Chapter Four

The Practice of Communicative Language Testing

4.1 Introduction:

The present chapter will make an analytical study of the actual language tests in practice at the undergraduate level for Compulsory / General English courses (first and second years) at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). For the purpose this chapter will, first, try to investigate whether the language tests given at the above level match the claims of the course objective(s) as specified in the syllabus for both first and second years. Secondly, a sample of communicative language test will be provided for the basic language skills. In a way it will try to identify the factors responsible for the gulf between principle and practice of Communicative language testing.

4.2. The Practice of Language testing at AMU:

4.2.1. The Curricular Set up:

The Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), first established as Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College in 1875, was the outcome of its founder’s (Sir Syed Ahmad Khan) efforts for the educational uplift of the Indian natives in general and Muslims in particular through imparting Western education, rather than the old, dying Oriental studies, in the English language (Khan, 1999:36). Therefore, English has always occupied a central
position in the general curriculum of AMU in both pre and post independence era. Khan (1999:75), on the basis of his analysis of English syllabi of 1875 (the first syllabus of this institution), 1920 (the year of its becoming a university), 1965 (when the three language formulae was introduced) and the 1994-95 (when he made this study), observers that

“the General English course has mostly been language-oriented. … the syllabi also reflected that the syllabus-designers always intended the teaching of English to occur through the most modern techniques of the time. As evidence, in the first syllabus of 1875 (see Appendix I) we witness a dominance of grammar and translation items. Perhaps it is because of the general practice of Grammar Translation Method those days. Likewise in the present syllabus (of 1994-95) (see Appendix II) we find a presence of TV and video for language teaching. …

… English, since its establishment, has remained the most dominant medium of instruction and the medium of examination despite the introduction of Hindi and Urdu …”.

The above observations also show that India by now owes more than a century old history of English language teaching and that a lot of energy has already been spent to streamline the effectiveness of ESL programmes. Yet
ESL pedagogy, to most of the stakeholders, is overlaid with underachievement. As a consequence, a revision of the English curriculum / syllabus, like other subjects at AMU, has been a recurrent phenomenon. The present syllabus of Compulsory English, which is being taken into consideration for this research, was the result of a major syllabus revision in the year 2001. It not only overhauled the content of the syllabus, but also the format, technique and type of the language test.

4.2.2. Survey of the Syllabi:

For the present study, the First and Second syllabi of the Compulsory English courses of 2009-10 session for B.A, B.Sc. and B.Com (Honours) students are put to analysis.

4.2.2.1. First Year Compulsory English Course

The curricular objective of this course is well expressed in its ‘Aim of the Syllabus’ (Please see Appendix III). It goes as follows:

“Compulsory English for B.A, B.Sc. & B.Com First and Second years is an integrated course. Its main aim is to make the learners proficient enough to use the basic language skills – Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening – in their everyday life for various purposes. These skills are spread over five units in both the years. ‘Speaking’ and ‘Listening’ are clubbed together as ‘Oral
Communication’ for the sake of convenience in teaching and testing. The activities, items and components in second year are graded to suit the learners’ needs / expectations. The materials are so designed that they involve even the teaching of essential grammar, vocabulary, usage and various interactive and communicative skills.”

The above mentioned ‘aim’ of the syllabus makes it clear that it intends to train the students in ‘basic language skills’ in order to make them ‘proficient enough’ to communicate effectively ‘in their everyday life’ for ‘various purposes’. In other words it can be said that the Compulsory English syllabus is intended to train the students in attaining communicative skills for their everyday communication. This also means that this syllabus does not merely expect students to master the structural / grammatical rules of the English language. This is made clear even by the unit-wise distribution of the course content.

Unit I and II, for instance, deal with the Reading Comprehension: its strategies (such as Predicting, Skimming, Scanning, etc.) in unit I as ‘Reading Comprehension I’ and actual comprehension activities of prose and poems in unit II as ‘Reading Comprehension II’.

Units III and IV are intended to train students in writing skills, such as Note-Taking, Summarizing and Précis Writing in unit III as ‘Writing I’ and
writing descriptions, applications/formal letters and preparing CVs in unit IV as ‘Writing II’. Here while unit III trains the students in academic / study skills, unit IV takes into consideration the language function of ‘Describing persons, places and things’, besides another very important writing skill of training students in everyday communicative skill of writing formal letters and preparing CVs.

Due to the lack of infrastructural support for both teaching and testing, Unit V combines ‘speaking’ and ‘listening’ as ‘Oral Communication’. This unit is divided into four sections A, B, C, and D, so that one section is taught along with each unit, hence the training in ‘oral comprehension’ is not confined to unit V to be taught only towards the end of the session at the end of the earlier units I – IV. Thus it is given much such for practicing oral communication. Section D of unit V is taught independently as the last unit. This unit gives the students an opportunity to practice English in ‘living situations of Oral Communication’, such as “In the Library”, “An Invitation to Tea”, “At the Bank”, and others.

The syllabus concludes with an important note that

“There are no text books for the course. The entire course is skill based. The teaching materials provided to the students by the
Department of English, AMU, are for illustration and practice. They should not be taken as prescribed texts for examination purposes.”

This note is important for the present study too, because it refers to the aspect of examination / testing. This note in the syllabus suggests that the materials provided for teaching are not to be considered for testing. That is, since this is a skill based course, no memory based or content based question should be asked from the materials used in the classroom. This also means, in a way, that the test setters are advised to frame questions that could evaluate students of their communicative skills while reading, writing and orally communicating in a given situation. From this note it can also be inferred that the tests are supposed to evaluate whether students are proficient enough to communicate effectively in their everyday life for various purposes.

4.2.2.2. **Second Year Compulsory English Course**

The curricular aim of the second year syllabus (please see Appendix IV) is same as the first year. This means that learners are put to further training in their second year of studies. But a look at the unit wise distribution of the course, we find some newly introduced items.

Unit I, for instance, is divided into two sections A and B. While section B, like first year syllabus, consists of Prose passages and couple of poems for
comprehension practice, Section A takes into consideration such grammatical units as ‘phrases, clauses, and sentences’ and various types of ‘linking devices’.

Unit II gives students practice into writing paragraphs on given topics, set of information, data or images.

Unit III includes such language functions for writing practice as Giving Directions, Instructions, Writing Processes, Writing Future Plans, and writing letters of thanks, regret, condolence, invitation, etc. This unit like earlier one is an extension of the first year syllabus.

Unit IV again deals with composition / writing activities, such as ‘Reporting events, speeches, meetings and Essay Writing’.

Unit V deals with ‘Oral Communication’. Like the first year syllabus, components of this unit are spread along with units I – III to be taught round the year, hence giving maximum practice to students in oral communication.

As discussed in the earlier section, even the second year syllabus concludes with the same note.

4.2.3. Analysis of the language test at undergraduate level:

The Compulsory English course at the first and second years of undergraduate level in AMU is tested against a total of fifty (50) marks: ten (10) marks for the Sessional tests (like small quizzes) and forty (40) marks
for the final (Exit / Achievement) test / examination. Sessional tests are sort of internal evaluation, generally designed and conducted on the students by their own teachers. Here these teachers are given liberty about the number or even the types and techniques of tests to be conducted. While the final examination of forty (40) marks, on the contrary, is centrally designed and conducted by the Examination Department, where the test-setter and the evaluators may not be the teachers of the students who are taking the test. Generally the test scripts are randomly distributed among teachers for evaluation.

For the present study, an attempt will be made to analyze only the final (Exit / Achievement) tests for the first and second years of the academic session 2009 – 10 vis-à-vis the test specifications put forth by the Communicative Language Testing. Though this specification has already been mentioned in Section 3.4 of the earlier chapter under the heading ‘Mechanics of Communicative Test Construction’, it is being mentioned here too as a sample for the sake of convenience:
### Box 1: **Format for Communicative Test Specifications:**

**1. Purpose of the Test:** The test setter needs to be clear about the objective and purpose of the test under consideration. This helps in determining whether this is going to be a Quiz, a Placement, Progress, or Achievement Test.

**2. Timing:** For example, Total time of test: 55 minutes / Two and a half hours.

**3. Techniques:** Test setters need to decide on what test techniques (multiple-choice, true-false, cloze, C-test, long answers, or short notes, etc.) will be most suitable for the above purpose of testing.

**4. Content:** A language test is meant mainly to assess the learners’ level of proficiency in the language skills. Therefore, while writing down a test one should keep the test objective in mind and set a content familiar to the learners.

   a. **Types of Text:** e.g. the texts should be academic – taken from the prescribed textbooks or some authentic texts. This also needs to be determined as a matter of curricular policy.

   b. **Addressees:** These are the learners for whom the test is intended. Here most of the variables relating learners, like native/non-native, sex, age, community, culture, tradition etc need to be taken into consideration.

   c. **Topics:** e.g. related to the language course, the learners’ area of studies (may be ESP), or the interest of students in general.

   d. **Critical levels of performance:** This hints at the required levels of performance for different levels of success. This also hints at the difficulty level of the test.

   e. **Operations:** This suggests specification of the task to be carried out by the learners. For a reading test, for instance, the test may include such operations as:

      i. Scanning extensive written texts for pieces of information;

      ii. Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context;

      iii. Getting the gist;

      iv. Distinguishing main ideas from supporting details;
5. **Format:** This refers to overall structure of the test with statements regarding the test component, allocation of time and marks, etc.

   a. **Description:** This refers to the sections in the test. For instance, the paper is divided into two sections: reading and writing. The reading section consists of two parts – scanning and detailed reading. The details for this may be as follows:

      i. **Scanning:** A section of the classifieds from a newspaper. 10 short answer items.

      ii. **Detailed Reading:** One passage of about 800 words in length with short-answer items, true false questions and gap-fill items.

      iii. **Writing:** One writing question with clues for writing a set of instructions.

   b. **Weightage:**

      For example: Total marks: 50

      Section 1 (Reading): 30 marks
      Question 1 (Scanning) – 10 marks
      Question 2 (Detailed Reading) – 20 marks

      Section 2 (Writing): 20 marks

6. **Scoring Procedure:** For example,

   Reading Section: A detailed marking key will be provided

   Writing Section: The attached marking criteria will be applied

7. **Sampling:** This relates mainly to the content of the test. The test maker has to assess through sampling whether the test is appropriate in terms of content validity and constructive back wash. A test is neither supposed to be easily predictable nor should be alien to the learner.

