Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1. OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING TECHNICAL ENGLISH IN ENGINEERING COLLEGES

The present thesis “A Case Study and Analysis of Course--Content, Materials And ESP Curriculum Design in Teaching Technical English and Communicative Skills in Select Engineering Colleges” is an attempt at pointing out some of the much-overlooked lacunae that exist in the pedagogy of English at the Engineering level; four State Universities have been taken for research; two of them are State managed Universities and two are privately managed Deemed Universities. They are: Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar; Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (Kakinada); Koneru Lakshmaiah University and Vignan University, Guntur. The study also aims to critique the pedagogy of Technical English at the Engineering level with specific reference to the objectives of teaching/learning English. The study is concerned with the practice of teaching and its productive results, rather than the ideology of teaching English. It also makes an attempt at suggesting measures to better the existing conditions.

In the Post-Colonial Indian context, many “Roles of English” have come under close scrutiny, and English has become a term representing not merely “language and literature,” but a divergent range of areas. English has become as large and capacious as a subject, as Prof. K. Narayan Chandran comments in A Companion to English in India: Reflections on a Project and a Proposal:

English is now generally understood not only as ‘language and literature’ (as it used to be) but also as an instrument for the institutional and cultural practices that underpin them. Literature
and other arts; literature, philosophy, and the social sciences; disciplinary measures and categories that involve translation, creative writing, media and gender studies, and many more. English may be shown to mediate crucially, or it may be gainfully aligned for professional purposes (2001: 17).

English has been playing varied roles as mentioned above, though no attempt has been made by any institution or body to evolve a definitive plan of action for realising the success of any of these roles. As far as the tertiary courses of higher education are concerned, some institutions helped in strengthening the professional courses in the national system of education; they are: University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Indian Medical Council (IMC). In 1968, the National Policy on Education (NPE) laid emphasis on the study of English and other international languages. The NPE insisted that India must not only keep pace with scientific and technological knowledge, but should also contribute to it significantly. It is for this purpose that the study of English is required to be strengthened.

As the present research concentrates on English in the Engineering and Technological institutes, it would be worthwhile to look at the norms of AICTE the body which monitors the technical education in the country. AICTE ensures the co-ordination and integrated development of technical and management education. It is exhilarating to note that at this level considerable thrust has been given to various disciplines; it is also depressing that very little importance is being given to English language which is, at present, the language of communication on the global scenario. AICTE is vested with the statutory authority for planning, formulation and maintenance of norms and standards, accreditation, funding priority areas, monitoring and evaluation, maintenance of parity of
certification and awards, and ensuring the co-ordinated and integrated development of technical and management education. A duly constituted Accreditation Board conducts the mandatory periodic evaluation to maintain the desired standards.

1.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF OBJECTIVES

Objectives play a very important role in indicating the direction of an educational programme in which teaching, learning and evaluation have to operate. They are crucial in making these three processes methodical and systematic. They indicate a starting point in planning. As Ivor Kevin Davies has rightly put it, “They are an ideal, an aspiration and a direction in which to go” (1976: 12). Objectives are vital in making educational activities valuable, fruitful and worthwhile.

In an ideal situation, the objectives of the course are translated into reality by the teachers with the help of certain teaching methods and materials. Thus, the teachers, methods and the syllabus are just a means to realise the objectives of the course. In other words, they are expected to execute the formulated objectives of the course which, in turn, are based on the needs of the students. When a course does not take the needs of the students into consideration, it will not be meaningful for them. Robert Frank Mager has stated that it is indispensable to have objectives in any educational programme because “If you’re not sure where you’re going, you’re liable to end up at someplace else and not even know it” (1975: vi).

1.2.1 The Rationale for Using Objectives in an Educational Programme

Having acknowledged the fact that objectives decide the success of any educational programme, it is necessary to examine the rationale for using them.
Educational Accountability

As teaching like any other enterprise, represents an investment in human and financial resources, it is essential that whatever is done by way of teaching is accounted for. Accountability entails a balance between investment (in terms of both money and man-hours) and student learning. If an educational endeavour, like any other endeavour, has to prove its success or utility to the society, it must have a set of explicit objectives which everyone involved in the endeavour is aware of.

