

ISSN 0976-8165

*The Criterion*



# *The Criterion*

An International Journal in English

Bi - Monthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access eJournal

August 2014 Vol. 5, Issue-4

5<sup>th</sup> Year of Open Access

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Vishwanath Bite

Managing Editor

Madhuri Bite

[www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com)

[criterionejournal@gmail.com](mailto:criterionejournal@gmail.com)

About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>

## Evaluation of UG English Language Course Materials Offered by SAUs in Maharashtra State

**Sarap N.S.**

Assistant Professor of English

**Mahadik R.P.**

Junior Research Assistant

**&**

**Mehta P.G.**

Assistant Professor,

Deptt. of Extension Education,

College of Agriculture, Dapoli (M.S.).

Dist. Ratnagiri 415 712

English is essential for the learners either as a second or foreign language in different scientific disciplines, further the needs of English language increase widely, particularly, in such disciplines where English is used as the medium of instruction for teaching as well as learning as in the faculty of agriculture. Unfortunately some educational systems do not pay much attention to the importance of English, instead, it is considered as secondary or subordinate subject. In fact, the English material in use at the Faculty of Agriculture for B.Sc. (Agri.) degree course teaches only communication skills. The same course is prescribed to other degree courses at State Agricultural Universities (SAUs). It emphasises only on communication skills and hence, there is no scope for structural aspects of language. Though the materials are relevant to the some professional/occupational needs the students enjoy learning some interesting topics and uses of the target language. The standard of the students in English proficiency is unsatisfactory; they can use English effectively neither in their discipline i.e. agricultural sciences nor in the situational settings i.e. outside their discipline. For that reason, the present study intends to evaluate the importance of the course material with the viewpoint of the learners.

### Introduction

English has been accepted as an international language all over the world; its use has been expansively increased at present than it was in the past. Moreover, the use of English continues to increase greatly all over the world. English has the greatest importance as compared to other languages. It is estimated that, over two billion people in the world today speak English in various dialects and proficiency level. As English has gone beyond its natural borders, non-native speakers of English outnumber three to one as asserted by Crystal (1997). Nunan (1992) states that though there are a wide range of diverse and sometimes contradictory views on the nature of language and language learning, curriculum developers need to take account of and respond to data coming from learners, teachers, evaluation experts and so on. In the course of time, English has established itself as the world language of research and publication and it is being used by a multitude of universities and institutes of learning all around the world as the language of instruction (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). In India also, English is extensively used in the field of science and technology. This is also true for agricultural sciences degree programmes.

Taking into consideration the importance of this course the study was conducted with following specific objectives.

1. To investigate usefulness of the current English language course to follow specialized agricultural courses,

2. To ascertain the extent of practical skills offered by this course, and
3. To evaluate overall usefulness of this course.

### Methodology

The study was conducted at the eight agricultural colleges under all the four SAUs. From each university two colleges, one constituent and one private affiliated, were chosen. From each college fifty students were selected randomly. Hence, total sample is 400. The questionnaire was the major instrument used in collecting data of this study. It is employed to collect information from the perspectives of the students regarding issues undertaken.

### Results and Discussion

The first question asked to the informants what the current English course primarily teaches them. The following table states the information in this regard.

**Table (1): Kind of English offered by agriculture English course**

Sl. No.	Category (Score)	Respondents (n= 400)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Communication skills (3)	380	95.00
2.	General English (2)	20	05.00
3.	Other (1)	00	00.00
<b>Average: 2.95 Total</b>		<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 1 ascertains that almost all the students (95.00 per cent) said that current English course teaches communication skills. Only 05.00% students felt it was general English. The average score obtained was 2.95. This confirms that pure communication skills are covered in the syllabus.

The following table describes supplementary material given by the teacher, which was not included in the syllabus. To this query the replies of the students are given as under.

- a. Yes (040) 10.00%
- b. No (360) 90.00%

Then students were asked what kind of material was given. Table 2 focuses on this information.

**Table (2): Supplementary material given by the teachers**

Sl. No.	Kind of English supplementary material given to the students	Respondents (n= 40)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Purely agricultural	23	57.50
2.	Agriculture related	25	62.50
3.	General English	29	72.50
4.	Grammar	19	47.50

The above table shows that a very less number of students believe that they were given variety of supplementary material by the teachers. In all 57.50 per cent students reported that purely agricultural material was given, while 62.50 per cent said that it was agriculture related. 72.50 per cent found general English material given to them and 47.40 per

cent grammar. This clearly raises the question on whether the teachers, from all the colleges under study, had given supplementary material for reading as only 10.00 per cent students responded positively.

Then the informants were asked to give their views regarding the utilization of the English material in use. Students were asked did the English language course help them to follow the other courses taught in English. (Taking notes, understanding by listening to lectures, talking to teachers and other students etc). The responses of the students were as follows

- a. Yes (336) 84.00%
- b. No (64) 16.00%

The extent of usefulness of the English language course as perceived by the students is given in the table below.

