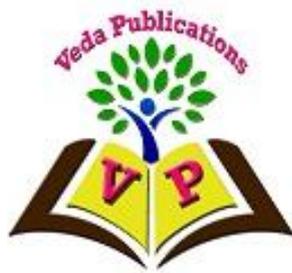


**ELT SYLLABUS IN HIGHER SECONDARY AND COLLEGIATE EDUCATION**

S. Parvathavarthini

*(Assistant Professor/Department of English, Alagappa Chettiar Government College of Engineering and Technology
Karaikudi, Tamilnadu.)*Email: parvathas@yahoo.co.in**ABSTRACT**

Multilingual scenario of our country has contributed dual status to the global language, English. The dual status that has been bestowed on the language is that it is the official language and a link language of the sub continent. Hence, it is a compulsory subject in the school curriculum of states especially in Tamilnadu. Still, when it comes to collegiate education it has been made optional especially for professional colleges. English is taught in these institutions to help students communicate in English in various official contexts and in informal context to communicate with fellow citizens. The language has been taught through literature and grammar like its Tamil counterpart. Still, the ongoing research in English language teaching and learning has brought in changes in the curriculum, methodology and syllabus.

ELT and ELL have travelled a long way from teaching and learning language through literature to mastering the language by learning language through learning its skills. The dilemma is still persistent in the educational scenario. On the one side, learning a language is learning poetry, short story, novel or drama and grammar. On the other side, it is learning a language is only learning the four skills and grammar without literary content. At the same time, English language teaching has totally shifted from language learning through language skills, and learning the English language through literature has become a thing of the past as far as engineering education is concerned. The paper aims at finding out the general scenario in the higher secondary and collegiate education as far as English language teaching and learning is concerned. Further, it also tries to find out if the poor performance in engineering classrooms is due to the contrasting scenario found in the language learning environment in the schools and colleges.



BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Students learning English in colleges especially in engineering colleges face difficulties in mastering the language. It is indeed a strenuous task to make them get involved in a listening activity in British English or in Indian English. Likewise, a majority of them do not involve in a discussion that follows the reading or listening activity. Hence, the teacher is forced to deal with grammar concepts and organizing nuances by way of direct teaching. While the prescribed book gives guidelines to the teacher is to be in the periphery and function as a facilitator. The teacher is expected to create a situation that helps the learners involve in self-learning. In many occasions, it is highly impossible for the teacher to facilitate such situation.

When questioned about their lack of participation it is revealed that they come from Tamil medium or rural schools. Still, these students have secured very good marks in English in their final exams. Furthermore, it had to be had in mind that they have been taught English as a subject for twelve years all through their school. So the researcher was curious to know if the different syllabus, the teaching methodology and the assessment pattern that is followed in the different schools and colleges have resulted in their non-performance in the college scenario.

HYPOTHESIS

English syllabus followed in the Tamil medium schools and English medium are different.

English that is prescribed and taught in the schools are taught through literature and the English that is taught in the colleges are skill oriented and they concentrate on teaching and learning skills.

OBJECTIVE

Analyze the syllabus (English) prescribed for the twelfth standard or plus two syllabus that is prescribed for the state board and the central board.

Analyze the syllabus (English) prescribed for arts and science colleges and engineering colleges.

Compare the syllabus, teaching methodology, materials and assessment pattern to find similarities and dissimilarities.

METHODOLOGY

The paper aims at analyzing the various syllabuses followed in the schools and in colleges to find out how the English language is taught there. Curriculum, Syllabus, teaching methodology and evaluation pattern decide what the students learn. Especially, the syllabus is one of the main criteria that decide what is taught and learnt. Hence, the syllabi that are followed in the school and colleges are collected and analyzed. Further for the teaching methodology, the guidelines given for the teachers in the prescribed text are considered. Added to that, the assessment pattern that is exhibited in the final exam question paper and the scheme of evaluation are taken into consideration.

Schools earlier had four different education systems. They are state board, matriculation board, central board and a few international schools that follow ICSE or IGCSE syllabus. The most prevalent are the state board syllabus, matriculation and the central board syllabus. Out of these the historical change in the education mode by introducing 'samacheer kalvi' (2010-2011) has done away with the matriculation syllabus in Tamilnadu. Hence, now there are only three syllabuses. But normally we have students only from state board and a few from central board. Therefore, the state board and the central board syllabus have been taken for the present study. Hence those two syllabuses were taken into consideration.

As far as the college education is concerned the education committee has introduced arts and science colleges, and professional colleges which consist of engineering, medicine and law. We also have other professional colleges, such as agriculture, and siddha. Out of these, the syllabus from engineering colleges and arts and science colleges were taken up for the present study. Because, the curriculum that is designed for medicine and law degrees do not have English as a separate subject. English is taught as an individual subject in only two streams. They are engineering and arts and science institutions. Hence the syllabus and the evaluation pattern in the two streams have been taken up in the present study.