8. **Moderation:** In order to overcome individual weaknesses of the test setter, it is always better to moderate the test in terms of its objective, clarity of instruction, possible correct answer, timing, marks distribution, and scoring procedure.
In the light of the above specifications, an attempt will be made in the following sections to assess whether the tests used at undergraduate level in AMU match the requirement of a communicative test format:

**4.2.3.1. Analysis of the First year Test:** Following aspects of the specifications were found in the language test given to the first year students of AMU at undergraduate level (please see Appendix V):

**Box 2: Test Specifications for First year Compulsory English Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. <strong>Purpose of the Test:</strong></th>
<th>Achievement Test / End of the first year test. The objective is to assess learners’ level of proficiency in communicative skills, like reading, writing, and oral communication.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Timing:</strong></td>
<td>Three hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Techniques:</strong></td>
<td>Unit - I: Word-formation, sentence building, fill-in-the-blanks, and scanning. Unit - II: Answering questions, and finding synonyms. Unit – III: Note-making and Précis writing. Unit – IV: Writing description, writing an application and CV. Unit – V: Writing a dialogue, discussion, or interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Content:</strong></td>
<td>The content is familiar (not remote) to learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. <strong>Types of Text:</strong></td>
<td>The type of texts used is not from the materials used for the classroom teaching; Use of authentic text is also found in this test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. <strong>Addresseees:</strong></td>
<td>Learners of non-native context, both males and females, of Arts, Social Sciences, Sciences, and Commerce courses at undergraduate level representing various communities, culture, and tradition take this test. Hence the addresseees are heterogeneous in nature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| c. **Topics:** | Since a General ELT Course, it contains topics of general interest, not meeting the area of interest of any specific
group of learners / addressees.

d. **Critical levels of performance:** Since the same test is given to the students of various streams, the test often becomes lopsided in terms of difficulty level. For instance, if the test is easy for the students of Bio-Chemistry Main, it remains quite difficult for the students of Hindi, Urdu, or Arabic Main students.

e. **Operations:** Students in this test are involved in such operations as:

**For Reading activities:**

i. Word formation and sentence building;

ii. Completing the sentences by filling in the blanks by choosing appropriate words;

iii. Scanning extensive written texts for pieces of information;

iv. Answering Comprehension questions;

v. Finding synonyms in the given passage.

**For Writing activities:**

i. note-making

ii. Précis writing

iii. Writing descriptions

**For Oral Communication:**

i. writing dialogue, or

ii. generating discussion, or

iii. Interviewing a teacher.

5. **Format:** This refers to overall structure of the test with statements regarding the test component, allocation of time and marks, etc.

a. **Description:** The test is divided into five units, each unit consisting of eight (8) marks. The details for this are as follows:

i. **Unit I: Reading Comprehension 1:**

- Word formation and meaningful sentence building
- Fill in the blanks to complete the given text
- **Scanning:** A Notice from a newspaper. 08 short answer
ii. **Unit II: Reading Comprehension 2:** One passage of about 250 words in length with four (4) short-answer items and one (1) vocabulary item.

iii. **Unit III: Writing Skills 1:** One passage with about 425 words for making notes and writing a précis.

iv. **Unit IV: Writing Skills 2:**
- topics to write description on ‘either of the parents’, or ‘your first day in the university’, or ‘the rural landscape of a place you have been to’. No clues or verbal/non-verbal input was provided.
- Writing an application / letter for job with a CV. An advertisement is provided as verbal input.

v. **Unit V: Oral Communication:**
- writing a dialogue (Clues are given for this task), or
- writing a discussion (Only topic is given), or
- Writing an interview (topic and purpose of interview is given)

b. **Weightage:**

i. **Unit I: Reading Comprehension 1:**
- Word formation and meaningful sentence building (02 marks)
- Fill in the blanks to complete the given text (02 marks)
- **Scanning:** A Notice from a newspaper. 08 short answer items. (04 marks)

ii. **Unit II: Reading Comprehension 2:** One passage of about 250 words in length with four (4) short-answer items and one (1) vocabulary item. (08 marks)

iii. **Unit III: Writing Skills 1:** One passage with about 425 words for
- making notes, and (04 marks)
- writing a précis. (04 marks)
iv. **Unit IV: Writing Skills 2:**
- Writing description on ‘either of the parents’, or ‘your first day in the university’, or ‘the rural landscape of a place you have been to’. No clues or verbal/non-verbal input was provided. (04 marks)
- Writing an application / letter for job with a CV. An advertisement is provided as verbal input. (04 marks)

v. **Unit V: Oral Communication:** (08 marks)
- writing a dialogue (Clues are given for this task), or
- writing a discussion (Only topic is given), or
- Writing an interview (topic and purpose of interview is given)

6. **Scoring Procedure:** No Marking criteria or Scoring Key is provided to the evaluators. Hence it is purely impressionistic.

7. **Sampling:** No sampling is done to assess for the appropriateness in terms of content validity and constructive back wash of the test.

8. **Moderation:** It is done by a team of moderators officially appointed to evaluate the test in terms of its objective, clarity of instruction, possible correct answer, timing, marks distribution, etc.

4.2.3.2. **Mismatch in the First year Compulsory English Test:**

This section will reflect upon the mismatch between principle and practice of Communicative language testing by comparing the above box with sections 3.3.1 (principles) and 3.3.2 (characteristics) of the Communicative language testing. Once again, for the sake of convenience, some of the salient features of the Communicative language testing are listed below, in the light of which an attempt will be made to identify the mismatch or the weaknesses in the test discussed above. These features are:
a. Communicative language test should test **communicative skills**, rather than aspects of language. In other words, the test should carry hidden linguistic / grammatical forms and the communicative / functions of language should be made obvious. In brief, there should be a focus on communicative process

b. Students should get **an opportunity to perform communication** in the test, for which the test needs to be context specific. The test thus should test the ability to deal with discourse.

c. A communicative test **tests what the course wants to encourage among students**, so that it could help learning through a Positive wash back based on a proper scoring criteria.

d. It should be **criterion referenced**: whether students can perform a certain task.

e. Validity: **whether the test measures what it intends to test**; that is, it should carry high content validity.

f. **Reliability**: whether the test makes learners perform the task that it intends.

g. A communicative test has: **purpose of test, context, performance, interaction, authenticity, unpredictability, task-based**.

In order to investigate the mismatch between principle and practice, the above features is arranged below in a table along the unit-wise distributed questions asked in the first year Compulsory English test. This table, hence, will be able to express the strengths and weaknesses of the actual test in practice.
Table 1: Availability of Features of CL Testing in actual language test of First year Compulsory English – 2009-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of CL Test</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1.1</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1.2</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1.3</th>
<th>Unit II Q. 2</th>
<th>Unit III Q. 3-A</th>
<th>Unit III Q. 3-B</th>
<th>Unit IV Q. 4-A</th>
<th>Unit IV Q. 4.B</th>
<th>Unit V Q. 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unpredictability</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-based</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance opportunity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative skills</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring Key/marketing criteria provided</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that two questions out of three in Unit I entitled ‘Reading Comprehension 1’ fails to match the specifications of a communicative language test. It is so mainly because questions 1.1 and 1.2
hardly carry anything related to the target of unit I, that is, reading comprehension. Question 1.3 comes closest to the parameters because it is based on an authentic text from everyday life and is directly performance and task based relating the reading skill. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

Unit II, entitled ‘Reading Comprehension 2’ consists of only one question (question no. 2). This question carries a passage of about 250 words followed by four comprehension questions and one based on vocabulary. Apparently this test matches the requirements of a communicative language test, in the sense that it involves learners in communicative skill, besides being valid and reliable. But if we see it carefully, we find that thus test could have included various other techniques – like True-false, Gap-filling, Multiple-choice, Sequencing statements, etc. – to elicit levels of comprehension among students. In other words, the simple comprehension based questions, as given in this test, often lead to students’ copying lines from the given passage rather than answering in their own words. Besides, variety of activities / tasks in a test involves students in communicative activities. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

Unit III is ‘Writing Skills 1’ and it consists of two questions, where question 3-A fails to be valid and reliable in the sense that it does not involve learners
into tasks and activities. That is, it does not provide learners an opportunity to perform while taking the test. Question 3-B comes closest to the parameters, but it is not based on communicative skills. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

Unit IV, entitled ‘Writing Skills 2’ consists of two questions. Question 4 A ceases to be reliable and is not found to be task-based or interactive, that is, it lacks in communicative skills, except that the learners have to write a description. No input – verbal or non-verbal – is provided here. While in contrast question 4 B provides a context in which the students have to write a letter and also prepare a CV. Hence it involves the learners in doing the task as per the requirement of the question given. However, no scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

Unit V which is entitled ‘Oral Communication’ totally fails to meet the criteria of a communicative language test, because here no oral communication takes place. Rather the students have to write the test. What is taught or what is intended to be taught through this unit is not being tested. That means this test ceases to be either valid or reliable. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

The analysis of this test is also required to be investigated in terms of the techniques of tests for various basic language skills. That is, one needs to
assess whether these tests use appropriate techniques for these skills. This can be done in the form of separate tables for each skill spread over the prescribed syllabus and even the test for the first year.