**Table (3): The extent of usefulness of the English language course as perceived by the students**

Sl. No.	Category (score)	Respondents (n= 336)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	To great extent (3)	205	61.01
2.	To somewhat extent (2)	101	30.07
3.	To a limited extent (1)	030	08.92
	<b>Average: 2.52</b> <b>Total</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 3 exhibits that more than three-fifth (61.01 per cent) informants regarded the usefulness of the present English course to a great extent. For less than one-third (30.07 per cent) the course was useful to somewhat extent and for only 08.92 per cent student it was useful to a limited extent. The average score was 2.52. Considering these facts it is crystal clear that the present English language course is useful for the learners to follow other courses.

The next item enquired about the implementation of the Agriculture English course outside the agriculture discipline i.e. in different situational settings.

Does the current English language course help you to communicate outside your academic sphere?

- a. Yes (226) 56.50%
- b. No (174) 43.50%

Though more than half students said the course was useful outside their specialized field, a remarkable number of students (43.50 per cent) expressed concerns about limitations to help communicate outside agricultural field. Interestingly the students expressed the need of introducing more practicals, some grudged limited use of spoken English and some considered the syllabus difficult. Several students complained that the course was taught with examination point of view.

It is clear that there is no contradiction between the proposed objectives of the present English language course and its authentic implementation. It claims that the students should be able to communicate intelligibly in different uses of English. The responses of the learners revealed that the current English language course partially meets the language needs of the students to communicate outside their agricultural field.

The next question was concerned with the practice of language skills in relation to the different activities within the agricultural topics. In this regard it is worth pointing out that any foreign language cannot only be learnt by teaching grammatical structures or lexical

forms, but it can be acquired through the application of four language skills viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Table (4) explains the allocation of each practical skill as perceived via student informants. It indicates the percentage of the benefits the agriculture English course for the following language skills.

**Table (4): Allocation of Practical Skills**

Listening	27.6%
Speaking	28.4%
Reading	36.7%
Writing	57%

As observed by the students that writing skill has the lion's share (57.00 per cent) in the materials of agricultural English course. While, the percentage of the skills of listening, speaking and reading were got somewhat less allocation 27.60 per cent, 28.40 per cent and 36.70 per cent, respectively. This is due to the fact that there is an agreement between the results tabulated above and the contents of the course.

Unfortunately there was poor implementation of the pragmatic skills viz. listening and speaking, though they are regarded the most important skills in language learning. Some language skills were over emphasized and others are somewhat undervalued i.e. writing was over emphasized whereas listening and speaking were given less prominence.

In the agricultural context, each language skill device plays its own role in which it has full rights in the implementation aspect, for instance

- Listening to lectures, symposia, conferences, etc.
- Speaking in agricultural context, informal discussions and conversations, etc.
- Reading textbooks, journals, papers, documents, success stories, etc.
- Writing examination papers, reports, articles and research materials, etc.

The last item of this questionnaire mentioned below is about the benefit of English language course, its contribution in learning of agricultural sciences and effective use of English in the real life situations.

Then students were asked to rate usefulness of the current English course. The students' rating of the course is given in the following table.

**Table (5): Usefulness of the English language course in general**

Sl. No.	Category (score)	Respondents (n= 400)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Useful (3)	266	66.50
2.	Somewhat useful (2)	124	31.00
3.	Not useful (1)	010	02.50
	<b>Average: 2.64</b> <b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The above table determines that nearly two-third (66.50 per cent) informants found the English language course useful to them, whereas, less than one-third (31.00 per cent) found it somewhat useful, and only 02.50 per cent students said it was not useful. The average score found to be 2.64. Hence, the present English course is, undoubtedly, useful to the agriculture students.



## Conclusion

In present English language course offered by the SAUs in Maharashtra State, thorough emphasis is given on communication skills. Majority of the students were found satisfied in respect of usefulness of the course. But there is scope to improve it by giving proportionate importance to language skills.

## Recommendations/Implications

1. In order to improving usefulness of the present English language course more emphasis needed to be given on the pragmatic skills viz. listening and speaking with due importance to reading and writing.
2. Various supplementary materials including agriculture related, are to be given in addition to the curriculum of the degree course for making learners familiar with agricultural English, as well as, for their overall improvement in English proficiency.

## Works Cited:

- Brown, H., D. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Flowerdew, J., and Peacock, M. (2001). (Eds.). *Research perspectives on English for academic purposes*, Cambridge: CUP.
- Ferda Tunç (2010). Evaluation of an English Language Teaching Program at a Public university Using CIPP Model. M. Sc. Thesis, The Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University, Turkey.
- Horwitz, E., B., Bresslau, M. Dryden, M.E., McLendon, J. Yu (1997). "A Graduate Course Focusing on the Second Language Learner. *Modern Language Journal*. 81 (4): 518-526.
- Kiely, R. and P. Rea-Dickins (2005). *Program Evaluation in Language Education*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lamie, J. (2005). *Evaluating Change in English Language Teaching*. Basingstoke. Palgrave: Macmillan.
- Nunan, D. (1993). Task-based syllabus design: selecting, grading and sequencing tasks. In G. Crookes and S.M. Gass (Eds.). *Tasks in a pedagogical context*. Cleveland, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Orr, M. (2010). Evaluating the Testing Course in an MA in ELT. *ELTED Journal*. Vol. 13 pp. 4-10.
- Pawson, R. and N. Tilley (1997). *Realistic Evaluation*. London: Sage.
- Waters, A. (2007). "ELT and the Spirit of the Times". *ELT Journal* 61(4): 353-359.