Educational Accountability can be translated into reality only when the objectives are made explicit and a demonstration of the extent to which these objectives have been realised is made at the end of an educational endeavour. Merely stating a list of objectives does not ensure educational accountability. What is needed is a circulation of these objectives among all the participants who are involved in the endeavour and also among the people who are interested in it.

In the syllabi of most Universities, the objectives are categorically mentioned. As both the teachers and students are given the copies of syllabus in technical/professional colleges, it is assumed that they are aware of the objectives of the course. But a look at the performance and proficiency of second and third year Engineering Students make us wonder if there is an attempt on the part of the teachers to fulfil the given objectives. This is where educational accountability plays a significant role in matching the objectives with the final result of the course completed by the students.

Thus, as far as ensuring educational accountability is concerned, having a set of objectives for a course is as good as not having any objectives at all if they are not
known to the beneficiaries and not carried out by the executioners, and ultimately are not achieved. In such a situation, the objectives often remain unfulfilled.

❖ **Facilitation of Course Design and Syllabus Design**

Given a specific set of well formulated objectives, the task of designing the Course and Syllabus becomes easy, in that the designers have some guidelines in the form of objectives to proceed with their respective tasks. In this context, one has to bear in mind that the Syllabus Design is only a part of the Course Design. A Course Design includes not only the syllabus but also methods, evaluation procedures, administrative aspects etc.

A syllabus must reflect the objectives; and, the course is meant for their realisation. Coordination between syllabus and course design presupposes a set of explicit objectives. A glance at the objectives given in the syllabus in this context has revealed that they are neither meticulously worked out nor do they contain any specificity. For instance, Acharya Nagarjuna University mentions that the objective of teaching “Technical English Communication Skills Course” is to make the learners “linguistically aware and communicatively competent.” It also demands that “special attention” should be paid “to contemporary texts on language and industrial needs.” These phrases appear mere rhetoric in the absence of the awareness of the teacher on the communicative method of teaching; and, the inadequacy of the language texts to cater to the desired objectives.

The main drawback of teaching English in India is clearly evident in this context. The facts to be noted are as follows:
i. The teachers of English in India possess a Post-Graduation qualification (M.A.) in English Literature. This course contains modules from English literature of different periods-1400 A.D. to the present - and writing in English from different countries (Commonwealth literature, American literature, Canadian literature, African literature, Indo-Anglican literature etc.). These inputs, no doubt make them enhance their knowledge of literatures in English. But what they have to teach in Engineering colleges is purely functional English which is the need of the hour. In the absence of proper orientation on Technical English and English Language teaching methodology, even a brilliant teacher might fail to fulfil the objectives given in the syllabus of technical English.

ii. The Technical English syllabus is provided with a long list of books for reference, without any information and guidelines on the books useful for particular units. The untrained teachers cannot use these reference books in the absence of micro details concerning the syllabus and the specific material prepared to deliver the syllabus; and more so in the absence of any hint on the methodology. For instance, Koneru Lakshmaiah and Vignan Universities mentioned different topics in their prescribed syllabus. In the same way, Unit II of Acharya Nagarjuna University mentions “Corporate Information” without any hint on what should be dealt with under that heading. Similarly “technical words” are supposed to be taught; but the list of words is not given.

❖ Making the Teaching Objective-Oriented

The objectives of a course give direction to teaching and make it an objective
oriented activity which would prove to be meaningful and purposeful. A constant watch and review by the teachers and the students has to be taken up as the fulfilment of objectives is to be monitored. Success has to be measured in terms of empowerment of the student but not on terms of completion of the syllabus. This can be achieved only by making the entire teaching, interactive activity learner-oriented and through continuous assessment.

❖ **Facilitation Evaluation of Student Learning**

Evaluation is an inseparable part of any course. The purpose of evaluation is to test how far a specified set of objectives has been realised. Objectives enable to test the learning capacity of the students. They act as guidelines by providing information about what should go into the evaluation procedures. In other words, the evaluation procedures must not only test the students on how far the specified objectives have been realised by them, but also assess the success of the teachers in delivering the material meaningfully.

