A Brief Study of Curriculum and Syllabus for ESP/EST Courses

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1

Abstract

Most often, the words syllabus and curriculum are used synonymously. Nunan (1989) says, "Curriculum is concerned with planning, implementation, evaluation, management and administration of educational programmes, syllabus on the other hand, focuses more narrowly on file selection and gradation of contents." All syllabuses are aimed at helping the learners learn English, and they are organized depending on what they focus on. Syllabuses are mainly two types: structural syllabus /product-based syllabus and procedural syllabus / process-oriented syllabus.

Keywords: Curriculum, Syllabus, ESP/EST, Product-Based Syllabus, Process-Oriented Syllabus

Introduction

Engineering students need mastery in English Language for academic needs and for their employability skills. The students of science and technology should learn English so that the teachers of EST (English for science and technology) ought to design and develop the EST course/syllabus in order to meet the needs of engineering students. English for science and technology or EST is a sub category of the larger field of English for Specific Purposes in which it shares some basic characteristics with the larger field of ESP (Rao, C S, 2014, 2017).

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) have defined a course as "An integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge." According to Munby (1978), "ESP courses are those where the syllabus and the materials are determined by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner."

Designing an ESP syllabus/course is considerably complex and the designers of ESP syllabus should be aware of the different functions in order to meet the needs of the students.

According to Dudley-Evans, ESP meets specific needs of learners and makes use of methods and activities of disciplines it serves (Dudley-Evans, 1997). It also centers on the language aspects appropriate to these activities like grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse and genre. ESP Course possesses a recognizable mixture of features of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, symbols, styles, etc. and also incorporates a greater content of 'scientific English' which has some special vocabulary, special symbols and also employs 'logical grammatical operators' (if, although, unless, whenever, etc.) with great precision. EST, an offshoot of ESP, is characterised by:

- the use of specialized terminology

- stylistic conventions like the use of impersonal tone

- the frequent use of the passive voice

- low redundancy

- long and complicated sentences

- little use of synonyms

- the use of standard phrases in deeds and contracts for instance

Curriculum and Syllabus

Curriculum is a general concept that reflects the philosophical and theoretical views on language and language learning, teacher-learner relationship and roles. It defines the general goals of language education and acquisition and also takes into account administrative and evaluative considerations. According to Robertson (1971), "Curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for

pupils both in and out of the school and community through classroom instruction and related programmes."

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Taba (1962) suggests seven points that are to be considered before constituting curriculum:

- diagnosing educational needs

- formulating objectives

- selection of contents

- organization of contents

- selection of learning experiences

- organization of learning experiences and determining the ways and means of evaluating the effectiveness of what is taught

J. Galen Saylor, William M. Alexander, and Arthur J. Lewis (1981): "We define curriculum as a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives for an identifiable population served by a single school center for persons to be educated."

Difference between Curriculum and Syllabus

The difference between curriculum and syllabus is clear. Shaw (1975) says, "... the curriculum includes the goals, objectives, content, processes, resources, and means of evaluation of all the learning experiences planned for pupils both in and out of the school and community, through

classroom instruction and related programs..." He then defines "syllabus" as "a statement of the plan for any part of the curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself."

Allen (1984) defines 'Curriculum' is a very general concept, considering philosophical, social and administrative factors in view of planning of an educational programme. Then 'Syllabus' is referring to the subpart of a curriculum, concerned with the specification of what units will be taught. According to Noss and Rodgers (1976), a language syllabus is a set of justifiable, educational objectives specified in terms of linguistic content. Here the specification of objectives must have something to do with language form or substance, such as the use of language in situations, or language as a means of communication.

"Syllabus is a list or inventory of items or units for teaching with which learners are to be familiarized, (Johnson, 1982 and Crombie, 1985). Mackey (1981) says, "a syllabus provides a rationale of how that content should be selected and ordered to specify the content of learning." According to Candlin (1984), syllabuses are social constructions, produced interdependently in classrooms by teachers and learners ... They are concerned with the specification and planning of what is to be learned, frequently set down in some written form as prescriptions for action by teachers and learners. In the words of Breen (1984), basically, a syllabus can be seen as a plan of what is to be achieved through our teaching and our students learning, whereas, Prabhu (1984) says, its function is to specify what is to be taught and in what order.

