Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.

===

Abstract

This paper discusses various aspects of English language curriculum adopted and used in the universities of Haryana. Haryana, a wealthier state of North India, which is said to have second highest per capita income, one of the largest producer of food grains and milk; with SEZ sectors like Gurgaon, Faridabad, Sonepat, Panipat which are rapidly emerging as major hub for IT, automobile industry, education, handloom industry and refinery -- is expanding vigorously. It has one Central University situated in Mahendergarh, and eleven State Government Universities located in Kurukshetra, Sirsa, Sonepat, Murthal, Rohtak, Hisar, Faridabad. English Departments in the State Universities of Haryana are largely English Literature teaching departments. A detailed survey of models of curriculum in general and the syllabi followed in the Universities in Haryana are presented.

Key words: Curriculum, Design of syllabi, Haryana State in India, aspects of language curriculum in universities.

Introduction

English, in global world today, is the primary language of ICT, business, science, education etc. and its international link status demands a practical command of English rather than mastering typical literature-language courses. This undoubtedly necessitates developing an effective curriculum of English especially in Higher Learning Institutions/Universities to fulfill the needs of our learners. Traditionally, a curriculum, is taken to refer to a statement or statements of intent – the '*what should be'* of a course of study whereas syllabus is, according to Allen, the selection of materials based on objectives, duration of course and level (p. 64). Richards (2001) describes curriculum development as "the range of planning and implementation processes involved in developing or renewing a curriculum" (p. 41). He defines the processes as focusing on "needs analysis, situational analysis, planning learning outcomes, course organization, selecting and preparing teaching materials, providing for effective teaching and evaluation" (p. 41). Therefore, curriculum involves the philosophical,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   1
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

social and administrative factors in an educational programme; practically speaking, these aforesaid factors are what the decision-making bodies in universities are obliged to observe in higher education committees. Borrowing words from Brown (1995), curriculum development is, therefore, understood as "a series of activities that contribute to the growth of consensus among staff, faculty, administration and students." (p. 19).

Though the development of linguistic skills and literary appreciation are common goals in many language programmes, yet historically speaking, teaching language has consistently been viewed as a less sophisticated, and therefore less difficult task than teaching literature (Barnett 1991; Kramsch, 1993). This reflects a historic divergence between language and literature, which Short (1996) refers to as a 'border dispute over territory' between linguists and literary critics. Not only is this dichotomy fatal to an integrated teaching-learning experience but this divergence has resulted in two 'disconnected pedagogic practices' (Carter and McRae, 1996: xxiv). This is even truer in India, especially with regards to University education. Researchers, teachers and instructors (Bernhardt,1995; Scher, 1976; Schulz, 1981) have commented on the lack of articulation between courses in many foreign language departments. Bragger and Rice (1998) commented that language/literature courses often are organized in ways that create sudden jumps in difficulty level in both content and in language, and that expectation levels of instructors often do not correspond to the realities of student proficiency.

Need for a Suitable Syllabus

According to Penny Ur (2005) , a syllabus is a document which consists, essentially of a list. This list specifies all the things that are to be taught in the course(s) for which the syllabus was designed: it is therefore comprehensive (176). It is the syllabus which sets a road map for the learner guiding him/her the quantum of effort a student has to put in and create an impartial understanding without any confusion. Syllabus, generally speaking, sets forth the nature and scope of the course along with assigning it a brand value, which helps the learner to choose various courses empowering learners to place themselves later in the job market successfully.