❖ **Facilitation Evaluation of Teacher Performance, Teaching Materials, Methods and Evaluation Procedures**

Objectives provide a yardstick with which one can gauge the success and efficiency of the teacher performance, teaching methods and materials. If a course fails in the realisation of its objectives, there could be many reasons for it; the chief among them being the use of improper methods, materials and evaluation procedures. One cannot realise the given objectives without adopting the right methods of teaching and testing. Since methods, materials and evaluation procedures are a means to achieve the objectives, one cannot evaluate their success and
effectiveness without gauging them. Thus, objectives become indispensable in evaluating the methods, materials and evaluation procedures of a course.

Besides the functions listed above, the objectives of the course may serve many more functions, but objectives by themselves are of no use unless they are realised.

1.2.2 Formulation of Objectives

Having argued that one cannot really do away with objectives in conducting any course successfully, it becomes imperative that one knows the sources from which the objectives are derived. The sources of objectives one chooses are dependent on the kind of educational philosophy that underlies the thinking. There is no single answer to the question “What are the sources of objectives?” However, at present, considerable emphasis is placed on need-based learning/teaching and the needs of the students should serve as the sole source of objectives.

There are basically three ways in which objectives figure in the process of planning. A detailed account of these three ways is given by Ivor Kevin Davies in his book entitled *Objectives in Curriculum Design* (1976: 86). The three ways are:

   i. Systematic Planning
   ii. Expedient Planning
   iii. Piecemeal Planning

i. **Systematic Planning**

In Systematic Planning, objectives are formulated first and the means to achieve these objectives are determined next. Systematic Planning is based on Ralph Winfred Tyler’s model (1949: 5-47), that is to say; objectives are derived from a study of learners, society and the discipline concerned.
ii. **Expedient Planning**

In Expedient Planning, the reverse of what happens in Systematic Planning takes place. The ends or objectives are formulated after defining the means. The planning is not from objectives to means, but from means to objectives. On the face of it, this kind of planning might seem illogical and irrational but it is after all expedient.

iii. **Piecemeal Planning**

In Piecemeal Planning neither the end nor the means is predetermined in clear cut terms. It involves a merging of ends and means. As the name itself suggests, no master plan is drawn in advance. Instead, the objectives are formulated in a Piecemeal Planning, keeping certain aims at the backdrop. There is no one thing always determining the other. That is to say, neither the objectives nor the means have control over each other. It is a very flexible kind of planning in that, it can incorporate at any stage any new discoveries related to either the subject matter or the means or the objectives themselves.

Given these three alternative kinds of planning, one must decide on the best way of planning necessary for designing Technical English Course at professional level. If one follows the Systematic Planning meticulously, it has the demerit of isolating ends and means as two successive steps in the process, rather than recognising them as two integral parts of a whole. If one follows Expedient Planning *in toto*, it has the limitation of the means constraining the system from having objectives that are beyond the available means. Piecemeal Planning might be ideal in a situation where deciding on the objectives and means is carried out by the teachers at the classroom level. Implementing Piecemeal
Planning requires expertise on the part of the teachers and it also means decentralisation of education.

Perhaps a combination of all the three types of planning mentioned above would be ideal for Technical English at the Professional level. Apparently, it might seem impossible to blend these three conflicting ways of planning. But an eclectic blend of these three modes is not as impossible as it might seem and it can be done by an effective teacher, based on the needs of the students.

1.3 THE OBJECTIVES OF TECHNICAL ENGLISH COURSE IN ENGINEERING DISCIPLINES

An attempt has been made here to enumerate the implicit and explicit objectives of the Technical English in Engineering disciplines.

Based on the responses of the teachers and the syllabi of different Universities, a general tentative list of some implicit and explicit objectives of Technical English Course in Engineering disciplines has been prepared and these objectives are enumerated below in their descending order of importance.

- To develop in the students the critical ability to judge the texts prescribed dispassionately.
- To prepare the students to face competitive examinations such as GRE, TOEFL, CAT, CAD, GMAT etc.
- To prepare the students for post graduate courses in their respective disciplines.
- To inculcate certain “moral” and “ethical” values in the students.
- To familiarise the students with Technical English texts of different countries and to make them capable to understand these texts.
➢ To develop in the students the ability to communicate their ideas cogently and effectively.

