



## General English Examination Pattern at Undergraduate Level in Satavahana University: an Appreciable Ignominious Endeavour

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### ABSTRACT

Question papers should test the subject of students. They must make the students think to write the answers to given questions. The examination pattern should be useful to both teachers and students in teaching and learning. The paper seriously points out that the examination pattern in General English subject at Undergraduate level in Satavahana University is a breakdown show. It focuses on fake evaluation, present situation of methods of evaluation and absence of comprehensible objectives. The paper attempts to show that the material and traditional examination pattern decrease the knowledge of students.

### KEYWORDS

English language, syllabus of Degree General English, examination pattern

### Examination in English at the Undergraduate Level in Satavahana University

The situation of English language teaching in Undergraduate level at present gives impression that it is in need of appropriate updating and accurate expansion to suit the needs of the students. Teachers and lecturers of English who are working in Degree colleges argue that proper examination pattern is the most important input in bringing English to its previous high pedestal. Students too mention that the present examination pattern in General English does not help them to improve their communication skills because the essay type questions at will not any cost assist them to speak in English. Question paper does not have any oral activities and many students do not give much importance to communicative English. Essay type questions and functional grammar questions do not encourage them to improve their English knowledge except copying and memorising so the faculty too conducts tests to know students skills. Tests are very important to assess student's education. Teachers usually handle unit tests and half yearly tests. It is true that university boards in Undergraduate level order the English lecturers to conduct a lot of examinations rather than to teach English. Heaton says "Tests are driven by the teaching that has occurred, supporting the learning process and motivating students. Tests operating under the old assumptions, constructed mainly for assessing students' performance in the L2, result in teaching driven by the test" (1988: 5). Every English teacher should test student's language skills but unfortunately the teacher follows the examination pattern at Undergraduate level which was given by the University boards. Heaton says "Focusing too greatly on testing language elements tends to have a detrimental effect on communicative teaching of the language. Fluency or the ability to communicate in a range of situations closely related to real life, shows that the student can use the language when speaking and listening, whereas a test of whether a student can manipulate certain structures effectively does not mean they are proficient speakers" (10).

### Evaluation

Evaluation is a theoretically informed approach and it is always a tricky job. It serves as a means to examine and evaluate the entire teaching and learning process as it gives feedback to learners and teachers. It becomes an integral part of teaching because it provides significant information about the achievement of learners. The learners attempt the examinations and write what they blindly memorize. It has been defined as a systematic, rigorous and meticulous application of scientific methods to assess the design, implementation, improvement program.

### Present Situation of Methods of Evaluation at the Undergraduate Level

University conducts examinations to assess student's performance in English. In the present education system, the written examination and oral examination in General English are held at the end of each year of the three year Degree course of Telangana. Undergraduate level students have General English in the curriculum of the first and second years only since they do not have English in their final year course but internal and external examinations are conducted in their first and second year course. The external examinations are completely based on the course content prescribed for the year. An academic plan of work is generally prescribed by the university concerned. Like intermediate and high school studies, the universities include tests like quarterly, half yearly and pre-final in the curriculum. The examination branch of the university has decided that the qualifying marks in theory examination are twenty eight marks out of eighty marks. The students should get seven marks out of twenty marks to pass in English language practical examination. The final result of the student is declared on the basis of the marks secured by students in his internal and external examinations held at the end of the first and second year of the course.

The percentage of marks secured by a student plays a significant role in his future in getting admission to higher education or getting a job in private sector or government sector. Thus, all decisions with regard to the ability of a student are made on the basis of a set of final examinations. As a result, the entire teaching and learning process is subordinated to the internal and external examinations. But the ill-fated thing is that the end marks the students get in General English are evaluated in scoring which formulate students monotonous in learning English. As early as in 1966, the Kothari Commission rightly captured the crux of the issue. "In the present system, when the future of the students is totally decided by one external examination at the end of the year, they pay minimum attention to the teaching, do little independent study through most of the academic year and prepare desperately for the final examination" (Panchamukhi, 318-319).

The present system of a final examination is not properly implemented and it cannot even adjudge the quality of information received. Of course, the teachers are generally criticised for these things. As we, English teachers, have large classes in Indian English classrooms, most of the teachers cannot ponder on all the students which create uninteresting atmosphere. The other side of the coin, the student's communication skills and language skills are not tested in the examinations. It is valued that how a student performs in a three hour written

test in General English at the end of the year alone is taken into consideration. His communication skills and language skills are not properly tested in the end examinations. The question papers are prepared from the prescribed syllabus, not from creative ideas. The Degree English language teaching curriculum in Telangana is infected with serious lapses as under:

1. Inappropriate and impractical curriculum objectives
2. A total variance between the objectives and teaching and learning materials
3. Unnecessary stress on final examination to test language abilities of the student
4. Ill-equipped, untrained and ill-motivated teachers
5. Totally unreliable and invalid pattern and examinations

#### **Absence of Clear Objectives**

Objectives of the course are extremely significant. These must be meaningful, realistic, practical and attainable to the students. They should be defined and stated clearly in terms of skills and knowledge which the students are expected to possess at the end of the Degree course. The syllabus of Satavahana University, Karimnagar General English syllabus at Undergraduate level spelt out nothing but a list of prose and poetry lessons and prescribed text books followed by an outline of the examination pattern. There are a lot of problems raised out of the situation. Indeed, there are many specified objectives given. The objectives are not fulfilled with the unworthy text books as there is no single topic on communication skills or speaking skills which is the main objective to learn a new language. The course writers proceed with their work in an unsystematic and unscientific manner because of lack of explicitly stated objectives. In the absence of explicit objectives for the students at the Undergraduate level, the teacher has to depend on the objectives set by the text book writers which are tenuous and unachievable. The examination pattern and question papers do not meet the objectives. They are unrealistic. The level of performance expected of a learner is not stated unambiguously.

