

Need to Reform Syllabus for Four Year Undergraduate Programme (NEP-2020) for Effective Teaching of the English Language in the Colleges and Universities of Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory

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Abstract

The effective teaching and learning of the English language (FYUGP) under NEP 2020 in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir requires a significant reform of the existing curriculum to meet the changing academic, professional, social, and technological needs of learners. Although English occupies an important position in higher education and employment, at college or University level the instruction often remains predominantly examination-oriented, with considerable emphasis on prescribed texts, grammar rules, and theoretical knowledge rather than functional proficiency and communicative competence. This paper proposes a learner-centred, competency-based and skill-oriented framework for reforming the Four Year Undergraduate Programme in English syllabus in Jammu and Kashmir. The proposed framework seeks to integrate the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—with academic, professional, digital, and employability-oriented communication. It also recommends greater use of communicative and task-based pedagogies, continuous assessment, diagnostic testing, language laboratories, project work, presentations, and experiential learning. Considering the multilingual and culturally diverse context of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the proposed syllabus also advocates meaningful engagement with local linguistic and cultural contexts while maintaining exposure to wider varieties and uses of English. The study argues that English should be taught not merely as a subject of study but as a practical means of communication, knowledge acquisition, professional development, and social mobility. The proposed reforms aim to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world language use and to equip undergraduate students with the confidence and competencies necessary for higher education, employment, and participation in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords

Four Year Undergraduate English Education; Curriculum Reform; English Language Teaching; Communicative Competence; Competency-Based Learning; Skill-Based Curriculum; Employability

Skills; Digital Literacy; Multilingualism; Jammu and Kashmir; Higher Education; Learner-Centred Teaching; English Language Proficiency; Experiential Learning

1. Background

English occupies an important position in the educational, professional, administrative, and digital domains in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. At the FUGP level, however, the teaching of English in many institutions continues to remain predominantly literature-oriented, with comparatively limited emphasis on the systematic development of practical language skills.

A large number of undergraduate students enter higher education with considerable variation in their proficiency in English. Many students require structured support in basic grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, academic writing, speaking, and communication skills. The existing syllabus, where heavily focused on prescribed literary texts, may not adequately address these diverse linguistic needs.

There is, therefore, a need to reform the Four Year undergraduate English syllabus so that it maintains the academic value of literature while giving greater and more systematic attention to Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW), communication, critical thinking, digital literacy, academic writing, and employability-oriented language skills.

2. Need for Syllabus Reform

The reform of the undergraduate English syllabus is proposed for the following reasons:

- i. **Wide Variation in Students' Language Proficiency:** Students joining undergraduate programmes come from diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds.
- ii. **Insufficient Emphasis on Functional English:** Students need English not merely as a subject of study but as a means of communication in academic, professional and everyday contexts.
- iii. **Limited opportunities for Oral Communication:** The syllabus should provide regular opportunities for presentations, group discussions, conversations, interviews, debates and public speaking.
- iv. **Need for Academic Writing Skills:** Students require training in paragraph writing, précis, summaries, reports, essays, referencing, research writing and effective use of sources.
- v. **Employability Requirements:** Competitive examinations, interviews, workplaces and professional environments increasingly demand effective communication skills.
- vi. **Digital Transformation:** Undergraduate learners need the ability to communicate effectively through emails, online platforms, presentations, digital documents and other contemporary media.
- vii. **Multilingual Context of JK (UT):** The syllabus should recognise the linguistic realities of the region and adopt appropriate pedagogical approaches for learners transitioning into English-medium academic environments.
- viii. **Need to bridge the gap between School and Higher Education:** A graded and progressive language curriculum can help students overcome foundational gaps instead of assuming uniform proficiency at the undergraduate level.

3. Objectives of the Proposed Reform

The reformed syllabus should aim to:

- Develop functional and communicative competence in English.
- Strengthen the four basic language skills—Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.
- Improve grammatical accuracy and vocabulary.
- Develop confidence in spoken English.
- Enable students to communicate effectively in academic and professional situations.
- Develop academic reading and writing skills.
- Promote critical thinking, creativity and independent learning.
- Introduce students to digital and professional communication.
- Improve presentation, interview and group-discussion skills.
- Provide opportunities for continuous practice and assessment.
- Make English teaching more learner-centred, activity-based and outcome-oriented.