Therefore, for designing a suitable syllabus, the aim, resources, procedure, and evaluation (Nunan, 137) need to be considered. Some other scholars like Mills add a few more

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   2
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

like: title, objectives, background, problem statement, procedures, resources, as well as assessment into account (13). Besides, to design an adequate syllabus, which is a public document having explicit objectives, "grading" i.e. the arrangement of syllabus content from easy to difficult need to be considered as a prime factor. Since there are different varieties of language, culminating into various types of discourses like literary and scientific; expressive (focusing on personal expressions like diaries, letters etc.); transactional (which focus on both the reader and the message like editorials, instructions, advertising, business documents) poetic (focusing on form and language like drama, poetry etc.), narrative (stories and novels); argumentative (political speeches and sermons etc.), expository … a suitable syllabus need to take all this into account. Further, "needs analysis" should be practiced before developing any curriculum and designing any syllabus (Nunan,158). To incorporate a technique, into the normal syllabus design, for instance to teach poetry , "integration" should be highly considered. Finally, "sequencing," i.e., the order of contents in syllabus according to difficulty, frequency, or needs of learners (Nunan, 159) should be observed. The separation of literature from language is a *false dualism* should be kept in mind since literature is language and language can indeed be literary.

Types of Syllabus

There are different kinds of syllabi. Binary terms are largely used. To cite a few among them:

a) *Product oriented* syllabus *vs* the *process-oriented*. In the former, the focus is on the knowledge, which learners should gain as a result of instruction; while in the latter, the concentration is on learning experiences (Nunan, 27).

b) *Analytic and Synthetic* -- Long and Crookes (1993) suggest a distinction between "two super-ordinate categories, analytic and synthetic syllabi.

Analytic syllabus presents L2 in chunks, without linguistic interference or control, and rely on the learner's ability to induce and infer language rules, as well as on innate knowledge of linguistic universals.

Since the mid-1980s, as a result of widespread interest in the functional views of language and communicative language teaching analytic syllabus formed a basis to develop *procedural, process and task-based* syllabi. They are distinguishable from the many syllabus

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940** **16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   3
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

types because their rationale derives from what is known about human learning in general and second language learning in particular.

The term "synthetic" refers here to structural, lexical, notional, functional, and most situational and topical syllabi, in which acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of separately taught parts, building up to the whole structure of the language. It segments the target language into discrete linguistic items for presentation for one at a time.

Scholars and researchers also use terms like *Type A* syllabus for analytic and *Type B* syllabus which automatize existing non-analytic knowledge and contributes to 'primary processes'.

   c) *Addictive or Grammatical Syllabus:* It introduces one item at a time before moving to the next in order to prepare the ground for the latter. The arrangement of materials could be based on topics, themes, settings, and situations (Nunan 158). An example might be the course Literary Criticism in which it seems impossible to teach structuralism while students have no idea about Russian formalism; or, instructing deconstruction when nothing is known around structuralism.

   d) *Notional/Functional Syllabus*: A functional-notional syllabus is based on learning to recognize and express the communicative functions of language and the concepts and ideas it expresses. In other words, this kind of syllabus is based more on the purposes for which language is used and on the meanings the speaker wanted to express than on the forms used to express them.Examples of functions include: informing, agreeing, apologizing, requesting; examples of notions include size, age, color, comparison, time, and so on.

   e) *Situational Syllabus:* The primary purpose of a situational language teaching syllabus is to teach the language that occurs in the situations. The content of language teaching is a collection of real or imaginary situations in which language occurs or is used. A situation usually involves several participants who are engaged in some activity in a specific setting. The language occurring in the situation involves a number of functions, combined into a plausible segment of discourse. Examples of situations include: seeing the dentist, complaining to the police, buying a book at the book store, meeting a new student, and so forth.

   f) *Content-based Syllabus:* Content-based language teaching is concerned with

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   4
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

information, while task-based language teaching is concerned with communicative and cognitive processes. For example, to teach students of science or law in the language which is the medium of instruction, some linguistic adjustments need to be done to make science/legal system more comprehensible. Herein, the poetic function of language will not suit the content. Therefore, the students are simultaneously language students and students of whatever content is being taught.

g) *A Skill-based Syllabus:* Skills are a set of abilities that learners must be able to use to be competent in a language, relatively independently of the situation or setting in which the language use can occur.While situational syllabi group functions together into specific settings of language use, skill-based syllabi group linguistic competencies (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse). A possible secondary purpose is to develop more general competence in the language. For example, listening to spoken language for the main idea, writing well-formed paragraphs, giving effective oral presentations, and so forth. Therefore, in skill based syllabus the content of the language teaching is a collection of specific abilities that may play a part in using a language and that can be applied at any given time.

