A.

COLLECTION AND TREATMENT OF DATA

Source

This study was conducted in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador with the English Communications Instructors of the sixteen District Vocational Schools, and with industries having a workforce of twenty-five or more employees. The size of the instructor population was 16, while the number of industries questioned totaled 22.

On January 23, 1980, materials consisting of the questionnaire, a self-addressed prepaid return envelope, and a covering letter were sent to the instructors. The covering letter and the "Information Sheet" of the questionnaire both explained to the instructors the purpose of the study. On March 26, a follow-up letter was sent to all instructors who had not responded up to that date. By April 25, 100 percent return rate had been realized.

On March 12, 1980, materials consisting of the questionnaire, a self-addressed prepaid return envelope, an overview of the problem area, and a covering letter were sent to the industries. The covering letter, the "Information Sheet" of the

questionnaire, and the "Overview of the Problem Area", explained to the members of industry the purpose of the study. On April 5, a follow-up letter was sent to all members of industry who had not responded up to that date. By April 18, a 95.4 percent return rate had been realized.

Table 1 gives details regarding the number of questionnaires sent out to instructors and the number returned; and the number of questionnaires sent out to industries and the number returned. It shows that both instructors and members of industry were quite willing to respond to the questionnaire.

Table 1

Number of Questionnaires Sent Out to
Instructors and the Number Returned

	Number Sent	Number Returned	Percent Returned
Instructors	16	16	100
Industry	22	21	95.4

Data Treatment Procedures

Two types of data were collected in this study from instructors: (1) data concerning the number of hours spent on the topics listed in the questionnaire, and (2) data concerning the degree of importance placed upon these topics. Data concerning the degree of importance placed upon the same topics

by members of industry were also collected.

By use of mean importance rating obtained from the raw data, tables were developed to show the degree of importance assigned to each topic, and the amount of time spent on each topic by instructors. Tables were also developed to show the degree of importance assigned to each topic by members of industry.

In order to show more clearly the topics of chief concern to the instructors and the members of industry, an arbitrary decision was made by the researcher to classify the topics as minor, moderate, or major according to the mean importance rating. The following scale was used for this classification: (1) 1.00 - 2.00, minor; (2) 2.01 - 2.99, moderate; (3) 3.00 - 4.00, major.

It was also possible, because the participants were rating specific topics, to isolate the topics that the majority of instructors and members of industry considered of major or minor importance, and also to isolate the topics on which instructors and members of industry differed considerably. A set of tables was developed to show these relationships.

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present a descriptive analysis of the data gathered on the content of the English Communications program in Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools, the degree of importance placed on the different aspects of the program will be presented by English Communications Instructors and members of industry which vocational school students serve.

Using mean importance ratings and ranked order, tables are provided to show in profile form: (1) how the four major categories of the English Communications program were rated as to importance by instructors and members of industry, and (2) how the specific topics in these categories were rated by instructors and members of industry. Tables are also used to show the mean time spent on the different topics by English Communications Instructors. This same method is used to show the agreements and disagreements of ratings by both members of industry and instructors.

RATING OF TOPICS

Major Categories

Table II presents the ranked order and mean importance ratings of the four major categories as perceived by English Communications Instructors. English Communications Instructors perceived three of these major categories to be of major importance with mean importance ratings of over 3.00 on a four point scale. "Fundamentals of English" was the topic rated the highest, with a mean importance rating of 3.12. The categories of "Worker's General Knowledge" and "Written Communication" also had mean importance ratings above 3.00. The category of "Oral Communication" received a mean importance rating of 2.73.

Table III presents the ranked order and mean importance ratings of the four major categories as perceived by members of industry. Only two of the categories received mean importance ratings of over 3.00 by members of industry. These were "Fundamentals of English" with a mean importance rating of 3.36, and "Written Communication" with a mean importance rating of 3.26. The remaining two categories "Oral Communication" and "Worker's General Knowledge" received moderate ratings with mean importance ratings of 2.89 and 2.73 respectively.

A comparison of Tables II and III reveals that both English Communications Instructors and members of industry gave the category "Fundamentals of English" the highest rating. This is significant, as it shows the importance placed on this aspect of the program by the instructors and people in industry, yet there are many who advocate its removal from the communications curriculum. The category of "Worker's General Knowledge"

Table II

Rank Order and Mean Importance Rating of the Four
Major Categories as Perceived By
English Communications Instructors

Rank Order	Major Categories	Mean Importance Rating
1	Fundamentals of English	3.12
2	Worker's General Knowledge	3.11
3	Written Communication	3.04
4	Oral Communication	2.73

Table III

Rank Order and Mean Importance Rating of the Four
Major Categories as Perceived By
Members of Industries

Rank Order	Major Categories	Mean Importance Rating
1	Fundamentals of English	3.36
2	Written Communication	3.26
3	Oral Communication	2.89
4	Worker's General Knowledge	2.73

received a high rating by instructors with a mean importance rating of 3.11, while members of industry rated the category as moderate with a mean importance rating of 2.73. This low rating by members of industry is probably due to the low rating given to the topic of "Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)". (The majority rated the topic as "of little or no importance". The categories rated as major by members of industry received a higher rating than the categories rated as major by English Communications Instructors.

