Current Practices and Pitfalls of ELT Syllabi for Developing Engineering Students' Communicative English in Bangladesh[1]

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Abstract

The current practices and shortcomings of engineering students' English language teaching (ELT) syllabi were examined from the perspectives of learners and teachers in English as a foreign language (EFL) context. The syllabi included content that had little impact on students' communicative competence in English (CC-E). Students were generally concerned about their professional communication abilities. In this study, the researchers collected data from ten engineering-focused universities in Bangladesh. These universities' existing ELT syllabi (ELT-S) were examined, seeking the current practices and pitfalls. The study sampled 152 participants from the selected universities. The study followed a mixed-method approach. In the qualitative technique, content analysis, focus group discussion (FGD), and interviews were employed for data collection, while survey questions were used in the quantitative approach. The study's findings revealed that the existing English syllabi of those selected universities required updating and modification to meet the identified professional requirements regarding the type, credit allotment, content, classroom practices, class size, policies, etc. The improvements included redesigning English syllabi, material, and teaching methods to improve engineering students' communicative abilities. A uniform curriculum with at least one English language sessional course per semester in all engineering majors was strongly recommended.

Resumen

Se examinaron las prácticas actuales y las deficiencias de los programas de estudios de enseñanza del idioma inglés (ELT) de los estudiantes de ingeniería desde las perspectivas de los estudiantes y profesores en el contexto del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL). El plan de estudios incluía contenidos que tenían poco impacto en la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes en inglés (CC-E). En general, los estudiantes estaban preocupados por sus habilidades de comunicación profesional. En este estudio, los investigadores recopilaron datos de diez universidades de Bangladesh centradas en la ingeniería. Se examinaron los programas de estudios ELT (ELT-S) existentes de estas universidades, buscando las prácticas y dificultades actuales. El estudio tomó una muestra de 152 participantes de las universidades seleccionadas. El estudio siguió un enfoque de métodos mixtos. En la técnica cualitativa, se emplearon análisis de contenido, discusión en grupos focales (DGF) y entrevistas para la recopilación de datos, mientras que en el enfoque cuantitativo se utilizaron preguntas de encuesta. Los hallazgos del estudio revelaron que los programas de estudios de inglés existentes de las universidades seleccionadas requirieron actualización y modificación para cumplir con los requisitos profesionales identificados con respecto al tipo, asignación de créditos, contenido, prácticas en el aula, tamaño de las clases, políticas, etc. Las mejoras incluyeron el rediseño de programas de estudios de inglés, material y métodos de enseñanza para mejorar las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes de ingeniería. Se recomendó encarecidamente un plan de estudios uniforme con al menos un curso sesional en inglés por semestre en todas las carreras de ingeniería.

Introduction

A syllabus is a teaching tool used to enhance learning. It establishes a teaching program or pedagogic agenda for activities (Widdowson, 1984). However, a syllabus is a flexible document constantly amended or modified to meet changing demands. The syllabus serves as a road map for what students should study in each topic. As a result, it must be well-planned, precise, and output-driven. It is critical to address the learners' prior linguistic knowledge and what they will acquire in the language teaching-learning syllabus (Read, 2003). The current study examined the communicative competence in English (CC-E) of the engineering students (ES) in the English as a foreign language (EFL) environment of Bangladesh.

Teaching communicative English in Bangladesh is not easy. After passing the higher secondary test (HSC), pupils register as undergraduate students at various universities. Students discover that the existing undergraduate level syllabus can help them develop their linguistic abilities but frequently miss the practical

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tasks at this stage. Finally, pupils grasp the linguistic rubrics but cannot utilize the language confidently and communicatively in a real-world context (Wali, 2018). However, due to their varying previous knowledge of English, the ES often struggle to succeed in English courses. They need English language skills for academic and professional development (Mohamed et al., 2014; Qasemi & Ibrahim, 2015). So, teachers and students become concerned with the teaching-learning process of communicative English as they require these skills to improve their employability.