The existing school syllabus from the state board of Tamilnadu and central board was analyzed



with the prescribed text book and the evaluation pattern based on the question papers available that is used for the assessment in the final examinations. The same was done for arts and science colleges. Syllabus that is being followed for the part –II English in the colleges and the question papers used to assess in the end semester examination was taken into consideration. For this purpose, the Alagappa University syllabus that is prescribed for the affiliated colleges is considered. Likewise, for the engineering colleges the syllabus that is prescribed for the affiliated colleges of Anna University was considered.

ANALYSIS

English that is prescribed for the central board consists of two papers. They are English core and English elective. The paper on English core consists of two books consisting of Prose and poetry writings followed by an activity on insight or deep comprehension. The paper on English as an elective consists of two books. One book consists of prose pieces, poetry pieces and two plays. Each piece is followed by activities relating to comprehension, grammar, writing skills and speaking skills pertaining to the literature content. The other book has five units each having activities that comes with content on poetry, prose and newspaper articles. It consists of a listening activity, followed by a reading activity which is continued in the form of discussion and finally speaking activity. The units also consist of grammar activities related to the listening or the reading passage given or in relation to a passage separately given for the purpose. Both the papers have two novels as extended reading.

With regard to the assessment pattern, it is a combination of assessment of both the language skills and comprehension of the literary texts. The assessment of English core is divided into three units: they are reading comprehension of unseen passage (30 marks), writing skills (30 marks) and literature and long reading text (40 marks). Wherein the learner is assessed for reading and writing skills on general content, the literary content is assessed for an in-depth comprehension of them. Likewise, for the English elective paper the assessment is divided into 3 parts, they are reading skills (20 marks), writing skills and grammar (40 marks) and literary texts and long reading (40 marks). Here again, the assessment

of literary text is on in depth analysis of the character study or plot construction of the literary text.

English in state board consists of one common syllabus for Tamil medium and English medium instruction. It consists of vocabulary competencies, grammatical competencies, listening competencies, speaking competencies, reading competencies, writing competencies, study skills (referring to a dictionary), occupational (report writing, advertisements etc), strategic competencies (bravery, confidence building), and Creative competencies. Assessment consists of two papers; English –I, and English-II. English I consists of vocabulary and lexical competencies (30 marks), grammatical competencies (20 marks), reading competencies (15 marks), writing competencies (15 marks) in which questions from prescribed prose are asked, literary competencies – poetry (20 marks). Here again, as in the case of the central board, the assessment is partially for language skills and partially for comprehension of literary texts.

English of the arts and science colleges is prescribed for the first two years in the three year UG programme. The paper is titled 'English for Enrichment,' and consists of five units. The first two units are allocated to prose, the third unit is for poetry and the fourth unit is for grammar and the fifth unit is for composition. There are two books subscribed for the syllabus, they are 'An anthology of prose and poetry,' and 'A book on grammar usage and composition.' There are three prose pieces in each unit. With regard to the prescribed poetry, it consists of poetry from literary experts from various ages. English for Enrichment-II for the second semester is of the same pattern. It has the same books prescribed with different prose and poetry pieces. As far as grammar is concerned, the whole grammar is divided into four or five topics per semester. Further they are arranged in such a manner that it starts from the basics. Likewise, Composition is also similarly arranged with the basic activities of informal letter writing and hints developing in the first semester. The fourth semester consists of expanding a proverb.

In the second year, the students are introduced to short stories and one-act plays in the first semester. Two units are allocated to one-act



plays with each unit having two one act plays. The prescribed text books are a short story collection, a book on one-act plays and a book on communication. The grammar book is the same for all the four semesters. The second semester consists of a drama, and a novel with three titles from Tales from Shakespeare.

Evaluation is done at the end of each semester. The assessment is for a maximum of 75 marks. It consists of three parts, part A, B, and C. Part A is for 20 marks with ten questions of 2 marks each. Out of these 6 questions are from the literary content, 3 question on applying grammar rules and one question on the content of grammar unit, like what is perfect tense, or précis etc. Part B is an assessment for 25 marks with 5 questions of 5 marks each. Three of them are for literary content and two of them are related to composition, in this case, a letter writing and précis writing. Finally, part C is for 30 marks with 3 questions of 10 marks each. It is an open choice wherein the student is expected to choose 3 questions out of the five questions given. Out of these five, three are from literary texts, one from composition and the other is a reading comprehension. The question reveals that grammar is taught directly and language is learnt only through literature. The assessment of language aims at testing their language skills and their comprehension of literary texts.

The engineering college syllabus aims at imparting all the four language skills namely LSRW. The syllabus consists of five units; each unit consists of activities relating to all the four skills. It starts with the sequencing of words to make a meaningful sentence in the first unit to writing a critical passage in the last unit. The activities of speaking also range from describing people, places to finally taking part in a discussion in the last unit. This syllabus consists of prescribed text books that include a passage from science magazines and newspapers. It is followed by activities that are aimed at employing all the four skills. The students are expected to listen to a passage, read an article on it, sit around and discuss to find answers for some of the questions given, and finally write down the points in a coherent manner to say it in front of the class. There is another that book consists of a detailed description of the various

