Chapter Seven

Guidelines For A New Curriculum/Syllabus

7.1 Introduction

The new policy on education (NPE), 1985 Ministry of Education, Govt. of India insisted on taking stock of ELT in the country to suggest measures for improvement of the standards of English. As part of the NPE, the curriculum development centres (CDC) were set up at the selected universities to prepare learner centred modern curriculum. The main focus of this move was to appreciate the need for the introduction of learner-centred, research oriented methods in the instructional system which would enable the learner to engage himself in creative and divergent thinking, learning through problem solving, self learning, and to explore new avenues of communication, productive work as well innovation through such methods as simultaneous project work and the like.

Within the framework of the existing tertiary education, the investigator, in the light of the experiences provided by the investigation (study), feels that the following guidelines, in the preparation of curriculum and syllabus will, largely, improve the language proficiency of the learners to suit their professional and social requirements.

7-1.1 This sort of experimentation, analysis and improvement of curriculum and syllabus has to be an on going process, if they are to yield the desired result.

Curriculum / Syllabus
7.1.2 Instead of prescribing textbooks, comprehensible input must be provided in large quantities.

The study has revealed that the student variability is of wide range and a curriculum cannot neglect the requirements of the learners’ varied level of proficiency. The texts prescribed at present takes into consideration only the average learners. There should be sufficient scope for the selection of material, comprehensible for the learners of low proficiency and challenging to above average learners. The learners whose proficiency is much below the average level on account of reasons beyond their control can select from among the course materials, items to suit their level of proficiency and investing more time and effort the learner can, within a fixed time come up to the level of other students in the class. Similarly, those who are very proficient by the time they join the course can also select challenging and motivating material to enhance their proficiency, without any feeling of loss of time. They can go ahead with better achievements. Until the range of student variability is reduced to an admissible level this has to continue. Sufficient remedial measures, followed by close monitoring will have to be an essential part of classroom activity.

7.1.3 The range of vocabulary and structure of the course has to be fixed, based on the profile of the average learner who joins the course, with allowances for the above average and below average learners. The course must be designed in such a way as to ensure the learning of a particular number of vocabulary and structures. The list has to be prepared, based on the principles of the selection of vocabulary for teaching
English as a foreign / second language. The list has to be revised as per the requirements of the learners from time to time. This revision has to be an integral part of course designs. The inexplicable advancement in knowledge and information has caused the emergence of a number of vocabularies, inevitable for day today communication of every educated individual. A list of these words has to be identified and made apart of the language teaching/learning programme.

7.1.4 At least a considerable section of the language input must be comprehensible to the learners of low proficiency.

7.1.5. The language input must be relevant to the learner’s socio-political economic, and cultural background, his values and his perception of the status and importance the language he is learning, since the input is expected to make the learners responsible citizens.

7.1.6. Each unit of language exercises, tasks and the activity should create a great amount of genuine communicative pressure on the part of the learners.

7.1.6. Though the ultimate product of language learning is an accurate phonologic, grammatical and semantic system, the learning experiences provided by means of the course books and classroom interaction should not stick to accuracy alone.

The causes of each mistake committed by the learner have to be analysed and the strategies to correct them have to be evolved, without affecting fluency.

7.1.7. Language is more ‘acquired’ than explicitly and formally ‘learnt’. So strategies for learner – learner interaction, teacher learner interaction and learner – textbook
interaction have to be evolved. Learning experiences provided have to be learner centred.

7.1.8. Promotion of group work is found to be an effective method of learning language. In addition to this it, will help the overall development of the learners.

7.1.9. Teaching of grammar has to be incidental.

7.1.10. Emphasis is to be given for fluency in the early stages of learning rather than for grammatical and phonological accuracy.

7.1.11. Any authentic material, with which the learners are familiar, has to be made use of, for teaching vocabulary and grammar. Even the subjects they learn, as part of the degree course must be made a suitable vehicle, which can be utilized by language teachers to teach English.

7.1.12. Learning is at present confined to the classroom. This must change. Tasks and exercises should be organized to enable the learners to learn language outside the classroom. This must be in such a way as to promote extra-reading and writing tasks.

