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Conclusion

After tracing the history of English education in India in general and in Assam in particular an investigation into the Assamese students' needs for English and related matters was done in Chapter 3. An analysis and evaluation of the textbooks and allied teaching materials in General English papers at the higher secondary (that is, +2) and the T.D.C. levels were done in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. In this chapter we will summarize the findings and make recommendations. We will also suggest further researches in ELT in the State; the possible measures which can be taken within limited resources of the State for excellence in the teaching of General English; and how to evolve local criteria in the pedagogy of textbook evaluation.

8.1 Students' needs for English

From our investigation into the Assamese students' needs for English and related matters we come to the conclusion that although the needs of arts, science and
commerce students differ from one another on some points, they converge at a number of other points. The common purposes for which the students of all the three streams need the knowledge of English are: (1) to get jobs under State and Central governments, and big companies for which competitive examinations and interviews are held in English; (2) to pursue postgraduate and other higher studies for which the medium of instruction is only English; (3) interstate correspondences and travels; (4) to read national and international newspapers, journals and books on current affairs; (5) to listen to programmes on quizzes, sports, news, wild life and general science broadcast and telecast over radio and television stations respectively; (6) to converse with teachers, friends and people of other tongues; and (7) to read stories or articles and books on sports, current affairs, politics and economics, and entertainment programmes like movie and music. In addition to the above purposes the science students need English to take courses in science because the medium of instruction is English; and to read books and journals in science. Similarly, the commerce students' priorities include communication with a greater variety of people; to take courses in commerce because textbooks are written in English; and to read
Therefore, we recommend that when selecting or designing textbooks and allied teaching materials in General English for the students it should be kept in mind that they are suitable and appropriate to meet the above needs and interests.

8.2 Awareness of the English teachers

We find that a large number of teachers of English at the higher secondary and the T.D.C. levels are not aware of the developments in the field of ELT materials production. They seem not to have any knowledge of some important documents like Michael West's General Service List of English words containing 2000 headwords, the Nagpur Report with a suggested vocabulary of 2700 words suitable for Indian schools, and the Reports of two Study Groups on the teaching of English in India (1967, 1971) which contain recommended vocabulary and grammatical structures for designing courses in English at different levels and suggestions for need-based courses. They are also ignorant of the Post-Graduate Diploma Course in the Teaching of English (PGDTE) offered by the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL), Hyderabad and its usefulness to the teachers. Several teachers of English both at the
higher secondary and the T.D.C. levels even do not know minimum how many English words and grammatical structures a high school-leaver is expected to have known.

We, therefore, recommend that every teacher should acquire a PGDTE from the CIEFL so that he can keep abreast of the current developments in the field of ELT materials production and effective classroom methodologies. At least, in-service short training courses should be conducted for both school and college teachers by the English Language Teaching Institute, Assam.

8.3 The textbooks and allied teaching materials

We have analysed and evaluated the syllabuses, textbooks and allied teaching materials in General English either prescribed or recommended for the higher secondary and degree courses in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. Here we record our conclusions and recommendations in a condensed form.

8.3.1 Higher secondary course

1 The following measures should be taken to make the syllabus suitable.

a The objectives of the course should be stated clearly.
b The syllabus should contain details of the teaching points, particularly in grammar and composition.

c Suggestions on effective teaching methods for large classes, and instructions on testing procedures and designing of question papers should be given in it with general guidelines on objective, unbiased and reliable evaluation.

d A teacher's handbook or manual should also be provided for the general guidance of teachers.

2 The textbook on prose and poetry, Select Readings in English which is for the detailed study should either be replaced with a suitable one or modified by taking the following remedial measures.

a The difficult and otherwise unsuitable prose pieces and poems mentioned below should not be prescribed for the students. They are:

1 Julius Caesar
2 The Merchant of Venice
3 Life and Learning
4 The Harm That Good Men Do
5 The Verger
6 Bertrand Russell
Some passages describing how English is useful to the Assamese people should be included in the textbook to have a motivating effect on students to learn English well.

b The numerous editorial and printing errors in the book should be corrected.

c Good paper and a variety of typeface should be used to print the book clearly and attractively.

Out of the two rapid readers, David Copperfield is suitable because of its abiding human interest besides being retold in 1800-word vocabulary. But Around the World in Eighty Days is likely to be difficult for the students because the editor has retold the story using 2800-word vocabulary. Therefore, the second book should be replaced with a simpler textbook. Further, as there are no notes and glossary in the first book, they must be appended to the text for the use of students.
4 The present recommended Anglo-Assamese book, *A New Approach to English Grammar and Composition* which is found unsuitable owing to several reasons should be replaced with a grammar written completely in English.