Table IV shows the ranked order and the mean time spent on the four major categories as revealed by English Communications Instructors. "Written Communication" was the category that received the most attention, with a mean time spent of 37.5 hours. This is probably due to the fact that this category includes the major topics of "Obtaining Employment", "Report Writing", and "Paragraph Building", which received mean importance ratings of above 3.00 by instructors. The fact that the category of "Fundamentals of English" received a mean time spent of 20.2 hours is rather insignificant, as many instructors stated that they include this aspect of the program in all other three categories. ("Fundamentals of English" had received the highest rating as to importance by both instructors and industry.) It should be noted that in arriving at the four major categories, there was need for some overlapping of topics. For example, in arriving at the mean importance rating, the topic of "Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions" was used for both categories of "Written Communication"

Table IV

Ranked Order and Mean Time Spent on the Four
Major Categories as Revealed By
English Communications' Instructors

Ranked Order	Major Categories	Mean Time Spent (Hours)
1	Written Communication	37.5
2	Oral Communication	25.9
3	Worker's General Knowledge	22.1
4	Fundamentals of English	20.2

and "Oral Communication".

Individual Topics

Table V provides in ranked order, with mean importance rating and degree of importance, the topics as perceived by English Communication Instructors. Instructors perceived twelve of these topics to be of major importance, eight topics as of moderate importance, and one topic of minor importance. "Obtaining Employment" was rated the highest with a mean importance rating of 3.81. The next two topics in ranked order with mean importance ratings of 3.31 were the topics of "Report Writing" and "Paragraph Building". The topic of "Debates" was the only topic to be rated as of minor importance by instructors. The eight topics rated as moderate had mean importance ratings between 2.25 and 2.75.

Table VI provides in ranked order, with mean importance rating and degree of importance the topics as perceived by members of industry. Members of industry perceived thirteen of these topics to be of major importance, and eight topics to be of moderate importance, with no topics receiving a minor rating. "Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions" with a mean importance rating of 3.60 was rated as the most important, while "Spelling and Vocabulary" and "Grammar of Sentences" were the next two topics in ranked order, with mean importance ratings of 3.55 and 3.49 respectively. The eight topics rated as moderate had mean importance ratings between 2.15 and 2.95 with "Debates" receiving the lowest rating.

Table V
Rank Order, Mean Importance Rating, and
Degree of Importance of Topics as Perceived By
English Communications Instructors

Rank Order	Topics	Mean Importance Rating	Degree of Importance
1	Obtaining Employment	3.81	Major
2.5	Report Writing	3.31	
2.5	Paragraph Building	3.31	
4.5	Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)	3.19	
4.5	Letter Writing (layout, types, etc.)	3.19	
6	Sentence Faults	3.15	
7.5	Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions	3.13	
7.5	Conducting A Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)	3.13	
9	Grammar of Sentences	3.08	
10.5	Punctuation and Capitalization	3.06	
10.5	Spelling and Vocabulary	3.06	Moderate
12	General Class Discussion	3.04	
13.5	Forms (banking, income tax, etc.)	2.75	
13.5	Interpreting Trade-related Literature	2.75	
15	Tool and Instrument Description	2.63	
16	Description of Work Materials	2.44	
17	Panel Discussion	2.44	
18	Study Tips (library techniques, note taking, information retrieval, etc.)	2.31	

Table V Continued

Rank Order	Topics	Mean Importance Rating	Degree of Importance
19.5	Delivery of Prepared Speech	2.25	Moderate
19.5	Telephone Communication	2.25	
21	Debates	1.81	Minor

Table VI

Rank Order, Mean Importance Rating, and
Degree of Importance of Topics as Perceived By
Members of Industry

Rank Order	Topics	Mean Importance Rating	Degree of Importance
1	Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions	3.60	Major
2	Spelling and Vocabulary	3.55	
3	Grammar of Sentences	3.49	
4	Obtaining Employment	3.40	
5.5	Punctuation and Capitalization	3.30	
5.5	Letter Writing (Layout, types, etc.)	3.30	
7	Sentence Faults	3.26	
8.5	Paragraph Building	3.25	
8.5	Tool and Instrument Description	3.25	
10.5	Report Writing	3.20	
10.5	Telephone Communication	3.20	
12.5	Description of Work Materials	3.15	
12.5	Interpreting Trade-related Literature	3.15	
14	Forms (banking, income tax, etc.)	2.95	Moderate
15	Study Tips (library techniques, note taking, information retrieval, etc.)	2.85	

Table VI Continued

Rank Order	Topics	Mean Importance Rating	Degree of Importance
16	General Class Discussion	2.80	
17	Conducting a Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)	2.40	Moderate
18.5	Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)	2.25	
18.5	Delivery of Prepared Speech	2.25	
20.5	Panel Discussion	2.15	
20.5	Debates	2.15	

An examination of Tables V and VI reveals that of the twenty-one topics presented, nine were considered to be of major importance by both English Communications Instructors and members of industry. The topic "Debates" received the lowest rating by both instructors and industry, with mean importance ratings of 1.81 and 2.15 respectively. The similarities and differences, and the degree of differences of ratings by English Communications Instructors and members of industry will be presented in Tables VII, VIII, and IX.

