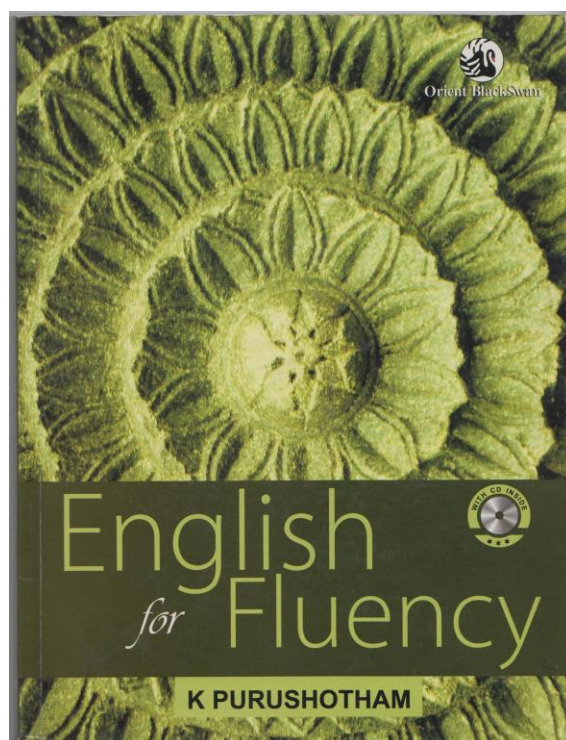


**A Critical Analysis of the General English Prescribed for
the Undergraduate Level First Year Students in Satavahana
University, Telangana State**

Dr. Adi Ramesh Babu



Abstract

English language teaching and learning has been always a difficult job. Text books play an important role in language learning. In view of the importance of English as a target language in Telangana State, the syllabus of General English for undergraduate level students has been changed during 2013-2014. The paper traces out how the present General English text book for undergraduate level first year students in Satavahana University makes it dull to be learning a language. It critically brings out how the book does not encourage the learners to improve communication skills in English language as it has not attracted the undergraduate level students.

Keywords: English language, text books, General English text book, undergraduate students

Introduction

A standard text book should have some universal characteristics. A text book generally should be a learner friendly and activity based. It must follow simple to complex methods and topics to be arranged from known to unknown. Of course no text book is perfect, but a textbook must contain materials that deal with factual subjects rather than myths. It should contain enough exercises that must cover all the language skills. It is a tool for the teacher, who plays a role of a facilitator in the teaching learning process. Teacher has the opportunity to assign supplementary materials based on the students' needs. Keeping in view the aforementioned ideas, the paper tries to analyze the new General English text book for the undergraduate level first year students of Satavahana University.

English is taught as a foreign language in India. English teachers and lecturers teach English based on text books that are prescribed by the boards of universities. It is the time to analyze the text books whether they satisfy the learners as well as teachers. The syllabi of English text books are generally changed between four and five years.

Focus of the Paper – Efficacy of the General English Textbook for First Year in Satavahana University

The paper points out whether the present General English textbook for undergraduate level - first year students in Satavahana University has accomplished its set goals or not. Therefore, it is very important to look into whether it has corresponded with the learner's needs of the particular situation, and whether it has improved learner's communication skills in English. Since the university orders the lecturers to follow the prescribed text books, the lecturers are not diverting their minds from it. That is why it is seen that textbooks get more importance in a language classroom. The textbooks provide lessons and samples of classroom progress through given instructions by the course editors. Regarding this, McGrath (2002) asserts that textbooks can set the direction, content and they can propose ways in which the lesson is to be taught.

Objectives of the Course

1. To expose the learners to cultural diversity and value education through the humanistic curriculum;
2. To empower the learners with skills necessary for global placements;
3. To equip the learners with the skills essential for their academic subjects;
4. To acquaint the learners with reference skills;
5. To encourage learner autonomy through pair and group activities;
6. To help the learners and the facilitator visualize the theoretical and practical components of the course as a complement to each other;
7. To encourage the facilitator to make creative use of various pedagogical tools and the new educational technology;
8. To orient the learners to utilize the fruits of the ICT Revolution for equipping themselves for international competitive examinations.

Expected Outcome

The expected outcome of the course is that the learners will be able:

1. To be aware of cultural diversity and values of life;
2. To communicate effectively with coherence and relevance in speech and writing;
3. To be proficient with the Soft Skills required for national and global placements;
4. To participate in brainstorming sessions for cooperative learning;
5. To be proficient in modes of web-based learning.

Concerning the teachers, there will be a growing awareness of their role as facilitators. The syllabus enables the teachers to adopt a progressive use of interactive teaching, besides greater recognition of the role of learner–centric approach.

