Chapter 7
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Three Year Degree Course (Commerce)

Textbooks in General English

7.1 The syllabuses

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7.3 Comparison of the courses in Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities

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Our initial discussion on the General English course for the degree science students made in the beginning of the previous chapter holds good for the commerce students too. As in the case of the former General English in T.D.C. (commerce) is of only one paper carrying 100 marks in both the universities of Gauhati and Dibrugarh. In this chapter we will analyse and evaluate the syllabuses, the textbooks and allied teaching materials prescribed for the paper.

7.1 The syllabuses

The syllabuses of the two universities are reproduced in Appendices 3(F) and 3(G) for ready reference. We find that the syllabus of Gauhati University gives only a bare outline of the subjects, a list of recommended books and a scheme of examination with subject-wise distribution of marks. But the Dibrugarh University
The syllabus contains elaborate statement of objectives, a list of teaching items in remedial grammar and written communication, the titles of prescribed books and the scheme of examination with item-wise division of marks.

However, both the syllabuses are deficient in several respects. The observation made in a monograph of the Association of Indian Universities regarding the present syllabuses in general is relevant here too. It says:

The syllabus as it obtains now is extremely inadequate and it fails to answer some basic questions like, how clearly the syllabus provides guidance; what and how should a teacher teach and how does the teacher know what he has taught. The syllabus as of now leaves a lot to be desired. Syllabus document is a crucial document and in its preparation very often arbitrariness, haste and unrealistic thinking dominates. ... With this kind of casual approach to one of the dominating elements, the casualties are the teaching performance of the teachers and the learning attainment of the students. (11)

The Gauhati University syllabus even does not state the
objectives of the course. Further, there are no suggestions to the teacher on teaching methodologies, no direction to the question paper setter on testing techniques or to the answer script examiner on evaluation procedure given in either of the two syllabuses. A handbook for the teacher with commerce students in view has not been prepared. So these defects should be corrected to improve the syllabuses.

7.2 The textbooks and allied teaching materials

There are seven books either recommended or prescribed for the students of Gauhati University and four for those of Dibrugarh University. Selections from English Prose and Verse for the B.Com. Course prepared by Osmania University is a common textbook for both the universities. It contains twenty-seven pieces of prose and six poems out of which only a few have been prescribed. As the Preface to the book rightly states:

Its Prose selections offer a wide range of content ... on subjects of interest to students of Commerce. They should not only stimulate the student in acquiring an effective command of English but also acquaint him with words in English frequently used in
his area of special study. The exercises given at the end are intended for practice in the basic areas of syntax, usage and vocabulary.

Out of twenty-seven prose pieces sixteen are directly related to commerce, for example, "Management Speaks to the Graduate" by C.B. Randall, "A Business-Man's America" by J.T. Adams, "A Talk on Advertising" by H. Wouk, and "Company Report" and "Negotiating a Contract" by P.Binham. So the study of these and such passages will help the students acquire the vocabulary and sentence patterns frequently used in their area of study. Four passages are on general science, such as, "The Method of Scientific Investigation" by T.H. Huxley and "The Atom" by Sir G.Thomson. The rest of the seven passages centre round miscellaneous themes. Some of them are: "The Day the Dam Broke" by J.Thurber, "With the Photographer" by S.Leacock and "The Modern World" by Sir H.Nicolson. The study of these passages and those like them will help the students increase their knowledge of English required for purposes of general communication. They also provide variety to the topics included in the course and relieve the monotony. The six poems are so chosen as to be of relevance to the commerce students and to stimulate in them a love for art, literature and

Our general discussion on the suitability of a passage with regard to its vocabulary, grammatical structures, thought content, cultural points and interest value made in Chapters 4 and 5 are valid here too. The prose passages and poems in the present anthology are, arguably, suitable for the degree commerce course. The students are not likely to face any difficulties regarding the prescribed pieces. Our observation and findings are also in communion with the views of the students themselves analysed in Chapter 3 that they do not find the prescribed textbooks difficult for them.

Further, there are notes on each passage in the anthology followed by exercises. There are a brief introduction to the author and the theme of the passage, and a glossary. The notes and glossary are very useful to the students. They also serve as aids to teaching for the classroom teacher. Comprehension questions and those on language study require short answers and are suitable for commerce students. Our general discussion on the suitability of exercises made in Chapters 4 and 5 are valid here too. If the students work out the exercises given in the present textbook on vocabulary,
phrases and idioms, sentence structure and remedial grammar they will certainly acquire proficiency in English. From our discussion on different aspects of the textbook we conclude that it is a suitable teaching material for the students.

Selected One-Act Plays edited by Satyanarayan Singh is another book prescribed for the students of Gauhati University. In the Introduction to the book it is mentioned that the "editor has taken special care to prepare Notes and Exercises that will suit the present-day needs of college students." The language exercises, it is claimed, are designed "to give students necessary training and practice in the correct writing of English and with a view to improving their vocabulary."

We find that the six one-act plays included in the book ("A Marriage Proposal", "Refund", "The Bishop's Candlesticks", "The Finding of the Treasure", "The Ugly Duckling" and "The Ghost of Jerry Bundler") are on a variety of themes. They are witty, humorous, sad and moving. So they are most likely to be interesting to the students. Commerce students need to communicate in future with various groups of people in the society. As the dramatic form of literature provides with enough of
opportunity to learn conversational English, we find the present textbook suitable for the target students.