Table VII shows the nine topics perceived by both members of industry and English Communications Instructors as being of major importance and the mean importance rating assigned to each topic by both. It should be noted that a great emphasis is placed upon the importance of oral and written communication by both parties surveyed. This is reflected in the high rating the topics received with mean importance ratings from 3.06 to 3.81 on a four point scale.

Table VIII lists the topics perceived as being of major importance by members of industry but not by English Communications Instructors, and the mean importance rating assigned to each topic by both. An examination of the difference in ratings will reveal that these differences are significant on a four point scale. The topic with the greatest difference in rating by the two parties surveyed is "Telephone Communication", with a mean importance rating of 3.20 by members of industry and a mean importance rating of 2.25 by English Communications Instructors. It should be noted that all four topics were

Table VII

Topics Perceived by Both Members of Industry
and English Communications Instructors
as Being of Major Importance; and the
Mean Importance Rating by Both

Topics	Mean Importance Rating	
	Instructors	Industry
Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions	3.13	3.60
Spelling and Vocabulary	3.06	3.55
Grammar of Sentence	3.08	3.49
Obtaining Employment	3.81	3.40
Punctuation and Capitalization	3.06	3.40
Letter Writing (layout, types, etc.)	3.19	3.30
Sentence Faults	3.15	3.26
Paragraph Building	3.31	3.25
Report Writing	3.31	3.20

Table VIII

Topics Perceived as Being of Major Importance
by Members of Industry But Not by English
Communications Instructors; and the
Mean Importance Rating by Both

Topics	Mean Importance Rating	
	Instructors	Industry
Tool and Instrument Description	3.25	2.63
Telephone Communication	3.20	2.25
Description of Work Materials	3.15	2.44
Interpreting Trade-related Literature	3.15	2.75

Table IX

Topics Perceived as Being of Major Importance
by English Communications Instructors But
Not by Members of Industry; and the
Mean Importance Rating by Both

Topics	<u>Mean Importance Rating</u>	
	Instructors	Industry
Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)	3.19	2.25
-Conducting a Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)	3.13	2.40
General Class Discussion	3.04	2.80

directly related to skills needed on-the-job.

Table IX presents the topics perceived as being of major importance by English Communications Instructors, but not by members of industry, and the mean importance rating assigned to each topic by both. While considerable emphasis is placed on the topics "Trade Unions, (history, terms, procedures)" by instructors, with a mean importance rating of 3.19, industry does not give it the same importance, rating it as only moderate with a mean importance rating of 2.25. The other two topics considered of major importance by instructors but not by industry were "Conducting A Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)" and "General Class Discussion". These topics received significantly lower ratings by industry, with mean importance ratings of 2.40 and 2.80 respectively. These differences will be further revealed in Table X.

Table X shows the ranked order and mean time spent on the different topics by English Communications Instructors. While the exact time spent on each topic was difficult to determine because of overlapping of topics, one can readily see where the emphasis lies. The topic receiving the most attention was "Obtaining Employment" with a mean time spent of 10.8 hours. The next three topics in ranked order were, "Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)", "Report Writing", and "Letter Writing", with mean time spent of 8.9 hours, 8.6 hours and 8.1 hours respectively. There were three topics in which the mean time spent was less than two hours. They were "Debates", with a mean time spent of 1.6 hours; "Study Trips (library techniques, note

taking, information retrieval, etc.)", with 1.3 hours; and "Telephone Communication", with a mean time spent of 1.2 hours.

A comparison of Tables VI and X reveals that while the topic "Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)" ranked second by instructors with a mean time spent of 8.9 hours, members of industries did not perceive this topic as being very important. They gave it a mean importance rating of 2.25. The topic "Telephone Communications" was considered by members of industry as being of major importance, with a mean importance rating of 3.20. Instructors, however, ranked this topic last, with a mean time spent of only 1.2 hours. These Tables also show that there is a significant difference in the emphasis placed on two other topics. The topics "Description of Work Materials" and "Interpreting Trade-related Literature" both were considered of major importance by members of industry, since they received mean importance ratings of 3.15. However, instructors ranked these two topics very low, with a mean time spent of 2.1 hours for "Interpreting Trade-related Literature" and 2.0 hours for "Description of Work Materials". It should be noted that there exists a large variation in the time spent on the different topics among the various instructors. For example, three of the more important topics as rated by members of industry ranged as follows: Obtaining Employment, 6 to 36 hours; Grammar of Sentences, 0 to 18 hours; and, Spelling and Vocabulary, 0 to 14 hours.

