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## A Preview of the Syllabus for English Language at Osmania University

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### Abstract:

*This paper tries to share some of the findings of an empirical research conducted for the doctoral degree. The researcher tried a preview of the syllabus of Osmania University from 1979 to 2011. Widdowson says that, "a syllabus not only defines what the ends of education through a particular subject ought to be, but it also provides a framework within which the actual process of learning must take place".*

*Breen (1989:47) defines syllabus as "...a plan of what is to be achieved through our teaching and our students' learning". This shows that a syllabus is a plan of work drawn up for the purpose of teaching and learning a course. During different periods, different approaches to teaching have been used. Different syllabuses have been used for different approaches to language teaching. The syllabus depends on the approaches to teaching. Underlying each approach to language teaching is a theory of language and a theory of learning which determine the syllabus and methodological procedures of the approach.*

**Key words:** *syllabus, empirical, approaches, learning.*

**Introduction:** A syllabus is an expression of opinion on the nature of language and learning; it acts as a guide for both the teacher and the learner by providing some goals to be attained. Hutchison and Waters (1987:80) define syllabus - "at its simplest level a syllabus can be described as a statement of what is to be learnt; it reflects language as linguistic performance."

Yalden (1987:87) sees Syllabus as, "An expression of opinion on the nature of language and learning, it acts as a guide for both the teacher and the learner by providing some goals to be attained."

Hutchison and Waters (1987:80) define syllabus as "a summary of the content to which the learners will be exposed."

Graves (1996) argues that, syllabus is after all a book on course design rather than syllabus designs. We start with the specific group of learners over a specific length of time and then you design a syllabus for it.

According to Shaw (1975), syllabus is "a statement of the plan for any part of the curriculum, excluding the element of curriculum evaluation itself."

Tickoo (1987) says that a good language curriculum must reflect

- ) Current thinking on what language is
- ) How best it can be acquired
- ) A similar awareness of new thinking classroom management and
- ) Ways of building a conducive learning environment

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Breen (1984) expresses that any syllabus will express, however indirectly, certain assumptions about language, the psychological process of learning and about the pedagogic and social process within a classroom.

Noss and Rodgers (1976) define a language syllabus as "a set of justifiable, educational objectives specified in terms of linguistic content". Here the specification of objectives is with language form or substance, with language-using situations, or with language as a means of communication.

Richards, Platt, and platt (1992) gave the definition of syllabus as an educational programme which states the purpose of the programme, the content, teaching procedures and learning experiences which will be necessary to achieve this purpose and means for assessing the educational ends that have been achieved.

Stern says that syllabus is a statement of the subject matter, topics or areas to be covered by the course leading to a particular topic.

For Widdowson, syllabus not only defines what the ends of education through a particular subject ought to be, but it also provides a framework within which the actual process of learning must take place.

Candling says that syllabus is concerned with the specification and planning of what is to be learned frequently, set down in some form as prescribed for action by teachers and learners.

Brumfit says that a syllabus is no more than a specification of what can and should be thought about clearly ahead of time.

**An Analysis of the syllabus of Osmania University** was done to understand how English was introduced and the syllabus changed .In the year 1979 the syllabus had a Text for Non –Detailed Study and One Act Plays of Today Edited by M.Manual (Macmillan)

The following plays were prescribed for study

1. The Last War ---- Neil Grant
2. The Six of Calais ---- George Bernard Shaw
3. Remember Caesar ----- Gordan Daviot
4. The Betrayal ----- Padraic Colum
5. The Lawyer of Springfield – Ponald Gow

## 2. Composition

- a) Letter writing
- b) Précis Writing
- c) Comprehension
- d) Technical Report Writing

## 3. Grammar: Common Errors (the use of Prepositions, articles and tenses)

The syllabus of 1979 had English for General Purpose. It was not relevant because it did not cater specifically to the needs and interest of the students of Engineering and Technology .The syllabus consisted of plays composition and grammar which did not focus to train students to use language in ‘specialist discipline’.

