CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 For many students in the non-Arts subjects, especially for students of science and technology in particular, English is a compulsory subject as a foreign language on the course. Some of them take it seriously, even when they are not to be examined in it. Often there is no examination and little interest is taken. Only the far-sighted among the students recognize the advantages of being able to read English fluently and to discuss their special interest with colleagues who do not speak their own mother tongue. Since Science has gone international English has also become international. English is considered today as an international language (Kachru 1984, Crystal 1990).

Even so, there are very few students who are interested in their special subject alone. Except where the special vocabulary of the subject is the focus of attention, English courses for students of science and technology can safely draw upon wider subject matter, which may offer a ground better suited to a meeting of the minds of teacher and taught. This does not make it impossible for the student to improve his/her English.
In India, according to the document *Curriculum for the Ten Year School: An Approach Paper*, the first language will most often be the mother tongue. The second language will be Hindi where it is not the mother tongue. It will be another Indian language where the mother tongue is Hindi. The third language would usually be English, but could also be any other foreign language. Thus, we have not a bilingual but a multilingual situation. Therefore, we will have to consider how best English can be taught so that it could be used effectively by our undergraduates to fulfil their academic and social needs.¹

### 1.2 Study Skills

The modern age is characterized by an explosion of knowledge. In order to cope up with the rapid pace of knowledge today, our students need Study Skills, such as reference skills, note taking, note making, summarizing and time management. These skills help the students to acquire the ability to locate information and to store it for ready retrieval and use.

#### 1.2.1 Reference Skills

With the help of reference skills our students know which sources to refer to when they need a piece of information relating to their
discipline. Referring to abstracts of research, consulting indices, dictionaries, year-books, atlases, encyclopedias and other sources of information will help him/her to be conversant with relevant source materials. Complex skills like note taking, note making and summarizing will help the student to store the information located from the sources.

1.2.2 Note Taking Skills

Note taking involves comprehension of the material (from lectures or from reference books) reducing it to essential points or themes, deciding the sequences of points in order of importance and organizing the points into a visual display. This will allow the student to review the material at one glance and also indicate the relative importance of points and relationship between them.

We should provide enough practice in note taking so as to enable our students to comprehend matter, jot it down in the form of points (not full sentences), arrange them in correct sequences and organize the points into a visual display.

As an initial step, we could ask the students to pick out the main points in a given passage. We could give them guidance in doing so
by framing questions on the main points and ask the students to supply the answers not in the form of sentences but in points. The passage will have to be selected carefully, so as to lend itself to an exercise of this type. The students could then be asked to go over the passage again and put down the sub points under each main point.

An exercise of this type would give students practice in grasping the main points from the original text. We should also guide students to develop their own private shorthand, help them to drop all unnecessary words, and use abbreviations for words, which occur frequently in the passage. After the students have had practice in taking down notes from prepared passages, we could start on note making exercises from reference books related to their discipline. Practice in note taking in the context of listening could be given at a large stage by making the students take down points from a lecture or a recorded talk.

The most difficult part of note taking is converting a piece of prose into visual display. Hence, we should illustrate the various forms by making use of headings and sub-headings in schematic arrangements or making use of lines, boxes, trees in diagrammatic arrangements. This will
allow the student to review the material at a glance whenever it may be necessary to consult the notes.

Although, we use note taking most commonly to record oral presentations, note taking strategies are also used to record notes from written sources. The skill of taking notes is probably most challenging for auditory and kinesthetic learners because of the manner in which they receive and process information.4

1.2.2.1 Learning Styles

Learning styles are simply different approaches or ways of learning. We should remember that every individual learns differently and thus has a unique learning style. “Approximately 20 to 30 percent of the school-aged population remembers what is heard; 40 percent recalls well visually the things that are seen or read; many must write or use their fingers in some manipulative way to help them remember basic facts; other people cannot internalize information or skills unless they use them in real-life activities such as actually writing a letter to learn the correct format.”5

1.2.2.2 There are three types of learners: (a) Visual learners (b) Auditory learners and (c) Kinesthetic or Tactile learners.
(a) Visual Learners

These learners learn best when information is presented visually. It is as if information doesn’t exist unless it has been seen in written form. If the visual learner favours verbal learning, he/she will relate most effectively to material in written language format. If the visual learner favours nonverbal stimuli, he/she will relate most effectively to material presented in picture or design format. These learners need to see the teacher’s body language and facial expressions to understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the classroom to avoid visual obstructions, such as people’s heads. They benefit from an instructor’s use of the blackboard or of an overhead projector to display the outline of a lecture’s essential points. They may think in pictures and benefit from visual displays such as: blackboard notes, handouts, outlines, diagrams, overhead transparencies, charts, tables, maps, photographs, illustrated books, videos. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners prefer to take detailed notes to absorb information, even if they already have a written copy of the presentation. These learners tend to like to study by themselves in a quiet room. They usually do not gravitate to group study. They see information in their ‘mind’s eye’ when they try to remember something. They often have an artistic side that enjoys activities having to do with visual art and design. Visual learners will tend to be most
effective in written communication and symbol manipulation. Visual learners make up about 65% of the population.

