



An Empirical Study on Syllabus Design and English Language Teaching at Calicut University

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Abstract

The study investigates English education in Kerala with the support of the communicative approach. This research evaluates the effectiveness of the course “The Four Skills of Communication” from students’ and teachers’ points of view. This is a common course taught in different colleges affiliated with Calicut University. This research investigates the English textbook and syllabus for its ability to help students improve their proficiency in the English language. This empirical study observes the development of language skills of learners and highlights the positive and negative aspects of this syllabus and textbook. As the course name indicates “the four language skills,” the paper evaluates the language skills taught by the teachers as instructed by the course developers. This study is an enlightening lesson for course and textbook developers to check whether the course and the syllabus are relevant for improving students’ proficiency in English.

Keywords: syllabus design, curriculum development, English language teaching, textbook analysis, communicative approach

Introduction

This study explores the effectiveness of the English syllabus and language teaching in Sree Kerala Varma College Thrissur, governed by Calicut University. Calicut University is one of the most prominent universities in Kerala, India. There are more than 105 colleges governed by the University, which has taken a keen interest in improving the English proficiency of students. Kerala, one of the states of India known for its high literacy rates, has been able to contribute tremendously to the field of English language education. The origin of education in Kerala can be traced back to the 4th century, which witnessed the period of the Sangam age (4th B.C.– 2nd A.D.). Kerala has also marked its presence in Indian history through its spice trade with other countries.

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Though Kerala is one of the smallest states of India, consisting of only 1.18% of the total area of the country, the state plays a seminal role in the field of education. Kerala enjoys the highest literacy rate (93.91%) of all the states in India. When English education started in Kerala, the state was divided into three provinces: Cochin, Malabar, and Travancore. The development of education was slow in the Malabar region compared to the other two provinces.

One of the most important factors which helped the flourishing of English education was the influence of Christian missionaries. They paved the way for the development of English and education in Kerala. They introduced English education to raise the standard of living of people and found the education of women to be very significant, contributing to the development of society because women spent most of their time at home, allowing them opportunities to teach their children. Thus, the development of society may be attributed to women. Herman Gundert, who was part of the Basal German Evangelical Mission, also took the initiative for the development of English education in Malabar. Thereafter Kerala witnessed major developments in the field of English education. New colleges, universities, and schools came into existence because of the influence of Christianity.

Theoretical Background

The communicative approach is quite popular in the field of syllabus design and language teaching methods. The communicative syllabus is one of the most prominent syllabi in the field of syllabus design. As the name indicates, the syllabus stresses communication skills such as giving advice and making requests. The main aim of this method is to equip the learner not only with linguistic knowledge but also with communicative competence. Communicative competence enables the learner to use a particular language in a specific context and deals with different requirements of the language. It not only deals with grammar rules but also deals with social and cultural environments.

The communicative syllabus is related to Wilkins's (1976) functional-notional syllabus, which emphasizes the social and situational aspects of language, dealing with what to say and when to use a language. Hence, the functional-notional syllabus necessarily includes communication skills. The Council of Europe adopted Wilkins's work to develop a communicative syllabus. As the name indicates, function refers to the language functions which constitute communication. Even though the communicative syllabus was accepted by many, some scholars did not give it a warm welcome. Widdowson (1971) supported the syllabus in the beginning, saying, "There seems no reason at all why we should not, for example, say 'For this course, we will select undertakings, promises, warnings, definitions, classifications' and so on rather than 'For this course, we will teach the simple present, present continuous, count and mass nouns and so on'" (p. 39). However, two years later he said the educators have to be very careful in accepting the communicative syllabus as a universally accepted syllabus (1971). One of the main reasons for his comment was that the communicative syllabus includes many practical risks. The syllabus is limited only to a specific situation. Considering these aspects, the method cannot be accepted as a universally accepted one.

The communicative syllabus is framed following the requirements of the learners, helping them to attain communicative competence. *Communicative competence* enables the learners to understand grammatical knowledge and helps them use the language based on a given situation. Communicative competence helps the learner to employ language appropriately and accurately. The authenticity of the materials is an essential factor in the communicative syllabus. The method checks and assures the authenticity of the material. The syllabus mainly contains communicative tasks and helps the learner to improve communication skills.

The communicative syllabus has gained considerable attention over the years. Currently, most of the syllabi used for second language learners are communicative. Maley (1984) has discussed the role of teachers in the communicative syllabus, explaining that the teacher is just a facilitator who controls the environment and provides a suitable environment for learning the language. Teachers play different roles in the communicative syllabus. First, Maley (1984) talks about the shift from the teacher-oriented syllabus to a learner-oriented one. Later he talks about group activity. He says that group activity can help the learners acquire the language, and teachers should extend their support to the idea of group activities.

Teachers have to provide a relaxed atmosphere for learning because it helps the learner to learn the language better. Learning takes place when the mind is relaxed. For instance, the misconceptions about errors. People consider errors to be negative in learning, but it is worth considering that errors are a necessary part of learning. When somebody makes mistakes, then that shows he/she is learning. The teacher's job is just to help the learner achieve his/her goal, often through providing them some time to work so that they may come up with a positive output. The present research adopts the communicative approach for two reasons. The first reason is that this is the latest method used in second language learning, and secondly, this method highlights language skills. Since the current research also deals with language skills, it could be evaluated using communicative syllabus yardsticks.

