

**Essentials of Course Design towards Planning and Material
Development in Teaching of English:
*A Course proposed for First Semester Engineering College Students
at CSVTU***

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Abstract

Curriculum can refer to the total structure of ideas and activities developed by an educational institution or by a team of authorities to meet the learning needs of students and to achieve desired educational aims. Some people use the term to refer simply to the content of what is taught. Others include also the teaching and learning methods involved, how students' attainment is assessed, and of course, the underlying theory of policy of education.

Course Design is a part of Curriculum Design that concerns one learning/teaching subject rather than many that are taken care of by the curriculum. And a syllabus is not merely an inventory of components of the subject course in terms of teaching items and categories to be taught but also a statement about weighting, relating and sequencing the selected items and categories.

The very idea of a syllabus, as indeed of a course or of a curriculum, is centred on the intentional and planned activity of teaching with certain questions in mind: not just what it is that is to be taught but how it is to be taught and to whom and why. Also, some provision has to be made for the assessment of participants who have had a certain course, and also for the evaluation of the course itself. This should serve as feedback for further modifications in the course. It is therefore an unending cyclic process with every new cycle suggesting new changes and improvement based on this feedback and of course on the new theories of learning and teaching developed over time.

Thus many English language teachers for many reasons design courses and develop their own teaching materials to personalise the materials according to the learners and also to overcome the lack of 'fit' of the course book. This paper therefore presents some of the essentials followed towards planning and outlining of course content and material development with a sample lesson out of a 32 hours course designed for first semester engineering college students of CSVTU.

Keywords: Essentials of Course Design, Outlining Course Content and Planning for material development.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching of English has gone through various changes over the past 50 years. But perhaps the changes of the last 25 or 30 years have been the most interesting. English teaching has gone through grammar translation method to direct method to audio-lingual/visual methods, etc. Now, we talk of the communicative and the communicational and of course the eclectic methods.

However, many courses have been written - and many of these are still in use - that is structural in approach and methodology. Some have put only situational headings and have followed a behaviourist inductive style and approach. In the developed countries, the emphasis on teaching may have moved from a primary focus on language form, and explicit or implicit knowledge of structures, to a focus on language in use. But in developing countries - at least in Chhattisgarh, India - the approach in practice is still basically structural, in schools and colleges, even though some syllabuses claim to have integrated the modern approaches to teaching, but only in the headings.

It is felt by many that grammar-focus courses might have developed knowledge about the language, but learners were unable to cope with the main function of natural language that is for communication.

The movement that followed this new interest, with the work of Wilkins (1976) and of Widdowson (1978), and many others, shifted the attention in the field of language teaching towards a new idea of syllabus content and student achievement, in terms of ability to use language in real life situations, rather than to merely know the rules of the language.

Therefore, then, there was a growing appreciation of students' needs, as indeed of various psycholinguistic factors in language acquisition. The result was communicative courses based on notional/functional syllabuses. In practice, however, the story is different, as in many cases where the notional/functional syllabuses with no specific structural elements were introduced, the students did not achieve the capability to generate the required language as expected. In fact, the students actively wanted grammar to be taught.

In my personal view, a purely structural syllabus can be taught along a structural-to-communicative continuum where the approaches slide from purely structural in the initial stages (corresponding to the initial levels of students) to more and more communicative approaches in the advanced stages of the course. In Indian situations, it seems to work at least with first year college students, who in general are intelligent and who can utilize the metalanguage, if used in the course, to their advantage.

This paper, therefore, proposes essentials of Course Design towards planning and material development for first year college students with the main aim of avoiding 'cumulative language deficit' in them.

Course Design Essentials

Designing a language course has several components. Classic models of curriculum design as well as more recent models agree on most of the components, although they may subdivide some of them and give them slightly different names. For classic models see Stenhouse (1975), Taba (1962), Tyler (1949) ; for recent models see Brown (1995), Johnson (1989), Nunan (1998), Richards (1990), Yalden (1987). These components comprise setting objectives, determining content, materials and method; and evaluation.

The model I use in designing this course for CSVTU engineering college students of first semester is based upon following questions:

1. What are my students' needs?
2. What is their educational background?
3. How can I assess them so that I can address them?

Following the framework designed and with series of interaction with the students over a period of more than ten years and going through the Cycle of Course Development, the linear and structural course is modified into cyclic course leading to the use of eclectic methodology for effecting learning and teaching of English and finally improving the students' communication skills which in turn expands their job placement horizon.

The structural course comprises 3 learning and teaching components – Sounds of English, 24 Friends of Not and Five Matching Tables and is weaved into communicative approach through the process of contextualisation, varied interaction patterns and by using the contents connecting to more real life situation be it social or professional. This course, therefore takes 32 hours to equip the students with the correct and required language tools and overcome the language deficit they have at the time of entry in the engineering colleges.