In this study, the researchers examined existing English syllabi, their content, resources, and other components of the selected engineering-focused universities (EFU). Engineering students (ES) frequently need the English language to complete specific tasks, such as writing research papers, lab reports, technical reports, and projects and communicating with colleagues and counterparts for academic and professional objectives. Nonetheless, the existing English language curricula at the selected universities appeared insufficient to emphasize all the four skills equally. Their CC-E was deficient in some areas. While the Bangladeshi government made various attempts to improve English language teaching and study up to the upper secondary level, no new mandatory language programs or projects have been added to the ES.

The alarmingly widening gap between the curriculum developed for students and the skills required by companies and the labor market has been identified as the primary cause of rising unemployment among educated graduates (Chowdhury et al., 2020). This chasm is caused by the traditional pedagogical approaches in higher education institutions for teaching, learning, and assessment (World Bank, 2014). Students lack originality, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and proactivity as they learn from selected texts, prepared notes, and generally one-sided lectures. Their assessment methods are less diverse and scientific than modern methods like case studies, presentations, group work, simulations, and term paper writing (Chowdhury et al., 2020), contributing to the learners' communicative competence (CC) development.

The current syllabi might have a scarcity of content or implementation strategies to help future engineers develop a robust professional foundation in communication skills. This unique circumstance places a strain on the English teaching-learning process and necessitates the adoption of a need-based English syllabus. Nonetheless, most students lack a syllabus tailored to their specific needs (Chostelidou, 2010). University English courses should enhance students' communication abilities, but English syllabi and content are incompatible with professional requirements (Bhuiyan & Khan, 2022). So, the objectives of this study were to identify the shortcomings of current curricula and the necessity of modifying English language syllabi to assure communicative and professional competency in English among the ES in Bangladesh. The study sought answers to these research questions to address the objectives: (i). What are the English language teaching syllabus (ELT-S) techniques and contents currently in use in the EFUs? (ii). Does the current ELT-S meet all professional requirements for developing CC-E of the ES? & (iii). What are the pitfalls of the existing practices and policies in the ELT-S improving the competency level of the ES?

Literature Review

The English courses help engineering students improve their academic and professional English skills (Rahman et al., 2017). The teaching-learning process of the English language following the existing ELT-S of ES does not always suit, as expected, for multiple reasons. As a result, Sultana (2014) considered that higher education in Bangladesh robbed some students of their rights to knowledge. A structured and purposeful syllabus could ensure communicative improvement among the ES. Hence, this research contributes to the universities regarding the teaching-learning process of the English language generated from the need for students' viewpoints considering the existing syllabi. ELT-S do not look entirely different from one another; instead, the syllabi for language teaching areas are composites of two or more different types of syllabi (Zela, 2015). Munby (1978) stated in another study that syllabi and materials are developed after a preliminary examination of learner communication needs in English for special purposes (ESP) courses. Thus, the syllabus and resources for ESP courses at Bangladesh's EFUs must be adjusted to the needs of the learners. A communicative strategy must focus on the learner's communication needs and address them. To this end, the researchers examined the syllabi using a variety of theoretical frameworks derived from various approaches to foreign language syllabus design. Sultana and Dovchin (2019) consider that EFL students have some educational implications for foreign language pedagogy outside of classroom digital language practices. This study injected the feeling that learners should go out of the box with a positive perception apart from their discipline.

Shamrao (2013) showed that many rural ES could not perform well in their professional lives because of poor English communication skills. The study recommended that teachers and students participate in many interactional activities that are very important to improve their skills.

Kainth and Kumar (2014) reported how teaching English in India was not still up to the mark and caused the unemployment of a significant number of technical graduates. The only reason was their lack of communication skills, which were considered survival or life skills in the twenty-first century's competitive environment. It is of the utmost importance that, despite the fact that the courses are intended to equip students with certain skills, they fail to do so.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the challenges faced by both students and instructors in Bangladeshi engineering and technology institutions during the ELT instruction at the undergraduate level. However, this paper was prepared on multiple theoretical bases. Canale and Swain (1980) researched communicative approaches to second language teaching. They identified four major components for CC in their model: grammatical, strategic, sociolinguistic, and discourse. This paper also considered these four significant aspects on looking into the ELT-S. The communicative approach to language teaching emphasizes the learner's ability to understand and use language appropriately in real-life social and academic situations. (Communicative Competence, n.d.). The communicative language teaching (CLT) approach was introduced in Bangladesh in the late 1990s (Khan et al., 2020). The communicative movement of 1970 and ESP are interrelated and supportive (The Communicative Approach, n.d.). ESP may be an excellent example of CLT as it usually emphasizes students' needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1984). ESP was influential in the higher education context of Bangladesh as per the expectations of the ES to enhance their CC-E. Richards and Rodger (2001) also mentioned ESP is a particular dimension in learning-teaching that provides enough practical guidelines to be skilled for professional communication.

