ABSTRACT

The General English curriculum at the undergraduate level has undergone very few changes for several decades in India except by way of changing a few texts (essays and poems). The ad hoc character of these selections and their unrelatedness to the general curricular framework do not seem to have caused much concern among the teachers in general and the editors of such texts/anthologies. While teaching is increasingly becoming student-centred now, an awareness of students' wants and needs can go a long way in helping in the selection of materials in a context where students study English as a compulsory second language. It is in this background that the present study has made an attempt at designing study materials for intensive reading based on an awareness of the needs and wants of students for whom the materials are meant.

Chapter I of the thesis outlines the circumstances that have prompted the study and prepares the ground for the researcher's hypothesis. It is hypothesised that reading materials that are culturally appropriate to the contemporary Indian context and conceptually accessible to the students not only further the students' motivation to anchor their attention in the material but also ease out their tension and anxiety in the classroom, as a result, their skills of comprehending the material are pleasantly and profitably developed in the classroom by the teacher who is pressurized for various reasons to 'cover the portions in time'.

Chapter II initiates a discussion about the place of a textbook which is the central string around which the whole teaching-learning process is woven. Secondly, there is an analysis of about 55 textbooks prescribed for intensive study in various universities of India over the past three decades. Finally, it spells out the criteria for the selection of intensive reading materials to be field-tested by the researcher.
Chapter III deals with a survey conducted to assess the views of the students on their wants and needs. It begins by highlighting the importance of needs analysis and then reports on a survey undertaken by the researcher through a questionnaire with a sample of about 200 undergraduate students who had completed their first-year language programme. Finally, it brings out the findings of the survey.

Chapter IV first explains the basis for the selection and the nature of material selected for field-testing. Secondly, it describes the actual experiment conducted by the researcher using a few reading texts in five colleges with about 250 students. Finally, it analyses the responses of the students.

Chapter V summarises the major aspects of the study, reports the main findings, and offers a few suggestions. The present study indicates a shift away from overdependence on canonical pieces by established writers towards choosing texts within the reach of the students for whom these materials are meant. After all, the learner should read the text, not the teacher, without too much of mediation by the teacher. In addition to ensuring that the topics dealt with in the passages for intensive reading would appeal to the students, we should select texts that would make the students comprehend them and inspire them to read for themselves. The importance of this principle seems to have been borne out by the present study.