Review of the Literature

With its emphasis on effectively communicating in a given language, the communicative approach shifts from being teacher-oriented to student-centered. In this approach, communication skills play an important role. Teachers are just facilitators in the class who help the students learn a new language. The primary duty of the teacher is to prepare a suitable atmosphere for the students to learn a language. Learning responsibility is fully based on the learners. Hence, this approach lays more emphasis on the learners rather than the teachers. In this approach, the grammar part is not ignored as it explains grammatical rules based on real-life situations. Communicative language teaching employs different types of tasks to improve communicative aspects of language like group discussions, games, and so on.

This method fulfills the primary duty of language, which is communication. In this approach, a language can be considered as learned only when the student can communicate with someone else using the language. The method encourages interaction with students rather than interaction with teachers. The method also examines the language use of the learners because the material is prepared based on the language of the learner. Hence, it can be inferred that this method takes into account the interest of the students, and it can be regarded as the most relevant aspect of this approach. Brumfit (1979) explained that communicative language teaching is not merely a technical job. The implementation of this method demands genuine feelings and interest. The communicative language teaching approach teaches the students to progress from simple to complex tasks. The main advocates of this approach are Wilkins (1976), Widdowson (1978), Candlin (1973), and Brumfit (1979). Other British applied linguists also helped in building the theoretical foundation of communicative language teaching. Wilkins's (1976) book on the notional syllabus became one of the most important textbooks for the formation of communicative language teaching. The notional-functional approach and the functional approach are two other terms used to refer to communicative language teaching. No method is unique in its features because each method influences others. Like the other methods, the communicative language teaching method also shows close connections with other methods. One of the most important concepts related to this method is Dell Hymes's (1972) notion of *communicative*

competence. This idea was contrary to Noam Chomsky's theory of *competence* (1965). Chomsky's competence deals with the abstract ability that helps the learner to speak grammatically correct sentences. It also deals with a homogeneous community and the community that knows the language perfectly. However, Hymes's communicative competence mainly stresses communication and culture. This cultural aspect was neglected in Chomsky's concept. This approach is important for this research because it includes all the language skills equally. This approach is practiced widely in different fields of education, especially in France and Britain. Textbooks and syllabi are framed based on the concepts of communicative language teaching. This method is an extension of the notional-functional approach. The ultimate goal of communicative language teaching is not simply communication, but rather communicative competence. Communicative competence does not mean only the attainment of grammatical rules; rather, it enables the learner to understand when and where to use these rules. Communicative competence helps the learner to understand the different language functions in different contexts. As mentioned earlier, this approach deals with all the language skills—reading, writing, listening and speaking—in an equal manner.

Analysis of the Syllabus and Textbook

As one of the major universities in Kerala, Calicut University was an obvious choice for the focus of this study. The university takes the initiative for the development of syllabi and textbooks for students' progress in the English language for all the colleges affiliated with the university. My study investigates the current scenario in Calicut University concerning the language skills in the university. The study examines the textbooks and syllabi that are related to language skills in colleges, with Sree Kerala Varma College being selected as the site for data collection. Students from Bachelor of Arts degrees in Political Science, Sanskrit, and Functional English were used for the data collection.

Questionnaires and interviews were used to gather the data from the participants. One questionnaire was prepared for professors to learn their opinions on the effectiveness of the syllabus, so their questionnaire contained questions related to the syllabus. The students received a different questionnaire that focused on whether they can learn English language in the classroom in an effective manner. The student questionnaire covered information related to their professor's teaching methods, textbook details, classroom settings, etc. The following data gives a clear idea about the background of students.

Table 1.
Students' background information

Course	Frequency	Percentage
B.A. Functional English	18	24.66
B.A. Political Science	34	46.58
B.A. Sanskrit	21	28.77
Total	73	100

Data was collected from English teachers and students alike to gather information about English language teaching. The study concentrated on common courses taught in the colleges under Calicut University because the same course is taught in more than a hundred colleges.

Hypothesis of the Study

The study is conducted based on the following hypotheses.

1. The existing syllabi of common courses do not contribute to the development of the language skills of the learners.
2. The communication aspect is often neglected in the syllabus.
3. The teaching methods are traditional, thus are not effective for learning.
4. Students find the English language complex because they have an assumption that English is the most difficult language to learn.
5. Students do not get ample opportunities to speak English and are not provided with the scope and space for improving their spoken proficiency.

Methodology

The field study was conducted at different places in Kerala to analyze the syllabus and teaching methods. The data was collected from Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur which is affiliated with Calicut University. Regular field visits were made to collect the data and get a thorough understanding of the curriculum. The data collection commenced with request letters addressed to the concerned authorities to gain permission to access the necessary information. After getting permission to collect data from different sources, the minutes prepared by the Board of Studies Members were collected. These minutes helped to understand the changes that were brought about in different courses, textbooks, and the syllabi over the years. This was one of the important factors that influenced the research.

The minutes also helped to review the changes made in the syllabus and compare those changes concerning developments in society. Have they upgraded the syllabus and textbooks? Were the professors aware of the current teaching methods? Has there been a change in the syllabus according to the latest developments in language teaching? These are the main questions that this research was concerned about. Students from different backgrounds were the population for my research. This study was based on the responses collected from 73 students. Responses were also collected from two professors regarding syllabus and language teaching in Kerala. The textbook related to language skills was also subjected to scrutiny. The research found that there is one textbook which is introduced to improve the student's English language proficiency, titled *The Four Skills for Communication*. The syllabus of the text is also analyzed to get a clear idea about the needs of the learners. The following section shows how the syllabus and its classification are framed to improve students' proficiency in English.

