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Redesigning the B.E. Syllabus Using Technology

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Abstract:
Many educators have initially attempted to incorporate the teaching of technological literacy into existing curricula. Actually, it is difficult to cover all the issues relating to the new technology in existing courses. In the 1990s, the curricula of first year engineering English began to undergo a transformation, which has been only accelerated. A growing number of engineering colleges began to offer new programs and courses that dealt directly with new media, such as online business English course, IELTS, TESOL and computer-assisted reporting. Some colleges took a more basic approach, restructuring their existing courses and degree programs.

Keywords: Educators, technological literacy, curricula, engineering, transformation, programs

1. Introduction
In this rapidly changing environment, there are a number of compelling reasons for incorporating technology into the language instruction of Engineering curriculum. As technology plays an increasingly important role in our lives, it becomes vital to expose engineering students to that technology. This paper focuses on redesigning the B.E/B.Tech syllabus with the technology usage and newspapers.

2. Current Technology Use
Presently, the uses of new technology in the teaching of English language can be categorized into four main methods: 1) Class Room Instruction, 2) Using online syllabi/materials, 3) implementing distance learning/online courses, and 4) educating technological literacy within the curriculum.

2.1. Class Room Instruction
Nowadays, the classrooms of Indian Universities and Engineering colleges are being designed with multimedia equipments that allow the teachers to combine video, audio, and electronic text in their classroom instruction. Computer-assisted and multimedia instruction is particularly beneficial for language educators. It can contribute to student engagement and success in skill courses, such as news writing and copy editing. Students of this generation have rated a computer writing program higher than the traditional paper exercise, while teachers reported that students made great improvement in grammar by using computerized writing tools (Smith, 1990).

2.2. Using Online Syllabi/Materials
New technology allows teachers to create their own content and to post materials and course information online. Online syllabi are the most widely used teaching tool among the university and college professors. In addition to course syllabi, teachers can post their class notes, reading materials, assignments, class discussions, tests, grades, and other learning materials that are not easy for students to access in traditional syllabi. In view of this advantage, many universities are developing school-wide systems that offer a website for each course offered.

2.3. Implementing Distance Learning/Online Courses
The virtual language classroom is not yet used to its full potential by the engineering colleges of Tamilnadu and other educational institutions. Some schools offer online courses that allow students to learn their lessons themselves but many of them still require students to live near the campus. Distance education is still in the trial process, largely because of varied instructional methods. The major barrier for implementing distance learning is not the technology infrastructure, but an effective instruction without a classroom setting (Arant, 1996).

2.4. Educating Technological Literacy
Panici (1998) describes technological literacy as "understanding both the why and how of new media communication tools." This goes beyond pure technological skills, which are relatively easy to obtain, to encompass critical thinking skills and key issues surrounding the new technology-issues. Pavlik (2003) notes that there is"...something much deeper and more important that our

students need to learn in the context of new media, something that goes well beyond the qualities of craft and skill. They need to learn about the ways digital technologies are quietly-and not-so-quietly-transforming the world." (p. 314)

3. Reframing Curriculum

A major trend in curriculum change is toward practical, hands-on training. Numerous engineering colleges are developing multimedia labs, online magazines, and digital newsrooms-all of which expose students to technologies, practices, environments that mimic those they will encounter in their professional lives (Nicholson, 2001). Pryor (2003) emphasizes the importance of this kind of technical, nuts-and-bolts training, noting that the publishing of electronic content is inextricably linked to its creation.
As language educators of engineering institutions started rethinking curriculum, a number of them are reaching out to other disciplines. According to Smith (1990), as professors have seen the need of acquiring new knowledge and techniques of new media themselves, administrators have responded by hiring new faculty from computer or information science departments.