The following table reflects upon the first and second units, namely ‘Reading Comprehension 1’ and ‘Reading Comprehension 2’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1.1</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1.2</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1.3</th>
<th>Unit II Q. 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sentence Comprehension</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Picture Cues</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Phrase &amp; Sentence Cues</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Skimming</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Scanning</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Handling difficult words</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. True-false</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Matching</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Multiple-choice</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 1.1 and 1.2 totally fail to be using the techniques of reading comprehension. This is so perhaps, because they fail to be tests in reading comprehension as also shown in table 1.
Question 1.3 generally does not have items 1 to 7, except item 5, because it is basically a test in scanning. But then, it could have used the techniques as specified in items 8-10 to bring in variety in the test.

Question 2 carries a passage of about 250 words with four comprehension-based / skimming-based questions and one vocabulary-based, but it fails to involve various other techniques as listed in the above table for evaluating reading comprehension.

The availability of techniques of communicative language tests can be traced in the first year Compulsory English test in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Unit III Q. 3-A</th>
<th>Unit III Q. 3-B</th>
<th>Unit IV Q. 4-A</th>
<th>Unit IV Q. 4-B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sentence Completion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sentence combination, expansion, and reduction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Building paragraphs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Guided writing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Free writing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. use of diction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. cohesion / coherence</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Rhetorical device</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Unity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here we see that the writing tests in general do not follow all the techniques of communicative language testing. Unit III, question 3 A, for instance, appears to be very weak. This is so perhaps because the question mainly concerns an academic skill which has a format. It would have been better, if the test setter had provided the format to test this writing skill.

Question 3B of unit III appears to be very gripping, though it is a type of free writing and a guided writing too at the same time due to the availability of the notes available for writing the précis. Précis writing in itself needs a lot of polish on the part of the writer so far as cohesion, coherence, rhetoric, etc are concerned.

Unit IV, question 4 A, would have been tested better if the test setter had provided the students with some inputs or had asked the students first to produce input in the form of a box or table or chart and then used this input for writing a description. In the present form the test does not involve students in such activities as sentence completion, combination, expansion, guided writing, etc. It just asks the students to write in ways they like.

Question 4B is a better test, in the sense that the students have to write following the requirements and inputs in the given advertisement. Though
this type of writing can not be free writing or does not expect much use of rhetorical devise, this test involves students in various aspects of writing activity as listed in the table above.

A test in oral communication needs to combine the techniques used for both ‘listening’ and ‘speaking’. But since the test under consideration for analysis is basically writing based, it does not carry any of these techniques. One may cross check these techniques of oral communication in the following table vis-à-vis the given test:

Table 4: Availability of Techniques of Testing Oral Communication in First year Compulsory English Test – 2009-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Unit V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listening and responding to questions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. listening and drawing maps/direction</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. listening and taking notes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. understanding speeches, dialogues, lectures, interviews, descriptions, instructions, telephonic conversations</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. giving instruction/direction</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Role plays</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Explaining, describing, paraphrasing</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Oral interviews</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Picture cues for elaborations/descriptions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Situations for greeting, requesting, regretting, apologizing, commanding.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the above techniques are exploited while testing oral communication in unit V, question 5 of the Compulsory English test of the first year.

4.2.3.3. Findings and Discussion:

The following finer points with discussion can be listed here with regard to tests in reading, writing and oral communication at the first year level:

**Reading Comprehension:**

i. Two questions (questions 1.1 and 1.2) out of three in Unit I, entitled ‘Reading Comprehension 1’, fail to be a test in reading by any means. That is, they fail to be a valid test because they do not test what they are intended to do under the unit of reading comprehension.

ii. These tests (questions 1.1 and 1.2) are not even reliable because they do not make the learners perform the task in reading comprehension.
iii. These tests do not even provide real life situation for the students.

iv. They do not match the specifications of a communicative language test, because they cease to be performance-based, context-based, interactive, or authentic text-based.

v. Questions 1.1 and 1.2 do not even apply the typical techniques of testing reading comprehension.

vi. Question 1.3 comes closer to the parameters of a communicative language test because it is based on an authentic text from everyday life and is directly performance and task based relating the reading skill. But this test could have included various other techniques – like True-false, Gap-filling, Multiple-choice, Sequencing statements, etc. – to elicit students reading abilities.

vii. Question 2, a test based on reading passage, also fails to be an effective comprehension check test, because it lacks in varieties of questions based on such techniques as True-false, Gap-filling, Multiple-choice, Sequencing statements, etc. The passage here is followed by four general comprehension based questions, which are generally answered by students by picking lines from the given passage rather than answering them in their own words. Hence these questions fail to be valid and reliable in testing reading comprehension.
viii. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators/examiners for the above tests in reading comprehension.

**Writing Skills:**

i. Question 3-A fails to be valid and reliable in the sense that it does not involve learners into tasks and activities, relating making notes. It just asks students to make notes without providing any format. In such a situation, students will either make the notes in a format that was taught in the class (if he remembers it) or they will use different formats (which will affect the marking criteria). Hence such an open ended question will be answered based on memory or in multiple formats.

ii. Question 3-B appears to be convincing, but it needs a neatly designed marking criteria / scoring key, which is missing in this test.

iii. Question 4-A has a lot of scope for becoming an effective communicative language test. This question could have designed various interactive activities in the form of pre-writing and while-writing tasks, but they are missing here. Hence this question ceases to be reliable and is not found to be task-based where students get an opportunity to participate. There is sufficient scope here to provide the students with verbal and/or non-verbal inputs. Or even the students could have been asked to prepare or
complete a box, table or a chart (as a pre-writing task), to be used for writing the description.

iv. In contrast, question 4 B provides a context in which the students have to write a letter and also prepare a CV. Hence it involves the learners in doing the task as per the requirement of the question given. Nevertheless, this question could have carried some verbal inputs to be used by students for writing the answers.

v. the test does not involve students in any sentence level activity, such as sentence completion, combination, expansion.

vi. No marking criteria / scoring key is provided to the evaluators with this test.

**Oral Communication:**

i. Question 5, Unit V, entitled ‘Oral Communication’ totally fails to meet the criteria of a communicative language test. In fact, in no way it is a test in oral communication. No oral communication takes place. Hence this test ceases to be either valid or reliable by any means.

ii. The tests (the given three options) under question 5 resemble those tests in writing which are designed on some situations with no verbal input, like questions 4-A and 4-B. Here too students are supposed to write, rather than communicate orally.
iii. What is taught or what is intended to be taught through this unit is not being tested here. That means this test ceases to be either valid or reliable.

iv. Since the test is assumed to be answered in written mode, it exploits no technique of oral communication, such as ‘limited response, picture cues, task response, multiple-choice, short lecture or social context, guided techniques, explanation, paraphrasing, and others’.

v. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

4.2.3.4. **Analysis of the Second year Test:** Following aspects of the specifications were found in the language test (please see Appendix VI) given to the Second year students of AMU at undergraduate level:

**Box 3: Test Specifications for Second year Compulsory English Test**

| 1. **Purpose of the Test:** Achievement Test / End of the first year test. The objective is to assess learners’ level of proficiency in communicative skills, like reading, writing, and oral communication. |
| 2. **Timing:** Three hours |
| 3. **Techniques:** |
| Unit - I: Identifying phrases / clauses; Sentence combination; Answering comprehension based questions; and changing word form. |
| Unit - II: Paragraph writing / composition. |
| Unit – III: Writing formal / informal letter; Process writing. |
| Unit – IV: Report writing; Essay writing / composition |
| Unit – V: Writing a dialogue or debate |
| 4. **Content:** The content is generally familiar (not remote) to learners. |
a. **Types of Text:** The type of texts used is not from the materials used for the classroom teaching; Use of authentic text is also found in this test.

b. **Addressees:** Learners of non-native context, both males and females, of different third world nationalities belonging to Arts, Social Sciences, Sciences, and Commerce courses at undergraduate level representing various communities, cultures, and traditions take this test. Hence the addressees are heterogeneous in nature.

c. **Topics:** Since a General ELT Course, it contains topics of general interest, not meeting the area of interest of any specific group of learners / addressees.

d. **Critical levels of performance:** Since the same test is given to the students of various streams, the test often becomes lopsided in terms of difficulty level. For instance, if the test is easy for the students of Bio-Chemistry Main, it remains quite difficult for the students of Hindi, Urdu, or Arabic Main students.

e. **Operations:** Students in this test are involved in such operations as:

   **For Reading activities:**
   
   i. Identifying and underlining phrases or clauses;
   
   ii. Combining sentences into one;
   
   iii. Answering Comprehension questions;
   
   iv. Changing word forms.