Classification of Syllabus

There is only one course taught in Calicut University for its undergraduate program that is related to language skills. *The Four Skills for Communication* by Josh Sreedharan (2016) is taught in the first semester of the degree program. The course, The Four Language Skills, with course code ENGI A01, is the single English course taught at the colleges governed by Calicut University. The syllabus is classified into five systematic sections:

1. Objectives of the Course
2. Course Description
3. Evaluation
4. Core Text

5. Appendix

The key target is to empower the students' linguistic proficiency and skills. Vocabulary, being an integral element of linguistic savvy, is the pillar of this course. The students are trained to build their vocabulary bank, which is undeniably essential for smooth communication skills. These factors enable students to use the English language systematically.

The syllabus delineates the time allotment for each module. Ten hours are allocated for the first module, titled "English for Communication." Fifteen hours are allotted for primary skills that comprise the second module in the textbook. The third module focuses on secondary skills, for which fifteen hours are allocated. The fourth module concerns grammar, for which twenty hours have been allotted. Twelve hours are allotted for the evaluation of students. Overall, seventy-two hours are allotted for the course. The assessment is primarily performed based on the semester exam. There is also a classification in the grading system whereby 80% of the marking scheme is obtained from the written tests, and 20% of marks are taken from continuous evaluation.

Continuous evaluation includes attendance, assignments, seminar papers, viva voce, and test papers. 50% of the scheduled marks are allotted for test papers, 25% for attendance, and 25% for seminars, assignments, and viva voce. Letter grades are used to evaluate the students' performance through the following system: A=>90%, B=85-89%, C=80-84%, D= 75-75%, and E= below 75%. Attendance grades are also marked, and letters are used to show the performance of the students: A=3.5-4.0 equates with Excellent, B=2.50-3.49 is equivalent to Very Good, C=1.50-2.49 expresses Good, D=0.50-1.49 indicates Passing, and E=0.49 means Poor performance. Each of these have grade points of 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. A grade of D is the cutoff for passing the exam, while a C is the cutoff for passing the internal exam; if any student gets a grade of E, then he/she has to retake the course.

The course comprises four modules. These are as follows:

1. English for Communication
2. Primary Skills
3. Secondary Skills
4. Grammar

The Four Skills for Communication (Sreedharan, Cambridge University Press, 2014) is not only a relatively new textbook in the field of common courses, but it is the core textbook for first-year students of degree programs. Introduced in 2014, this book is the only textbook which deals with four language skills. The textbook starts with the topic "English for Communication." The first section primarily outlines the types of communications like verbal, nonverbal, network communications and participant-based communications. The first section also elucidates the different functions of language and emphasizes communication skills. The module presents English as a global language.

The second module mainly explains the kinds of languages and language families, and includes charts to elucidate the language families. It also differentiates between formal and informal English and stresses primary skills, including listening and speaking. On the one hand, listening skills involve listening to speech, lectures, and conversations, making them the main tasks mentioned in the syllabus. On the other hand, it includes multiple functions of language such as requesting, greeting, seeking permission, and reporting. The module puts emphasis on English phonetics, pronunciation, and word stress, starting with an introduction to listening, and it clearly distinguishes between listening and hearing. The important points are provided in bullet points, and there are also symbols of headphones which show that students have to use the CD to listen to the exact pronunciation. Exercises come at the end of the chapter. There are mainly three sections in this module:

1. Listening to a conversation.
2. Listening to speech.
3. Listening to lectures.

The module also highlights the importance of speaking skills. The inclusion of tables and pictures differentiates the chief points in each section. The exercises for each chapter come at the end of the chapter.

The third module incorporates secondary skills, such as writing and reading. Reading skills include the reading of poems, essays, news reports, letters, and online content. Charts and advertisements are part of this exercise. The writing skills comprise letter writing, blogs, notes, and reports. It also includes paragraph writing, resumes, and email writing.

The next module is related to English grammar, which primarily discusses subject-verb agreement, phrases, clauses, articles, voices, and idioms. The appendix concludes the syllabus with the book's title, author's name, publisher's name and year of publication. The glossary is given in the last two sections of this module and are related to prescribed poems and essays. Sections titled, "About the Poem" and "About the Essay" are present in each chapter of the module.

The next module is writing skills and includes writing paragraphs, sentences, reports, letters, e-mails, blogs, and resumes. It also talks about different types of sentences. Various examples are provided to explain the writing style. In letter writing, importance is given to different formats used in the process. The exercise task comes at the end of each chapter. Tables are used in the textbook to elaborate the concepts.

The last module is grammar and pronunciation. The grammar section primarily deals with tenses, articles, phrases, clauses, sentences, idioms, voices, and word classes. Tables are provided in each chapter to explain the concepts better. The next section is "Pronunciation." This chapter starts with sounds and symbols in English with examples. The module contains a CD-ROM, and it is referred to with a symbol throughout the module. The module also addresses phonetics, pronunciation, vowels, consonants, and word stress.

The last section of the textbook is the appendix, where the vowels and consonants are presented, along with examples to demonstrate the pronunciation of each sound in English. The short description in the last section of the book sheds light on the expected output of the textbook. It says that the textbook equips students to be efficient in the four language skills. This approach makes teaching and learning enjoyable. The textbook covers various topics related to language skills. The textbook follows a functional and holistic approach to learning English.

