Chapter Three: Research Design

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the design and the conduct of the study. The following section presents a comprehensive description of the design of the study, the tools used and the mode of data collection employed. The research orientations employed in the study have been discussed briefly in Chapter One in 1.5.

As stated in Chapter One, this study examines the social psychological factors in operation in a second language-learning context, identified through a review of literature presented in Chapter Two, in section 2.3. These factors are examined in the context of tertiary learners in Andhra Pradesh, and discusses their influence in the language learning processes, and thereby achievement.

In order to examine these factors, the study includes both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of data. It involves a Questionnaire survey which yielded to a quantitative analysis, and Interviews with different stakeholders- the students, teachers and parents analyzed in a qualitative manner. In addition to these Classroom Observation was conducted and analysis was done both quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.1 Research Questions

The study investigates the questions:
The research questions being focused in this study are the following:
1. In what ways do the social-psychological perceptions operate within the context of learning English at the Tertiary level in A.P in India? In other words:
a. What are the attitudes and beliefs that learners hold towards learning English?

b. What are the learner's motivational orientations to learn English?

c. What are the issues of anxiety in learning English?

d. How do students self assess their proficiency?

2. How does learners' background in terms of personal, educational and parental factors affect their learning English?

3.2 The Sources of Data

The research questions are discussed through an analysis of data collected from the sources and tools listed below. The list of the sources of data is followed by a detailed description of the tools of data collection including the sample details (Number of students, teachers and parents involved in the study).

Data has been collected using:

1) Student's Questionnaire (SQ).
2) Proficiency Test (PT)
3) Students' Interviews (SI)
4) Teachers' Interviews (TI)
5) Parents' Interviews (PI)
6) Classroom Observation (CO)
7) Text Books Evaluation (TBE)

In the following sections each of these instruments used for data collection will be described.
3.2.1 The Student’s Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix: 1) consists mainly of two parts:

1) Personal profile (Question Nos 1-16)
2) Questionnaire on Attitudes and Motivation in Language learning (Question Nos 1-37)

The Personal profile section has been constructed by the researcher specifically for this study. The questions that are included in this section are discussed next. The questionnaire study was done with a sample of 30 students.

3.2.1.1 Personal Profile

This section elicits details with respect to the following four areas:
A) Biographical details
B) The educational background,
C) Details of exposure to English Language.
D) Details of general exposure to English

The specific details asked in each of the four areas are listed below:
A). Personal information: This is the first section of the questionnaire and requires the students to provide the following information:
   a) Details of self: Name, age, sex, mother- tongue, and residential address course of study, name and address of the college.
   b) Details of parents: Father’s and Mother’s Educational qualifications, Occupation, Income (monthly) and Mother tongue/ First Language.

B). Educational background (Questions 1-3):
This section elicits information about the student’s educational background

   a) Medium of instruction
b) Type of institution,
c) Whether in district/ town
d) Whether the student's school had a library or not.

C). Specific Exposure to English (Questions 4a to 9 and questions 11 to 11d):

The questions under this section cover a range of details regarding the extent of exposure to English through different activities and contexts of use of English and in the different skill areas.

D). General Exposure to English (Questions 10a to 10d and questions 12 to 16):

These questions range from use of English and Mother tongue simultaneously, to whether English classes were interesting/ enjoyable, whether English Teacher was always likable, and whether speaking English was made compulsory in the school that the student attended. Finally this section ends by eliciting the list of languages known to students and the extent of their proficiency in those languages.

3.2.1.2 Questionnaire on Attitudes and Motivation in Language Learning

This part of the Questionnaire consists of the social psychological factors that are the focus of this study. It has been developed by taking some of the questions from published questionnaires either directly or through adaptation for this study.

It contains modified items from the Beliefs about Language learning Inventory (BALLI), (Horwitz 1988); from Gardener et al(1999); from Language Learning Orientations Scale – Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation Subscales (LLOS-IEA) (Noels et al (2000); Horwitz, Horwitz, and
Cope’s Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) and Miller’s Writing Apprehension Test (Cheng et al 1999)

These have been used because they contain items, which this study sets out to examine. The BALLI and the FLCAS inventories used in the Foreign Language learning context were modified to suit the second language-learning situation. The original questionnaires are mostly oriented towards language learning in Foreign contexts. Further for the lack of space and in order to accommodate all the social psychological factors under study here only those items relevant to this context have been used with necessary modifications.

