CHAPTER II
TRENDS IN TEACHING AND TESTING ENGLISH

II.1 INTRODUCTION

A large number of examinations in the past have encouraged a tendency to separate testing from teaching but both testing and teaching are so closely interrelated that it is virtually impossible to work in either field without being constantly concerned with the other.

II.2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher reviewed research papers presented by practising teachers and ELT experts on the various aspects of English language teaching and testing.

The review is presented in a nutshell below in two parts—Teaching English as a Second Language and Testing English as a Second Language.

II.2.1. TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

A. “Development of Writing Skills: Changing Focus in Teacher Preparation”

In their research paper, N. Saratchandran and K.R. Nakulan, practising English teachers, state that in the Indian context, English is mainly used as a language of interpersonal communication across language groups/areas. On the whole, the use of the language in its written form is relatively more extensive than in its spoken form. Thus, the development of writing skill in the learner acquires a greater significance. The tools used by the researchers in their work are given:
Some of their findings are:

The examination of samples produced with minimum teacher support revealed problems such as:

- Inadequacy of ideas, facts and figures
- Poor organisation
- Furnishing of irrelevant information
- Confusion about layout
- Uncertainty about the format to be chosen
- Use of inappropriate style
- Improper captions
- Grammatical mistakes
- Obscurity in expression
- Lack of precision
- Repetition of ideas
- Spelling errors
- Failure to use appropriate style

After investigation the researchers suggest that:

1. Before the learner is asked to attempt a writing task he/she should be made well acquainted with the what, why and the how of it.
2. To be successful, skill development in acquiring language proficiency has to be viewed essentially as a process-oriented rather than a product-oriented phenomenon.
3. While writing, monitoring and regular feedback will promote better development of the writing skill.

4. A clear perception of the complex processes involved in the learner attempting a writing task and readiness on the part of the language teacher to do adequate preparation to facilitate the acquisition of the writing skill by the learner are of paramount importance for effecting meaningful change.

5. Strengthening the learner’s writing skill can possibly provide a solution to the burning problem of students resorting to unfair means in examination. The weaker a student is in written communication, the greater the inclination to copy in the examination.

6. A change in focus in teacher-preparation calls for a thorough and comprehensive revision of the language curriculum at all stages with a common perspective. Communicative competence and process-oriented enabling activities should become the focus of attention at all levels and this alone can bring the learner to a pivotal position in the language class.

7. The average teacher has to be shaken out of the normal state of complacency and inertia by the compulsions and demands of a need-based and life-oriented language curriculum.

B. “Group Work and Articulate Learners”

In research paper, the authors, Sushma Chaturvedi, M. Fatima Parveen, Theodora Marks and K. Rama, feel that even today there seems to be differential learning taking place in the English classroom. Therefore it was felt necessary to study group work more closely to know the factors influencing group work with a special focus on the influence of articulate learners in group work. The questions addressed are:
What kinds of groups facilitate learning?

Which tasks lend themselves to more participation?

What kind of a role is more suitable in role plays?

Four teachers of different Kendriya Vidyalayas conducted the study in their respective schools where they played the dual role of teacher and researcher. The tasks used were: preparation for debate and role play. Two tasks were used in each class. The learners were classified into articulate, less articulate and those of mixed ability based on their classroom participation, language proficiency and leadership qualities. The following tools were used for data collection:

- Class observation
- Diaries
- Self assessment by pupils
- Interviews
- Questionnaires

**FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the study were very interesting and revealing. As far as the nature of the tasks goes it was found that role-plays ensured participation because they have prescribed roles for the less articulate. Participation tended to be influenced by the kind of role played in a role-play. The less articulate learners seemed to be more comfortable speaking to their peers. Class X students were more comfortable with group work and seemed to be doing better than Class IX, where the learners were progressively becoming aware of group norms and improving their participation. It was deduced that one year of exposure had
perhaps made Class X students more confident. It was also found that articulate learners seemed to be patronising the less articulate learners during group work. Mixed groups were more effective for team performance but individual contribution was better ensued in homogenous group as they allowed negotiation. Girls seem to be more outspoken even among the less articulate. As far as the question of whether *proficiency* in one skill gets transferred to other skills, it was found that proficiency in writing did not naturally get transferred to speaking and vice versa.

**IMPLICATIONS**

- It is important to motivate the articulate learner at the beginning of any group activity. Let them know they play a vital role in drawing out others.
- ‘More structured tasks are better for participation’. Hence instead of grouping less articulate ones with articulate ones for help, the tasks themselves can be made more self instructional/ self explanatory.
- Mixed groups are better when the team spirit needs to be encouraged. As they work in groups collectively for the success of the task, the more articulate ones try to draw out the best from all the members.

**C. “Students with Specific Learning Disability in the English Curriculum”**

The authors of this research paper, Sonali Nag and Arulmani, say that –

‘We have students in our regular classrooms who have Special Education Needs but who go undetected either for want of initiative or lack of information on how to recognise them. One such category of children is those who have a Specific Learning Disability’.

Given the various subtle and not so subtle deficits, the learning disabled person is challenged by an education system that lays heavy emphasis on the following:
- a heavy load of reading assignments.
- Materials (text books) that require higher levels of reading skills to master the content.
- A lecture format where note taking and listening skills are essential.
- Evaluation targets that are content based where mastery is typically by reading text books.
- Written performance as the main sample of mastery.
- A time bound test paper that does not take into account slower rates of functioning.
- Scoring systems that do not acknowledge the disability.

Changes in English curriculum that can help a student with Learning Disability are:

1. Skill areas are clearly delineated (Speaking, Listening, etc.). This should allow for both specificity in identification of deficits and planning of teaching targets.
2. Shift in teaching methodology to more broad based concept of language skills. This should foster a more positive teacher attitude towards informal language and oral performance, going beyond the restrictive focus on spelling and grammar.
3. Inclusion of group interactions through project work and practical exercises. This should now give validity to oral performance as an area of competency. With this the chance of the learning disabled student experiencing success in the classroom, increases.
4. Introduction of continuous assessment: this should now allow for a wider range of performance situations to be assessed.

The following intervention methods with specific focus on classroom based, English-teacher-initiated methods would be of help:

- Encourage exploring in the language
- Encourage active participation and oral performance
- Give feedback for both oral and written performance
- Encourage scheduling and time tabling
- Encourage making drafts and rough work
- Teach proof-reading skills
- Use simpler sentence structures
- Teach different reading techniques
- Teach point-making skills
- Help make spelling lists
- Help make lists of jargon words and useful phrases
- Give cue sheets wherever possible
- Repeat instructions at the individual level.

II.2.2. TESTING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Tests may be constructed primarily as devices to reinforce learning and to motivate the student or primarily as a means of assessing the student's performance in the language. In the former case, the test is geared to the teaching that has taken place, whereas in the latter case the teaching is geared largely to the test. Standardised tests and public examinations, in fact, may exert such a considerable influence on the average teacher that they are often instrumental in determining the kind of teaching that takes place before the test.

