Chapter - I

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1.1 General

English language is universally known as a gift for life oriented communicative interaction. It stands enriched humanely, officially, scientifically and technically. It has in itself the power of assimilation and it functions as window of knowledge. It remains as the Second language and as a medium of instruction in the field of education in India. Hence, English Language Teaching attracts all round attention.

A lot of innovative thinking has come into the field of English Language Teaching in recent years. The most significant among them is Communicative Language Teaching. Syllabi at various levels of teaching English in India have been reformulated to include Communicative Language Teaching among other approaches.

1.2 Present Status of English Language and English Language Teaching.

English became the lingua-franca of the Indian nation and
there was no single Indian language which could immediately replace English and hence it continues as a link language even today.

In the present English Language Teaching situation, the English teacher struggles to complete the text book materials, and fails to develop the communicative skills among students. Very often the regional or the first language is used to teach the content of the lessons. Writing examination involves memorizing and reproducing the content found in the text book. Hence, developing the language skills are normally neglected.

The New Education Policy makes the following significant statements.

1. System of teacher education should be overhauled.
2. In-service and Pre-service of teachers are inseparable.

The above mentioned document proposed the establishment of DIET. (District Institute of Education and Training), CTE (Colleges of Teacher Education), and IASE (Institute of Advanced Studies in Education). Techniques like Open class rooms, individually graded and cooperative learning, etc., make learning process more joyful and meaningful. The educational objectives should aim at perfection in basic
skills, group participation and problem solving. The curriculum should be so designed to provide experience in enquiry, exploration, imagination, discovery, self-learning, and self-evaluation.

The preparation of curriculum involves five phases. They are:

1. Selection of aims, goals and objectives.
2. Selection of suitable learning experiences to realize the set objectives.
3. Selection of contents which provide certain learning experiences.
4. Integrating the learning experiences to the activities, experiences and content with respect to the teaching-learning process.
5. Evaluation to the effectiveness of learning in pupils or achievements.

Curriculum should be functional and closely related to the present and future needs of the students. Learning the first language is a natural process whereas learning a second language here, English remains as an intellectual and as a complex process. Communicative Language Teaching will help relaxing the teaching of rigid grammatical
rules. It helps to concretize language structures through the use of it. It also helps to design materials of language learning to suit the intellectual level of students, at least from VI standard onwards. Basic vocabulary, structures, reasonably correct sentence patterns for communication, simple selections from literary texts meant for creating aesthetic pleasure, etc., should figure in the teaching material. English language becomes essential to the advanced learner because of its socio-cultural ramifications and requirements. Communicative competence in English is the ultimate aim of teaching learning process.

The syllabus for teaching English at the Higher Secondary level was changed in 1995 by the curriculum planners in Tamilnadu. The syllabus incorporates several new features in terms of objectives, methodologies or techniques and evaluation.

A set of new books has been prescribed for teaching of English at the Higher Secondary level. These books include many teaching items related interactive process and communicative tasks. Due to the introduction of new syllabus and text books, the examination pattern at the Higher Secondary level has also been changed.
The new approach to English Language Teaching necessitates the adoption of new attitudes and strategies on the part of the teacher. But the existing situation is contrary to the reality. It has been observed that by and large many schools at the Higher Secondary level do not fulfil the new demands placed on them. The reasons for this might be lack of awareness, insufficient training, lack of conviction and inadequate competence on the part of those who are involved in teaching learning process.

In this context, English language teaching requires a new orientation. This new orientation, should aim at preparing teaching materials based on discourse, emphasising the development of communicative competence rather than grammatical competence. Grammatical competence could be imparted as part of communicative competence. So, neither words nor structures but only discourse should be the focus of attention for communicative teaching.

1.3 English Language Teacher.

Every teacher of English requires the following qualities to make the teaching-learning process successful.
1. He is expected to adopt a dynamic linguistic methodology combined with aesthetic appeal.

2. He has to create an awareness about the utilitarian aspect of English.

3. It is essential that he knows about developing communicative approach to English Language Teaching.

4. A teacher of English should have sufficient language proficiency, linguistic ability, psychological insight and cultural awareness.

5. He should possess a balanced communicative skill.

6. The aspects like 'how to teach and how much to teach' are in the hands of the teacher. Hence he should manipulate the situations in a pleasant way and make the interaction more effective using current and relevant information.

7. Teacher of English should have social and cultural awareness.
8. He has to be an actor, a syllabus designer, a material producer, a class room practitioner, a creator, a guide, a co-worker, a coordinator, a counsellor and also an evaluator.

The teaching and learning of English involves imparting all the four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. In short, the teacher must know the methods and techniques of teaching English.

