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Language Learning in Engineering Colleges of Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract: Students learn English in their school days through grammar and English literature. English is a necessary tool for getting into a good job and for a multiracial business and technical outlook for engineering students. So, the aim of the English subject in engineering sector is to encourage the students to involve in learning the target language and to obtain proficiency in technical communication. Some students, out of personal interest and motivation learn vocabulary through substantial reading. But many students depend on the teachers for the development of vocabulary.
The present paper deals with the features of vocabulary. It also presents the general and competency-based objectives of the curriculum. It reviews the English course books and the process of evaluation of the four language skills.

I. THE FEATURES OF VOCABULARY NEEDED

For the students who use English for specific purposes, it is crucial to learn about 2000 words related to the field of engineering. Usually, when students want to learn the meaning of a word, they refer to various sources like dictionaries, wordfinder and other word books. But they may not be sure of the usage of the word until they learn to use it adequately. Slow learners, unless they do take their own effort to learn, are caught in a difficult situation when they do exercises like reading comprehension, essay writing, etc. It is noticed that students realize the need for good use of vocabulary when they are stumped for the right word to use. Further, to develop their basic vocabulary for effective reading, speaking and writing, it was decided to teach them three words a day during the first semester. Therefore, Students learn vocabulary directly through explicit instruction.

II. OBJECTIVES OF CURRICULUM

The curriculum in English includes the objectives of teaching, methods of instruction, textbooks, learning materials, guidance and counselling, students' involvement in literary and cultural activities, their participation in seminars and conferences and evaluation. The principles to be adopted in preparing curriculum are:

1) Converge the changing needs of the trainee
2) Follow certain objectives
3) The subject matter should be in tune with the learning environment of the students
4) Train the students both conceptually and professionally
5) Evaluation pattern should be outlined.

As verbal communication is being given most importance in the rapidly changing world scenario, it involves the preparation of relevant domain subject areas to be imparted. This is possible by researching and thereby designing effective functioning of English language. The majority of the prospective employers are in interested in hiring employees with good communication skills, so the English classroom methodology should be tailored to develop the verbal competency of the students. English language is the link language of the world.

It can be done only when the English curriculum is so designed to protect the pristine glory of the language. The activities are to be contextualized and should present language in natural situations. Students should be sensitized to the subtlety of words. The cognitive and affective abilities of the learners ought to be activated by stimulating them to make more use of their imagination. Innovative, need-based exercises, vocabulary and correspondence should be a part of English curriculum.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE OBJECTIVES OF ENGLISH CURRICULUM

The proficiency in English language is closely linked to ‘good communication skills. It has become mandatory when employability is at stake for want of communication skills on the part of the students in the present scenario. Since skills and personal attributes are revealed through communication, the responsibility of grooming students in life skills is also emphasized as part of language teaching and learning. The essential core key skills given emphasis in the English curriculum are:

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The characteristics to be groomed are:
Adaptability, Sense of Humor, Self-Motivation, Commitment, Stress Management, Enthusiasm, Integrity, Reliability, Self-esteem and Personal Presentation

IV. OBJECTIVES OF ENGLISH SYLLABUS

The objectives of English language are designed to meet the skills and personal attributes that are to be acquired by the learners.

1) To design the main course material and exercises with authentic materials drawn from everyday use catering everyday needs.
2) To provide a learning environment to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills within and beyond the classroom environment.
3) To integrate English language learning with employability skills and training effectively.
4) To assist the students to carry on the tasks and activities through guided instructions and materials.
5) The material may be culled from newspaper articles, advertisements, promotional material etc.
6) To provide hands-on experience through case-studies, mini-projects, group & individual presentations.

V. EVALUATION PROCESS

The examination is universally felt to be the single or main obstacle to curriculum reform. Language evaluation may not be limited to “achievement” with respect to syllabi but must be reoriented to measurement of language proficiency. The present study discusses some ways of conducting ongoing evaluation of language proficiency. The study proposes ongoing, continuous, or formative evaluation contrast with ground realities and problems reported by teachers, suggesting that ongoing evaluation can become meaningful only when teachers and learners both take responsibility for their own progress, rather than performing to external benchmarks real or imaginary; immediate or ultimate. To implement this process, it is necessary that teachers and learners must be able to recognize the “occurrence of learning”, a mental growth as imperceptible as physical growth. For an instance, the absurdity of a nutritional programmed excluding crash diets or miracle growth foods. A deep language opportunity. The present study lists out a few pointers to help in attainment. Typically, learner control of language is reflected in longer mean length of utterance; sustained language input is reflected in such a growth in output through visuals. In contrast, students from rigidly taught classrooms remain inarticulate, or produce single words, mostly nouns, in response to such pictures. Thus, teachers can get an intrinsic sense of language growth in the child with such a task, administered at three or four-month intervals understanding of the learning process, which is individual and self-regulatory, is essential to develop students’ language learning and proficiency. It is assumed that all evaluation should ultimately aim at self-evaluation if learners are to be able to exercise choices for learning and become “lifelong learners. It is how one evaluates that decides whether a student wants to be evaluated. While even the most child-centered methods of evaluation are provoking anxiety for some, there is no question that a system of evaluation must be put in place. It is thus a question of both how and how much that matters. Learners participate in evaluations with more comfort when the experience is not always a failure, and the outcomes can be seen as a legitimate and appropriate way toward the next step in learning. Unfortunately, for most students the immediate role played by current evaluation methods within the learning process is not clear. The present study lists out a few pointers to help in attainment. Typically, learner control of language is reflected in longer mean length of utterance; sustained language input is reflected in such a growth in output through visuals. In contrast, students from rigidly taught classrooms remain inarticulate, or produce single words, mostly nouns, in response to such pictures.

