

CHAPTER-VI

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6.0 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CHAPTER

After analysing the present syllabus and question papers in detail (Chapter-IV), we found it necessary to obtain the teachers and students views about the present set of materials as a whole and particularly how far these materials could be used successfully to develop the required skills of the students. An attempt therefore has also been made by a set of questionnaires to find out whether the student needs are looked after or not by the present set of materials [CHAPTER V].

In this section, we have tried to sum up our findings. These findings are derived not only from our analysis and collection of data but also from our experience as a classroom teacher.

The conclusion is followed by some recommendations which will act as a guide line for the future planners of syllabus. Hence, no separate 'model syllabus' is provided at the end of this research.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The chief aim of this study was to analyse the present English Language Teaching materials prescribed for pre-University students against the back-ground of the prevailing English Language Teaching situation at the Pre-University level in the colleges of Mizoram affiliated to the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) Shillong. The analysis has been attempted in the context of the principal ELT trends. The views of the principal participants of the ELT activity, viz. college teachers and

students were elicited through questionnaires and their responses have been tabulated, analysed and interpreted. The details of the findings have been summarized at the end of each section of the questionnaires.

The data collected through the survey yielded a variety of useful conclusions. These findings and major conclusions relating to the main issues which were stated in Chapter-1 (Section 1.6) have been organized leading to some useful recommendations.

In the following sections, the conclusions and recommendations, in regard to the Government Policy, learner needs, teacher's role, as well as teaching-learning materials have been presented. A classroom observation also reveals some weaknesses of the teachers. Hence, teaching methods, teacher training and examinations have also been touched upon.

6.2 ENGLISH TEACHING : GOVERNMENT POLICY

In the state of Mizoram, the teaching of English starts from class III. In spite of the recommendations of the Kothari Commission and the 'Report of the Study Group on English,' the teaching of English is not shifted from Class III to Class V. A pass in English is compulsory at the Matric or Secondary School Certificate [SSC] Public examination. English is the only medium of instruction at the high school level [viii - x]. There is no regional medium of instruction at the High School level. It is therefore expected that by the time they complete their two years PU course they would have learnt English as a subject and

other subjects through the medium of English for ten years. But the exit behaviour of the students show that there is hardly any improvement in their English.

No studies have so far been conducted in this state to find out the actual causes of the failure and the level of difficulties the learner faces in learning English at the PU level.

6.2.1. POLICY AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

The policy of the North Eastern Hill university with regard to the teaching of English at the undergraduate level has been very clearly described in the UGC Zonal Workshop Report NEHU [FEB 17-19., 1977] [Appendix- V]

The report clearly pronounces the objectives of the course and the expected outcome. But in actuality, we find that in NEHU the traditional kind of syllabus still exists and this consists of a list of topics or books to be read. It is not specific enough to serve any useful purpose for it fails to specify just what it is that students would learn to do. The NEHU syllabus consists only of a list of books. It does not specify the desired goals and achievements to be reached. The argument has always been that teachers are aware of their goals and objectives.

" No doubt teachers have presumably this in mind, but there is some evidence that unless objectives are both slated and deliberately catered to they tend to be neglected". [Beared 1970 : 61]

In connection with selection of the materials, the UGC Zonal workshop report says

" one factor, among the other things, should be considered: Is the text suitable for language work i.e. does it contain vocabulary and structures that can form the basis of suitable language work in the class at this level ?."

It also says,

" General English course will not be considered successful unless it enables the students to participate in conversation and express his ideas coherently and correctly."

The Zonal Committee also expected that

" at the end of the PU stage a student should be able to read with comprehension and appropriate speed text books, general books and articles in English or subjects that he studies for his course."

Regarding writing ability, the committee expressed that the

" Stress should be given on the functional ability of the student. Principles of paragraph construction -topic sentences and their amplification should occupy the central place in composition teaching."

