



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.2., 2017 (April-June)

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

Designing curriculum of English for B. Tech first year students in Engineering colleges

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ABSTRACT

As there is a growing demand of Communicative English, the stress on language proficiency has become utmost important for the engineering graduates. Designing curriculum is a method of planning the objectives of the learners, so that teaching would be learner centric, need based, focusing on specific goals, identifying the problems, setting the targets with the ultimate aim of improving language proficiency of the students. This paper aims to focus on the need of English at the B.Tech first year level, their requirements, the inputs that have to be given in the form of Curriculum, the methodologies to be followed and implemented, reorganizing ,and finally evaluating the teaching learning process. By the end of the course the students should be able to describe and understand various functions of English language, effectively use four language skills-listening, speaking, reading, writing, Communicate in an intelligible English accent, be proficient in writing, learn to apply new information, expertise in functional grammar and pronunciation.
Key words: Designing Curriculum, Language Skills, Teaching learning process.

Introduction

English language teaching has undergone tremendous changes throughout the world. As there is a growing demand of Communicative English the stress on language proficiency has become utmost important for the Engineering graduates. In recent years many factors like the influence of industry on the educational institutions to improve the skills of the learners according to the employability point of view, lack of skills to pursue education in foreign universities and teachers focus on sustainability development has lead the way for the innovative teaching methods of English that enhance communication among the students.

I would like to focus on Designing curriculum of English for B.Tech first year students. Designing curriculum is a practical way of language teaching, planning the objectives of the learners so that focus would be on full filling the needs of the learners ultimately achieving the goals and be effective communicators.

Before considering the main aspects of designing curriculum, what does designing curriculum mean? Identifying the needs of the learners, focusing on the objectives, planning process, inputs in the form of syllabus, lesson plan, class room teaching, monitoring and evaluation, executing.

Identifying the needs of the learners: As most of the B.Tech first year students are from rural background they do not have proficiency in English language. At this level an awareness has to be created by the teachers about the importance of role of communication and the academic skills which are also called as survival skills.

The needs of the learners are improving communication skills, acquiring communicative competency, improving linguistic competency, learn to use the language for specific and unspecific purposes, motivation, self-confidence, lack of orientation as per their level, self-assessments of strengths and weakness, the involvement of the student in the learning process so that learning becomes a successful learning, finally over all development of LSRW Skills.

The inputs in the form of curriculum: The inputs include the books, any printed material, video's, tape recorder, multimedia, authentic materials. Awareness should be brought among the students about the importance and role of communication which is going to shape up their future and increase the face value. Conlon [2008:156] has identified a number of priorities for engineering educators: they need to fully embrace a commitment to social justice, equality, work humanization and the principles of sustainable development.

The main aspects of the curriculum should be to focus not only on the linguistic skills and improving the communication skills of the students but also to inculcate proper values, focus on ethical standards, responsibilities towards people at the environment, team work and communication. Teacher's active involvement in students' activities makes the students to forget their phobia, stage fear etc.

Language skills to be enhanced

Listening skills:

The objectives of listening skills are:

- Developing active listening skills to enhance communication.
- Differentiate between active and passive listening.
- Process of listening, how to be efficient listeners.
- Identifying different barriers of effective listening.
- Understanding the essentials and significance of listening.

The objectives of speaking/oral communication are:

- Functional English syllabus that covers functions of English language like Introducing, making requests, apologizing, expressing, opinion, greetings, requesting, polite ways of refusal, inviting, persuading.
- Understand the significance, essentials, barriers and effectiveness of speaking.
- Improving pronunciation.
- Giving presentations and seminars.
- Extempore speeches.
- Debates/Group discussions.
- How to face interviews.

The objectives of reading skills are:

- Understand the techniques of reading.
- Developing sub-skills of reading like skimming, scanning, intensive reading, extensive reading, pre-reading.
- Able to identify specific words in a text.
- Developing critical thinking skills.
- Developing reading habits in general.

The objectives of writing skills are:

- Recognizing writing as an important tool for communication.
- Understand the significance, essentials and effectiveness of writing.
- Writing to express ideas.
- Writing narratives, reports, letters.
- Writing effective paragraphs.
- Creative writing.
- Précis writing.
- Expanding.

