Chapter 6
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Three Year Degree Course (Science)

Textbooks in General English

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The General English course in arts is more inclusive than that in science in both the universities of Gauhati and Dibrugarh. It is perhaps because the arts students need a wider knowledge of English than the science students. This assumption seems to be right. The arts students may pursue postgraduate studies in English. After passing B.A. one may become a teacher of English in schools. Jobs meant for arts students need wider knowledge of English than the jobs meant for science students. Higher studies and research in humanities, social sciences, languages, literature and culture which arts students are likely to pursue need better proficiency in English than the higher studies and research in science subjects. So General English in Gauhati University consists of two papers carrying 100 marks each and in Dibrugarh University it has three papers with a total of 300 marks. In the science stream, however, there is only one paper carrying 100 marks in both the universities.
It is perhaps assumed that the proficiency in English one acquires by the end of the higher secondary course is sufficient for a science student's general communicative needs. The General English course for the degree science students is meant to equip them with the skills to pursue their further studies. Therefore, the English course is more comprehensive in arts than in science.

We will analyse and evaluate in this chapter the syllabuses, the textbooks and allied teaching materials in General English prescribed for the present Three Year Degree Courses in Science offered by both Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities. The needs of the students and their views on the difficulties in the course and their suggestions for the improvement of the textbooks so as to suit their learning purposes will also be taken into consideration.

6.1 The syllabuses

When we analyse the syllabuses [See Appendices 3(D) and (E)] keeping in view the general principles of syllabus design discussed in earlier chapters we find that no objectives are stated in the prescribed one for the Gauhati University. There are only the title of a
textbook, the list of prescribed topics, a list of teaching items in grammar and composition, and the scheme of examination mentioned in the syllabus. So it lacks in the details of specification, justification and attainability. On the contrary, the syllabus for the students of Dibrugarh University contains a statement of objectives in clear and elaborate language. It also gives a list of teaching items and titles of recommended books on remedial grammar and written communication suitable for the study of science. Further, it prescribes a textbook as a reader. The scheme of examination with itemwise division of marks is also given in the syllabus.

However, there are several defects in both the syllabuses. There is no mention of the teaching methods to be followed in the classroom. No direction is given to the examination question paper setter on testing procedure or the examiner on evaluation techniques. A handbook for the teacher, specifically keeping science students in view has not been prepared. So these defects should be removed to make the syllabuses suitable.

6.2 The textbooks and allied teaching materials

The prescribed textbook for the Gauhati University
students is Perspectives: An Anthology of Modern English Prose edited by S.A. Vasudevan and M. Satya Babu which contains seven passages on a variety of themes. The first two are essays on general aspects of science. In "Science and Sensibility" Jacob Bronowski "argues (i) that Science puzzles many people because it is of recent growth, (ii) that it is not opposed to the arts, or literature, but a very important part of our culture, and (iii) that it has increased our sensibility" (Vasudevan and Babu 93). The second essay is "The Scientific Point of View" by J.B.S. Haldane. The author tells us how the scientific point of view is absolutely unbiassed which seeks only to arrive at the truth. Haldane believes that the application of the scientific attitude and method can solve many of our problems. The other five passages included in the book are "India's Contribution to World Unity" by Arnold Toynbee, "What I Believe" by E.M. Forster, "The Garden Party", a short story by Katherine Mansfield, "University Days" by James Thurber and "On Not Being a Philosopher" by Robert Lynd.

All the seven passages are expected to be interesting to the students because the style is simple and direct. The students can also relate the subject matter of the passages to their experience. We do not find the vocabulary or grammatical structures in these
passages to be difficult for the learners. Other aspects like thought content and cultural points are not likely to pose any obstacle to comprehension too. The anthology also contains a brief introduction to the author and a review of each passage along with notes and glossary. These are useful to the students as well as the classroom teacher.

However, the textbook should have contained more passages on scientific topics with scientific vocabulary to be more useful to the students. Different types of exercises on comprehension (local, global, inferential and evaluative) and guidance on pronunciation of new words should have been appended to the selected passages. If these blemishes are removed the textbook will qualify for an appropriate teaching material.

There are three books either recommended or prescribed for Dibrugarh University students. Foundation: English for Science Students by Graham Graves is meant for teaching remedial grammar and written communication. The following claims are made in its Preface:

Language and study skills are developed in a manner that encourages the application of
basic scientific principles to situations beyond the narrow confines of the syllabus and examination. This is done to provide adequate and broad enough language practice to allow generalization and concept formation about basic science to take place in English.

