CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Measures should ... be taken to introduce courses to suit the needs of students at different levels of attainment and help them attain a command whereby they can use English as a 'library language'."


The Report of the Education Commission (1964-66) recommended that English be taught as a 'library language'. A consensus had already emerged in the field of education by 1964 that students must be facilitated to acquire knowledge in the discipline of their choice through their mother tongue, but at the same time, they must also be provided with a language tool using which they could keep themselves abreast of what is called the 'explosion of knowledge' the world over.

The idea of teaching English as a library language has belied the principle of evolution. The teachers of English in Gujarat, except where they teach students of special English, continue to plough the sands. It is time, one feels, to clearly understand the specific objectives of teaching English as a library language and ponder over how to meet these objectives. This investigation is an attempt to spell
out the objectives, evaluate the present teaching of English in Gujarat at the college level in the light of the objectives, and suggest ways of satisfactorily meeting the objectives.

Scope

The investigator assumed a certain connotation of the term 'library language' and yet thought there was scope for determining a widely acceptable connotation through an opinion survey.

The investigation into the actual teaching of English as a library language was limited to the faculties of Commerce and Science. There was a strong temptation to add at least the faculty of Arts, but it was resisted since its inclusion would have made the investigation rather unwieldy, considering the fact that there are various subjects of specialization in the same faculty.

Of the rest of the faculties, Commerce and Science were automatic choices since they attract the largest number of students and the linguistic requirements of their students are common enough to be understood by a teacher of English. This investigator can claim to be rather closely familiar with such requirements of
Commerce students because he is a teacher of English in a Commerce college. As for the Science faculty, its inclusion needs no apologies even otherwise, in view of its importance to a developing country.

The study includes the two faculties of all universities in Gujarat, viz. The Gujarat University, The South Gujarat University, The Saurashtra University, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda and The Sardar Patel University in its purview. English is being taught in the said faculties of these universities under similar circumstances. Hence a study basically related to one of the universities could be extended to the rest with efforts which are not overpowering and an outcome which is all the more significant in view of the completeness of the study. The study, even if concerned with only one university, would have been complete by itself academically, but from the practical point of view, keeping away matters which are within its easy reach, it would have been incomplete. Since the same official policy guides the teaching of English in all these universities, a complete study is only in the fitness of things.

The vocabulary introduced at all the levels upto graduation in Commerce and Science in these universities
was analysed, the relative syllabuses, text-books and question papers were critically examined and an attempt was made also to get an idea of the equipment of the teacher and the taught, especially in the light of their capability, respectively, to teach and learn English as a library language. The study proved that the requirements of teaching English as such were not met, so the investigator thought that the onus was on him to suggest ways and means to make good the deficiency.

The importance of methodology in a programme of language teaching can never be belittled. But its study requires a lot of scientifically controlled experimentation and longitudinal research which are not feasible in the present educational set up. The aspect has, therefore, been reluctantly excluded from the study.

Objectives:

The following were the specific objectives of this investigation:

(i) To figure out the connotation of the term "English as a library language"

(ii) To evaluate prescribed syllabuses in the context of the objectives of teaching English as a library language

(iii) To evaluate question papers in the context of the objectives of teaching English as a library language
To study the nature of the language work being included in new syllabuses and in question papers based on them.

To estimate the size of the vocabulary prescribed for study at each of the levels up to graduation.

To study the 'usefulness' of the vocabulary prescribed for study for the purpose of using English as a library language.

To study the impact of the acquisition of a 'useful' vocabulary on students' power of comprehension in a specific subject.

To evolve a minimum 'useful' vocabulary on an experimental basis for one of the levels up to graduation in Commerce and Science.

To examine the equipment of teachers of English.

To examine students' equipment in English.

To present a few model passages for Pre-University Commerce in which at least 75% of the new vocabulary items introduced are 'useful' to Commerce students.