(b) Auditory Learners

These learners learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. These learners benefit from group discussion because they learn most effectively from listening/speaking exchange. These learners benefit from audio materials such as: speeches, interviews, videos, music. They have a memory for the spoken word and so remember things in their mind’s ‘ear’ as they heard them. They respond less to written notes and more to the memory of how they heard information and/or repeated it aloud. Written form may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder. These learners often gravitate towards study groups and collaborative learning situations. Auditory learners may be sophisticated speakers that may tend to specialize in subjects like law or politics. Auditory learners make up about 30% of the population.
(c) Kinesthetic or Tactile Learners

These learners learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. The kinesthetic learner will learn most effectively when the learning process actively engages the body. The tactile learner will learn most effectively when the learning process activates the sense of touch. These learners assimilate skills through imitation and practice. They benefit from a lab situation where they can manipulate materials to learn new information. Kinesthetic learners learn best through performance-oriented activities, such as role-playing, charades, skits, and games, and pantomime. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by a need for activity and exploration. They benefit from instructors who encourage in-class demonstrations, experiments, and fieldwork outside the classroom. Kinesthetic learners make up about 5% of the population.

Notes are not just collections of information. Note taking skills help one to pay better attention to an oral presentation or written document because they keep the individual active. In college, good note taking skills aid in understanding of material, effective preparation for exams, and completion of assignments. The first step to improve note taking is better attention and listening skills. It is impossible to take good
notes if one cannot pay attention while listening to a presentation or reading a book. Good listening skills require that one attend to basic health needs, eliminate internal and external distractions and maintain a positive self image. This is where non-linguistic factors come into full play.  

Preparation for a note taking task is an effective strategy for taking better notes. While it is most easily applied to taking notes from lectures, preparation may be used for other tasks as well. There are several aspects of pre-task preparation: completing assigned readings, reviewing previous notes, completing homework or lab problems, and bringing the appropriate materials.

Our students frequently complain that they are unable to determine during the lecture what is important and what might just as well be left out. A common complaint from students is that the teachers expect them to be tape recorders and that there is no way in which they could write that fast. We think this is patently wrong! The teacher does not expect anyone to be a tape recorder, but expects them to do good note taking. our students may attempt to write down every word uttered by the teacher, combining page after page of isolated facts and details but missing a more general understanding of the material, as they are too busy in writing to be
able to listen. Information presented in class often contains the central concepts of the course and the material most likely to be included on exams. Yet, students frequently do not realize the importance of note taking and listening.

Effective note taking from lectures and readings is an essential skill for university study. Good note taking allows a permanent record for revision and a register of relevant points that one can integrate with one’s own writing and speaking. Good note taking also helps one distinguish where one’s ideas came from and how one thinks about those ideas.

Effective note taking requires:  
(a) recognizing the main ideas
(b) identifying what information is relevant to your task
(c) having a system of note taking that works for you
(d) reducing the information to note and diagram format
(e) where possible, putting the information in your own words
(f) recording the source of the information

While many students view note taking as an activity conducted simply in lecture, good note taking skills require preparation and
reflection as well. The class notes can serve as an important tool for reviewing for exams and distilling key concepts. The key is that we should develop a system that enables the students to:

(a) review regularly
(b) recite (repeating key concepts from class)
(c) reflect (connecting class ideas to other notes and readings)

Almost all students in our education system have been taught to take notes in outline form. We think this is not the most successful way to learn from notes as learning information in a linear format is time consuming and often highly unproductive. When one studies, one's overriding and primary goal should be understand relationships between and among the topics and supporting details. Thus, we need to employ a note taking system that helps us understand relationships. There are, in fact, a few different types of note taking strategies like maps, matrices, diagrams and cards that we could use to record notes.

### 1.2.3 Note Making Skills

Note making may differ from note taking in that it is an activity which requires more time. Note taking implies putting down points hurriedly either from a lecture or a radio-talk or from printed matter. Note
making, on the other hand, can be done at one’s convenience and, hence, can be better organized and more elaborate. But both note taking and note making are skills needed by the student for his/her own academic and even personal use.

1.2.4 **Summarizing Skills**

We often use the terms ‘summary’ and ‘abstract’ interchangeably which result in some confusion. This problem arises because there are two distinct types of abstracts - ‘descriptive’ and ‘informative’. The informative abstract is another name for a summary; the descriptive is not. The descriptive abstract is usually only 2 or 3 sentences in length; hence it is not a summary or very informative. An informative abstract (summary) is an abbreviated version of the most significant points in a book, article, report or meeting. It is usually about 5% to 15% of the length of the original. It is useful because it condenses material, informing the reader the most important points of the original text.

An abstract should briefly: (a) re-establish the topic of the research, (b) give the research problem and/or main objective of the research (this usually comes first) (c) indicate the methodology used, (d) present the main findings, and (e) present the main conclusions.
Summarizing is another skill in which the student needs guidance and practice. Summarizing, however, could either be for personal use or for the benefit of others and should be better organized.