Table XI presents the topics rated by 75 percent or

Table X

Rank Order and Mean Time Spent on Topics
By English Communications Instructors

Rank Order	Topics	Mean Time Spent (Hours)
1	Obtaining Employment	10.8
2	Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)	8.9
3	Report Writing	8.6
4	Letter Writing	8.1
5	Conducting a meeting (Parliamentary procedure)	7.1
6	Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions	6.6
7	Grammar of Sentences	6.5
8	General Class Discussion	5.8
9	Spelling and Vocabulary	5.4
10	Paragraph Building	5.2
11	Sentence Faults	5.1
12	Delivery of Prepared Speech	4.2
13	Punctuation and Capitalization	4.0
14	Tool and Instrument Description	3.8
15	Forms (banking, income tax, etc.)	3.7
16	Panel Discussion	3.4
17	Interpreting Trade-related Literature	2.1
18	Description of Work Materials	2.0
19	Debates	1.6
20	Study Tips (library techniques, note taking, information retrieval, etc.)	1.3
21	Telephone Communication	1.2

Table XI

Topics Rated By 75 Percent or More of
Instructors and Members of Industry as
Being of Considerable or Major Importance

Topics	Percent of Instructors	Percent of Members of Industry
Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions	100	100
Obtaining Employment	100	90
Spelling and Vocabulary	81	100
Grammar of Sentences	81	95
Sentence Faults	88	90
Punctuation and Capitalization	88	90
Paragraph Building	88	90
Report Writing	88	85
Letter Writing (layout, types, etc.)	88	80
Interpreting Trade-related Literature	81	85
General Class Discussion	88	75

more of English Communications Instructors and members of industry as being of considerable or major importance. This meant a rating of 3 or above on a four point scale. There were eleven topics out of twenty-one rated as being of considerable or major importance by 75 percent of both parties. This suggests that fewer than 75 percent of both instructors and members of industry rated the remaining ten topics as of considerable or major importance. The only topic rated 3 or above by all instructors and all members of industry was

"Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions".

"Obtaining Employment" received a rating of 3 or over by all instructors, while 90 percent of members of industry rated it 3 or above. The topic "Spelling and Vocabulary" received a rating of 3 or above by all members of industry, while 81 percent of instructors rated it as of considerable or major importance.

Table XII reveals the topics in which the number of instructors and members of industry differed by 20 percent or more in their rating as to considerable or of major importance. There were six topics in which this difference occurred. The greatest differences occurred in the topics "Telephone Communication", "Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)", and "Conducting A Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)". "Conducting A Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)" was rated 3 or above by all instructors, while, only 45 percent of members of industry thought this topic to be of considerable or major importance. "Telephone Communication" had the next largest spread with 85

Table XII

Topics In Which The Number of Instructors and
Members of Industry Differed By 20 Percent or More
In Their Rating as to Considerable or of Major Importance

Topics	Percent of Instructors	Percent of Members of Industry
Telephone Communication	38	85
Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)	81	45
Conducting A Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)	100	45
Forms (banking, income tax, etc.)	88	60
Tool and Instrument Description	62	83
Description of Work Materials	62	82

percent of members of industry rating it 3 or above, while only 38 percent of instructors gave it that status. The topic "Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)" received a rating of 3 or above by 81 percent of instructors, but only 45 percent of members of industry thought it to be that important. Of the three remaining topics in this Table two received ratings of 3 or above by approximately 20 percent more members of industry than by instructors, while the other received a rating of 3 or above by 28 percent more instructors than by members of industry.

Table XIII presents three topics which received a rating of considerable or major importance by 50 percent or less of instructors and members of industry. Only 25 percent of instructors and 30 percent of members of industry rated "Debates" as being 3 or above on the rating scale. This suggests that fewer than 75 percent of instructors and 70 percent of members of industry considered this topic to be of little or no importance. Fifty percent of instructors and 35 percent of members of industry rated "Panel Discussion" 3 or above, while the remaining topic, "Delivery of Prepared Speech" was rated as being of considerable or major importance by 31 percent of instructors and 45 percent of members of industry.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, a descriptive analysis of the importance placed upon the topics of the English Communications

Table XIII

Topics Which Received a Rating of Considerable
or Major Importance by 50 Percent or Less
of Instructors and Members of Industry

Topics	Percent of Instructors	Percent of Members of Industry
Panel Discussion	50	35
Debates	25	30
Delivery of Prepared Speech	31	45

program in Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools as perceived by English Communications Instructors and members of industry has been presented. By use of mean importance ratings and mean hours spent, the findings of this study were presented in tabular form. Tables were presented that showed: (1) the mean importance rating and the degree of importance assigned to the twenty-one topics by English Communications Instructors and members of industry; (2) topics perceived by both members of industry and English Communications Instructors as being of major importance; (3) topics perceived as being of major importance by members of industry but not by English Communications Instructors; (4) topics perceived as being of major importance by English Communications Instructors but not by members of industry; (5) mean importance rating of the four major categories as perceived by English Communications Instructors and members of industry; (6) mean time spent on each of the twenty-one topics by English Communications Instructors; (7) the percentage of instructors and members of industry rating topics as of major importance.

It was found that for the four major categories, "Fundamentals of English" received the highest rating by both English Communications Instructors and members of industry. Nine topics were perceived as being of major importance by both members of industry and instructors; four topics were perceived as being of major importance by members of industry but not by English Communications Instructors; and three topics were perceived as being of major importance by English Communications

Instructors but not by members of industry. The topic receiving the lowest rating by both instructors and members of industry was "Debates".