A. Reading

Reading program in grade level is difficult for monitoring progress. They need standardization for evaluation.

B. Evaluation

1) As students generally are more proficient in decoding, they read faster words per minute with fewer mistakes.
2) Scanning a text such as a list, a telephone directory, an advertisement can be used for information. Reading for given information.
3) There may be some who progress from the mere spelling out of the letters of a word, to spelling and sounding out the word, using spelling out as a “word attack” skill for new words.
4) Extended reading
5) Reading for inference

C. Speaking

In Mother tongue(s) learning, speech progresses from a one-word, mostly nouns, stage to the production of multi-word sentences with verbs, auxiliaries, determiners, adjectives, and prepositions, perhaps through a two-word stage. Some research at CIEFL suggested that second language learner-speech progresses through similar stages.

D. Evaluation Can Be Done

1) In the form of an entry in a portfolio that is maintained for each child ("portfolio assessment")
2) Learners can be encouraged to maintain private, frank diaries of their learning experiences, in a language they know, to monitor their own progress.

E. Listening and Writing

The testing of writing and listening can similarly be broken up into sub-skills. This sort of testing can be complemented by integrated language tests (beginning with the cloze test, for example). A subskills approach to evaluation reflects the teachers' intuitions that students may have strengths; extroverted, articulate speakers may not be very interested in or good at an introverted, private activity like reading. The teacher can identify areas of strength as well as areas where guidance is needed.

F. Summative Evaluation

In evaluating a language, it is "proficiency" rather than "achievement" that needs to be tested. Because the ability to use the language appropriately in new contexts can be tested through:

1) Reading age-appropriate material o Listening to and understanding age-appropriate material
2) Writing on age-appropriate topics Control over receptive vocabulary
3) Control over expressive vocabulary
4) Conversing on age-appropriate topics.

Thus, National benchmarks for language proficiency need to be evolved by first gathering reliable descriptive data in all these respects from representative all-India samples. Such benchmarking of national norms or averages is well known as a precursor to the adoption of support initiatives where necessary in the social sciences and education. It also balances the curricular freedom provided during the learning process, with the standardization of evaluation that certification ultimately requires. The benchmarking leads to a set of National English Language Tests, a bank of tests that learners and teachers can use for self-evaluation by opting to take them. These tests should allow for a much finer measure of proficiency than a broad overall grade or score It is a robust teacher intuition that not all learners are equally at home in all the four skills; thus, good speakers may not be good writers, as there may be a trade-off between "accuracy" and "fluency" in the learning process. Neither are all skills equally important for all professions.

Listening and Writing The testing of writing and listening can similarly be broken up into sub-skills. This sort of testing can be complemented by integrated language tests (beginning with the cloze test, for example). A subskills approach to evaluation reflects the teachers' intuitions that students may have strengths; extroverted, articulate speakers may not be very interested in or good at an introverted, private activity like reading. The teacher can identify areas of strength as well as areas where help is needed.

Scores that reflect differential learner aptitudes and strengths enhance employment potential and have a wash back effect on the curriculum. Importantly, a set of National English Language Tests serve to counter the current problem of Second Language acquisition. Overall, standardized national benchmarks for language skills those culminate in a set of National English Language Tests for various levels would: Allow individual students to get a sense of where they stand, their strengths and weaknesses, and how to progress. Balance freedom of learning with standardization of assessment. English language teaching is thought to be exclusively a matter of teaching strategies. It is thought that, if teaching were above a minimum level of efficiency, learning would naturally follow. Teaching is considered the active skill while learning the passive skill (Wittrock, 1986: Crystal, 1997). When children do not acquire a second language in the expected time, it is assumed that there is something wrong with the educational programme they are being exposed to. In the process of language learning it is observed that there are some students who show tremendous progress on acquiring the new language. Similarly, even on the best programmes there are some students who show little progress. Learning strategies are special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension and learning. As for how students, Norman (1980) summarizes as, "It is strange that we expect students to learn yet seldom teach them about learning. It is time that we made up for this lack, time that we developed the applied disciplines of learning, problem solving and memory. We need to develop the general principles of how to learn, how to remember and how to solve problems and then to develop applied courses, and then to establish the place of these methods in academic curriculum".