Bhuiyan (2019) mentioned that the number of English language credits in the universities are insufficient and this is why the ES place their English courses in a lower priority list. In most surveys conducted among the engineer-employees, communication skills in English have been recognized as one of the significant engineering obstructions for the graduates in getting good jobs. Good command over English is significantly needed as all country's economic actions are internationalized. Thus, a high grade of collaboration in English is required austerely for an increasing requirement of software and information technology-based service engineers as all the communication is done through English with clients around the world (Ferrari & Dhingra, 2009). As our engineering students lack the required English skills needed for job appointments, this study investigated the suitability of the ELT-S of engineering institutions to develop future engineers' CC-E.

Materials and Methods

The research was conducted in a mixed-method approach since the qualitative and quantitative tools supported the study's development. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) mentioned that a mixed-method approach allows the investigators to utilize all possibilities. The data were collected from content analysis of the ten university course documents from the respective websites, FGD, semi-structured interviews with participating teachers, and a questionnaire survey among the students.

There were 152 randomly selected participants: 120 existing students, 24 former students (alumni) who had recently graduated with different engineering backgrounds, and eight ELT teachers (four regular faculty members and four expert-teachers) from ten EFUs in different regions of Bangladesh. The universities were coded from U1 to U10. The teacher-participants were also from those universities whose minimum qualification was a post-graduate degree in English. The eight teacher-participants were two assistant professors, two associate professors, and four professors. The student participants were from different engineering departments. The participants were chosen from the universities where the researchers could flexibly communicate. The researchers documented the age ranges of the participants to identify areas of concern for future studies with more diverse age demographics.

SL	Participants	n	Gender		Age
			Male	Female	
1	Present Students	120	65%	35%	18-22
2	Former Students	24	67%	33%	26-32
3	Teachers	8	62.5%	27.5%	31-55

Table 1: Participants' demographic information (n = 152)

The questionnaire surveys were administered to the students to elicit pertinent information about current English language syllabus practices at the EFUs. The questions were adapted from Rashid and Rana (2021), Sultana et al. (2019), and Gözüyeşil's (2014) concepts of the students' need of the language skills, a lack

of importance of communicative competence in the current syllabi, the effectiveness of the current syllabi, students' evaluation of the current syllabi, existing English language courses, content, teaching criteria, resources and administration, and professional needs of language courses. There were both open-ended and closed-ended questions on the surveys. The open-ended items were graded on a five-point Likert scale, which included Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), No opinion (NO), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (A) (SA). The alumni attended an online FGD on 11 May, 2021 where the researchers asked for some suggestive opinions for developing the CC-E of the future engineers. The teacher-interviewees took part in the interview process in two groups. The regular faculty members were assigned the identifiers T1, T2, T3, and T4. They were interviewed from an academic perspective. On the other hand, expert teachers who were also involved in administrative activities, planning, monitoring, and development were classified as E1, E2, E3, and E4.

In qualitative research, the interview technique elicits detailed information from interviewees rather than identifying issues from the researchers' perspective (Davison, 2014). The interview technique was used to ascertain the objective and subjective character of individual attitudes, behaviors, impulses, and reactions to phenomena, events, or circumstances (Creswell, 2014).

From January, 2020 through May, 2021, data collecting continued. No one interfered with the data collection process; thus, the researchers ensured the data's reliability. Participants were told that the information they supplied would stay private and that there was no danger associated with participation in the study before the data collection process. The study was done to ascertain the ELT challenges and requirements for enhancing the professional communication skills of engineering students in Bangladesh. Thus, data were examined following the needs of the stakeholders of ELT-S. Rahman and Jelane (2021) argue that needs analysis might reveal which language abilities are required to perform a given position.

