Chapter 4

Analysis of the English test papers designed by Madrasa English teachers and an evaluation of the diagnostic English test papers administered by the researcher

Over the years, with an increase in science and technology, the demand of using and learning English language has been increasing. However, English language learners throughout the world in non-native countries, in spite of learning English rigorously and continuously, fail to communicate with ease. In India Madrasa students too, face many problems in learning English as a foreign language because of some unsuitable learning conditions provided to them. The main problems lie in their textbooks, teaching methodology, resources, and test papers for examinations, resulting in poor performance of the students.

The present chapter attempts to analyze some of the sample test papers, which the researcher collected from select Madrasas during his field survey in 2012, with the purpose of finding out whether the test papers cover language skills, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation and to what extent each skill is covered in the papers. Moreover, this chapter will also present an assessment of a diagnostic English test paper designed for the students of Madrasas at Intermediate level in order to check their proficiency level in English.

4.1. Analysis of the sample test papers designed by Madrasa English teachers for the Intermediate level students

All the questions in the sample test papers collected from Madrasa Jamia tul Falah (Azamgarh), Maahad (Lucknow), and Ahsanul Banat, a Madrasa for girls (Moradabad) are reproduced below one by one, and are categorized according to the language skills and sub skills. This aims to find out whether the test papers consist of exercises based on language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing), pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition, the analysis will also include the extent of each language skill and sub skill in the papers.

Half yearly examination 2010-11 for class Arabic III (Intermediate level) at Jamia tul Falah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total marks: 30</th>
<th>Total questions: 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration: 2 hours</td>
<td>All the questions to be attempted:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grammar based questions
1. Separate the subjects and predicates from the following sentences. (3 marks)
2. Separate the predicates and indicate their parts. (3 marks)
3. Tell the function done by noun clause use in the following sentences. (3 marks)
4. Insert noun classes to complete the sentences. (3 marks)
5. Write adjective clause to complete the sentences. (3 marks)

Vocabulary based questions
6. Use the words into your own sentences. (3 marks)

Translation based questions
7. Translate the following proverbs into Urdu (5 marks)

Writing skill based question
8. Write down an essay on any one of the given topics. (My best friend, The Independence Day, and My school) (7 marks)
    Half yearly 2010-11 for class Arabic IV (Intermediate level) at Jamia tul Falah
    Total marks: 30
    Duration: 2 hours
    Total questions: 7
    6 questions to be attempted:

Comprehension based questions
1. Read the following passage and answer the questions given below. (5 marks)
2. Explain any one of the following stanzas with reference to the context. (5 marks)
3. Write the central idea of the following questions. (5 marks)
4. Answer any five of the following questions.

Vocabulary and grammar based questions
5. Give the antonyms and synonyms of the following. (5 marks)
6. Find one word for each of the following expressions. (5 marks)

Grammar
7. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the proper words/phrases given below. (5 marks)
    Annual examination 2010-11 for class Arabic IV (Intermediate level) at Jamia tul Falah
    Total marks: 50
    Duration: 2:30 hours
    Total questions: 9
    All the questions to be attempted:
Comprehension based questions

1. Read the following passage and answer the questions given below. (6 marks)
2. Explain any one of the following stanzas with reference to the context. (6 marks)
3. Answer any three of the following question. (6 marks)
4. Write the central idea of the following questions. (5 marks)

Vocabulary based questions

5. Substitute one word for each of the following expressions. (5 marks)
6. Give the synonyms of the following. (6 marks)
7. Give the antonyms of the following. (6 marks)

Grammar

8. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with the proper words/phrases given below. (4 marks)
9. Use each of the following pairs of words in your own sentences. (6 marks)

Half yearly examination 2011-12 for class Arabic IV at Jamia tul Falah

Total marks: 30 Total questions: 7
Duration: 2:30 hours All the questions to be attempted:

Comprehension based questions

1. Read any of the following passages and answer the questions given below. (6 marks)
2. Explain any one of the following stanzas with reference to the context. (4 marks)
3. Write down the central idea of the following questions. (4 marks)

Vocabulary based questions

4. Find one word for any four of the following expressions. (4 marks)
5. Give the synonyms of any four of the following words. (4 marks)
6. Give the antonyms of any four of the following words. (4 marks)
7. Use any three of the following pairs of words in your own sentences. (4 marks)

Annual examination 2011-12 for class Sanwiyah Sadisa (Intermediate level) at Maahad, Lucknow

Total marks: 80 Total questions: 7
Duration: 2:30 hours 5 questions to be attempted with each of 16 marks.
Reading comprehension based questions
1. Explain the following with reference to the context. (prose)
2. Explain the following with reference to the context. (poetry)
3. Answer the following question in English. (What is Imam Bukhari? What is Muslim symbol of? What happens to the person who first saw the Prophet? Whose Islam is the best??)

