

Evaluation at Undergraduate Level - An Analysis

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"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

-- Ludwig Wittgenstein

Language is a unique feature that distinguishes human beings from other living beings, and therefore, remains potentially a communicative medium capable of expressing ideas and concepts, as well as moods, feelings, and attitudes. Many eminent writers like R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand have used English to portray the culture and identities that are different from the west.

In the present scenario, the knowledge of English has become a necessity. It has become a tool for a better status in society and window to the world. Apart from the historical factors which had made English as the most important language, the recent advancements in the fields of science and technology have reinforced the status of English as the global language. The invention of the World Wide Web and the Internet intensified the necessity of a common language of communication throughout the world. The expansion of Globalization has resulted in the growth of multinational companies. They are the major generators of employment. This factor has a compelling effect on the nation to train the youth with command on English both for national and international purposes.

English Language Skills- English was introduced in the year 1840 with the available literature, and English Language Teaching (ELT) remained an unknown field. The learners could learn the language with ease as the teachers were from Britain and they had the exposure to the idiomatic language of the British teachers. From the early 1960s, the standards of English started dwindling because of the dull materials and unsuitable methodologies of teaching and testing in the general English courses which never focused on teaching any specific skills of the language. Till the challenge of communicating effectively was posed by Globalization, Indian education had been passive towards the concept of teaching English as a language.

The English language has six skills, three major skills assisted by three ancillary skills. Listening facilitates speaking, vocabulary helps in reading and grammar aids in writing. Without the integration of these six skills, language learning becomes a half-hearted effort. This mistake is grossly exposed when students appear for competitive examinations or international tests such as TOEFL or IELTS. The learners are faced with serious difficulty in dealing with English as they are not trained in using the language for conversation or serious writing. Hence the focus needs to be shifted to teaching the skills of language in an integrated manner and the testing should concentrate on examining their use of the skills taught to express their ideas and opinions. A study was undertaken to analyse the

evaluation pattern at the undergraduate level to identify the problem areas in terms of testing.

The existing system of English language Evaluation at Undergraduate level

The study began with a cursory look at the objectives of the course as mentioned in the prescribed textbook under the per view of Osmania University.

I year course objectives planned are as follows;

- To make the students learn good English for success in their professional and personal life.
- To emphasize the performance of all the LSRW skills in the class.
- To ensure that the students evolve to become proficient learners in the use of English.
- To ensure that every student learns to speak and write fluent and accurate English in addition to scoring well in the internal and university examinations.
- To bring about a change where students do not have to enrol for short-term courses to learn English despite having completed a UG or PG course in English.

II-year Course objectives are as mentioned below;

- To draw the students into the text, make them read the text with understanding and insight, and encourage them to think beyond the text.
- To address the English language needs of the students with due acknowledgements to their critical thinking capabilities.
- To emphasize on 'use' rather than 'usage'; on how the English language is used rather than how it should be used.
- To expose the students to a range of contexts where the language is used to meet a variety of real-life communication needs –to give and seek information, to express opinions, and to convey ideas and feelings.
- To equip the students to engage with the practical, emotional, intellectual, and creative aspects of language by integrating knowledge and skills.

Evaluation pattern of Undergraduate Course I Year

At the UG level, the evaluation of English language skills is done with a question paper consisting of Part A and B.

Part A is of objective type and carries 20 marks.

Questions framed are based on basic English grammar. The questions are meant to test the writing skills of the student with an allocation of 12 marks. The next questions test speaking skills with questions on writing phonetic transcription and completing a conversation according to the given context for 8 marks.

Part B of the question paper is entirely devoted to testing the writing skills. A total of 10 questions are given from the prescribed text with an internal choice. Students are expected to answer five questions chosen from 5 lessons. The questions are of essay type for 12 marks each. Thus, it can be concluded that out of 80 marks allotted to the end Semester examination, a total of 72 marks are meant to test writing with a marginal 8 marks allotted to test speaking skills.

Undergraduate Course II Year

Total marks allotted is the same for Undergraduate I and II-year English Test. The similarities do not end here with the continued supremacy of testing the memory-based writing skill over the other English language skills, as it is evident from the 75 marks allocated to testing writing out of 80 with a frugal 4 marks allotted to testing speaking skills.

Conclusion

Undergraduate program is the last stage of learning English language skills to assist the students in securing employment. This aspect of English language learning is disregarded in designing the UG course curriculum and evaluation pattern. Instead of training the learners in acquiring the listening, speaking and reading skills, the evaluation procedures rely heavily on testing rote learning in the pretext of writing.

The questions are directly picked up from the lesson without providing any opportunity for the learners to think, contemplate and express themselves. The testing mechanism allows no scope to measure the critical thinking skills, the ability of brainstorming, organizing the information and expressing it in a proper way contrary to the higher-order skills expected from the graduates venturing into higher education or employment.