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ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EMERGENT SYLLABUS IN TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

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The classroom is the meeting place or interaction point between the predesigned syllabus and individual learner syllabuses. The interaction will generate the real syllabus or the syllabus in action which is jointly constructed by teachers and learners together”(Breen, 1994). In a nutshell, the actual classroom implementation of a predesigned syllabus is different as its end users (teachers, schools, students) perceive it from their respective perspectives on the basis of criteria like convenience, time constraints, difficulty level, and individual competence. Moreover, the predesigned syllabus is dependent on generally centralized teaching or prescribed course material and central examinations. In the case of this predetermined syllabus the decision regarding the content or what of learning, the why and how of learning are made by policy makers and syllabus experts. As a result, many a times, the predetermined syllabus may serve as an ideal syllabus for the students and teachers of specific location and backgrounds but not for all the locations and backgrounds. With a view to this fact, the paper discusses the role and significance of emergent syllabus and curriculum in teaching-learning of English as a Second Language (ESL).

KEYWORDS: Syllabus, Curriculum, Emergent Syllabus, English as a Second Language (ESL)

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Syllabus is a document specifying the content items/study material to be taught/learned by the target learners. It states the selection, organization and sequencing of content to be delivered to the specific group of students. It provides information about the content, aims and objectives of the course, the required level of competence i.e. entry level behavior of the learners, outcome expected from the learners at the end of the course, the suggested methods and techniques to be adopted, the pattern of evaluation and question paper. It also states teaching procedures and learning experiences to achieve the goals and objectives of the course of instruction and the order in which they should be taught. Thus, Syllabus is a subset of Curriculum. In a broader sense, the syllabus is identical to the narrow definition of the Curriculum.

A curriculum is a more generalized or an overview of the subjects or topics that the students are meant to learn, while the syllabus is a more detailed overview of the subject of study. A curriculum may list basics of various issues pertaining to the course under study, while, the class syllabus lists what topics will be covered under each of the basic topics, what will be the concepts that students may understand by the end of each topic, and it may even list what exercises or problems in the textbook will be covered during class. Apart from the above components, Curriculum also includes educational events, relationships (teacher-student), attitude of teachers, students, parents etc. towards students, text, school, proficiency of language, teacher's objectives, students' objectives, societal and economic objectives, and environment at home and at school or workplace, all the set of activities, details of classroom behavior and practices too.

In a nutshell, the syllabus is a document related to all the classroom related concerns, while the Curriculum encompasses all the socio-economic and political milieu related to whole educational enterprise in which a syllabus is framed. Thus, a Syllabus is a part of Curriculum. Since a language is highly complex and pervasive and cannot be taught at a time, all the phenomena related to the language might not be relevant or necessary to be taught to the learner/group of learners. Therefore, successful teaching of the language evidently requires a selection and then an arrangement of the teaching items/materials depending on the prior definition of the objectives, proficiency level to be developed in the learner, duration of the program, and the like, on the one hand, and on the other, upon the consideration of the learner's needs, lacks, aptitudes, motivation, age, personality memory transfer of training, cognitive style, and so forth. The selection and the sequencing absolutely take place in the syllabus planning stage.

As syllabus provide details about aims, and objectives of the course, content, prescribed methodology and evaluation pattern, it becomes a sound framework to observe for teachers, students, schools. It is helpful to teacher with all the level of proficiency and expertise. Even the newly trained or less experienced teacher can too teach second language more efficiently if the syllabus is properly designed and contain all the components it should.

EMERGENT (PROCESS SYLLABUS)

There are various types of syllabuses as result of paradigmatic shift in syllabus design over a period of last three decades. The fundamental two types of syllabuses are (EFL PGCTE, 2012):

1. Predetermined or Predesigned or Prescribed Syllabus
2. Process or emergent syllabus which further can be categorized into:

- I. Teacher's Syllabus
- II. Students' Syllabus (Learners' Syllabus)
- II. Classroom Syllabus

The learner's (student's) syllabus is always different from the prescribed syllabus because of the following reason:

In the predesigned (prescribed) syllabus, the content or unit of categorization is planned, graded, selected and categorized in syllabus by the syllabus designer (maker) before the classroom interaction occurs. It tells the teacher what to do, teach and examine throughout the year as a part of the course. Irrespective of the unit of categorization, i.e. the structure of language, or vocabulary or functions of language, or the situation or the communications, the prescribed syllabus is ideal one which has little to do with the actual classroom situation or learning. It is not a real syllabus and does not consider process of learning rather just focus on content. However, this is not something actually takes place in classroom or in the area of language learning. The users of syllabus have also a crucial role to play. They interpret syllabus components from their perspective, convenience and competence. As a result, we have teacher's syllabus, students' or learners' syllabus and classroom syllabus or the real syllabus. Learner is also an important participant of teaching-learning process, and he interprets the syllabus components differently than the way they are prescribed or planned.