Summarizing is related to note taking and note making. It is an important skill, which helps the students prepare a summary or an abstract of a lecture, talk or a printed text. These are important skills, which the student will find useful even after he/she has ceased to be a student.

Summarizing must be different from the traditional precis writing. It is unrealistic to impose a word limit on the length of a summary. The length would depend on the construction of the text. As he/she goes through the text, the student must be guided to underline keywords and phrases and to make notes in the margin which later can be developed into a summary.

1.2.5 Time Management Skills

There is no mystery about managing time. We have 24 hours each day and 168 hours each week to eat, sleep, work, relax, exercise, attend classes and study. There is nothing magical about getting the most from these hours; it just takes planning. However, time management does
require self discipline and control until the behavioural changes are internalized and time management becomes an everyday habit. Plans and schedules for managing time are useless if one does not follow them. Effective time management necessitates a sense of balance. On the one hand, perfect time management skills do not make one a perfect student or employee. On the other hand, poor time management skills do not make one a stooge. Some brilliant people habitually are "a day late and a dollar short." 10

The main reason for managing time is to provide structure to one's life and, in turn, peace of mind. Managing time is just something one does for one's own self, to make one's work easier. We should remember that simply setting aside time to study will not ensure that students will do well academically. It is just as important to make efficient use of that study time by using effective study strategies. For example, setting aside three hours to read a chapter is a waste of time if one doesn't understand or remember what one has read. Similarly, spending ten hours simply reading over notes in order to prepare for an exam is probably not going to result in an 'A' grade. Hence, doing well in college depends on setting aside time to study and using that time effectively.
With time management strategies, we can fulfil a number of functions. One of our purposes is to plan activities and schedule time for completing them. Now here the strategies help us to predict when we will be most busy so that we can plan to get things done ahead of time. Our second purpose is to help students become more punctual. Time management strategies also aid us in remembering obligations such as meetings, appointments, and special events.

1.3 Language Skills

A teacher of English is expected to teach language skills, viz. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of these, it is reading and writing that are the only skills to be tested in a conventional language test. However, when English is taught for academic purposes, as most of the English courses are, except in English (special), a student needs to be trained in academic skills like study skills, for instance. It is in this context that we can ask why it is necessary for a teacher of English to concern himself/herself with these skills and how can he/she teach them. The role of a teacher today is not merely that of a dispenser of knowledge. He/she has to initiate his/her students into the art of learning by equipping them with study skills such as reference skills, note taking, note making, summarizing, time management etc. If the syllabi have no place for this, the point is who
is to teach these skills. We can understand that it is the responsibility of each subject teacher to do so. But this will lead to duplication of effort. Since these skills are universal, and involve language, they may be said to be related to language skills (listening, reading comprehension, writing etc.). Hence it is not unfair to say that these skills should be dealt with by the teacher of English rather than the subject teachers. It is the kind of language used that makes the study skills relevant. This will justify the role of English as a service language, which will help students to acquire the necessary knowledge in their own disciplines. This way, we can bring English closer to the teaching of other subjects.

The teaching of English language skills should commence fairly early while the students’ study habits are still flexible. The teacher of English will have to expose his/her students to informative or expository writing in which logical relationships and structures play an important part. He/she will have to draw the attention of the students to ways in which these logical relationships and the linguistic devices that signal meaning relationships are organized. Being sensitive to the signals helps the student to pick out the information easily and to organize it properly for his/her own reference. 11
1.3.1 Testing Listening:

Listening has come to be recognized as an active rather than a passive skill and its importance acknowledged in the acquisition of language. With the emergence of video and multimedia as teaching tools, it is being given renewed attention. Listening is a language skill which our students usually find the most difficult. We think that it is often so because they feel under unnecessary pressure to understand every word.

We can test listening in a number of ways, but when testees’ proficiency in listening gets more advanced in particular, the testing of listening becomes more complicated. It becomes more difficult to separate listening from other skills, and the combination of skills can put great demands on the testee. In addition, some ways of testing listening do not reflect real world listening tasks.

1.3.1.1 We usually define listening as a receptive skill comprising both a physical process and an interpretive, analytical process. (Lundsteen 1979). However, this definition is often expanded to include critical listening skills (higher-order skills such as analysis and synthesis) and nonverbal listening (comprehending the meaning of tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, and other nonverbal cues.) The expanded definition
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of listening also emphasizes the relationship between listening and speaking.

1.3.1.2 Listening tests typically resemble reading comprehension tests except that the student listens to a passage instead of reading it. The student then answers multiple-choice questions that address various levels of literal and inferential comprehension. Important elements in all listening tests are \(^{12}\) (1) the listening stimuli, (2) the questions, and (3) the test environment.