#### **Traditional Examination Pattern**

Evaluation gives an insight into the learner's advancement and make sure for other modules of the curriculum. In order to be efficient and consequential, evaluation has to be based on specified objectives. The skills and abilities of the students must be tested in any type of examination. The objectives provide the criteria for measuring the results of the instructional process. Questions in the examinations are normally based on these criteria. The given objectives have not set any kind of criteria. In the objectives, it is given that all the students will improve language skills but written skills are only tested in the examination whereas the other three skills such as listening, speaking and reading are completely neglected. The Undergraduate level General English question paper would reveal all these things. It is totally prepared based on text and Undergraduate level functional grammar. No attempt is made to test the application of language points learnt by the student for the integrated use of the target language.

Added to these problems, the question paper is usually prepared by university experts who are not involved in the teaching of English for Degree students. They even do not know the strengths, weaknesses and knowledge of English of the rural Undergraduate students. How ridiculous thing it is? The examination branch of the university should have taken the support of the concerned and working lecturer in preparing question paper. Although there are a few changes in the question papers from time to time, especially when the syllabi are changed, the pattern of question paper does not meet all the objectives. Thus the question paper in English at the Undergraduate level seems to be a mere replacement of a set of old questions with a set of new and different kind of questions without any qualitative change. It is only through question wise analysis that the strengths and weaknesses of the present question papers in English can be discovered.

#### **The Teaching Materials at the Undergraduate Level**

Text book is one of the major tools for testing. It represents entire curriculum. If a text book is prepared by a qualified expert, it helps the learners. The course writers must know the knowledge of the students. But normally General English text books at the Undergraduate level are prepared and prescribed by a syllabus committee, which is most of the times from university board. Each such prescription holds good for more than three years in general or till it is replaced by a new one. The first year General English syllabus was modified for the academic year 2013-2014 and second year General English was changed for the academic year 2014-2015 at Satavahana University, Karimnagar and Telangana State.

These textbooks are not prepared keeping in view the target needs of the second language learners at the tertiary level. They are clearly indicative of the ambitious and unrealistic expectations of the syllabus committee. There are several questions raised in utilising the text books for acquisition of the language such as:

1. Are the text books really helping the students to improve all the language skills?
2. Do they help in learning the second language?
3. Can teacher utilize the text book as a tool for the language learning?

The course writers do not think all these questions while preparing text books. Course writers should have known the background and knowledge of English of Degree students.

#### **Actual practice and teaching Methodology at the Undergraduate Level**

It is ultimately the teacher who has to activate the curriculum. If the teacher fails to understand the underlying principles, the objectives are bound to fail. Most of the teachers who are not trained are not well acquainted with the principles of language teaching or learning. The teachers are frequently concerned with the coverage of the syllabus, which is prescribed syllabus. His work would be finished if he completes his syllabi. As a result, teaching and learning of English has been reduced to a process of rote learning of answers and reproducing them at the time of examinations. Most of the times answers are dictated to speculated questions by the faculty based on the earlier question papers. English teachers and lecturers adopt the traditional and the easiest method. i.e., lecturing method. He explains everything in his way. There might not be any explanations. As most of the students are from Telugu medium, the teachers have to use native tongue.

#### **Teaching English Grammar and Other language Work**

Degree General English has grammatical items at the end of each chapter. The text usually focuses on language work. The teaching of grammatical items is done in isolation. The use of these items is explained in the regional language. When teacher gives additional practice in the language work, his attempts are thwarted by administrative compulsions like coverage of syllabus and external examinations so most of the teachers opt to finish the syllabus only instead of giving number of exercises. The other problem is that students have readymade materials such as guide and test papers. To overcome all these problems, the following precautions should be taken step.

1. Change of text books to meet the objectives
2. Involvement of teachers in curriculum development
3. Change of examination system.
4. The question paper should be focused on speaking skills also.
5. External examiners must be appointed for practical examination.
6. General English marks should be added at the end of the course.
7. Refresher courses for teachers and question paper setters.

General English examination pattern at Undergraduate level in Satavahana University must be changed. The question paper setters should incorporate some speaking activities such as group discussion, debate, role play and its discourses. They try to prepare the question papers which should bring out the student's inner ideas in the target language. Asking question on functional English and essay type questions on literature is a foolish thing because they do not help the students to improve their communication skills so the General English at Undergraduate level examination pattern must be changed with some of the communicative activities.

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