Satavahana University, Karimnagar, *English for Fluency* (for Degree I year) Syllabi

SL.No	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking	Grammar	Vocabulary
1	What Is My Name?:	Paragraphs	Listening for sounds, stress and intonation	Greeting, taking leave and introducing oneself and others	Nouns	Homonyms
	P. Sathyavathi					
2	Pochamma's Goddess: Radha D'Souza	Essays	Listening for theme	Making requests	Pronouns	Homophones
3	The Woodrose: Abburi Chaya Devi	Descriptive essays	Listening for theme	Asking for time and directions	Articles	Homographs
4	The Kitchen: Vimala	Narrative essays	Listening for main ideas	Inviting	Adjectives	Synonyms
5	Yanadi Kotadu:	Expository essays	Listening for main ideas	Apologizing	Kinds of verbs	Antonyms
	Sujatha Gidla					
6	Adivasis: Kancha Ilaiah	Argumentative essays	Listening for details	Interrupting	Tenses	Prefixes
7	For Vegetarians Only: Sky Baba	Formal letters	Listening for details	Asking for and giving opinions	Adverbs	Suffixes

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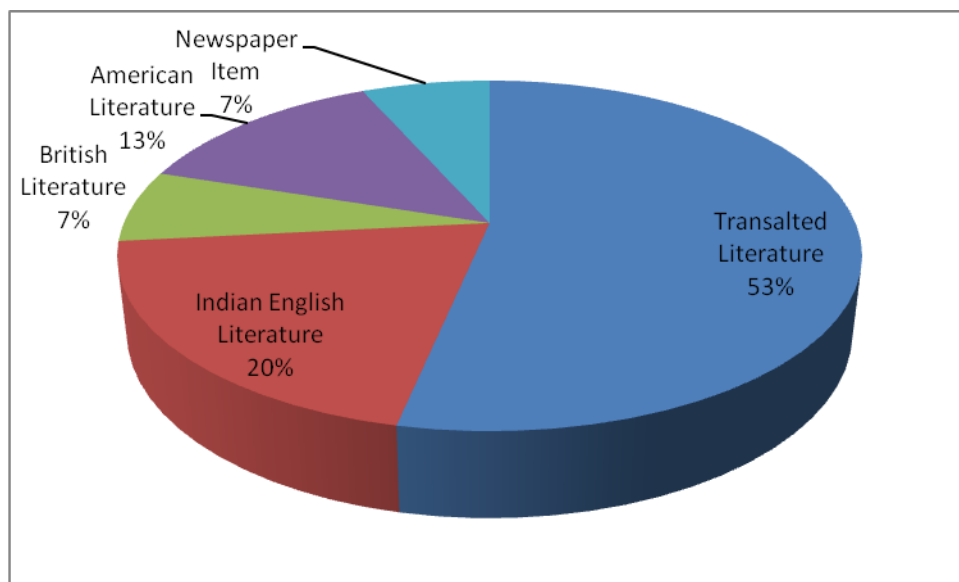
8	Hunger: Jayanta Mahapatra	Emails	Listening for information	Agreeing and disagreeing	Declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory sentences	Compound words
9	From <i>Untouchable</i> Spring: G. Kalyana Rao	Application letters and curricula vitae	Listening for information	Suggesting and advising	Simple, compound and complex sentences	Collocations
10	Lawley Road: R. K. Narayan	Memorandums	Listening for facts	Giving instructions	Question tags	Phrasal verbs
11	Letter to My Daughter: Jawaharlal Nehru	Official reports	Listening for facts	Asking for clarifications and permission	Conjunctions	Idioms
12	Leave This Chanting: Rabindranath Tagore	Note making	Listening for the gist	Making complaints	Prepositions	One-word substitutes
13	The Man behind 'i' (Apple)	Summaries	Listening for the gist	Telephone skills	Genitives and possessive adjectives	Style and register
14	The Bet: Anton Chekov	Paraphrases	Listening for opinions	Presentations	Subject-verb agreement	Commonly misspelt words

15	The Gift of the Magi: O'Henry	Information transfer	Listening for opinions	Group discussions	Active and passive voice	Commonly confused words
16	If: Rudyard Kipling	Punctuation	Listening for attitude	Interviews	Reported speech	Connotations

The present textbook has a suitable title *English for Fluency*, well designed, attractive cover page and high quality of editing with color pages. It's easy to carry. *English for Fluency* fulfilled the subject matters language and literary aspects. It has sixteen chapters. First to nine chapters (What is My Name, Pochamma's Goddess, Woodrose, The Kitchen, Yanadi Kotadu, Adivasis, For Vegetarians Only, Hunger, From Untouchable Spring) are translated from Telugu into English so they are attractive to the students as it gives local culture. Students feel that it is their literature but the problem is that they are connected with their mother tongue, which is Telugu. Indirectly they are forced to learn Telugu in English classrooms instead of learning English. The most amazing thing is that most of the English lecturers too speak in Telugu for the sake of the students. If they use English in the English classrooms, the students argue that they can't understand as they come from Telugu medium background. It is the problem with the text books. The native culture and local literature are highly focused upon, rather than opting for British literature or American literature. (graph 1)

