Chapter - 1

Introduction
1.1 The Background of the project:

1.1.0 Introduction:

The most significant need in today’s education is the reform of the examination system around which the whole teaching programme is geared up. Education commissions and committees, appointed by the Government of India from time to time, have made many recommendations for improving the examination system both at school and college levels. The University Education Commission, 1948, under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, declared, “If we are to suggest one single reform in university education, it should be that of examination.” The Secondary Education Commission, 1952, under the chairmanship of Dr. A.L. Mudaliar, recommended a thorough change in the structures of both internal and external examinations. Thus, examination reform has been a long recognised but utterly neglected aspect of present day education. Cramming and cheating has grown rampant leading to widespread indiscipline. Examination outcomes are also largely unreliable as sincere and hardworking students often complain of under-scoring. Such ills plaguing our examination system need to be weeded out. All the more, examinations in English with essay type questions have largely become subjective encouraging only cramming and cheating. The few objective and short answer type questions do hardly matter and fall far short of the actual need in providing a suitable substitute. Unreliable examination scoring seems to be one of the
reasons of the poor achievements of our students and indirectly, the poor state of English in the State.

This project, therefore, aims at working out a suitable model of testing strategy through question techniques in English at the +2 examinations in the state of Orissa. However, if found suitable it could be extended to other disciplines and other classes too.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to deal mainly with reforms, changes and innovations brought about in the area of 'external examination' at the Higher Secondary stage. The ELT situation in India is briefly discussed, and the syllabus and the evaluation procedures at the +2 level in the state are critically examined to formulate the hypotheses for the project.

1.1.1 Examination Reforms – Its need and historicity:

Examination system has been a legacy of the British rule in our country. Evaluation did exist in the earlier Vedic periods in different forms when the disciples were informally tested by their Gurus in different ways. But the present system owes its origin to the system of education and evaluation brought to our country by the British.

The Early Years:

i) The history of external examination in India is over a hundred years old. Its beginning may be traced to the establishment of the three Universities of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta in 1857 as a consequence of Wood's Despatch and after the battle of independence in 1857 was lost by the Indians. These Universities were modelled on the line of 19th Century
British Universities and had therefore not developed their own examination system. The universities also conducted Matriculation Examination known as the entrance examination. An Intermediate Examination was conducted at the end of two years.

ii) For the first time a Calcutta principal raised his voice against the examination system in 1871 for reducing students to "Mere machines of memory" and "for making education synonymous with cramming of large amounts of knowledge" (Gupta 1975: 1).

iii) The Indian Education Commission report (1881-82) was the first to critically examine the evils in the exam. system. Both Lord Curzon, in the early years of the 20th Century and the first Indian University Commission, the Hunter Commission in 1902 expressed dissatisfaction with the prevalent examination system in the colleges and universities. They suggested changes in the objectives and methodology of examination. The commission observed that teaching was subordinated to examination and not examination to teaching.

Matriculation Examination also became flawed over the years and in the words of Singha (AIU), "It was thought desirable to delink Matriculation Examination from the universities so as to give the Secondary stage the status of a terminal stage, in addition to being preparatory for the university stage".

iv) The Calcutta University Grants Commission of 1917–19 recommended the establishment of Boards of Secondary Education in order to put an end to the dominating attitude of universities in school education.
Intermediate classes of two years' duration to serve as a kind of buffer between school education and universities were introduced. This commission also expressed dissatisfaction about the existing examination system and some of the shortcomings observed were concerned with.

(a) alternative questions in papers.

(b) mechanical system of marking

(c) grace marks and adhoc moderation procedures

(d) frequency of examinations.

v) In 1920 the Hartog Committee report criticised the academic nature and bias of the examinations at the school level that continued to be governed by the needs for entry to universities.

vi) In 1921-22 all administrative responsibilities for education at all levels were transferred from the British authorities to the Indian Ministers. Provincial autonomy was granted in 1935. The report of the Central Advisory Board for post-war educational development, formally known as Sargent Plan (1944) also criticised the High School examination serving as the entrance to university. Hardly any steps were taken to remove the flaws in the examination system pointed out by the Calcutta University Commission. Sri D.N. Mukherjee, Chairman of the Examination Section, All Indian Education Conference, 1944 said: "The Conclusion is irresistible that education in India, dominated by external control and tutelage in the form of a fragmentary and unscientific examination has resulted in the perpetuations of mediocrity and
retardation of genius, facts which are necessary concomitants, if not inevitable consequences of the prevailing system”.

II. The Post Independence Scenario:

i) The Independence in 1947 brought in optimism among the educationists. The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948) was highly critical of the existing examination system and made many recommendations concerning teachers, teaching, learning and administration. In the same year 1948, the United Provinces (now U.P. & Uttaranchal) Government constituted a committee on the re-organisation of Primary and Secondary Education. The Central Provinces & Bihar also appointed a committee for the same purpose. Both these committees deliberated on the problems of examinations and they suggested immediate reform procedures. In U.P. a Secondary Education Re-organisation Committee was appointed which, for the first time, suggested that external examinations might be replaced by an assessment made by the teacher and that continuous assessment could be the main basis for the final assessment of a student.

ii) In the year 1952, a Secondary Education Commission, popularly known as the Mudaliar Commission, gave some specific recommendations in regard to Examination Reform.