It should be noted that since the topics presented for rating were not considered to be all-inclusive, space was provided on the questionnaire and both instructors and members of industry were asked to add and rate any other topics which they believed should be included in the English Communications program. Members of industry reported only five additional topics. The topics of "Inventory Control (ordering, requisitions, etc.)", "Scheduling (work, time off, vacations, etc.)", "Motivation (expression, talks, etc.)" were rated as being of major importance by one member of industry. Another rated "Legible Writing" as being of major importance, while another member of industry added the topic "Speed Reading" but did not rate it.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to survey the English Communications Instructors in Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools to ascertain what is being taught and the degree of importance placed upon the content of the English Communications program. The study was also to survey industries which Newfoundland vocational graduates serve, to ascertain how they would rate as to importance the content of the English Communications program. More specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions related to the English Communications program:

1. What topics are being taught?
2. How many hours are spent on each topic?
3. How do English Communications Instructors in Vocational Schools rate the different topics being taught?
4. How do industries rate as to importance the topics presently being taught?
5. What additional topics would industry like to have included in the program?

Procedures

In an attempt to answer the above questions, an instrument was developed by the researcher using as a basis, the Outline For English Communication. A pilot study was conducted with the instrument in an attempt to ensure that the specific topics in the questionnaires were unambiguous, and to maximize face-validity. A major objective was to ensure that the instrument was appropriate for the research setting.

Following the pilot study minor modifications were made. These revised questionnaires were sent to English Communications Instructors and members of industry.

The instructor questionnaire was sent on January 23, 1980. The respondents were encouraged to maintain anonymity. On March 26, a follow-up letter was sent to all non-respondents in order to elicit a greater response. By April 25, 100 percent return rate had been realized.

On March 12, 1980, the industry questionnaire was sent to twenty-two industries in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. On April 5, a follow-up letter was sent to all members of industry who had not responded up to that date. By April 18, twenty-one, or 95.4 percent of the questionnaire were completed and returned.

On the instructors' questionnaires English Communications Instructors were asked to rate as to degree of importance, twenty-one topics using a scale ranging from 1 (of no importance), to 4 (of great importance). After rating each of the topics the instructors were asked to state the number of hours spent on each.

topic.

On the industry questionnaire, members of industry were asked to rate, as to degree of importance twenty-one topics using a scale ranging from 1 (of no importance), to 5 (of great importance). Both instructors and members of industry were asked to list any topics which they considered important but not included in the questionnaire.

Mean importance ratings were obtained for each specific topic in the questionnaire as perceived by instructors and by members of industry. An arbitrary decision was made by the researcher to classify topics as minor, moderate, or major, according to the mean importance rating. The following scale was used for this classification: (1) 1.00 - 2.00, minor; (2) 2.00 - 2.99, moderate; (3) 3.00 - 4.00, major. The topics were ranked according to their mean importance rating. The mean time spent was obtained for each specific topic as reported by instructors.

All the above information has been presented in tabular form to give greater clarity of interpretation. The tables are presented in Chapter 4 accompanied by descriptive materials in which the important points are mentioned.

Major Findings

Of the twenty-one topics listed on the questionnaire, twelve topics were rated as being of major importance by English Communications Instructors. The topics of "Obtaining Employment", "Report Writing" and "Paragraph Building" received mean importance

ratings over 3.30 on the four point scale. The remaining nine topics received mean importance ratings above 3.00. They were:

Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)
Letter Writing (layout, types, etc.)
Sentence Faults
Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions
Conducting a Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)
Grammar of Sentences
Punctuation and Capitalization
Spelling and Vocabulary
General Class Discussion

When mean importance ratings were obtained for each of the topics, as rated by members of industry, it was found that thirteen of the twenty-one topics fell in the category of being major importance. The four topics of "Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions", "Spelling and Vocabulary", "Grammar of Sentences", and "Obtaining Employment" received mean importance ratings of 3.40 or over. The following are the remaining nine topics which were rated between 3.15 and 3.40:

Punctuation and Capitalization
Letter Writing (layout, types, etc.)
Sentence Faults
Paragraph Building
Tool and Instrument Description
Report Writing
Telephone Communication

Description of Work Materials

Interpreting Trade-related Literature

When mean time spent was obtained for each of the different topics as reported by English Communications instructors, it was found that there exists a large variation in the communications program among the sixteen vocational schools surveyed.

When topics were placed in four major categories and mean importance ratings obtained for each of the categories as rated by English Communications instructors, it was found that the categories were rated as to importance in the following order with number 1 being the most important:

1. Fundamentals of English
2. Workers' General Knowledge
3. Written Communication
4. Oral Communication

When topics were placed in four major categories and mean importance ratings obtained for each of the categories as rated by members of industry, it was found that the categories were rated as to importance in the following order with number 1 being most important:

1. Fundamentals of English
2. Written Communication
3. Oral Communication
4. Workers' General Knowledge

When the ratings of the different topics by the two groups surveyed were compared, it was found that:

1. There were nine topics considered to be of importance by both.
2. There were four topics considered to be of major importance by members of industry but not by instructors.
3. There were three topics considered to be of major importance by English Communications instructors but not by members of industry.

When the ratings of the four major categories by the two groups surveyed were compared, it was found that both members of industry and instructors rated "Fundamentals of English" as the most important category.

Findings Related to Other Research

The research reviewed in Chapter 2 of this thesis reported on what skills industry and educators in the vocational field expect a person to possess if he is to be successful in the "world of work" and in his community. The research also reported on English Communications programs offered to the tradesman by other provinces. This section will, where possible, compare the most noticeable differences and similarities of the findings of these reviewed studies, with the findings of this study.

