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CHAPTER

Test, Examination and Evaluation in English Teaching

Testing, examining and evaluating the learning of pupils is essential in a teaching-learning process. They are not only beneficial for the learner, but also for the teachers. They are all the more important for learning English, because English is not only a foreign language, but also a different one. Although some have demanded to eliminate tests, examinations and evaluations, yet their need is undebatable due to the following reasons :

- (i) Tests, examinations and evaluations help in promoting pupils from one class to another.
- (ii) They get the students acquainted with their state of knowledge.
- (iii) Merit scholarships can be given on their basis.
- (iv) They help in giving admission on the basis of merit.
- (v) Teachers can eliminate individual difficulties by knowing them through testing, examining and evaluating.
- (vi) They are a source of motivation for studies.
- (vii) Teachers can know about the appropriateness of their method of teaching by results and can bring a change in the method, if needed.
- (viii) In teaching, the teacher has to relate the new knowledge with the already acquired knowledge of students. For this, he must know their state of knowledge which he can know through tests.
- (ix) For the selection of good and efficient teachers, their merit in various examinations is needed.
- (x) At the time of the promotion of teachers, their results are considered. For this examinations are necessary.
- (xi) Results of tests, examinations and evaluations determine the standard of a college.

(xii) Guardians, too, are benefited by tests, examinations and evaluations. They can know the rate of progress of their wards.

(xiii) They are also necessary in curriculum construction, because only by knowing the results, the standard of a class can be decided.

TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS

Although some use tests and examinations interchangeably, both differ in meaning and functions. Test is a shorter term, whereas examination is a broader one. Examination has a greater role to play than tests. The word, 'test' has been derived from 'Testum', a Latin word. Testum used to be an earthen pot which was used during the middle ages to test if minerals put into it had gold in them. In the same manner, test are to find out if the students have learnt what they have been taught. In other words, tests are the answers to this question, "I had told you this. Did you understand?" The word, 'examine' has been derived from the Latin word 'examen'. Examen is the pointer of a balance. It indicates by its movement whether the weight in one pan is equal to the standard weight put in the other pan. In the same way, examinations are to know whether the child has acquired or reached a certain standard of know-ledge. In other words, examinations are the answers to the questions put to students, "This is the standard. Have you reached it?" Tests are taken weekly, fortnightly, monthly. Examinations are taken only after a term or session, e.g., after three or six months or a whole year.

Characteristics of a Good Test and Examination

Tests and examinations are very important. Therefore, they should be designed properly. In designing them, the following characteristics should be kept in mind :

(i) Tests and examinations must take into account the aims and objectives of teaching English.

(ii) They should ask students only what has been taught.

(iii) They should neither be very easy nor very difficult.

(iv) The answers to questions asked should not be very long.

(v) Clear instructions should be given to students.

(vi) The scoring system should be fair as well as easy. Prof. Samaratne¹ says, "In marking, objectives marking should be used as far as possible."

1 W. R. P. Samaratne : *The Teaching of English*.

- (vii) They should have reliability and validity.
- (viii) Questions should be arranged in order of relative importance.
- (ix) On important topics, more questions should be asked.
- (x) Questions should proceed from simple to complex.

Types of Questions in Tests and Examinations

In tests and examinations of English, the following three types of questions are asked :

1. Essay type.
2. Short answer type.
3. Objective type.

1. Essays Type. The answers of essay type questions are long like an essay. The forms of questions are mostly as follows :

- (i) Write the meaning of prose and poetry with explanation.
- (ii) Write critical description of a prose passage.
- (iii) Write an essay on.....
- (iv) Express your own views on the lesson.
- (v) Translate the passage.
- (vi) Write the main idea of the passage in your own words.
- (vii) Compare the views of first passage with the second passage.

These types of questions have the following advantages :

- (i) They are easy to construct.
- (ii) They help in measuring the higher mental abilities, such as imagination and reasoning.
- (iii) They facilitate language development.
- (iv) They give opportunity to pupils to express their views.