4. Role of the Teachers

In reality, the teachers of engineering colleges tend to genuinely follow the available prescribed textbooks and student work sheets/workbooks, which are not necessarily professionally prepared. The present curriculum, which requires teachers to be creative and resourceful in developing their own instructional objectives and in managing the class, should be unique, focusing LSRW skills along with technology. The ministry of education has improved salaries of the teachers, yet failed to improve teachers' professionalism. Mastering English seems to be easier than mastering the methods of teaching, implementing the curriculum, using instructional technology and conducting learning evaluation. In fact, for the teachers who have taught at least five years, it is easier to learn English than to learn the methods of teaching.

5. Training and Professional Development

ELT trainings and EFL professional development programs should emphasize instructional technology and curriculum implementation. This suggests that instructional technology is the weakest area of EFL teaching followed by curriculum implementation and methods of teaching. Prof.Watson, echoed the same problems in pre-service training that existed 40 years ago. There is nothing wrong with them, but over teaching those to prospective teachers of English as a foreign language at the cost of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing is educationally misleading.
A program that consists of 20 hours of training can be offered to the language teachers of   engineering colleges just before the beginning of every academic year: The plan includes (1) teacher professional development, (2) review of English, (3) teaching methodology, (4) workshop on (classroom) action research, academic writing, learning material development, and (5) peer teaching. The inclusion of those subjects must have been based on the analysis of needs. Teachers are generally weak and have failed to equip them with sufficient knowledge and practical know-how in those areas. To develop professionalism in EFL teaching, proficiency in English is crucial. In other words, it is much easier to learn English than to learn how to teach it. A language teacher cannot teach what he does not know, and without subject matter pedagogy he cannot do well. In service training is the most appropriate way of upgrading their professionalism, followed by training to improve English proficiency.

6. Needs of the Engineering Students in the Language Learning Context

1. Almost 80% of the language teachers of technical institutions stressed the need for providing well-equipped Language laboratories with relevant software and modern communication systems as the top priority to impart effective training to students in basic language skills.
2. Lack of motivation among students to attend English language classes has been
3. the most difficult problem faced by the teachers. Many students of private engineering colleges are not interested to attend English classes as they feel that they can manage without attending it and yet score good marks.
4. Some of the reasons are core subjects' pressure, absence of well equipped Language labs and class rooms, lack of training to teachers in imparting activity-based teaching using latest technology, odd timings of English classes in the college timetable and constraints in completing the syllabus in time etc.
5. The teachers are willing to take the extra effort to motivate the students in developing their personality by creating the right learning environment.
6. The evaluation process of both theory and practical classes also de-motivate the students.

7. Required Modifications

Gnana Gandhi.S.Mercy, (2014) focuses the importance of technology in revising the curriculum. She stresses the fact that teachers should refine themselves along with the curriculum.
1. Teachers should be provided with internet facilities and learning resources with appropriate training to conduct such activities.
2. English language training should be extended throughout the engineering course.
3. The activities should be designed to develop both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.
4. Students need right level of motivation and scope for personality development.
5. Teachers have to select and conduct activities to develop technical English skills.
6. Training for teachers and proper orientation in implementing the different modules of the syllabus is highly essential.
7. The awareness about the importance of communicating in English starts with the students, only when they reach the final year, facing the job interviews.

8. Imparting training to students in basic skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, especially technical writing for which the allotted time as per timetable in most colleges is quite inadequate.
9. The need for soft skills training, personality development, phonetics practice, exposure to the corporate world, business communication, training in public relations, well-equipped classrooms for theory classes, motivating the students etc. have also been mentioned as crucial needs.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that teachers' classroom instruction directly affects students' motivation level and teachers' own motivation levels are affected by the students' responses in the classroom. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), the best methodology for identifying the needs of particular group of learners is to use such methods as questionnaires, follow-up-interviews, and collection of authentic texts. Researchers also propose that teachers should outline correct learner expectations and attitudes about how languages are learnt and also explain the reasoning behind classroom methods. The gap among teachers and learners can be thus minimized.

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