The Donahue³⁸ study found that there was a considerable

³⁸ A.J. Donahue, A Study of the Communication Curriculum for Pre-employment Trade Courses in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, (unpublished paper), 1977.

variation in the trade communications course among the vocational schools in the province. Donahue also found that "Report Writing", "Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)", "Tool Description", and "Oral Communication" and "Debates" were rated highly by graduates who had gone through the program. Donahue also found that instructors described interest in "Telephone Communication" as high.

Peter F. Drucker³⁹ found that the ability to express oneself is perhaps the most important of all the skills a man can possess.

The Wilcox⁴⁰ study found that management listed effective written communication and effective speaking at the head of a list of needs felt to be needed by their subordinates.

The Erickson⁴¹ study found that in a survey conducted among industries in Wisconsin, and Iowa, "Report Format" was listed as a desirable skill by 86 percent of the respondents. Erickson also found that 30 percent of the time in technical schools was spent on fundamentals of English.

³⁹ Roger P. Wilcox citing Peter F. Drucker, How To Be An Employee, Fortune, May, 1952.

⁴⁰ Roger P. Wilcox, Communication At Work: Writing and Speaking, Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1977, Boston, U.S.A.

⁴¹ Harold P. Erickson, An Effective English Program For The Technical School, (unpublished Master's Thesis), Wisconsin State University, 1968, p. 25.

The findings of this study compared favourably to all studies to some degree. This study found that most of the topics considered by industry to be of major importance would contribute to the acquisition of the different skills deemed necessary by the authors of the studies cited.

A major finding of this study agreed with the findings of the Donahue⁴² study. Donahue found that there existed a wide range in the amount of time spent on the different topics by instructors. This study also found a significant variation in the hours spent on each specific topic by instructors.

This study disagreed with the Donahue study in the following areas: "Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)", and "Debates" were rated highly by graduates as reported by Donahue, while members of industry rated these two very low.

Conclusions

In keeping with the limitations and delimitations of this study, the following conclusions can be made:

1. There exists a significant variation in the time spent on the specific topics in the English Communications program by the various vocational school instructors.
2. There is considerable variation in the content of the Communications program among the sixteen vocational schools in the province.

⁴² Donahue, op. cit.

3. Members of industry do not perceive all the topics presently offered in the English Communications program to be of major importance to the tradesman.
4. A working knowledge of the fundamentals of the English language is a desirable skill for any tradesman, as perceived by members of industry.
5. The ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing are necessary skills for the tradesperson, as perceived by members of industry.
6. There exists a significant difference in the rating of the specific topics as to the degree of importance between English Communications instructors and members of industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made.

Recommendations for Implementation

1. An appropriate agency such as the Association of Vocational School Administrators of Newfoundland should give consideration to providing English Communications instructors with a bibliography of current readings pertaining to business and industry that might be of assistance to them in aligning

their programs with the needs of the industrial community.

2. The Division of Vocational Education should employ the services of a full-time curriculum co-ordinator to expedite the related aspect of the trade program.
3. The Division of Vocational Education should examine the report of the Curriculum Committee of the Association of Vocational Schools Administrators of Newfoundland to determine the feasibility of implementing these recommendations.
4. Because this study revealed that the time spent on each specific topic in the program varied considerably among instructors, there should be established a line of communication among the various instructors by means of workshops, telephone calls and correspondence.
5. Since this study indicated that there exists a considerable variation in the English Communications program among the vocational schools in the province, the Division of Vocational Education should endeavor to implement a standardized program with enough flexibility to enable the instructor to adjust the program to meet the needs of each particular class.

Recommendations for Further Study

The basic purpose of this study was to survey the English

Communications instructors in Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational schools to ascertain the content of the English Communications program; and to discover how members of industry rated this content as to importance for their employees.

The following are suggested topics that the researcher feels need further study in Newfoundland.

1. A study to determine how graduates of the vocational schools perceive the English Communications program. (Since these are the people the program is designed to accommodate, a fairly accurate assessment could be obtained from them on the benefits attained from the different segments.)
2. A study of Trade Instructors to determine the difficulties students encounter in completing their specific trade; and if the Communications program can be adapted to help solve these difficulties.
3. A study of the immediate supervisors of tradesmen to determine what they feel could be done to help tradesmen through the English Communications program.
4. A study of English Communications instructors in Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools to determine if problems exist in the deliverance of their program; and to examine any new approaches to instruction.
5. A study of the other provinces of Canada to determine what has been accomplished in the area of English

Communications in their respective vocational
institutions.

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APPENDIX A: INSTRUMENT TO INSTRUCTORS

District Vocational School
Burin, NF
AOE 1EO

1980 01 23

Dear Sir/Madam:

As part of the requirements for the M. Ed. program at Memorial University, I am conducting a survey of the English-Communications programs in vocational schools in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The intention of the questionnaire is to obtain data relative to: (a) the topics covered in the English-Communications programs, (b) the number of hours devoted to each topic, and (c) the importance placed upon each topic by the instructor of the program.

When this data is obtained, it will be presented to the industries which our graduates serve, so that they can rate as to importance, the topics now being taught in our schools. Members of industry will also be requested to submit any topic which they consider important and is not included in the programs presently being offered.