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Cognitive approach views learning as an active process that occurs within the learners and which can be influenced by the learner. Instead of viewing the outcome of learning as depending mainly on what the teacher presents, the outcome of learning is supposed to depend jointly on what information is presented and on how the learner processes that information. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) state, "The use of particular learning strategies during learning can affect the encoding process, which in turn affects the learning outcome and performance". Crystal (1997) also says. “Students can benefit from being taught to 'learn how to learn' foreign languages". Chamot (1990) is of the opinion that "Training students to use particular learning strategies improves their language performance". Some observational studies of successful second language learners by Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco (1978) reveal that successful second language learners employ active learning strategies to learn more effectively. According to Cook, good language learners find a learning style that suits them, involve themselves in the language learning process, and develop an awareness of language both as a system and as communication. They do not treat language solely as communication or as academic knowledge, but as both. Language learning is complete only when one has mastered all four language skills. Hence, there is a need for more controlled research on second language learning strategies especially when language acquisition is viewed as a cognitive skill.

VI. LANGUAGE LEARNING PROBLEMS

The language problems are:

1) Is there a demand of English for the professional students?
2) How far does the English course aimed at college level cover the needs of the student who desires to use the language to acquire further technical knowledge?

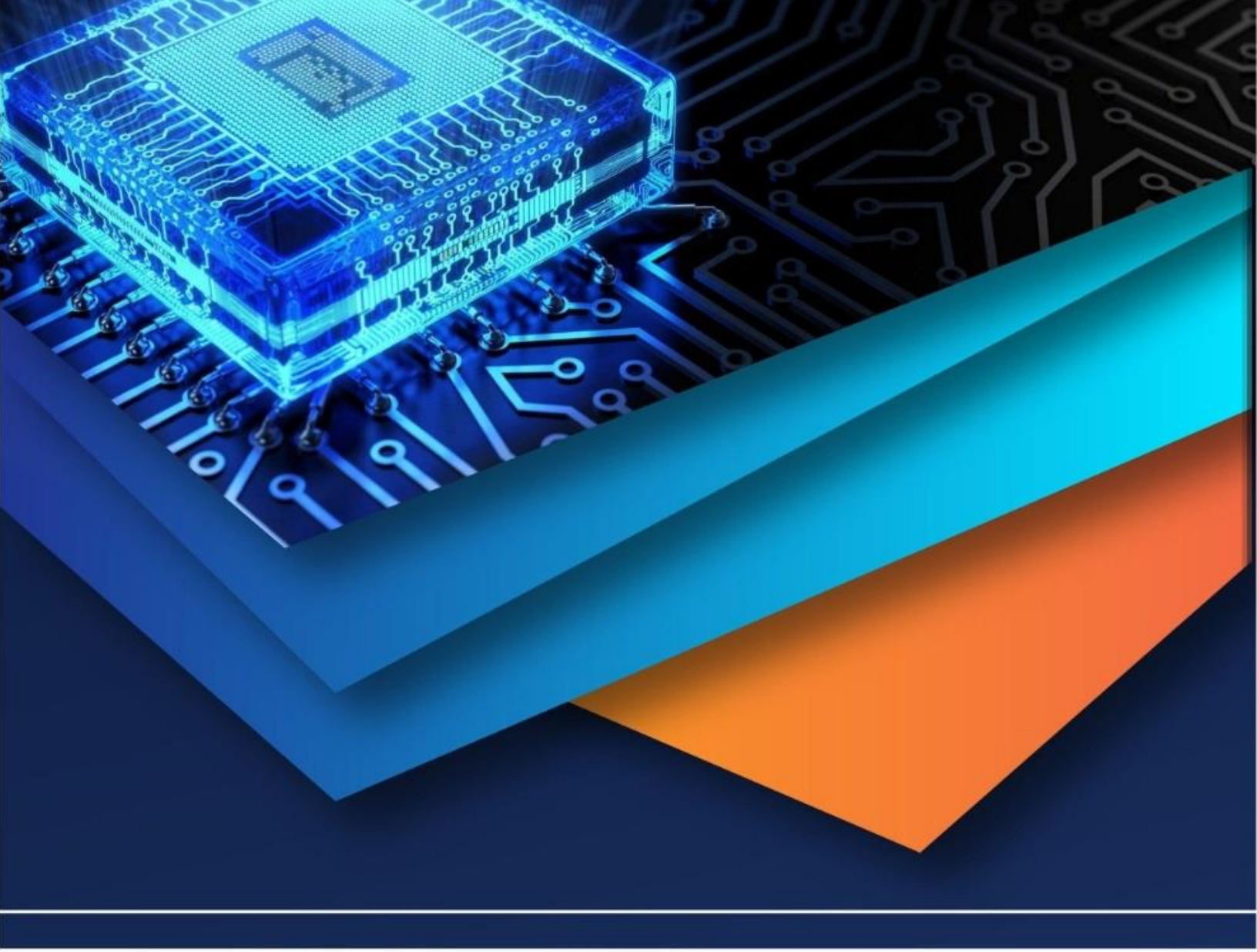
VII. CONCLUSION

Thus, the answers to these questions have immediate repercussions on teaching method and on the organization of the courses. The study aims to find if such a course in technical English is necessary for the budding engineers prior to the commencement of their vocation. Further, it focuses on devising such a course that fulfills the demand of the professionals. Ultimately it thrives to explore the existence of a general technical vocabulary.

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