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SUGGESTIONS FOR SYBA COMPULSORY ENGLISH SYLLABUS

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Abstract:

This article is for those universities that have English as compulsory subject for the second year.

The aim of this syllabus is to improve language competence through language and literature studies. SYBA, being a course in higher education, we cannot exclusively insist on grammar.

The syllabus of the second year Compulsory English is one step ahead of that of the first year. Discussion on the first year's syllabus will be found in the researcher's article on that syllabus. The first year syllabus consists of anthology and phonetics. The second year syllabus should be divided, as usual, into literary text(s) and language. The second year's syllabus should be a bit more advanced than the first year's syllabus. However, it should not be much more advanced than that of the first year.

In literature, the researcher thinks of suggesting two texts—one for each term. Text for the first term may be a collection of poems. That for the second term may be a collection of short stories, literary or reflective essays. Care should be taken that the poems and short stories/essays adapt to the level of the students. In language, it would be better to prescribe vocabulary for the first term and some important topics in basic sentence constructions for the second.

The evaluation system may be 80 + 20. Syllabus may be divided into two equal portions, one for each term. Term end examination may test the first half syllabus. This examination will carry 60 marks. The annual examination will be of 80 marks. It will test the second half of the syllabus along with some portion of the first half of the syllabus. This pattern is most beneficial in our current state of education.

INTRODUCTION

Except for Mumbai University, almost all the universities in Maharashtra introduce Compulsory English for the first, second and third years of graduation. It is because most of the universities in Maharashtra have most of the affiliated colleges situated in their respective rural areas. The exposure of English is hardly found in rural areas. Most students learn special subjects in Marathi. Under these circumstances, it is essential to keep students constantly in touch with English. Compulsory English should be a course to improve their competence of English. This can be done by exposing them to (i) literature, and (ii) language. The exposure of language, however, should be given scientifically. Here there is a need to follow the sequence of skills acquisition in child first language acquisition. Three years course in Compulsory English should be an integrated course to pursue this objective. The present course of second year, therefore, is a sequel to the course in the first year. In view of this fact, certain suggestions have been made.

This article aims at making some suggestions for the second year paper of Compulsory English. These suggestions are made in the light of the researcher's article on the first year syllabus [1] published earlier. In fact, this article is a sequel to the earlier article.

PURPOSE OF COMPULSORY ENGLISH

As mentioned in the Introduction, most of the universities in Maharashtra are rural. There students are not exposed to English. They learn their subjects in Marathi. To let them be in touch with English, the subject Compulsory English is introduced at all three years of the degree course. The primary aim thus is to keep students in contact with English.

AIM OF THE SYLLABUS

The aim that the researcher sets before this proposed syllabus is to improve language competence through language and literature studies. While devising a college English syllabus, there lies one basic assumption. This assumption is that students are well-versed in basic grammar. Unfortunately, this assumption is wrong in the case of most rural students. As a result, we have to devise a certain strategy to get rid of the difference between assumption and fact. However, it being higher education, we cannot exclusively insist on grammar. The golden mean of the amalgam of literature and language becomes therefore inevitable. In view of this situation, the researcher had proposed the first year syllabus.

NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE SYLLABUS

As usual, the syllabus consists of two sections—literature and language. The first year's syllabus suggests anthology at random, the second year's syllabus proposes a collection of poems and a collection of short stories, short essays or reflective essays. In the language section, it is suggested that vocabulary and basic sentence constructions may be prescribed. In this way, the general design of the syllabus is as follows:
Course Work for Term I

1. A collection of poems
2. Vocabulary expansion—phrasal verbs, idioms, proverbs, collocations, registers: general communication (it includes names of vegetables, fruits, flowers, cultural practices, words occurring in day-to-day conversations), religion, journalism, medical science; one-word substitutes, synonyms and antonyms, proverbs, collocations

Course Work for Term II

1. A collection of short stories/literary essays/reflective essays
2. Some important canons of basic sentence constructions, e.g. tense, mood, aspects, uses of the tenses, etc.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE SYLLABUS

It is appropriate to begin with poetry. It is because the earliest literature was in the form of poetry. Students should enjoy different interesting poems all over the world. However, the emphasis is on British poetry. The difficulty level of the poems should adjust to the level of students. Poetry, by and large, inclines more to feelings than to reason. There are some exceptions to this trait. In spite of this, care should be taken that emphasis is laid more on emotional poetry rather than on the rational one. Students are expected to enjoy poetry as literature. One care should be taken. Do not prescribe obscure or complicated poems in the name of modernity.