**Procedure:**

The procedure for this study mainly comprised opinion survey, content analysis, experimental study, testing and exploratory survey. Its details have been given below.

For the purpose of verifying certain assumptions relating to the connotation of the term 'library language', an opinion survey was conducted. Questionnaire, interview and correspondence were used as tools, and educationists, teachers of English, pedagogians and the elite were
selected as respondents. In the light of the consensus that emerged on the connotation of the term, specific objectives of teaching English as a library language were spelt out. The survey also, incidentally, helped develop guidelines for the investigation.

With a view to studying the impact of the teaching of a 'useful' vocabulary on students' power of comprehension, two small experiments were carried out. One experiment was tried out on a group of Pre-University Commerce students and the other on a group of Pre-University Science students.

By adding new items contained in Selections in English for the S.S.C. Examination, 1971, to the vocabulary prescribed for Standards VIII, IX and X, a comprehensive vocabulary-list school-leavers are supposed to have learnt was prepared. The list was used to determine new vocabulary items introduced after the termination of the secondary level.

Systematic random vocabulary samples were drawn from the text-books of Compulsory English, prescribed for different levels of the two faculties at different universities in Gujarat for the year 1971. On the basis of these samples, the size of the vocabulary introduced at each class level as also at the faculty level was
estimated for each university. Similarly, the extent of the 'useful' items in the vocabulary was estimated. Services of the teachers of subjects other than those related to languages were utilised for the purpose of determining the 'usefulness' of the vocabulary items. The special vocabulary evolved for Pre-University Commerce, mentioned in Section 'E', was an additional source of reference for the purpose of determining such items for Commerce. A few vocabulary items introduced at the Pre-University Commerce and Science levels were studied also in the light of Thorndike's word-value system.

On an experimental basis, a special vocabulary was developed for Pre-University Commerce by analysing the vocabulary of five books covering the topics on the syllabuses for subjects other than languages at the level - Commerce, Accountancy, Economics, Commercial Geography and Business Mathematics.

A check-list was evolved for the purpose of evaluating the syllabuses of Compulsory English for 1971 in the light of the specific objectives of teaching English as a library language. It was used to evaluate the syllabuses and suitable conclusions were drawn.
G Common patterns underlying the question-papers in English for the year 1973 were detected. The patterns were evaluated in the light of the specific objectives of teaching English as a library language.

H Using the Language Section of the question-paper in English for Pre-University Commerce of the Gujarat University for the year 1973 as test material, tests were administered to a group of S.S.C. students and a group of Pre-University Commerce students. The difference between the means of their achievement scores was worked out and suitable conclusions were drawn. The tests verified the investigator's assumption that the questions being too simple, the performance of the S.S.C. students could be as good as, if not better than, that of the Pre-University Commerce students.

I A questionnaire was administered to relatively younger teachers of English, seeking their views on the following:

(a) The objective of teaching English in India today

(b) Whether the objective is met by the present syllabuses

(c) If the objective is not met, their suggestions to make the syllabuses meet it

(d) The method they follow in teaching English
The responses were examined from the view-points of the clarity of the teachers' approach to the problem and their language equipment. Both these aspects of the teachers' competence were rated on a three-point scale - Good, Fair and Poor.

Students' equipment was studied in the following manner:

1. Their entry language equipment was studied from specimens of the written English of prospective college entrants. Their terminal language equipment was studied from specimens of the written English of T.Y.B.Com. students.

2. The reading efficiency of a small sample of T.Y.B. Com. students was measured through suitably constructed tests.

3. A questionnaire was administered to a group of T.Y.B.Com. students and data regarding their library habits, with special reference to their reading in English, were collected.

A few passages were collected which could be included in Selections in English for Pre-University Commerce. They were adapted in the light of college entrants' language proficiency. Their vocabulary was
analysed so as to make sure that they contained a desired number of items 'useful' to Commerce students.

Exercises covering language aspects vital to teaching English as a library language were set on the model specimen passages.