A language test which seeks to find out what candidates can do with language provides a focus for purposeful, everyday communication activities. Such a test will have a more useful effect on the learning of a particular language than a mechanical test of structure. In the past even good tests of grammar, translation or language manipulation had a negative and even harmful effect on
teaching. A good communicative test of language, however, should have a much more positive effect on learning and teaching and should generally result in improved learning habits.

Fortunately, a number of well-known public examining bodies now attempt to measure the candidates’ success in performing purposeful and relevant tasks and their actual ability to communicate in the language. In this sense, such examinations undoubtedly exert a far more beneficial influence on syllabuses and teaching strategies than in the past. However, even the best public examinations are still primarily instruments for measuring each student’s performance in comparison with the performance of other students or with certain established norms.

A brief review of research papers and write ups in testing and evaluation in English as second language is given below:

A. “Evaluating Oral Communication — An Approach”

In this paper Mr. S.K. Gangal writes that the Communicative approach to English teaching at the secondary level aims at developing communicative skill of the learner, both oral and written, through a shift of emphasis from content – oriented teaching to language – skills teaching; this necessitates a corresponding change in evaluation techniques hitherto being used in the content- laden approach to English language teaching. Testing of communication skills, both oral and written, have to be in focus for any evaluation programme under the communicative English language teaching.

He provides touchstones for effective oral communication and while evaluating the oral communication the following aspects of language learning should be kept in view to ensure proper standards:
• Presentation of ideas in a coherent and logical sequence with a fountain like ease in the language used.
• Correct pronunciation, proper stress and intonation.
• Use of appropriate words with a wide range of vocabulary while speaking.
• Time taken to react to the given stimuli.
• Opportunities provided to other person(s) to speak and react during interaction.
• Use of appropriate gestures

All of the above aspects of evaluation of oral communication are equally important, and as such should be given equal weight to ensure that the learner makes efforts to acquire proficiency in all these aspects of oral communication.

B. Exercises and techniques for objective assessment are:

• Listening to the taped material

Since listening is one of the important skills to be developed for oral communication, listening to the taped material followed by answering the comprehension questions based on the taped material should form a battery of tests set for evaluation in oral communication. All the comprehension questions need not test only the information provided. In fact, the bulk questions in this area should be inferential type which should test the learner’s ability to read between the lines and comprehend the speaker’s real message. The students may also be asked to pronounce certain words with proper stress used in the recorded material played back to them. They may also be asked to transcribe the pronunciation of these words using phonetic symbols with stress marks.

The recorded material may be a news item, a speech, a dialogue, a description, a group discussion or even a small story. A listening exercise should not be of more than 5 minutes duration whereas 10 minutes may be earmarked for completing the exercise set for listening comprehension.
Debate

Debate is an important activity to be used in the evaluation of communication skill of the students. To sustain interest and provide variety to what the students speak the teacher need not give only one topic for debate to the entire class. Instead, he may chose a few topics and allot one each to different groups to speak on. The teacher may evaluate the performance of each student when he speaks. Marshalling arguments for and against the topic by the student besides his pronunciation, stress and interaction should be the main criteria for evaluating his performance.

Extempore speeches

The communication skill of the students can be best judged through their extempore speeches. To rule out the possibility of using the ideas of the previous speakers on the given topic by a student it would be appropriate if a variety of topics are selected and every student is allotted a fresh topic by taking out lots to speak on. Every speaker may be allowed 2-3 minutes to speak on the subject. While evaluating, the teacher should give due weight to the speaker’s thoughts and his presentation, including his pronunciation, stress and intonation.

Elocution

It is an individual activity under which the students make prepared speeches on a given topic within the time allocated. The students are given a topic in advance to prepare and speak on the subject. While evaluating an individual’s performance on this scale, the teacher should give credit to the presentation of ideas in a logical way besides the fluency, pronunciation, stress and intonation of the speaker. The students showing indifference to or deficiency in these areas should be heavily scored down even though the ideas presented are worth considering.
Besides content, fluency, pronunciation, stress and intonation of the speaker are of paramount significance in debates, extempore speeches and elocution.

- **Group / Panel Discussion**

  The class may be divided into different groups for purpose of group discussion and each group may be assigned one topic. One of the students of the group may act as the compere. The teacher, while evaluating the individual students in this group activity, should give weight to the logical presentation of a thought/ view point. The students who try to monopolize the time in the group discussion without giving opportunity to other members to speak should be penalised.

- **Reacting to News items**

  Reacting to various news items of national and international importance appearing in the National dailies during the current week may be yet another interesting exercise both for purpose of teaching and evaluating oral communication. While reacting to a particular news the student may be asked to present his view point touching those aspects of the subject which have not been covered as a part of the news item appearing in the paper. The government policies on various issues of public interest may also be selected for this purpose.

- **Introducing each other**

  As a pair work activity the students are paired by taking lots. Then they are given 10-15 minutes time to know each other. They inquire about their hobbies, likes and dislikes, future plans and their contribution to the society etc., thereafter the teacher calls out their numbers one by one and invites them to come on to the stage where they introduced their partners to the rest of the members of the class.
While evaluating the communication skill of the individual students the teacher need not go by the details of the student introduced but by the way he/she is introduced.

- **Interviewing VIPs visiting the school**
  Under this, each student of a class acts like a member of the press club of the school and interviews at least one VIP visiting the school. The interviews taken (typed/written) then are presented in the class and the teacher evaluates the performance of each student with due weight given to the coverage, variety and creativity in the interview.

- **Viva – Voce**
  The communicative skill of the students can also be tested through a viva-voce, which can be conducted at a school/cluster level by two examiners appointed by the school/Board.

  The above exercises are only suggestive and not exhaustive. A willing and imaginative teacher, in fact, with the help of the students can create so many other exercises for evaluating oral communication skill of the students.

The CBSE ELT team to facilitate objective evaluation of conversation skills has suggested the following 5-point assessment scale.
### Conversation Skills Assessment Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Listening</strong></th>
<th><strong>Speaking</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The learner has general ability to understand words and phrases in a familiar context but cannot follow connected speech;</td>
<td>1. The learner shows ability to use only isolated words and phrases but cannot operate on connected speech level;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. has ability to follow short connected utterances in a familiar context;</td>
<td>3. in familiar situations, uses only short connected utterances with limited accuracy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. has ability to understand explicitly stated information in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts;</td>
<td>5. shows ability to use more complex utterances with some fluency in longer discourse; still makes some errors which impede communication;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. understands a range of longer spoken texts with reasonable accuracy, and is able to draw inferences;</td>
<td>7. organises and presents thoughts in a reasonably logical and fluent manner in unfamiliar situations; makes errors which do not interfere with communication;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. shows ability to interpret complex discourses in terms of points of view; adapts listening strategies to suit purposes.</td>
<td>9. can spontaneously adapt style appropriate to purpose and audience: makes only negligible errors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The CBSE ELT team has also formulated a writing assessment scale to facilitate evaluation of written composition exercises, which is given below:
For a writing composition that carries 10 marks, the split up of marks will be 4 for Content, 3 for Fluency and 3 for Accuracy.