Teaching Practices

As far as English literature teaching is concerned, the members of the teaching fraternity cull excuses that the nature of the two fields is different. A literature teacher ought to stir student's emotions and thoughts. Time is also an issue. For literary courses, it is absolutely necessary to inform students of the content before the term, for example in drama and fiction the length would be problematic and outrun their time ; whereas in poetry, preparation is important and the teachers have to ask students to read the poem before the session to understand it and to look up new words. Moreover, literature usually lends itself to be managed by self-study with different approaches in literary criticism that are not restricted to text-based methods, but reader-response orientation,historical or author-intended meaning, psychological approaches, and so forth. Nevertheless, the task of a literature teacher is to conduct various updated theories in his methodology in order to be more effective, as far as he/she is concerned.

Carter and Long (1991) describe the rationale for the use of the three main approaches to the teaching of literature:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   5
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

a)   The Cultural Model : This formulates the traditional approach to teaching of literature. It is a teacher-centred approach. There is a little or no opportunity for language learning. It requires the learners to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text. The universality of thoughts and ideas are emphasised but learners have to understand different cultures and ideologies in relation to their own by themselves.

Language teachers largely reject this model.

b)   The Language Model : This model takes a *reductive* approach to literature. The approach enables learners to access a text in a systematic and methodical way in order to exemplify specific linguistic features, for example, literal and figurative language, direct and indirect speech. These activities are disconnected from the literary goals of the specific text. Nonetheless, they can be applied to any text. It is also a teacher-centred approach wherein there is little engagement of the learner with the text other than for purely linguistic practice; literature is used in a rather purposeless and mechanistic way in order to provide for a series of language activities orchestrated by the teacher.

c)   The Personal Growth Model: This model helps learners develop knowledge of ideas and language – content and formal schemata – through different themes and topics. It attempts to bridge the cultural model and the language model not only by focusing on the particular use of language in a text but also by placing it in a specific cultural context. Learners are encouraged to express their opinions and make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those expressed in the text.

These three approaches to teaching literature differ in terms of their focus on the text: the first treats the text as a cultural artifact; second, uses the text for grammatical and structural analysis; and third, the stimulus the text for thinking skills and personal growth activities.

Practically speaking, all the aforesaid three approaches have gaps. They do not provide a holistic solution to the teaching learning experience.This gives rise to the questions do our students actually achieve proficiency in language skills and critical social-thinking skills? Is literature teaching the only legitimate teaching? Is language component subsidiary? Are there

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   6
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

some social-cultural factors, which contribute to this politics of curriculum design?Can we not synthesize approaches keeping the learner's need in focus?

The Case of Haryana State

Haryana, a wealthier state of North India, which is said to have second highest per capita income, one of the largest producer of food grains and milk; with SEZ sectors like Gurgaon, Faridabad, Sonepat, Panipat which are rapidly emerging as major hub for IT, automobile industry, education, handloom industry and refinery -- is expanding vigorously. It has one Central University situated in Mahendergarh, and eleven State Government Universities located in Kurukshetra, Sirsa, Sonepat, Murthal, Rohtak, Hisar, Faridabad. English Departments in the State Universities of Haryana are largely English Literature teaching departments. They still quite follow the rigid, traditional approach, which can be summed up in the words of Hoffman and James (1986) as: "The teaching of literature to undergraduates legitimizes our standing as professors and the teaching of language does not" (p. 29). Hoffman's and James' statement equally applies to course curriculum for post graduate courses and above and if we take an overview of some of the universities of Haryana, it becomes self-evident:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   7
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