5 A separate textbook on writing of the items like precis, summary or substance, letter, application and amplification should be recommended for the students.

6 The final examination question papers should be so designed as to test language skills and not merely knowledge and information. Some questions may be designed with 'life-orientedness' (Saraswathi 224), that is, the questions should demand students to relate the ideas in the passages to the real-life situations. Thus the students can see the practical utility of the topics they study.

7 It is necessary to teach the students how to take notes in the classroom and how to make notes for their study at home. They must also be taught how to prepare for the final examinations and write answers properly.
Three Year Degree Courses (in arts, science and commerce) of both Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities

1. The syllabuses of Gauhati University for all the three streams of arts, science and commerce have more defects than those of Dibrugarh University. Therefore, the following measures should be taken to make them (syllabuses) suitable for the students.

a. Keeping in view the needs, interests, ability and actual entry behaviour of students the aims and objectives of teaching English with the terminal behaviour expected should be stated clearly and in great detail. The textbooks and allied materials should be so designed or chosen as to make them achievable.

b. Suggestions for appropriate classroom activities and methods of teaching in large classes along with testing procedure and evaluation techniques should be given.

c. The syllabuses should specify all the teaching points and suggest the order in which they should be presented.
d The teaching of study skills like note-taking and note-making must form a part of each course along with spoken English.

e It is necessary to make participation in seminars, group discussions, debates, dramatics and mock parliament compulsory for students to increase their speaking skills.

f Each syllabus should provide the teacher with a handbook or manual and a list of reference books. It should also give a list of books for further reading for students along with a good ELT dictionary.

g The arrangement of course contents in the arts syllabus of Gauhati University is inappropriate. Remedial grammar, composition, prose and rapid reader should be taught in the first year followed by poetry and drama in the second year.

2 Several measures should be taken to remove the shortcomings in the design of prescribed prose selections and make them suitable for the concerned students.

a The following first four pieces of prose in the Gauhati University anthology and the next
fourteen in the Dibrugarh anthology for arts students are either difficult or unsuitable owing to several reasons:

1. Walking Tours
2. Wordsworth in the Tropics
3. Nottingham and the Mining Country
4. In Exile
5. The Frogs
6. Twelve Million Black Voices
7. Walt Whitman
8. Indian Philosophy
9. The Western Intellectual Tradition
10. Tragedy: An Introduction
11. The Happiness Principle
12. Useful Work versus Useless Toil
13. The Road to Happiness
15. Robert Owen and Owenism
16. The Making of the Bomb
17. Sir Agravaine
18. A Visit to Grandpa's.

They need to be changed for the learning to be really productive and useful.

b. The editorial and printing errors in the former textbook should be corrected. The latter textbook is free from such errors.
Although notes and glossary are given in all the prose selections, they are not exhaustive. The meaning of all the words outside Nagpur vocabulary list should be given to make students less dependent on the teacher.

Some exercises on the thematic aspects of the passages are given in the Gauhati University prose selection for arts students but they are lacking in *On the Threshold* of Dibrugarh and *Perspectives* for science students of Gauhati. Therefore, exhaustive exercises on grammatical structure practice, comprehension, composition and appreciation should be given in all the prose selections. They will be useful to students in their home study and to the teacher to conduct discussion.

One poem in the Gauhati University selection and four poems in *Whispering Reeds* of Dibrugarh contain either a number of difficult words or allusions rendering them difficult for the students. Therefore, they should be excluded from the courses. They are:

1. *The Pirate Father's Return*
2. *Lycidas*
3. *The Toilet*
4 Gerontion
5 Still Falls the Rain.

b The poetry selections should contain exhaustive notes and glossary, and exercises to help students compensate for the lack of personal attention from the teacher which is inevitable in large classes.

4 a The original and unsimplified Shakespearean dramas, *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*, are difficult and unsuitable for the General English courses because they are mostly dramatic poetry and full of archaic and poetic words. They should be replaced with some suitable twentieth century plays. However, Shakespearean plays may be kept optional for the students who might wish to read them by themselves.

b Although the abridged version of J.B. Priestley's play, *An Inspector Calls* is a suitable textbook it must contain exercises on comprehension and appreciation.