The team also has thought in terms of the subjectivity that arises while evaluating written compositions, especially the longer compositions, and so, aiming at as much objectivity as possible in this regard, has formulated the following writing assessment scale.

**Writing assessment scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content /4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 ---- The answer bears almost no relation to the task set.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ---- The answer bears limited relevance to the task set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ---- Much of the answer is in line with the task set, but there is some repetition, redundancy and/or omission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ---- The answer is largely relevant and adequate, with little repetition, redundancy or omission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ---- The answer is fully relevant and adequate to the task set</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency /3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 ---- Ideas are fragmentary, not organised in a coherent manner, and the theme is not clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ---- Although the general theme is clear, ideas are not logically presented and the style may be inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ---- The general theme is clear. Main ideas are adequately presented in a fairly appropriate style, but supporting details are well organised and presented in a style appropriate to the situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accuracy /3
0 ---- inadequate vocabulary even for the basic part of the writing task, most grammatical patterns inaccurate, frequent punctuation and spelling errors.
1 ---- frequent grammatical and / or vocabulary inaccuracies, poor use of punctuation and spelling.
2 ---- use of vocabulary is adequate, though perhaps sometimes limited. There are still some minor grammatical, punctuation and /or spelling errors.
3 ---- uses appropriate vocabulary with hardly any grammatical, punctuation or spelling errors.

Layout
Where layout has to be assessed, up to 1 mark may be detected from the total scored as follows:
- 1 ---- The work is inappropriately or inaccurately laid out.
- ½ ---- The layout is generally appropriate, but with a few minor errors.
- 0 ---- The layout is appropriate and accurate.

II.3. FUNCTIONS OF A TEST

Why test? But it must be emphasised that the evaluation of student performance for purposes of comparison or selection is only one of the functions of a test. Furthermore, as far as the practising teacher is concerned, it should rarely be either the sole purpose or even the chief purpose of testing in schools.

Although most teachers also wish to evaluate individual performance, the aim of the classroom test is different from that of the external examination. While the latter is generally concerned with evaluation for the purpose of selection, the classroom test is concerned with evaluation for the purpose of enabling teachers to
increase their own effectiveness by making adjustments in their teaching to enable certain groups of students or individuals in the class to benefit more. Too many teachers gear their teaching towards an ill-defined ‘average’ group without taking into account the abilities of those students in the class who are at either end of the scale.

A good classroom test will also help to locate the precise areas of difficulty encountered by the class or by the individual student. Just as it is necessary for the doctor first to diagnose the patient’s illness, so is it equally necessary for the teacher to diagnose the students’ weaknesses and difficulties. Unless the teacher is able to identify and analyse the errors a student makes in handling the target language, he or she will be in no position to render any assistance at all through appropriate anticipation, remedial work and additional practice.

The test should also enable the teacher to ascertain which parts of the language programme have been found difficult by the class. In this way, the teacher can evaluate the effectiveness of the syllabus as well as the methods and materials he or she is using. The test results may indicate, for example, certain areas of the language syllabus which have not taken sufficient account of foreign learner difficulties or which, for some reason, have been glossed over. In such cases the teacher will be concerned with those problem areas encountered by groups of students rather than by the individual student. If, for example, one or two students in a class of 30 or 40 confuse the present perfect tense with the present simple tense (e.g. I already see the film’), the teacher may simply wish to correct the error before moving on to a different area. However, if seven or eight students make this mistake, the teacher will take this problem area into account when planning remedial or further teaching.
A test which sets out to measure students’ performances as fairly as possible without in any way setting traps for them can be effectively used to motivate them. A well-constructed classroom test will provide the students with an opportunity to show their ability to perform certain tasks in the language. Provided that details of their performance are given as soon as possible after the test, the students should be able to learn from their weaknesses. In this way a good test can be used as a valuable testing device.

II.4. BACKWASH

Too often language tests have a harmful effect on teaching and learning; and too often they fail to measure accurately whatever it is they are intended to measure. The effect of testing on teaching and learning is known as backwash. Backwash can be harmful or beneficial. If a test is regarded as important, then preparation for it can come to dominate all teaching and learning activities. And if the test content and testing techniques are at variance with the objectives of the course, then there is likely to be harmful backwash. An instance of this would be where students are following an English course which is meant to train them in the language skills (including writing) necessary for university study in an English speaking country, but where the language test which they have to take in order to be admitted to a university does not test those skills directly. If the skill of writing, for example, is tested only by multiple choice items rather than by items requiring the use of skill in writing itself, it is clearly undesirable. This is a case of harmful backwash. However, backwash need not always be harmful; indeed it can be positively beneficial. To quote the words of Arthur Hughes: “I was once involved in the development of an English language test for an English medium university in a non-English-speaking country. The test was to be administered at the end of an intensive year of English study there and would be used to determine which
students would be allowed to go on to their undergraduate courses (taught in English) and which would have to leave the university. A test was devised which was based directly on an analysis of the English language needs of the first year undergraduate students, and which included tasks as similar as possible to those which they would have to perform as undergraduates (reading textbook materials, taking notes during lectures, and so on). The introduction of this test, in place of one which had been entirely multiple choice, had an immediate effect on teaching: the syllabus was redesigned, new books were chosen, classes were conducted differently. The result of these changes was that by the end of the year’s training, in circumstances made particularly difficult by greatly increased numbers and limited resources, the students reached a much higher standard in English than had ever been achieved in the university’s history. This was a case of beneficial backwash”.

Davies (1968) has said that ‘the good test is an obedient servant since it follows and apes the teaching’. He has rightly said so because if the teaching, content and methodology have been good and sampled adequately in the test, we are sure to get a beneficial backwash. The proper relationship between teaching and testing is surely that of partnership. It is true that there may be occasions when the teaching is good and appropriate and the testing is not; we are then likely to suffer from harmful backwash.
II.5. SALIENT FEATURES OF A GOOD LANGUAGE TEST

The reason for mistrusting tests is that very often they fail to measure accurately whatever it is that they are intended to measure. Teachers know this. Students’ true abilities are not always reflected in the test scores that they obtain. To a certain extent this is inevitable. Language abilities are not easy to measure; we cannot expect a level of accuracy comparable to those of measurements in the physical sciences. But we can expect greater accuracy than is frequently achieved.