➢ To develop in the students “Oral Communicative Skills and Soft Skills.”

➢ To stimulate in the students a “desire” to read even beyond the prescribed texts.

➢ To prepare the students for the needs of a job and building up a career.

➢ To develop in the students a taste for “Technical English.”

How far the stated objectives of Technical English in Engineering disciplines are operational through the three most important components of the course namely – syllabus, methods and evaluation, has to be examined.

➢ **To develop in the students the critical ability to judge the texts prescribed dispassionately**

The students of Engineering disciplines come from different academic backgrounds and might follow different learning methods during their earlier period of study. They need the ability to understand and to analyse their academic texts in an objective manner and according to the context.

➢ **To prepare the students to face competitive examinations such as GRE, TOEFL, CAT, CAD, GMAT etc.**

This objective of preparing the students for important competitive examinations has to be taken care of, by the syllabi of the selected Universities. It is be noted that even English medium students, who study English as a subject of study, from the L.K.G. to the Graduation, under the 2+10+2+4 pattern, for nearly eighteen years, are also in need of taking special coaching to appear for competitive examinations at national and
international levels. The Technical English that they study during their Engineering course and its components does not match the level of language proficiency expected in these examinations. Though the objectives of English courses at Engineering level make a mention of the language skills - vocabulary enhancement, composition etc., the inferior quality of the course materials and unsuitable methodologies of teaching and testing followed in India belie the hope of students to acquire the required English language proficiency.

If at all this implicit objective has to be realised, the Universities should adopt similar course materials and the same testing methodologies followed in these examinations. Alternatively, intensive training in English could be given in the third year of Engineering to the students who desire to take such tests. This training would enable them to succeed in the tests.

➢ To prepare the students for post graduate courses in their respective disciplines

In order to prepare the technical graduates for higher courses, intensive teaching in technical English is imperative. As is followed by most of the Universities abroad, ESP (English for Specific Purposes) should be offered to the first year Engineering students. If it is found, on diagnosis, that they do not possess the required proficiency in English, they should be given an English course in the first year of study to bring them upto the mark. Technical English course could be offered in their second year.

➢ To inculcate certain “moral” and “ethical” values in the students

The students of the first year Engineering courses are usually in the age group of 17-19 years. That is a volatile period of their life, where they feel that they are adults,
though they are not yet adults. After facing the entrance examinations they wish to enjoy a new-won sense of freedom. It is at this stage of their life that they should be shaped on right lines. Value-education goes a long way in shaping the character and conduct of the students in this age-group, the importance of which they are also realising. In this respect, the response of the first year JNTU(K) Engineering students to their prescribed textbook, Dr. Abdul Kalam’s *Wings of Fire* is worth noting.

This book has two advantages:

i. It inculcates reading habit in the students and improves reading proficiency.

ii. It increases their ambition and provides direction in their life.

➢ **To familiarise the students with Technical English texts of different countries and to make them capable of understanding these texts**

To achieve this objective, the students could be encouraged to browse the Internet for information on various subjects and fields for preparing essays on them. Internal assessment can include some assignments which demand such reference work by the students. This exercise has the following advantages:

i. It encourages the students to do independent reading.

ii. It develops in them a taste for extra information and thirst for knowledge.

iii. If the topics are chosen from technical field, it improves their proficiency in Technical fields.

➢ **To develop the ability to read with comprehension and write cogently and effectively**

This objective is probably the most explicitly mentioned one in the syllabi of all the Universities. Within the syllabi in Acharya Nagarjuna University,
Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (Kakinada), Koneru Lakshmaiah University and Vignan University, there is no prerequisite for this particular objective. There is no special or exclusive module pertaining to the development of the ability in Reading or Writing. Even in teaching, this objective gets hardly any focus. The ability to read or write cogently and effectively is something which can be acquired only with adequate practice. Every time the students attempt something in reading or writing, they need to know their individual lapses. This demands considerable personal effort on the part of the teacher. But, the Engineering students of all the disciplines hardly get any practice in reading or writing. It would be appropriate to quote here the words of Francis Bacon: “Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man” (1941: 15).