components found in the syllabus, like Group Discussion, grammar units, paragraph writing, letter writing, resume writing, etc. There are direct explanations followed by examples. The assessment pattern consists of grammar and vocabulary questions as short answers (2 marks) and letter writing, report writing and comprehension activities as questions for big answers (16 marks)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The school syllabus of the state board that is prescribed for the Tamil and English medium students are the same. Moreover, the objective of the syllabus is to impart language skills to the students. They are taught language through the prescribed text that consists of prose, poetry, drama and short stories. Activities are given in continuance of the literary texts and prose writings. Still, language skills are tested along with literary texts in final exams. Equal importance is given to both language and literature as far as school education is concerned. With regard to the Arts and Science College, the assessment gives sixty percentage importance to literature and 40 percentage importance to language skills. Contrary to this, assessment and syllabus of the engineering education is directed only at language skills. The assessment pattern is strictly general giving no room for memorizing. There is a maximum probability for the question paper to assess the language skills and not the content knowledge or the memorizing capability of students. At the same time, it has to be noted that even here all the four skills are not assessed in the end semester examination. It is only reading and writing that are assessed. Listening and speaking are left to be assessed in the internal evaluation that attributes to a minimum in the final grading.

DISCUSSIONS

There has been a spectacular shift in the perception of English language teaching, which is manifested in the English teachers specializing in the language for their doctorates. But, does it affect the language learning scenario, is a question that needs an answer. It is found that the syllabus in schools and arts and science colleges still focus on teaching language through literature. And literature is given in all forms in poetry, prose, drama and fiction. The



students are even asked to involve in role play based on the drama to improve their speaking skills (state board syllabus). Likewise in arts and science colleges too, the importance is still given mainly to the literature content to impart language skills. It is only in the engineering colleges that the shift is more obvious. Here, there is no mention of literature, but for one or two books that are given just for extended reading and not for assessment.

The syllabus given in the schools is related to that of the arts and science colleges and engineering colleges. The syllabus forms a perfect basis for learning language through literature and learning language through skills. The prescribed texts contain texts followed by language activities involving all the four skills. This should equip the students to involve in various activities that are given in the engineering classroom. Likewise, similar activities related to literary texts are also given in both the state and central board syllabus. Further language is taught through literature and through task-based learning. Moreover, language is skills based only in engineering colleges and arts and science colleges have a syllabus based on literature.

A uniform pattern that is found in the assessment pattern is the negligence of listening and speaking in the final exams conducted in schools and colleges. Listening and speaking skills occupy an equal importance with all the other skills in the syllabus and consequently in the teaching of the subject they are not tested in the final exams. Still, in spite of the language skills being included in the syllabus and in the text books, it cannot be authentically said that student who gets nice scores in the final exams will have corresponding listening and speaking skills.

VALIDATION OF THE HYPOTHESIS

It is found that the first hypothesis that states that the syllabus prescribed in the schools with English and Tamil medium instruction is different is negated. This is because the syllabi prescribed constitutes the same content and assessment pattern.

English that is prescribed and taught in the schools are taught through literature and the English that is taught in the colleges are skill oriented and they concentrate on teaching and learning skills. This

is partially negated and partially validated. In schools, language is taught through literature and by skill oriented activities. Likewise, as far as collegiate education, in arts and science colleges English is taught through literature and language. At the same time, the syllabus prescribed for engineering college students is more skills oriented. Further, it is different from the state board syllabus because it is completely skills oriented with no room for literature. Hence the third hypothesis is partially validated.

LIMITATIONS

Language learning in a classroom set up depends on various issues apart from syllabus, prescribed text and assessment. It depends on the experience and exposure of the teacher, teaching methodology, proper infrastructure and technology. In spite of the availability of every other facility, it also depends on the learner's attitude and their ability to take part in a language activity or master the language. The above analysis is done based on the documents that are available and field work was not carried out. Normally the success of the syllabus and the materials depends on how it is employed in the classroom scenario. The present study did not take up any classroom atmosphere into account. The teachers' experience, exposure and understanding of the syllabus and handling of the materials were not taken into consideration. Hence those aspects which have a major contribution to the language acquisition of the students have to be considered.

CONCLUSION

On comparing the syllabi that are prescribed for schools and colleges it is found that schools have both literature and language content. Further language skills are given importance as far as syllabus and materials are concerned. Likewise, college syllabus also contains both literature and language skills with a variation. Engineering college syllabus concentrated only on language skills. Whereas Arts and science college syllabus is more literature-oriented. Hence, school syllabus is framed in such a way to cater to both the ends. Under such situation in engineering colleges, when there is a complete switch to language content, an elaborate bridge course that creates awareness about the CLT should be inculcated in the beginning for better understanding.



Apart from the above factors, two more issues have been found in the analysis. These two issues are about the two neglected skills and the authenticity of the assessment. In the language classroom, the learner has to be well equipped with listening and speaking skills. But it is these skills that are neglected in the schools and in colleges. Hence, they have to be assessed properly to prove that the learners have either acquired them or not. Likewise, assessment pattern is little ambiguous because learners (belonging to different medium of instructions) who have secured the same marks for the same syllabus and a centralized valuation tend to show different caliber. And these calibers basically relate to speaking skills. Hence the above issues could be the reasons for the non-performance of the students in the classroom.

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