This section of 37 questions in all is again divided into 2 parts.

The first part deals with General views / beliefs about Language learning (Questions 1-16). The second part elicits Personal views/beliefs about language learning. These and the sub categories under each of these are presented in the table- 3.1 below. The subscales that each of these categories is divided into and the questions allotted to then in the questionnaire are presented in the Table No: (Appendix 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General views/beliefs</th>
<th>Personal views /beliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Nature of language learning</td>
<td>A) <strong>Motivation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Language Aptitude</td>
<td>a) Instrumental Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Learning and Communication Strategies</td>
<td>b) Integrative Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Bilingualism</td>
<td>c) Extrinsic Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Importance of English</td>
<td>d) Intrinsic Motivation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Amotivation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>B) Anxiety</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) General Anxiety in language learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C) Self-Assessment

a) General self assessment of Language Proficiency
b) Assessment of Context embedded activities
c) Assessment of Cognitively demanding activities
d) Assessment of Information oriented activities
e) Assessment of Entertainment oriented activities

Table: 3.1 Categories of the Questionnaire

The first three sections of this part of the Questionnaire include information sought using a five point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The last section on Self Assessment includes a five point scale ranging from Very Easy to Very Difficult.

3.2.2 The Proficiency Test

The test has been developed specifically for this study to assess the proficiency of the students in English language.

The test contains four sections:
a) Reading Comprehension
b) Dialogue writing
c) Cloze
d) Essay writing
Reading Comprehension: This section tests the skill in reading and answering comprehension questions at the end of the passage. The passage deals with 'E-Books' and is geared to the information generation today. The questions range from the factual to inferential kind.

The Dialogue Writing section is built around a situation, which also links up to the theme in the Reading passage relating to the Computer field. It requires the students to supply the dialogues that a particular character would speak in the situation, while the other interpolator's dialogue is provided.

The Cloze section tests the ability of the student to supply contextually appropriate vocabulary out of his/her own repertoire.

The essay writing section contains with a free writing exercise (with some clues given) and presents the students with a topic dealing with personal experience.

A Pilot of the Proficiency test has been conducted and a discussion of this follows in the section on the Pilot study. (See 3.6. for the Description of the Pilot Study)

3.2.3 Students' Interviews

Thirty (30) Students have been interviewed based on their responses in the questionnaire using a semi structured interview schedule. Out of the thirty students interviewed fifteen are from the English medium background and the other 15 are from the Telugu (regional) medium background, who have studied till their schooling or Intermediate in Telugu medium and then shifted to English medium. The interviews have been conducted keeping the following rationale in view:
1. To enrich the data obtained through the other sources of data
2. To fill in the gaps in the questionnaire data
3. To identify contradictions in questionnaire data when compared with the interview data.
4. To triangulate the data by asking the same questions asked through the questionnaire using different words.
5. To give scope for open discussion to accommodate new categories arising out of interviews

Extra categories evolved from the interviews specifically were accommodated under the main categories being studied.

3.2.4 Teachers' Interviews

Five teachers have been interviewed with respect to the categories that this study is examining, by using a semi-structured interview schedule. The teachers are from different types colleges where some of the students who participated in the study are pursuing their courses.

The insights from teachers are analyzed in order to triangulate data collected through other sources.

3.2.5 Parents' Interviews

Five Parents of the students included in the Interview study have been interviewed. Three parents of the students from Telugu medium background who shifted to English medium and another two parents of the students from English medium background were chosen for this purpose.
Parents were interviewed, with respect to their opinions about the role and importance of English in India, their encouragement and motives in shifting their children to English medium.

The interviews (Students, Teachers and Parents) were audio recorded. The audio recording was transcribed (Appendices: 5, 6, 7 for a sample of transcripts).