While giving preference to vocabulary in language section, the researcher has the sequence of learning L1 in mind. L1 acquisition is the natural process of language learning. In this process, a child learns sounds first. Arrangement of sounds in a proper order makes a word. Different words arranged in a proper sequence make a sentence. The researcher intends to follow the same sequence in three years' syllabus in Compulsory English. Students have learnt sounds in Compulsory English at FYBA [1]. The SYBA stage is now ripe for learning vocabulary. They should begin with words that occur in general communication. Then comes phrasal verbs; then comes proverbs.

A collection of short stories or literary essays is very interesting. Here students enjoy the book. At the same time, lessons in such books make them think. Reflective essays fully make them think about some vital problems. However, while selecting such essays, their thinking ability need not be neglected.

After learning vocabulary, students should know how to arrange words in a proper sequence to constitute a sentence. To know basic sentence-structure, one must know tense, mood, aspect and so on. Instead of teaching communicative English, it is better to teach basic sentence construction. One of my teachers had made one statement. He said: the entire attempt at introducing communicative English is sure to fail. It is because the syllabus of communicative English is based on the basic assumption that students are well-versed in basic grammar. This assumption, however, is wrong. They are not good at basic grammar. Therefore, syllabus based on a wrong assumption will not yield good fruits. Besides, mugging up stock phrases like hello, how do you do? how are you? please, thank you are not for regular English course in colleges. To do this, special vocational courses may be conducted. Those courses should begin in Class XI. If need to teach such courses in colleges arises, UGC may introduce an independent course in Linguistics. Such a course does exist in universities in the name of Functional English. However, it is unaided. There is no harm in running such a course on grant-in-aid basis. In that case, degrees in Linguistics instead of English may be given. Designers of general English course need not lay much emphasis on communicative English.

EVALUATION SYSTEM

Evaluation system should follow 80 + 20 pattern. It is the most useful pattern in present circumstances.

QUESTION PAPER FORMATS

Different competencies are to be tested in both term end and annual question papers.

a. Term end question paper

In the term end question paper, questions on the collection of poems and vocabulary will be asked. The following format may be adopted:

TERM END EXAMINATION	
QUESTION PAPER FORMAT	
QUESTION NO.	MARKS
1 (a) Long answer question on the collection of poems OR	[10]
1 (b) Long answer question on the collection of poems	
2 (a) Long answer question on the collection of poems OR	[10]
2 (b) Long answer question on the collection of poems	
3. Two short notes (out of three) on the collection of poems	[16]
4 (a) Explain the meaning of any four (out of six) of the following phrases/idioms/proverbs and use them in your own sentences.	[8]
4 (b) Write English words for any four (out of six) Marathi ones. (Provide Marathi words from different subjects, i.e. registers)	[8]
4 © Do as directed (any four) (4<6): (Ask questions to test ability to know one-word substitutes, synonyms, antonyms, proverbs, collocations, etc.)	[8]

This question paper pattern is adopted in consideration of testing some competencies. Some testing competencies are given in Munby (1978) [5], whereas some are the outcomes of the researcher's own rationale. The following table presents various competencies in terms of emphasis on them:

TERM END EXAMINATION

Question No.	Competency	% of Emphasis
1 (a)/(b)	general theme of the poem	16.66%
2 (a)/(b)	general theme of the poem	16.67%
	Total	33.33%
3	specific aspects of themes	26.67%
4 (a)	understanding common phrases/ idioms/proverbs	13.33%
4 (b)	understanding important registers	13.34%
4 ©	one-word substitutes, synonyms and antonyms, proverbs.	13.33%
	Total	100%

b. Annual question paper

In the annual question paper, questions on short stories/literary essays/reflective essays and basic sentence constructions will be asked. However, the first term syllabus is also retained for testing. The following format will be adopted:

ANNUAL EXAMINATION
QUESTION PAPER FORMAT

QUESTION NO.	MARKS
1 (a) Long answer question on the collection of poems OR 1 (b) Long answer question on the collection of poems	[10]
2. Two short notes (out of three) on the collection of poems	[10]
3. Do as directed (6<9) (Based on Term I syllabus)	[12]
4 (a) Long answer question on short stories/literary essays/reflective essays OR 4 (b) Long answer question on short stories/literary essays/reflective essays	[8]
5 (a) Long answer question on short stories/literary essays/reflective essays OR 5 (b) Long answer question on short stories/literary essays/reflective essays	[8]
6. Two short notes (out of three) on short stories/literary essays/reflective essays	[12]
7 (a) Short notes on any two (out of three) of the following: (short notes on tense, mood, different uses of tenses, etc. will be set.)	[8]
7 (b) Do as directed (any six) (6 < 9) (questions on tense, mood, etc. will be set.)	[12]

The following table presents various competencies in terms of emphasis on them:

ANNUAL EXAMINATION		
Question No.	Competency	% of Emphasis
1 (a)/(b)	general theme of the poems (Term I)	12.5%
2	specific themes of the poems (Term I)	12.5%
3	vocabulary (Term I)	15%
4 (a)/(b)	general theme of short stories/ literary essays/reflective essays	10%
5 (a)/(b)	general themes of short stories/ literary essays/reflective essays	10%
6.	specific aspects of themes of short stories/ literary essays/reflective essays	15%
7 (a)	grammar in theory	10%
7 (b)	testing important aspects of sentence construction—tense, mood, aspects, etc.	15%

JUSTIFICATION OF THE QUESTION PAPER PATTERNS

I. Term end question paper

Different competencies have been given due weight. In the literary section, the aim is to test students' global comprehension. Therefore, thematic, both general and specific questions, are given 33.33% and 26.67% emphasis respectively. 13.33% weight is given to understanding phrases, idioms and proverbs. Almost equal amount of weight is given to registers and one-word substitutes, synonyms, antonyms, proverbs. The total percentage of literature is 60%. It is certainly justifiable. It is because language learning is like swimming. Unless you practice swimming in water, you cannot succeed. Similarly, language competence cannot be achieved by merely mugging up the rules of grammar. In spite of this, the need of the study of language is not neglected in toto here. The reason is obvious. In a country like India, where English is a second language, we must be aware of students' exposure. Most colleges in most universities in India and Maharashtra are located in rural areas. There even students of English hardly get any exposure outside classroom. Under these circumstances, students should confront both literature and language. Language is for theory and literature is for practice. Here practice is laid more emphasis.

II. Annual question paper

The same strategy is followed in the question paper pattern of the final examination. Here the first term syllabus is given 40% emphasis. Within it, 25% emphasis is laid on literary topics, whereas 15% on language topics. In the second term syllabus, 35% of the total emphasis is laid on literary topics, whereas 25% on language topics.

Some raise one question: Is it appropriate to ask questions on only a few units out of the total number of units prescribed? The answer is 'yes'. It is because it leaves uncertainty as to which units will be tested in examination. This uncertainty is wholesome for making students study maximum units. If the exam committee decides to test all the topics in examination, they have to change their policy. In that case, they have to do two things. First, increase the number of questions in exam. Secondly, reduce the number of topics in syllabus. Neither of the above policies is feasible all the time. Increasing the number of questions

makes questions objective. The more the number of questions asked within a specified time, the more objective they are. It is impossible if the policy of the syllabus is to ask descriptive questions, particularly on literary topics. In the testing methodology, objective questions are asked to test students' reading skill. In a similar way, descriptive questions are asked to test students' writing skill. The formula of testing reading skill is: more questions, fewer lessons. Here cloze reading technique is employed. The formula of testing the writing skill is: fewer questions, more lessons. The earlier technique is useful in linguistics, but not in all other papers. More lessons enable students to expand vocabulary and improve sentence constructions.

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher draws the following conclusions:

1. This syllabus is a sequel to the FYBA Compulsory English syllabus.
 2. FYBA Compulsory English syllabus consisted of prose, poems, one-act play(s); SYBA Compulsory English syllabus specializes in poems and short stories/literary essays/reflective essays in first and second terms respectively.
 3. A child learns sounds first. Sounds are followed by words, and then sentences. The same sequence is maintained in the syllabus. FYBA Compulsory English syllabus suggests phonology. SYBA Compulsory English syllabus suggests vocabulary and basic sentence constructions.
 4. As usual, the 80 + 20 system is the best.
- In this way, the researcher hopes that this syllabus will be beneficial for the students of SYBA.

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