(1) The element of subjectivity in essay type examination should be minimized by introducing objective type questions. At the same time the number of external examinations should be reduced.
(2) Due credit must be given to school records and in-school or internal examinations in the final assessment.

(3) In external and internal written examinations and also in the school records, a system of letter-grading rather than numerical marking should be adopted.

The commission observed: "The examinations today dictate the curriculum instead of following it, prevent any experimentations, hamper the proper treatment of subjects and sound methods of teaching, foster a dull uniformity rather than originality, encourage the average pupil to concentrate too rigidly upon too narrow a field and thus help him to develop wrong values in education. Pupils assess education in terms of success in examinations. In short, external examinations are exercising a restricting influence over the entire field of education to such an extent as almost to nullify its real purpose".

The Government of India, taking cue from the Mudalilar Commission Report, established an All India Council for Secondary Education (AICSE) whose main function was to advise the Government of India and State Governments on the manner in which these recommendations could be implemented effectively. The Council circulated a questionnaire to a large number of educational agencies and eminent educationists, to find out from their responses, priority areas and accordingly, to develop a Plan of Action. The priority areas identified were:
(a) Examination Reform.

(b) Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education.

(c) Methodology and Equipment for Science Teaching.

(d) Organising & Administering Multipurpose Schools.

As the foremost priority area was identified as examination Reform, the Bhopal Seminar on Examination Reform was organized in Feb. 1956. Certain valuable suggestions for the improvement in the Examination system were made at the seminar. One significant recommendation was to create an expert body called the Central Examination Unit to work exclusively in this area. The S.R. Dongerkery Committee appointed by the University Grants Commission in September, 1957, recommended means to improve the academic and technical aspects of examinations. The University Grants Commission invited Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom, Head Examiner of the University of Chicago to advise the Commission to prepare an agenda to reform the examination system in the Indian Universities. Dr. Bloom (1958) prepared a ten-year phased programme of examination reform which was subsequently approved by the Central Ministry of Education. His recommendations were:

(a) Although the Boards and Universities show considerable interest in examination reform, most teachers lack proficiency in formulation of course objectives and need guidance for framing questions for both external and internal examinations.
(b) The essay type questions do not always test what is expected of a student. This leads to guess work. Therefore, teachers should be made familiar with the nature, purpose, scope, value and limitations of evaluation techniques.

(c) The present system of examination is not reliable because students' fate hangs solely in the hands of the examiner. Little attempt has been made to assess how effectively an examination measures students' achievements.

(d) There is lack of communication between teachers of schools and colleges and administrators of Boards and Universities.

(e) To improve essay examination, examiners should meet, discuss and evaluate scripts together.

(f) One examination at the end of two or three years can not properly assess the students' abilities, Credit should be given for internal assessments and class tests.

(g) Importance given to external examinations makes teachers and students slaves to rigid conformity, and

(h) An all India Evaluation unit should be formed to guide and control the evaluation system in the Boards and Universities.

As a first major step, the Central Evaluation Unit (CEU) within the AICSE was established in 1958. This unit, consisting of trained evaluation officers, conducted a number of training programmes through
workshops, seminars and courses all over the country. It established contacts with the Secondary School teachers of the different parts of the country and oriented them to the new concepts and techniques of evaluation. Lecturers of Training colleges and paper setters were also trained. State Evaluation Units were established in different states to carry on the work of examination reform. After the establishment of the National Council for Educational Research and Training in 1961, the CEU became a part of it.

iii) The Kothari Commission (1964–66), was constituted to study the problems in the field of Education in general and Examination Reform in particular. They remarked: "In the present system, when the future of the students is totally decided by one external examination at the end of the year, they (students) pay minimum attention to the teachers, do little independent study through most of the academic year and cram accurately for the final examination. The crippling effect of external examinations on the quality of work on higher education is so great that examination reform has become crucial to all progress." And they had the following suggestions.

(1) The Commission suggested a new approach to the whole concept of evaluation. It strongly argued the need to improve written examinations with a view to making them valid and reliable measures of educational achievement at all levels. The commission drew the attention of everyone to the techniques to be devised for measuring those important abilities and skills that written examination could not measure.
(2) The commission observed that paper setters must be trained to raise their level of technical competence to improve external examinations. Steps suggested were:

(a) Question papers must contain questions testing objectives rather than simple acquisition of knowledge.

(b) Improving quality of questions.

(c) Adopting rational and scientific scoring procedures.

(d) Mechanising the processing of results.

(3) Every candidate must be permitted to sit again for the entire examination or for separate subjects to improve his/her performance.