This survey is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Frank Wolfe, Associate Professor, Memorial University, and has the approval of the Division of Vocational Education.

Since a high percentage of return is essential to make this survey worthwhile, it would be appreciated if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it to the undersigned as soon as possible. A summary of this survey will be forwarded to you for your information.

In anticipation of your co-operation, I thank you.

Yours truly,

John P. Coady
English-Communications
Instructor

District Vocational School
P. O. Box 369
Burin, NF A0E 1E0

1980 03 26

Dear Sir/Madam:

On January 23, 1980, I mailed you a questionnaire relating to my thesis on the English-Communications Program. This thesis is an essential part of my graduate studies program at Memorial University.

As of the above date, I have not received your completed questionnaire; and, as time is of great importance to me in the completion of this study, I am again requesting you to complete the questionnaire at your earliest convenience and return it to the undersigned. In case you have misplaced the original questionnaire, a copy is enclosed.

If you have already returned the questionnaire, I thank you for your assistance; without it my thesis would not be possible.

Yours truly,

John P. Coady
English-Communications
Instructor

Enc.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENGLISH-COMMUNICATIONS INSTRUCTORS

A SURVEY OF THE ENGLISH-COMMUNICATIONS
PROGRAMS IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS IN THE
PROVINCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Conducted By

John Patrick Coady
English-Communications Instructor

Burin District Vocational School
Burin, Newfoundland

(Telephone: 891-1253)

INFORMATION SHEETThe Purpose

The purpose of this questionnaire is to enable the English-Communications Instructors in vocational schools to identify topics being taught, to state the number of hours spent on each topic, and to rate each topic in importance.

It is hoped that the results of this survey, coupled with the rating by industries, will provide the information needed for improving the English-Communications program in vocational schools.

Directions

You will observe that there are two parts to each question. The first part requires that you state the number of hours you spend on the topic in the school year; while the second part of the question requires you, using the given rating scale, to circle the response you believe to be appropriate with regards to the importance of the topic. Since these topics may not be all inclusive, you are asked to add and rate, in the spaces provided, other topics that you include in your program.

You are assured that all information received will be held in strictest confidence. The completed survey will report total data only and not individual responses.

Please return completed questionnaire to the address shown on the title page.

RATING SCALE

1. Of no importance
2. Of little importance
3. Of considerable importance
4. Of great importance

Please circle appropriate response number,
and insert approximate time spent.

	Time Spent (Hours)	Of no importance	Of little importance	Of considerable importance	Of great importance
A. Grammar					
1. Grammar of Sentences		1	2	3	4
2. Sentence faults		1	2	3	4
3. Punctuation and Capitalization		1	2	3	4
4. Paragraph Building		1	2	3	4
B. Spelling and Vocabulary		1	2	3	4
C. Report Writing		1	2	3	4
D. Telephone Communication		1	2	3	4
E. Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)		1	2	3	4
F. Tool and Instrument Description		1	2	3	4
G. Description of Work Materials		1	2	3	4
H. Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions		1	2	3	4
I. Obtaining Employment (Letter of Application, Interview practice, etc.)		1	2	3	4

	Time Spent (Hours)	Of no importance	Of little importance	Of considerable importance	Of great importance
J. Discussions					
1. General class discussions		1	2	3	4
2. Panel discussions		1	2	3	4
3. Debates		1	2	3	4
4. Delivery of prepared speech		1	2	3	4
K. Conducting a Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)		1	2	3	4
L. Study Tips (library techniques, note taking, information retrieval, etc.)		1	2	3	4
M. Letter Writing (layout, types, etc.)		1	2	3	4
N. Forms (banking, income tax, etc.)		1	2	3	4
O. Interpreting Trade-related Literature		1	2	3	4
P.		1	2	3	4
Q.		1	2	3	4
R.		1	2	3	4
S.		1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B: INSTRUMENT TO MEMBERS OF INDUSTRY

District Vocational School
Burin, NF
AOE 1EO

1980.03 12

Dear Sir/Madam:

As part of the requirements for the M. Ed. program at Memorial University, I am conducting a survey of industries which are served by the graduates of Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools. The purpose of this survey is to ascertain the relevancy of the English-Communications programs now being offered, and to solicit suggestions for topics considered important, but not included in the present programs.

For your information, an overview of the problem area as it relates to the study is attached.

This survey is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Frank Wolfe, and has the approval of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Memorial University.

Since a high percentage of return is essential to make this survey worthwhile, it would be appreciated if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided.

In anticipation of your cooperation, I thank you.

Yours truly,

John P. Coady
English-Communications
Instructor

District Vocational School
P. O. Box 369
Burin, NF AOE 1EO

1980 05 06

Dear Sir/Madam:

On March 12, 1980, I mailed you a questionnaire relating to my thesis on the English-Communications Program. This thesis is an essential part of my graduate studies program at Memorial University.

As of the above date, I have not received your completed questionnaire; and, as time is of great importance to me in the completion of this study, I am again requesting you to complete the questionnaire at your earliest convenience and return it to the undersigned. In case you have misplaced the original questionnaire, a copy is enclosed.

If you have already returned the questionnaire, I thank you for your assistance; without it my thesis would not be possible.