The listening stimuli should represent typical oral language, and not consist of simply the oral reading of passages designed to be written material. The material should model the language that students might typically be expected to hear in the classroom, in various media, or in conversations. Since listening performance is strongly influenced by motivation and memory, the passages should be interesting and relatively short. To ensure fairness, topics should be grounded in experience common to all students, irrespective of sex and geographic, socioeconomic, or racial/ethnic background.
In regard to questions, multiple-choice items should focus on the most important aspects of the passage - not trivial details - and should measure skills from a particular domain. Answers designated as correct should be derived from the passage, without reliance on the student's prior knowledge or experience. Questions and response choices should meet accepted psychometric standards for multiple-choice questions. An alternative to the multiple-choice test is a performance test that requires students to select a picture or actually perform a task based on oral instruction.

1.3.1.3 Some Problems of Listening In English

Some problems in listening are related to the speed of delivery and the language used by the speaker. Since these are beyond the learner's control, the learner is unable to keep up with the speaker. Hence he fails to grasp the whole meaning of the text. Being unfamiliar with the sounds, stress, intonation and rhythm of naturally spoken English, the learner also face difficulties especially if the speaker has a different accent.

Other problems are due to a lack of concentration, distractions inside and outside the classroom, the tendency of the listener to try to understand every thing in the listening text (Lee 1986). As pointed

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out by Rixon (1986) problems in listening arise because spoken words do not stay still to be scrutinized and puzzled over as written words.

1.3.2 Testing Speaking

1.3.2.1 Difficulties of testing speaking

Speaking is probably the most difficult skill to test. It involves a combination of skills that may have no correlation with each other, and which may not lend themselves well to objective testing. Researchers are still grappling with questions about the criteria for testing these skills and the weighting of these factors. A speaker can produce all the right sounds but not make any sense, or have great difficulties with phonology and grammar and yet be able to get the message across. Also, success in speaking depends to a great extent on the listener. Comprehension of anything spoken depends, among other factors, on the degree to which the listener is familiar with the speaker's accent and the degree to which he/she shares background knowledge. Thus, a problem faced by a given listener may not really be a problem for another one.

Another difficulty is separating the listening skill from the speaking skill. In most normal situations, an interchange between listening and speaking depends appropriately, in part, on comprehending spoken
input. This necessarily becomes a factor in the testing of speaking, and it is
difficult to know whether we are testing purely speaking or speaking and
listening together.

Testing speaking also poses a particular problem when it is
necessary to test a larger number of students. In some situations, it is
necessary to test thousands of students, and even if each student speaks for
only a few minutes, this becomes an unmanageable job.

1.3.2.2 Types of speaking tests

There are several types of speaking tests such as reading
aloud, conversational exchanges, oral interviews, role play test, group or
pair activities etc. One way that we can test reading is by having the
testees read aloud. The reason is simple. It is not generally a good way to
test reading, for its backwash effect is likely to be harmful, and it is not a
skill that we use much outside of the classroom. However, we can test
pronunciation separately from the content of speech. Another simple type
of test is a test in which we give a particular situation to the students and
instruct them to respond in a certain way. These tests are usually highly
structured and require only a limited response, not connected discourse.
Oral interviews are testing situations in which the tester and the testee carry on a conversation. The tester generally has a list of questions to ask the testee, and someone - either the interviewer or another person but preferably another person - assesses the language proficiency of the testee. The advantage of an interview is that it attempts to approximate a conversation situation, but the knowledge that it is a test and the constraints of the roles in the interview make it difficult to have a real, natural conversation. The interview protocol needs to be carefully considered. It might be best to start with yes/no questions or factual questions that are easily answered to put the interviewee at ease, but these can be inhibiting, which is why this stage should not last too long. The questions should be interesting, easy to respond to, and give the testee some range of options to choose from in answering.

Another type of test is a role play. In a role play, the testee and a confederate are given information on which to base a role play, and the testees are evaluated on their ability or carry out the task in the role play. For example, the role play may be used in getting information about course requirements. Role plays require the testee to use various functions that he/she might need in real communication.
To avoid the types of problems associated with oral interviews, we can group our students into pairs or teams that are given some tasks, such as a quiz to work on together, a puzzle to workout etc. The idea in such a situation is not to find the 'right' answer but to stimulate speech for the tester to evaluate, for this is intended to be a less inhibiting situation than an interview test. However, it does not allow the tester any control. How the activity goes depends to a great extent on the mix of testees that are put together. If their level of English proficiency is widely different, or if one testee is particularly dominant, this will influence the interaction. A well trained interviewer can provide such situations as would be congenial in interview after interview. Nevertheless, this is not possible in testing a group of testees in group activity. In addition, successful group discussions depend on factors other than speaking, including active listening, eliciting the options of all the group members and even maintaining decorum, which is where etiquette comes in.

1.3.2.3 Assessment

A realistic assessment is one of the greatest difficulties for a majority of teachers in the testing of speaking. It is necessary to develop a system of assessment that can be applied as objectively as possible. Even after that is done, one finds that there remains the possibility of some
subjectivity creeping into assessment. The scale can be one general scale for overall speaking ability, or we can divide it between several aspects of the skill of speaking, such as pronunciation, fluency, grammar, content, vocabulary, organization etc. The scale also depends on the speaking task used for the test. A test that uses a task like speaking in public would differ from one that uses a group discussion. 19

1.3.3 Testing Reading

Reading is probably the most common of the four skills to be tested, and it may seem to be the easiest of the skills to test. That is one of the reasons why reading comprehension figures prominently on test. The reading skill has a high priority when we emphasize the role of English as a library language, the language in which information is available about the latest developments in most areas of knowledge. This priority should be reflected in the testing as well as in the teaching of English.