All said and done, the policy at the University level

did little to the common students in improving their skills in English. As a result they do not have adequate ability to use English either in a written discourse or in spoken form. In other words what ever English is taught or learnt at the school or college level is not learnt well enough to be of any practical use in one's day-to-day life.

6.3. LEARNERS' NEED AND COURSE OBJECTIVES

If an appraisal of the successive courses of study in English is made from the point of view of learner needs, it can be said that there was not much consideration of learner needs in the history of NEHU. A high ability and competence in English is demanded by the PU course. The course itself is concentrated on the best in English literature, whether a student has the need or not. A student at the PU level has to study literary essays as almost an imposition and as a requirement for passing the examinations. With regard to the teaching of English the University never distinguished between practical training in English and the study of English literature. It continued the conventional pattern of prescribing English literature, like any other University in India. Therefore, one is surprised to note that there was virtually no change either in syllabus or in content for nearly 25 years since the inception of NEHU.

An analysis of teachers's opinion to the current ELT thinking shows a positive reaction. With regard to the objectives sought to be achieved in teaching English at the PU level, teachers clearly state their preferences starting from developing a mastery of language skills for functional use in communication,

moving on to the use of English as a library language and the development of study skills for use in the study of the learner's subjects of specialization.

Students also view 'General English' course at the PU level as one which should focus on the practical needs, such as 'the ability to write simple English for practical purposes, and the ability in reading comprehension.. This view of the students is fully in conformity with the views of their teachers.

6.3.1. PERCEIVED OBJECTIVES OF THE GENERAL ENGLISH COURSE AT THE PRE-UNIVERSITY LEVEL

The following section briefly discusses the objectives of teaching General English at the PU level viewed on the basis of the Communicative philosophy of language teaching.

It is encouraging to note that as many as 80% of the teachers [cf Table -12 Q NO. 13] have stated their conviction about the 'mastery of language skills for functional use in communication.' This certainly provides an evidence of fresh thinking among the teachers of English indicating a growth of awareness of the main trends and issues in ELT among the English teachers at the college level.

The study of literature in the PU course was favoured by a large number of teachers. It would seem that since the PU course is a conventional 'language through literature' type with selections from Prose and Poetry, the teachers viewed the study of literature as the most important aspect after the students have acquired communication skills in English.

The teaching and learning of English at different levels-Primary, secondary and tertiary-have undergone numerous changes in the past, especially in the recent past. These changes were the result of various influences : Social, political and academic are the most important among others. Not all the changes were innovative or useful, or the result of an awareness of learner needs. A few were rather hurried and short-lived. An important purpose of a study of this kind is an analysis of the factors that have led to the success or failure of the attempted changes, enabling future planners to learn worthwhile lessons from them.

Teaching of English at the school level in the recent past is basically 'structural'. The syllabus for teaching English for class III to X at the school stage consisted mainly of a list of graded structures and selected items of vocabulary. The teaching of structures was the most important concern of teachers, occupying most part of teaching/ learning time. Not only were teachers expected to teach the structures to a mastery level, but they were exhorted to follow almost religiously the order in which the structures were listed. Along with the teaching and learning of these grammatical patterns the development of language skills was also emphasized. The employment of the structural method, the Direct Method and the Oral Method to put the structural approach into practice was the essence of teaching English at the school level until around 1980.

Most of the teaching of English at the Pre-University level is a continuation of the structural syllabus, in the sense

that the mastery of language structure was considered important even at this level. But in most of the courses at the PU level, this was combined with the teaching of selections from literature until the early 1980s.

But the structural approach to teaching English at the school level has lost its edge in the recent past, mainly because of the awareness of its limitations. Even though the structural approach is still followed in the state it has become more flexible and relaxed. Besides attempts have been made to combine the advantages of the structural approach with the possibilities suggested by communicative thinking in ELT.