Why are tests inaccurate? The foremost reason concerns test content and techniques. If we want to know how well someone can write, there is absolutely no way we can get a really accurate measure of their ability by means of a multiple choice test. Professional testers have expended great effort, and not a little money, in attempts to do it; but they have always failed. We may be able to get an approximate measure but that is all.

What factors contribute to good testing?

A. VALIDITY

i. Content validity

A test is said to have content validity if its content constitutes a representative sample of the language skills, structures etc. with which it is meant to be concerned. It is obvious that a grammar test, for instance, must be made up of items testing knowledge or control of grammar. But, this in itself does not ensure content validity. The test would have content validity only if it
included a proper sample of the *relevant* structures. Just what the relevant structures are will depend, of course, on the test.

**ii. Criterion-Related Validity**

Another approach to test validity is to see how far results on the test agree with those provided by some independent and highly dependent assessment of the candidates’ ability. This independent assessment is thus the criterion measure against which the test is validated.

There are essentially two kinds of criterion-related validity: concurrent validity and predictive validity. *Concurrent validity* is established when the test and the criterion are administered at about the same time. The second kind of criterion-related validity is *predictive validity*. This concerns the degree to which a test can predict candidates’ future performance.

**iii. Construct Validity**

A test, part of a test, or a testing technique is said to have construct validity if it can be demonstrated that it measures just the ability which it is supposed to measure. The word ‘construct’ refers to any underlying ability (or trait) which is hypothesised in a theory of language ability. One might hypothesise, for example, that the ability to read involves a number of sub abilities, such as, the ability to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context in which they are met. It would be a matter of empirical research to establish whether or not such a distinct ability existed and could be measured. If we attempted to measure that ability in a particular test, then that part of the test would have construct validity, only if we were able to demonstrate that we were indeed measuring just that ability.
iv. **Face Validity**

A test is said to have face validity if it looks as if it measured what it is supposed to measure.

**B. RELIABILITY**

The second source of accuracy is reliability. A test is reliable if it measures consistently. On a reliable test you can be confident that someone will get more or less the same score, whether they happen to take it on one particular day or on the next; whereas on an unreliable test the score is quite likely to be considerably different, depending on the day on which it is taken.

Unreliability has two origins: features of the test itself and the way it is scored. In the first case, something about the test creates a tendency for the individuals to perform considerably differently on different occasions when they might take the test.

In the second case, equivalent test performances are accorded significantly different scores. For example, the same composition may be given very different scores by different markers (or even by the same marker on different occasions). Fortunately there are well-understood ways of minimising such differences in scoring.

**How to make tests more reliable**

Ways of achieving consistent performance from candidates:

- Take enough samples of behaviour
- Do not allow candidates too much freedom
- Write unambiguous items
- Provide clear and explicit instructions
- Ensure that tests are well laid out and perfectly legible
- Familiarise candidates with format and testing techniques
- Provide uniform and non-distracting conditions of administration
- Use items that permit scoring which is as objective as possible
- Make comparisons between candidates as direct as possible
- Provide a detailed scoring key
- Train scorers
- Accept responses and appropriate scores
- Identify candidates by number, not name
- Employ multiple, independent scoring

Reliability and Validity

To be valid a test must provide consistently accurate measurements. It must therefore be reliable. A reliable test, however, may not be valid at all. For example, at a writing test we might require candidates to write down the translation equivalents of 500 words in their own language. This could well be a reliable test; but it is unlikely to be a valid test of writing.

There will always be some tension between reliability and validity. The tester has to balance gains in one against losses in another.

II.6. Testing the language skills

Four major skills in communicating through language are often broadly defined as *listening, speaking, reading and writing*. In many situations where English is taught for general purposes, these skills should be carefully integrated and used to perform as many genuinely communicative tasks as possible. Where this is the case, it is important for the test writer to concentrate on those types of test items which appear directly relevant to the ability to use language for real-life
communication. Thus, questions which test the ability to understand and respond appropriately to polite requests, advice, instructions, etc. would be preferred to tests of reading aloud or telling stories. In the written section of a test, questions requiring students to write letters, memos, reports, messages should be used in place of the more traditional compositions used in the past. In listening and reading tests, questions in which students show their ability to specific information of a practical nature would be preferred to questions testing the comprehension of unimportant and irrelevant details. Above all, there would be no rigid distinction drawn between the four different skills as in most traditional tests in the past, a test of reading now being used to provide the basis for a related test of writing or speaking.

Ways of assessing performance in the four major skills may take the form of tests of:

- listening (auditory) comprehension, in which short utterances, dialogues, talks and lectures are given to the testees;
- speaking ability, usually in the form of an interview, a picture description, role play, and a problem-solving task involving pair work or group work;
- reading comprehension, in which questions are set to test the students' ability to understand the gist of a text and to extract key information on specific points in the text; and
- writing ability, usually in the form letters, reports, memos, messages, instructions, and accounts of past events, etc.

It is the test constructor's task to assess the relative importance of these skills at the various levels and to devise an accurate means of measuring the student's success in developing these skills. Several test writers still consider that their purpose can best be achieved if each separate skill can be measured on its
own. But it is usually extremely difficult to separate one skill from another, for the very division of the four skills is an artificial one and the concept itself constitutes a vast over-simplification of the issues involved in communication.

II.7. TESTING AS PROBLEM SOLVING

Language testers are sometimes asked to say what is 'the best test' or 'the best testing technique'. Such questions reveal a misunderstanding of what is involved in the practice of language testing. In fact there is no best test or testing technique. A test which proves ideal for one purpose may be quite useless for another; a technique which may work very well in one situation can be entirely inappropriate in another. As we saw in the previous chapter, what suits large testing corporations may be quite out of place in the tests of teaching institutions. In the same way, two teaching institutions may require very different tests, depending, amongst other things, on the objectives of their courses, the purpose and importance of the tests and the resources that are available. The assumption that has to be made therefore is that each testing situation is unique and so sets a particular testing problem. It is the tester's job to provide the best solution to that problem.

In every situation the first step must be to state the testing problem as clearly as possible. Without a clear statement of the problem it is hard to arrive at the right solution. Every testing problem can be expressed in the same general terms: we want to create a test or testing system which will:

- consistently provide accurate measures of the abilities in which we are interested;
- have a beneficial effect on teaching (in those cases where the tests are likely to influence teaching);
• be economical in terms of time and money;

Let us describe the general testing problem in a little more detail. The first thing that testers have to be clear about is the purpose of testing in any particular situation. Different purposes will usually require different kinds of tests. This may seem obvious but is something which seems not always to be recognised. Some purposes of testing are:

• to measure language proficiency regardless of any language courses that candidates may have followed
• to discover how far students have achieved the objectives of a course of study
• to diagnose a student's strengths and weaknesses, to identify what they know and what they do not know
• to assist placement of students by identifying the stage or part of a teaching programme most appropriate to their ability

All tests cost time and money- to prepare, administer, score and interpret. Time and money are in limited supply, and so there is often likely to be a conflict between what appears to be a perfect testing solution in a particular situation and considerations of practicality.