An important question we should answer in any systematic testing or reading is: what we are testing when we test this skill at the intermediate level or at the undergraduate level. 20 At the level of collegiate education, reading does not mean knowing either syntax or vocabulary separately. It is an integrative skill that brings both together in
understanding a piece of writing. When we give a passage for reading, a student should be able to understand its content - the information, the ideas, the attitudes or the feelings expressed in the passage. He/She should also be able to draw inferences and make generalizations from what is suggested or implied but is not stated in a passage. He/She should have the ability, besides, to make judgments on the content, on the style of language, on the building up of the argument etc. in the text.  

Now we focus on how we test the reading ability in our examinations. Some university question papers in English include, among questions on the prescribed text, short comprehension questions. These do not really test comprehension but test knowledge and memory because the text has been taught in class, i.e., has been subjected to detailed explanation and analysis. The language ability that is taught by means of certain materials in class should be available to the student in understanding other materials and new situations which he/she has not encountered in class. He/She should be able to understand a passage solely with the language ability he/she possesses. To make sure whether the student possesses this ability, we should test comprehension through unseen reading passages. It will then be possible for us to assess this ability more validly since he/she will not be aided by rote memory of the text or by the explanation that the
teacher might have given. Some of our general English question papers also have a separate section for the testing of comprehension of this kind. This is often part of the general language paper. The practice here is usually to set an unseen prose passage for reading.

Another problem relates to the questions set on the passage selected. Our examinations at present are mainly test of writing ability although they purport to test understanding as well. If that be the aim, it is difficult to understand why comprehension is not tested separately.

Among the skills involved in reading are:

(a) associating graphic symbols with sounds and words.
(b) understanding relationships between pieces of information in a sentence, including elements of sentence structure, negation and embedding.
(c) deducing meaning of words from their roots and affixes.
(d) deducting meaning of words from the context.
(e) understanding presuppositions.
(f) understanding relationships among parts of the text, signalled by such devices as lexical devices (synonyms, repetition, etc.), anaphoric reference (pronouns) and connectives.
(g) understanding temporal and spatial relationships.
(h) understanding relationships such as cause and effect, generalization and example; comparison; contrast; and opinion and support.
(i) anticipating what will come next.
(j) identify the main idea and supporting details.
(k) understanding figurative language and allegories.
(l) understanding inferences.
(m) skimming (getting an overall idea of the passage).
(n) scanning (looking specific information).
(o) reading critically.
(p) varying reading strategies according to the type of text and purpose of reading.

While various lists have been made of the skills involved in reading, these are never clear cut. Therefore it is difficult for us to decide which skills are actually being used. We also find it difficult to determine which skills are easiest, since a reader may have a lot of difficulty in processing what appears intuitively to be an easy skill and vice versa. However, when we construct a test, it would be advisable to use a list of skills, since it encourages a tester to broaden his/her approach and set questions other than those requiring a testee to find facts in the text.
1.3.3.1 *Choosing a text*

The text used for testing reading can have an impact on the results. There are some of the factors that need to be considered.

1.3.3.2 *Variety*

It is useful to use a variety of texts while we test reading. The use of prose is a conventional way of testing reading, we can use many other types of texts for testing. Some of these include schedules, newspaper articles, advertisements, and instructions.23 These are gaining currency in Gujarat in the form of collected, collated and edited texts like Thaker et al and Mishra et al (1999), for instance.

1.3.3.3 *Type of text*

The type of text chosen should reflect the goals of the language teaching situation. If students are studying academic English, we should select texts from such sources. If they are studying English to use it in their daily lives, we should select such texts as menus, leaflets, or letters which might be useful. When we say academic English, it means English used for academic purposes (EAP), such as seminar presentations, discussions, listening to lectures, note taking, note making, reading, academic writing, use of library, internet and computer etc.
1.3.3.4 Reading and background knowledge

One of the issues in testing reading today is that background knowledge plays an important part in reading comprehension. The argument is that if we have some background knowledge while reading a text, we are able to comprehend it more easily and more completely. This would help make it possible to draw more accurate inferences from it than reading a text without background knowledge. For example, reading an account of a game in a sport that you do not know about and one that you know a lot about. In the former case, you will probably understand little of the description of the game and in the latter case, you will probably understand almost everything - even information that the writer does not state directly. If you are familiar with cricket, you know that one-dayer with a team averaging a score of 6.5/7 runs per over is making an unusually high score, even if the writer does not say so. The reading text chosen for the test has a higher possibility of success if the testees have a fairly good level of background knowledge on it. In case some testees have background knowledge than others taking the test then the former are likely to have advantage over the latter. The outcome will not be reliable in such a situation.
In addition, the text should not be about a subject that the testees are either very familiar or very unfamiliar with. The use of a text which allows for considerable background knowledge will be waste of time because the testees will then be able to answer the questions without even understanding the text. Alternatively, lack of any background knowledge of the text would pose great deal of difficulty for the testees in terms of comprehending and making inferences, even if they were fairly good readers.