Planning for Material Development

We get 32- 40 hours classes every semester. Based upon the number of classes allotted and the aim of the course designed, these 32 hours comprises 16 sessions each of 120 minutes. In this section, I, set the outline the course syllabus and describe the goals and objectives, assignments, schedule and lesson plan for each class with appropriate materials for practice.

<p>1. Description Saying what there is and where things are ; describing features Grammar: There is/are ; have/has; place prepositions</p>	<p>Exercises Listening: Classroom Speaking: short answers, Introduction and Description</p>
<p>2. Language Chart – Description Forms of Language, Language skills and their types, Difference between Oral Form and Written Form, Introduction of Sounds of English. Grammar: 44 Sounds of English</p>	<p>Exercises Grammar: Fill in the blanks, True or False, Questions and Answers (speaking, reading & writing. Pronunciation: Short vowels, Long vowels and Diphthongs</p>
<p>3. Idea Chart Telling about types of sentences: State verbs, Modal Verbs and 5 Tables. Grammar Types of Verbs; Friends of Not ,</p>	<p>Exercises Writing: Describing Idea Chart in state verb sentences Speaking: describing each other's family</p>

Negative and Interrogative, Short-answers and Question-tags	Reading: labelling types of sentences of lesson My Family.
4. Going Places Grammar: Present Simple Tense Vocabulary: vehicles; public transport; Talking about travel.	Exercises Listening & Speaking: Likes and Dislikes.
5. Now Talking about things happening 'now' and 'around now'; Describing Scenes Grammar: Present Continuous tense.	Exercises Reading: What's going on? Listening & Speaking: now & These days.
6. Habits, customs and Facts Talking about repeated activities and things that are generally true Grammar: Present simple Tense; frequency expressions.	Exercises Reading: Our House with labelling. Speaking: Questions and Answers
7. The Past Talking about past events; saying when things happened; telling stories Grammar: Past simple; time expressions.	Exercises Listening & speaking: When did you last ...?
8. Experiences Quiz: Talking about past events with present position, announcing News, talking about changes Grammar: Present perfect Tense	Exercises Writing: use of since and for Listening: Have you ever...?
9. Duration Talking about activities that are still going on; asking and talking about duration. Grammar: Present perfect continuous and simple.	Exercises Listening & Speaking: 24 hours Pronunciation: Dialogues Mid-Course Evaluation: Speaking & Writing
10. Sounds and Syllables Revising Sounds of English Grammar: Counting syllables	Exercises Feedback and Revision: LSRW on each other's family, house and sitting room.

<p>11. Comparisons</p> <p>Making comparisons, expressing preferences, describing outstanding features.</p> <p>Grammar: Comparative adjectives; than; superlative adjectives.</p>	<p>Exercises</p> <p>Reading: Comparisons and Another Talk, labelling sentences, asking questions.</p>
<p>12. Food and Drink</p> <p>Vocabulary: meals, restaurants, drinks</p> <p>Reading activity: At the Restaurant</p>	<p>Exercises</p> <p>Listening & Speaking : Meals of the day, starters, main course and desserts</p>
<p>13. Morning and Evening</p> <p>Talking about routine, lifestyle and Time management (8x8x8)</p>	<p>Exercises</p> <p>Listening and Speaking: Interview your partner to know each other's lifestyle.</p> <p>Writing: Effective routine plan</p>
<p>14. Presentation</p> <p>Telling about a book through presentation. Telling about 'POWER'</p>	<p>Exercises</p> <p>Listening: 7 Habits of Highly effective People.</p> <p>Assignment: Writing your experience of this course in the form of letter</p>
<p>15. Interview</p> <p>Getting to know about CV writing through an interview.</p> <p>Listening activity: How to make your powerful</p>	<p>Exercises</p> <p>Listening: Fill in the blanks, True and false.</p> <p>Writing: CV writing assignment</p>
<p>16. Course Revision, Testing and Evaluation</p>	<p>Exercises</p> <p>Students' Presentation, Test , Viva and Feedback</p>

A Sample of lesson Plan and materials

Aim: to describe charts and flow charts using is, am are, have and has necessary.

Sub aim: to provide written reference material to understand the relationship between sounds of English and letters of English.