(4) Regarding restructuring Secondary Schools, the Committee said that

(a) Secondary schools should be of two types: High Schools providing a ten year course and Higher Secondary Schools providing a course of 11 to 12 years.

(b) Attempts to upgrade every secondary school to the higher secondary stage should be abandoned. Only the bigger and more efficient schools, about one fourth of the total number, should be upgraded. The status of the existing higher secondary schools should be reviewed from this point of view and if necessary, those that do not deserve
the higher secondary status should be downgraded.

(c) A new higher secondary course beginning in class XI, should be instituted. Classes XI and XII (and during the transitional period class XI only) should provide specialized studies in different subjects. Where, however, existing higher secondary schools, with integrated course in classes IX, X and XI ran satisfactorily, the arrangement could continue until class XII was added.

(5) Regarding transfer of Pre-University courses, the Commission noted that

(a) The Pre – University course should be transferred from the Universities and affiliated colleges to secondary schools by 1975 – 76 and the duration of the course should be lengthened to two years by 1985 – 86.

(b) The U.G.C should be responsible for effecting the transfer of all Pre – University or Intermediate work from the Universities and affiliated colleges to schools.

(c) Simultaneously Higher Secondary classes should be started in selected schools by state Education Departments as self contained Units, and assisted with adequate recurring grants.
(d) Boards of Secondary Education should be re-constituted to accept the responsibility of the higher secondary stage also.

(6) Advocating lengthening the duration of the Higher Secondary Stage, the Commission suggested:

(a) In the fourth plan, efforts should be made for securing a better utilization of existing facilities, for making the necessary preparation for implementing the programme and for lengthening the duration of the course in a few selected institutions, as pilot projects.

(b) The programme of lengthening the duration of the higher secondary stage should begin in the fifth plan and be completed by the end of the seventh plan.

iv) In 1969, the UGC set up another committee on Examination Reform in Central Universities, which came up with concrete measures to improve the nature of Examinations and the sessional work. In May 1969, student representatives from more than 80 Universities were invited to a three-day conference convened jointly by the Union Ministry of Education and the UGC. This happened to be the first instance when students' participation was also elicited for improving examinations.

v) In the Madurai session (1970), the Inter-University Board of India and Ceylon remarked: "Proposals for improving the system of examination are made very often ... In this ideal day, when some of
these proposals can be implemented, amounts to not doing anything. It is, therefore, proposed that steps ought to be taken to streamline and improve the working of the existing modes of examinations. However imperfect these might be, for the next decade or so at least, we have to live with them. So the only practical thing that can be done in respect of the examination system is to identify its weaknesses and make its functioning more efficient”.

The next phase of examination reform started in pursuance of the decisions of the Madurai Session. In 1971, the Inter-University Board of India and Ceylon organised a seminar of the University and College Experts and published a report in which vital aspects and issues with regard to examination reform were discussed. A meeting of the Vice-Chancellors was organised in October 1971 to make an in-depth analysis of the suggestions made by the experts. In 1972, a report was prepared by the committee on examination, formed by the Advisory Board of Education. It suggested means to improve the examination system at the school and other stages. In 1973, the University Grants Commission brought out a brochure “Examination Reform: A Plan of Action”, which pointed out some major defects of the examination system and suggested procedures of reform. It highlighted reasons for the slow progress in reforms in the examination system as follows:

(a) Lack of awareness of the defects

(b) Lack of will to change.
(c) Lack of courage to introduce drastic changes, and

(d) Lack of resources and administrative support.

vi) A.B.L. Srivastava (1971) also gave some valid suggestions to improve examinations, viz.

(a) Use of short answer type questions

(b) Setting questions from question banks

(c) Distribution of answer books among examiners.

(d) Scaling of marks and

(e) Internal versus External assessment.

vii) The main purpose of examination as envisaged by the Education Commission (1964-66) and realised in the National Policy on Education (1986) is to help determine and gradually raise standards of attainment. As such, it should be construed as a powerful instrument for improving the quality of education in general and that of teaching-learning in particular. In order to streamline the evaluation at the school level and to reduce the predominance of external examinations, the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the programme of Action (POA), 1992 suggested the introduction of “Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) that incorporates both scholastic and non-scholastic aspects of education, spread over the total span of the instructional time”. It is also a fact that the attainment levels for passing a particular examination have been set in the range of 33% to 40% marks. There is hardly
any opportunity in the External Examination System to make good the deficiency in the required attainment levels. Development of mastery levels amongst learners has been emphasised in the National Curriculum Framework, 1988.

The Education Commission (1964 – 66) stressed the need to define National Standards at three levels, namely, at the end of the primary stage (Class VIII), end of Lower Secondary stage (Class X), and end of Higher Secondary stage (Class XII). National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, also reiterated the same by stating that Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) should be identified for all stages of Education. Identification of such standards, thus, becomes the starting point of educational endeavour. Minimum Levels of Learning could eventually be stated in terms of certain competencies encompassing knowledge, concepts, skills and personal qualities such as interests, attitudes, appreciation and values. These standards are required to be achieved by everyone at the mastery level.