But, essay type questions have been subjected to much criticism, due to their following demerits :

(i) Essay type questions cannot be asked from the whole course.

(ii) There is individuality in giving marks to answers of essay type question. A teacher gives 50% marks to one answer. Another teacher may give as much as 80% marks to the same answers.

(iii) They have very low reliability, as pointed out by *Dr. Ballard*¹, "No one doubts the instruction in composition as part of

¹ Dr. Ballard : *Board of Examinations*-Supplementary memorandum on examinations for scholarships.

the school curriculum in English, but in view of the evidence as to the unreliability of essay questions as part of the examination, hesitation is felt in recommending the inclusion of such questions.

(iv) They emphasise more on long answers than on correct answers.

2. Short Answer Type. Short answers are given to such types of questions, e.g., write definitions, questions on grammar, comprehensive questions.

3. Objective Type. Objective type questions have the following characteristics :

(i) Answers of questions are definite and very short. Answers are given in one or two words.

(ii) There is objectivity in marking answers of objective type questions.

(iii) There is less possibility of copying the answers.

But these types of questions have the following demerits :

(i) No attention is given to the language.

(ii) The setting of paper with objective type questions is difficult.

(iii) They need more paper and money for printing.

(iv) There are enhanced chances of giving answers by guessing.

Objective type questions are of the following types :

(a) **Recall Questions**—e.g., Who is the writer ofpoem?

(b) **Completion Questions**—e.g., Dinu went to.....to purchase.....

(c) **True or False Questions**—e.g., Which statement is true and which one is false.

(i) Jawahar Lal Nehru was born in 1954.

(ii) Jawahar Lal Nehru was the first prime minister of India.

(d) **Multiple Choice Questions**—e.g., Which answer is correct :

Grape means.....(सेब, संतरा, अंगूर)

(e) **Matching Questions**—e.g., Pair the following :

A	B
Beautiful	Big
Small	Misery
Day	Ugly
Pleasure	Night

Since both essay and objective type questions have merits as well as demerits, it is suggested that a test or examination in English should have all the three types of questions. Prof. C. S. Bhandari¹ and others have expressed this view, "An examination at the secondary school level should aim at a fair and consistent estimate of the pupils' command of the essentials of the language; so in every question paper, there should be a judicious combination of : (a) Objective Type Questions, (b) Questions requiring Short Answers and (c) Essay Type Questions."

Types of Tests and Examinations in English

There are two types of tests and examinations in English :

1. Traditional or Essay Type. In these types of tests and examinations all the questions are of essay type. These have all those merits and demerits which essay type questions have. These days, they have been subjected to much criticism. According to Benjamin², "The traditional essay type of examination has been found rather unsatisfactory and its limitations are well-known. Scientific investigations have proved that these examinations are frustrating and extremely unreliable for the evaluation of pupils' achievement and abilities".

2. New Type. These types of tests and examinations have all objective and short answer questions. They are called new because they remove some of the demerits of the traditional type tests and examinations. They have all those merits and demerits which objective type questions have. New type tests and examinations are of two types :

(a) Oral and (b) Written.

(a) Oral Tests and Examinations. These are intended to test : (i) reading, (ii) comprehension and (iii) expression. Some of the various devices used to test these are as follows :

Reading. The teacher asks students to read a passage one by one. He himself notes their pronunciation, stress, speed and intonation.

Comprehension

(i) Auditory Comprehension. The teacher, reads a passage and asks questions based on it. Dr. Lado has constructed a test of auditory comprehension in English.

1 C. S. Bhandari, et. al. : *Teaching English*, Langmans, 1961, p. 123.

2 Benjamin : *The Teacher Speaks*.

(ii) **Reading Comprehension.** The teacher asks students to read (silently or loudly) a passage of prose and then asks some questions related to that passage.

(iii) **Picture Comprehension.** The teacher shows a picture to the students and then ask many questions based on the picture.

(iv) **Story Comprehension.** The teacher narrates a story before students and then asks some questions on that story.