4. Proposed Structure of the Four Year Undergraduate English Curriculum

A balanced undergraduate English curriculum may broadly consist of the following components:

A. Foundation English

This component should cater to students who require strengthening of basic language competence.

Suggested areas:

- Parts of speech and sentence structure
- Tenses and subject-verb agreement
- Articles, prepositions and conjunctions
- Modals and auxiliaries
- Active and passive voice
- Direct and indirect speech
- Common grammatical errors
- Vocabulary building
- Word formation
- Synonyms, antonyms and collocations
- Punctuation and spelling

The emphasis should be on application rather than memorisation of grammatical rules.

B. Listening Skills

Listening should become an integral component of the undergraduate English course.

Students may be exposed to:

- Short conversations
- Lectures and talks
- Interviews
- News and announcements
- Academic discussions
- Audio/video materials
- Different varieties and accents of English

Activities may include note-taking, identifying key information, summarising, and comprehension exercises and responding to spoken instructions.

C. Speaking and Oral Communication

Greater emphasis should be placed on actual use of English.

Students should regularly participate in:

- Conversations
- Pair and group activities
- Role plays
- Group discussions
- Debates
- Seminars
- Presentations
- Public speaking
- Interviews
- Extempore speaking
- Situational communication

The objective should be to develop fluency, confidence, intelligibility and appropriateness, rather than merely grammatical perfection.

D. Reading Skills

The curriculum should develop both intensive and extensive reading habits.

Suggested areas:

- Reading comprehension
- Identifying main ideas
- Skimming and scanning
- Inferential reading
- Vocabulary in context
- Critical reading
- Academic texts
- Newspaper and magazine articles
- Essays and contemporary writings
- Short literary and non-literary texts

E. Writing Skills

Writing should move progressively from basic to advanced forms.

Students should practise:

- Sentence and paragraph construction
- Descriptive and argumentative writing
- Essay writing
- Précis writing
- Summary writing
- Note-making

- Report writing
- Formal letters and applications
- CV/resume writing
- Email writing
- Academic writing
- Introduction to citation and referencing
- Basic research/project writing

F. English for Employability

A dedicated component may be introduced to connect language learning with career development.

It may include:

- Preparing a CV/resume
- Cover letters
- Job applications
- Interviews
- Group discussions
- Workplace communication
- Professional emails
- Telephone etiquette
- Presentation skills
- Communication in meetings
- Competitive-examination-oriented language practice

G. Digital and Contemporary Communication

Students should be introduced to effective and responsible communication in digital environments.

Suggested areas:

- Email etiquette
- Digital presentations
- Online communication
- Academic and professional use of digital platforms
- Evaluating online information
- Digital vocabulary
- Basic principles of responsible digital communication

5. Place of Literature in the Reformed Curriculum

The proposed reform should not reduce English literature to a marginal component. Literature remains essential for developing imagination, cultural awareness, empathy, critical thinking and sophisticated language use.

However, literary texts should increasingly be used as resources for language development.

For example, a short story can be used for:

- Vocabulary development
- Reading comprehension
- Discussion

- Pronunciation activities
- Creative writing
- Character analysis
- Presentation
- Critical thinking

Thus, the curriculum should establish a productive relationship between language and literature, rather than treating them as completely separate domains.

6. Local and Regional Context

The Four Year undergraduate English curriculum in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir should incorporate texts and communicative situations that students can relate to.

Where appropriate, the syllabus may include:

- Writers from Jammu & Kashmir
- Indian English writers
- Contemporary Indian literature
- Local cultural narratives
- Essays concerning social and environmental issues
- Contemporary issues relevant to young learners

Such material can make English learning more meaningful while simultaneously exposing students to wider national and global perspectives.

7. Pedagogical Reform

Curriculum reform must be accompanied by a corresponding change in classroom practice.

The teaching-learning process should gradually move from:

- Teacher-centred → Learner-centred
- Lecture-based → Activity-based
- Memorisation → Application
- Textbook dependence → Multiple learning resources
- One-way communication → Interactive communication

Teachers may use:

- Pair work
- Group work
- Role play
- Peer learning
- Presentations
- Language games
- Audio-visual materials
- Language laboratories
- Digital learning resources
- Projects and classroom tasks

8. Continuous and Skill-Based Assessment

Assessment should measure actual language competence rather than only the ability to reproduce prepared answers.