Syllabus Analysis by the Participants

Two professors responded to the questions regarding the syllabus. The first professor who responded had degrees of M.A. and B.Ed, and the second had an M.A and Ph.D. One of the professors specialized in ecocriticism, which would not appear to have a strong relationship to language pedagogy. One of them held a permanent position, and the other held an adjunct position. One of them had only eight months of experience in teaching. One taught at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels while the other taught only degree students. She was a guest faculty in the department. Neither professor had undergone any training to teach the English language.

The professors were not satisfied with the aims and objectives of the course because they felt that the syllabus was rushed and needed more time to cover the material. They also said that they could not execute the syllabus properly owing to the shortage of time. When questions were asked as to whether the syllabus was helpful, they said that it was adequate, but the problem lay with the current syllabus, which did not provide them with ample time to teach. So they had suggested extending the time into a second semester also. They were also not happy with the course plan because they could not follow a particular method. However, they did say that the course was relevant, as it stressed communication skills.

The professors also thought that the syllabus could enhance the language. But most of the time, they could not complete the syllabus for lack of time. When questions were asked about the most important language skills, the professors said that all language skills were equally important. The negative aspect of the syllabus was that it gave little importance to the modules. The educators just touched on the concepts without delving deep into them. The teachers often asked students to speak and write so that they could improve their language skills.

Both professors agreed entirely on the importance of training, because that would help them improve their classroom teaching. Students could not thoroughly understand the ideas prescribed in the syllabus, although they understood the concepts to a certain extent. The professors also indicated that there had been changes in the last five years, and these modifications had made the syllabus better. They agreed that they sometimes asked students to memorize the answers. They also encouraged students to use their creative skills. The best quality of a teacher was to alleviate the students' fear when they used the language and help them feel confident. The teachers also encouraged students to put their best in their overall development and advocated for prioritizing the students' speaking and listening skills.

The professors also used various methods to improve English grammar, asking students to do exercises and frame sentences. They made use of the workbook also, assigning homework from and providing assignments for students to improve their language. Every teacher kept a copy of the syllabus, too, although it was felt that the current syllabus was too vague for a short semester, as it lacked proper orientation. The strength of the syllabus was that it gave everything in a capsule manner. This helped the students to learn everything in a shorter period of time, although there was no proper order to teach language skills. The teachers also suggested that the training program should be given more importance, as it helps them to teach communication skills. The following sum up the major findings from the interviews and questionnaires.

Findings from the Syllabus Analysis

1. Professors' areas of specialization are unrelated to language pedagogy.
2. The aims and objectives are not met adequately.
3. Professors are not trained to teach the course.
4. Time constraint is a significant problem.
5. Professors do not follow any particular methodology to teach the course.
6. The modules are not given enough importance.
7. Professors are not happy with the course plan.
8. In most cases, they cannot complete the syllabus.
9. Students are asked to memorize the answers.

Student’s Responses on the Textbook

This study investigates the textbook prescribed for the students in common courses. The evaluation of the textbook was done mainly using a questionnaire that was given to teachers and students. Seventy three students responded regarding the textbook. The questionnaire is divided into five sections including background information, interests of the students, classroom teaching, textbook information, and teaching method information. Students of various ages participated in the data collection. The following table shows the ages of the students.

Table 2.
Age Group of Students

Age	Frequency	Percentage
17	11	15.07
18	52	71.23
19	9	12.33
20	1	1.37
Total	73	100

The study also obtained the students’ language backgrounds and documented that a majority of the students (62 students) were from a Malayalam-medium background and only 11 students were from an English background.

The paper also looked at the students’ parents’ backgrounds. Parent educational level is divided into 5 sections: (A) below 10th, (B) 10th pass, (C) 12th pass, (E) degree pass, and (E) above degree. The following table shows the range of their backgrounds.

Table 3.
Parents’ Educational Background

Education	Fathers’ Education	Mothers’ Education
A	12	6
B	41	26
C	6	22
D	4	11
E	1	1
NA	9	7
Total	73	73

As the table shows, most of the parents have the qualification of 10th pass.

Students’ proficiency is also one of the critical factors for the study. The study included students from various backgrounds so that their language proficiencies could be evaluated. Most of them said that they were not fluent in English, with only 18 claiming fluency. Moreover, the common course was the same across different disciplines. The following table shows the fluency of the students.

Table 4.
English Fluency of the Students

English Fluency of the Students	
Yes	55
No	18

Interests of the Students

One of the important aspects of this work was to take into account the interest of the students to see if their interest could lead to learning the English language. A variety of questions were asked to understand the interests of the students. Students were given four options to mark their responses. Table 5 shows the responses of the students.