II.8. Approaches to Language Testing

Language tests can be roughly classified according to four main approaches to testing:

(i). the essay translation approach
(ii). the structuralist approach ;
(iii). the integrative approach;
(iv). the communicative approach;

Although these approaches are listed here in chronological order, they should not be regarded as being strictly confined to certain periods in the development of language testing. Nor are the four approaches always mutually exclusive. A useful test will essentially incorporate features of several of these approaches.

A. The Essay Translation Approach
This approach is commonly referred to as the pre-scientific stage of language testing. No special skill or expertise in testing is required: the subjective judgement of the teacher is considered to be of paramount importance. Tests usually consist of essay writing, translation and grammatical analysis (often in the form of comments about the language being learnt). The tests also have a heavy literary and cultural bias.

B. The Structuralist Approach
This approach is characterised by the view that language learning is chiefly concerned with the systematic acquisition of a set of habits. It draws on the work of structural linguistics, in particular the importance of contrastive analysis and the need to identify and measure the learner's mastery of the separate elements of the target language: phonology, vocabulary and grammar. Such mastery is tested using words and sentences completely divorced from any context on the grounds that a larger sample of the language forms can be covered in the test in a comparatively short time. The skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are also separated from one another as much as possible because it is considered essential to test one thing at a time.
Such features of the structuralist approach are, of course, still valid for certain types of test and for certain purposes. For example, the desire to concentrate on the testees' ability to write by attempting to separate a composition test from reading (i.e. by making it wholly independent of the ability to read long and complicated instructions or verbal stimuli) is commendable in certain aspects. Indeed, there are several features of this approach which merit consideration when constructing any good test.

The psychometric approach to measurement with its emphasis on reliability and objectivity forms an integral part of structuralist testing. Psychometrists have been able to show clearly that such traditional examinations as essay writing are highly subjective and unreliable. As a result, the need for statistical measures of reliability and validity is considered to be of utmost importance in testing; hence the popularity of the multiple choice item- a type of item which lends itself admirably to statistical analysis.

C. The Integrative Approach

This approach involves the testing of language in context and is thus concerned primarily with meaning and total communicative effect of discourse. Consequently, integrative tests do not seek to separate language skills into neat divisions in order to improve test reliability: instead they are often designed to assess the learner's ability to use two or more skills simultaneously, thus, integrative tests are concerned with a global view of proficiency - an underlying language competence or 'grammar of expectancy', which it is argued every learner possesses regardless of the purpose for which the language is being learnt. Integrative testing involves functional language and integrative tests are best characterised by cloze testing and of dictation.
The principle of cloze testing is based on the Gestalt theory of 'closure' (closing gaps in patterns simultaneously). Cloze tests measure the reader's ability to decode 'interrupted' or 'mutilated' messages by making the most acceptable substitutions from all the contextual clues available. Every \( n \)th word is deleted in a text (usually every fifth, sixth or seventh word), and students have to complete each gap in the text, using the most appropriate word.

Dictation, another major type of integrative test, was previously regarded solely as a means of measuring students' skills of listening comprehension. Thus the complex elements involved in tests of dictation were largely overlooked until fairly recently. The integrated skills involved in tests of dictation include auditory discrimination, the auditory memory span, spelling, the recognition of sound segments, a familiarity with the grammatical and lexical patterning of the language and overall textual comprehension. Unfortunately, however, there is no reliable way of assessing the relative importance of the different abilities required and each error in the dictation is usually penalised in exactly the same way.

Dictation tests can prove good predictors of global language ability even though some recent research has found that dictation tends to measure lower-order language skills such as straightforward comprehension rather than the higher order skills such as inference. Other types of integrative tests are oral interviews, composition and translation.

D. The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach to language testing is sometimes linked to the integrative approach. However, although both approaches emphasise the importance of the meaning of utterances rather than their form and structure, there are nevertheless fundamental differences between the two approaches.
As its name suggests, the Communicative Approach is based on the belief that acquiring a language means, above all, acquiring a means to communicate confidently and naturally. In other words, in order to communicate effectively in real life, students need more than mere knowledge about the language. In addition, they must be able to use English effectively, with confidence and fluency. Therefore teaching and testing should not be content based (except literary pieces selected for inclusion in the Literature Reader). Instead, its overriding goal is to develop the practical language skills needed for academic study and subsequent adult life.

The approach brings together a number of ideas about the nature of language and language learning:

- **Knowledge and Skill**

  One of the tenets of the communicative approach is that language is a skill to be acquired, not merely a body of knowledge to be learnt. Acquiring a language has been compared to learning to drive. It is not enough to have only theoretical knowledge of how an engine works: one must know how to use the gears and how to interact with other road users. Similarly, simply knowing parts of speech or how to convert the active into passive does not mean one is proficient in the language. One must be able to put the knowledge into practice in natural use. Hence in language learning, even though there are some rules to be learnt, there is no substitute for learning by doing. In good teaching, this experience is supported by carefully graded contextualised exercises.

- **Structure and Function**

  Language can be described in different ways. Obviously we can label an utterance according to its grammatical structure. Another approach is to decide what function it performs. Consider the following:
a) "Can I open that window?"

b) "Can I carry that case?"

We could say that a) and b) have the same grammatical structure: they are both interrogative. We should also recognise that they perform different functions: a) is a 'request' and b) is an 'offer'.

The Communicative Approach recognises the use to which language is put, and encourages pupils to be aware of the relationship between structure and function.

- Appropriacy

Another related issue is that of appropriacy. We all speak different types of language in different circumstances to different people. For example, suppose a boy wants to open a window. To his friend he might say: "Hot in here, isn’t it? Mind if I open the window?" However to his teacher he might say "I’m afraid I’m rather hot. Would you mind if I opened the window?"

Using language inappropriately is just as incorrect as making an error of structure or of spelling. The Communicative Approach lays stress on language appropriacy.

- Accuracy and Fluency

Traditional language teaching lays greatest stress on accuracy—using the language correctly and without error, usually in short, decontextualised work such as a grammar transformation exercise. The communicative approach recognises the importance of accuracy, but contends that learners should use English easily, smoothly, at a reasonable pace, with little hesitation—i.e. with fluency.

- The role of the teacher

Most teachers are familiar with a teacher centred classroom, where the teacher plays a dominant role, speaks most of the time, and interacts with the class as a
whole. However, in the communicative approach, teachers will need to adopt a variety of roles.