1.3.3.5 Difficulty

The difficulty value of a text is another important issue. Few testees may be able to take a test that is too difficult and their scores would be low. Many would end up notching a good score if it is too easy. Familiarity plays a role here. Familiar subject areas would make a test simple but an unfamiliar one would make it difficult.

Reading comprehension test can assess whether students are able to: 24

(a) identify the meaning of known words in different contexts;
(b) guess the meaning of unknown words based on context;
(c) recognize parts of speech;
(d) recognize syntactical structures;
(e) identify cohesive ties and understand their functions (relation across the sentence);
(f) extract salient points from a text;
(g) discriminate main ideas from supporting or secondary ones;
(h) skim (reading for gist);
(i) scan (reading for specific information);
(j) learn as much information as possible.

1. 3.4  

**Testing Writing**

Writing is one of the most difficult of the language skills but is the only skill apart from reading to be tested on General English courses. Moreover, less time is devoted to writing skill as compared to the other linguistic skills in an academic set up. Time factor is one of the important reasons. In many teaching situations, teachers may see their students for no more than an hour or two a week and writing is seen as time consuming and perhaps not the best way of making use of such a short amount of time. Students too may feel that writing is an activity best done away from the classroom and that spending valuable classroom time writing in silence is a waste of time.
Another factor that may dissuade teachers from devoting time to writing skills is the fact that written work needs to be corrected. This may not be a problem in a one-to-one class or a small Business English Group, but in a class of forty or more students this becomes a real issue - 30 minutes work for each of the students could produce several hours work for the already stressed teacher. In addition, the idea of writing itself may have negative connotations for both teachers and students. Students might have uncomfortable memories of having to write long discursive essays on topics chosen by the teachers and teachers of having to spend long hours going through these scripts, some of which may be written carelessly or in bad English. In this respect, it is worth considering briefly what we write in our own language on a day-to-day basis. Essay writing will probably not feature on our list of regular writing activities unless we are preparing for an examination. The list will, however, probably contain some or all of the following: e-mails, notes and memos, messages, letters and filling in forms. As a starting point, perhaps these will be thought to be more authentic and relevant writing tasks. We have also no reason for why these tasks cannot be collaborative. Although in a realistic situation, we rarely write keeping pace with others on the same topic, we do of course write to other people. The classroom is an ideal place to replicate this type of activity. We should encourage students to write on a regular basis for the teacher, for this would
be an excellent way to get feedback from the class. The task can be either individual or a small group task and, rather than correcting all the errors, the teacher can respond to the points made in each letter by writing brief comments or underlining errors to be corrected by the individual student or group. In teaching situations where a sufficient number of computer terminals are available this process can be extended to e-mails.

Focusing on the process of writing and introducing skills such as generating ideas (brainstorming the topic for relevant vocabulary), structuring information, drafting and redrafting, reformulating and reviewing can also make writing more communicative rather than a silent, solitary activity which one tends to regard as a waste of valuable classroom time. If, in addition, writing is seen as a valuable way of practicing language, in much the same way that speaking is seen as practice, then writing itself can be seen as having a much more positive role in the language learning process as a whole. Educating learners about the role and value of writing and pointing out the numerous different purposes that writing can have both in terms of communication and in terms of language practice can also help to project a more positive image for writing-based activities in the classroom. In this respect, it would be worthwhile to spend time discussing what people write, how they prepare what they write and
how it is corrected and by whom. This would encourage the learners to take the initiative on their own. Similarly, something of this kind would motivate the learners to experiment with speaking at quite an early stage. They would then find themselves in a position where they would be persuaded to experiment with writing at an early stage. Trial and error is an inevitable part of the process. Communication through e-mail is rapidly becoming the chief means of communication in modern times and an ability to compose an effective written messages an indispensable skill. Thus writing needs to be given its rightful place in the process of language teaching as a whole.

### 1.3.4.1 Problems in Testing Writing

Testing of each skill offers difficulties, but testing writing presents two particular problems. The first is making decisions about the matter of control, objectivity of the evaluation, and naturalness in the writing test. Controlled writing, although it may be easy to grade objectively, does not reflect writing used in real-world situations. By the same logic free writing, when allowed, does not give the teacher any control or for evaluating it objectively.\(^\text{25}\)
The second major problem with testing of writing we face is that when it cannot be graded objectively, it necessitates the development of a scale so that it enables teachers to grade it as objectively as possible. How this is done is one of the great difficulties faced in the testing of writing.

