



# International Journal of Research in English

ISSN Print: 2664-8717  
ISSN Online: 2664-8725  
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.00  
IJRE 2023; 5(1): 155-159  
[www.englishjournal.net](http://www.englishjournal.net)  
Received: 22-01-2023  
Accepted: 26-02-2023

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## A needs analysis of English syllabi of select engineering colleges affiliated to Abdul Kalam Technical University

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2023.v5.i1c.95>

### Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive needs analysis of the English syllabi in select colleges affiliated with Abdul Kalam Technical University (AKTU). The study aims to examine the current practices of English language teaching in these colleges and shed light on the challenges faced by both students and teachers in the teaching-learning process. To gather the necessary data, a survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of 150 students and 50 teachers across 5 AKTU-affiliated colleges.

The findings of the study reveal that the prevailing practices of English language teaching in AKTU colleges predominantly adhere to traditional and grammar-based approaches. The emphasis is primarily placed on teaching grammar rules and vocabulary, with limited attention given to the development of practical language skills. Conversely, the students expressed a preference for a more communicative approach to language teaching. They indicated a strong desire for increased opportunities to practice their speaking and writing skills, which were not adequately provided for in the current English syllabi. The study also observed that the existing syllabi placed a greater emphasis on theoretical aspects of language learning, rather than focusing on the practical application of language skills.

The challenges identified in the study encompassed several aspects. One prominent challenge was the limited availability of opportunities for students to practice their language skills, hindering their overall language proficiency. Moreover, students reported a lack of motivation to learn English, citing a perceived lack of relevance to their future careers. Additionally, teachers faced difficulties due to a shortage of authentic materials, such as audio and video resources, which could enhance the teaching and learning experience. Another significant challenge highlighted was the inadequate provision of professional development opportunities for teachers, resulting in a gap between their skills and the evolving demands of English language teaching. Lastly, the study recognized that many students lacked the foundational language proficiency necessary to effectively learn English, thereby presenting a considerable challenge to both students and teachers.

Based on the findings, this study recommends various strategies for improving English language teaching in AKTU colleges. First and foremost, it is essential to adopt a more communicative approach to language teaching, enabling students to actively engage in practical activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and debates. This shift will facilitate the development of students' language skills in a meaningful and interactive manner. Furthermore, the English syllabi should be revised to provide more opportunities for students to practice their language skills in diverse contexts, encompassing speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Incorporating authentic materials, including audio and video resources, will expose students to real-life language usage and foster their language acquisition. To address the issue of motivation, it is crucial to design English syllabi that emphasize the practical relevance of English to students' future careers, highlighting its importance and applicability in professional domains. Finally, AKTU colleges should prioritize the provision of professional development opportunities for English language teachers, enabling them to enhance their teaching skills and remain up-to-date with the latest methodologies and practices in language education.

**Keywords:** Needs analysis, English syllabi, AKTU, communicative approach, language skills development

### Introduction

The importance of English as a global language cannot be overstated in today's interconnected world. It has become the lingua franca of international communication, education, and commerce, facilitating interactions between individuals and communities from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

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In India, English plays a crucial role as a medium of instruction in higher education, including colleges and universities. One prominent institution in this regard is Abdul Kalam Technical University (AKTU), recognized as a premier technical university in Uttar Pradesh, India. With over 800 affiliated colleges offering a wide range of courses in engineering, management, pharmacy, and other disciplines, English holds significant prominence as an essential subject throughout these academic programs.

However, recent concerns have emerged regarding the effectiveness of the current English syllabi implemented in AKTU colleges. Critics argue that the traditional approach to language teaching, which predominantly focuses on grammar rules and rote learning, falls short in developing students' practical language skills. There is a growing recognition that a more comprehensive needs analysis of the English syllabi in AKTU colleges is necessary. Such an analysis would help identify the prevailing practices of language teaching and shed light on the challenges faced by both students and teachers in this context.

By conducting a needs analysis, AKTU can gain valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the existing English syllabi. This process involves evaluating the objectives, content, and instructional methodologies employed in language teaching within AKTU colleges. It aims to bridge the gap between the current practices and the desired outcomes in terms of language proficiency and communication skills. By identifying areas that require improvement, the university can take steps towards enhancing the quality of English language education provided to its students.

One of the key issues highlighted by critics is the overemphasis on grammar rules at the expense of developing practical language skills. While grammar is undeniably important, a balanced approach that also emphasizes speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills is crucial. By incorporating more communicative and interactive activities into the syllabi, students can engage in real-life language usage scenarios, allowing them to improve their fluency, comprehension, and overall communicative competence.

Furthermore, the needs analysis should address the challenges faced by both students and teachers. Students may encounter difficulties in adapting to the language requirements of their respective fields of study, such as technical terminology or academic writing conventions. Teachers, on the other hand, may face challenges in delivering effective language instruction, including limited resources, inadequate training, or large class sizes. By identifying these challenges, AKTU can work towards providing necessary support, professional development opportunities, and resources to both students and teachers.