6.4. ROLE OF THE TEACHER

With the advent of major socio-political and socio-linguistic changes and approaches to ELT, the role of the teacher has also assumed a great importance in transacting the teaching/learning activity in the classroom. The ELT opinion today considers that translating, annotating or explaining do not constitute the teaching of English. Present day teaching is, value based-attitudinal, skill oriented and learner-centred. In such changed circumstances a teacher of English to be effective, should have genuine aptitude for teaching the language, a high degree of language competence, and a knowledge of ever changing theoretical concepts and their applied aspects.

" A teacher whose soul is wrinkled and whose heart is atrophied, who is devoid of energy and enthusiasm, capacity and character is a

disgrace. A teacher must not regard himself as a mere wage earner whose job begins at 10 AM, and ends at 5 PM, when he can shake the dust off his feet and walk out of the bread giving factory. No, he is a spiritual alchemist charged with the sacred work of creating cultured citizens. The teacher has therefore to instruct, inspire and illumine." [Joshi, quoted in UGC 1981 : 45]

The idea that anyone who knows his English will be able to teach it well has been proved invalid. The teacher should master the best class room techniques, he should be thoroughly prepared for his job. He requires pre-service and in service training, orientation and re-orientation to the latest developments in teaching/learning theories and their applications.

In the teachers' questionnaire, the information about the qualifications, experience, choice of teaching as his profession, awareness of his role as a teacher of English and his degree of job satisfaction, were ascertained. It is disturbing to note that 90% of the teachers teaching English at the undergraduate level have had no training either of a pre-service or an in-service kind like orientation or induction courses. This section of teachers might perhaps be working under the same conditions and following the same strategies which were prevalent and popular at the time of their own studies. The natural tendency of such teachers is not to give much credence to innovative ideas and practices.

Even though literature teaching is not considered one of the important aims of compulsory English at present, 14.28 % of teachers prefer to teach literature in ' General English' courses if they had the choice [Table-7] indicative of lack of awareness and/or disapproval of the current ELT thinking on the part of one-sixth of the teacher population. It should be mentioned here that the majority of students relegated the study of literature to the position of least importance, when their views were sought on this matter. The first requirement of a successful teacher is a thorough understanding of and reasonable commitment to, the prescribed aims and objectives of teaching his subject at the level he is working.

It is found that 57.14% of the teachers had opted for profession as a deliberate choice [Table-10 Q NO. 11]. It is certainly a welcome feature that the profession should attract persons of commitment and regard for the job. A frustrated job seeker who somehow sneaks into the profession without any aptitude, but under pressure of inevitable circumstances would be a liability to the profession. There are examples of a few teachers who initially entered the profession without an aptitude for it, but subsequently developed a love for it, but their number is small. In this survey 14.28% of the teachers were identified as belonging to this small group by their own statement [Table 10].

In this regard it should be suggested that all the teachers of English who teach degree classes should be given intensive pre-service training before they are asked to take on

their teaching function, they should then be given opportunities to familiarize themselves with changing trends in ELT through in service courses and re-orientation programmes.

6.5. TEACHING /LEARNING MATERIALS

The important findings with regard to the selection and production of the materials for the pre-University English course are as follows:-

i] The teachers, though in agreement with the overall objectives of the current course in English, viz, the development of communication skills, were not highly appreciative of the book prescribed for PU.

The teachers as well as the students viewed the textbooks prescribed for the PUC as neither 'useful' nor 'interesting'.

ii] The majority of the teachers felt that the content of the books are of much higher difficulty level. Students on the other hand claim that they are from vernacular medium of instruction and find the content of the textbook, specially prose and non- detailed study, very difficult for them to cope up with.

iii] Most of the teachers opined that as there is no exercise provided in the text books so that they can practise the different skills, it is difficult both for the students and teachers to use the material to its fullest capacity.

iv] The quality of reading material prescribed as non-detailed study was felt adequate by the teachers but because of

the difficulty level of the book they favoured a collection of reading passages of different kinds, i.e. stories, essays, biographies etc, rather than full length novel. The students were also not appreciative of the book " Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," in its usefulness and interesting nature of the content.

v] The second year English text prescribed for study: selections from English Prose and Poetry was not found to be different in any way from a similar selection used in the first year. The view of the teachers is not to be taken as a complimentary one. We also feel that there is a need for a thorough rethinking of the content, nature and function of the book.