Findings

Canale and Swain's (1980) model and the contents in the ELT-S

This study suggested that the current ELT-S have similarities in contents and practices of CC-E as per the CC model. Given that the syllabi's contents are not relevant for CC-E development among the ES, the study revealed a disappointing scenario. The researchers wondered how only theoretical aspects could impact the professional lives of the ES as the communicative aspects from Canale and Swain's (1980) model are often ignored in the ELT-S at most of the universities. This study reported the English courses and their contents of the ELT-S as follows:

EFU	Course Title	Credits	Total Credits	Type
U1	Communicative English-I	1.5	3	S
	Communicative English-II	1.5		S
U2	Technical English	3	3.75	T+G+TW
	English Skills Laboratory	0.75		S
U3	English Reading	3	9	T+L
	English Writing	3		T+TW
	Business Communication	3		T
U4	Functional English & Sociology	4	10.75	T+G+O
	English & Economics	3		T+G+O
	Professional Practices and Business Communication	3		T+O
	Professional Practices and Business Communication (Sessional)	0.75		T+S+O
U5	Basic English	3	9	T+G
	Introduction to Composition	3		T
	Advanced Composition (Technical English Writing)	3		T+TW
U6	English Communication Skills	2	3	T
	English Communication Skills (Lab)	1		T+S
U7	Functional English	3	4.5	T+G+S
	English Language Lab	1.5		S
U8	Fundamentals of English	2	3	T+G
	Fundamentals of English (Sessional)	1		S
U9	English and Sociology	3	4.5	T+G+O
	Developing English Skills Lab.	1.5		S
U10	Elementary English	3	6	T+G
	English Comprehension, Writing and Speaking	3		T+L+TW+S

T=Theory, L=Literature, G= Grammar, S=Sessional5, TW=Technical Writing, Others=O
Table 2: English course titles at the EFUs in Bangladesh

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[5] The sessional courses refer to some practical courses that have no formal exams. There is a series of tests with formative assessments mainly based on four language skills with particular focus on speaking skill.

As illustrated in Table 2, two EFUs do not offer sessional or practical English language classes. However, eight universities provide sessional courses with few credit hours. U4 and U9 have merged with other fields, rendering them incapable of effectively ensuring the learners' linguistic aptitude. The content lists of the EFUs are somewhat similar in the case of teaching and learning items with Canale and Swain's (1980) four communicative aspects, but most of the sampled EFUs lack the fulfillment with appropriate practice and credit hours. U3 and U4 have a theoretical 'Business Communication' course, but the study discovered relatively few opportunities for the ES to be involved in the practice. Almost all courses include an oral presentation for 10 to 15 points as part of the final exam.

Below, Table 3 shows the regular contents in the ELT-S at the EFUs. However, all the universities do not cover all these topics. The contents and practical sessions vary from institution to institution as to the credit hours and course design (Table 2). The strategic and sociolinguistic contents are not considered central in the course syllabi. Besides, five-course syllabi carry inadequate discourse content (U2, U3, U4, U5, U10). Three EFUs (U1, U2 & U6) have practical courses, and only U1 offers the courses as completely sessional, but with inadequate credit hours.

Themes from the features of Canale and Swain (1980)	Frequently found contents in the ELT-S of EFUs
Grammatical (Phonology, orthography, vocabulary, word formation, and sentence formation)	Articles, affixes, sentences, verbs, conditionals, emphatic, tense, determiners, comparatives, parts of speech, modifiers, punctuation, WH & yes/no questions, English phonetics, etc.
Strategic (Reference sources, grammatical and lexical paraphrasing, requests for repetition, clarification, slower speech, or problems in addressing strangers)	Problems in addressing unfamiliar persons, business communication, etc.
Sociolinguistic (Understanding socio-cultural rules, e.g., formality, politeness, directness, non-verbal behaviors, cultural references (idioms, expressions, behaviors)	Communicative expressions for personal identification, life at home, giving advice and opinion, instructions and directions, requests, complaints, apologies, describing people and places, narrating events, idioms, etc.
Discourse (Learners' understanding and producing texts in the modes of listening, speaking, reading, writing, cohesion and coherence in different types of texts)	*Conversational:* Role plays, situational talks, dialogues *Listening:* BBC & CNN extracts, short conversation, British & American accents *Speaking:* Elements and qualities of a good speaker, storytelling, oral presentation *Reading:* Reading, scanning, skimming, summarizing, vocabulary for engineers *Writing:* Drafting, paragraph and essays, cover letter, applications of business letter, resumes and job letters, etc.