Table 5.
Students' responses on their interests

Sl No	Questions	Definitely	Yes	No	Don't know
1	Do you want to study English?	34(46.58)	39(53.42)		
2	Which of the language skills do you want to learn more?	7(9.59)	48(65.75)	8(10.96)	10(13.70)
3	Do you follow any particular techniques to learn English?	14(19.18)	51(69.86)	8(10.96)	
4	Do you find English a difficult subject?	18(24.66)	55(75.34)		
5	Do you read English newspapers?	10(13.70)	55(75.34)	5(6.85)	3(4.11)
6	Do you watch English movies?	10(13.70)	41(56.16)	15(20.55)	7(9.59)
7	Do you listen to English news?	14(19.18)	52(71.23)	6(8.22)	1(1.37)
8	Do you have access to internet?	64(86.30)	9(13.70)		
9	Do you read books written in English?	9(12.33)	49(67.12)	12(16.44)	3(4.11)
10	Do you get enough opportunities to talk in English in your class?	10(13.70)	40(54.79)	16(21.92)	7(9.59)

The question number section shows the serial number of the questions asked in this section of the questionnaire. There were 10 questions in the section. The first question was, "Do you want to study English?" All the students marked positive responses to this question. Thirty-four students said that they definitely want to study English, and 39 students said 'Yes' that they need to study English and their percentages were 46.58%. The next question was about the language skills that students wanted to learn more about. 48 students marked that they needed to learn speaking skills more than the other three skills, and their percentage constituted 65.75%. The next question was about the techniques used to learn English. Fifty-one students said that they sometimes followed particular methods to improve their English language, while 14 students said that they did not follow any particular methods to learn English.

The next question was "Do you find English as a difficult subject?" 55 students said that they did not find English to be a difficult subject, whereas 18 students said that they find English to be a difficult subject. The next question was about the habit of reading English newspapers. 55 students replied that they read English newspapers, and their percentage is 75.34%. Ten students reported that they did not read English newspapers. There was a question regarding English movies. 41 students

responded that they sometimes watched English movies, whereas 10 students answered that they did not watch English movies. There was a question about watching English news, and most of the students marked that they sometimes watched English news and the highest percentage of students who watched English news was 71.23%.

The next question concerned the accessibility of the internet to the students. 64 students responded that they have access to the internet. The next question was about the habit of reading books. 49 students said that they sometimes read books written in English and their percentage is 69.12%. The last question in this section was related to the opportunities that students get in the class to speak English. 40 students marked that they sometimes got opportunities to speak in the class, and 10 students responded that they never got chances to speak English in the class and their percentages are 54.79% and 13.70% respectively.

Classroom Teaching Information

One of the significant phases of language learning involves classroom teaching. Thus the study included questions related to the classroom. The following table shows the details about the classroom teaching of the common course taught in various colleges of Calicut University. There were 12 questions in this section, which again had four options as possible answers. Seventy-three students participated in the data collection from different streams. The following table shows the responses of the students.

Table 6.
Students' Responses on Classroom Teaching

Sl No	Questions	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Is the medium of instruction in English?	2(2.74)	40(54.79)	13(17.81)	18(24.66)
2	Do you understand the lessons taught in English?	4(5.48)	18(24.66)	30(41.10)	21(28.77)
3	Do you find your teacher's method interesting to study the subject?	5(6.85)	38(52.05)	20(27.40)	10(13.70)
4	Do you find the lessons prescribed for you interesting?	8(10.96)	44(60.27)	13(17.81)	8(10.96)
5	Do you find that your lessons contain difficult words?	2(2.74)	55(75.34)	10(13.70)	6(8.22)
6	Do you like the way the teacher teaches English?	7(9.59)	30(41.10)	23(31.51)	13(17.81)
7	Do you think that the English taught in the class is useful?	3(4.11)	17(23.29)	15(20.55)	38(52.05)
8	Do you get any chance to speak in English in the class room?	5(6.85)	38(52.05)	15(20.55)	15(20.55)
9	How many English classes do you have in a week?	2(2.74)	2(2.27)	4(5.48)	65(89.04)
10	Do you think those classes are sufficient?	8(10.96)	20(27.40)	15(20.55)	30(41.10)
11	How many English classes would you like to have per week?	3(4.11)	5(6.85)	18(24.66)	47(64.38)
12	How many of the language skills are practiced in the class room?		6(8.22)	36(49.32)	31(42.47)

The first question in this section dealt with the medium of instruction in the classroom to teach the textbook. Two students (2.74%) stated that the medium of instruction was never in English in the classroom. Forty students (54.79%) observed that the teachers used English as the medium of

instruction occasionally. Thirty students (17.81%) opined that teachers used English as the medium of instruction in the classroom frequently. 18 students found that teachers had always used English as the medium of instruction.

The second question dealt with the lessons taught in the class. In this regard, whether the students understood the lesson was worth interrogation. Four students (5.48%) responded that they failed to understand the lessons taught in the classroom, whereas 18 students (24.66 %) responded that they understood the lessons occasionally. However, 30 students (41.9%) said that they often understood the lessons taught in the classroom. Lastly, 21 students (28.77%) agreed that the lesson taught in the classroom was always understood.

The next question revolved around the method used in the classroom to teach the course. Five students (6.85%) said that they felt little interest in the method that was adopted by the teachers, while 38 students (52.05%) agreed that the method was interesting on an occasional basis and 20 students, who constituted 27.40% of the total, opined that often teachers' methods received considerable attention when they taught the common course. Ten students held the view that the methods used in the classroom were always interesting, and they were 13.70% of the total.

The next question dealt with the lessons prescribed in the textbook. The question aimed to find out whether the lessons were interesting in the classroom. Eight students, who constituted 10.96% of the total, said that they never found the lesson prescribed in the textbook interesting. While the majority of students (60.27%) held the view that the lessons prescribed in the textbook cultivated an interest on an occasional basis, 13 students opined that they often felt the topic interesting and their percentage accorded to 17.81%. However, 8 students constituted 10.96% of the total population, and they responded that they always found the lessons interesting in the textbook.