1.4 Teaching - Learning Process

English teaching should be learner - centred activity. The learners should extract the ideas from teaching, exhibit them, mould them with their originality. Both teaching and learning are multidimensional concepts. Teacher as well as students should combine their efforts so as to make learning more effective. Teachers are learners to make their teaching practical and practicable. At the initial stage, teachers make mistakes. In experience they become good avoiding mistakes. At this juncture it is interesting to quote the words of Verma (1994: 14)

‘All teachers goof but only good teachers turn goofing into a creative activity’
1.5 English Language Teaching Methods

A method is the sum of teaching techniques utilized in a certain situation (Brumfit, 1983). In other words, a set of teaching techniques, related to a framed syllabus is called a method. The adoption of method differs according to the individual.

The following are the methods used so far to teach English.

1. Grammar-Translation method
2. Direct method
3. Audio Lingual method
4. Audio Visual method
5. Structural approach
6. Situational approach
7. Communicative approach

Communicative approach to language teaching aims

1. To develop all the four skills namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

2. To make the students acquire communicative skill so as to have enthusiastic interaction inside as well as outside the class room.
3. To develop communicative skill among students using technical aids like Television, Computer, etc.,

4. To make students attain communicative skill so that the students can use language in social context with fluency, accuracy and appropriateness.

5. To develop technical skill and vocational efficiency in English.

1.6 Aim of the Study

It has been observed that the class rooms at the Higher Secondary level in general do not fulfill the new demands such as focus on functional skills, learner-centered teaching, etc., and the communicative aspect of language teaching in particular. The reason is that the class rooms lack the congenial physical and academic climate.

In view of the points mentioned here, this study proposes to probe into

1. The techniques of teaching English followed in the class rooms from the communicative point of view.
2. The tasks of reviewing the text books, methods of teaching, evaluation procedures, etc., adopted for teaching of English from the communicative point of view.

Based on the above, the study would, then, be able to propose various steps that could be taken so that the teaching of English at the Higher Secondary level could be made more effective.

1.7 Research Design and Methodology

This study presents an analysis of the techniques of teaching English at the Higher Secondary level in Tamilnadu. As Higher Secondary Course is a crucial stage in a student's career and it stands as a bridge between high school and college education. Hence this research at the Higher Secondary level receives importance.

The Research design incorporates the following aspects in the present study.

1) field work
2) selection of subjects
3) collection of data
4) adoption of methodology
5) analysis
6) outcome of the analysis.

1.8 Field Work

The source materials for the present research are drawn from the field of English Language Teaching. Materials were collected from Central Institute of English and Foreign Language, Hyderabad, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, Ananda Ranga Pillai Library Pondicherry and the library, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore. Journals of Indian Education, Indian Education Review and English Language Teaching, etc., were perused to get thematical information related to the present work. Matriculation, Aided, Corporation and Government schools both from Urban and Rural area have been observed so as to identify the teaching methods adopted in them. A Questionnaire meant for the teachers of English at the Higher Secondary level in the State of Tamilnadu has been prepared for collecting data and the facts regarding the use of communicative aspect of English language.

Through field work, the views of teachers of higher secondary classes in Tamilnadu, regarding the nature and functions of the revised syllabus and text books and the pattern of question papers, etc., were
elicited. The teaching techniques adopted by the teachers were also elicited. By observing the classes, the class room activities while teaching English were taken note of.

The type of schools from which data were collected are listed in the Appendix. The field work was carried out for a period of two years, from 26.6.94 to 14.8.96. The questionnaires prepared for eliciting information regarding the teachers' learning activity, etc., were distributed to 150 higher secondary English teachers working in different districts of Tamilnadu.

These 150 schools belong to 4 categories namely Corporation, Government, Aided and Matriculation Schools. Among these 150 schools, 16 are Corporation schools, 66 are Government schools, 47 are Aided schools and the remaining 21 are Matriculation schools.

The primary data for the present study has been collected through field work in two phases. In the first phase, a pilot survey was conducted for getting the general idea regarding the conditions related to the second language teaching-learning process. It revealed the conditions and atmosphere that prevailed in most of the schools in Tamilnadu. The views of teachers regarding communicative language teaching, the text books and question papers were collected. A basis was formed through
this survey for framing the hypotheses and to have an overall idea on teaching learning process from communicative point of view and on the role of the materials.

The second survey was conducted in two phases. At the first phase, an observation of the classes was made. Twenty class rooms belonging to Government, Corporation, Aided and Matriculation schools, each containing five classrooms were observed. Only Tamil Medium classes in Government and Corporation Schools, English Medium classes in Matriculation schools, and both Tamil and English Medium classes in Aided schools were observed. Data were collected pertaining to various aspects. The interviews were conducted at the level of teachers. Keeping in mind the three aspects viz, teachers, students and text books, a questionnaire exclusively for teachers of English was prepared.

The questionnaire prepared at the second phase was meant for teachers and it included various aspects such as motivation, development of four skills, particularly communicative skill, and the analysis of text books and question papers.