Expression. Agard and Dunkel have pointed three levels of expression in speech. They are :

(a) Ability to report a single, simple act or situation in precise words.

(b) Ability to express a sequence of ideas fluently, and

(c) Ability to converse.

Expression test can be taken as follows :

(i) The teacher performs some actions. He asks students to describe them. For instance he closes the door and asks students to describe this action in English.

(ii) The teacher shows a picture and asks students to describe it.

(iii) The teacher asks some general questions, e.g.,

What is your name ?

Where do you live ?

Do you like your school ?

What is honesty ?

(iv) The teacher gives a topic and asks students to speak a few sentence on it .

Advantages of Oral Tests and Examinations

(i) They test the ability of students to express themselves orally.

(ii) They test the pronunciation of students.

(iii) They test the reading skill of students.

(iv) They prepare students to face interviews in future.

(v) They help students in building personalities.

(vi) They test the understanding of English, spoken and written, by the students.

Disadvantages of Oral Tests and Examinations

(i) There is no place for writing in oral tests and examinations.

- (ii) They are time consuming. So, they prove very inconvenient for a class with huge strength.
- (iii) There is subjectivity in marking.
- (iv) The conference on "The Teaching of English in Schools" held at Delhi in 1983 observed, "Although it is essential to assess oral achievement, the systematic testing of spoken English at the school stage involves so many organizational problems that the difficulties in this direction seem to be insurmountable."

(b) **Written Tests and Examination.** Written tests and examinations are meant to test the following :

- (1) Vocabulary,
- (2) Language study,
- (3) Composition,
- (4) Comprehension, and
- (5) Translation.

1. **Vocabulary.** Vocabulary testing consists of :

- (i) Spellings of words and phrases.
- (ii) Meanings of words and phrases.
- (iii) Uses of words and phrases.
- (iv) Building new words and phrases.

For testing spellings, the teacher can ask these questions :

Correct the spelling of the following :

Table (मेज), Chair (कुर्सी), Orange (संतरा)

Write the correct word in the space :

The.....is fine today. (Whether; Weather)

The.....jumped on the man. (Lion; Loin)

Add 'ing' to the following words :

go; put; sit; come.

For testing meanings of words and phrases, the following questions can be asked :

Give the meaning of the following :

sky; banana; start; huge.

Give the antonyms of the following :

good; day; honest.

Give the synonyms of the following :

happy; beautiful.

Select the correct word which has been defined in the sentence :

Seven days one after another (week, month, year).

Incidents related in a chronological way (Biography, History)

A. F. Watts¹ has developed a test of this type to test the meaning of words and phrases.

Select the correct meaning of the following :

Apple : सतरा, अमरुद, सेब, अनार।

Dr. H. C. Sinha has constructed a vocabulary test for classes X, XI and XII. Students have to give the nearest meaning in Hindi of an English word.

In order to make students use words and phrases, the following types of questions should be asked :

Use the following words in sentences :

man, men, people, boy, girl.

Add 'a' or 'an' before :

school, college, apple.

Substitute the word 'beautiful' with another suitable word :

beautiful day : beautiful scene.

For building new words and phrases, the following questions can be asked :

Make a new word from each of these :

Apple, work.

Give two words starting from 'dis'.

2. Language Study. Language study involves the testing of: (i) Sentence pattern and construction and (ii) Grammar.

The sentence pattern and construction can be tested by the following :

- (i) Substitution tables.
 - (ii) Use of tense.
 - (iii) Use of genders.
 - (iv) Completion of sentences.
 - (v) Changing sentences into negative, positive and interrogative.
 - (vi) Changing sentences into direct or indirect speech.
 - (vii) Changing simple sentences into compound or complex sentences.
 - (viii) Changing the voice—passive or active.
 - (ix) Correcting the wrong order of words.
- The grammar can be tested by asking :
- (i) To find nouns, verbs, etc. in a sentence.

¹ A. F. Watts : *The Language and Mental Development of Children*,

- (ii) To find object, subject and predicate in a sentence.
- (iii) To find participle and gerund in a sentence.
- (iv) To change the narration, and
- (v) To change the voice.