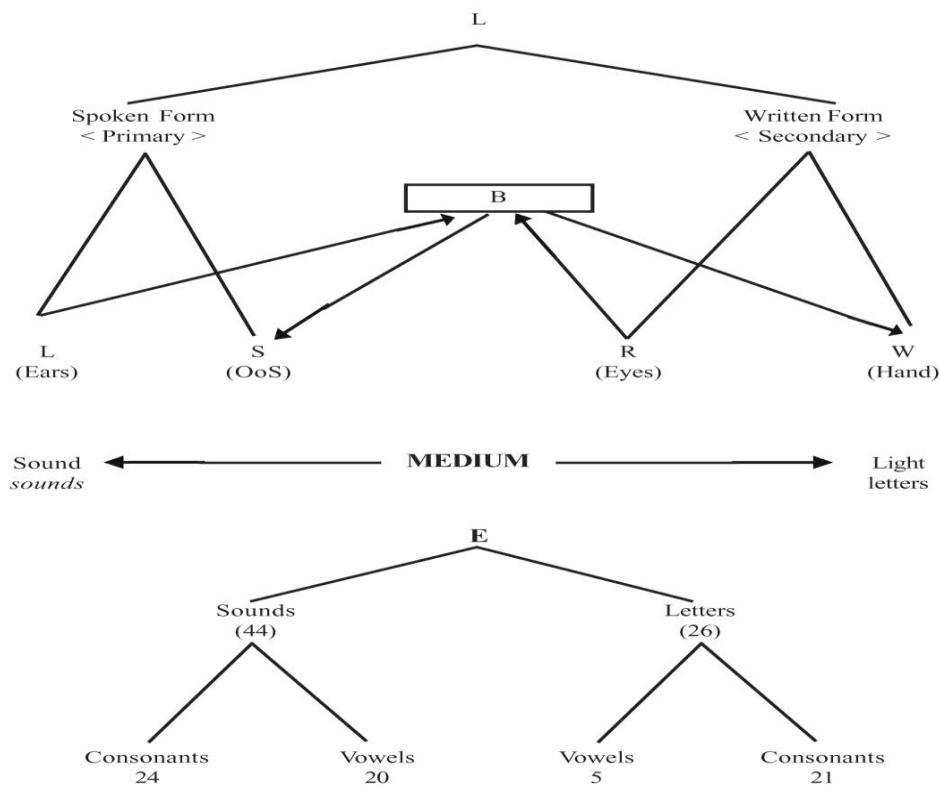
Time: 50 minutes

Procedure:

1. Show them the Language Chart and elicit what L is ... and then let them understand what language skills are , how many forms it has ... orally (pre teach Vocab)
2. Distribute the Handout (question 1): ask the Students to fill up the blanks using is, am, are, have and has and also to choose the words from the options available.
3. Ask students to discuss and check their answers within their groups.
4. Discuss answers with the whole class. (make a point that for describing anything... be it family , city , school , college , building ...the simple way is to use is am are have has)
5. Ask Students to read the fill up the blank text with the correct answers and give Handout (question 2) to check their understanding of the Language Chart.
6. Discuss the answers with the whole class.
7. Distribute Handout (question 3) and ask the students to answer the questions with complete sentences. (for consolidation)
8. Discuss the answers orally with students and make them practise ... the use of (is am are have has) in the form of simple sentences.
9. Distribute Handout (question 4) and ask the students to describe their college using (is am are have has) in a page. (monitor, stimulate their ideas, guide them) to get a description of their college in their own words).
10. Later if possible signpost some best written descriptions on board for reflection and correction.

Language Chart

1. Look at the Language chart and fill up the blanks using (is am are have and has) where necessary



L is It two(forms, types). They Primary and Secondary The other name for Form is form and for Secondary Is

Spoken form two (forms , types , parts, skills). They Listening and Speaking, whereas written form also two They are Reading and Writing. Listening and Reading skills and Speaking and Writing skills.

In English Language, We SOE for listening and Speaking in the form and letters for Reading and Writing in the form.

SOE 44 where vowels 20 and consonants 24 . on the other hand in Written form, Letters 5 and 21

2. Based on the above description and Language chart, answer the following sentences in True or false.

1. Language exists primarily in the spoken form and secondarily in the written form.
2. It is a means of effective communication amongst human beings.
3. We can improve our pronunciation by learning Sounds of English.
4. There is no one – to – one relationship between the oral symbols and the visual symbols in English Language.
5. There is no one – to – one relationship between the oral symbols and the visual symbols in Hindi Language.

3. Answer the following questions

1. What is “L” and “E” in the ‘L chart’?
2. How many forms has it?
3. What are they?
4. What skills are listening and Reading in a Language?
5. What skills are Speaking and Writing in a Language?

4. Describe your college using is, am, are and has, have in one full page.

Conclusion

Course Designing needs introspection and evaluation of the benefits and costs of designing Need-based Course. Need-Based Course get an extra advantage outlining and developing materials closer to the life of students which in turn makes the learning and teaching very effective through ESA (Engage Study Activate)” sequence. (Pg. 71, Harmer J). Moreover, a Need-Based Course that satisfies the essentials proposed could make a difference because there are not enough materials available especially in Indian context. And in my view, it always does once we match the course objective with the course content and develop materials accordingly.

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