The objective of improving the Reading or Writing skills of the students, thus, is not operational through the course, either in its content or in its teaching methodology. Most students manage not only to just scrape through but also get first classes despite their poor reading and Writing Skills. Though unpalatable, the reason for this state of affairs is that most of the teachers in Engineering colleges do not possess expertise in evaluating appropriately. To impart any skill to a group of students, particularly in a large class, the teachers should have thorough expertise. The teachers of English in Engineering colleges are expected to impart the required spoken and written skills to their students. This exercise depends on the following factors:
i. The homogeneity and heterogeneity factors in English language proficiency of the students.

ii. The ability of the teacher to teach communication skills to the students.

iii. The number of classes allotted for English.

iv. The infrastructure and other facilities provided by the college authorities.

The real scenario reveals that most of the Engineering graduates do not possess adequate communication skills in English despite their technical brilliance. A survey says that 83% of Engineering graduates are unemployable. Hence, it can be concluded that efforts and results do not match the laudable objectives given in the English syllabi of these Universities.

➢ To develop “Oral Communication Skills” and “Soft Skills” of the students

This objective, the most important one in the context of the present thesis, is concerned with promoting communication skills of the students. It includes the development of communicative abilities both in speech and writing. This is the most important objective from the point of view of the students. But the course as such seems to do very little towards the realisation of this objective. What the course offers in the form of its Technical English Communication Skills does not cater either to the objectives of the course or students.

What is required for the students is an exclusive paper on communication skills and a different orientation to the teaching methodology that is currently used by most of the teachers of the professional courses. Teaching through the stereotyped lecture method does not help the students at all in developing their
oral communication skills. Latest ELT methodology and teaching techniques have to be adopted to promote communicative competence among the students. Various techniques should be used in the classroom in order to promote the communication skills of the students.

➢ To stimulate a “desire” to read even beyond the prescribed texts in the students

This objective is akin to the first objective in that, its realisation depends on many factors like the methodology, the course material provided, the students’ general attitude towards it and their motivation.

During the survey conducted for this research, the following two questions are posed to the first year Engineering students of different disciplines.

- Have you read all the units in the prescribed texts?
- How many English books have you read in the first year, which are not prescribed for your study?

The responses of the students to these two questions have not been positive. Quite expectedly, most of them conceded that they have not read even the prescribed texts. In all the classes surveyed, there was not a single student who has read all the prescribed textbooks. In one section, there is only one student who has read two of the prescribed textbooks; and, all the others have confessed to have tried reading only one or two textbooks. The two chief reasons, most of them have stated for not reading even the prescribed textbooks, are: 1) want of time; and, 2) unintelligibility of the textbooks. Apparently their pace of reading is slow and hence they are not able to finish reading even half of the prescribed
textbooks. The objective of encouraging the students to read beyond the prescribed syllabus in an ESL (English as a Second Language) situation is an ideal one; but, in this scenario, it hardly gets operational.

- **To prepare the students for the needs of a job and building up a career**

  This objective is the most practical of all in the sense that it pertains to the most practical requirements of the students. This objective is not directly reflected in the syllabus, except in a small component called English Language Teaching (ELT).

- **To develop a taste for “Technical English” in the students**

  The syllabi of Technical English should create an interest and aptitude towards the course among the students. Through formal and informal talks with the students and through the tests conducted, it is noted that many of the Engineering students do not show enthusiasm towards their Technical English syllabus. They are of the opinion that Technical English is one amongst their technical subjects.

1.4 PROFILES

The profiles of teachers and students who take part in the survey are placed in a sequence in an order to assess their background, their perceptions on the course which they are teaching and learning.

1.4.1 Profile of the Teachers

Teachers in the Engineering Colleges have the basic qualification of M.A. (Litt.); a few of them have M.Phil. Degree, which is also in English literature; and, very few
possess a doctoral degree. Most of them do not have any training in teaching or testing Technical English Courses prescribed for the students of Engineering disciplines. However, some exceptions are to be found; a few of them who have the Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching of English (PGDTE) from the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) (now EFLU), are well aware of the teaching methodology of English. The opinion of the teachers who do not have such training has also not been positive with reference to the handling of Technical English Courses in the Engineering Colleges.