6.6. CLASSROOM TEACHING METHODOLOGY

In this study practising teachers were asked searching questions on the current practices prevailing in the English classroom, as also about the possibilities for changing them for the better. The responses received from the teachers are convincing proof of the fact that our teachers are not only fully aware of the serious shortcomings of existing classroom strategies, but also are keen on experimenting and innovating in the methods they want to employ. Teachers attach great importance to the following activities which could be organized while teaching English.

6.6.1. ORGANISATION

[i] Helping learners pay close attention to certain selected features of language [words, grammatical items,

spelling, pronunciati-on, etc.], and giving them practice in the use of those features.

[ii] Giving suggestions to learners in the form of questions, hints, guidelines, etc, so that learners study the text and derive maximum benefit from such study.

[iii] Explaining the meanings of words, clarifying the concepts, paraphrasing and giving a simplified summary.

[iv] Organizing projects and assignments which would require the learner to understand closely what he/she has read and apply the knowledge to a meaningful purpose.

[v] Giving individual learners opportunities to talk to the rest of the class [as a whole or in smaller groups] about what he/she has read in the book and his/her reaction to it.

It has to be observed that the above activities strike a balance between teacher-centred strategies e.g.[i] and [iii] on the one hand, and learner-centred strategies e.g. [ii],[iv] and [v] on the other. Most experts on classroom methodology will happily agree with this kind of balanced approach to teaching a language.

6.6.2. ACTIVITIES

The teachers identified factors such as 'large classes' 'lack of motivation in the learners,' 'too ambitious a syllabus,' 'unsuitable textbooks' and 'inadequate physical facilities' as factors that adversely affect good classroom-teaching/learning. While students agreed with the disadvantages

of large classes and unsuitable textbooks, many of them thought that the syllabus was too ambitious and the physical facilities were inadequate. But a number of students stated that the teachers always use the same method for teaching all lessons, thereby making their teaching uninteresting. This is a comment from students which is not very flattering to the teachers and points to the need of the teacher having at his command, a variety of classroom strategies which can be used appropriately for different purposes.

6.6.3. LECTURES AND TUTORIALS

The lecture sessions at present are not followed up with discussions and tutorials. But most teachers as well students feel that tutorials must be conducted after a certain number of lectures and the popular ratio for both teachers and students seem to range from 1:1 to 4:1. The imperative need for combining, judiciously, lecturing by the teacher with discussion by the students and tutorial sessions cannot be over-emphasized. In fact, the idea seems to be accepted all round though it is very seldom seen in practice. Urgent steps have to be taken in this regard.

The lecture method continues to be favoured because of its usefulness in the large classes, being the quickest way to cover the syllabus, and for providing a good opportunity to expose the learners to spoken English. It is unrealistic to hope that the lecture method with all its well documented disadvantages, will be replaced by anything more suitable in the near future.

6.6.4. LEARNER PARTICIPATION

To ensure more and more learner participation and involvement in the teaching /learning activity the teachers have recommended the following:-

[i] Setting pre-reading questions which would induce the learner to read the selection before the lesson.

[ii] Giving pre-class assignment [finding out word meanings etc.], which forces the learner to use reference books.

[iii] Organizing play reading, role playing, poetry reading, etc., which create confidence in the learner.

6.6.5. THE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE

A majority of teachers stated that they feel the need for using the mother tongue in the English class 'sometimes'. They think the mother tongue which also happens to be the regional language could be used for explaining word-meanings, difficult concepts, and comparing features of grammar. Interestingly, a majority of students disapproved of the use of the mother tongue in the English classrooms.