   **For Writing activities:**
   
   i. Paragraph writing
   
   ii. Letter writing
   
   iii. Process writing
   
   iv. Report writing
   
   v. Essay Writing

   **For Oral Communication:**
   
   i. writing a dialogue, or
   
   ii. Writing a debate.

5. **Format:** The overall structure of the test with statements regarding the test component, allocation of time and marks, etc goes as follows.

   **a. Description:** The test is divided into five units, each unit carrying
eight (8) marks. The details for this are as follows:

i. **Unit I: Reading Comprehension:**
   - Identifying and underlining phrases and clauses
   - Combining the sentences into one
   - Comprehension: One passage of about 220 words in length with two (02) short-answer items and one (1) vocabulary item.

ii. **Unit II: Paragraph writing:** using verbal input and a chart

iii. **Unit III: Writing Skill:**
   - Writing a letter of regret or writing an informal letter to a friend. No verbal input is given.
   - Writing a process using the given verbal input.

iv. **Unit IV: Composition:**
   - Report writing. Clues or verbal input is provided.
   - Writing an essay on one of the given topics: ‘Environment protection’, ‘The importance of reading’, or ‘Cricket tournament in India’. No verbal / nonverbal input given.

v. **Unit V: Oral Communication:**
   - writing a dialogue (situation of purchasing a TV is given, or
   - writing in a debate in favour or against on one of the topics: ‘Reservation for women’, ‘Coalition government in India is not successful’, or ‘Celebrating Birthday Parties’.

b. **Weightage:**

   **Total Marks:** 40

   i. **Unit I: Reading Comprehension:**
      - Identifying and underlining phrases and clauses **(02 marks)**
      - Combining the sentences into one **(01 mark)**
      - Comprehension: One passage of about 220 words in length with two (02) short-answer items and one (1) vocabulary item. **(05 marks)**

   ii. **Unit II: Paragraph writing:**
- using verbal input, and (04 marks)
- using a chart. (04 marks)

iii. **Unit III: Writing Skill:**
- Writing a letter of regret or writing an informal letter to a friend. No verbal input is given. (04 marks)
- Writing a process using the given verbal input. (04 marks)

iv. **Unit IV: Composition:**
- Report writing. Clues or verbal input is provided. (04 marks)
- Writing an essay on one of the given topics: ‘Environment protection’, ‘The importance of reading’, or ‘Cricket tournament in India’. No verbal / nonverbal input given. (04 marks)

v. **Unit V: Oral Communication:** (08 marks)
- writing a dialogue (situation of purchasing a TV is given, or
- writing a debate in favour or against on one of the topics: ‘Reservation for women’, ‘Coalition government in India is not successful’, or ‘Celebrating Birthday Parties’.

6. **Scoring Procedure:** No Marking criteria or Scoring Key is provided to the evaluators. Hence it is purely impressionistic.

7. **Sampling:** No sampling is done to assess for the appropriateness in terms of content validity and constructive back wash of the test.

8. **Moderation:** It is done by a team of moderators officially appointed to evaluate the test in terms of its objective, clarity of instruction, possible correct answer, timing, marks distribution, etc.

4.2.3.5. **Mismatch in the Second year Compulsory English Test:**

Like the first year Compulsory English test, this section will assess the Second year Compulsory English tests (unit-wise) in the tabular form against the parameters and the techniques of the communicative language
testing. These tables, hence, will be able to express the strengths and weaknesses of the actual test in practice.

Table 5: Availability of Features of CL Testing in actual language test of First year Compulsory English – 2009-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of CL Test</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1-A (a)</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1-A (b)</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 2-A</th>
<th>Unit II Q. 2-B</th>
<th>Unit III Q. 3-A</th>
<th>Unit III Q. 3-B</th>
<th>Unit IV Q. 4-A</th>
<th>Unit IV Q. 4-B</th>
<th>Unit V Q. 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Validity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reliability</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Context</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Performance</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Interaction</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Authenticity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Unpredictability</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Task-based</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Performance opportunity</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Communicative skills</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Scoring Key/marking criteria provided</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that two questions - 1-A (a) and 1-A (b) - out of three in Unit I entitled ‘Reading Comprehension’ fail to match the specifications
of a communicative language test. They are neither valid nor reliable. They are in no way tests in reading comprehension. At the same time they are direct questions on linguistic / grammatical forms rather than communicative skills. Question 1-B comes closer to the parameters of a communicative language test because it is based on a given passage of about 225 words, where in order to answer to the questions the students have to get involved into the task of reading the passage carefully. However, this question carries a major lacuna too. That is, the test setter has given only two short answer type, comprehension question and one vocabulary-based question, which are not sufficient to assess the readers’ level of comprehension. Besides, no scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

Question 2-A, under Unit II, entitled ‘Paragraph Writing / Expansion’, could have been made better by involving students in some performance activities, like listing the points as a pre-writing activity, and then to be used for writing the paragraph. On the whole this task is satisfactory in terms of a communicative language test.

Question 2-B is better a test in comparison to Question 2-A, because here the students are first supposed to read the given chart, on the basis of this chart they are supposed to write the paragraph. Again no scoring key is provided to the evaluators.
Unit III - ‘Writing Skill’ – consists of two questions. Question 3-A appears to be a very flat question based on a given situation with no input – verbal or nonverbal – available to them. Hence this test is only partially valid and reliable, hardly providing any performance opportunity for completing the task. Question 3-B is better in the sense that it provides a set of verbal inputs, hence providing an opportunity for writing a text. However, no scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

Unit IV, entitled ‘Composition’ consists of two questions. Question 4-A asks the students to write a report on a living situation for the students of AMU, i.e. their Founder’s Day Celebration. Besides the topic being familiar, the students are even provided with a set of verbal inputs. Therefore, such test, besides being motivating to students, involve them into the task. While in contrast, question 4-B provides merely topics expected to be exploited by the students in order to write an essay. It is a good test, if the test setter intends to involve the students into Free-writing. However, no scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

Unit V which is entitled ‘Oral Communication’ does not make the students involve into any type of listening or speaking activities. Rather the students have to write the test. What is taught or what is intended to be taught through this unit is not being tested. That means this test ceases to be either
valid or reliable. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

The analysis of the Second year test is also required to be investigated in terms of the techniques of communicative language tests for the basic language skills. That is, one needs to assess whether the tests, discussed above, use appropriate techniques for these skills. This can be done in the form of separate tables for each skill, spread over the prescribed syllabus and even the test for the second year.

The following table reflects upon the first unit, namely ‘Reading Comprehension’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1-A (a)</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1-A (b)</th>
<th>Unit I Q. 1-B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sentence Comprehension</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Picture Cues</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Phrase &amp; Sentence Cues</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Skimming</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Scanning</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inferencing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Handling difficult words</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. True-false</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Matching</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Multiple-choice</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Availability of Techniques of Testing Reading in Second year Compulsory English Test – 2009-10
As the above table shows, all the three questions, under Unit I, fail to exploit the techniques of the communicative language tests. Hence they cease to involve students in task-based, performance opportunities in communication.

Questions 1-A (a) and (b) appear to test students’ grammatical knowledge rather than their reading comprehension abilities. Question 1-B, on the other hand, carries a passage of about 225 words for involving the students into the act of reading, but then whether they could comprehend the given passage or not is not possible to be made out from mere two comprehension and one vocabulary question. The test setter could have framed various questions involving the techniques of true-false, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, etc, besides testing other strategies of reading like scanning, inferencing, guessing difficult words, and others.

The availability of techniques of writing for communicative language tests can be traced in the second year Compulsory English test with the help of the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Unit II Q. 2-A</th>
<th>Unit II Q. 2-B</th>
<th>Unit III Q.3-A</th>
<th>Unit III Q.3-B</th>
<th>Unit IV Q. 4-A</th>
<th>Unit IV Q. 4-B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sentence Completion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sentence</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here we see that the writing tests in general are beyond sentence level. That is, they do not test students for sentence completion / building, sentence combination, expansion, or even reduction. There are generally two types of questions: with verbal inputs (questions 2-A, 2-B, 3-B & 4-A) and without verbal inputs (questions 3-A & 4-B). In other words, we have questions that have either verbal inputs or situation / topic inputs. These questions could have been made more interactive and performance based by involving students in pre-writing and while-writing tasks.

A test in oral communication needs to combine the techniques used for both ‘listening’ and ‘speaking’. But since the test under consideration for analysis is basically writing based, it does not have any of these techniques. One may
cross check these techniques of oral communication in the following table vis-à-vis the given test:

Table 8: Availability of Techniques of Testing Oral Communication in Second year Compulsory English Test – 2009-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Techniques</th>
<th>Unit V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Listening and responding to questions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. listening and drawing maps/direction</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. listening and taking notes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. understanding speeches, dialogues, lectures, interviews, descriptions, instructions, telephonic conversations</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. giving instruction/directions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Role plays</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Explaining, describing, paraphrasing</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. oral interviews</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Picture cues for elaborations/descriptions</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Situations for greeting, requesting, regretting, apologizing, commanding.</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the above techniques are exploited while testing oral communication in unit V, question 5 of the Compulsory English test of the second year too.