Educational Testing Service (ETS):

Establishment of Educational Testing Service (ETS) as per the recommendations of NPE, 1986 was considered an important aspect of educational measurement and evaluation in the country. It could not be implemented although it was significantly mentioned in the “National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education Framework” (1988). It would have technically assisted the school administration to compare the achievement levels of different institutions and to provide academic inputs to schools.
for introduction of more innovative internal assessment procedures. However, CIEFL, Hyderabad has recently established The National English Language Testing Service (NELTS) in its efforts to raise the standards of English in the Country.

III. The latest Development

The NCERT in its discussion document (Jan 2000: 88) subscribed to this view and said: "With a view to providing realistic assessment, evaluation has to be regularly done by employing a multiplicity of techniques covering all aspects of all-round development of learners’ growth. Evaluation should provide for alternate proceeding to cater to the needs of children with special needs. As it has to be carried out through out the teaching-learning process, it should be undertaken in a manner that neither creates burden on children nor becomes taxing to the teacher. Evaluation has to be a regular feature of classroom teaching/learning for which informal ways will have to be adopted by teachers. ... Teachers may be given orientation on the lines of SOPT (Special Orientation of Primary Teachers) where practical training may be provided in the nitty-gritty of evaluation techniques, their use and applications." And they raised the following questions.

1. Should there be examinations / evaluation at all?

2. How much and up to which stage should there be school-based evaluation and at which stage public examination should exist?

3. Could we think of a combination of both school-based and public examination system?
4. Should there be grading or marks system? Which area suits most for grading system?

5. How to empower teachers to exercise constraint and to be judicious?

6. How to ensure reliability and validity in such evaluations?

7. How can semester system be introduced at +2 level?

In a recent development, the CBSE has announced the scheme of assigning grades in place of marks at class X examination, which is a welcome development.

Thus, the Indian system has been dominated by external examinations. Efforts have been made to reform the same. Various experiments have been tried but with little success. None other than the person who teaches the students can do the best evaluation.

1.1.2 **English in India — A brief survey:**

The Education Commission, 1966 observed: "The introduction of the regional languages as the media of education should not be interpreted to mean underrating the importance of English at the University. For a successful completion of the first degree course, a student should possess an adequate command over English, be able to express himself in it with reasonable ease and felicity, understand lectures in it and avail himself of its literature. Therefore, adequate emphasis will have to be laid on its study as a language right from the school stage. English should be the most useful 'Library Language' in higher
education and our most significant window on the world".

The above extract sets the tone of the goal for the teaching of English in India. There is, of course, no denying the fact that English in India has been caught in a ceaseless flux as the country has been undergoing constant change. One aspect of English in the Post-independent India could be the sphere of applied literature, of scientific writing, encyclopaedia and lexicon. But the justification for making students learn English today is that it is a language with many practical uses and benefits. It creates opportunities to achieve higher socio-economic status and improved quality of life. The study of English literature is of secondary importance, relevant only to those few who may wish to undertake it as a specialized discipline.

In a large country like India with regional languages that have a great literary tradition, there has always been a need for a 'lingua franca', an official language for inter-provincial use. Though Hindi has got the official status of the natural language, English cannot be displaced in a day. In the speech delivered in New Delhi on 23 July 1961, the then Prime Minister is reported to have referred to the demand for introducing Punjabi in the state's High Court and said that, "if the work of the various High Courts in the country was carried out in their respective regional languages, it might create problems for the supreme court."

The chief Ministers' Conference, held in Delhi in August 1961, considered the questions of language in its various aspects from the point of view of national
integration. The Prime Minister presided over the conference. The question, medium of University education, was discussed at length. It was observed: ‘The tendency of regional languages to become the media of University education, though desirable in many ways, may well lead to the isolation of such universities from the rest of India unless there is a link in the shape of an All India language …… such a common link can only be Hindi or English. Ultimately it will have to be Hindi... Till such times as this happens, English may be continued... In any event, the standard of teaching both in Hindi and English should be improved and maintained at a high level in schools and colleges’.

A number of committees and study Groups have in recent times given anxious thought to the place of English in our system of education. The teaching of this language at various stages, its role in schools and at the universities, its share in the timetables, and its contribution to the teaching of other subjects form the part of a problem which has become increasingly important as well as controversial with the passage of time. Most of the problems were reviewed by the Study Group appointed by the Ministry of Education in 1964. It made a number of recommendations on policies and programmes, syllabuses, methods and materials. The group tried to find out the reasons for the non-implementation of some of the major recommendations of the previous committees and specialist bodies. It also stated the new needs for which programmes and methods are to be worked out. The group recommended three different but related demands that have to be met
in framing the programmes for the future of English Teaching in this country. These were:

(a) The changing conditions and the need to answer the problems created thereby.

