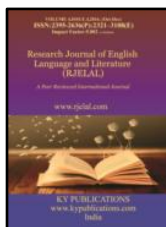**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

The ESL Teaching-Learning Pedagogy:as Envisaged in Indian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

As a norm for development and growth, different countries have developed Quality Assurance (QA) models for their higher education systems as necessitated by their unique national contexts. India is no exception. From time to time, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of India has been bringing out publications that provide insights into the Indian example in quality assurance. On reading these publications, we interpretin the government'sperspective, 'Quality education'is 'fitness for purpose at minimum cost to society'.In the light of such a notionwe tendto inquire whether our tertiary education systems are indeed fit for use, in terms of providing the education and training that students and society need. The new entrant students in our universities prove the educational standard otherwise that we, university teachers, who are to execute university curriculum struggle hard to mould them for global standards. The context is that we can do nothing about the students'past but still we can do something to turn them as quality global citizens. This paper deliberates on the quality of University English Language teachersin necessitating a change in students who are the products of the teaching learning process.

Key words:quality assurance; education; training; global standards; global citizens.

Introduction

Universities,as portals of knowledge wish to provide students quality education to develop them as competent professionals in the global market. It is possible with the instructions focused on the students comprehending their core subjects and concepts underlying them as framed under appropriate curriculum and syllabus.The teachers who execute the curriculum have to be competent teachers, who are not only knowledgeable, skilful, and effective in teaching but understand the learners' need and temperament. The higher education context which is perturbed with such notions as learner autonomy, teacher as facilitator, monitor and mentor makes it immensely necessary for the teachers to develop their teaching skills for effective dissemination of knowledge and information to the students.

Learners/ Students

Though the terms learners and students are used interchangeably by different authors the present article finds the learners are more focused on their learningthan the students. The most students who join the universities after completing nearly fourteen years of English as Second Language learning do not show any evidence of having acquired or learned the language. Their language ability makes it clear that they have studied the language but not learned to use the language in oral and written communication. The article finds the term students

more appropriate in the ESL context, as shared by an Indian ESL teacher of a deemed to be university in Chennai.

The students who get admission into the professional courses satisfying the minimum marks requirement are the most emboldened lot. Admission to the professional course is more than their wish. These students do not abide by any rule and they are the least motivated.Seth Lindstromberg(2008) has categorized the students as follows: some students have low proficiency in English because of their English learning only for a short period and insufficient learning encouragement, but they have a good chance of catching up if they get adequate attention. Therefore, with little more consideration and concession they can be motivated to learn well. But it is the low proficiency group which disrupts the work of their classmates and gives the teachers headache. "They attach little importance to all the reasons for learning that we asteachers and their better motivated classmates could see: reasons such as gaining knowledge for qualifications and career, experiencing the fascination for discovery and making one's parents and teachers happy"(2008:6); with their stubborn attitude they are not to be easily persuadable.

Learning Context

Asian students, particularly the Indian students learn English not for social uses of English but rather for the specifically academic and professional uses of English. Engineering graduates require an ever-increasing range of skills to maintain relevance with the global environment of the new millennium. Communication skills are a vita component of this, recognised by academia and industry alike. Communication is multifaceted and incorporates various elements, such as oral, written, listening, visual, intercultural, interdisciplinary, etc. These need to be considered when examining communication in engineering education (Riemer 2010). There is a clear necessity for effective English communication skills for engineers in the current globalised environment. A course in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) need to customise English language training for developing communication skills of students. It should aid in the globalisation of education and the internationalisation of concepts

and specialised knowledge of the future engineers. The concept of ESP gathers poignancy in the education of engineering students by focusing the students' attention on the particular terminology and communication skills required in the professional field. In day to day life, in purely personal contexts oral communication is the spoken language that is not chaste but uses colloquialisms, ellipsis, deixis, false starts, repetition and rephrasing, back-channelling, vague language, run-ons and overlaps (Bygate 1987). However, the professional life expects a different kind of language use to meet the ethics and etiquette of a work place. Oral communication in the globalised context comprises of General English (GE) in terms of language use in interpersonal communication, English for Specific Purpose (ESP) in terms of understanding the concepts and their application, in addition it enhances the students' adaptability for transnational mobility, flexibility to work in global work culture that needs team working, managerial and leadership as well as other personal skills. As such, these competencies have become pivotal in the engineering profession (Ravesteijn, et al. 2006). So the consensus is that the engineering students who learn English as English for Specific Purposes or Technical English in the professional institutions in India and elsewhere must be prepared to face the challenge of acquiring oral and written communication skills for better academic and career prospects..

Teacher's Role

Teachers' role is crucial in the process of shaping the engineering or any other professional under-graduates for global placement. From the teachers' observations it is apparent that despite the current curriculum design which has encompassed functional aspects of English, students lack the motivation to build up communicative competencies in a progressive manner and to reach the required standards by the end of the programme. To eliminate this deficit, the teachers need to identify methods and types of instructional programmes that could address the present problem of engineering students' lack of oral communication skills. They need to customise their teaching to suit the orthodoxy of the day and the learners' age, interest and need. A need based task proposal that can integrate the language

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skills for a meaningful content based language instruction seems to be more appropriate for a professional leverage.

Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)

The classroom teaching has to be saddled with the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) that engages learners' procedural and declarative knowledge while the focus is on content. In the content based curriculum the primary focus is on academic tasks, within a communicative context. As Chamot and O'Malley (1994) suggest, the CALLA model incorporates four reasons for incorporating content into the ESL/ESP class. First content provides students with opportunity to develop important knowledge in different subject areas. Second, students are able to understand, discuss, read about, and write about the concepts developed. Third, students exhibit motivation and interest when the content is learnt with the language. Last, content provides a context for teaching students learning strategies that can be applied to the level of classroom learning. More importantly, as CALLA advocates, the students need to be engaged and trained in self- evaluation, peer – evaluation because both being part of constructive reflection are very important in the evolution of an undergraduate student into a professional.

Task Based Language Teaching Method

Richards and Rodgers (2001) believe that TBLT is motivated primarily by a theory of learning. Along with them, the author believes (a) Language is primarily a means of making meaning, (b) Multiple models of language inform TBLT. TBLT looks on structural, functional, and interactional models of language, (c) Lexical units are central in language use and language learning and (d) Conversation is the central focus of language and the keystone of language acquisition. As such the study made use of TBLT as a valid method for teaching interpersonal and academic communication along with role play as learning strategy. Jeon (2005) argues that language acquisition is an extremely complex process which involves the interaction of many different variables such as materials, feedback, and activities and TBLT influences these variables positively. In other words, TBLT provides learners with authentic and meaning-based materials, real life communicative activities and motivating feedback.

Stern House suggests informing the learners of objectives may well be a valid procedure for language learning. When such is the procedure, the teacher should make instructional goals to develop learners' confidence in speaking and listening and the language content provided as input must be real, relevant and realistic language (Brindley 1984: 56). The teacher takes informed decisions to start with the course, giving due consideration to the students' language ability, age, aptitude, attitude and the relevance of the crucial language to which they are introduced for a future context. The linguistic environment (the language to which learners are exposed) is crucial to language development. When the learner's linguistic expressions are not clear the teacher may introduce interactional modifications (Long1985) by supporting the interaction by expanding on the learner's utterances to help them "receive an accurate linguistic model of what they intend to say" (Ellis 1990). As success in language learning depends upon available time (Carroll 1981), the teacher needs to introduce narrow or focused reading of materials/text related to the topic of learning (Krashen & Brown 2007) and also the Content and Language Integrated Learning approach of Coyle, et al. (2012) because English is both the medium and content in the Technical English/ Higher education classrooms.

Learner Autonomy

The past three decades have seen vast changes in language teachers'attitude towards teaching in general. To be precise and truthful to the present day orthodoxy the teachers havemoved toward more communicative pedagogical approaches which encourage students to participate in their learning more fully. Learner autonomy has been defined as the ability to take control over one's learning and is also described as a "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action". Learner autonomy, can mean different things to different people.In the higher education context knowledge and information dissemination are time bound and the process depends on the willing cooperation of the learners

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and hence learner autonomy can be found only in motivated and capable learners.

Learner autonomy is often mistakenly equated solely with independent out-of-class learning in which learners are in control of all aspects of their learning process. In this view, an autonomous learner is one who is intrinsically motivated and learns outside the classroom, alone, and with no need for support from the teacher. However, learner autonomy can also be developed in the structured learning environment of the classroom and become part of the pedagogical objectives of a language course. When a syllabus is designed to promote learner autonomy, the focus of the syllabus is clearly on a student-centred approach.

In courses that seek to promote learner autonomy through the use of technology, it can be useful to draw upon a constructionist view of language learning. A constructionist approach can encourage students to learn in a social context and help them to develop an ability on the models given to create new knowledge, solve new problems and employ creativity and critical thinking. Such an approach supports the concepts promoted by collaborative theories of knowledge dissemination and emphasizes the participation of the learner in the learning process. Experience is a central notion to constructionist theory as "knowledge can and can only be generated from experience. Adopting such a theoretical approach to course design, the student is viewed as an active participant who brings his or her unique learning characteristics to the social learning context.

Conclusion

To maintain relevance to the requirements of the students and maintain quality in teaching universities need to reflect on industry (and social) demands by imparting requisite skills to the students. Integrating these skills within subject modules, a mix of the right skills may be achieved. The curriculum should identify the ways and means by which communication can be integrated into engineering subjects. Further, the communication knowledge and awareness created in the first year needs to be sustained till the end of the course through the projects identification and discussions and the oral and written presentations there on.

The teacher is still very much involved in assisting learners with their learning. The development of learner autonomy can have strong collaborative elements. Learners can choose to be more or less independent at different points in their learning process and learners can be encouraged to reflect on their learning and ways to improve it. The cognizance one need to interpret is an autonomous learner can be brought to exist only by a teacher who is knowledgeable, skilful and effective in her teaching.The hetrochronous students do not wish the teachers to be instructors and teachers but would like to work under the watchful eyes of the teacher who is a facilitator, guide and mentor; better still, an indispensable part of teaching learning process despite the technological advances.

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