3. **Composition.** For this, the questions should be framed on the following lines :

- (i) Writing a few sentences expressing an idea.
- (ii) Developing a story from the key words.
- (iii) Writing a story.
- (iv) Writing letters.
- (v) Writing applications.
- (vi) Writing essays.

The marking of a composition should not be by total impression. It should be by categories. *Hartog, Rhodes and Burt* had marked compositions in an experiment in the following manners :

Categories	Marks
1. Quantity, quality and control of ideas	50
2. Vocabulary	15
3. Grammar and punctuation	15
4. Structure of sentences	10
5. Spellings	5
6. Handwriting	5
Total	100

4. **Comprehension.** Testing of comprehension is important, because it tests intelligence and vocabulary as pointed out by *F. G. French*, "It is difficult to separate tests in comprehensions of a given passage from tests in vocabulary, for obviously, that pupil will be better equipped to answer a test who has a larger vocabulary to draw upon Again, comprehension is, of course, closely linked with general intelligence and a comprehension test is also a test of intelligence." Following types of questions can be asked to test comprehension :

- (i) Write the names of the authors of.....
- (ii) Explain the following passage with reference to context.
- (iii) Explain the meaning of these words.....
- (iv) Give the central idea of the lesson.....
- (v) What lesson do you learn from the poem.....?
- (vi) Who is the hero of the story.....?

(vii) What did the hero say when he was rebuked by his mother ?

(viii) Give a suitable title to the following passage.

5. Translation. Students can be asked to translate passage in Hindi to English or vice-versa.

EVALUATION

The concept of evaluation was introduced by *B. S. Bloom*. In India, NCERT organized seminars on 'Evaluation' in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and many other places. The concept of evaluation is also applicable to the teaching of English. Evaluation is a gradual and continuous process. According to *J. W. Wrightstone*, "Evaluation is a new technical term introduced to design a more comprehensive concept of measurement." There are four steps in evaluation which are also applicable to the teaching of English.

1. Determining the educational objectives.
2. Organizing learning experiences to change the behaviour of pupils according to the educational objectives.
3. Measurement of the behavioural change.
4. Referring the measurement of educational objectives to see if the behavioural change was according to the objectives.

The objectives of teaching English have been discussed in a previous chapter. Organizing the learning experiences for behavioural changes, there should be objective based lesson planning.¹ For the management of the behavioural changes, the following devices are used :

- (i) Observation
- (ii) Interview
- (iii) Questionnaire
- (iv) Check-list
- (v) Creative words, e.g., students, paintings, poems, and
- (vi) Examination with objective test items : This can be oral and written.² The oral and written examination contain objective test items (questions), e.g.,

Test Item 1

Objective	:	Knowledge
Specification	:	Discrimination

1 An outline of lesson plan for objective based teaching in English and a detailed lesson plan are given in Appendices F(a) and F(b).

2 Description of oral and written examination has already been presented.

Topic : Elements of knowledge
 Sub-topic : Sentence structure
 Marks : 1
 Direction : Fill in the gaps :
 I.....going to the market. I metan
 old friend of mine.

Test Item 2

Objective : Knowledge
 Specification : Recognition
 Topic : Elements of languages
 Sub-Topic : Vocabulary
 Marks : 1
 Direction : Guava is a.....
 a. Cereal
 b. Vegetable
 c. Fruit

The teacher should present a complete test by preparing a blue-print which gives the rationale and the planning of the test. An outline of a blue-print is as follows :

BLUE-PRINT FOR THE UNIT TEST

Objectives→	Knowledge			Skill			Application		
	E	S	O	E	S	O	E	S	O
Form of Item Contents									
Elements of language Text-book content Reading Writing etc.									
Total item marks									

Note : E : Essay Type
 S : Short Answer Type
 O : Objective Type

After the measurement of behavioural changes, it should be determined whether the said objectives have been achieved or not. In this way, evaluation is a long, continuous and qualitative process.