1.3.4.2 Even so, there are many reasons for the effective teaching and learning of writing at college level. The following three main reasons are quite perceived: 26

(a) Misled by college English tests

Compared with other language skills, little emphasis has been put on the writing task in the classroom. Surprisingly, writing forms an important part of texts in a formal academic setting. Most college English teaching has been somehow guided by English tests used in colleges, where the emphasis is laid on the testing of reading comprehension through the testing of learners’ knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. As a result, both teachers and students do not pay adequate attention to writing in an English class.
(b) Students' false perceptions about English writing

Most Indian English learners hold a false belief that learning a foreign language means learning of the rules of grammar and usage, remembering words and memorizing individual structures and patterns. Writing is not thought to be as important as reading in the examinations. It is due to such a perception that most students are reluctant to spend much time in writing for perception.

(c) Students' ignorance of the characteristics of English writing

Another important reason why students do not write poorly in English is that they lack the basic knowledge of nature of English discourse. The discoursal patterns in English are different from those in the vernacular language. When students are unaware of these differences, they are inclined to transfer discourse patterns directly from vernacular to English. So it is not surprising that what students write always appears to be unclear and confused in terms of logic.

1.3.4.3 Nurturing students' awareness of importance to writing

Fortunately, more and more English teachers have realized the urgent need for developing students' writing ability. Research shows that what learners know about their learning tasks can directly influence the
process and even the outcome of their learning, and that learning how to
learn is more important than the learning itself. When learners are
conscious of their learning targets, they will learn automatically and
effectively. A common problem with students who are not doing English as
a major or special subject in most colleges is their vague knowledge of
writing task. Once students have the awareness about importance in English
writing, the teaching and learning of writing will be less painful and more
effective and pleasant.

1.3.4.4 Means to help in writing

We should emphasize the role of writing in language
learning. Many students take it for granted that if one can remember a large
number of English words and show a fair performance in reading, one has
learnt the language well. Therefore, they spend a large amount of time in
and out of class in learning rules of grammar and usage, memorizing word
by word and reading various kinds of topics and books in English. Not
enough attention is paid to the development of their productive skills, such
as writing. This surely requires of teachers that they do what they can do
bring about an attitudinal change in the learners toward the English tests.
They need to make it clear that writing is an inseparable part of language
learning and they need to reinforce it. It is impossible to acquire a target
language effectively without learning to write. When students know the importance of writing in foreign language, they will take the initiative and learn it successfully and naturally. Second, we should realize the difference between Gujarati and English discourse patterns.

1.3.4.5  *The nature of discourse*

English writing is more direct compared with Gujarati in expression. The topic is explicitly stated while details or facts are required to support the main idea. On the contrary, Gujarati writing is more or less indirect. The people who write may not introduce the topic explicitly; rather repeat it in several other ways, leaving readers make informed judgements from the context. Therefore, Gujarati writers tend to make assertions without many explanations or elaboration.

1.3.4.6  *The difference of reasoning*

English discourse emphasizes logical reasoning and clear organization of ideas with the main ideas clearly stated, appropriate facts provided to support the main idea and references duly cited. Unlike English reasoning, Gujarati reasoning, in general, offers assertions instead of evidence with fewer references at times. One concrete example after

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another is presented without caring too much about their connection to the conclusion.  

1.3.4.7 Styles of expression

English rhetoric prefers a definitive, even deductive approach and emphasizes creativity and individuality. So the students are encouraged to use their words in order to express their own ideas. However, Gujarati rhetoric prefers an inductive way of expression. Therefore, Gujarati English learners seem to prefer quotation and paraphrase of well known words or the use of set phrases rather than their own personal ideas. Traditionally, the dominant teaching for writing class in India is that the teacher gives a general explanation of certain writing skills and then assigns either a topic or an outline. Students write independently in class and hand their assignments to their teacher for marking. The teacher normally marks the composition with 'correction' in red ink, occasionally with added comments, focusing on form of the writing instead of the content. This traditional approach of teaching writing does not work well in helping students to improve their writing capacity. Instead, students can be given some time to do some pre-writing and planning activities such as discussion, debate, reading and drawing lists and so on. They can share prompt ideas, selected words and constructive sentences with themselves.
This process of teaching can provide students with a chance to think in depth, to try out new ideas and to help and learn from each other.

1.3.4.8 The ability to write in English involves at least six component skills. They are:

(a) *Grammatical ability:* This is the ability to write English in grammatically correct sentences.

(b) *Lexical ability:* The ability to choose words that are correct and used appropriately.

(c) *Mechanical ability:* The ability to use punctuation, spelling, capitalization etc. correctly.

(d) *Stylistic skills:* The ability to use sentences and paragraphs appropriately.

(e) *Organizational skills:* The ability to organize written work according to the conventions of the language, including the order and selection of material.

(f) *Judgment of appropriacy:* The ability to make judgments about what appropriate depending on the task, and the context including the purpose of the writing, and the audience.
We believe that perhaps the most difficult, and most important, of these skills, is the last. Native speakers develop a sense of what is appropriate in different writing situations (though they may be taught to use specialized registers, such as Academic English or Business English). Registers of English range from very informal forms such as colloquialisms, slang and jargon to more formal forms such as the language used in business letters, legal documents, and academic papers which use standard English. A writing test needs to take all these skills into account, which our tests do not (Khan 1991: Raviya 2002).