6.7. EXAMINATION PATTERN

In order to reform the existing examination pattern to suit the changed circumstances of learner needs and new approaches, the teachers thought that the following are pre-requisites :

i[a] Teachers and other professional groups should be consulted before defining objectives or prescribing materials and

examination reform.

[b] Suitable [interesting] teaching/learning materials should be produced before hand.

[c] The syllabus should clearly state the objectives and it should be reformulated.

[d] An appropriate set of teaching strategies should be formulated and teachers should be oriented to the changed strategies.

[e] Desirable changes should be made in the question paper.

ii. Setting objective type of questions demands great skill and knowledge about the philosophy of the same. We have felt while analysing the question paper [in Chapter IV] that question setters/teachers should be given prior training from AIU or other such institutions which run courses similar to Evaluation Methodology and Examination before giving them any assignment.

iii. The teachers observed that the main functions of the examination should be to test the learners communicative ability, the development of language skills, mastery of language structure, understanding of the contents of the prescribed texts, the mastery of study skills and appreciation of literature. There was clear evidence that teachers are convinced about the priorities to be attached to each one of these.

It is also observed that students too attach the same priorities to the different abilities in response to the questions put to them on this subject. Interestingly, both the teachers and

the students attach the least importance to appreciation of literature and the top most priority is given to the ability to use English for practical purposes. In reallocating weightages to the different skills in the question papers, these views of the teachers and the students should be taken into consideration.

6.8. TEACHER PREPARATION

Most of the teachers felt the need for training for the teachers of English at the undergraduate level. This is encouraging because the traditional view has been that lecturers and professors at the college/University level do not really require any professional training to become good teachers.

6.8.1. IN SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Presently, among the training programmes for the college teachers, there are Summer Institutes organized by the UGC, Orientation and Refresher Courses offered by the academic staff college of different Universities, PGDTE/PGDES courses offered by the CIEFL Hyderabad and regional centres of Lucknow and Shillong. Most of the teachers seem to prefer periodical in-service training programmes. We also feel that a slightly condensed PGDTE programme at the CIEFL with a greater emphasis on College level teaching would be ideal for these teachers.

Many teachers who have been exposed to the new ideas about language teaching, showed keen interest in improving their professional competence. Personal interview and informal talks also reveal that teachers are very much professionally alive but they are unhappy with the existing facilities available to them

and stated that they are inadequate to equip themselves with the latest trends in ELT.

6.9. SOME PROPOSALS

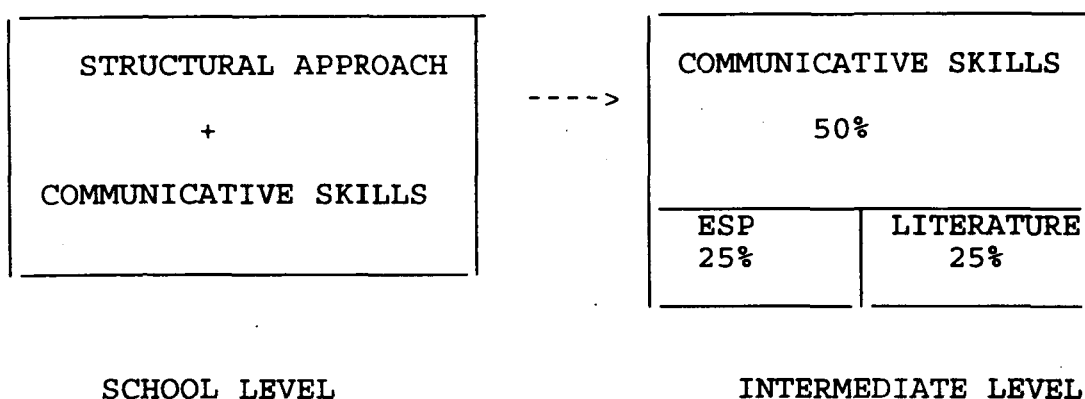
With the foregoing views and ideas in mind, and as a logical corollary to them, we make a bold attempt to put forward the following proposals.

