



## An Analytic Study of BA/BSc/BCA/BCom Part I General English Syllabus Prescribed by the University of Jammu

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### ABSTRACT

*The recent developments in Information and Communication technologies have emphasized the need for focused training in communication skills. Language courses especially General English need a shift from the literature/culture orientation to communicative functions. There is a dire need to redefine the contents of the General English Course prescribed for BA/BSc/BCA/BCom. Part I, by the University of Jammu in order to think what the students need to use language for. The aim of this research paper is to obtain a detailed description of the status of General English syllabus in teaching English as a second language and to study whether the existing course fulfills the present and future needs of the students. Field procedures have been used for collecting information and data regarding the existing General English syllabus, such as questionnaires, tests, observations, etc. Guided by the theoretical consideration of fieldwork methodology, three instruments—diagnostic tests, questionnaire for teachers, and questionnaire for students—were chosen and employed for the present study in order to establish the collective opinions and the views of the teachers and students regarding the General English syllabus and textbooks at the first year degree level in the University of Jammu.*

**Keywords : Status of GE Syllabus, opinions and views, critical analysis and suggestions**

### Teachers' feelings, attitudes, opinions and feedback

The aim of syllabus or course of study in English for second language learners ought to be, and often is, to make learners proficient in the art of communicative skills. But the present syllabus does not fulfill the desired target of teaching and learning of English as a second language. The Board of Studies in English, University of Jammu aims at teaching language through literature. But expecting learning of literature without acquiring linguistic skills is paradoxical as the present General English Syllabus is generally more literature and less language based. The majority of the English teachers are not happy with its organization. The responses of the teachers show that the focus of teaching General English should be on the functional aspect of the English language. But the present textbooks focus more on literature of English than on the language and there is a vast gap between the syllabus and the expected output of the students. The focus may be on the effectiveness of teaching English grammar and how to improve writing skills of the learners. Majority of the teachers do not rate the existing syllabus up to the mark because it is not updated and modified with the rapidly changing needs. Syllabus revision or change is the normal process. It would be more appropriate to compile or commission well-written materials which could provide interesting and highly relevant texts for the teaching and learning of the English language.

A teacher is the soul of any educational institution. Without his/her dedicated services learners cannot reach the pinnacles of success. A teacher prepares his/her students with sound knowledge and inculcates in them the ability to think decisively, analyze logically and act purposely. But this is possible only if the teachers are well-trained, experienced and devoted to their duties or profession with updated techniques and teaching methodology. The present data indicates that majority of English teachers are not happy with the present system. There is no interaction between the students and the teachers because there is no room for the students to express their views and ultimately students are left with no other choice but to procure photo stat materials and guide books. The students then use them as exam materials and reproduce them at the examinations. Thus they do not benefit at all from such kind of practices. The advancement of which

learning is the main aim of every good system of education is never achieved. Our classrooms should not consist of just four walls, they should have enough space equipped with the latest teaching aids where the young learners are to be practically trained and acquire knowledge to succeed in every task of learning the English language. The responses of English teachers show that there is an urgent need to improve the techniques and methods of teaching General English at undergraduate level. Our examination system should not be a mere test of knowledge and information. In fact, it should aim at evaluating a candidate's suitability to the challenging and ever-important tasks of language learning. Our techniques and methods of teaching General English should be focused on enabling the learners to develop abilities to face the problems in language learning and come up with solutions rather than run away from them.

More than 85% teachers (Who responded to the questionnaire) admitted that the present syllabus of General English for BA/BSc/BCom/BCA Part I does not allow them to be innovative. This is mainly because of the lack of the coordination between the needs of the learners and the syllabus designers. Teachers of English have no time to provide additional information or knowledge to the students. They are just committed to complete the syllabus. They are not concerned with the quality of knowledge provided to the students and how much they have achieved. No feedback is required except the written scripts annually or half-yearly where the students put forth only crammed mastery. Language teaching without the innovative and novel techniques may not prove to be successful. Therefore, a fruitful teaching learning process is possible only if the teachers are allowed to be innovative enough to meet the desired needs of the learners. The teachers of English have given remarkable reasons to the belief that the existing syllabus and the educational system do not allow them to be innovative while teaching General English to the first year degree students in Humanities, Science, Commerce and Computer Applications. The most important reasons are as under:

- a) The time constraint and the fear of examination which always lurks on the hearts of the teachers or taught, leave no scope for any innovative exercise to be taken in the classes.