In the year 1988 the syllabus was revised with

Unit - I Grammar a) common Errors

Unit II Compostion a) Letter Writing b) Comprehension c) Report Writing d)Precis

Unit III One Act Plays of Today Edited by M. Manual (Macmillan)

the following plays only

1. The Last War ---- Neil Grant
2. The Six of Calais ---- George Bernard Shaw

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3. Remember Caesar ----- Gordan Daviot
  4. The Betrayal ----- PadracK Colum.

Unit 1V

Detailed text: The Heritage of English (Macmillan)

Poetry

1. The Solitary Reaper - William Wordsworth
2. If - Rudyard Kipling
3. The Road not Taken - Robert Frost
4. The Bangle Sellers - Sarojini Naidu
5. To The Indian Who Died in South Africa - Nissim Ezekiel
6. A Hot Noon in Malabar - Kamala Das.

The syllabus for the year 1988 consisted of an anthology of prose and poetry with grammar and composition .The context of teaching language to the student of technology demands a necessity for procedural orientation in order to activate language use that may approximate the kind of activity in which students will have to engage in their specialized areas. Task like information gap or information transfer activities would have helped the students in professional students. The language taught in the classroom should be the language required for Engineers for further studies and at the work.

In the year 1997-2004 the syllabus was based on Listening, Speaking, Reading and writing and one unit was on Focus Language and Functions. The prescribed text books English for Engineers and Technologist –A Skills Approach 2

Prose Passages - A Slip of the Tongue and Good Manners

Two verses-Echo and The Best of school from Practical English Prose and Verse

The course book ‘English for Engineers and Technologist –A Skills Approach’ 2 had exercise on language .It was the model of ESP in terms of subject specific contents and skill focused. This prescribed had exercise on language development ,listening , speaking reading writing skills. This text gave an opportunity to the leaner’s to discuss, make use of flow charts, read the passage and answer question ,identify tools used in engineering ,listen and answer the tables. The text consist of passages taken from newspapers and magazine related to science and technology but the contemporaneity of this text affected as changes in technology and science are rapid .This detracts from the interest value and de motivates the students .

In the year 2005 the syllabus was revised dividing it into five units.

Unit I Communication

Unit II Writing

Unit III Letter writing

Unit IV Remedial English

Unit V Essays (Our own Civilization, Andrew Carnegie, The secret of Work and The Generation Gap.)

In the year 2011 the syllabus was revised. The new model paper consists of part A (twenty five marks) with Grammar (correction of sentences, synonyms and antonyms from Unit iv) and part B (fifty marks) consists of questions based on Unit i, Unit ii, Unit iii and Unit v (See appendix).

There are five units in the prescribed syllabus and there are four essays in Unit V, namely:

- ) Unit I Communication
- ) Unit II Interpersonal Communication
- ) Unit III Writing Skills
- ) Unit IV Grammar

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- ) Unit V Essays (Unit V has four essays)  
Barrack Obama: A Trendsetter  
Rendezvous with Indra Nooy  
Muthyala Raju: An Engineer Turned IAS Officer  
R.Madhavan - Engineering to Farming

A Lab External has been included from the year 2011 which consists of 50 marks based on listening, speaking, reading and writing and also phonetics. In addition to this, a Lab External is conducted in the month of May. Three Lab Internals are conducted for twenty five marks each and the average of the three Lab Internals are sent to the University and added to the Main Exam for fifty marks, conducted in the academic year making it 75 marks in total.

These types of examinations boost the confidence of the students as they secure good marks. But these marks do not help them much in the future as by the time they reach their Third Year to face campus placement, they do not remember much. Given a gap of two years, they are not very much in touch with the subject as all Engineering Graduates face entry level test for placements, which test their writing and speaking skills for group discussion, presentations and interviews which require excellent written and spoken communication skills.

Writing Skills of Under Graduate Engineering Students :The aim of teaching English in B.E1/1V of Osmania University is to help students develop the skills that they will require in coping with writing requirement in their respective field of study and in the future workplace .

The syllabus for B.E. first year under graduate engineering course of Osmania University has five units and unit iii is writing, this Unit has Paragraph Writing, Letter Writing, Report Writing, Seminar Skills, Drafting Notice, and Memo.