- Describing.
- Identifying grammatical errors in writing.
- Story writing.

Teaching grammar and Vocabulary: The objectives of teaching grammar and vocabulary are to enable the students to learn the correct forms of grammar, structures, proper use of tenses, verb forms, phrasal verbs, prefixes, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms, one word substitutes, idioms and phrases, technical vocabulary, know the right use of parts of speech, know the rules for the correct use of language there by improving their language efficiency. Teaching them functional English so that they know the use of language appropriately.

Methods of Teaching: It includes focusing on objectives of the course, materials, teaching and learning activities, the role of teachers and learners, techniques to be followed and feed back and the actual classroom practices. Whatever method we follow it should help the learners to achieve their outcomes and helps them in fulfilling the objectives.

Methods of teaching listening skills: The teacher should brief them up on what is listening, different types of listening, active listening, barriers to listening and finally giving them some exercises that arouse curiosity, improves learner's imagination. To get a better understanding on listening skills students should continuously keep watching video's, video lectures, listen to different types of accents and comprehend the listening text.

Activities like Information gap exercises, completing a story, listening to audio texts, listening to the conversations/speeches, and answering the questions. The students feel motivated because they feel these kinds of activities resemble the natural use of language.

Methods of teaching speaking skills: There are two different criteria. Classroom learning and learning through exposure. Class room learning in the form of language skills and learning the language through exposure to the outside world. Class room learning includes teaching through spoken structures of grammar, and by practicing the sub skills of speaking like talking about one, describing, interaction, Role plays, expressing ideas, requesting, conducting seminars, group discussions, debates, and other speaking activities. Learning the language through exposure to the outside world is exposing oneself to real life situations outside the classroom, socializing, talking to strangers at different situations. The student should be able to interact well with the teachers and students, describe something, narrate an event, participate in role plays, giving extempore speeches, present a paper etc.

Through speaking we are integrating all the language skills. We read something in a newspaper or a magazine, express our views, have a discussion on it or we end up in an argument. If the source is television we listen to it and speak on it .Here we are integrating both listening and speaking.

Methods of teaching reading skills: The role of a teacher is to enable the students to read different texts in the class, improve the fluency in reading, comprehending the text and motivating them. This skill can be acquired only through practice. The teacher can brief them up by teaching them the sub skills of reading and finally giving them exercises on reading.

Methods of teaching writing skills: Making the students know the what of writing i.e. what goes into writing and teaching them the sub skills of writing. Developing ideas, organizing them, cohesion i.e. using connectives and linkers, coherence, focus on the language, review writing.

Teaching vocabulary: Focus on word formation, Homonyms, Homophones, Collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, technical vocabulary Activities like word analysis, vocabulary games like scramble, spellethon, and jumbled letters identifying the correct spelling can be conducted.

Evaluating the teaching-learning process: Evaluation is testing the learner's outcomes. We measure the performance of the students. They could be formal or informal ways of testing. Tests include observations of classroom activities, questionnaires, quizzes finally giving the feedback to the students. There are summative tests/final exams that tells how much and how well students have learnt to use the language. There are progress tests that tell us the learners out comes such as reading, writing interaction, proficiency tests that aim at proving the abilities of the students so that they can appear for GRE,TOEFL and other competitive exams

We have these placement tests, diagnostic tests which help to find out the strengths and weakness of the students.

Conclusion

The present syllabus in the Engineering colleges in Telangana is committed to develop the linguistic competency as well as employability skills of the learners. It covers all the aspects of a general English language program focusing on four basic skills, LSRW skills apart from providing instructions in grammar and vocabulary. This course imparts knowledge of the study skills like note-making, note-taking, and referring to a catalogue or bibliography. Few students find the course books i.e. the prose texts very challenging and difficult because they do not have the minimum English language abilities to understand these texts.

Suggestions

- Curriculum design has to be an autonomous, flexible and dynamic process.
- While designing the curriculum which aspects of linguistic competence can influence the needs of the learners have to be identified.
- We find reading abilities low so, priority should be given to speaking abilities first.
- To strengthen the students' critical sensibilities their study skills and dictionary skills are to be strengthened.

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