Graph: 01

Distribution of literary items in the text book *English for Fluency*



The textbook has some short stories (What is My Name, Pochamma's Goddess, Woodrose, Yanadi Kotadu, For Vegetarians Only, From Untouchable Spring, Lawley Road, The Bet, The Gift of the Magi) four poems (The Kitchen, Hunger, Leave This Chanting, If), an essay (Adivasis), biography (The Man Behind 'i' apple) and letters (Letter to My Daughter). The textbook was framed from different themes such as feminist, minority and Dalit movements. Skybaba's For Vegetarians Only, G. Kalyan Rao's Untouchable Spring, The Man Behind 'I' apple, Satyavati's What is My Name, Vimala's poem The Kitchen represent minority, dalit, biographical literature and feminism respectively. The poem 'If' by Rudyard Kipling and the lesson "The Man Behind 'I' (Apple), biographical notes of Steve Jobs are inspiring to the students. One of the themes of the short story of Anton Chekhov's 'The Bet' is spiritual and O. Henry's story 'The Gift of the Magi' is about love and sacrifice. Learners come in touch with a wide variety of themes, enjoy literature, imbibe virtues and moral values to become good citizens. Thus this text helps students to become more humane and sensitive to other people's feelings.

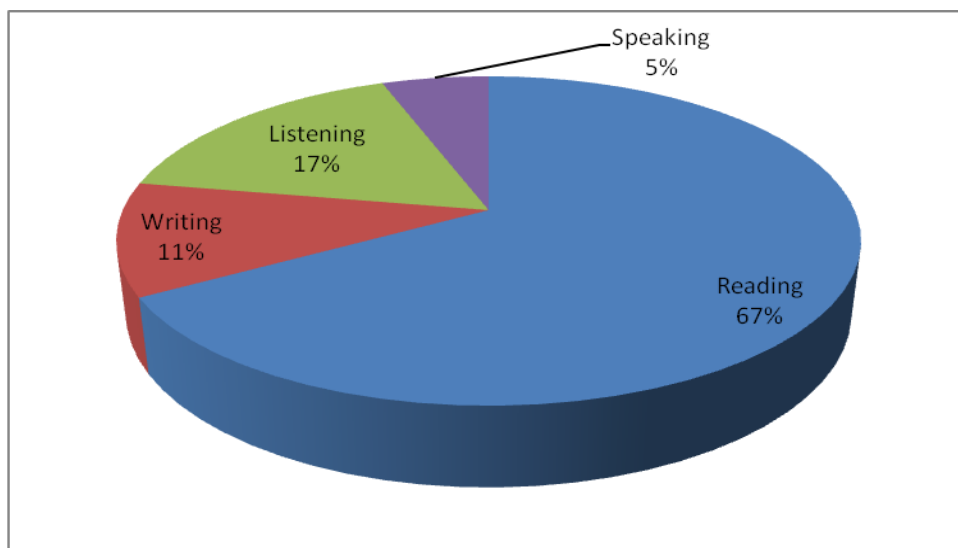
Supplementary readers or book of short stories are meant for extensive and non-detailed study. It's a big load on the bilingual Indian students. Omission of this extra reader is a great relief to the students. But on the other hand, the undergraduate General English syllabus at any

cost does not help them to learn language skills. The textbook has eight major components i.e. reading, glossary, comprehension, writing, listening, speaking, grammar and vocabulary. The first page of every lesson should have presented the aims of the lesson or unit to the students. It must be started with a reading section and move on to language skills. Although every chapter has been started with reading, it is not so impressive. In the overall weighing of the sections devoted to skills in the textbook, there is an imbalance between speaking and other skills. Speaking is completely neglected. (graph. 02) Reading seems to be given more importance throughout the book with 16 chapters. Listening is also somewhat neglected. There is unequal distribution of language focus in the sections contained in the chapters of the book.

Instructions to teachers and students have not been mentioned in the initial pages. If notes to the teacher had been given, it would have been a great help to the teachers. It helps the teacher to continue lessons without any other people's help. The other blunder in the textbook is that there are no separate sections of prose, poetry and communication skills. This shows it is not a conservative but modern text. The book does not give any information about the writer and translators. It is difficult to know about the writer because most of the lessons are translations and they are not available on the internet. It makes the teacher's work burdensome. Even bibliography is not given in the textbook.

