

A Study on Professional Development of English Language Teachers in Higher Education

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Abstract

English is the language which has occupied its space in center of communication in any area at global level. In India, percentage of K-12 with regional language as a medium of instruction who remain discomfort at UG level during first year due to weak base of soft skills including communicative ability in English. Hence, responsibility of enhancing students' communicative skills falls on the shoulders of English teaching professors. The present study aims to find out whether English professors in pharmacy colleges in select self-finance colleges (N=65, n=53) of Gujarat state are equipped to train pharmacy students to communicate effectively by using modern methods of English teaching. The key factors for the present survey concentrated on need of ELT training, syllabus relevancy and management support. The results indicates that most of the professors were not quite aware of modern English teaching methodologies and T& D programs during in service period. It is also studied that there is a huge gap between classroom teaching practices and industry expectations.

Keywords: English professors, soft skills, responsibility, modern English teaching methods, in service training

Introduction

Pharmacy students in India with regional language face challenges before going to be employed in organization in Gujarat state. The students passed higher secondary in Gujarati medium and pursuing bachelor degree of pharmacy with English as medium of instruction have problems with English communicative skills, particularly during first two years of UG period. The students of rural Gujarat in Pharmacy colleges face numerous problems from pronunciation problems to writing up issues in the area of pharmacy study. There are government pharmacy institutes, grant-in-aid pharmacy institutes and self-finance pharmacy degree/diploma colleges in Gujarat state. There are around 5000 seats in all institutes offering B.Pharm degree and more than 70% students having background of Gujarati medium as instructional language upto K-12. The B.Pharm degree pursuance preferred by students are more than 85% who have background of Gujarati medium. They face problems and struggle on occupying their level amongst students during initial semester due to English as a medium of instruction in colleges.

The role of Pharmacy colleges English language professors have crucial role to play with such kind of situation. Indian English teachers are more comfortable with traditional method of English teaching in higher education. They do prefer grammar base and teacher oriented teaching methods.

Albert Ryan (2008) points out that professors are comfortable following the traditional methods of teaching in which grammar learning is the most important ingredient and there is less space for activities that trigger spontaneous flow of communication. ELT conferences in India accentuate technology integrated language teaching, methods of language teaching, learning styles and strategies and evaluation methods. In spite of experts' discussions and paper presentations, there is always a big gap between what is learnt in conferences and what is practiced in classrooms. The excitement of conference participation vanishes within a couple of weeks and teachers tend to return to their old habits of teaching. Everyone agrees that English language professors in engineering colleges play an important role in shaping the language proficiency of students but the reality presents a bleak picture. Various reports and surveys highlight the importance of language skills and the employability of Indian graduates over and over again. Though communication skills is the key word of English teaching, many English professors in India are unfamiliar with terms like ESP, CLT and TBLT or do not know the concepts and

theories related to these terms. This ignorance is quite rampant as many English professors have completed their post-graduation in English literature in which ELT is one of the papers (Albert Ryan, 2008). As far as the communicative language teaching is concerned, India has a long way to go. Though communicative competence is the focus of English courses, the result of English teaching is not quite promising as many professors have no idea about how to implement CLT or TBLT in their classes.

According to Richard W. Riley (2014) teachers are the primary creators of opportunities for learning. Unfortunately, the teachers remain mute spectators and are asked to follow the curriculum without any training. Teachers in engineering colleges have not been trained to change the methodology of teaching according to the curriculum objectives and as a result the desired outcome of course is still missing. Though the professors have heard of communication skills, many are ignorant of the methods of teaching. Unless they are willing to unlearn their ingrained attitude towards ELT and are ready to open up to the new skills they have to learn in order to train the students, the grim scenario of employability in India will make no progress. Moreover, English professors must be aware that English is learnt for different purposes these days and the purpose of English learning in engineering colleges is to make the prospective engineers competent in communication. Hence, the traditional method of teaching must be done. Away with and professors must be taught the principles and concepts of Communicative Language Teaching & Task Based Language Teaching. English professors must be trained to accept the new challenges that they must be open to learn new strategies of teaching and adapt themselves according to the needs of the learners.