3.2.6 Classroom Observation

Another source of data employed in this study to look at the social-psychological frameworks that influence practice in language education is Classroom Observation. Actual proceedings of the language classrooms in the undergraduate colleges in Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh have been observed.

The rationale for conducting Classroom Observation was to get an overall picture of the English classes at the tertiary level. Methodology adopted by the teacher, interaction patterns in the classroom amount of teacher talk, learner participation and the extent of the use of L1 are observed.

Altogether five classes are observed. Each class focused on different aspects of language learning i.e. prose, poetry, essay writing, individual presentations and group discussion. Field notes were taken down, for an in-depth analysis.

3.2.7 Textbooks

The prescribed General English textbooks of the Osmania University in Andhra Pradesh have been evaluated to for content, language and tasks and exercises. These are two separate sets of Prose, Poetry and Grammar texts for both the first two years of Undergraduate study.
3.3 Pilot study

The questionnaire and the proficiency test were tested with 30 students in a pilot study have been piloted among 30 students from the 1st year Bachelor of Computer Applications. The group has been of specific interest to the researcher because of their by and large “good” entry level in terms of their cognitive abilities, their particular need for English in their future and the kind of a communicative curriculum they have in contrast to the other regular streams of under-graduates. The performance of the students on the proficiency test was seen to concur with their performance on the usual class tests. The pilot study led to the revision of the questionnaire in respects discussed in the next section.

3.3.1 Revision of the Students’ Questionnaire

Based on the responses to the Pilot questionnaire from the students as well as the suggestions given by an audience at the World congress on World Languages in Multilingual contexts the following changes have been made in the personal profile section of the questionnaire

1. In the student’s parental background section changes were made by grouping questions of the same category together under Father’s and Mother’s background.

2. The question seeking information on educational background: whether they had a library in their school has been separated. (Qn: 3 in personal profile)

3. Questions on the extent of exposure to English have been cued to capture information on each skill separately and in-depth.(Qns: 4-7 in Personal profile)
4. The questions in the Exposure to English section have been phrased to elicit information on the 3-point scale indicating the extent of exposure. (Qns: 4-15 in Personal profile)

1. The order of Questions 3 to 13 in Personal profile was shuffled.

2. One question seeking information on whether speaking English has been made compulsory in schools has been added. (Qn: 15 in Personal profile)

3. The changes brought the number of questions in this section from 13 to 16 in Personal profile)

8. The second section of the tool: Questionnaire on Attitudes and Motivation part has been retained in its original form for the main study except for the word “native” in question 8 which has been expanded to “British or American”.

3.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from different sources using different tools have been analyzed using the categories evolved from the Research Questions studied here. Data from all these sources had been combined and triangulated to answer the research questions.

In order to answer the research question 1, data from students’ questionnaire (Section on attitudes and motivation in language learning), students’ interviews and teachers’ interviews has been triangulated. This analysis led to the finding out of social psychological perceptions of the students as seen by themselves and their teachers.

The other means of data collection include: the students’ questionnaire (Personal Profile section), Proficiency test performance, Text book evaluation,
Classroom observation and Parents' interviews have been discussed to answer research question 2. These sources yielded a description of the social psychological frameworks of actual practice.

Therefore the study has been presented in two parts. The first part presents the social psychological perceptions of the students about learning English in this context which is the discussion presented under research question 1 in chapter 4. The second part answers research question 2 by describing the social psychological frameworks of actual practice here.

3.4.1 Quantitative Analysis of the Student's Questionnaire

The responses that the students gave to the questions in the Student's questionnaire, using the Likert- format scale Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, and Strongly Disagree have been collated on each point on the scale. Data thus collated has been tabulated for each question and discussed by presenting the tables under the relevant category and showing the extent that the social psychological perceptions are in operation in the present context.

3.4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

3.4.2.1. Analysis of data from the Students, Teachers and Parents' Interviews

The data from the Students' Interviews has been presented along side the Students' questionnaire data and the corroborations and discrepancies between the two sources of data have been discussed. At another level the same findings were compared with the views from the Teachers interviews and discussed. Thus data
from Students’ questionnaire, Students’ interviews and Teacher interviews has been triangulated.
The data from the Parents’ interviews has been analyzed and discussed as one of the background factors influencing the student’s learning of English.