It has now been accepted that the development of communication skills is the ultimate goal of teaching and learning a language. But opinion seems to be in favour of developing these skills along with and based on a mastery of language structure which would serve as a core. It is, therefore, necessary to continue a flexible structural approach in the early years of school level together with, and followed by, the development of communicative skills towards the end of the school stage.

The pre-university is a terminal as well as a transitional stage; students either move on to higher studies of an academic or professional nature, or they take up vocations. The learner needs at this stage appear to be three-fold; a further development of the ability to use English for practical communicative purposes, the acquisition of the special variety of English necessary for the pursuance of the studies in different disciplines and an initiation into the study of the English literature. Hence, it is necessary to organize the teaching of English devoting a sizeable part of the effort as development of communicative skills [nearly 50%] and the study of English for

specific purposes [about 25%] and an introduction to literature [about 25%]

This order of priorities should be reflected in the choice of prescribed teaching/strategies, and in the pattern of tests and examinations.



COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS 30%	
ESP 35%	LITERATURE 35%

UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL

6.10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to some extent will solve some of the problems discussed by us.

6.10.1. RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS

Teachers who are required to teach English at the

undergraduate level should invariably be recruited and trained with the following considerations in mind.

[i] they should be MAs in English with a compulsory paper in the teaching of English, securing a high second class.

[ii] Professional training like the PGDTE/PGDES offered by the CIEFL should be made compulsory.

[iii] A great deal of practice in applying modern classroom techniques should be provided before a person is appointed as a teacher of English to teach undergraduate classes. Frequent orientation training programmes should be arranged in order to familiarize the teachers with the latest trends and developments in the field of ELT.

6.10.2. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The instructional materials should be produced with the involvement of teachers of English in undergraduate classes. Such material should reflect the needs of the learners and also pay attention to students interests. They should also provide enough scope to acquire adequate proficiency in relevant high level, oral/reading comprehension skills as well as study skills.

2.10.3. CLASSROOM TEACHING

There should be a radical reform in the classroom teaching/learning activity providing facilities for tutorials, group discussion, individual work, seminars etc. with a view to

developing the skills needed by our students in their future career.

2.10.4. TESTING PROCEDURE

Unlike traditional and memory testing procedures, a practical system of testing should be evolved which would be continuous and cumulative Internal assessment with a proper understanding of the concept and adequate administrative support should be introduced. It is for the psychometricians to make it work while creating the situation of integrity and fair play in our context since the concept is pedagogically sound.

2.10.5. LIBRARY FACILITIES

Library facilities in colleges should be improved greatly in order to attract both students and teachers in cultivating the regular habit of using the library. The library should be stocked with books, periodicals and journals interesting as well as useful both to teachers and students. In selecting reading materials, prevalent student demands, requirements and attitudes should be taken into account as a result of a survey [if possible]. Books and periodicals of a professional nature which carry recent and relevant information on classroom practices, educational research and technology should form the bulk of the teachers' section of the library.

6.11. CONCLUSION AND GENERAL OBSERVATION

The main thrust in designing syllabus as we have noticed, has changed over the years in relation to the

orientation of courses in terms of the content-from a total concern with literature to a narrow view of language to cater to the needs of disciplines, to an attempt at mastering language through literature and, finally, a concern for the development of communication skills tempered with literature.

Shifting of this thrust, as it is felt, is in accordance with the current trends and approaches to the teaching of English rather than on the basis of a clear understanding of changing learners needs and objectives of learning English. Syllabus designing, ought therefore, to be a genuine attempt to understand and cater to the social needs of the learners of English of the present day.

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