4.2.3.6. Findings and Discussion:

Reading Comprehension:

i. Q1-A (a) and 1-A (b) – two questions out of three in Unit I, entitled ‘Reading Comprehension’ - fail to test reading comprehension. Rather they directly test knowledge of linguistic / grammatical forms.

ii. They are neither valid nor reliable.

iii. They do not match the specifications of a communicative language test, because they are not interactive, context-based, or activity-based.

iv. Question 1-B intends to test reading comprehension by giving a reading passage with a merely limited number of two (02) comprehension questions and one (01) grammatically motivated, vocabulary question. Here the number of questions should have been more, besides including a variety in asking questions /
techniques of testing reading comprehension, like True-false, Gap-filling, Multiple-choice, Sequencing statements, etc.

v. All the three questions, under Unit I, fail to exploit the techniques of the communicative language tests. Hence they cease to involve students in task-based, performance opportunities in communication, while testing.

vi. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators/examiners for the above tests in reading comprehension.

**Writing Skills:**

i. Question 2-A, Unit II, entitled ‘Paragraph Writing / Expansion’, could have been designed in a better manner by involving students in some performance activities, like listing and sequencing the points or completing a given table, box or chart, as a pre-writing activity, to be used for writing the paragraph. Besides this, the students could have been asked to write ‘topic sentence’ and ‘supporting sentences’, as a part of paragraph writing. In addition to this some activities in sentence level expansion could have also been designed.

ii. Question 2-B is a better test in comparison to Question 2-A, because here the students are first supposed to read the given chart and on the basis of their understanding of the chart, they will write a paragraph.
iii. Question 3-A appears to be a very flat question based on a given situation with no input. Like question 2-A, even here either some verbal/non-verbal input could have been provided or the students could have been made to be involved in some pre-writing activity like filling the box or completing a table.

iv. Question 3-B is a test in writing processes. Here the test-setters does give a context/situation along with verbal inputs, but this could have been more innovative by involving students in step-wise sentence building activities.

v. Question 4-A is an activity in report writing based on the given verbal inputs. Reports are written in a given format. In the absence of any format, here the students will be either using their memory for writing a report in the format that was taught by the teacher in the class, or they will use different formats, which will create problem of scoring. Subjectivity of examiners are certainly going to interfere the marking criteria. However, what is positive in this test is that it provides the learners a familiar situation along with a set of verbal inputs.

vi. Question 4-B provides merely topics expected to be exploited by the students in order to write an essay. Though it can be considered an example of a test in free writing, here too, the setter can give points to be elaborated for completing the essay.
vii. Tests in Writing skills in general are beyond sentence level. That is, they do not test students for sentence completion / building, sentence combination, expansion, or even reduction.

viii. There are generally two types of questions: with verbal inputs (questions 2-A, 2-B, 3-B & 4-A) and without verbal inputs (questions 3-A & 4-B). This means that other techniques of testing writing like picture cues, guided-writing, building a paragraph outline, etc are missing.

ix. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

**Oral Communication:**

i. Question 5, Unit V, entitled ‘Oral Communication’ totally fails to meet the criteria of a communicative language test. In fact, in no way it is a test in oral communication. No oral communication takes place. Hence this test ceases to be either valid or reliable by any means.

ii. The tests (the given three options) under question 5 resemble those tests in writing which are designed on some situations with no verbal input, like questions 3-A, 4-A and 4-B. Here too students are supposed to write, rather than communicate orally.

iii. What is taught or what is intended to be taught through this unit is not being tested here. That means this test ceases to be either valid or reliable.
iv. Since the test is assumed to be answered in written mode, it exploits no technique of oral communication, such as ‘limited response, picture cues, task response, multiple-choice, short lecture or social context, guided techniques, explanation, paraphrasing, and others’.

v. No scoring key / marking criteria are provided to the evaluators.

4.3. **Samples of Communicative language tests:**

In the above section an attempt was made to investigate whether the actual language tests for compulsory English at undergraduate level in AMU meet the theoretical parameters and techniques identified by the communicative language testing. It was found that these tests in practice carry some major lacunae, as specified in the tables above. Keeping these in mind, the researcher here proposes to submit a couple of sample tests for the basic language skills, such as Reading, writing and oral communication. Some of them are as follows:

4.3.1.**Samples of Reading Comprehension:**

Teaching and testing of Reading skill / comprehension generally involve such aspects of reading as:

- Read a long or a short text for specific information
- Skim or scan to obtain general information from a range of text
- Guess the meaning of words from a context
- Read and make inferences
- Obtain information from texts, diagrams and tables
• Predict contents
• Understand line reference
• Understand technical specifications
• Transfer information
• Read a short text to distinguish facts from opinions
• Read for local and global comprehension

These aspects of reading are exploited in a communicative language test in the form of such activities / tasks to be performed as: These are also known as techniques of testing reading.

• Match word with meaning
• Match captions with pictures
• Write a list of uses
• Read and underline
• Fill in the blanks
• Label diagrams
• Match terms with definitions / explanations
• Read a slogan / quotation and say what they refer to
• True or false, rewrite the false ones as true
• Read and say what the words refer to
• Read and complete the text
• Read and answer the questions
• Read and guess meaning
• Match sentences to pictures
• Read and complete the table

For teaching and testing reading comprehension skills, series of books are available in the market. Some of them are Aebersold & Field (1997); Ellis & Ellis (1982); Bartram & Parry (1989); Nunan (1989); Grillette (19…). In terms of reading exercises Ellis & Ellis (1982), entitled *Penguin Elementary Reading Skills* is of special mention because it carries performance based

For a passage based reading comprehension activity the following two samples are being provided. Here an attempt will be made to impress upon the fact that a reading passage can test students’ comprehension through various techniques, unlike the simple, limited number of skimming based questions given by the test setters for Compulsory English test at AMU.

4.3.1.1 Sample 1: Testing Reading Comprehension:

Read the passage below then answer the questions that follow:

| Early in the 16th century men were trying to reach Asia by traveling west from Europe. In order to find Asia they had to find a way past South America. The man who eventually found the way from the Atlantic Ocean to Pacific was Ferdinand Magellan. Magellan sailed from Seville in August 1519 with five ships and about 280 men. Fourteen months later, after spending the severe winter on the coast of Patagonia, he discovered the channel which is now called Magellan’s Straits. In November 1520, after many months of dangers from rocks and storms, the three remaining ships entered the ocean on the other side of South America. They then continued, hoping to reach Asia. But they did not see any land until they reached the islands off the coast of Asia. Before they arrived at these islands, later known as Philippines, men were dying of starvation. While they were staying in the Philippines, Magellan was killed in battle. The remaining officers then had to get back to Spain. They decided to sail round Africa. After many difficulties, one ship with eighteen men sailed into Seville three years after leaving. They were all that remained of Magellan’s expedition. However, their achievement was great. They were the first men |
to sail round the world.

Now answer these questions:

1. Decide which of these statements are true and accordingly write T for true and F for false in the last column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>T or F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magellan died in Spain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only 18 of Magellan’s men remained alive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magellan’s ships he used in his expedition were all lost.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The passage does not mention the cause of Magellan’s death.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magellan was finally able to find a way past America.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magellan and his men were exposed to many kinds of danger.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Answer the following questions from the passage:
   a) Which paragraph in the passage explains the purpose of Magellan’s expedition? _______________________________________________________________________
   b) When did Magellan enter the Pacific Ocean? _______________________________________________________________________
   c) What was the achievement of the men who returned to Spain? _______________________________________________________________________
   d) What happened to Magellan that prevented him from returning to Spain? _______________________________________________________________________
   e) What different dangers did Magellan and his men face during their voyage? ________________, ________________, ________________
   f) The two oceans mentioned in the passage are: ________________, ________________

3. Give the passage a suitable title: _______________________________________________________________________

4. What do these words, in bold type in the passage, refer to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words in bold type</th>
<th>Line nos.</th>
<th>What they refer to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Find the word in the passage which almost has the same meaning as the ones in the first column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word meaning</th>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Word in the passage with same meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finally</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of food</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized journey</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1.2 Sample 2: Testing Reading Comprehension:

Read the text and answer the questions below:

**HOW COINS AND NOTES ARE PRODUCED**

Today’s money is designed by artists and produced by hi-tech machines. Here is given step-by-step description of how it all happens.

**Coins:**

Modern day coins are produced in special factories called **mints**. Before any coin can be produced, though, it has to be designed. This is done by an artist and the design is usually very complex. Why? To make it harder for criminals to copy. Once a design has been completed and approved, a large plaster model of the coin is made. This has the design cut into it with metal tools. The model is then attached to a **reducing machine**, which copies the artist’s work onto a small piece of very hard steel called a die. Each coins needs two dies, one for the front and one for the back. These are then fitted to another machine – the **coining press**. This is where the coins themselves are actually produced. In the past it was common for coins to be made of gold or silver, but not now. These days, metal money consists of cheaper metals – for example, copper, nickel, zinc or tin. To make money, these are heated and mixed together in the right amounts. After that, the **mixture** is rolled into long, thick blocks which are

- Softened
- Rolled again until they are thin, and
- Cut into shaped pieces called blanks.
It is these blanks which are squashed (under enormous pressure and very quickly) between the two dies on the coining press to make coins.

Notes:
Like coins, notes are also designed by artists. In the case of notes though, the designs are much more complex. Each one contains thousands of tiny lines. This is done deliberately to make the notes as hard as possible to copy. First, the artist produces a sketch. Then, when that has been accepted, he/she engraves the design onto a steel plate. The design is engraved back-to-front with special, extremely sharp tools. Why back-to-front? So that when it is printed, it will be right way around on the notes themselves.