Table 3: Canale & Swain's features and the related English course contents at EFUs in Bangladesh

Table 3 shows that the ELT-S contents did not cover all the features of Canale and Swain, but most of the features were included. It indicates that the ELT-S implementation has yet to reach its true success.

All student-participants (both former and present students) were asked a closed-ended question about the contents prevalent in the ELT-S. The result indicated that most ES experienced theoretical and grammatical English language classes. Figure-1 shows their choices:
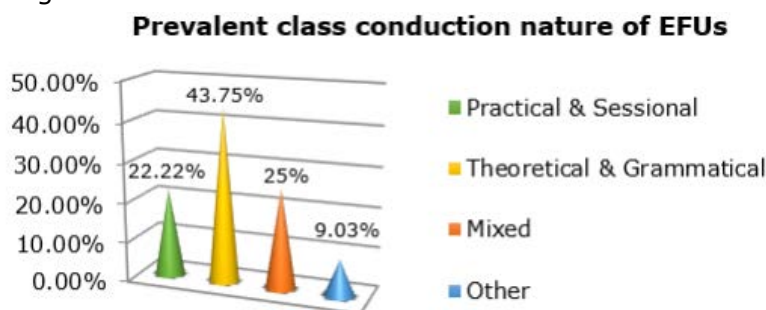

Figure 1: Prevalent EFL class types at EFUs

ELT-S for CC-E: Students' perspectives

Table 4 shows students' perceptions of factors affecting CC-E. *Statement-1* shows that about 45% do not find any activities or contents in the ELT-S related to strategic communication and problem-addressing skills.

SL	Statements	Responses in percentage (%)				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
1	My English syllabus carries content about strategic communication skills and problem-addressing skills.	6.66	38.33	17.5	35.83	1.66
2	English syllabi possess certain content associated with professional requirements and social interactions.	1.66	5	45.83	40	8
3	My communicative competence can be developed significantly with the existing English syllabi.	9.16	17.5	12.5	32.5	28.33
4	Students need not study all the contents within the framework of the question pattern.	17.5	32.5	12.5	26.66	10.83
5	ELT-S content should be chosen from the engineering contexts to train the students in professional communication skills.	2.5	1.7	37.5	55.83	2.5
6	The English syllabus has the necessary contents for technology-oriented learning to enhance our career through CC-E.	4.17	65	5.83	14.17	10.83
7	The contents of the ELT-S ensure the integration of the four English language skills.	16.16	34.16	2.50	30.83	15.83

Table 4: Factors affecting the CC-E of the students of EFUs

Statement-2 shows that 40% of present students stated that their syllabi addressed the necessity of professional footing or social communication skills; nonetheless, 45.83% of students were ignorant of these essential issues. As these English syllabi are generally provided in level-I or II, the majority had limited knowledge about career prospects. So, the syllabi's objectives should be clear to the students. However, the students still believed CC-E through their ELT-S can considerably increase their communicative skills (*Statement-3*). *Statement-4* shows around 50% of the participants did not want to restrict their study to the framework of the question pattern. Contrarily, a good number of the participants were picky regarding the question pattern. It implies that some pupils were more concerned about marks than developing communication abilities. The students also discussed the topics of ELT-S in an engineering context. *Statement-5* shows that 55.83% of participants agreed that English curricula should provide engineering context for future professionals' communication skills, while 37.5% remained neutral. To build their CC-E for career growth, most students stated that the curricula lack adequate technology-oriented activities (*Statement-6*), though Sultana et al. (2019) suggested using ICT tools to help students. *Statement-7* presented the participants' perceptions about the integration of four Basic English skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in the syllabi of the EFUs, 34.16% disagreed and 16.16% strongly disagreed that all the skills were present. Contrastively, more than 40% agreed with this integration.