5 There are five rapid readers—three for Gauhati and two for Dibrugarh University courses respectively. Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding*
Crowd, the abridged version of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Apology for Heroism*, Jim Corbett's *My India* and James Hilton's *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* are all suitable for the students. However, except *Kim* no other textbook contains notes, glossary and exercises. So they should be included in those books.

6 Although all the prescribed textbooks on remedial grammar and composition are found to be suitable for the students they lack in exercises with local colour. Supplementary exercises using local names of places and persons should be designed and distributed among students in the form of handouts to make the teaching of grammar interesting to students.

7 a Final examination question papers of Dibrugarh University are better designed than those of Gauhati University in all the three streams. However, all the question papers should stress more on testing language skills than literary appreciation because in ESL (English as a Second Language) students need to learn communicative use of the language, not study the serious aspects of literature.
Further, students must be given practical hints on how to answer questions in the final examinations properly because their ignorance of it is one of the reasons which contributes to the high percentage of failures.

Guidance on pronunciation of new, unfamiliar and difficult words should be given in each textbook which is presently lacking. This will help students learn and practise the pronunciation of words without solely depending on the classroom teacher.

There are some textbooks in commercial correspondence, precis writing and written communication which are not available in the market. They should be replaced with some other suitable books. The Macmillan Student Edition of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and the University of London Edition of *Goodbye, Mr Chips* should either be made easily available to students or some different editions prescribed for them.

8.4 Some related factors and further suggested fields of research

The textbooks and allied teaching materials at the higher secondary and T.D.C. stages are only a part of
the system comprising a host of factors responsible for the teaching and learning of English. After analysing the prescribed ones we gave our conclusions and recommendations in the foregoing sections of this chapter. Now, we suggest some topics related to other factors to conduct further researches. We hope, the findings will contribute to the improvement of teaching programmes.

1 The State must evolve a sound policy on teaching English at school, college and university levels. Only those who have a good knowledge of English should be appointed as teachers of English in middle, high and higher secondary schools, and colleges. Inspectors should regularly visit schools and colleges and supervise teaching. Authorities of schools and colleges should provide minimum facilities like a good library, a reading room, a typewriter and a duplicating machine for the use of students and teachers. They should also encourage holding of seminars, group discussions and debates regularly in their institutions. Teachers should also be encouraged by the authorities to undergo training, attend refresher courses, and acquire diplomas and degrees like PGDTE, M.Phil., M.Litt., Ph.D. or D.Litt. on the
topics related to ELT. So the role of authorities in improving the ELT scene in the State is likely to be a good research topic for prospective scholars.

2 From our experience and observations we have known that the teachers at middle, high and higher secondary schools either do not teach English effectively or are not efficient enough to teach English. Even a number of errors the college students make are said to have been inherited from their school teachers. Further, it is the school teachers who build the foundation of students' knowledge. So an investigation into the actual knowledge of such teachers should be undertaken. But the researcher may face the practical problem of not receiving responses to his oral or written enquiries from the teachers. So the State Government itself should conduct this investigation.

3 It is sometimes said that the teacher is the method. A good teacher can use even a bad textbook to teach English effectively with his ingenuity whereas a bad teacher cannot make use of even a good textbook. So an investigation into the actual knowledge of college teachers and their awareness
of the developments in the ELT materials preparation should also be conducted. This is an essential field of research to suggest improvements in the teaching of English at the college level.

4 There are generally large number of students in college classes. The method of teaching which is effective in small classes may not be so in large classes. So researches should be conducted to find effective methodology for teaching English in large classes.

5 Teaching of English at various levels should be co-ordinated. Positive effect of such co-ordinations should be carefully noted through organized researches.

6 Parents' encouragement, students' motivation and their study strategies may greatly improve the English learning situation in the State. So research is necessary in this field.

7 A study should be conducted on the necessity of teaching spoken English to the students.

8 Error analysis, the mother tongue interference and contrastive analysis are the three other relevant areas of research which can contribute to the improvement of the ELT scene in the State.
8.5 Measures for excellence: the art of the possible

In a poor State like Assam the government does not or perhaps, cannot spend sufficient amount of money for teaching English either in schools or in colleges in the way of providing infrastructure facilities, equipment for language laboratories and teachers trained in modern methodologies. So here we suggest a few measures which can be taken within the limited resources of the State Government, and with the active and sincere co-operation of the authorities of schools and colleges, for excellence in the teaching of General English at the higher secondary and degree levels.