In order to channelize the field work systematically, a number of test instruments were used.
1.9 Questionnaire

The questionnaire for teachers elicits various kinds of information such as warming up and motivation, using first language, speaking English outside the classroom, the difficulties in speaking English fluently, habit of referring to the dictionary, giving importance to pronunciation, usage of vocabulary, the process of interaction, etc. It also elicits information related to practice of four skills, particularly communicative skill. Information regarding the students' talk, model reading by the teachers, use of blackboard, administering of exercises, watching TV, materials prescribed, materials needed, suitable classroom climate, proper rapport between the teacher and the students. The Questionnaire also elicits information regarding the attitude and aptitude of the teachers and of the students as well. (A copy of the Questionnaire has been given in the Appendix)

1.10 Questionnaire on Motivation.

Questions have been included to evaluate the aspects of motivation (refer numbers B, 2, 3, E.5 in the questionnaire).

The following aspects were analysed

a. motivation or warming up before starting the lesson
b. passages in the lesson

c. teachers’ own ideas

d. difficult context in giving motivation

e. use of first language in motivation

f. difficulty in making the students interact

g. use of blackboard in motivation.

h. suitable classroom climate in motivation.

1.11 Questionnaire on the Teaching Methods

The following aspects have been included to test the techniques of teaching which framing questions and teaching methods adopted by the teacher.

a. difficulty in speaking English fluently

b. referring to the dictionary for pronunciation and meaning.

c. developing vocabulary (synonyms and antonyms, etc.,)

d. developing grammar

e. asking questions

f. making the students interact

g. giving model reading

h. developing reading skill

i. correcting errors while reading
j. using Supplementary Reader
k. using blackboard
l. helping the students to acquire basic skills namely listening, speaking and reading

The answers to these questions given by the teachers helped to analyse the role of teaching techniques and methods followed.

1.12 Questionnaire on the Teaching Process

The questions on the following aspects have been included to test the teaching learning process which is very helpful for the successful interactive and communicative class room set up.

The points raised through the questions are:

a. use of materials other than the prescribed one
b. sufficiency of the allotted time.
c. suitability of the classroom climate
d. proper rapport between the teacher and the students
e. attitude and the aptitude of the teachers
f. attitude and the aptitude of the students.
1.13 Questionnaire on Text Books

The questions framed for the analysis of text books of both first and second year Higher Secondary classes are helpful to find out the area of difficulties and variations in the text books. It was divided into two sections. They are:

i. Content based
ii. Skill based

(i) Contents based Questions

This part contains a series of questions to measure the level of the difficulty of the text books. The questions are framed to test the thematic aspects. The questions on the following topics were raised.

a. note making
b. summary writing
c. dialogue writing
d. replying letters
e. comprehension
f. paragraph writing
g. idioms and phrases
h. stress and pause
(ii) Skill based Questions.

The following questions are included to test the skills acquired by the students. They are.

a. What are the skills that the students acquire more?

b. Do the students acquire the habit of listening?

c. Do they read English newspapers and magazines?

d. Do they refer to the dictionary?

1.14 Interviews

To know more about the teaching techniques, difficult areas of the text books, available sources and resources, interviews and discussions were made. Teachers have expressed and exposed their inner views and opinions about English Language Teaching, syllabus, the process of teaching and learning, text books and question papers and the limitations related to English Language Teaching.
1.15 Subjects for Data Collection

700 students were the subjects from 20 classes of the following schools. They are both from XI and XII standards.

1. Government School Tamil Medium Sections : 5
2. Corporation School Tamil Medium Sections : 5
3. Matricultion School English Medium Sections : 5
4. Aided School Tamil / English Medium Sections : 5

1.16 Analysis

The study made two kinds of analysis:

i) Quantitative Analysis

ii) Comparative Analysis

Quantitative Analysis was made to detect the quantity of errors committed by the students. The quantity of errors varies from school to school and from one medium of instruction to another and it has some bearing on communicative teaching also.

The Comparative Analysis was made identifying the differences in the practice of communicative language teaching adopted
by the teachers of rural and urban area and the differences in communicative skill among the students belonging to Tamil and English Media.

Through observation method, the errors committed by the students during the process of learning English in general and the communicative English in particular are analysed. The errors committed by the students in all areas such as prose, poetry nondetailed and grammar exercises are identified. The errors committed while speaking and writing and the reasons for committing such errors are observed and taken note of. The techniques of teaching English adopted by the teachers are identified. The limitations from teachers'side and the reasons for those limitations are taken note of. These aspects of observation are helpful to sum up the solutions and the remedies.

The advantages of the prose lessons and the actions and reactions of both the teachers and in those areas are derived. The selected poems and the purpose of those poems are analysed. The linguistic areas of exercises given at the end of each lesson, the attempt and the response of the students in aiming the goal of the syllabus through those exercises are elicited.