(b) The role of English as a 'Source' language; and

(c) The place of English as a "link" with the outside world for the acquisition of new knowledge.

1.1.3. English in India: Aims and Objectives:

"It is well to remember that the object of English teaching in India is not to produce a Winston Churchill or a J.Krishnamurthy, but to equip generations of young men and women to transact their professional life which is predominantly English Speaking", wrote a reader in the Hindu, June 10, 1982. On one occasion, Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, stressing the need for English observed, "It is absolutely clear to me and it is not an arguable matter, that the scientific and technological training has to be given in English. It is absolutely necessary."

English will continue to be the language of trade, commerce and industry in the country for many years to come. It will also remain the language of administration at higher level. Hindi has yet to replace English suitably as the language of competitive examinations. Knowledge of English is necessary to acquire modern scientific and technological terminology. English keeps us updated with the latest thoughts in Europe in every field of life.

There was a time when some people believed that in the post 1947 India, English will slowly and
gradually lose its relevance. Time has proved this view to be myopic. Only we have come to define its role more precisely as an auxiliary language, a tool to acquire scientific, technical and other kinds of knowledge. This accounts for the development of different kinds of ESP (English for Special Purposes). With this, we have normally felt the need of a shift from a purely grammatical to a communicative approach to language teaching.

As we have inherited a predominantly literary tradition of learning English, we fail to appreciate the notion of teaching Functional English. Students have no interest in going through books in English. Even the prescribed textbooks are not read by most of the students. They depend on bazaar notes to pass the examination. This is because they face great difficulty in comprehending standard writing in English. Their expression in English is even poorer than their comprehension. English as a medium of examination has in fact failed, for there seems to be as many kinds of English as there are candidates sitting for an examination. This has necessitated a revision of our aims in teaching English.

The conventional syllabus on grammar laid stress on the form and structure rather than on the meaning and use. Learning to form grammatically correct sentences was more important from this point of view than composing and developing a discourse and manipulating sentences and grammatical/lexical forms. This emphasis on form and structure remained the central preoccupation not only with Bloomfield but also in Chomskian Linguistics, not withstanding
Chomsky's all important and far-reaching distinction between 'competence' and 'performance'. In the implementation of the grammatical syllabus the teacher and the text were more important than the learner and his needs.

As a reaction to the inadequacies of the grammatical syllabus, several new syllabi – notably the situational syllabus and the notional syllabus – were proposed, all stressing the communicative role of language. The basic premise of the Communicative-Oriented Language Teaching (COLT) is that the needs of the learners should determine syllabus designing, choice of teaching materials and methodology of teaching, and the goal should be to develop adequate communicative competence among the learners. We should be concerned more with fluency than with accuracy, with the rhetorical function of language than with its grammatical appropriateness.

1.2. **English at the Higher - Secondary Level in Orissa.**

1.2.1 **The Syllabus:**

   English is a compulsory subject and the course lasts for two years. This study has taken into account two syllabuses prescribed by the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), Orissa.

   i) Syllabus for 2000 Final Examination for both Arts and Science streams (See Appendix -V)

   ii) The revised communicative syllabus prescribed for 2002 Final Exam. and onwards (See Appendix - VI)
i. The first syllabus states its objectives as follows:

The course is aimed at introducing the students to a broader aspect of English Language and Literature. It is presumed that the students at the school level have relatively a limited level of attainment in English language and are not exposed to varieties of English. "The aim of this course is, therefore, two-fold: remediation of certain areas of grammar and consolidation of grammar items and English language skills, which they have already acquired. It is further aimed at acquainting them with the finer aspects of English literature." (CHSE, Orissa 2001)

ii. The following are the objectives of the revised syllabus, 2002:

The English syllabus has been designed to suit the academic, vocational and social needs of learners at the higher secondary level. It is expected that after the completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Pursue degree courses in the science and humanities, commerce, agriculture etc.

2. Study professional courses in medicine, engineering, accountancy etc.

3. Join the World of Work.

It is assumed that there are few variations with regard to these language skills required by students in the Arts, Science and Commerce Streams. Therefore, a common syllabus has been designed to meet the needs of learners in all the streams. By the end of the Higher Secondary Course, learners will be expected to acquire the language skills specified below:
A. READING

Learners should be able to

1. Read authentic, expository, argumentative and narrative texts, demonstrating factual, inferential and evaluative comprehension.

2. Recognise the structure and organization of a text, i.e. how a text lends itself to division into logical or rhetorical "chunks" and how these chunks are related to each other and contribute to the meaning of the whole text.

3. Identify the main points and the subordinate points in the text and the logical and rhetorical relationship between them.

4. Identify the cohesive devices employed to establish links between different parts of the text.

5. Guess the meanings of unfamiliar lexical items using contextual clues.

6. Consult a dictionary to obtain information on the meaning and use of lexical items used in texts.

7. Convert the verbal information contained in a text into non-verbal representations and vice-versa.

B. WRITING

Students should be able to

1. Express themselves in clear and grammatical English, using appropriate punctuation and cohesive devices.
2. Write in a style appropriate to a given communicative purpose.