1 A large number of students fail only in English at the higher secondary and degree examinations. So they have to be detained for at least one more year to appear at the final examinations again. Thus, they lose one year. So we suggest that an intensive bridge course in General English for completely one year should be conducted for the students after their high school course. No other subject will be taught during the year except English. And this course will be optional for students. Those who think they have not acquired sufficient proficiency in English to continue their
higher secondary and degree courses may take this course. There must be a lot of practice and correction work both in written and spoken English throughout the year. Students would be helped to acquire communicative competence and learn how to use the language in various situations. S.Pit Corder says in one of his papers published in 1967, "Given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the data" (qtd. in Howatt 285). So such topics should form the core of the bridge course which will motivate students to learn English. They should tell students how English will be helpful to them in their future life.

Although the teaching and learning of English is a continuous process from Class V to the degree classes there exists no co-ordination among different levels of education. In this connection we suggest that a co-ordinating agency be formed at the sub-divisional level among different schools and colleges. A local college teacher with a PGDTE may be appointed to supervise English teaching programmes in ten middle, high and higher secondary schools.
Every college teacher of English should be asked to acquire a PGDTE from the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad in order to improve his methods of teaching.

There is a scarcity of teachers of English in both schools and colleges in Assam. Moreover, those who become teachers of English still fall short of the desired level of competence. Annie David says in her paper presented at the Seminar on Communicative Language Teaching, CIEFL, Hyderabad in August 1988, "At least in India the greatest problem regarding ESL (English as a Second Language) is the non-availability of secondary school teachers who possess any English worth speaking of" (qtd. in Focus on English 14-15). This is true of Assam too. So, with a view to producing sufficient number of effective teachers of English we suggest that the State Government should establish at least ten colleges of excellence at different places in the State with limited seats, for thirty students at the best. Although all the subjects will be taught in these colleges, particular stress will be laid on the teaching of English. A lot of practice and correction work will be done in the classes because as Bloomfield says, "Practise everything
until it becomes second nature" (qtd. in Howatt 267-68). Practice and correction work can be effectively done only in small classes, not in large ones.

In view of high rates of failure in examinations, proposals such as setting up of ten colleges of excellence, deputing teachers to acquire PGDTEs, forming co-ordinating agencies among different levels of education and introducing one year intensive bridge course in English at the end of the high school course are worth considering.

8.6 Pedagogy of textbook evaluation — evolving local criteria

When evaluating the textbooks and allied teaching materials in our study, we used the research tools and procedure suggested in the following three books:

But we find that these books have not touched some important points which must be attended to in evaluating textbooks and allied teaching materials in General English prescribed for the higher secondary and T.D.C. students in Assam. First, there are nearly two hundred fifty students in language classes. Secondly, although proficiency in English (at least, in written form) is essential for success in their future life, the Assamese students are not motivated to learn English properly. When they do realise the importance of English, it becomes too late for them to learn it. After being taught English for six years from Class V to Class X the students are expected to have learnt English which is required for most functions in society. But, unfortunately, owing to several factors the students who get admitted to the higher secondary or even the degree
courses do not have fifty per cent of that knowledge of English. They cannot write even a few short and simple sentences correctly.

Therefore, we suggest that the textbooks in General English for the higher secondary and degree courses should be written with the following points in mind. First, the textbook should be explicitly written for large classes with its contents and methodology suitably chosen for effective teaching. Secondly, the contents of the textbook should be so designed or chosen as to generate motivation in the students to learn English properly. This can be done by including short stories, articles and real life experiences in the prescribed textbook showing how a good knowledge of English helps a man in becoming a success in different spheres or careers of his life and also contrastingly, how the lack of this knowledge hinders one from achieving it. Thirdly, the textbook should have local context, that is, it should use the subject matter of regional importance. Exercises should be designed accordingly too. The original writings of English authors may be adapted with local names of places and persons to give them even a pseudo-local colour. Lindsay Miller argues in favour of using adapted textbooks or teaching materials in the classroom "to allow learners to focus
on language-use rather than battling with strange contexts" (31-33). Fourthly, the textbooks for the higher secondary and degree students in Assam should be designed in such a way that the first fifty per cent of the contents will deal with the fundamentals of English which the students are expected to have learnt during the first six years (from Class V to Class X) and the rest fifty per cent with topics of higher standard which are not too difficult for them. The contents should stress reading comprehension and communicative skills in English, especially in the written form.

When evaluating or selecting textbooks and allied teaching materials in General English for the higher secondary and degree courses in Assam it should be examined whether they fulfil the above criteria or not. We consider these four as the essential local criteria in the pedagogy of textbook evaluation.