Review of Literature

Richards and Farrell (2005) noted that in-service training for teachers is important to the long-term development of teachers and success of the programs. As the knowledge base of teaching changes constantly, renewal of professional skills is mandatory to address the new challenges in the teaching-learning process. The need to update the skills in terms of curriculum trends, second language acquisition research, composition theory and practice, technology or assessment is severe. They also point out that classrooms are places where teachers also can learn. The administrators of educational institutions must provide continued professional education.

According to Penny Urr many teacher trainees know a lot about theoretical linguistic knowledge, but have no idea on integrating it with practical classroom teaching. Moreover, some of them may know some good teaching ideas but are ignorant of the deployment of group or pairwork in the development of communication techniques. She recommends training courses on the principles of good pedagogy i.e. lesson design, activity design, and classroom management. In addition, there must be more integration of theory with practice. Reflection and analysis of practice teaching must be enriched by ideas gained from books and lectures. Besides, there is a need for integration of linguistics and pedagogy.

Brian Tomlinson (1986) feels that it is assumed that in-service training or short refresher courses are necessary to bring TEFL teachers up to date as the flow of new theories, ideas and techniques are overwhelming for teachers to learn everything independently. He points out that teachers may resist the new ideas as the traditional methods of teaching they have been following for years are discredited. Some teachers feel that these new techniques may become failures in actual classroom setting and they may have to revert to their old methodologies. These courses provide only theoretical information without teaching the ways to apply them in classrooms and many courses are too ambitious to bring in radical change in teacher behavior in a short period of time. In order to make these in-service courses effective, the objectives are to be specific, limited and behavioral and the expertise of the participants must be appreciated and made use of. Most importantly, the course must be experimental and not just theoretical. He suggests that individual classroom observation, constructive feedback, group discussion and planning are vital to achieve the objective of these in-service training.

Martin Parrott (1993) observes that improving teaching skills or awareness of language teaching is not achieved by subscribing to one particular approach or method as there is no right way to teach. Teachers must be aware of their students' dispositions to learn and change their styles according to the needs. They must be aware of their own teaching preferences and predispositions. Professional competence involves 'experimental knowledge' and 'received knowledge' (Wallace, 1991). As per the model, received knowledge refers to acquaintance with "the vocabulary of the subject and the matching concepts, research findings, theories and skills which are widely accepted as being part of the necessary intellectual content of the profession". Experiential knowledge refers to both

the knowledge-in-action developed by pre-service teachers through practice and the opportunity to reflect on that knowledge-in-action

Renandya, W. (2012).has observed that novice teachers are on their own many a time without proper direction. Farrell points out that there is always a gap between pre-service teacher preparation and in-service teacher development.

According to Cheng and Wang (2003), teacher educators must know the present condition of language teachers and their professional needs. In addition, teacher educators are to know the teachers' knowledge base and their training patterns so that they can be helped to reach their professional goals.

Methodology

The present study was conducted among 53(n=53, N=65)) English professors working in different pharmacy colleges located in Gujarat state. Responses were collected through emails and in person. The response rate registered as 81.5%.Convenience sampling technique was applied. The structured questions were asked to the respondents on, ELT training and its needles knowledge, pre-service training, in-service training, awareness on language skills, workshops and papers, relevance of course syllabus, attitude and industry-academic handshake. IBMSPSS.25 is employed for the purpose of data analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table-1 of annexure indicates that male respondents are 25 (47.2%) and female respondents are 28(58.2%). 22(41.5%) respondents having age < 30 years and 12(22.6%) respondents have 30-35 years of age. 19 (43.8%) respondents have 50+ age..34(64.2%) respondents have PG degree and 19(35.8%) have PhD degree.Table-2 of annexure indicates the results on Q1 related to ELT training during teacher`s UG/PG career. 38(71.2%) respondents have denied on having ELT training certificate and 15 remained neutral on the same. Table-3 of annexure related to ELT training certificate and its necessity during their career.18 (34.0%) respondents strongly disagreed with need of such ELT training certificate,15(28.3%) disagreed,12(22.6%) agreed and 8(15.1%) respondents have affirmatively responded on necessity of such certificates for knowledge enhancement on English language. It is interpreted that 33(62.3%) respondents are disagreed with the need of ELT training certificate and 20(37.7%) respondents are in favor of earning ELT training certificates for knowledge enhancement. Table-4 of annexure related to having ESP knowledge.12 (22.6%) respondents are strongly disagreed with English for special