The students were also asked about their priority about four essential English language skills. The study found that they prioritize speaking (29.16%) and writing (33.33%) more (Figure 2).
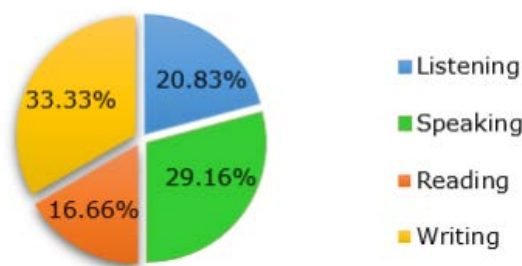

Figure 2: Priority of language skills to be included in the ELT-S

Synopsis of FGD

The graduates suggested some key aspects to help the curriculum developer improve learning outcomes. Preparing a syllabus should consider students' perceptions and purpose. So, the graduates also had more data regarding the problems in implementing the effective ELT-S, professional adding, and credit hours. They also reported insufficient credit hours and fewer practice sessions in the language classes, matching Jamilah's (2016) findings. The English courses were not designed for workplace success. Most graduates reported that the content and the class conduction were not helpful for professional situations, not even for their social interactions.

Regarding their involvement in making the curriculum, they were never called on for any surveys, which is disappointing. However, graduates are particularly positioned to appraise their education's impact on their careers. They can highlight the inadequacies they encountered throughout their university years and the employability skills and knowledge that future engineers will need to succeed in their professional careers (Saunders-Smits & de Graff, 2012). Ex-students' perspectives paralleled those of current students to a considerable extent. Finally, the graduates reported a scarcity of technology use in the language classes, in contrast to Bhuiyan et al.'s (2021) belief that technology in education can make teaching-learning more accessible. Huang et al. (2019) also felt that technology can facilitate, support, and enhance learner performance, learning, and instruction.

Interviews with the teacher-participants

Four English instructors from the selected EFUs were interviewed through formal and informal questions to get the current scenario of the English syllabi and the classroom teaching techniques. They have also expressed their opinions about the English syllabi. When they were asked about the usefulness of the English courses, the majority were in favor of it. One of the teacher participants (T1) stated that:

> The courses are helpful, but all the lessons are not equally important. Like all other academic courses, the English courses have some favorable aspects if students' acceptance, motivation, and perception are appropriately addressed. But, indeed, the number of English language courses is not sufficient to develop their language skills for real-life communication. However, each semester, it becomes almost impossible to reach all the students with practical classroom sessions due to inadequate credit hours.

The teachers partially expressed their dissatisfaction about the contents of the syllabi. When they were asked about the steps taken for the remedy of this discontent, T2 stated:

> I have no opportunity to suggest the contents of the syllabi as a different committee is working on preparing the syllabus. However, the four basic English language skills should be incorporated into the syllabi based on the need of the work field.

Teachers used different methods in their English classes. Often, the strategies and practices were not effective. The researchers found that the teaching techniques were not chosen based on the students' requirements. While asking about the method followed in the classroom, T3 clarified:

> I follow the grammar-translation method in English class as some engineering students are from rural backgrounds and are comfortable with this method. On the contrary, the syllabus has advised the CLT approach. But we cannot deny our responsibility to develop the students' communication skills in English. Moreover, no social, professional, or strategic communication skills are defined explicitly in the syllabi.

The participant teachers indicated that the course objectives, learning outcomes, and graded content were all made available at the start of the semester. Despite this, students rarely read course outlines and were unfamiliar with numerous terms. Several lecturers stated that students generally prioritize completing the course within the timeframe over adequate learning in the process. However, an expert of an engineering institution (T4) opined that

> Students' motivation is primarily concentrated in their core courses; for that reason, they sometimes lose interest in the EFL courses. To eliminate this problem, we think integrating more engineering context and specific reference books may develop students' motivation to develop communicative English. In this regard, ESP syllabus may be supportive if successfully implemented.