- b) Innovative exercises cannot be conducted in overcrowded General English classes.
- c) When students are presented with conventional techniques of teaching and learning the English language, they withdraw from active classroom participation.
- d) Needs of the learners are ignored.
- e) Existing syllabus compels learners for cramming.
- f) Modern communicative aspect of the language has not been included in it.
- g) Out of fashion topics have been included without language exercises.
- h) Future prospects of the students are not taken into account while designing the present document of the General English syllabus.
- i) Language skills like listening and speaking have no place in the present syllabus of General English.
- j) Literature based syllabus has been prescribed for the students.
- k) Textbooks are not properly graded keeping in mind the needs of the learners.
- l) Lack of coordination between secondary education and Higher education syllabus designers.

The teachers of English feel that the envisaged changes are bound to stand the learners in good stead in acquiring proficiency in language skills. Practical skills will enable the learners in shedding inhibitions and expressing themselves freely and clearly. An element of objective questionnaire shall make a great difference in improvement of syllabus and learning skills of the students. If proper language activities/tasks are included in the syllabus in which the students will be freely allowed to express their views and ideas, the teachers with the help of the properly graded and designed activities/tasks may improve the creativity of the students and the quality of the syllabus.

#### Students' feelings, attitudes, opinions and feedback

There is a general tendency in our state that private schools are better than government schools as far as English language teaching is concerned. Government schools offer a programme of education designed with the needs of the general public in mind while private schools have more scope to be flexible. They generate their own curriculum and may offer

more specialized courses. But the majority of students dwell in rural areas of Jammu and Kashmir State. These students receive education in rural schools and as such become mere memorizing machines and remain deprived of learning and improving language skills. There is no doubt that the academic quality of teaching personnel in government schools is far superior to that of the private schools but the application of sincere and honest teaching approach in government schools by teaching faculty is undoubtedly questionable. The sound edifice of language building concept is an urge that comes among the teachers from within and picking up teaching techniques in the changing global scenario which is primarily missing in government schools particularly functioning in rural areas.

All government school educators are required to be state certified, private school teachers may not be required to have state certification. But it is a common thinking that private school teachers who do not have state certification are experts in their field because of their devotion and commitment.

Most of the affiliated colleges of the University of Jammu are located in rural areas like Poonch, Rajouri, Doda, Udhampur, Ramban, Kishtwar, Reasi, Badharwah, etc. That is why the majority of the students come from government schools where the formal teaching of English starts from middle standard. Moreover English is not taught as a language but as a subject. These rural areas lack competent language teachers and the proper awareness is not provided to them for training programmes.

From the information provided by the students at undergraduate level, it is clearly evident that maximum students are unable to express themselves in English. At secondary and senior secondary level General English is taught as a subject and not as a specialized course for improving the skills of the learners in order to solve their problems. One cannot be made a driver unless one is made to sit on the steering oneself. Besides, the theory of Degeneration depicts that the organ which is not used regularly, degenerates gradually; same is the case with our left hand which is weaker than the right one because the former is not used frequently. In our educational system, the activities that are designed to promote fluency among the students are ignored. The students are not engaged in meaningful communication involving the use of the language for common functions. The teachers only translate the text into the vernacular and the students are asked to use guidebooks/help books to learn by heart the answers of the questions in comprehension section, just to get through the examination. Therefore, the syllabus should be improved in order to create a healthy teaching learning process. It should be in a position to identify the needs of the time.

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