1.4.2 Profile of the Students

The Engineering students in Andhra Pradesh come from diverse backgrounds and thus possess diverse levels of proficiency in English language. Due to this diversity in their academic backgrounds, there is a need to strike a balance between the conceptual and linguistic level of each learner. The encouraging factor is that these students who take admission into Engineering colleges usually possess a high degree of motivation to learn.

With such conditions prevailing in a language class room, a single approach towards teaching of English would be inadequate to meet the requirements of all the students. Use of different methods and materials of different levels, books specific to the communicative requirements of language have to be recommended when the students form such a heterogeneous group. Therefore, a learner–centred approach should be followed. Before this process of teaching - learning begins, a thorough analysis of the needs of the learners should be made; and, this should form the basis for designing the syllabus. As the target students here are prospective professionals, suitable ESP (English
for Specific Purposes) courses in English should be of prime choice: In view of Chris Kennedy, “The essence of ESP is in catering to the needs of particular groups of students, taking into account the variables and constraints involved” (1984: 1-15).

A single common course book to a heterogeneous group may arouse diverse feelings in the students; it may bring disillusionment to the abler students, while the average students may find it to be very suitable and the below average students may find the same text to be difficult. Chris Kennedy advocates in his book *The Future of English Language Teaching* (1984: 1-15), the introduction of three different course books, or, developing a course book, which can address the needs of learners at these three levels. This point, however, is controversial and requires an in-depth study.

**1.5 VITAL FOCUS OF THE THESIS AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY**

The vital focus of the thesis is on critiquing the objectives of teaching/learning Technical English at professional level. The most glaring deficiency in the pedagogy of Technical English lies at the grass root level. The incompatibility of various objectives is present both at the grass-root and system levels.

The following facts point at some of the most glaring gaps that exist in the pedagogy of Technical English at the Engineering level:

1. The First year students who belong to different disciplines in Engineering courses have English as a common subject. Most students expect their English paper to improve their communication skills (this is made evident in the survey conducted); but the course seems to do little, either directly or indirectly, with realising this particular desire or requirement of the students. This shows that the syllabus as well as testing patterns in English, as offered by different Universities, do not take into
account even the primary objectives of the English syllabus meant for professional students studying in the Engineering and Technology courses. Further, it also shows how oblivious and indifferent the courses have remained to the practical and realistic needs of the students.

2. There seems to be little compatibility between the objectives of the students and those of the teachers. Most students aspire that the course would somehow improve their English communication skills; but most of the teachers teach the course through the use of traditional methods which are teacher-centred rather than learner-centred.

3. The long-held objectives of the students and those of the teachers seem to be different from operational objectives. While most students do hold that improving their communication skills is their main objective in this course, they eventually give importance to securing a pass mark in the examination. The objective of passing the examination sidelines the primary objective of the students. Thus, there is a wide gap between the held and the operational objective of the students and that of the teachers.

4. Many a time, Technical English course does not seem to follow even the explicitly stated objectives, which renders the existing evaluation meaningless.

5. Admissions to Engineering courses are made through an open entrance examination irrespective of their medium of instruction at the +2 levels of different disciplines. Consequently, the disparate needs of the students coming from non-English medium background are not taken care of by the course.

6. Primarily at the beginning of the course one needs to conduct an examination to test the abilities and the capacities of the students in the course and divide them into
three categories--active learners, average learners and slow learners rather than following the present pattern of all the students of different capacities being put in one section.

A random sample of five scripts written by the first year Engineering students (2009-2010) on their first–day in the college testify to their diverse levels of proficiency in English in joining the course. It is this diversity in English proficiency of the students of the same class that has triggered the interest of this researcher. The question posed is: “What do you expect from this Technical English Paper in your course?”

7. Since there is no continuous and formative evaluation, the students do not get opportunities to write and to learn from their mistakes. In the entire four-year B.Tech. programme, students take just one examination at the end of their first academic year. Even this examination is conducted only with the sole purpose of awarding marks. The students do not get any feedback of their performance. They are never shown their scripts and are never apprised of the mistakes or errors in their writing. Consequently, the Writing Skills of the students do not show any considerable improvement even by the end of their four-year B.Tech. programme.