1.4 Terminology Used

The topic of this research is “Testing of Achievement in English in the Sciences at the Undergraduate Level in Gujarat”. We try to define and describe terms like Test, Testing, Language Testing, Achievement, Achievement Test, Sciences, Undergraduate Level to be specific about what we mean when we use them in this thesis.

1.4.1 Test

The term ‘test’ is a noun that is used formally to refer to a standardized procedure for measuring sensitivity or memory or intelligence
someone's knowledge of something. In medical profession, to test means to screen or examine for the presence of disease or infection. Another meaning associated with it is that of a measure which provides information about a person's knowledge, skill, competence or behaviour. Tools are often used to monitor education, evaluate programme effectiveness, measure students' achievement and assess students' mastery of skills.

1.4.2 Testing

The term 'testing' in a sense means an assessment of the characteristics of something. Another sense in which it is used is the act of giving students a test to evaluate what they know or have learned. It is also used to refer to an act of subjecting to experimental test in order to determine how well something works.

1.4.3 Language Testing

We refer to language test and language testing wherever we have used the terms 'test' and 'testing' respectively throughout this research work. There are six chief objectives of Language testing.  

(a) To determine readiness for instructional programs

Some screening tests are used to separate those who are prepared for an academic or training programme from those who are not.
Such selection tests have a single cutoff point: examinees either "pass" or "fail" the test, and the degree of success or failure may not be deemed important.

(b) To classify or place individuals in appropriate language classes

Other screening tests try to distinguish degrees of proficiency so that examinees may be assigned to specific sections or activities on the basis of their current level of competence. Such tests may make no pass-fail distinctions, since some kind of training is offered to everyone.

(c) To diagnose the individual's specific strengths and weakness

Diagnostic screening tests generally consist of several short but reliable subtests measuring different language skills or components of a single board skill. On the basis of the individual's performance on each subtest, we can plot a performance profile which will show his relative strength in the various areas tested.

(d) To measure aptitude for learning

Still another kind of screening test is used to predict future performance. At the time of testing, the examinees may have little or no knowledge of the language to be studied, and the test is employed to assess their potential.
(e) To measure the extent of student achievement of the instructional goals

Achievement tests are used to indicate group or individual progress toward the instructional objectives of a specific study or training program. Examples are progress tests and final examinations in a course of study.

(f) To evaluate the effectiveness of instruction

Other achievement tests are used exclusively to assess the degree of success not of individuals but of the instructional program itself. Such tests are often used in research, when experimental and “control” classes are given the same educational goals but use different materials and techniques to achieve them.

A good test possesses three qualities: validity, reliability, and practicality. We can say that any test that we use must be appropriate in terms of our objectives, dependable in the evidence it provides, and applicable to our particular situation. There are other test characteristics which are also of value, but these three constitute the sine qua non, without any one of which a test would be a poor investment in time.
1.4.4 **Achievement**

As a noun, the word ‘achievement’ has many meanings. A dictionary definition of ‘achievement’ encompasses elements which include ‘success’, ‘performance’, ‘accomplishment’, and ‘winning’ in broad terms. The term is also used to mean a measurement of what a person knows or can do after training. Another meaning associated with it is that of an ability to demonstrate accomplishment of some outcome for which learning experiences were designed.

1.4.5 **Achievement Test**

An achievement test attempts to measure what each student and the class as a whole has learned - his/her present level of performance. They are particularly helpful in determining individual or group status in academic learning. We generally use achievement test scores in placing, advancing, or retaining students at particular grade levels. We also utilize achievement test scores in diagnosing strengths and weaknesses and to award prizes, scholarships, or degrees. We frequently use achievement test scores in evaluating the influences of courses of study, teachers, teaching methods, and other factors considered to be significant in educational practice. They are also currently employed in business and industry, civil service, and the armed forces. In all these fields, achievement tests are an
important tool in checking the attainment of minimum performance standards, selection, placement and classification and counseling.

1.4.6 Undergraduate Level

The word 'Undergraduate Level' in a sense means a university student who has not yet received a first degree. Another meaning associated with it is that of a student working towards a first degree, higher education certificate or diploma or equivalent.

1.4.7 Sciences

The Sciences are a reference to Natural Sciences such as Physics, Earth Sciences, Biology, Microbiology, Mathematics, Agriculture, Forestry, Astronomy, Computer Sciences, Ecology, Marine Sciences, Earth Sciences, Zoology, Physiology etc. and Basic Sciences such as Anatomy, Bacteriology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Cytology, Embryology, Epidemiology, Genetics, Pharmacology, Physiology etc.

1.5 Rationale

The reason for making such a proposal is that such elaborate study has not been undertaken anywhere in this country to the best of our knowledge. There are instances of master's and doctoral level research
proposals covering only certain limited areas. Hence, the present study is
deemed as the need of the day in view of the changing educational scenario,
and the rising need for the present day aspirant to withstand the tough and
demanding competitive levels.
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