The next question touched upon the words used in the textbook. Two students (2.74%) responded that they never found the words used in the textbook difficult to understand. Most of the students agreed that the words used in the textbook were difficult. In fact, almost 55 students agreed to it, and their percentage constituted 75.34%. Ten students said that they often found the words difficult, and their percentage accorded to 13.70. Six students opined that they always found the words used in the lessons difficult and they constituted 8.22 % of the total.

The next question was concerned with the method of teaching in the classroom. Seven students responded that the way the teacher taught English in the classroom did not cultivate interest for them, and they constituted 9.59% of the total population. The majority of the students said that they found the method used to teach English interesting. They were 30 in number and constituted 41.9% of the total population. While 23 students, who constituted 31.51% of the total, believed that they often found the method interesting in the classroom, 13 students responded that in regard to English language teaching, they always found the method interesting in the classroom.

The study raised questions regarding the usefulness of the English language in the future. Three students, who constituted 4.11% of the total, did not find the English taught in the classroom productive, while 17 students agreed that they felt the lessons taught in the classroom were useful on an occasional basis, and their percentage constituted 23.29%. Fifteen students found the lesson taught in the classroom often useful, and they constituted 20.55%. Most of the students said that the lesson was useful. They constituted 38 in number and represented 52.05 % of the total students.

The next question was regarding the participation of students in speaking English in the classroom. Five students said that they never got any chance to speak English in the classroom, and their percentage was 6.85%. Thirty-eight students, who constituted 52.05%, said that they spoke

English in the classroom only on an occasional basis. 15 students said that they often get a chance to speak in the classroom and they constituted 20.55 % of students. On the other hand, 15 students responded that they always got a chance to speak in English in the classroom, and their percentage constituted 20.55%. The next question was about the number of English classes, and most of the students agreed that they had more than three classes in a week. They were 65 in number, and their percentage constituted 89.04%.

The study also investigated whether the number of English classes was sufficient. Most of the participants agreed that more than three classes per week were necessary to learn English. Thirty students supported it, and their percentage constituted 41.10%. However, 8 students responded that the classes were not sufficient in a week and their percentage constituted 10.96%. The study also made inquiries regarding the number of classes students would like to have. Most of the students agreed that they need more than 3 classes in a week to learn the English language. They were 47 in number, and their percentage constituted 64.38%.

The last question in this section was concerned with the number of language skills practiced in the classroom in regard to the course. Most of the students said that all the language skills were practiced in the classroom. They constituted 31 in number, which accorded to 42.47%. Most of the students agreed that more than one language skill was practiced in the classroom. No students marked the first option, which mentioned only one language skill.

Students Responses on Teaching

An array of questions regarding the teaching of English in the classroom was also put forth by the study. The section offered fifteen different questions. There were four options to mark students’ responses. The following table shows the responses collected from students regarding teaching information.

Table 7.
Students’ Responses on Teaching

Sl No	Questions	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Do you think that learning English is a necessity?	2(2.74)	18(24.66)	6(8.22)	47(64.38)
2	Do your teachers demand you to memorize the answers?	9(12.33)	32(43.84)	18(24.66)	14(19.18)
3	Do they give any practice for your exam?	2(2.74)	32(43.84)	30(41.10)	9(12.33)
4	Do teachers give some assignments?	1(1.37)	7(9.59)	25(34.25)	40(54.79)
5	Do they give only those assignments prescribed by the textbook?	3(4.11)	26(35.62)	12(16.44)	32(43.84)
6	Do you think those assignments are useful for your studies?	6(8.22)	14(19.18)	17(23.29)	36(49.32)
7	Is your teacher friendly or formal?	3(4.11)	25(34.25)	20(27.40)	25(34.25)
8	Does she/he present the subject matter in a simpler way?		37(50.68)	23(31.51)	13(17.81)
9	Does your teacher encourage you to ask questions?	6(8.22)	23(31.51)	21(28.77)	23(31.51)
10	Do you ask questions in the class?	20(27.40)	30(41.10)	18(24.66)	5(6.85)
11	Do you get any training or tips to write from your teachers?	5(6.85)	44(60.27)	19(26.03)	5(6.85)

12	Do you get any suggestions to read literature?	10(13.70)	41(56.16)	8(10.96)	14(19.18)
13	Do you have a language lab?	6(8.22)	67(91.78)		
14	Do your teachers give notes for the exam?	36(49.32)	22(30.14)	7(9.59)	8(10.96)
15	Can you approach your teacher whenever you have queries about your lessons?	12(16.44)	32(43.84)	9(12.33)	20(27.40)

The first question asked in this section regarded the necessity of English in students' day-to-day life. The majority of the students said that they had always felt the need to learn English. In fact, 47 students supported this argument, and they constituted 64.38% of the total. However, 2 students, who constituted 2.4% of the total population, said that they had never felt the necessity to learn English, while 18 students responded that they felt the necessity to learn the language on an occasional basis and their percentage constituted 24.66%. Six students opined that they often felt the necessity to learn English and their percentage came around 8.22%.

The next question was concerned with memorizing answers in class. Nine students disagreed that they were forced to memorize answers, while 22 students said that they had memorized the answers occasionally; their percentage constituted 43.84%. Eighteen students (24.66%) said that they had done it more often, whereas 14 students responded that following the instruction of the teacher, they had always memorized the answers.