A random sample of five answer scripts taken from the students after completing their first year (2009-2010) substantiates the above mentioned observation. The question posed is: “What do you learn from this Technical English Paper in your course?” And the answers are not very encouraging.
1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The hypothesis of this thesis is to explore the English language needs of the students in Engineering disciplines and to examine how far these have been fulfilled through the prescribed English syllabus in the selected four Universities of the State of Andhra Pradesh. The responses of the students and teachers were elicited through a questionnaire. A critical analysis of the objectives of some of the more important questions given in the questionnaire becomes imperative to justify their suitability in the process of the survey conducted. The objective of each question is presented here:

Q.1. Do the Textbooks create an interest in you?

Creating an interest in language-learning plays a vital role. It produces effective second language communicators by creating interest in the learners. It successfully makes them continue their learning even after the achievement of the goal. To enable the English instructors to motivate such students, a number of methods, both implicit and explicit, are needed both within and outside the class room.

Speaking about the success of a second language learner, Johan Gorham and Diane Marie Millette in their article entitled “A Comparative Analysis of Teacher and Student Perceptions of Courses of Motivation and Demotivation in College Classes” in the journal, Communication Education have listed out the required prerequisites of language learning, all of which are interconnected with the factor of motivation:

Positive self-concept, high self-esteem, positive attitude, clear understanding of the goals for language learning, continuous active participation in the language learning process, the relevance of conductive environment that could contribute to the success of language learning (1997: 245-261).
In this context, a question arises whether the textbook provides necessary inspiration to the learners as well as to the teachers. The interest created alone makes them go forward to achieve the desired objectives. Regarding the fulfilment of the above objective in the syllabus, the opinions of the learners have been put together.

Q.2. Are the topics in the textbook relevant to the Engineering Course?

The topics in a language textbook should not only impart skills in the target language, but should also be relevant to the learners and the course. The textbook should provide material on the topics appropriate to the age, psychological and linguistic level of the learners. When the question is asked whether the concerned textbook is relevant to the Engineering course, the researcher could get diverse responses from the students of the selected Universities.

Q.3. Are the technical terms included in English syllabus properly designed?

As the syllabus of Technical English is designed for a specific purpose, it aims at introducing the technical terms. This objective is required to be properly defined as the learners are unfamiliar with Engineering subjects when they join the college. The learners are asked whether they are able to comprehend the technical terms, and if the definitions are clear. The response of the students to this question has been put together, to ascertain their level of comprehension.

Q.4. Do the technical materials in the textbook increase the technical knowledge of the learners or enhance the language learning?

The answers are glaringly transparent on the question whether the technical materials had helped to increase the technical knowledge or were helpful only in
enhancing language learning. The tilt has been towards the language-learning rather on the learning of Technical English.

Q.5. **Do the tasks in textbook encourage you to use your creativity?**

The materials in the textbooks give wings to the imagination of the students and bring out their creativity, apart from developing linguistic skills and providing information. It is important, therefore, that the students develop a love for books, particularly their textbooks and have unrestricted access to other books to satisfy their curiosity. Moreover, Creativity is an important factor of personality which endows new perceptions and helps perceive new relationships among old things or ideas. Providing a wide range of tasks to a learner can give confidence and sharpen creative abilities. This question has been posed to assess the capabilities of the students on the aspect such as sharpening their use of creativity.

Q.6. **Is the cover design attractive?**

It is true that a picture is worth thousand words and the cover design is not an exception. In fact, one of the major objectives that impress a reader to read the book is its cover page. The fact is that it creates a long lasting impression in the eyes of book-lovers. As Shakespeare said, “first impression is the best impression.” The cover sets the tone for the reading of the book and is so designed as to motivate the learners to focus their attention on learning.

Q.7. **Do you find it easy to use new words (vocabulary) in your interaction/in other situations?**

Vocabulary in any language cannot be learnt or is used merely in the classrooms.
Learning vocabulary in a language requires communication in real life situations. Thus, students need to acquire an array of communication skills that can enable them to use in various contexts, with different people.

Hussin, Maarof and D’Cruz (2001: 245-261) have stated that

What occurs in the language classrooms must be extended beyond the walls of the classroom so that a link is created between what is learned in the classrooms with what occurs outside of the classrooms.