7.1.13. The habit of developing the correct pronunciation of words and sentences has to be initiated at every level of learning / teaching. Each learner has to be given occasion to express himself in the target language with appropriate word stress, sentence stress and intonation. Appropriate strategies to develop oral proficiency have to be evolved.

This is because language teaching primarily aims at preparing the learner to behave appropriately and purposefully in a variety of social situations. Every stage in
the development of language teaching/learning has been directly related to the developments in other branches of human knowledge.

7.1.14. The system of evaluation must be restructured thoroughly. It must be an integral part of the teaching / learning activity and not to be confined to the end of the course or end of the term examination. Testing as part of classroom teaching must be designed in such a way as to ensure learning on the part of the learner to a satisfactory level. This is by no means an easy task. Much study and research is required to do anything effective in this direction.

    There should be provision for maintaining a cumulative record of the achievement of each learner in the class and this should be based on the performance of the learner in every language class. This is to be made in the most transparent way leaving no scope for any complaint.

7.1.15. Curriculum is taken to be a broad and inclusive statement about policies, principles, beliefs, assumptions, procedures, objectives, materials and testing tools. These must be made in clear terms, in minute details, leaving no doubt on the part of the teachers/learners.

7.1.16. In order to create awareness on the part of teachers about the curriculum, syllabus and use of textbooks, orientation programmes have to be organized. The teachers must also be given, if necessary, awareness of the areas associated with teaching/learning such as socio linguistics, psycho linguistics, phonology, phonetics, methods of teaching, material production, evaluation methods as also the training in the appreciation of various genres of literature.
7.1.17. Right from the beginning stage of curriculum development, evaluation comes in. The selection of what to each and decisions on how to teach are based on value judgments formed based on the information available, whether this information is intuitively or empirically arrived at. The design and construction of appropriate evaluation instruments also follow from the objective formulated.

The objectives of teaching each teaching/learning unit have to be clearly spelt out. Focus on the four basic language skills and their sub skills are to be more or less equally ensured. UGC curriculum development centre, the central institute of English and foreign languages, and various universities in the country are organizing various workshops, to restructure the existing ELT programmes in the light of ever widening requirements of English language proficiency on the part of the younger generation. The rationale of the curriculum is built on a total change in traditional thinking about ELT, making a swing away from literature towards communicative use of language in social and professional contexts.

7.1.18. From the very beginning of the investigation the investigator has identified the English teachers as the stakeholders of whole process of English education at the tertiary level. With the emergence of the present global situation, the teachers have to be geared up to adjust themselves with the new situations. Therefore, the teachers are expected to adopt flexible teaching approach that results in the success of learners. To do this the teacher must first know each student’s level of proficiency in order to provide appropriate teaching material and methodology to ensure appropriate teaching.
Teachers should not only be aware of the scope of, new technological civilization in the sphere of teaching and learning but also have to be conversant and well equipped in using this technology effectively.

Teachers must be able to specify all the linguistic materials and instructions for its presentation. The teachers must keep themselves abreast of the changing trends in education.

The teachers should also ensure that the developments in technology are made use of, in promoting learning. At the same time they are to be, aware that the increased use of technology, in no way diminishes the role of teachers. For the same reason the pre-service training and in service training of teachers assure wider significance. Yet, another task of the teachers is to take responsibility for their learning and bringing about necessary attitudinal changes in them.

The tertiary level English course in colleges affiliated to the University of Kerala remains unchanged for along time, in spite of the shift of emphasis of learning it as a library language to a language of effective communication. No English teacher, who is sensitive to the functions, and roles that language plays in development of society, in relation to the unprecedented developments taking place across the world, can ignore the unjustifiable deterioration that has been taking place during the last few decades. The recent educational reforms which assigns top priority to technical and professional education has further been instrumental in marginalizing undergraduate education in science and humanities and languages. The academic bodies responsible
for keeping up the status and dignity of the courses turn their back on this crucial problem. It is in this educational context that the investigator felt it imperative to attempt to study the intensity of the problem to evolve certain measures to improve teaching/-learning English at the undergraduate level.

In the course of the study the investigator realized, how important language is in the all-round development of the individual and the society. It also provided occasion to distinguish the approaches required for acquiring mother tongue, second language and foreign language. It was also felt imperative to conduct an appropriate field study to make the investigation authentic.