Further, the objectives of the course in General English for the degree science students have been stated in the Dibrugarh University syllabus as (a) correcting, through practice grammatical mistakes common in the written works of students; (b) improving their reading comprehension by acquainting them with the kind of English (style, organization, use of charts, etc.) that is used in scientific writing (books, reports, articles, etc.); (c) acquainting them with non-technical words which are commonly used in scientific writing and (d) helping them to learn to write simple, clear and accurate English in the manner necessary in writing on and about the sciences.

We find that the book contains twenty teaching units. Each unit has a reading passage followed by a variety of practice exercises on scientific vocabulary building, grammatical structures, usage, comprehension and writing reports of scientific experiments. We find
them suitably designed to develop communicative skills in science students. All the four objectives stated in the syllabus can be fulfilled by using this textbook. Moreover, the claims made in its Preface can broadly be achieved too. So the book is suitable for the students.

*Communication in English for Technical Students*

prepared by Curriculum Development Centre, Technical Teachers' Institute (Eastern Region), Calcutta has been recommended in the syllabus as a 'source book for teachers' for teaching remedial grammar and written communication. There are four sections in it one each on reading, grammar, word formation and writing. Scientific themes are used in all the passages. It is expected and also stated in the Authors' Preface to the book that "the teacher has the responsibility of selecting those units from each of the four sections that are most needed by the class concerned." The book can be used as a workbook too because students may write answers to the given questions in the book itself. A detailed Teachers' Manual is also available which contains suggested answers and advice on classroom methodology. If a teacher takes the help of this Manual for his guidance he will be able to use the textbook in the classroom even more effectively. So we find that all the four objectives of the General English
Course stated in the syllabus can be achieved with the use of this book. Therefore it is a suitable teaching tool.

*Improve Your English* by V.N. Arora and Lakshmi Chandra is prescribed as a reader. It contains thirty-six extracts from the writings of different authors and is divided into six units called (1) The world of science and technology, (2) The impact of science and technology on society, (3) Mass media, (4) Man and nature, (5) Science versus the humanities, and (6) The humanities. The first half of the book deals with the sentence and the paragraph. The students can be taught comprehension and how to organize a paragraph effectively with the exercises given in it. The second half deals with composition. Detailed explanations and graded exercises are there in the textbook which can help the students learn the art of effective writing.

The topics or passages included in the book make a balance between the scientific technical culture and the liberal arts culture. The students can learn from these topics how to express themselves even on any of the topics outside their main area of study.

The book, therefore, can help fulfil all the objectives stated in the syllabus. It is quite a suitable textbook on remedial grammar and written communication. The study of the book will surely help
the learners develop their writing skills in English.

When teaching the textbooks the teacher may have to prepare handouts and distribute them among students in order to make his teaching in the classroom more effective. However, there are no allied teaching materials mentioned explicitly in the syllabuses. A dictionary of scientific terms is essential. A suitable one should have been recommended for the use of students and the teacher.

6.3 Comparison of the courses in Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities

Here we make a very brief comparison between the courses of both the universities. The written syllabus of Dibrugarh University is better designed than that of Gauhati University. There is only one prescribed textbook for the Gauhati University course but there are three textbooks either recommended or prescribed by Dibrugarh University. No textbook is prescribed for the students of Gauhati on grammar and composition whereas the textbooks for those of Dibrugarh are composite books to teach all the items on remedial grammar and written communication. All aspects considered, the General English course and the textbooks for the degree science
students of Dibrugarh University are better than those of Gauhati University.

Conclusion

From the discussions made in this chapter we come to the following conclusion and recommend remedial measures. The Gauhati University syllabus appears to have been prepared in a casual manner. It has several shortcomings. Although the Dibrugarh University syllabus is comparatively better it is not entirely free from blemishes. Neither of the syllabuses contains any suggestions on effective teaching methodologies. There are no instructions to the question paper setter or to the answer script evaluator. Such instructions would have helped maintain correlation among the objectives of the course, the designing of question papers and the evaluation procedure. They should be incorporated into the syllabuses. A handbook should also be provided for the classroom teacher. In the prescribed anthology of Gauhati University there are only two passages on scientific themes. We are of the view that at least fifty per cent of the passages should have been on such themes to provide sufficient scope for the students to learn the vocabulary and grammatical structures
required for studies in science. Guidance on pronunciation of new words should be given in all the textbooks of both the universities. No textbook is prescribed for the items on grammar and composition in Gauhati University. A good textbook specially dealing with the items essential for the students of science should also be prescribed or recommended.
Particulars of the copies of the textbooks taken for evaluation

T.D.C. (science), Gauhati University


T.D.C. (science), Dibrugarh University