	K.U.K		M.D.U		C.D.L.U		D.C.R.U.S.T		BPSMV	
Paper I	Literature (1550-1660)	Critical Theory-I	Literature (History-I / Fiction)	Literature (Novel)	Literature (Introduction)	Literature (American)	History of English Literature-I	Literature (Indian)	**Language and Linguistics**	**Applied Linguistics**
II	Literature (1660-1798)	Literature (American)	**Study of Language-I**/ Literature : Prose	Literature (American/ New Literature)	Literature (upto1660)	Literature (Indian/ Indian Writing)	Critical Foundation	Literature (American)	Literature (British 1340-1625)	Literature (British 1837-1901)
III	Literature (1798-1914)	Literature (Indian-I)	Literature (Poetry-I)	Literature (Indian-II)	Literature (1660-1798)	Literary Criticism -II	**Phonetics and Phonology**	Literature (Modern World)	Literature (British 1625-1700)	Literature (British 1901-1945-I)
IV	Literature (1914-2000)	Colonial and Post-Colonial / **English Language-I**	Literature (Drama-I)	Literature, Gender, Ethnicity-I	Literature and Culture	**Communica--tion Skills in English**	**Advanced Writing Skills**	Literature & Cinema / Literature & Psychology/ Literature and Philosophy	Western Literary Theory & Criticism	Contemporary Literary Theory
V	Genre (Fiction)	Literature and Gender/ Literature and Philosophy/ New Literature-I	Literature (Indian-I)	Criticism and Literary Theory-II	**Linguistics-I / ELT**	Study of Genre	**A**: British Literature -- Poetry / Drama / Prose **B**: Literature and Communication / **Non-Verbal Communication / Communication and Culture**	Dalit Writing in India / **Language &Discourse** Popular Fiction	**Language Acquisition and Teaching Methods**	Cultural Studies
VI	Critical Theory	Critical Theory -II	Literature (History-II/ Mythology)	Translation (World/ Indian)	Literature (1798-1832)	Literature (American-II)	**Oral Communication Skills Lab**	Seminar	Literature (British 1900-1970)	Literature (British 1901-1945-II)
VII	Literature (American)	Literature (American-II)	**Study of Language - II/** Literature: Classical Drama	Literature (American-II) /Canadian)	Literature (Victorian)	Literature and Gender/ Subaltern Literature	Introduction to Information Communication Technology Lab	Literary Criticism & Theory -II	Literature (British 1798-1830)	Literature (Indian/ American) **/ ELT**

Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   8
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

	Literature (Indian writing)	Literature (Indian-II)	Literature (Poetry-II)	Literature (Diaspora)	Literature (Modern British)	Literature (Diaspora / Partition)	History of English Literature-II	Literature and Gender	Indian Poetics	Literature (Indian/ American) / ELT
VIII										
IX	**Linguistics, Stylistics & ELT**	Colonial and Post-Colonial-II / **English Language-II**	Literature (Novel)	Literature, Gender, Ethnicity-II	Literary Criticism-I	Post Colonial Literature and Theory	Literary Criticism & Theory -I	Indian Literary Theory and Criticism / Modern European Literature / South Asian and Diasporic Fiction	---	---
X	Literature and Gender	Literature and Gender-II / Literature and Philosophy-II/ New Literature-II	Literary Criticism and Theory-I	Criticism and Literary Theory-III	Linguistics-I / Teaching of English Literature	Literature (World / SAARC / Non-Fiction Narrative)	Literature (Novel)	Dissertation	---	---
XI	--	--	--	--	--	--	Translation		--	--
XII	--	--	--	--	--	--	**A:** Indian Literature in English Translation / Non-fictional Narratives / **Language and Linguistics** **B:** Interpersonal Communication and Personality Development / **Language Change & Contemporary Language Use / ELT**		--	--
XIII							**Oral Presentation Skills Lab**			