The objective of this unit that deals with writing skills are as follows:

- ) The unit attempts to introduce students to the basics of writing
- ) The unit attempts to prepare students for paper presentations, seminars both for study and
- ) The unit attempts to introduce students to the aspects of technical writing.

Globalization and Industrialization require more efficient Engineers and this has put a greater demand on the engineers – they need excellent academic backgrounds. Here, competition is very high and the fresh Graduate Engineers have to face eight to ten rounds (of group discussion and written tests) to secure a job. Most of these rounds are based on group discussions, presentation skills and testing the communication skills of the candidate for employment. For this purpose, Engineering Graduates have to acquire excellent communication skills to get a foothold in the industry. They have to communicate effectively in English as their job demands such knowledge. They have to perform various tasks like sending emails and communicating with clients as part of their job requirement, using English as a medium of communication. In some multinational companies, they are given in-house training after getting a job, in order to improve their communication skills and develop their personality to fit their job profile.

By the end of this writing unit students would have adequate exposure to the components of Paragraph Writing, Letter Writing, Report Writing, Seminar Skills, Drafting Notice, Memo .

The syllabus has mentioned the topics and given books for suggested reading, the teacher has to develop the relevant sample and teaching materials to teach in the classroom.

The objective of the writing unit is to develop the writing skills of students through technical approach .They utilize these skills at the workplace.

The syllabus objective also hints at focusing on the learning and engaging the learners in communication to allow them to develop their communicative competence, using a process oriented and task based approach to

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language teaching .Some topics of the syllabus also hints them to use prewriting and post writing activities like Brain storming, Drafting and Revising the drafts but these steps are occasionally used in the classroom.

The aim of the writing skills is to help students learn the techniques required at work place.

It can be said that the writing unit is to develop the student writing skills and fluency .The objective of the writing unit is to enable students to

- ) Synthesize ideas into paragraphs
- ) Draft letters ( letter of complaint ,letter of enquiry )
- ) Write reports and learn about the use of illustrations, tables and diagrams.
- ) Write notice, memo, and circulars.

In broad terms, the unit is aimed at meeting the needs of the Under Graduate Engineering Students in developing their writing skills .This English language subject is common to all the first year engineering students irrespective of the branch they choose for study.

Writing is an important aspect of education at School, Intermediate and University level The writing teachers should effectively implement suitable approaches to the teaching of writing. The teachers should encourage participation of students through Brain Storming and discussion in the classroom.

However the teaching methodology adopted by teacher in school and intermediate is the lecture method .Where the students are passive listeners and the teachers are active and does most of the talking .Thus, as Teshome Wagaw (1979) and Hailemichael ,(1993) say has encouraged rote learning, teacher dependence and preoccupation with the examination .

Therefore many students find it difficult to cope with their professional studies which demand of them learning strategies difficult from what they have done in school and intermediate.

In the first year of study of Engineering at the Under Graduate level ,the teaching of writing is predominantly product oriented .The teacher discusses the topic for the first fifteen to twenty minutes and sometimes puts the format of the topic on the Black Board. Then the students are required to write a paragraph .The students are not exposed to prewriting and post writing session .The students are given time to write and few of the completed writing tasks is checked by the teacher.

The teaching of writing has been described by Pincas (1982:2) as follows

- ) Its scope must be widened to go beyond the critical, unrealistic school type compositions of traditional teaching to more genuine practical and relevant kinds of writing.
- ) It should be communicative, or functional, as possible i.e., it should be seen to fulfill the sort of normal communicative purpose that writing is used for in everyday life.
- ) It should go beyond merely reinforcing grammar and vocabulary and deal quite specifically with those skills that are required for effective writing.
- ) In other words ,although written English should certainly support and be integrated with grammar and vocabulary learning ,teaching writing should be recognized as a special part of language teaching with its own aims and objectives .

The syllabus has been devised to meet the requirement of students going to foreign universities for further education and for this; they require good communication skills, on par with other nationals. The students have to appear for tests such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOFEL), Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), Graduate Record Examinations (GRE), International English Language Testing System (IELTS) which require excellent communication and vocabulary skill

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