Syllabus Types

There are different types of syllabuses for teaching English, their characteristics and the advantages and disadvantages pertaining to each. All syllabuses are aimed at helping the learners learn English, and they are organized depending on what they focus on. Some syllabuses focus on the end product- structural syllabus and others focus on the process- the procedural syllabus. So, the syllabuses are mainly two types: structural syllabus /product-based syllabus and procedural syllabus / process-oriented syllabus.

N. S. Prabhu (1983) makes a distinction between the product- and process oriented syllabus as: "A syllabus can be seen to have either or both of two major roles. It is, on the one hand, an

articulation of what is intended to be taught, and, on the other, an indication of what is to be done in the classroom. In its first role, the syllabus is an analysis of the objectives or content of teaching and may be said to be product-based….   In its second role, the syllabus is a specification of the means envisaged for achieving objectives and may be said to be process-based," (Prabhu, 1983:1)

Product-based syllabuses: there are four varieties of syllabuses - structural /grammatical syllabus, situational syllabus, functional syllabus, and lexical syllabus.

- Structural syllabus focuses on teaching words and structures; it is also called a grammatical or linguistic syllabus as it is centred on grammatical items such as articles, the singular and plural, the tense and adverbial forms.

- Situational syllabus concentrates on the situations in which the learners are likely to use the language and tries to give them the language for communicating with people in those situations. in this syllabus, a conscious attempt has been made to help the learners use the language in those situations. But the syllabus is not designed for language use outside those situations.

- Functional syllabus is based on the learners' perceived needs. The learners will be motivated to learn because the syllabus makes sense to them. They are provided opportunities to use English as a tool of communication in different settings. They are given the language to express different functions.

- Lexical syllabus tries to teach the learners the commonest words along with their meanings and the commonest patterns in which they are used so that learners can use the language for communication.

Process-Oriented Syllabus: Process-oriented syllabus focuses on the process of learning, which is *what* decides the *how*, *why* and *what* of learning. It is analytical and open to everyone to be analyzed and experienced, as it is not fixed one. It provides the teachers several chances of planning in the form of tasks rather than objectives, in the form of different activities the class

becomes student oriented rather than teacher oriented. The task-based, skill-based and content-based syllabuses come under this Process-oriented syllabus.

- Task-Based Syllabus is designed in order to complete some complex and meaningful tasks, and to develop language competence through the very process of performing of the task. The language learnt comes out of the linguistic demands of the activity. Task-based syllabus promotes and encourages collaborative learning.

- Skill-Based Syllabus is to teach some specific skills which are needed in using a language. Skill-based syllabus focuses on development of skills and makes the learners confident. It is designed and implemented considering the learners' cognitive levels. Skill-based syllabus group linguistic competencies (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and discourse) together into generalized types of behavior, such as listening to the spoken language for the main idea, writing-well formed paragraphs, specific purpose writing and so on.

- Content-Based Syllabus is designed in view of teaching some content or information in a language in which the focus is on the development of language through classroom activities. It enhances the language through different contents and/or in the context of various types of information. It is designed to promote cognitive skills and to involve the integration of subject matter (what to talk about) and linguistic matter (how to talk about).

Conclusion

ESP courses are those where the syllabus and the materials are determined by the prior analysis of the communication needs of the learner (Munby, 1978). Designing an ESP syllabus/course is considerably complex and the designers of ESP syllabus should be aware of the different functions in order to meet the needs of the students.

Most often, the words syllabus and curriculum are used synonymously. Nunan (1989) says, "Curriculum is concerned with planning, implementation, evaluation, management and

administration of educational programmes, syllabus on the other hand, focuses more narrowly on file selection and gradation of contents." All syllabuses are aimed at helping the learners learn English.

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8