Bank notes have to last a long time. Because of this fact they are made with extra-strong paper which contains cotton. But that is not only unusual thing about bank-note paper. In most cases it also contains a very thin piece of metal which runs from top to bottom and faint drawings called watermarks which can only be seen if you hold them up to the light.

The inks printed on bank-notes are not used anywhere else. They are specially made and lots of different colours are combined in each note. Again this is done for reasons of security.

There are three types of printings needed to produce any bank-note. The first is called intaglio and the main elements in the design (faces, objects, etc). Next, all the complex patterns in the background are printed by a process called lithography. Finally, a third system, letterpress, adds the serial number. This has to be done separately because each note needs an individual number.

Now answer the questions:

1. What is the first step in coin making?

2. How many dies does a coin need? Why?

3. What is the similarity between early forms of coins and nowadays?

4. The following words are underlined in the passage, what do they refer to?
5. What are the precautions that are taken to make it difficult to copy notes?

___________________________________________________________

6. What are watermarks?

___________________________________________________________

7. What is the importance of artists in money making?

___________________________________________________________

8. Complete the following table about the functions of the following machines, instrument and tools which are mentioned in the text. You will find them in bold and italicized typed fonts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Machines/Instrument/Tools</th>
<th>Line Nos.</th>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Machine</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coining Press</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharp tool</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. What is the difference between ordinary ink and the ink used in printing bank notes?

___________________________________________________________

10. What is strange about bank-notes? Why?

___________________________________________________________

11. Look at the following words in their context, then match them with the suitable definition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Line Nos.</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Put the following steps of notes production in the right order, then, use them to write a paragraph about notes production.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps in the process</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painting the main elements in the design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engraving the design onto a steel plate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixing different coloured ink together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producing a sketch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding serial number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing all the strong papers which contain thin pieces of metals and watermarks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Now write the paragraph:**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
4.3.1.3 Marking Criteria for Reading Comprehension:

**General Instruction:**

- Give full marks for the correct one-word answers in the form of matching, word substitution, or fill-in-the-blanks, etc.
- But for more than one-word answers, follow the instructions given below:

  g) **General Content:** Full marks, if the answer is given in one’s own words (i.e. lines not picked from the given passage); and if the information provided is relevant and arranged in logical organization.

  h) Give marks for relevance of information and logical organization.

  i) **Grammar:** Give marks for accuracy of tenses, verb forms, uses of function words like articles and pronouns.

  j) **Variety:** Give marks for a wide range of vocabulary and structures, and use of connectors and signal words, linkers, sequence words, etc.

**Note:**

A zero should be given only:

- If the student has been caught cheating.
- If the student has not answered the task.
If the student has only written some words, picked from the given text, and randomly placed without any level of logical organization or grammatical accuracy.

4.3.2. Samples of Writing skill:

A course in writing at undergraduate level generally target at such learning outcomes as:

- Writing short sentences
- Writing short paragraphs
- Explaining cause and effects
- Writing a formal / informal letter
- Writing descriptions of persons, places, and things
- Writing process
- Writing instructions / directions
- Writing reports
- Writing essays
- Summarizing / Abstracting / Précis writing

These aspects of writing are tested in a communicative framework with the help of such activities / tasks as:

- Expanding words into sentences
- Sentence Completion
- Arranging words to frame sentence
- Sentence combination, expansion, and reduction
- Building paragraphs, using topic and supporting sentences
- Writing based on verbal inputs
- Writing based on non-verbal inputs like tables, diagrams, and charts
- Guided writing
- Free writing
- use of diction and rhetorical devices
- Mechanics of writing, like spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.
Since a communicative language test targets on the learners’ participation and involvement in the task provided in the form a test, it is better if students are made to write as a Pre-writing activity, things like ‘listing identities’ for describing persons, list and sequence points on a given topic before they go on to write a paragraph or essay, or make a table, chart or diagram before writing an explanatory or descriptive text. In brief, in a communicative language test, students are required to think and prepare their own inputs as a part of pre-writing stage, before they are involved to actual while-writing activity. Merely asking the students to write a paragraph or an essay using a randomly given verbal input actually fails to meet the requirements of a good communicative language test in writing.

Such textbooks as *Headway Series* by Liz & John Soars (1993), *Look Ahead* by Hopkins and Potter (1994), *Tapestry Series* by Rebecca Oxford, *Keep Writing* parts 1 & 2 by Richard Harrison (1997), *New Interchange* by Richards, Hull & Proctor, and *Tasks for Independent Language Learning* by Gardner & Miller (eds.) carry effective tasks in various types of writing. Please see Appendix VIII, before you going through the sample exercises given below, for some samples from couple of these books:
4.3.2.1 **Sample 1: Writing Skill: Describing Persons:**

Complete the box below, before you write the paragraph to describe your friend:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/Single:</td>
<td>Children:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies:</td>
<td>Languages known:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write the paragraph:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Note: Filling out the box like in the above task makes the students participate and prepare his/her own list of information. Hence, they do
not need to use the test-setter’s list of input. The difficulty level of this exercise can be raised, if we add certain aspects like, as reflected in the box below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father’s name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of brothers and sisters:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married/Single:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbies:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress &amp; Habits:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size &amp; Build:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facial features &amp; Expressions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim in life:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Now if the students are asked to write, they can compose a detailed description in more than a paragraph by using the above set of information.

4.3.2.2 Sample 2: Writing Skill: Explaining a table:

The table below shows the proportion of different categories of families living in poverty in Australia in 1999. Explain the information in the table by selecting and reporting the main features, and making comparisons where relevant. Write at least 150 words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Type</th>
<th>Proportion of people from each household type living in poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Single aged person</td>
<td>6% (54,000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Aged couple                      4% (48,000)
- Single, no children             19% (359,000)
- Couple, no children             7% (211,000)
- Sole parent                     21% (232,000)
- Couple with children            12% (933,000)
- **All households**              11% (1,837,000)

Now write your answer:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4.3.2.3 **Sample 3: Writing Skill: Describing graphs and charts:**

The graph below shows the demand for electricity in a posh colony in Delhi during typical days in winter and summer. The pie chart shows how electricity is used in this colony. Explain both the graph and chart given below by selecting and reporting the main features, and making comparisons where relevant. Write at least 150 words.
Write your answer here:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
4.3.2.3 Marking Criteria for writing Skill: (10 marks)

**General Content:** (3 marks)
Give marks for relevance of information and logical organization.

**Grammar:** (3 marks)
Give marks for accuracy of tenses, verb forms, use of other function words like articles, pronouns, prepositions, sequence words, and linking devices.

**Variety:** (2 marks)
Give marks for a wide range of vocabulary and structures, and use of connectors and signal words, and overall presentation of information.

**General Writing Mechanics:** (2 marks)
Give marks for good spelling, correct punctuation, and use of capitals. Deduct marks for poor spelling of common words and very untidy or illegible writing.

**Notes:**
- Depending on the nature of the task, the minimum number of words the student is required to write is 150. If the students write less than 100 words, one mark should be deducted. This is not applicable if the number of words is defined by the task, e.g. formal letter, set of instructions, description of a process, etc.
- If the student’s answer is off the topic, it should be marked out of one-third of the allocated marks.
- A zero should be given only:
- If the student has been caught cheating.
- If the student has not answered the task.
- If the student has only written three to five sentences of little grammatical and structural accuracy and no content value.

- The allocation of marks is subject to changes in policies of test weighting.

4.3.3. Samples of Oral Communication:

The teaching and testing of oral communication generally involves in the following activities:

**Listening:**

- Listen for general information
- Listen for specific information
- Obtain gist of what they hear
- Transfer information from listening input to diagram
- Listen for comprehension

**Speaking:**

- Give and obtain information
- Present summary (from notes)
- Describe (technical features)
- Explain (technical data)
- Give definitions (computer features)
- Make justifications
- Give instructions/directions
- Compare information

For a communicative test of oral communications, students are required to be involved in such operations as:

- Listening and answer questions
- Listen and complete sentences
- Listen and identify
- Listen and tick
Listen and complete a table
Listen and label a diagram
Multiple choice
Listen for specific information (descriptions, definitions)
Listen for specific information (announcements, news items, interviews, conversation)
Listen for gist (lecture, speeches)
Listen for general comprehension

Contributions like Fulcher (2003), Underhill (1987) on testing speaking besides other textbooks (such as Such textbooks as *Headway Series* by Liz & John Soars (1993), *Look Ahead* by Hopkins and Potter (1994), *Tapestry Series* by Rebecca Oxford, *Keep Writing* parts 1 & 2 by Richard Harrison (1997), *New Interchange* by Richards, Hull & Proctor, and *Tasks for Independent Language Learning* by Gardner & Miller (eds.)) provide sufficient material and explanation to communicative testing of oral communication. Please see Appendix IX for samples on communicative language testing of oral communication from couple of these books. With regard to oral communication testing at AMU, a few samples are provided below, which can be put to practice by replacing the written mode of its testing as shown in the first and second year Compulsory English tests.