3. Plan, organise and present ideas coherently in paragraph forms.

4. Describe objects, people and places, habits and customs, processes and events.

5. Identify and establish logical relationship: cause effect, problem solution, comparison/contrast; identify and describe a trend etc.

6. Compose essays ...

7. Write formal and informal letters for various social and business purposes:

8. Prepare 'reports'

9. Produce 'notes' from articles and books.

10. Prepare 'summaries' and 'abstracts' of different types of texts.

11. Convert information from one text-type to another.

12. Convert information from diagrammatic to verbal form.

13. Compose telegrams, notices, slogans, headlines, advertisements etc. in appropriate language.

C. LISTENING:

Students should be able to
1. Listen to and comprehend talks, oral presentations, reports etc. identifying the topic and main points.

2. Listen to and understand instructions, advice, requests, warning etc.

3. Understand and interpret natural spoken discourse in real life situations.

4. Retrieve the information required for a specific purpose from broadcasts, commentaries, announcements, talks etc.

5. Identify cohesive devices, key words etc.

D. SPEAKING

Students should be able to

1. Take part in spontaneous conversation of familiar topics in real life situations.

2. Respond to queries, requests, warnings, advice, instructions etc.

3. Present oral reports on incidents, events, processes, planned activities etc.

4. Take part in-group discussion, showing his ability to take turns in using language appropriate to different communicative purposes.

5. Narrate familiar events and incidents and express personal feelings and attitudes.
GRAMMAR:
The areas of grammar to be covered are the following:

i) Articles and determiners

ii) Tense, aspect and modality

iii) Auxiliary verbs

iv) Verb patterns, including non-finite forms

v) Prepositions

vi) The Passive

vii) Conditionals

viii) Imperatives

ix) The direct and reported speech

TRANSLATION:
Since translation is recognised as a useful device for second-language learning, apart from being an important skill in its own right, the examination will include a question requiring translation from an Indian language to English. However, translation, like grammar, should be taught and tested in meaningful contexts and not through isolated sentences.

The objectives stated in the revised syllabus are elaborate and have taken care of addressing the shortcomings of the old syllabus. But a thorough analysis of the course structures of both the syllabuses as well as the suggested question patterns betray the much-hyped agenda for reform. There is one anthology for prose and poetry instead of two graded anthologies, for "intensive reading" (detailed study). In the old
syllabus, three non-detailed texts have been prescribed for “Extensive Readings”

i) A collection of short stories or a retold novel.

ii) An anthology of biographies / autobiographies and

iii) An anthology of one act plays or a retold play

In the new syllabus, one book comprises all the three categories of texts for extensive reading. Some more items of writing, as stated in the objectives, have been incorporated for learning steps to writing. The approach in the new syllabus with regard to grammar and usage is by and large the same as in the old syllabus. The Council under the supervision of a textbook committee prescribes the textbooks. The new Govt. circular (effective from July 2001) has abolished tutorial classes at the +2 level. There are four periods a week (general classes) and one consultation class, each class comprising a maximum number of 128 students and with duration of 45 minutes. The consultation class has virtually turned out to be another general lecture class as it is practically not feasible to have fruitful discussion or counselling with such a huge number of students. In the ‘Introduction’ to the new textbook, the editors have discussed not only the content and objectives but also tried to suggest classroom activities and methods of teaching. The suggestions are ludicrous and impracticable. For example, they have recommended to split the class into groups of 5/6 students each, select a leader for each group and the teacher to guide them in reading, discussing and writing. In my opinion, all will agree
that a single teacher cannot guide and monitor some twenty odd groups in their multiple activities in a span of forty-five minutes.

1.2.2. The Examination System:

There is no provision for regular tests or assignments and any system of continuous assessment. The students need to take a mid-term and an annual class promotion test at the end of the first year and another mid-term examination before they are qualified to sit for the final examination. The final examination, to be conducted at the end of the second year of the course, consists of two written papers designed to test mainly the skills of reading and writing as well as grammar and translation (CHSE 2003:7). Since the final examination is conducted ‘officially, and a large body of ‘examiners’ evaluate the answer scripts, it happens to be the only occasion of evaluating students’ achievement in English.

The general pattern of the question papers at the +2 level (old and new) is basically identical in terms of objectives. The difference is mainly in terms of the testing points, the specific areas of testing and the allotment of marks. The final examination is the major passport for the students to enter into the degree classes. The examination is largely based on the texts, as prescribed in the syllabus. Altogether, a paper comprises a maximum of one hundred marks, out of which conventionally a score of thirty is considered pass marks.