The study also made inquiries regarding the practices given to students to prepare for the exam. Two students responded that they had never received any practice, and 32 students (43.84%) said that they got practice in the classroom on an occasional basis. 32 students said that they often received training in the classroom and 9 students responded that they had always gotten practice in the classroom. The next question dealt with the assignments given to the students. Forty students agreed that they had always received the assignments from the teachers and their percentage constituted 54.79%. Only one student said that they had never gotten any assignments in the classroom.

The study investigated whether the students were given any assignments other than what was prescribed in the textbook. In this regard, 32 students said that they had always got only the prescribed assignments from the textbook and their percentage came around 43.84%. Twenty-six students responded that the teachers had occasionally given some assignments other than what was prescribed in the textbook. Questions were also asked regarding the relevance of assignments to the study of the English language. Thirty-six students (49.32%) agreed that they felt that the assignments given to them were always useful. Moreover, 17 students said that they had often felt that the assignments were useful to learn the English language.

The next question was regarding the friendly nature of the teacher toward students. Twenty-five students responded that the teachers were friendly towards the students and their percentage constituted 34.25%. However, 3 students did not find the teachers approachable. Enquiries were also made regarding the manner of teaching English. Whether teachers taught the difficult topics in a simple way by using different methods was an important question. Twenty-three students agreed that teachers had often used simple ways to teach English and their percentage constituted 31.51%. Most of the students (50.68%) responded that they had used the simple way to teach English only occasionally. No students reported that the teachers had never used a simple way to teach English in the classroom.

The next question was concerned with the encouragement that students received to ask questions in the classroom. Twenty-three students (31.51%) said that the teachers encouraged the

students to ask questions in the classroom. However, 6 students responded that they were never motivated by the teachers to ask questions and their percentage constituted 8.22%. A group of 23 students (31.51%) and 21 students (28.77%) had agreed that the teachers encouraged the students to ask questions in the classroom occasionally and more often. The study investigated whether the teachers asked questions in the class on an individual basis. Thirty students said that they asked questions in the classroom occasionally. They constituted 41.10%. Twenty students opined that they never asked questions in the class and their percentage constituted 27.40%. Eighteen students said that they often asked questions in the class. Five students added that they always asked questions in the classroom and their percentage came around 6.85%.

The next question was related to formal training to improve writing skills. Forty-four students (60.27%) responded that they received training in writing skills on an occasional basis. However, 5 students (6.85%) responded that they never got any training in writing skills, while 19 (26.03%) students responded that they often got training in writing skills, and 5 (6.85%) students said that they always received training. The next question was regarding whether teachers encouraged the students to read literature to improve their reading skills. Forty-one students held the view that they received encouragement from teachers to read literature, and their percentage constituted 56.16%. Fourteen students said that they always got encouragement from teachers. However, 10 students responded that they had never got encouragement from teachers to read literature and their percentage constituted 13.70%.

The next question was concerned with the language lab. In this regard, 65 students said that they did not have any language labs in the college. In fact, 91.78 % students agreed with this. The next question dealt with the study notes given by the teachers for the exam. Thirty-six students (49.32%) responded that they never got any notes from teachers for the exam, while 22 students agreed that the teachers had given notes on an occasional basis. The last question in this section was related to the approachable character of the teacher, or whether the students felt comfortable asking questions at any time. Thirty-two students (43.84%) agreed that teachers were approachable only at times, while 12 students responded that they could never approach the teacher. Twenty students observed that they could always approach their teacher and their percentage was 27.40%.

Student’s Responses on the Textbook

This section consists of 10 questions regarding the textbook. Students were asked to mark their responses as ‘Never,’ ‘Sometimes,’ ‘Often,’ or ‘Always.’ The following table shows the responses of the students.

Table 8.
Students’ Responses about the English Textbook

Sl No	Questions	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	Do you think your academic goals can be attained through the textbook?	19(26.03)	41(56.16)	8(10.96)	5(6.85)
2	Do you think the textbook fulfills your needs?	28(38.36)	31(42.47)	12(16.44)	2(2.74)
3	Is the textbook interesting for studying English?	11(15.07)	40(54.79)	16(21.92)	6(8.22)
4	Does the textbook contribute to the development of language skills?	4(5.48)	29(39.73)	23(31.51)	17(23.29)
5	Are the topics intelligible for the whole class?	13(17.81)	29(39.73)	23(31.51)	8(10.96)
6	Do you find the contents interesting?	3(4.11)	47.(64.38)	15(20.55)	8(10.96)

7	Are you interested in activities prescribed in the textbook? To what degree?	12(16.44)	46(63.01)	14(19.18)	1(1.37)
8	How often are other textbooks used in the classroom other than the course textbook?	26(35.62)	25(34.25)	10(13.70)	12(16.44)
9	Do you think that the existing textbook will contribute to your development?	10(13.70)	29(39.73)	22(30.14)	12(16.44)
10	Do you think that your textbook needs some changes?	7(9.59)	28(38.36)	13(17.81)	25(34.25)

The first question in this set was whether the textbook helped the students to attain their academic goals. The majority of the students said that it helped to fulfill their academic goal once in a while. In fact, 41 students agreed on this, and their percentage constituted 56.16. Nineteen students (26.03%) responded that it never helped them to fulfill their goals, while only 5 students totally agreed that it helped to fulfill their academic goals. The next question was based on the requirements of the students concerning the textbook. Thirty-one students responded that the textbook fulfilled the requirements of the students occasionally and their percentage constituted 42.46. Nevertheless, 28 students said that it never fulfilled their needs. They constituted 38.36%.