In the name of samples for ‘Oral communication’ one can give an exercise based on listening text, to which the students respond, first by writing down the answers and then later by giving their response on some topic related to the listening text. In the sample below, an attempt has been made to design
one such test. Here in place of the audio/video text, the tape-script has been provided. If the students are weak (for instance, belonging to Arts group, excluding English or Communicative English Main students), they may be allowed to listen to the recorded text twice, But if the students are better ones (for instance belonging to Bio-Chemistry main, etc), they may be made to listen to the text only once. In TOEFL and IELTS tests too they do not allowing listening to the text for more than twice. For teaching purposes, they may be made to listen a sufficient number of times, for instance to discuss the answer, in case of some confusion. Here goes the first sample of a test in oral communication, spread as listening and speaking activities:

4.3.3.1 Sample 1: Oral Communication:

**SPEAKING**

**Part 1:**
The examiner begins with general questions about the students themselves, their friends, some trips, travels or picnics with friends.

Example questions:

- What type of friends do you have?
- In what ways are your friends important for you?
- Who do you like to go on picnic with? Friends or Family members? Why?
- Do you usually see your friends during playtime or anytime?

**Part 2:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities / Topics</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Describe an interesting historical place, that you last visited. You should say:
- What it is?
- Where is it located?
- Who built it?
- What you can see there now?
- Say why the place is interesting?

Part 3:
Discussion Topics: Traveling is important for knowledge.
Example Questions:
- Do you think traveling helps in gaining knowledge? Justify your answer.
- What do you learn when you visit historical places?
- What do you learn when you visit other regions, cities, and countries?
- Do you get to learn something of religion and culture too? Give examples to elaborate your response.

LISTENING COMPREHENSION
Listen to the recorded conversation and answer question 1 – 10.

Tape-script 1:
Sally: Oh, Peter, there you are. You’ve been ages. What kept you so long?
Peter: I’m sorry I’m so late, Sally. Have you been waiting long?
Sally: Oh, half an hour. But it doesn’t matter. I’ve had a coffee and I’ve been reading this guidebook for tourists. Sit down. You look very hot and tired. What would you like to drink?
Peter: I’d love a really chilled mineral water or something. Will you have another coffee?
Sally: Yes, I will. The waitress will be back in a moment. Why were
you so late? Did something happen?

Peter: Yes. You know I went to the bank to cash some travelers cheques? Well, the exchange rate was looking healthy, but when I went to the teller, they told me the computer system was temporarily down, so they couldn’t do any transactions. They said the problem would be fixed in a few minutes, so I waited. And then I started talking to another guy in the bank, and I forgot the time.

Sally: Oh, really? Someone you met in the bank? Does he work there?

Peter: No, he was a tourist, from New York. His name’s Henry, and he has been here for a week, but he’s moving on to Germany tomorrow. He’s an architect, and he’s spending four weeks traveling around Europe.

Sally: Just like us!

Peter: Yeah, just like us. He told me the names of some places where we should eat. Great food, and not too expansive, he said. Oh, and he also gave me this map of the bus system. He said he didn’t need it any more.

Sally: That’s useful. Pity he’s moving on tomorrow. Ah, here’s the waitress. Let’s order. Do you want anything to eat, or shall we just have a drink?

Peter: Well. I’m hungry, and we’ve got a lot of sight seeing to do, so let us just have a snack and a drink.

Sally: Sounds good to me!

Peter: Well, let’s decide what we’ll see today. I guess the best place to start is the Cathedral, and then the castle. What are the opening times for those two?

Sally: Well, according to this guidebook, the Cathedral is only open from nine-thirty in the morning until midday. No, hang on. That’s the Cathedral Museum. The Cathedral itself is open morning and afternoon. The Castle is just open from one to five, so we can’t go there until after lunch. I really want to spend some time in the Art Gallery, because they’ve got this wonderful painting by Rembrandt that I’ve always wanted to see.
Peter: What else should we see?

Sally: Well, the guidebook says the Botanical Gardens are worth spending sometime in, and they’re open all day, from eight to six, so we can go there any time. I’d like to go to the markets near the river too, but … oh … no, wait, that’s only in the mornings, too.

Peter: As well as today and tomorrow, we can see some other places on Monday, you know. But I don’t think the Markets will be open then; then only open on Thursday, so we’ve missed them for this week. May be we should go to the Cathedral today because it’s Sunday tomorrow, and even though it’s open everyday it might be more difficult to get in tomorrow because of the Church services.

Sally: That’s true, but the Art Gallery isn’t open on Sundays at all, so we will have to go there today. The Castle’s open on Sundays at all, so we’ll have to go there today. The Castle’s open everyday except Mondays, so we’re OK there, and the Gardens of course only close at night.

Peter: Are all these places free or do we have to pay to go in? What does the guidebook say?

Sally: I think there’s a charge for all of them except the Botanical Gardens. Oh, and the Markets, of course you don’t pay to go in.

Peter: OK, well, it looks like our plan is this: we will go to see the paintings you like first, The Rembrandt, then have lunch and go on to the Castle after that, and then the Cathedral.

Sally: OK, it says here that the roof of the Cathedral is really beautiful.

Peter: Is that right? What I really want to do at the Cathedral is climb the tower. The view is supposed to be spectacular.

Sally: OK, well, that’ll be more than enough for today. Then, tomorrow, let’s go to the Botanical Garden and have a picnic. I want to sit by the river and watch the swans. The city’s famous for them.

Now answer these questions:

Questions 1 – 5: Choose the correct option A, B or C
1. What does Peter want to drink?
   A. tea
   B. Coffee
   C. Something cold

2. What caused Peter problems at the bank?
   A. The exchange rate was down.
   B. He was late.
   C. The computers were not working

3. Who did Peter talk to at the bank?
   A. an old friend
   B. an American man
   C. a German man

4. Henry gave Peter a map of
   A. the city
   B. the bus routes
   C. the train system

5. What do Peter and Sally decide to order?
   A. food and drinks
   B. just food
   C. just drinks

Questions 6 – 8: Complete the notes below using words from the box below:

   Art Gallery
   Cathedral
   Castle
   Gardens
   Markets

6. Tourist attractions open all day: _______________________ and Gardens

7. Tourist attractions NOT open on Mondays: _________________ and Castle

8. Tourist attractions which have free entry: _________________ and
Questions 9 and 10: Complete the sentences below:

9. The first place Peter and Sally will visit is the _____________________________.

10. At the Cathedral, Peter really wants to _______________________________.

4.3.3.2 Sample 2: Oral Communication:

SPEAKING

Part 1:
The examiner begins with general questions about the students themselves, their surroundings, their life on the campus, their studies.

Example questions:
- Do you like your course?
- How do you find your life on the university campus?
- Can you list some of your problems?
- How do you manage your problems?
- Who helps you in sorting them out?

Part 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities / Topics</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss the worst crisis you have undergone as a student in this university. OR Discuss some of the major problems that you have faced so far as a student in this university. You should say:</td>
<td>- You need to speak on a couple of topics for 2 to 3 minutes. - You have one minute to think about what you are going to say. - You can make some notes to help you, if you wish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What it is / they are? • When it / they happened with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
you?
- Who solved it / them?
- How do you feel now of those problems?
- Do you find the campus an interesting place now?

Part 3:
Discussion Topic: Life is not a bed of roses.
Example Questions:
- Do you think struggle in life is important for gaining success? Justify your answer.
- What do you learn from your tough experiences / times?
- How do they help you in leading your future life?

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Listen to the recorded text and answer question 1 – 10:

Tape-script 2:

So the counseling services we offer deal with any problems arising from your studies, or in your life outside the university. Let’s take academic counseling. If you’re confused about subjects or how to combine them in your degree, then we can advise you and discuss the career you are aiming for, so that you can see it all in context. We can also chase up your tutor, if you’re not getting proper feedback on how you are getting on in your subject.

Besides help with academic problems, you may also need personal counseling: if you think you’re already under stress, well, just wait till classes begin next week. You’ll have to start adjusting to teaching and learning methods that may be unfamiliar to you, as well as the mounting pressure as the deadline for that first assignment creeps up on you. And of course, you have to cope with all this without your usual social network – you know, the social contacts, family and friends you could normally rely on for help. All of this causes anxiety. Studying overseas can trigger a personal
crisis – you may have left a lot of what you might call ‘unfinished business’ back in your country, or you may have interrupted personal relationships or even sometimes have broken them off to come overseas, and so the student often feels lonely, unhappy, unmotivated and unable to concentrate on studying. Or there may be other things bothering you. Or resident chaplain can offer you spiritual guidance if that’s what you want, or we can put you in touch with community groups that can provide you with social contacts and friendship.

What about exam stress? It affects nearly everyone to some extent, but especially overseas students like yourselves. There may be a huge amount of family pressure on you to succeed, and if you fail a subject or drop out a course because it’s too difficult then your self-esteem can suffer. But it’s not the end of the world if you don’t pass an exam – I had to resist First Year Anthropology, so I can certainly offer you a sympathetic ear! Anyway, exam failure can lead to worrying changes in the way you normally behave. You may also be off your food, or you may have dietary problems because the local food is not to your liking and upsets you, and this can affect your health and studies. Glenda Roberts is our dietician in the Health Service and we can put you on to her.

And we all have money problems, don’t we? But remember, full time students can get a low interest loan of up to six hundred dollars to buy books and for similar study-related expenses. That’s right and you can get double that amount if you can’t afford an item of equipment you need for your course – a musical instrument, for example. And it doesn’t stop there. When you move into a flat, starting up expenses, including furniture for it, can be covered by a loan through the Welfare Service – see Jill Freeman for details.

Can we help you? Well, last academic year, in spite of staff cuts, we counseled two hundred and forty international students for a total of twenty six hundred hours counseling, and, finally we won all but just one of the twelve appeals that we launched on behalf of the students. Not too bad for an understaffed service, don’t you think? That’s all from me. Thank you.