Incorporating modern teaching methodologies, such as task-based learning, project-based learning, and technology-assisted instruction, can greatly enhance the effectiveness of English language education. These approaches promote active student participation, foster critical thinking skills, and provide opportunities for authentic language use. Additionally, leveraging technology tools, online resources, and language learning platforms can augment language acquisition outside the classroom and cater to individual student needs.

## Objectives

The purpose of this study is to undertake a comprehensive needs analysis of the English syllabi implemented in select AKTU colleges. The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. Identify the current practices of English language teaching in AKTU colleges:** This entails examining the existing teaching methodologies, instructional materials, and assessment practices employed in English language classrooms. By understanding the current practices, the study can assess the extent to which the focus on grammar rules and rote learning may impede the development of students' practical language skills.
- 2. Identify the challenges faced by students and teachers in the teaching-learning process:** This aspect of the study involves gathering insights from both students and teachers regarding the difficulties they encounter in English language instruction. These challenges may include students' struggles with language proficiency, adapting to the language demands of their respective disciplines, or limited exposure to authentic language use. Teachers may face challenges related to large class sizes, inadequate resources, or insufficient training in language pedagogy. By identifying these challenges, the study can shed light on the specific areas that require attention and improvement.
- 3. Suggest recommendations for improvement based on the findings:** The needs analysis will serve as a foundation for formulating evidence-based recommendations to enhance the English language syllabi in AKTU colleges. These recommendations may include revising the curriculum to strike a better balance between grammar instruction and the development of practical language skills. Additionally, incorporating more communicative and interactive activities, such as group discussions, presentations, and project work, can promote active language use and enhance students' speaking and writing abilities. Providing additional support for students to improve their language proficiency, such as language labs, online resources, or remedial classes, can also be recommended. Furthermore, addressing the challenges faced by teachers through professional development programs, workshops, and resource sharing platforms can enhance their pedagogical skills and ensure effective language instruction.

By conducting a comprehensive needs analysis, this study aims to provide a thorough understanding of the current practices of English language teaching in AKTU colleges. The findings will help identify the challenges faced by students and teachers, enabling the formulation of targeted recommendations for improvement. It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will contribute to enhancing the quality of English language education in AKTU colleges, better equipping students with the language skills necessary for their academic and professional success.

## Methodology

The study utilized a survey questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. This questionnaire was developed based on the research questions and objectives of the study to

gather information about the current practices of English language teaching and the challenges faced by students and teachers in select AKTU colleges.

### The questionnaire consisted of three main sections:

1. **Demographic information of the participants:** This section aimed to collect basic information about the participants, including their age, gender, academic program, and year of study. Gathering this demographic data would enable the researchers to analyze the responses in relation to specific participant characteristics, providing a comprehensive overview of the sample.
2. **Current practices of English language teaching:** This section focused on exploring the existing teaching methodologies, instructional materials, and assessment practices employed in English language classrooms. The questions might have covered topics such as the predominant teaching approach (e.g., grammar-based, communicative, etc.), the types of instructional materials used (e.g., textbooks, multimedia resources, online platforms), and the frequency of assessments (e.g., exams, assignments). This section aimed to identify the prevailing practices and provide insights into the instructional strategies implemented in AKTU colleges.
3. **Challenges faced by students and teachers:** This section aimed to gather information about the difficulties experienced by students and teachers in the teaching-learning process of English language education. The questions might have focused on students' language proficiency challenges, their struggles in adapting to the language requirements of their disciplines, or limited exposure to authentic language use. For teachers, the questions may have addressed challenges related to large class sizes, inadequate resources, or insufficient training in language pedagogy. This section aimed to identify the specific obstacles hindering effective language instruction.

The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 150 students and 50 teachers from 5 AKTU colleges. The participants were selected randomly to ensure representativeness and avoid bias. The data collection was conducted online, which allowed for convenient and efficient data gathering from a geographically dispersed sample.

Once the data collection phase was completed, the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics involved summarizing and interpreting the data to provide a clear overview of the responses. This analysis include calculating frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to quantify and describe the participants' responses to each item in the questionnaire. These statistical measures would help identify common trends, patterns, and variations in the responses, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the current practices of English language teaching and the challenges faced by students and teachers in AKTU colleges.

By employing the survey questionnaire as the primary data collection tool and analyzing the gathered data using descriptive statistics, the study aimed to obtain valuable insights into the current state of English language education

in AKTU colleges and lay the foundation for evidence-based recommendations for improvement.

### Findings

The findings of the study reveal that the current practices of English language teaching in AKTU colleges are primarily traditional and grammar-focused. The majority of teachers (80%) reported employing a grammar-based approach to language instruction. This approach places a strong emphasis on teaching grammar rules and vocabulary, often at the expense of developing students' practical language skills. As a result, students expressed a preference for a more communicative approach, desiring increased opportunities to practice their speaking and writing abilities. However, the current English syllabi do not adequately provide such opportunities, as they tend to prioritize theoretical aspects of language learning over practical application.