The following question was to examine whether the textbook was interesting to students or not. Most of the students (54.79%) said that the textbook was interesting occasionally. Eleven students responded that the textbook was not interesting and their percentage constituted 15.07. Six students held the view that the textbook was always interesting and their percentage accorded to 8.22. The next question was regarding the development of language skills through the textbook. Twenty-nine students (39.73%) opined that the textbook helped in improving the language skills on an occasional basis. Twenty-three students strongly agreed that often it helped to enhance language skills. They constituted 31.51%. Seventeen students (23.29%) agreed that the textbook always helped for the development of language skills.

The next question explored the intelligibility of the topics in the textbook. Twenty-nine students opined that the topics prescribed in the textbook was intelligible for the students and their percentage constituted 39.73. Thirteen students (17.81%) expressed that the topic was never intelligible, while 23 students (31.5%) expressed that the topics were often intelligible for the students. Eight students (10.96%) felt that the topics were always intelligible for the students.

Questions were also framed to examine the interest of the students in regard to the textbook. Forty-seven students (64.38%) observed that they found the textbook interesting only in some instances. Fifteen students answered that the topics were often interesting in the textbook, and they constituted 20.55%. Three students revealed that the textbook content was never interesting for them. They constituted 4.11% of the total percentage. Eight students (10.96%) found the textbook content as always interesting.

The next question dealt with the activities prescribed in the textbook. The majority of the students found the activities in the textbook interesting. They were 46 in number, and their percentage constituted 63.01. Twelve students (16.44%) opined that the activities in the textbook were never interesting. However, 14 students revealed that the content was often interesting and their percentage constituted 19.18. One student (1.37%) expressed that the content was always fascinating. The next question was concerned with the use of secondary sources used in the classroom. Twenty-six students (35.62%) held the view that the teachers never used any secondary textbook in the classroom. Nevertheless, 25 students (34.25%) revealed that teachers used another textbook in the classroom on an occasional basis. Ten students agreed that teachers often used textbooks other than the coursebook.

The next question dealt with students' development of English language proficiency with regard to the current textbook. Twenty-nine students (39.73%) opined that the textbook contributed to the development of English language in some instances. Twenty-two students (30.14%) observed that the textbook often contributed to the development of the students. Ten (13.70%) students opined that the textbook never contributed to the development of the students. Twelve students (16.44%) expressed that the textbook always contributed to the development of the students. The final question examined whether the students required any modification with regard to the existing textbook. Twenty-eight students (38.36%) demanded modifications in the existing textbook. In addition, 25 students (34.25%) totally agreed that textbook required change. However, 7 students (9.59%) did not feel the necessity of a change in the existing textbook.

Positive Findings of the Textbook

1. 52.05% students found the English taught in the classroom useful.
2. 89.04% students answered that they had more than 3 classes a week and would like to attend a greater number of classes.
3. 64.38% students expressed that they would like to have more than 3 English classes in a week.
4. 64.38% students considered learning English to be a necessity.
5. 54.79% students responded that teachers gave assignments in the classroom.

Negative Findings of the Textbook

1. 27.40% students revealed that they did not ask questions in class.
2. 49.32% students said that teachers never gave notes for exams.
3. 26.03% students held the view that their academic goals cannot be attained through the textbook.
4. 38.36% students responded that the prescribed textbook did not fulfill the needs of the students.
5. 35.62% students responded that teachers never used secondary sources in the classroom.

This study is based on a few hypotheses. One of them is that the nature of the syllabus and how it is implemented are instrumental to the development of language skills in students. The study showed that the syllabi used in most of the universities were not updated regularly. Consequently, innovations and trends were not incorporated into this syllabus. It was also observed that the language skills of the students examined were not sufficiently developed. These two observations supported the hypothesis that a proper syllabus and its implementation were vital to the development of language skills. The next hypothesis was that the practice of communication skills was often neglected in the classroom. The study demonstrated that though the syllabus stressed communicative skills, they were rarely put into practice in the classroom. This supports the second hypothesis. The next hypothesis was that the teaching methods that were used in colleges were not helpful to students as teachers were not exposed to modern methods of language teaching.

The study showed that most of the teachers had not undergone any teacher training. As a result, they were unaware of new teaching methods. It was also observed from the responses collected from the students that they were not satisfied with the way the classes were conducted. These two points support the hypothesis that outdated teaching methods used in these institutions are of no help to the students. The last hypothesis was about limited opportunities for students to use English. This study concluded that students were afraid of their teachers in most cases. It was even observed that

teachers taught the English language using Malayalam. Consequently, students preferred to use Malayalam in the classroom. These observations further support the hypothesis that the students have limited opportunities to put English to use.

Conclusion

The study illuminates our understanding of the positive and negative aspects of the textbook and syllabus prescribed in the college by Calicut University. The hypotheses that were explored in the study were critical. Most of the hypotheses were found to be correct with one exception, that is, that students find the English language complex because of assumptions that English is the most difficult language to learn. The study is an insight for syllabus designers and authorities to improve the quality of language education syllabi, as well as textbooks. The authorities should give more priority to the negative aspects of these current resources so that they may come up with a better version of syllabi and textbooks. The study advocates for the learner-centered approach in English language learning. This approach will help the students gain a better command of the language in the class.

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