Graph: 02

Distribution of language skills in the text book *English for Fluency*



The text book *English for Fluency* also contains sections for grammar and vocabulary. It does not give any appendices at the end of the book. Language works such as listening, writing and vocabulary seem to be given more attention than speaking skills. As most of the chapters are translated from Telugu to English, readers can hardly find unfamiliar words and the course writers have not incorporated even the phonemic transcription for the glossary words. A word without phonemic script increases the hardship of both teacher and student. Students need to look up the dictionary to improve their lexical skills. Since most of the students are from impoverished families, and do not possess dictionaries, phonetic script should have been included in the book.

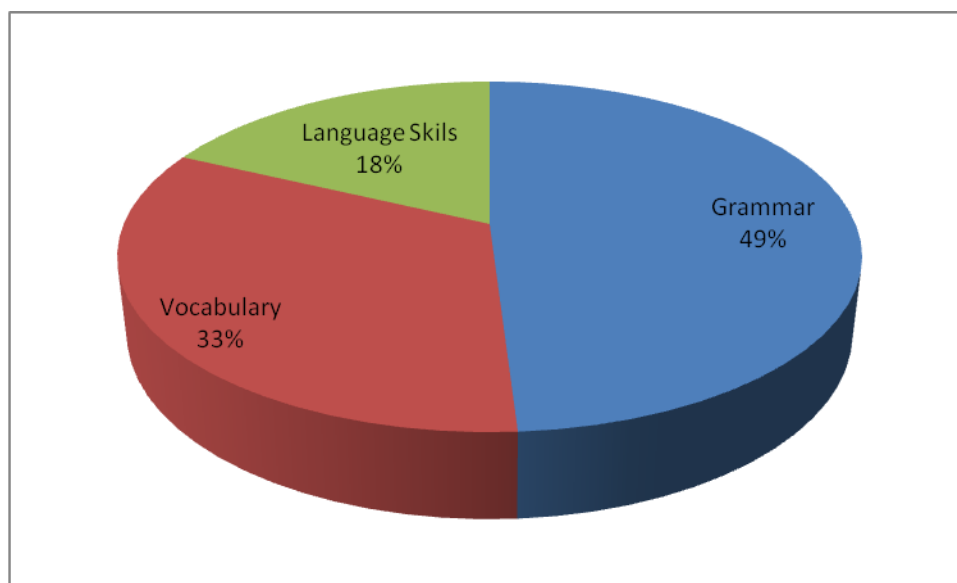
Vocabulary items such as homonyms, homophones, homographs, synonyms, antonyms, prefixes, suffixes, compound words, phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions, one word substitutes, confused words are grandly introduced, but no single answer is given to any exercises. Even some of the answers should have been given at the end of the text book. Strategies and language functions are hardly found in a systematic way. The next block is reading which is very much less in number. Indeed there is no single paragraph to read. The reading part in the text book is only the stories in the prescribed lessons. Regarding reading skill, there are only comprehension questions and two line answer questions. Since there are no reading activities, students may not

get any interest in reading the lessons too. They haven't encouraged them to be involved in the reading.

The Grammar part includes nouns, pronouns, articles, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, sentences, question tags, conjunctions, propositions, and voice are the basic chapters of any language. The students might have studied and practiced all these at the school level. There is no scope to practice any topic so that in a roundabout way these disappoint the students. What is the use of giving all the tenses and other grammatical topics, without mentioning any speaking activities? Grammar topics are more in number and language skills are not properly focused. (graph 3)

Graph: 03

Distribution of grammar, vocabulary and language skills in the text book *English for Fluency*



Speaking is the main objective in learning a language. Students are not asked to speak because the text book does not provide such type of activities. They are encouraged to prepare readymade market material to score marks to pass the examination. Indeed they have already

known English grammar better than the students who come from English medium background, but the problem is that they never use difficult jargon and make structures. The tasks on sentence structure are not given in the text book. Communication skills in English are also completely neglected in this book.

Conclusion

The study focused on the evaluation of the textbook used for undergraduate level first year students of Satavahana University. After the close evaluation of the components of the book, the findings suggested that the overall organization of the textbook and the themes included were not satisfactory. There are no real life-like situations role plays, group discussions, debate and other communicative tasks. Although the book tries to focus on all the four language skills, they are not given equal preference. Many problematic areas were detected as to the practicality of the book, its contents with local smell and flavor, use of simple language not with a single unfamiliar word and irrelevant tasks without answers. The findings also suggest that the course editor has followed a thematic approach for the setting of its chapters in a sequential order. The four language skills are shown deliberately since they are necessary. The topics and themes selected for this book are mostly appropriate to the students' interests, but most of them are translated and very short also. The cover page's grandiloquent look may attract the readers, but soon they come to know that there is nothing of great importance. There is no single topic for practical session. Throughout the book, grammar sections are exaggerated with every unit containing two sections on grammatical features. Thus the text book is just a book with a value toward getting marks in a year for the undergraduate level students of Satavahana University, Telangana State.

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