purposes in their colleges and 11(20.8%) respondents have disagreed with the same need. It means 23(43.4%) respondents are in the concept of needless to achieve knowledge on English for Special Purposes.56.6% respondents believe that English language teachers must have knowledge on ESP for delivering better knowledge to the students. Table-5 of annexure related to need of pre-service training to the teachers on ELT.33 (62.3%) respondents disagreed with need and not having pre-service training on ELT, whereas 20(37.7%) respondents are in favor of having pre-service training on ELT for better performance and delivery of lectures. -6 of annexure related to need of in-service training to the teachers on ELT.37 (67.8%) respondents disagreed with need and not having pre-service training on ELT, whereas 16(30.2%) respondents are in favor of having in-service training on ELT for better performance and delivery of lectures. -7 of annexure related to English language awareness programs to the teachers..43 (81.2%) respondents disagreed with English language awareness programs and its need in their colleges and not having such a structure on the same, whereas 10(30.2%) respondents are in favor of having English language awareness programs either through colleges or self-motivated awareness programs.-8 of annexure related to English language awareness programs training to the teachers..43 (81.2%) respondents disagreed with English language awareness programs and its need in their colleges and not having such a structure on the same, whereas 10(30.2%) respondents are in favor of having English language awareness programs as well as training either through colleges or self-motivated awareness programs. Table -9 of annexure related to workshops and conferences attended and need to enhance R&D skill in English language..43 (81.2%) respondents disagreed with attending and organizing national/global level workshops/conferences on English literature and ELT, whereas 10(30.2%) respondents are in favor of attending and organizing workshops on academic writing skills and ELT programs. Table -10 of annexure related to respondents' attitudes towards syllabus for Pharm 26 (49.0%) respondents disagreed with motivation towards affirmative attitude towards English as a compulsory subject at UG level in their respective colleges. whereas 27(51%) respondents are in favor of motivational and refreshers programs on English teaching at Pharm level. Table-11 of annexure related to course syllabus relevancy with other state universities across the world. 44(83.01%) respondents are disagreed with need of such comparison of course syllabus at global level and 9(16.9%) respondents are agree to see course syllabus at par with globalized standards in

the same area. Table-12 of annexure related to industry-institution interaction in terms of communication skills and language skills to teachers as well as students. It is also observed that weightage is given to pharmacy subjects for industry-institution handshake but English Language purpose, there is no space. 26(49.8%) respondents are agree to give sufficient weightage on English language skills development of teachers and students. Table-13 of annexure related to need of upgradation on all the above discussed issues in relation to English as a communicative language and its need. 30(56.7%) of respondents disagreed with need of upgradation in language teaching skills ,whereas 23(44.3%) respondents have positive attitude ton high need of skill upgradation of English language.Table-14of annexure related to management support of need of transformation of English Learning Teaching in B.Pharm colleges of Gujarat state. 18(33.9%) respondents disagreed the support of management on this issue for redesigning and rethinking of present criteria of English teaching as a compulsory language in their colleges,whereas 35(66.1%) respondents are in favor of getting management support on reforming English teaching and learning as a secondary and compulsory subject in select B.Pharm colleges of Gujarat state.

Findings and Conclusion

The interpreted data of the present study mainly focus on ELT training and its importance in professional courses where English is being taught as a compulsory language at UG level in Gujarat state, specifically in pharmacy colleges.awareness on ELT,adopted methods,attitudes,government policy and other relevant issues. The following findings are concluded in this study.