The limited number of credits and contact hours for English language courses, large class size, evaluation method, practical activity-based syllabus, etc. Experts felt professional training courses for English language teachers were required, but the authority often failed to arrange them due to administrative issues. One expert (E1) stated:

> I firmly believe that teachers should regularly receive in-service professional training, and their experiences should be shared while preparing the syllabus. However, such initiatives very often face obstacles owing to administrative and financial limitations.

Some significant issues were revealed in discussion with another expert (E2):

Sometimes the authorities need to compromise with the class size for many reasons; even they had to make clusters for English classes, sometimes for time management, and sometimes because of the unavailability of teachers. University authorities know that English teachers were often recruited considering their graduating university and result. Graduates with literature backgrounds sometimes took this opportunity and joined engineering universities teaching English with little knowledge of ELT methodology.

The experts suggested that university English teachers should share updated information about professional communication to draw the students' attention. E2 further specified:

I have hardly seen any teachers or management synchronizing with the requirements of the job markets and incorporating those in the syllabus and the teaching techniques. And the engineering context is also required for effective communication in the respective field.

Experts also expressed their dissatisfaction with the evaluation methods of English courses. E3 remarked that:

The activity-based exercises must be introduced to improve communication skills over theory or paper test. I found many teachers and students mentioning the same from their practical experiences. Besides, the authorities should administer surveys among the EFL teachers to formulate the English syllabi according to the learners' communicative needs, which is hardly ever done.

E3 also claimed that a big classes of sixty to sixty-five students with a duration of 90–120 minutes is a mammoth task for the language teachers to impart basic English language skills. However, the researchers also mentioned the efficacy of syllabus contents for professional communication. Regarding the ineffective content, one of the senior experts (E4) commented that:

The lessons generally included in the English syllabi of engineering-based universities are mainly grammatical and theoretical, whereas the students require more practical courses. Besides, the traditional syllabi contain content that needs to be covered in a limited time frame, which does not support achieving the course goal of better communication skills.

Discussion

Both teachers and students agreed that an insufficient number of English courses are available at the EFUs. Teachers criticized not having enough credit and contact hours to meet the learners' requirements. Class size was also linked to EFL learning and teaching efficacy. Sultana et al. (2019) expressed similar concerns. They reported that teachers could not comment on every student in a large class in limited class hours and large class sizes. They also advised keeping the class size around 30. For CC-E, teachers should provide adequate written feedback and practice functional language components. The students also reported inadequate technology-oriented content and Rintaningrum (2019) believed technology could enhance English skills.

A study of existing English syllabi revealed almost comparable content. The syllabi featured grammatical issues as well as the four core abilities. Few universities taught writing, but those that did must ensure that all students arrive at the same platform before the lecture. Only three EFUs provided two practical ESL courses. A ten to fifteen-mark presentation was required at the other universities. The alumni reported that many engineering graduates struggle to succeed professionally due to a lack of English communication skills. Clement & Murugavel (2015) also stated that engineering graduates remain unemployed due to poor communication skills and confidence. English's status as an engineering language has developed rapidly both at home and internationally. However, this study found that the course's content and design did not consider communication qualities. This is important as Talif and Noor (2009) emphasized the need for students' language competency in the workplace.

English is frequently used in international diplomacy, politics, business, and trade and it is effectively used by government, industry, and businesses to enhance economic and technological growth. This need for rapid communication requires CC-E. Employers in Bangladesh want employees who can both write and speak English. Therefore, universities use ELT-S designed to improve English language skills, preparing students for the competitive job market. As Bhuiyan (2019) said, engineers must be highly competent and communicative to compete and defend their professional excellence.

This study found that the lack of proper English courses in EFU's existing English syllabi only partially help Bangladesh students improve their English proficiency with professional communication challenges. Communicative activities such as individual presentations, role plays, group discussions, etc. should be used and continuously assessed. In the interview, teachers mentioned the lack of opportunity to participate in the syllabus and curriculum formulation, but curriculum can never be improved without the participation of

teachers (McKernan, 2008; Uztosun & Troudi, 2015). The findings indicated that the ELT-S for English language teaching-learning procedures at the Bangladeshi EFU was deficient and the students were significantly behind in achieving communicative competence, similar to the results that Rahman and Jelane (2021) found.