Vocabulary based questions
4. Write the meanings of the following words and use them in your sentences.

Grammar based questions
5. Define adjectives or nouns with its kinds and expressions.

Writing based questions
6. Write an essay on anyone of the following

Translation based questions
7. Translate the following passage.

Annual examination 2011-12 for the class Aalima III (Intermediate level) for at Ahsanul Banat, Moradabad

| Total marks: 40 | Total questions: 11 |
| Duration: 3 hours | All the questions to be attempted |

Vocabulary based questions
1. Write the meaning (any 4). (4 marks)
2. Answer in one word. (2 marks)
3. Write the synonyms (any 4). (2 marks)
4. Write the antonyms (any 4). (2 marks)

Reading comprehension based questions
5. Write the answer any one long. (4 marks)
6. Write the answer any three short. (6 marks)
7. Explain the following lines with reference and context. (Prose extract) (4 marks)
8. Explain the following line with reference and context. (Poetry extract) (6 marks)
9. Write the central idea of any of the given poem? (6 marks)

Grammar based questions
10. Use each of the following pairs of words in sentences of your own so as to make their meaning clear. (2 marks)
11. Fill in the blanks. (2 marks)
Annual examination 2011-12 for class Aalima IV (Intermediate level) at
Ahsanul Banat, Moradabad

Total marks: 40
Duration: 3 hours
Total questions: 11
All the questions to be attempted

Grammar based questions

1. Change into the indirect narration. (4 marks)
2. Combine each of the following sets of simple sentences into one sentence as
   mentioned against each (any 4). (4 marks)

Vocabulary based questions

3. Write the synonyms (any 8). (4 marks)
4. Write the antonyms (any 8). (4 marks)

Translation based questions

5. Translate into Hindi. (4 marks)
6. Translate into English. (4 marks)

Reading comprehension based questions

7. Read the following questions and answer the question given below. (5 marks)

Writing skill based questions

8. Write an application for character certificate or write a letter for frequent
   telephone disorder.
9. Write an essay on any one topic (Your hobby, Surah Fatiha- Quran). (7 marks)

The above questions and instructions of the sample test papers indicate
that all the test papers focused on reading comprehension most, then vocabulary
and grammar without any context, writing skills, and translation respectively.
Moreover, some of the instructions of the questions are incomplete, and have
some grammatical errors, which indicate teachers’ lack of proficiency in the
language and developing test.

To understand the analysis of the mentioned sample test papers more
specifically, a graphical representation is presented in figure 4.1 according to
each language skill and sub-skill covered in the papers:
Figure 4.1  Weightage given to language skills and sub-skills in Madrasa English test papers
Source: A diagnostic English test papers for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012

Figure 4.1 shows that the sample papers covered 34% reading comprehension, 28% vocabulary, 20% grammar, 10% writing skill, and 8% translation based questions, which indicate that the test papers designed for the Intermediate level Madrasa students are not up to the mark, and are not comparable with the Intermediate English test papers of Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSCE), Government of India, because questions as presented above are too easy to be answered by the Senior Secondary level students.

More specifically, 34% of the test papers is taken up by reading comprehension based question, because the syllabus is fully text-orientated, requiring the teachers to finish the select chapters of four prescribed textbooks in two years at Intermediate level. However, the questions based on reading comprehension are easy to attempt, which shows that the level of the students’ knowledge is low. (Please see the appendix for the sample test papers)

Vocabulary takes 28% of the test papers which seems to be too much at the Intermediate level. Even the vocabulary based questions are quite easy to attempt at this level. The questions such as ‘synonyms’, ‘antonyms’, and ‘one word substitution’ without any context indicate that tests are not up to the mark.
Similarly, grammar occupies 20% of the test papers, which is again higher than a standard test paper of CBSE at Intermediate level students. Questions such as ‘changing into direct/indirect’ and ‘simple sentences into complex sentences’ show the low grade of the test papers, which indicates that students still are weak in grammar and need to be taught. This also indicates that teacher did not work hard on their grammar in their previous classes.