The division of 100 marks among the three objectives, viz, knowledge, comprehension and expression, involves the presumption that while
"Knowledge" refers to the knowledge of facts as contained in the text book, "comprehension" refers to certain specific contextual details in the passages, familiarity with and close-reading of these passages. "Expression" refers to free or guided composition, geared to test the student's capacity for independent expression (e.g. Letter writing, paragraph construction, completion of a story etc). Grammar forms a part of the last category of the objectives mentioned above. The duration of the paper is three hours. Although all the major categories have to be compulsorily answered by the student, there are many, 'internal choices.'

1.2.3. The evaluation procedure:

The answer scripts are evaluated by a body of examiners appointed by the council, who are given an idea (Scheme of evaluation) of the expected answers before they start their evaluation work. Except in the case of evaluating the items on grammar and objective type questions, it is predominantly subjective. The examiners are teachers drawn from various institutions, who have put in a minimum of three years of teaching experience, and are expected to have a thorough knowledge of the subject.

Evaluation is done on a large scale in a centralised locale (Valuation Zone). Each script is individually valued, scrutinized and is finally cleared by the Chief Examiner.

1.3. The present system of examination - a critique:

Certain observations may be made about the present system in the light of various "reforms" that
have been expounded. The system appears close-knit but has an appallingly large number of loopholes in it.

1) The traditional "essay-type" examination involves a few questions, to each of which the students give long answers, which are judged by an expert examiner. Research over the past many years has repeatedly shown the unsatisfactory nature of such examinations. The research done in India by Harper and Misra (1983) produced results similar to those of comparable research in other countries. H.J. Taylor (1966), former Vice-Chancellor of Gauhati University, in discussing the wide variation among examiners and therefore, the unreliability of their marks, awarded says that, "All available evidence goes to show that we have here an intrinsic feature of essay-type examination marking ............... The differences are inherent in the situation and we cannot ignore them; and they are so large that they invalidate the whole result of the examination. (Quoted in, Harper and Harper 1992)

2. Again, the traditional examination is dominated by uncontrolled and uncontrollable chance factors (Harper 1992). If the candidate has concentrated his study on the right parts of the course, he succeeds. Hence the "guess questions" in the bazaar, are very much in demand.

3. The tradition of allowing a choice of questions introduces another chance factor. A.K. Gayen's (1961) studies in West Bengal have shown that just by the chance factor of what questions an examinee selects his marks may vary widely.
4. As several examiners are engaged in evaluation, the chance factor is even greater. H.J. Taylor (1966) concluded from his research: "To which examiner a particular script goes is entirely a matter of chance. Even a good candidate may fail if he is unlucky in this respect, since there are examiners who fail as many as 98% of their candidates. Conversely, a very poor candidate may pass if his script goes to an examiner who passes nearly everybody. ... It is clear that the element of chance dominates the whole situation".

5. The essay type examination is subject to bluffing. The student who knows very little, but is skilled and imaginative at writing, can pretend to know much more than he does. A skilled examiner, only if he has time for very careful reading, can detect this. It is, at times, difficult to know whether it is glib reproduction of memorized answers or the candidate has really understood and written.

6. The "defects of question papers," are open to even harder criticisms.

"The most frequent criticism of the questions is that they concentrate so heavily on testing the ability of students to reproduce memorized information... Another criticism is that the question paper for any subject covers only a small part of the subject... A third criticism of the current examination is that very often the questions are not clearly stated ... Even when examiners are thoroughly competent and conscientious, it remains true that their judgements differ widely as they assess the quality of answers to essay type questions... All these criticisms amount to a charge that the examinations are not valid and reliable instruments..."
for measuring the educational achievements of students". (Hill 1972:6)

Examinations have a great influence on the process of teaching and learning. The impact of examinations on classroom teaching and learning process which we may call their educational value, is even more important than their measurement value.

Indian educators have spoken frequently of the "baneful effect" of examinations on the process of education. Some of the effects are readily apparent. Because the examinations usually test on memorised information, our teaching tends to be confined to lecturing, spoon feeding of students, which they should acquire. But the students do not seem to be much interested in systematic study during the college years. They prefer intensive cramming and cheating. Soon after the examination, they quickly forget what they might have learned. It has little value for them, except as preparation for the examinations.

Because of the meagre coverage of the topics in the question paper, students do not need to cover the whole syllabus and so they study selectively. With the customary choice of questions, it is quite possible, not only to pass the examinations, but also to get maximum marks, by mastering a relatively small portion of the syllabus.

Because of variations in the judgements of examiners, of which students are at least partially aware, they know there is an element of luck in scoring marks. When students regard the examination as a gamble, and when so much depends on the outcome,
they are tempted to have resort to foul means to secure favourable results (Hill 1972).

7. Traditional essay-type questions are extremely inadequate measurements. The essay-type examination is often as much a test of stamina as of anything else. Often, only a small fraction of the examinees' time is actually spent in thinking and most of it just in writing (Harper & Harper 1992).