A balanced assessment framework may include:

Component	Suggested Weightage
Reading & Writing	30%
Listening	10%
Speaking & Presentation	15%
Grammar & Vocabulary in Context	15%
Project/Assignment	10%
End-Semester Examination	20%

The exact distribution may be modified according to the university's academic regulations.

9. Diagnostic Assessment

A diagnostic English language test may be conducted at the beginning of the first undergraduate semester.

On the basis of the results, students may be broadly placed into:

- Foundational support group
- Intermediate group
- Advanced group

Additional bridge/remedial classes can then be arranged for students who require them.

This would prevent a "one-size-fits-all" approach to English language teaching.

10. Establishment/Strengthening of Language Laboratories

The Colleges and Universities across the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir should be encouraged to establish or strengthen language laboratories equipped with appropriate audio-visual and digital resources.

Language laboratories can support:

- Listening practice
- Pronunciation
- Speaking activities
- Interactive exercises
- Communication practice
- Self-learning

Where a dedicated laboratory is not immediately feasible, institutions may use existing computer laboratories and digital resources.

Teacher Development

Successful syllabus reform requires continuous professional development of teachers.

Faculty development programmes may focus on:

- Communicative Language Teaching
- Outcome-Based Education
- Activity-based pedagogy

- Teaching pronunciation
- Digital tools for language teaching
- Assessment of speaking and listening
- Academic writing
- Inclusive and multilingual pedagogy

Teachers should also be provided with suitable teaching-learning materials and assessment rubrics.

11. Expected Learning Outcomes

At the end of the Four Year Undergraduate programme, students should be able to:

1. Communicate confidently and appropriately in English.
2. Understand spoken English in academic and everyday contexts.
3. Read and comprehend a variety of texts.
4. Write coherent, grammatically appropriate and well-organised texts.
5. Deliver presentations and participate effectively in discussions.
6. Prepare professional documents such as CVs, applications and emails.
7. Use English appropriately in academic and workplace situations.
8. Demonstrate improved vocabulary and grammatical competence.
9. Think critically and express ideas independently.
10. Use digital resources responsibly for academic and professional communication.

12. Suggested Model of Curriculum Design

A practical undergraduate English programme may follow the broad pattern:

FYUGP Semester—I & II

Semester—I Foundation & Communication Skills

Grammar, vocabulary, basic speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Semester—II Academic English

Reading strategies, academic writing, summarising, presentations and discussions.

FYUGP Semester—III & IV

Semester—III Professional Communication

CVs, interviews, workplace communication, report writing and Professional correspondence.

Semester—III Advanced Communication & Critical Thinking

Argumentative writing, critical reading, seminars, debates and advanced Oral communication.

FYUGP Semester—V & VI

Semester—V Literature and Language

Selected literary texts integrated with language.

Semester—VI Literature and Language

Selected literary texts integrated with critical-analysis activities.

FYUGP Semester—VII & VIII

Semester—VII English for Employability & Research

Research Writing and Applied Linguistics

Semester—VIII English for Employability & Research

Advanced English, Projects and Specialisation

13. Recommendations

It is proposed that the competent academic authority may consider:

- i. Constituting an expert committee for comprehensive review of the existing undergraduate English syllabus.
- ii. Conducting a needs assessment of undergraduate students across colleges of Jammu & Kashmir.
- iii. Introducing a graded, skill-based English language component.
- iv. Giving adequate weightage to Listening and Speaking skills. Integrating communication skills with literature teaching.
- v. Introducing employability and professional communication modules.
- vi. Introducing diagnostic and continuous assessment.
- vii. Developing common learning outcomes and assessment rubrics.
- viii. Strengthening language laboratories and digital resources. Organising regular faculty-development programmes.
- ix. Developing regionally relevant teaching materials alongside national and Global content.
- x. Reviewing the revised syllabus periodically on the basis of student performance and feedback.

14. Conclusion

The reform of the Four Year Undergraduate English syllabus is essential for enabling students of Jammu & Kashmir to meet the linguistic demands of higher education, employment and contemporary society. The objective should not simply be to increase the quantity of English taught, but to improve the quality, relevance and usability of English education.

A balanced curriculum combining language proficiency, literature, communication, critical thinking, digital literacy and employability skills can significantly enhance students' confidence and academic and professional prospects.

The proposed reform may therefore be considered as an important step towards making undergraduate English education in the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir more skill-oriented, inclusive, learner-centred, contemporary and outcome-based.

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