The government policy on English teaching as a compulsory subject silent on upgrading research and development skills of academicians in context to select pharmacy colleges of Gujarat state.The need of ELT and other skills on making prosperous English language through research and developmental activities are to be encouraged by college authorities with government support. The industry- institute handshaking in terms of professional English improvement is necessary and inevitable in this competitive era. The knowledge upgradation programs have not enough space within the present scenario of English teaching in professional course. The instructional medium of language after K-12 is not being separately at college level at the time of admission which also creates imparity between having English medium school background students and having Gujarati medium

as instructional language up to K-12 in Gujarat state. To conclude, it is a time emergent need to give adequate weightage to English as compulsory language in professional courses which can increase soft skills of students at their graduation level.

Limitations and Scope for further research

This is academic type of study and has also time constraints. It is also noted that funding issues during primary data collection played important role during the study. Further research can be conducted by expanding area of research and sample size.

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Annexure

Demographic Profile (Table-1)

Demo	Demographic Profile	Results	
		Numbers	%
Gender	Male	25	47.2
	Female	28	52.8
Age	< 30 yrs	22	41.5
	30-50yrs	12	22.6
	> 50 yrs	19	35.8
Education	PG	34	64.2
	PhD	19	35.8

ELT training during UG/PG(Table-2)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	24	45.3	45.3	45.3
	Disagree	14	26.4	26.4	71.7
	Neutral	15	28.3	28.3	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Entrainingcertificate(Table-3)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	18	34.0	34.0	34.0
	Disagree	15	28.3	28.3	62.3
	Agree	12	22.6	22.6	84.9
	Strongly agree	8	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

ESP knowledge(Table-4)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	12	22.6	22.6	22.6
	Disagree	11	20.8	20.8	43.4
	Agree	30	56.6	56.6	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Pre-service training(Table-5)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	10	18.9	18.9	18.9
Disagree	23	43.4	43.4	62.3
Agree	8	15.1	15.1	77.4
Strongly agree	12	22.6	22.6	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

In-service training(Table-6)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	29	54.7	54.7	54.7
Agree	8	15.1	15.1	69.8
Strongly agree	16	30.2	30.2	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Awareness on language skills(Table-7)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly agree	18	34.0	34.0	34.0
Disagree	25	47.2	47.2	81.1
Agree	8	15.1	15.1	96.2
Strongly agree	2	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Need of awareness training(Table-8)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	18	34.0	34.0	34.0
Disagree	25	47.2	47.2	81.1
Agree	6	11.3	11.3	92.5
Strongly agree	4	7.5	7.5	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

workshops/conferences(Table-9)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	30	56.6	56.6	56.6
Disagree	13	24.5	24.5	81.1
Agree	6	11.3	11.3	92.5
Strongly agree	4	7.5	7.5	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Attitude towards syllabus(Table-10)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	6	11.3	11.3	11.3
Disagree	20	37.7	37.7	49.1
Agree	11	20.8	20.8	69.8
Strongly agree	16	30.2	30.2	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

course syllabus relevancy(Table-11)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
Disagree	22	41.5	41.5	45.3
Agree	13	24.5	24.5	69.8
Strongly agree	16	30.2	30.2	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Industry-institution interaction(Table-12)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	2	3.8	3.8	3.8
Disagree	25	47.2	47.2	50.9
Agree	13	24.5	24.5	75.5
Strongly agree	13	24.5	24.5	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Need of skill upgradation (Table-13)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	4	7.5	7.5	7.5
Disagree	26	49.1	49.1	56.6
Agree	7	13.2	13.2	69.8
Strongly agree	16	30.2	30.2	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Management support (Table-14)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Strongly disagree	4	7.5	7.5	7.5
Disagree	14	26.4	26.4	34.0
Agree	23	43.4	43.4	77.4
Strongly agree	12	22.6	22.6	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	