Writing skill, which is necessary to be taught in order to fulfill the students’ target needs of learning English, occupies only 10% of the test paper, which is a major concern. Students are not given questions on different essays, letters, and application writing for a variety of purposes such as writing a letter to the father in order to request him to send money for fees or to ask permission for leave on account of illness and so on. Students are not made familiar with using writing in real life situations.

Translation practice, a big part of traditional Grammar Translation Method, is still in practice at the Intermediate level, which should be replaced by some writing or pronunciation based questions.

Moreover, on analyzing the test, it is noticed that some of the test papers have no proper instructions, leaving the examinees confused and clueless, what to do and how much to do. For example, most of the sample papers did not mention the marks of each question, and the number of the questions to be attempted. In addition, the language of some of the questions is poor, incomplete, and has language errors. Interestingly, the researcher found the instruction in Urdu in some of the papers, indicating to what extent students’ mother tongue dominates the EFL program at Madrasas.

To conclude, the test papers designed for the students of Intermediate level at select Madrasas mainly focus on reading comprehension (34%), vocabulary (28%), grammar rules (20%), and translation (8%) with little attention to writing skill (10%). Some of the instructions of the questions are confusing, incomplete, and have some grammatical errors, indicating teachers’ lack of knowledge in language, especially in developing a test paper. Questions in the tests are too easy to be answered and do not seem to be providing enough challenge to students’ knowledge in the language. The tests have low standard comparatively with a test at the Intermediate level.
4.2. Analysis of the diagnostic English test paper administered by the researcher for the Intermediate level students

A diagnostic English test paper was designed for the students studying at Intermediate level at select Madrasas in order to assess their proficiency in English. The test paper was of 40 marks, containing 6 questions on tenses, 4 questions on active/passive voice, 4 questions on direct/indirect (Grammar-18 marks), 4 questions on reading comprehension (8 marks), and two questions on writing skill (7+7 marks). Thus, the whole paper was of 40 marks with one hour duration. Students were distributed test papers in the classroom and asked to solve the paper within the time limit.

The data collected through the diagnostic English test paper is graded in MS Excel software, analyzing the percentile of each division of the paper, i.e. grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skill.

Figure 4.2 is the graphical representation of the grades of the students' knowledge of grammar.

![Figure 4.2 Students' knowledge of grammar](image)

Source: A diagnostic English test papers for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012

Figure 4.2 shows that only 4% of the students are excellent, 10% are very good, 38% are good, 31% are average, and 17% are weak in grammar. This indicates that 48% of students' knowledge of grammar lies between average and weak. This is because grammar is taught traditionally at Madrasas. Students are asked to memorize and mug up each rules of grammar, with no or
little understanding of using them in a context. Interestingly, questions such as what is noun and its kinds, write the definition of adjective and its kinds given in the test papers at the Intermediate level, show a traditional way of testing grammar knowledge, and is contrary the ELT approach.

Figure 4.3 is the graphical representation of the grades of the students' knowledge of reading comprehension.

![Graph of reading comprehension grades](image)

**Figure 4.3** Students' knowledge of reading comprehension  
**Source:** A diagnostic English test papers for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012

Figure 4.3 shows that only 8% of the students are excellent, 20% are very good, 12% are good, 17% are average, and 43% are weak in reading comprehension. This indicates that the majority (60%) of the students' knowledge of reading comprehension lies between average and weak. Surprisingly, students who spend most of their time in classroom or in their hostel in understanding the text in view of their text-oriented syllabus, face problems and lack proficiency, though reading comprehension practice should have enabled them to be proficient enough in this particular area.

Figure 4.4 is the graphical representation of the grades of the students' knowledge in writing skill.
Figure 4.4  Students' knowledge of writing skill
Source: A diagnostic English test papers for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012

Figure 4.4 shows that none of the students is excellent, only 2% are very good, 9% are good, 20% are average, and 69% are weak in writing skill, which indicates that most of the students are weak in writing skill.