Now answer the questions 1 – 10: Choose the correct option A, B or C:

1. The Counseling Service may contact tutors if
   
   A. they are too slow in marking assignments.
   
   B. they give students a lot of work.
   
   C. they don’t inform students about their progress.
2. Stress may be caused by
   A. new teachers
   B. time pressure
   C. unfamiliar subject matter

3. International students may find stress difficult to handle because
   A. they lack support from family and friends.
   B. they don’t have time to make new friends.
   C. they find it difficult to socialize.

4. A personal crisis may be caused by
   A. studying for too long overseas.
   B. business problems in the student’s own country.
   C. disruption to personal relationships.

5. Students may lose self-esteem if
   A. they have to change courses.
   B. they don’t complete a course.
   C. their family puts too much pressure on them.

6. Students should consult Glenda Roberts if
   A. their general health is poor.
   B. their diet is too strict.
   C. they can’t eat the local food.

7. Students in financial difficulties can receive
   A. assistance to buy books.
   B. a loan to pay their course fees.
   C. a no-interest loan to cover study expenses.

8. Loans are also available to students who
   A. can’t pay their rent.
   B. need to buy furniture.
   C. can’t cover their living expenses.

9. The number of students counseled by the service last year was
   A. 214
   B. 240
   C. 2,600.

10. The speaker thinks the Counselling Service
A. has been effective in spite of staff shortages.  
B. is under-used by students.  
C. has suffered badly because of staff cuts.

4.3.3.3 Sample 3: Oral Communication:

SPEAKING

Part 1:
The examiner begins with general questions about the students themselves, their specializations, the subject that they like or dislike, their impression about teaching and examination system.

Example questions:

- Do you like your course?
- Are you satisfied with the teaching of your course?
- Does your reading room / library have sufficient books in your area of studies?
- What is your study habit? Do you study late nights? Do you like to study alone in your room or in pair or group? Discuss the reason for your answer.

Part 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities / Topics</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss the merits / demerits of studying in pair / group for your assignments or exams.</td>
<td>• You need to speak on a couple of topics for 2 to 3 minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should say:</td>
<td>• You have one minute to think about what you are going to say.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Your agreement / disagreement? Reasons.</td>
<td>• You can make some notes to help you, if you wish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• List the merits / demerits?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some points relating your own study habits?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Things that you like / don’t like while studying?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 3:
Discussion Topic: Self help is the best help.

Example Questions:

- Do you think you have to tackle your problems relating assignment / exams in your own ways?
- Do you think learning occurs outside the class?
- Do you think learners learn more from their efforts rather than from teachers’ lectures?

LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Listen to the recorded conversation and answer questions 21 – 30:

Tape-script 3:

Rosa: Oh, there you are, good. Sorry I’m a bit late – there was a long queue. So have you worked how to deal with this assignment then?

Mick: Not yet, we’ve only been here for a couple of minutes ourselves.

Rosa: Can you just remind me what the task is exactly?

Pete: Well, there are two, no, three, parts of it: first, we have got to write an essay about ways of collecting data. Then …

Rosa: What’s the title of the essay exactly?

Mick: I’ve got it here: ‘Assess the two main methods of collecting data in social science research’.

Rosa: And how much do we need to write?

Mick: Fifteen hundred words. That’s for the essay. Then, for the second part of the assignment, we have to choose one method of data collection, and ‘carry out a small-scale study, making appropriate use of the method chosen to gather data from at least five subjects’.

Rosa: And then we have to write a report on the study?

Pete: That’s right, of three to four thousand words.

Rosa: Did you get as far as discussing which form of data collection we should go for questionnaire or interview, isn’t it?

Mick: Yeah, I think we should use a questionnaire. It will be so much
less time-consuming than organizing interviews, I reckon. Once
we’ve agreed on the wording of it, we only have to send it out
and wait for the responses.

Rosa: Yes, I think it probably would be quicker. But what did that
article he gave us last week say about the quality of data from
questionnaires?

Mick: I’m pretty sure it recommended questionnaire as a resource of
‘high reliable data’. As long as you design the questionnaire
properly in the first place, the data will be fine.

Rosa: No, I’m sure it talked about drawbacks as well, didn’t it?
Something about the response rate and the problems you get if
it’s too low.

Mick: Yeah, but we only need data from five subjects anyway.

Rosa: I suppose so. Another drawback I remember it mentioned was
that questionnaire data tends not to reveal anything
unexpected, because it is limited to the questions fixed in
advance by the researcher.

Mick: Come on, Rosa. This is only practice. It’s not meant to be real
research, is it?

Rosa: Well, I’m not sure about that. May be I’d better go through the
article again, just to be sure. Can you remember what it was
called?


Rosa: M-E-H-T-A ?

Mick: Yeah. And he also recommended a more recent book, called
‘Survey Research’, by Bell, I think. It’s in the series published
by London University.

Pete: And if we tried to use interviews instead, I saw a book in the
departmental library that’ll be helpful: it’s called ‘Interviews

Rosa: Right. I’ve got a tutorial now. Can we meet up again later this
week? What about Friday morning?

Pete: Suits me. Eleven o’ clock?

Rosa: Fine.
Mick: Before Friday, I think we should all look through the reading list.

Now answer the questions 1 – 10:

Questions 1 – 4:

Complete the notes below:

Details of Assignment

Part 1: Essay
Title: ‘Assess the two main methods of \(Q.1\) \___________ in social science research’.
Number of words: \(Q.2\) \___________

Part 2: Small scale study
Choose one method.
Gather data from at least \(Q.3\) \___________ subjects.

Part 3: Report on study
Number of words: \(Q.4\) \___________

Questions 5 and 6:

Choose TWO letters A – E.

What TWO disadvantages of the questionnaire form of data collection do the students discuss?

i. The data is sometimes invalid.
ii. Too few people may respond.
iii. It is less likely to reveal the unexpected.
iv. It can only be used with literate populations.
v. There is a delay between the distribution and return of questionnaires.

Questions 7 – 10

Complete the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Year of Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Q.27)___________ ___________</td>
<td>‘Sample Surveys in Social Science</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research’</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oxford University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bell</td>
<td>(Q.28) ___________</td>
<td>(Q.29) _______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>‘Interviews that work’</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Q.30) _______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.3.3.4 Marking Criteria for Oral Communication: (To be rated against 1 – 5)

#### Accuracy:

5. almost completely accurate use of forms
4. occasional minor errors of forms which do not affect communication
3. more serious errors of form but which still do not affect communication
2. many errors which do affect communication and require repair/clarification by the interviewer
1. many serious errors, in effect a non-communicator

#### Fluency

5. responds immediately, interacts naturally with interviewer and produces longer utterances than required
4. responds immediately, interacts easily with examiner, occasional pauses and hesitations to search for right form/word
3. some pauses and hesitations which make it necessary for interviewer to prompt but interacts naturally with interviewer
2. many pauses, hesitations, requires frequent prompting and repair from interviewer
1. slow to respond, limited to brief responses on specific points and unable to discuss

#### Intelligibility

5. Clear accurate pronunciation and use of appropriate stress and intonation
4. Minor errors which do not affect clarity / intelligibility
3 Some errors which clarity and require a little repair by the interviewer
2 Many errors which seriously affect clarity/intelligibility and require frequent repair
1 Errors are so frequent that communication is difficult; a limited or non-user

**Range of Expression**
5 Fluent communication with appropriate use of a wide range of vocabulary and structures
4 Fluent communication with occasional inappropriateness use of vocabulary and structure
3 Generally effective communication sometimes hampered by limited vocabulary and structure
2 Limited range of vocabulary and structure which severely restricts communication
1 Extremely limited range of vocabulary and structure restricted to a few formulas and short phrases

**Appropriacy**
5 Responds appropriately in situations presented in the test
4 Most contributions are appropriate with a few minor lapses in word choice, register
3 Occasional lapses in word choice and register
2 Frequent lapses in word choice and register
1 Inappropriate usage in most of the situations set in the test

4.4. Summing up:

Since the present chapter was aimed at an analytical study of the gulf between principle and practice of Communicative language testing with reference to the undergraduate level Compulsory English Course of the first
and second years, it began with providing the curricular set up of the AMU, where it tried to impress upon the fact that English language has always occupied a central position in the overall curriculum and that English language teaching has been more than a century old phenomenon in this university. Then this chapter identified the main objective of the syllabi prescribed at the above-mentioned levels and found that they intend to train learners in the English language in a way that they are able to communicate proficiently for various purposes in their everyday life. In the light of the principles of Communicative language testing and the objectives of the prescribed syllabi, the English language tests of the first and second years of the academic session 2009-10 were analysed and it was found that they often lack in meeting the parameters of the Communicative language tests. Hence the researcher proposed a couple of samples of communicative language based tests involving the basic skills of listening comprehension, reading and writing. These samples were also supplemented by samples from various books in the form of appendices for these language skills. More importantly, it was discovered that the language tests used at AMU do not provide the examiners/evaluators with any marking criteria / scoring key. Therefore, the present chapter also carries proposed marking criteria for these basic language skills. This chapter, thus, provides a set of sample English
language tests, along with marking criteria, for listening, speaking, reading and writing, premised on the principles of communicative language tests.

References:


Grillette (19…).


Syllabus and Courses of Studies in AMU for Examinations of 1926. Aligarh: The Muslim University Institute Press.