8. Traditional essay-type examinations are undemocratic (Harper & Harper 1992).

The student from a wealthy upper-class urban family from an English Medium School uses correct language because that is all he has ever used while for the lower-class student from the village vernacular school, learning to write even his "mother tongue" correctly, is a constant struggle.

9. The conventional classification of objectives into "knowledge, comprehension and Expression" is vague, because, in terms of the test items, these categories fail to draw the line of distinction between one and the other. This classification fails to specify/define the various skills that are involved in competence and performance in English. Very often, neither the examinee nor the examiner is clear about the question of fixing priorities, allotting weightage and distributing marks. It is commonly noticed that the student, ignorant of the expected answer, writes something; and the examiner, equally ignorant of what to look for in an answer or what marks to award, discharges his duties casually. This defect in the present system is totally unhelpful for a student who
has worked hard for his examinations, because, the chances of scoring high marks remains a far cry. Therefore, in the prevailing system an undeserving student can score even higher than a deserving candidate.

10. The classification into three 'objectives' as against any other specific criteria does not assess the students' depth of knowledge; either of the content or of the language. In other words, these are no clearly spelt out terms of reference to give someone an idea of a student's ability for "comprehension" as against so much of "expression".

11. The inadequacy in the terms, mentioned above, is evident particularly when there is no scientific method to define what is a "good" or a "satisfactory" answer.

12. In most of the institutions, the final examination is the only occasion where the students sit and write for a considerable length of time. And when, what they write is meant to be evaluated with deliberations by someone, there is hardly any practice given in the writing skills during the academic year. And hence, as a matter of principle, deciding a student's future on the basis of what he writes during these three hours is totally unjustifiable. Where there hasn't been any practice, nothing tangible can be expected to come out from a very large majority of students.

13. While the duration of the paper is three hours, no data is available regarding the time a script or the whole set of answer scripts may take for evaluation, and the publication of results. In other words, while it is presumed that the question paper lasts three hours,
there is no such information to state precisely that it can be valued with a fair amount of accuracy within a specific time.

14. The scheme of evaluation becomes so arbitrary that there is hardly any relationship between what the test is designed for and what the results indicate – i.e. there is no follow up work to diagnose why a certain test has given a certain result, or its inherent strong points/weaknesses or any such possibilities. The scheme is, at times, very carelessly prepared. While there are vague, generalised instructions to be followed for essay-type questions, the answers for objective type questions do not cover multiple “probable answers” for one bit. It is even seen that when the overall percentage of pass is inordinately low, a special meeting of the “Conducting Board” can arbitrarily increase the number of pass students so as to project a better picture of student performance at the time of the publication of results.

15. The scheme of designing the question paper and evaluation is so arbitrary that there is hardly any scope for a systematic statistical analysis and computation of the results. Except drawing a general overview about the system on the basis of the results, there haven’t been any serious attempts at remedying the defects etc... if they are discovered.

The new question pattern introduced by the CHSE, Orissa since 2002, tries to address and remedy some of the shortcomings discussed above. The question items try to test the course objectives of the new CLT syllabus. It is admittedly a commendable effort so far as it has made a bold beginning to bring radical
changes in the examination system. But it has miserably failed in addressing some of the key issues and problems facing the examination system in Orissa today. We provide below some such problems and lacunae in the new CHSE question pattern.

1) Although the number of short answer type and objective type questions has increased, there are still a number of essay type questions with alternatives.

2) Special care is taken to test some of the skills needed for communication. But some other very important skills like ‘Rapid silent reading” are completely neglected. Question—items set from non-detailed studies are almost akin to those set from detailed studies.

3) Question wise analysis has proved that some items have more than 90% facility value and hence, are worthless, as they do not differentiate between good and poor students. An example of such item is:

Q. Arrange the following words in the order in which they would appear in a dictionary:

    deed, approach, certain, bring, antonym

4) Some questions are based on the assumption that colleges in Orissa have ideal classroom situations where a teacher can split the class into groups of five-six students and monitor their discussions and writings. But the contrary is true as the tutorial classes have been abolished and the practice of lecture classes
comprising as many as 128 students still continues.

5) The time allotted for an exam sitting is three hours, but the response to all the questions in a paper requires far less time. This leads to indiscipline in the examination hall as the students indulge themselves in gossip and other unfair means during the extra time.

6) Results of the Annual CHSE Exam 2002 have shown that the percentage of students securing pass marks and more than 60% marks in English has a sharp rise in comparison to the results of the previous Examinations. This betrays the purpose of examination and a tendency has developed among the students to neglect English studies as it has become easier to score good marks even without serious preparations.

7) The new question technique has failed in checking mal-practices such as impersonation, copying from the material brought in, exchanging question – papers and answer scripts with other candidates, getting outside help, replacing pages in the answer sheet, getting help from the invigilators and gossip in the hall etc.

The above brief survey of the role of English in Orissa and the state of the present system of examination here forms the background to the project. Before formulating any improvement or reforms, we shall examine the language testing
devices and theories advanced by various people in the field. This is done in chapter two.