Below is the graphical representation of the grades of the students' knowledge in grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skill.

Figure 4.5  Students' knowledge in grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skill
Source: A diagnostic English test papers for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012
Figure 4.5 shows that only 4% of the students are excellent, 11% are very good, 20% are good, 22% are average, and 43% are weak in grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skill in total. The responses indicate that the ability of the majority of the students lies between average and weak in grammar, reading comprehension, and writing skill, which is a major concern and should be addressed.

4.3. Analysis of the students' errors in their writing samples

Students' writing samples are analyzed on the basis of the measures displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Scale of writing assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback log</th>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>spl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Pun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject/verb agreement</td>
<td>agr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>WC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular/Plural</td>
<td>S/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing word</td>
<td>MW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerund or Infinitive Use</td>
<td>G/I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>cap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular/plural</td>
<td>S/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor sentence/structure (str) and paragraph structure</td>
<td>str</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not needed</td>
<td>NN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>WO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Duncan: 2013, 137

Writing error pattern analysis

---

1 Duncan, Anne. *ESL 388W: Academic writing for international graduate students.* (Copy service: The University of Texas at Austin, 2013), 137.

2 "Writing error pattern analysis" *Teaching @CSU.*
Five samples of the students’ writing are displayed below in order to show Madrasa they wrote at the Senior Secondary level and what their weaknesses are, and what their proficiency level is.

Image 4.1  Writing sample 1
Source: A sample of diagnostic English test paper for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012

Image 4.2  Writing sample 2
Image 4.3  Writing sample 3
Source: A sample of diagnostic English test paper for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012

Image 4.4  Writing sample 4
Source: A sample of diagnostic English test paper for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012
Image 4.5 Writing sample 5
Source: A sample of diagnostic English test paper for students at select Madrasas of India, 2012

Having assessed and analyzed all the above writing samples of the students, it is concluded that Madrasa students are quite weak in composing a piece of writing. Their areas of weaknesses are related to punctuation, capitalization, grammar, verb forms, articles, preposition, singular/plural, subject and verb agreement, using right words, phrases and expressions, using gerund/infinitive, forming and ordering the words in a sentence, and organizing their thoughts into a coherent paragraph. Their writing paragraphs also lack good content.

Some very frequent errors such as capitalization, subject/verb agreement, capitalization, articles correct use of common verbs and words like study in place of read and so on can easily be solved if the teachers take these into consideration and start working on these. Furthermore, to overcome the problem of incoherent writing paragraphs, teachers should first tell students how
to place words into a sentence accordingly, and then to form sentences into a whole organized paragraph, bringing unity and coherence in them.

An important observation, while interacting with students after conducting and assessing some of the writing samples of the diagnostic English test paper collected there, shows that when students were asked to speak in their native language on the same topics given in the test paper, they appeared to be comfortable and fluent in their ideas. This indicates that students do not have problem of the content, rather they are unable to express their ideas in their writing because of the poor knowledge of English, which affects their interest.

In conclusion, the chapter analyzes the sample test papers collected from select Madrasas, which are not found up to the mark with compared to any standard test paper at the senior secondary level. The test papers covered 34% reading comprehension, 28% vocabulary, 20% grammar, 10% writing skill, and 8% translation based questions, with great emphasis on reading, vocabulary and with less focus on writing skill, which is very much required for the improvement of the students' ability in English as they need to communicate through writing and speaking.

Moreover, according to the evaluation of the diagnostic test papers of almost three hundred students, it was found that the majority of them are weak in English. Additionally, students' sample writings indicate that some of their errors are frequent and common, which can be easily remedied if the teachers take a serious note. It is their responsibility to analyze students' writing on the basis of the given scale of writing assessment and work on their problems step by step with the aim of enabling their students to communicate with ease.

References:
Duncan, Anne. ESL 388W- Academic writing for international graduate students. Copy service: The University of Texas at Austin. 2013.
“Writing error pattern analysis.” Published on Teaching @CSU. Accessed June 27, 2015.
URL: http://teaching.colostate.edu/guides/erroranalysis/