Littlewood William (1981) in “Communicative Language Teaching” sets out these roles:

- As a general overseer of his students’ learning, the teacher must aim to coordinate the activities so that they form a coherent progression, leading towards greater communicative ability.
- As a classroom manager, he is responsible for grouping activities into ‘lessons’ and for ensuring that these are satisfactorily organised at a practical level.
- In many activities, he may perform the familiar role of language instructor: he will present new language, exercise direct control over the learners’ performance, evaluate and correct it, and so on.
- In others, he will not intervene after initiating the proceedings, but will let learning take place through independent activity or pair and group work.
- When such an activity is in progress he may act as a consultant or adviser, helping where necessary. He may also move about the classroom in order to monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the learners, as a basis for planning future learning activities.
- He will sometimes wish to participate in an activity as co-communicator with the learners. In this role, he can stimulate and present new language without taking the main initiative for learning away from the learners themselves.
• Classroom procedures

In many traditional classrooms, the most common classroom procedure is whole class work, in which students all face front with the teacher communicating with the class as a whole. But communicative approach covers:

a) individual work

When an activity is designed for individual work, students will be working mainly on their own. While the students are working, the teacher can move around the classroom, making sure that everything is going smoothly and giving individual help where it is needed.

b) Pair work

Pair work activity can help to focus the students’ attention and provide a challenge as well as simplifying management of the class. In many pair work tasks, checking can be carried out in the same way as the individual work. Sometimes it may be better for one or more pairs of students to report back their conclusions to the rest of the class, possibly with class discussion.

c) Group work

Usually group work involves 4 to 6 students. The general procedure for group work is the same as for pair work:

• Instructions for the whole class
• Organisation of the groups
• Group activity while the teacher supervises
• Feedback and checking for the whole class
Pair work and group work encourage students to interact more; the students feel facile, enthused and involved, without much of inhibition, ventilating their thoughts freely and meaningfully in authentic situations.

d) Whole class work

Whole class work, of course, is necessary for matters such as formal instruction (e.g. the format of formal and informal letters), for warm up activities, for class discussion, for “class review” sessions at the close of pair work or group work. In whole class work, the teacher is in her traditional role.

II.9. Kinds of tests and testing

We use tests to obtain information. The information that we hope to obtain will vary from situation to situation. It is possible, nevertheless, to categorize tests according to a small number of kinds of information being sought. This categorisation will prove useful both in deciding whether an existing test is suitable for a particular purpose and in writing appropriate new tests where these are necessary. The four types of test are: proficiency tests, diagnostic tests, placement tests and achievement tests.

• PROFICIENCY TESTS

Proficiency tests are designed to measure people’s ability in a language regardless of any training they might have had in that language. The content of a proficiency test, therefore, is not based on the content or objectives of language courses which people taking the test may have followed. Rather, it is based on a specification of what candidates have to be able to do in the language in order to be considered proficient. This raises the question of what we mean by the word ‘proficient’.
In the case of some proficiency tests, 'proficient' means having sufficient command of the language for a particular purpose. An example of this would be a test designed to discover whether someone can function successfully as a United Nations translator. Another example would be a test used to determine whether a student's English is good enough to follow a course of study at a British University.

- **DIAGNOSTIC TESTS**

Diagnostic tests are used to identify students' strengths and weaknesses. They are intended primarily to ascertain what further teaching is necessary. At the level of language skills this is reasonably straightforward. We can be fairly confident of our ability to create tests that will tell us that a student is particularly weak in, say, speaking as opposed to reading, in a language. Indeed, existing proficiency tests may often prove adequate for this purpose.

We may be able to go further, analysing samples of a student's performance in writing or speaking in order to create profiles of the student's performance in writing or speaking, in order to create profiles of the student's ability with respect to such categories as 'grammatical accuracy' or 'linguistic appropriacy'.

Diagnostic tests form a solid foundation for meaningful remedial teaching.

- **PLACEMENT TESTS**

Placement tests, as their name suggests, are intended to provide information which will help to place students at the stage (or in the part) of the teaching
programme most appropriate to their abilities. Typically they are used to assign students to classes at different levels.

- **ACHIEVEMENT TESTS**

Now, it might be argued that to base test content on objectives rather than on course content is unfair to students. If the course content does not fit well with objectives, they will be expected to do things for which they have not been prepared. In a sense, this is true. But in another sense, it is not. If the test is based on the content of a poor or inappropriate course, the students taking it will be misled as to the extent of their achievement and the quality of the course. Whereas, if the test is based on objectives, not only will the information it gives be more useful, but also there is less chance of the course surviving in its present unsatisfactory form. Initially some students may suffer, but future students will benefit from the pressure for change. The long-term interests of students are best served by final achievement tests whose content is based on course objectives.

We wonder at this stage whether there is any real difference between final achievement tests and proficiency tests. If a test is based on the objectives of a course, and these are equivalent to the language needs on which a proficiency test is based, then there is no reason to expect a difference between the form and the content of the two tests. Two things have to be remembered, however. First, objectives and needs may not typically coincide this way. Secondly, many achievement tests are not in fact based on course objectives. These facts have implications both for the users of test results and for the test writers. Test users have to know on what basis an achievement test has been constructed, and be aware of the possibly limited validity and applicability of test scores. Test writers, on the other hand, must create achievement tests which reflect the objectives of a
particular course, and not expect a general proficiency test (or some imitation of it) to provide a satisfactory alternative.

*Progress* achievement tests, as their name suggests, are intended to measure the progress that students are making. If the syllabus and teaching are appropriate to these objectives, progress tests based on short-term objectives will fit well with what has been taught.

In addition to more formal achievement tests which require careful preparation, teachers should feel free to set their own ‘pop quizzes’. These serve both to make a rough check on students’ progress and to keep students on their toes.

**DIRECT VERSUS INDIRECT TESTING**

We now distinguish between two approaches to test construction:

Testing is said to be *direct* when it requires the candidate to perform precisely the skill which we wish to measure. If we want to know how well candidates can write compositions, we get them to write compositions. If we want to know how well they pronounce a language, we get them to speak. The tasks, and the texts which are used, should be as authentic as possible. The fact that the candidates are aware that they are in a test situation means that the tasks cannot be really authentic. Nevertheless the effort is made to make them as realistic as possible.

Direct testing has a number of attractions. First, provided that we are clear about just what abilities we want to assess, it is relatively straightforward to create the conditions which will elicit the behaviour on which to base our judgements. Secondly, at least in the case of productive skills, the assessment and interpretation
of students' performance is also straightforward. Thirdly, since practice for the test involves practice of the skills that we want to foster, there is likely to be a helpful backwash effect.

Indirect testing attempts to measure the abilities, which underlie the skills in which we are interested. One section of the TOEFL, for example, was developed as an indirect measure of writing ability. It contains items of the following kind:

\[ \textit{At first the old woman seemed unwilling to accept anything that was offered to her by my friend and I.} \]

where the candidate has to identify which of the underlined elements is erroneous or inappropriate in formal standard English. While the ability to respond to such items has been shown to be related statistically to the ability to write compositions (though the strength of the relationship was not particularly great), it is clearly not the same thing. Another example of indirect testing is Lado's (1961) proposed method of testing pronunciation ability by a paper and pencil test in which the candidate has to identify pairs of words which rhyme with each other.