Yours truly,

John P. Coady
English-Communications
Instructor

Enc.

OVERVIEW OF PROBLEM AREA

Students enrolled in the various trades at Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools are required to take, in addition to trade theory and practical, the three related subjects of mathematics, science and English-Communications.

The English-Communications component of these related subjects has never had any real input from industry.

Industry has never been researched as to what it believes should be included in such a program. The programs presently being taught are those perceived by the instructors of the subject as being relevant, rather than based on what industry desires.

This research, then, is an attempt to ascertain whether the topics being taught are relevant to the needs of industry.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYERS

A SURVEY OF INDUSTRIES WHICH ARE SERVED BY
THE GRADUATES OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS, TO ASCERTAIN THE RELEVANCY
OF THE PRESENT ENGLISH-COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMS

Conducted By

John Patrick Coady
English-Communications Instructor

Burin District Vocational School
Burin, Newfoundland

(Telephone: 891-1253)

INFORMATION SHEETThe Purpose

The purpose of this questionnaire is to enable the employers served by the graduates of Newfoundland and Labrador Vocational Schools, to rate as to importance the topics presently being taught in the English-Communications programs. In addition, space is provided for employers to suggest topics which they feel relevant but are not included in the present programs.

It is hoped that the results of this survey will provide the information needed for improving the English-Communications program in vocational schools.

Directions

Each question requires you, using the given rating scale, to circle the response you believe to be appropriate with regards to the importance of the topic. Since these topics may not be all inclusive, you are asked to add and rate, in the spaces provided, other topics which you believe should be included in the English-Communications program.

Please return completed questionnaire in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope.

RATING SCALE

1. Of no importance
2. Of little importance
3. Of considerable importance
4. Of great importance

Please circle appropriate response number.

A. Grammar

1. Grammar of Sentences
2. Sentence faults
3. Punctuation and Capitalization
4. Paragraph Building

B. Spelling and Vocabulary

C. Report Writing

D. Telephone Communication

E. Trade Unions (history, terms, procedures)

F. Tool and Instrument Description

G. Description of Work Materials

H. Interpreting and Giving Verbal and Written Directions

I. Obtaining Employment (letter of Application, Interview practice, etc.)

Of no importance
Of little importance
Of considerable importance
Of great importance

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

	Of no importance	Of little importance	Of considerable importance	Of great importance
J. Discussions				
1. General class discussions	1	2	3	4
2. Panel discussions	1	2	3	4
3. Debates	1	2	3	4
4. Delivery of prepared speech	1	2	3	4
K. Conducting a Meeting (Parliamentary Procedure)		2	3	4
L. Study Tips (library techniques, note taking, information retrieval, etc.)		2	3	4
M. Letter Writing (layout, types, etc.)	1	2	3	4
N. Forms (banking, income tax, etc.)	1	2	3	4
O. Interpreting Trade-related Literature	1	2	3	4
P.	1	2	3	4
Q.		2	3	4
R.	1	2	3	4
S.	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX C: RELATED CORRESPONDENCE

DISTRICT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

BURIN, NF

P. O. Box 369, Burin, NF AOE 1E0

1979 11 27

Mr. E. G. Yetman
Assistant Director
Vocational & Technical Education
Dept. of Education
P. O. Box 2017
St. John's, NF
A1C 5R9

Dear Mr. Yetman:

Re: Our conversation of November 23, 1979

As you are aware, I am in the process of writing a thesis as partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Education at Memorial University.

I intend in this thesis to survey the content of the English-Communication programs in the Vocational School system in the Province. With this information, and in conjunction with the industries which our graduates serve, I propose to present a unified, organized program for the pre-employment student.

May I have the approval of the Division to carry out such a study, and your support, in the way of a letter requesting your English-Communications instructors' co-operation in my efforts? A list of Communications instructors would also be appreciated.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours truly,

John Coady
Communications Instructor



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GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Division of Technical and Vocational Education

P.O. BOX 1017
ST. JOHN'S, Nfld.
A1C 5R9

December 10, 1979

MEMO TO: PRINCIPALS, DISTRICT VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

Enclosed please find a copy of John Coady's letter dated 1979-11-27.

This is to advise that this Division has given approval for Mr. Coady to carry out a study of the English - Communications programs in the District Vocational Schools. We hereby request the full co-operation of all your English - Communications Instructors in this worthwhile project.

We have submitted a list of those Instructors to Mr. Coady but we did not include Business Education Instructors because we do not know just who are teaching English. We would appreciate it if you would inform him of the name or names to whom he could write for information.

Yours truly,

Eric G. Yetman
Assistant Director

EGY/bt

Encl.

c.c. Mr. J. Coady

District Vocational School
Box 369
Burin, NF
AGE 1ED

1980 04 18

Dear Sir:

As part of the requirements for the Master of Education program at Memorial University, I am conducting a survey of the English-Communications program in vocational schools in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As part of my research, I am endeavouring to find out what is being done in this area in other provinces.

I would appreciate receiving any information you can provide (course outline, philosophy) regarding any related academic English-Communications program you may offer to students engaged in pre-employment trades.

A self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience in replying. In anticipation of your co-operation, I thank you.

Yours truly,

John P. Coady