In the Notes and Exercises given at the end of the book, there are a brief introduction to the author of each one-act play, a general remark on its theme, a glossary, short answer questions on comprehension, long answer questions on critical appreciation, and language exercises. These notes, glossary and exercises are useful to the students as well as the teacher. If the students work out the exercises their proficiency in English will surely improve.

The following four books — *Contemporary English Grammar, Structures and Composition* by David Green, *Living English Structure* by W.S. Allen, *A Remedial English Grammar for Foreign Students* by F.T. Wood and *Written Communication in English* by Sarah Freeman — are recommended as textbooks for teaching the prescribed items on remedial grammar and composition. The first two books are for the students of Gauhati University and the last two for those of Dibrugarh. The first book, as claimed in its Preface, is "a synthesis of the traditional and structural methods of teaching English Grammar." The book contains explanations of rules and exercises. The second book, as its title suggests, is
on English sentence structure. This book too contains explanations of different grammatical rules and a total of 268 exercises. A separate book containing key to the exercises is also available to help students learn on their own. We find these two books suitable for teaching the prescribed items like common errors, prepositional usage and sequence of tenses. But F.T. Wood's *A Remedial English Grammar for Foreign Students*, which has already been discussed in Chapter 5, is handy and better designed to teach the above items. However, none of these books deal elaborately with the use of idioms. So there should be another suitable book recommended for it.

In the Introduction to *Written Communication in English* the following objectives and teaching methodology are stated. First, the book "gives practice in writing in English for a wide variety of purposes, to meet the needs of students when they finish formal study either to find a job or to take a further course of study." Secondly, "the student is asked here to perform tasks which simulate, as nearly as possible, those which he will have to perform in English at work or college. For example, the student is asked to write various letters, draft reports, take notes, and write accurate descriptions." Thirdly, the book is designed "to develop the higher-order language skills needed for
working and organising thought in English." Fourthly, "In view of the large number of students in language classes the book is designed in such a way that the student can work, as far as possible, on his or her own." Fifthly, in teaching the different items included in the book, "The role of the teacher is to move from group to group, or from individual to individual, to help with difficulties."

The book contains a total of forty-three teaching units on seven different topics: (1) Communicating by letter, (2) Different ways of presenting information, (3) Description and narration, (4) Note-taking, (5) Reporting, (6) Arguing and (7) Expressing yourself. All the passages and related materials in different teaching units are appropriately chosen. If the students practise the writing tasks included in these units they will surely be able to perform the writing tasks which they will be called upon to perform in their future life (on different jobs), like writing letters, drafting reports, taking notes etc. Therefore, we find the textbook suitable for commerce students.

The following four textbooks —

Principles and Practice of Commercial Correspondence by Stephenson, Commercial Correspondence by M.Majumder, A Guide to Precis Writing by Fielden and
A Course in Written English by R.N. Ghosh, K. Moody and S.R. Inthira — the first three recommended for the Gauhati University course and the last one for the Dibrugarh are neither available in the market nor in most of the college libraries in the State. So we are unable to evaluate them here. Moreover, we are of the view that the syllabus framers should not have recommended or prescribed the books which are not available in the market.

The syllabuses of both the universities do not mention any allied teaching materials like reference books for teachers, further reading materials for students, a teacher's handbook, a good ELT dictionary or a dictionary of commercial terms. These materials contribute greatly to the success of the courses. So they should have been included in them.

7.3 Comparison of the Courses in Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities

The following is a very brief comparison of the courses in General English for the degree commerce students of both the universities. The written syllabus of Dibrugarh is better designed than that of Gauhati. There are textbooks on remedial grammar and written
communication in the courses of both the universities. Drama is taught in Gauhati but not in Dibrugarh. While poetry is a part of the course in Dibrugarh it is not so in Gauhati. Three recommended books in the course of Gauhati University and one prescribed textbook in that of Dibrugarh are not available in the market. The same book of prose and verse is prescribed for the degree commerce students of both the universities. However, the courses of both the universities have several deficiencies in them which should be taken care of to meet the needs of the students successfully.

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 designed in a casual manner. It has several defects. The aims and objectives of the course and the details of the teaching points have not been mentioned clearly and elaborately. Even the title of the textbook, Selections from English Prose and Verse for the B.Com. course has not been written fully in the syllabus. On the contrary, the syllabus of Dibrugarh University is almost
satisfactorily designed except a few blemishes. The aims and objectives are clearly and elaborately stated with details of the teaching points to be covered.

However, both the syllabuses have several shortcomings in common. The methods of teaching, testing and evaluation have not been given in either of them. There is also no mention of a teacher's handbook. There are some recommended books which are not available in the market. Therefore, we recommend that the syllabuses should be sufficiently elaborate in stating aims and objectives, and give details of all the teaching points to be covered. Suggestions for adopting appropriate teaching methodology in large classes, and proper instructions to the question paper setter and the examiner should also be given in the syllabuses to maintain correlation among teaching, testing and evaluation. The books which are not readily available in the market or which the university cannot supply to students should not be prescribed.
Particulars of the copies of the textbooks taken for evaluation

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


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