Perhaps the main appeal of indirect testing is that it seems to offer the possibility of testing a representative sample of a finite number of abilities which underlie a potentially indefinitely large number of manifestations of them. If, for example, we take a representative sample of grammatical structures, then, it may be argued, we have taken a sample which is relevant for all the situations in which control of grammar is necessary. By contrast, direct testing is inevitably limited to a rather small sample of tasks, which may call on a restricted and possibly unrepresentative range of grammatical structures. On this argument, indirect testing is superior to direct testing in that its results are more generalisable.
The main problem with indirect tests is that the relationship between performance on them and performance of the skills in which we are usually more interested tends to be rather weak in strength and uncertain in nature.

**Discrete point versus integrative testing**

Discrete point testing refers to the testing of one element at a time, item by item. This might involve, for example, a series of items each testing a particular grammatical structure. Integrative testing, by contrast, requires the candidate to combine many language elements in the completion of a task. This might involve writing a composition, making notes while listening to a lecture, taking a dictation or completing a cloze passage. Clearly this distinction is not unrelated to that between direct and indirect testing. Discrete point tests will almost always be indirect, while integrative tests will tend to be direct. However, some integrative testing methods, such as the cloze procedure, are indirect.

**Norm-referenced versus criterion-referenced testing**

Imagine that a reading test is administered to an individual student. When asked how the student performed on the test, we may be given two kinds of answer. An answer of the first kind would be that the student obtained a score that placed her or him in the top ten percent of candidates who have taken the test, or in the bottom five percent; or that she or he did better than sixty percent of those who took it. A test which is designed to give this kind of information is said to be norm-referenced. It relates one candidate’s performance to that of other candidates. We are not told directly what the student is capable of doing in the language.

In some cases we learn nothing about how the individual’s performance compares with that of the other candidates. Rather we learn something about what
he or she can actually do in the language. Tests which are designed to provide this kind of information directly are said to be criterion-referenced.

Books on language testing have tended to give advice which is more appropriate to norm-referenced testing than to criterion-referenced testing. One reason for this may be that the procedures for use with norm-referenced tests (particularly with reference to such matters as the analysis of items and the estimation of reliability) are well established, while those for criterion-referenced tests are not.

**SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE TESTING**

Subjective and objective are terms used to refer to the scoring of tests. All test items, no matter how they are devised, require candidates to exercise a subjective judgement. In an essay test, for example, candidates must think of what to say and then express their ideas as well as possible; in a multiple-choice test they have to weigh up carefully all the alternatives and select the best one. Furthermore, all tests are constructed subjectively by the tester, who decides which areas of language to test, how to test those particular areas, and what kind of test items to use for this purpose. Thus it is only the scoring of a test that can be described as objective. This means that a testee will score the same mark no matter which examiner marks the test.

Since objective tests usually have only one correct answer (or, at least, a limited number of correct answers), they can be scored mechanically. The fact that objective tests can be marked by computer is one important reason for their evident popularity among examining bodies responsible for testing large numbers of candidates.
Objective tests need not be confined to any one particular skill or element. In one or two well-known tests in the past, attempts have even been made to measure writing ability by a series of objective test items. However, certain skills and areas of language may be tested far more effectively by one method than by another. Reading and vocabulary, for example often lend themselves to objective methods of assessment. Clearly, the ability to write can only be satisfactorily tested by a subjective examination requiring the student to perform a writing task similar to that required in real life.

Objective tests are frequently criticised on the grounds that they are simpler to answer than subjective tests. Items in an objective test, however, can be made just as easy or as difficult as the test constructor wishes. The fact that objective tests may generally look easier is no indication at all that they are easier. Another criticism is that objective tests of the multiple-choice type encourage guessing. However, four or five alternatives for each item are sufficient to reduce the possibility of guessing. Furthermore, experience shows that candidates rarely make wild guesses; most base their guesses on partial knowledge.

A much wider sample of grammar, vocabulary and phonology can generally be included in an objective test than in a subjective test. Although the purposive use of language is often sacrificed in an attempt to test students’ ability to manipulate language, there are occasions (particularly in class progress tests at certain levels) when good objective tests of grammar, vocabulary and phonology may be useful—provided that such tests are never regarded as measures of the students’ ability to communicate in the language. It cannot be emphasised too strongly, however, that test objectivity by itself provides no guarantee that a test is sound and reliable. An objective test will be a very poor test if:

- The test items are poorly written;
Irrelevant areas and skills are emphasised in the test simply because they are 'testable'; and

It is confined to language-based usage and neglects the communicative skills involved.

It should never be claimed that objective tests can do those tasks which they are not intended to do. As already indicated, they can never test the ability to communicate in the target language, nor can they evaluate actual performance. A good classroom test will usually contain both subjective and objective test items but, in testing English as a Second Language at the school final level, the different Boards of Education discourage, rather avoid, Multiple Choice Questions, True or False type questions, Pick out the right word and Fill in the Blanks type questions - even though they are good objective test items - because of the administrative problems that may arise due to mass copying etc.

There is still a limited use for multiple-choice items in many communicative tests, especially for reading and listening comprehension purposes. Exactly the same argument can be applied to the use of several other item types.

Communicative language testing

Much has been written in recent years about 'communicative language testing'. Discussions have centered on the desirability of measuring the ability to take part in acts of communication (including reading and listening) and on the best way to do this. It is assumed that it is communicative ability which we want to test.
Communicative tests are concerned primarily (if not totally) with how the language is used in communication. Consequently most aim to incorporate tasks which approximate as closely as possible to those facing the students in real life. Success is judged in terms of the effectiveness of the communication which takes place rather than formal linguistic accuracy. Language 'use' is often emphasised to the exclusion of language 'usage'.