3.4.2.2. Evaluation of the Students’ Performance on the Proficiency Test

The evaluation of the first section of the test has been carried out based on the students’ ability to present answers in their own words in appropriate sentences depending on the question asked. Section two which deals with the dialogue completion task was assessed for their ability to use conversational nuances of language, and appropriacy of contextual content. The Cloze passage was evaluated for grammatical and contextual appropriacy in the use of vocabulary.

The researcher has scored the writing task in a subjective manner, using the yardsticks of grammatical accuracy, and appropriateness of the language used, and the students’ facility with language. The sections in the test have not been given a score and at the same time a comprehensive total of the scores on different sections put together have also not been calculated. The performance of the students has been studies instead in a qualitative manner to comment on the language that the students are capable of producing. This kind of analysis of the student’s performance helped to look at their ability vis-a-vis their social psychological perceptions.

3.4.2.3. Evaluation of the Textbooks

The common core General English text books prescribed by the University for 1st year, and 2nd year students have been evaluated for Content, Language, Tasks and Exercises that they contain. These have been discussed in terms of the
variety of topics, difficulty level of the language, and the types of the tasks and exercises. Samples of these are given in (Appendix 8)

3.4.2.4 Analysis of Data from Classroom Observation

The classroom observation data collected from classroom observation has been analyzed using the Target Language Observation Scheme (TALOS) (Ullmann and Geva, 1984) which was developed to basically to study observable classroom process variables that occur during the implementation of second language programs in the school system.

It was of interest to the researcher to use this particular observation schedule because:

1. The developers of the instrument used this instrument in core French classroom settings and suggest that it has the potential for use in other second language settings.

2. Based on a framework essential for L2 classroom features, TALOS consists of a ‘specific low inference’ section and a ‘global high inference’ section, which help in coding the same classroom events in two distinct ways. Both the ‘low inference’ and the ‘high inference’ sections have the teacher-initiated behavior and student behavior. The ‘high inference’ section further provides the opportunity to rate the implementation of the second language program. The ‘low inference’ section has scope to make specific entries whereas the ‘high inference’ section summarizes the major characteristics of the second language classroom relating to the teacher, student and program.

The current study employs only the second section of the instrument i.e., the ‘global high inference’ section, which has been used to analyze the classroom observation data that has been collected in the form of field, notes.
The ‘high inference’ section deals with broad dimensions in each of the items it focuses on the following:

1. In the item that focuses on the Teacher there are: L2 use along the cross lingual– intra lingual dimensions; teacher intent and purposefulness (e.g., clarity); teaching strategies (e.g., personalized comments, gestures and teacher traits such as humor, enthusiasm).

2. The Student item rates the extent of use of L1 and L2 on tasks; student activity (e.g., initiates personalized questions and comments) and student interest (e.g., attention).

3. Next the Program is rated in terms of the appropriateness to age and stage (e.g., linguistic and content appropriateness); emphasis on language skills (e.g., reading skills); and the degree to which a formal or functional emphasis is given to the lesson as well as the degree of L2 program integration with the general curriculum.

All the entries in the high inference section are ranked on a 0-4 scale where 0 stands for extremely low or no occurrence and 4 for very high occurrence. Further this scale allows the ratings to be done at the end of the lesson and not during its progress.

The profiles of the L2 classes observed in this study have been analyzed using the criteria discussed above. The differences in the classes observed are so marked that each contributes to the social psychological makeup of the language-learning situation in a unique way.

The discussion of the classroom observation is presented in the discussion of results that answers the research Qn.1 under ‘Attitudes and beliefs’ and ‘Motivation’ sections only.
3.5 Conclusion

This chapter stated the Research questions and described the design and procedure followed in the study. The data gathered through different modes of collection has been analyzed using both Qualitative and Quantitative ways. The next chapter presents the discussion of the results under each of the Research questions under study.