The EFU's English syllabi are neither fully functional nor fully grammar-translation focused. They put little emphasis on professional language skills. Aftertheir first two or three semesters, studentshad no more courses offered to learn English at the university. Results similar to those of Bhuiyan (2019) who discovered that after one and a half years of undergraduate level, no more English courses were offered for the learners Overall, the highlighted gaps demonstrate that current practice and policy cannot address student needs and require modification of ELT-S to align with Gözüyeşil's (2014) study.

Recommendations

Needs assessment is required in ESP for engineering students to create a meaningful learning environment as one of the goals of English courses is to improve professional communication skills. However, the following steps are recommended for redesigning the existing English syllabi:

English syllabi should contain both theory and practical parts since the students of EFUs join with different background knowledge. ESP syllabi should be introduced to develop the students' communicative English for professional use. ESP teaches English for academic studies, vocational and professional purposes, or non-native English speakers who learn English for specific goals can have better professional careers (Agustina, 2014).

Many students lack confidence in their presentation skills, so innovative training methods should be introduced in classes. Students feel more confident when given simple tasks with clear instructions. The difficulty can be increased as students' confidence grows.

A functional English course should be placed in the syllabus for level IV or final year students to conceive the contents required for career opportunities or workplaces.

Syllabi should have the four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with particular attention to speaking and writing.

Students' books and teachers' books/notes should be published simultaneously based on the syllabi. Teachers should get a copy of the teacher's book before the beginning of classes.

The syllabi should be supplemented by task-based real-life experiences with pair work, group work, face-to-face conversation, etc. Dedicated periods should be mentioned in the syllabi to practice real-life incidents outside the classroom.

Robertson and Nunn (2006) proposed introducing a task-based syllabus at EFUs for ELT. They recommended it be extensively relevant and applicable for learners of different backgrounds and ages. The current CLT approach could be practiced under a task-based syllabus where the two components, course evaluation and learner assessment are considered.

To make the English classroom teaching more engaging, effective, and practical, students could work on a project like making posters, wall magazines, assignments, and picture descriptions on any topic, which they could prepare and present in the English classes. All these should be a part of the syllabus too.

University authorities, faculties, and experts should include the workplace stakeholders while preparing the English syllabi for the engineering students; thus, it would suit the current needs of the workplace. Further, as engineers interact with worldwide clients, they must be trained to understand a variety of English accents.

Finally, the researchers recommend introducing a unified English language development course curriculum for the students of engineering programs at all EFUs and allot at least one 1.5-credit hours practical course each semester during the entire undergraduate level education. Such policy can be implemented as the BAC (2021) has set the standard of Academic Program Accreditation in 2021 that mentions that the Bachelor's degree program curriculum of any program should include a minimum of 25% of total credits for general education courses with clearly defined course learning outcomes.

Conclusion

English language courses in engineering may be effective if the objectives of teachers, students, and stakeholders are aligned. Teachers must be willing to adjust themselves to the level of their students and create confidence in them by taking on the role of a facilitator rather than the traditional position of a teacher. Learners should be aware of the CC-E and future personal and professional interests' requirements. This is only feasible via the collective efforts of the English syllabus, teachers, students, and stakeholders.

This study concluded that the English curricula at the selected universities should be more functional, practical, and reality-based to facilitate the acquisition of English skills. However, this study recommends that class lecturers not only rely on the syllabus elements. While there may be restrictions in developing the syllabi, teaching techniques, methods, approaches, and perceptions, those are required to be updated, developed, and reshuffled continuously. The researchers believe that the scenario will be different if the policy is appropriately implemented. The findings of this study cannot be extrapolated widely, given that the country is also home to numerous other engineering universities. As a result, the study suggests expanding the scope of research to include more universities and alumni, which could provide different windows for broad-spectrum data. Involving a good number of rural and urban pupils may shed more light on the issues. Generally, teachers up to the upper secondary level use the grammar-translation method for ELT, but universities rely heavily on the CLT approach. So, a comparison of the syllabi of these two methods and strategies for constructing a bridge should be considered.

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