The attempt to measure different language skills in communicative tests is based on a view of language referred to as the divisibility hypothesis. Communicative testing results in an attempt to obtain different profiles of a learner's performance in the language. The learner may, for example, have a poor ability in using the spoken language in informal conversations but may score quite highly on tests of reading comprehension. In this sense, communicative testing draws heavily on the recent work on aptitude testing (where it has long been claimed that the most successful tests are those which measure separately such relevant skills as the ability to translate news reports, the ability to understand radio broadcasts, or the ability to interpret speech utterances). The score obtained on a communicative test will thus result in several measures of proficiency rather than simply one overall measure. In the following table, for example, the four basic skills are shown (each with six boxes to indicate the different levels of students' performance). The six levels, to begin with, can form the six points on a scale indicating the levels of achievement as follows:

1 – Very low/poor
2 - Low
3 - Average
4 – Good
5 – Very good
6 - Excellent
The assessment of the language skills is done from time to time for each student as part of continuous assessment. In such a case, a student may be placed in 5 for reading skills whereas in 2 for writing skills, which shows he shows very good achievement in reading skills while in writing skills he is comparatively slow and hence a low achiever in writing skills. Such a study not only reveals the extent to which the language skills are acquired in the 4 areas (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking) distinctly, but also informs the teacher where the student requires prodding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANG. SKILLS</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
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<td>Listening</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening/Speaking</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
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Such a table would normally be adapted to give different profiles relevant to specific situations or needs. The degree of detail in the various profiles listed will depend largely on the type of test and the purpose for which it is constructed. The following is an example of one way in which the table could be adapted:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening to specialist subject lectures</td>
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<td>Reading textbooks and journals</td>
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<td>Contributing to seminar discussions</td>
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<td>Writing laboratory reports</td>
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<td>Writing a thesis</td>
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</table>
From this approach, a new and interesting view of assessment emerges: namely that, it is possible for a native speaker to score less than a non-native speaker on a test of English for specific purposes – say, on a study skills test of Medicine. It is argued that a native speaker’s ability to use language for a particular purpose being tested, (e.g. English for studying Medicine) may actually be inferior to a foreign learner’s ability. This is indeed the most controversial claim as it might be justifiably argued that low scores on such a test are the result of lack of motivation or of knowledge of the subject itself rather than an inferior ability to use English for the particular purpose being tested.

Unlike the separate testing of skills in the structuralist approach, it is felt in communicative testing that sometimes the assessment of language skills in isolation may have only a very limited relevance to real life. For example, reading would rarely be undertaken solely for its own sake in academic study but rather for subsequent transfer of the information obtained to writing or speaking.

So far we have analysed different concepts concerning Teaching and Testing English, functions of a test in English, the backwash that a test can provide and the salient features of a good test in English. At this point we should remember, as testing is problem solving, while testing English language skills the danger of confusing methods of testing with approaches to testing should be avoided. The purpose of the test should decide the type and approach, so we should be eclectic in using the different approaches and types of testing English effectively and meaningfully. There is a close relationship between the style and the quality of learning and the scheme and methodology of testing. Unless the testing is oriented to the purposes of teaching, no worthwhile transformation in teaching-learning process can take place. In consonance with this philosophy, the
scheme of evaluation in English has to be revamped so that both may interact with each other in close contact.

II.10. English Course for Classes XI and XII

After analysing the salient features of the different approaches and methods of teaching and testing English as a second language, the investigator formulated a set of aims and objectives for class XI and XII English teaching in schools. The set of aims and objectives were given to 6 judges, experts in English language teaching and testing - the investigator's guide, the Head of the Department of Evaluation, CIEFL, a professor in a college of Education, the English Studies Officer, British Council Division, and the Education Officer and the Assistant Education Officers, CBSE. Based on the suggestions of the judges, the aims and objectives were redesigned and the final draft approved by them is given below:

Aims and Course Objectives

AIMS

The course design has its origin in the Communicative and Skill oriented approach in teaching and testing. The emphasis is on:

Competence in communication in English so that the students can use English:

a. for self expression in real life situation
b. for pursuing higher studies in science, humanities, commerce, agriculture and vocational courses
c. as a resource for reference work in different fields such as medicine, engineering etc.
d. to develop an interest in appreciation of literature
e. for formulating and expressing their thoughts creatively
f. not only as a functional tool but also for personal development and inculcation of values
COURSE OBJECTIVES

As the course is based on communicative skills and the competence in the four skills—LSRW—Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, the course objectives are also given in terms of the skills. The course aims at an active vocabulary of 2500 common words and a passive vocabulary of 1500 words. By the end of class XII students should be able to achieve the specified objectives.

A. READING

On reading a text, the student will be able to:

- Perceive its overall organisation
- Identify the main points and sub points and how they are related
- Analyse the main points and sub points and how they are related
- Analyse, interpret, infer and evaluate ideas
- Tell/write on the author's message and tone/attitude
- Perceive information from tabular and diagrammatic forms
- Make notes using relevant short forms, symbols and abbreviations
- Abstract required information from a large text. Reduce the given text into a summary
- Identify the meaning of the words from the given context

B. WRITING

The pupil will be able to:

- Write correctly using correct vocabulary and grammar
- Write in a style appropriate for communicative purpose
- Give factual descriptions of objects, places, persons and processes
- Expand notes into a piece of sustained writing
- Draft clear, precise and cogent reports on events and experiments
• Use an appropriate style and format to write letters (formal and informal),
notices, posters, telegrams, reports and articles
• Transcode information from diagrammatic to verbal form
• Compose an argumentative essay on the given topic of social/political
interest.
• Use an appropriate style and format to write formal, informal and business
letters.
• Draft classified and non-classified advertisements for the given context
• Synthesise information from the passage and present in conclusion/precis.

C. LISTENING AND SPEAKING
• Use linguistic and non-linguistic features of the given context as clues to
understand and interpret what is heard.[key words, cohesive devices, tone of
the speaker, intonation, gestures and background noises]
• Understand the main points and supporting details of the speech, talk or
conversation
• listen for specific information
• listen, understand, interpret and respond to messages orally and in writing
• Understand and respond to spontaneous spoken discourse in familiar social
situations
• Express ideas/argue a point of view correctly, confidently, clearly and
effectively.
• Narrate happenings in a logical sequence
• Listen to and respond logically and effectively and convincingly to personal
feelings, opinions and attitudes

D. : GRAMMAR
The pupils will be able to use
• Tenses: the Simple Present, the Simple Past, the Present Perfect, the Present Perfect Continuous, the Past Perfect, the Past Perfect Continuous;
• Active and passive constructions
• Clauses: noun clauses, adjective(relative) clauses and adverb clauses;
• Modals: can, could, may, might, will, would, should, must, mustn’t, needn’t, ought to, have to;
• Determiners;
• Conventions of writings such as punctuation, parenthesis, indexing, underlining, use of abbreviations
• Phrasal verbs
• Change of narration

E. LITERATURE

The student will be able to understand, interpret, evaluate and respond to the following features in a literary text:
• Character(s) – as revealed through their (physical) features, traits, speech, behaviour and the role played in the story
• Plot / theme - as revealed through the events in the story
• Setting – the background, beliefs and attitudes
• Form – rhyme, rhythm, figures of speech, literary devices like simile, metaphor, pun, alliteration and repetition.

F. REFERENCE SKILLS

The pupils will be able to use their reference skills by:
• Locating a book in the library
• Finding out required information in a book by using its list of contents, index, etc.
- Looking up the meaning of words in a dictionary
- Do reference on a particular topic and take notes