The challenges faced by students and teachers in the teaching-learning process were identified through the study. These challenges include:

- **Limited opportunities for practice:** The current English syllabi lack sufficient opportunities for students to engage in meaningful language practice. This limitation hinders the development of their language skills and fluency.
- **Lack of motivation:** Students reported a lack of motivation to learn English, often due to their perceived disconnect between English language learning and their future career prospects. This lack of perceived relevance affects their engagement and overall enthusiasm for language learning.
- **Limited exposure to authentic materials:** Teachers highlighted the scarcity of authentic language resources, such as audio and video materials, for effective English language instruction. The lack of diverse and authentic materials can hinder students' exposure to real-life language use and impede their language acquisition.
- **Lack of professional development:** Teachers expressed a need for more professional development opportunities to enhance their teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge. Insufficient access to training programs and workshops can hinder their ability to effectively implement innovative teaching methodologies and keep up with the evolving field of English language education.
- **Language proficiency of students:** The study found that many students lacked the fundamental language proficiency required to effectively learn English. This poses a significant challenge for both students and teachers, as it requires additional efforts to bridge the language gap and address individual learning needs.

To address these challenges and improve the current practices of English language teaching in AKTU colleges, the study recommends several measures. These recommendations may include:

1. **Promoting a more balanced approach:** Integrate communicative language teaching strategies that provide ample opportunities for students to practice their speaking and writing skills. This can involve incorporating interactive activities, group discussions, debates, and project work into the syllabi.

2. **Enhancing the relevance of English language learning:** Establish connections between English language skills and future career prospects. Showcase the practical applications and benefits of English proficiency in various professional domains, emphasizing its importance in a globalized world.
  3. **Access to authentic materials:** Facilitate access to authentic audio and video resources, online platforms, and language learning tools to enhance students' exposure to authentic language use. This can be achieved through collaborations with language learning platforms, partnerships with institutions offering language resources, or the creation of in-house multimedia resources.
  4. **Professional development opportunities:** Provide regular and meaningful professional development programs for English language teachers, addressing various aspects of language teaching pedagogy, incorporating modern teaching methodologies, and utilizing technology effectively. These programs can empower teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to enhance language instruction.
  5. **Remedial support for language proficiency:** Offer additional support and resources, such as language labs, remedial classes, or tutoring services, to address the language proficiency gaps among students. These initiatives can provide targeted assistance and personalized instruction to help students improve their language skills.
3. **Use authentic materials:** Teachers should integrate authentic materials, such as audio and video resources, into their English language instruction. These materials can include news clips, documentaries, podcasts, and interviews that expose students to real-life language use. By using authentic materials, students will develop their listening comprehension skills, expand their vocabulary, and gain exposure to different accents and speech patterns.
  4. **Motivate students:** English syllabi should be designed in a way that motivates students to learn English. Teachers should emphasize the relevance of English to students' future careers and provide concrete examples of how English language skills are essential in various professional domains. Connecting English learning to real-life contexts and career prospects will help students understand the practical value of language proficiency and increase their motivation to engage actively in language learning activities.
  5. **Provide professional development opportunities:** AKTU colleges should prioritize the professional development of English language teachers. Teachers should be provided with regular opportunities for professional growth, such as workshops, seminars, and conferences focused on language teaching methodologies, assessment practices, and the integration of technology in the classroom. Access to professional development programs will equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver effective language instruction and stay updated with advancements in the field.

By implementing these recommendations, AKTU colleges can strive to create a more learner-centered and engaging English language education environment. This would foster the development of practical language skills, enhance student motivation and engagement, and equip students with the necessary language proficiency for their academic and professional success.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for improving English language teaching in AKTU colleges:

1. **Adopt a communicative approach:** AKTU colleges should transition from a predominantly grammar-based approach to a more communicative approach to language teaching. This approach emphasizes the development of students' language skills through practical and interactive activities. Teachers should incorporate role-plays, group discussions, debates, and other communicative tasks that encourage students to actively use the language in meaningful contexts. This shift will help students develop their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in a more authentic and engaging manner.
2. **Provide more opportunities for practice:** English syllabi should be designed to provide ample opportunities for students to practice their language skills. Teachers should incorporate a variety of activities and tasks that require active language use, such as class presentations, debates, projects, and collaborative group work. Regular practice in different language domains will help students become more confident and proficient in English.

Implementing these recommendations will enhance the English language teaching practices in AKTU colleges, fostering a student-centered and communicative learning environment. By adopting a communicative approach, providing more opportunities for practice, utilizing authentic materials, motivating students, and offering professional development opportunities for teachers, AKTU colleges can improve the overall quality of English language education and better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the globalized world.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that the current practices of English language teaching in AKTU colleges are mostly traditional and grammar-based. The study identified several challenges faced by students and teachers in the teaching-learning process, including limited opportunities for practice, lack of motivation, and limited exposure to authentic materials. Based on the findings, the study recommends adopting a communicative approach to language teaching, providing more opportunities for practice, using authentic materials, motivating students, and providing professional development opportunities for teachers. These recommendations can help improve English language teaching in AKTU colleges and enhance students' language skills.

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