EXAMPLE 1

In the course of Professional Communication – I, offered at 5th Semester B.Tech (CHARUSAT University)., we had theory as well as practical examination. The teaching scheme included 01 hour of theory and 02 hours of practical exposure as prescribed in the syllabus. There was 70 Marks of Theory paper and 30 Marks of Internal Evaluation (which included two theoretical examination + Marks for attendance and project) and 50 marks of Practical evaluation which included 25 marks for internal (journal + attendance) and 25 marks for external evaluation in the form of viva voce examination. However, it was observed that the students were performing pretty well in the theory examination but were not able to perform well in the viva voce examination or during interview and Group discussion at the time of campus interviews. As a result the Heads, Principal, and management executives looked into the matter, analysed the case, and come to conclusion that the students were performing well in the theory examination as it had learnt the content by heart. Even during practical exposure too, they were learning the components not as a useful skills or knowledge for future but as an important topic to be asked in the examination. As a result, though the predetermined syllabus was prepared in consultation with the eminent ELT scholars and after a thorough study of the syllabuses of the renowned engineering college in India and abroad, was proved ineffective and was getting replaced in its implementation by the learner's syllabus. Ultimately we had to change the syllabus of the course and as per the new syllabus there was just practical exposure and evaluation of 100 Marks. The theoretical evaluation had no place so that the students just focus on learning and acquiring skills and knowledge rather than cramming the content.

EXAMPLE 2

As part of the unit on Writing Skills to the technical students, the syllabus includes exposure and practice of writing paragraphs (short essays), selected business letters, emails and other docs (memo, agenda, minutes, notice etc.). In consonance with the syllabus components, the teacher generally teaches (make them practice) 02 drafts for each business document in the classroom. But the students mug up only those two samples for the examination and irrespective of the situation asked to write a document upon, they usually write only those which were taught or discussed in the classroom. Thus, out of prescribed syllabus, they just focus on sample business documents only, which in turn prove that the prescribed syllabus and the students' syllabus are different.

A language teacher irrespective of his teaching experience will definitely get benefitted by this predetermined syllabus. The syllabus covers skills (Listening, Speaking, and Writing) and components (Vocabulary, and Spelling/pronunciation/punctuation) much necessary for the development of language among its target users. A teacher may have many benefits in terms of selection of content, organization, methodology, process and evaluation.

The syllabus prescribes the texts to be used and also suggest the classroom activities and the skills targeted in each unit. Therefore, it will be very easier for a teacher of English language to exercise various activities and develop the targeted skills of his/her students. Most importantly, the inclusion of Listening skills and the subsequent exercises are the need of an hour to develop listening as well as speaking skills of the students.


It becomes very difficult for a teacher to select content, grade it as per the needs and level of the learners and design activities in a way to develop various skills and sub-skills of English language. This predetermined syllabus is a very important resource as it covers all these (content, graded material, suggested methodology, targeted skills and sub-skills, guidelines for activities, highlighted grammatical components and their usages, and practice for pronunciation, difficult spelling, and punctuations) in one document i.e. syllabus. All teachers, even the untrained, can also be benefitted just by using the guidelines the predetermined syllabus provides. Thus the syllabus is a bible for a teacher to follow it religiously and developing various skills and aspects of English language of his/her students.

CONCLUSION

Therefore it is necessary for the end users of the predetermined syllabus to sit together and spare time for analysing the reasons of a failure or being less successful in second language acquisition and negotiate over the all the decision pertaining to classroom procedures for language syllabuses. They may negotiate about selection and gradation of content, or the methodology or techniques/strategies of teaching and learning of English language, or the effectiveness of the evaluation pattern. If negotiated efficiently and successfully, they can definitely bring change or updates in the existing syllabus and formulate a new syllabus which is either teachers' syllabus (if teachers have negotiated about their teaching problems), or students' syllabus (if students' are consulted and kept in centre) or a classroom syllabus (general interaction among students, teachers and the syllabus).

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