K.U. Kurukshetra was established in 1966 and M.D.U in Rohtak the year 1976 ; C.D.L.U, Sirsa in 2003 whereas DCRUST, Murthal (Dist. Sonipat) in 1987 and BPSMV, KhanpurKalan (Dist. Sonepat) in 2006.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.   9
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

Except BPSM, Sonepat as a State university, other universities just make 'literature curriculum' with hardly any slot for language. In the case of Technical Universities like DCRUST, Murthal, communication skills and language itinerary do find place in curriculum. Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, the quality of education has dropped drastically and postgraduate students can neither write correct English nor speak fluently. In the last two decades, deterioration has been at an alarming pace. To cite an instance, which was covered widely in print and visual media, a high-tech cheating scam was busted in Rohtak in Haryana recently on May 4, 2015. Around 90 answer keys were leaked in this scam.The aforesaid instance is not the only one; mass copying among students is a daily affair . Adding to it is the tumor of malpractices, corruption and politics among teachers, which works as icing on the cake. Generally speaking, it is a bitter truth that the professors of literature have negligent know-how of technical knowledge of how a curriculum should be designed! Neither any training is provided by the UGC or any other agency. Consequently, curriculum design reduces to just a façade.

With the non-detention policy of the Government at the school level, which are the formative years for a learner, it is an extremely difficult task to teach aesthetic, or stylistic features of literary discourse to learners who have a less than sophisticated grasp of the basic mechanics of English language. Consequently, from the elementary level to the higher education level, either no competence gets built in students or it stands infructuous. Students do not get jobs and/or opt for unfair means even after bagging ample degrees.

Hence, there is a dire need to follow an integrated approach in curriculum design. We as the teaching fraternity need to break mental barriers, abandoning false practices. This is the only way for development and progress at the individual, institutional, social and national level.

==

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.
                                                                          10
Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

References

Allen, J.P.B. (1984). General Purpose Langauge Teaching: A Variable Focus Approach. In *General English Syllabus Design*Ed. C.J. Brumfit. Oxford: Pergamon.

Apple, M. (1990). *Ideology and Curriculum* (2nd edition). London: Routledge.

Breen, M. (2001). Syllabus Design. In Carter, R., & Nunan, D. (2001). (Eds.). *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, J. D. (1995). *The Elements of Language Curriculum*. New York: Heinle and Heinle.

Burden, R., & Williams, M. (1998). *Thinking Through the Curriculum*. London: Routledge.

Carter, R. and Long, M. (1991) *Teaching Literature.* London: Longman.

Carter, R. & McRae, J. (eds) (1996). *Language, Literature and the Learner*. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.

Carter, R. & Nash, W. (1990) *Seeing through Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Carter, R., & Nunan, D. (2001). (Eds.). The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Golby, M., Greenwald, J., & West. R. (Eds.), *Curriculum Design*. London: Croom Helm. Gaad, E.,

Lier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy & authenticity*. London: Addison Wesley Longman Limited.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.

11

Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in Haryana

Markee, N. (1997). *Managing curricular innovation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mills, S. C. (2006) *Using the Internet for Active Teaching and Learning*. New Jersey: Pearson
    Education, Inc.

Nunan,D. (1998) *Syllabus Design* . Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richards, J.C. (2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge
    University Press.

Short, M. (1996) *Exploring the Language of Poems, Plays and Prose*. London: Longman

Ur, Penny (2005) *A Course in Language Teaching Theory and Practice.* UK: Cambridge
    University Press.

Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.
Chairperson
Department of English
BPS Women's University
Khanpur Kalan
Sonepat-131301
Haryana
India
amrita1177@gmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 16:3 March 2016**
Prof. Amrita, Ph.D.

12

Ignoring Language Curriculum in Designing Syllabi: A Case Study of Universities in
Haryana