One cannot deny the fact that if a person achieves competence in a language he/she ought to apply it in real life situations. It fulfils the objective of language learning. Hence, a question is asked whether the textbook helps the language development of the learners, and to what extent, so that the learnt language is used in other situations.

Q.8. Are the topics easy to understand through the material in your text?

The topics prescribed for the courses should be easily assessable to the students then only students will try to navigate into creative learning which gives scope to the exploring into new ways of learning. In order to know the competence of the students in the topics prescribed for them and the difficulty level of the material, this question is posed. To supplement this question the following question is designed to collect the real data from the students.

Q.9. Are there adequate pictures, charts, graphs to understand the context of the topics in the textbooks?

The textbook appears to be simple in language presentation if the majority of students find it comprehensible. The textbooks for Engineering students should have these aids similar to their use in textbooks meant for optional subjects. Moreover,
“information transfer” from one medium to another is an important skill. Hence converting the text into a picture or graph or representing the material studied in the form of a table improves not only the skill of learner but also his imagination. Keeping this in view, this question has been posed in order to assess the comprehension skills of the students.

Q.10. “Do you think that your language has improved with respect to Grammar through the material in your textbook?”

Among the questions related to the objectives, one is regarding the development of language proficiency with respect to grammar. As Nicole Geslin et al. (1998: 8) have said:

Grammar is described as a set of shared understandings that enable people to communicate successfully. It is a resource used for making meaning in texts and it is always related to acceptance and intelligible meaning made in a particular context.

(http://www.und.ac.za/und/ling/archieve/gestl-v1.html)

Grammar rules should help the learner in understanding the working of the language; giving them confidence that they can understand and control what is going on. Through the language activities, learners can discover more about the facts, rules and functions involved in using grammar. Hence, this question is put to the students to know the degree of grammar included in the prescribed textbook.

Q. 11. How do you rate these tasks?

The textbook enumerates a number of items like Reading Comprehension, Paragraph and Essay Writing, Vocabulary, Synonyms, One-word Substitutes and Common Errors. When the Engineering students are monitored to do the tasks given, they must be able to actively involved in these tasks, instead of staying passive. The
success of this activity lies in the active participation and involvement of the learners. So, this question is asked in order to know the involvement level of the students.

Q. (12-15). Are the tasks set forth in the textbook helpful in improving your LSRW skills?

Yes ☐ To some extent ☐ No ☐

Please use the following grades to show how the tasks are helpful in your learning.

A-Excellent / B-Very Good / C- Good / D-Average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Speaking</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
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Good communication skills are necessary for the success of any professional. If one wants to reach out to people, he or she has to speak effectively. English language, in particular, has become indispensable to the younger generation aspiring to advance their career, anywhere in the world. English language learning has therefore become a must for an Indian student today. Language learning is not the same as learning any other subject. It is not confined to writing an examination and getting a Degree or Award. The four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking have to be practiced. Communication involves one’s ability to listen carefully so as to grasp the meaning and to respond in turn with apt words and clarity of pronunciation. This question is asked to assess the improvement level that the tasks have rendered to them.
Q.16. Do you have Communication Skills Lab in your first year course?

Yes □ □ No □ □

➢ If “yes” please name the software (or provider of software) in use in your Lab.

a) ……………………………

b) ……………………………

State how far the software is useful in developing your skills.

a) To a great extent □ □ b) To some extent □ □ c) Not at all □ □

➢ If “no” do you want to have Communication Skills Lab in the first year itself?

Yes □ □ No □ □

If so, why do you want to have Communication Skills Lab?

Communication skills are essential for expressing ideas, opinions, views, emotions etc. The main objective of Communication Skills Lab is to prepare students for campus recruitments. As it has been observed that many students have speech anxiety, at the beginning of the course, effective measures are taken to help the students overcome communication apprehension by introducing communication skills lab.

An attempt has been made in this chapter to make clear the importance of objectives in an Educational Programme, outlining the three important types of planning that could be followed while formulating objectives, viz., systematic, expedient and piece-meal planning, the questionnaire was designed accordingly. The next chapter, entitled, “Relevance of ESP in the present Educational Scenario” deals with the concept of ESP, its origin, development, approaches, materials and methodology.

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