Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.0. Introduction

The study looked at the operation of the social psychological factors in English language learning at the Tertiary level in Andhra Pradesh. To recapitulate, the study involved in the first part (Research Question 1) a description of social psychological factors from the students and teachers perspectives. In the second part (Research Question 2), it involved the analysis of the background of these students to see if the social psychological orientation is related to background factors.

The first research question therefore, yielded a description of the social psychological profile of the tertiary level learners vis-à-vis English language learning. Data from the Students’ Questionnaire, Students’ Interviews and Teachers’ Interviews has been triangulated in order to validate the description.

The study of the second research question moves from perceptions to actual frameworks of operation and includes an analysis of the learning environment of language education at the tertiary level in Andhra Pradesh vis-à-vis a study of:

a) Students’ exposure to English or their willingness to use English
b) Students’ Performance on the Proficiency test
c) Textbooks
d) Classroom procedures
e) Parental background

Chapter six sets out to conclude the study by presenting the overall findings and results arrived at and discussing the implications thereof. Implications are drawn for the School; English Language Teaching and Learning; and Research in the Language
Classroom. Finally, suggestions that evolve from the study for further research are presented.

6.1. Summary of Findings

In this study, the profile of the tertiary students vis-à-vis social psychological perceptions that students hold and the actual operation of these frameworks in the teaching learning process are presented. The major dimension of the study is the differentiation made between students who come from a Telugu medium background during their schooling or till Intermediate studies and those from a complete English medium background.

The social psychological perceptions stress the importance of the social knowledge acquired from the environment, which is the setting for learning the language. These views that learners hold are perceptions that have been passed on to them culturally. The summary of findings is presented with respect to the discussion of these perceptions that the study focused on in the first part of the study (Chapter 4) which answered research question 1. Next, the actual frameworks of operation of these perceptions in practice, describing the context itself in different dimensions is presented. This forms the discussion under the second research question which has been looked at in the second part of the study (Chapter 5).

A. Social psychological perceptions

The first social psychological factor we have looked at is ‘Attitudes and beliefs’ toward language learning. This factor was studied with respect to perceptions relating to the categories of: nature of language learning; aptitude in language learning; learning and communication strategies in language learning; bilingualism and status of English. Each of these categories yielded additional subcategories during the analysis of data:
Nature of language learning:
1. Ownership of language
2. a) Components of language learning
   b) Difference between Language learning and learning of Content subjects

Aptitude in language learning
1. Importance of age in Language Learning
2. Importance of Intelligence or Special ability in Language Learning, and
3. Importance of Mother Tongue in Language Learning

Communication and learning strategies
1. Strategies for improving proficiency
2. Strategies of preparing for tests and exams in English
3. Strategies for understanding new words, and
4. Strategies for handling errors

Bilingualism
1. Use of mother tongue in the class
2. Use of mother tongue in writing exams of other subjects in mother tongue, and
3. Use of mother tongue medium for primary education

Status of English
1. Importance of English
2. Purposes for which English is used

I. The results on the first factor of Attitudes and beliefs point to a clear distinction between the Telugu medium students and English medium students in their perceptions. In other words on all the categories under this section the perceptions of the Telugu medium students are different from the English medium students. While this is the general trend there are however a few students who comply with each other on certain
issues merging the demarcation across the two streams. Moreover the only issues on which all the students from both the two streams comply with each other are the categories of Aptitude in language learning, Bilingualism and Status of English.

Students from both the streams are of the view that it is better to learn a language during childhood. They consider intelligence to be an important factor in learning the language. With respect to Bilingualism the students are not for the idea of using mother tongue medium for primary education. However, they like the teacher to use mother tongue to a certain extent in the L2 classroom. Next, students consider English very important especially for using it for jobs.

The categories on which the TM students differ from EM students are Nature of language learning and Learning and communication strategies. Though TM students along with the EM students consider that communication is important they have a more linguistic approach to language learning and they lack awareness of strategies specific to language learning.

II. The second social psychological factor studied here is Motivation. This factor is studied with respect to the following sub-categories;

- Instrumental Motivation
- Integrative Motivation
- Extrinsic Motivation, and
- Intrinsic Motivation

The perceptions of the students from both the streams are similar about Motivation in language learning except with respect to the subcategory of Extrinsic motivation. While the English medium students also feel that it is important to learn English because everyone else thinks it is important, it is only the Telugu medium students who say that they feel that they must learn it for this reason and also that they feel ashamed before others if they cannot speak in English.
III. The third social psychological factor studied here relates to the issues of *Anxiety* in learning English. This factor is studied with respect to the subcategories of:

*General anxiety*
- a) English Classes
- b) Textbooks
- c) Teacher Correction
- d) Peers making fun, and
- e) Tests and exams.

*Skill specific anxiety*
- a) Listening
- b) Speaking
- c) Reading
- d) Writing

On their perceptions about anxiety during learning English, the students from Telugu medium differ from the English medium students especially with respect to anxiety relating to 'Teacher correction' and 'peers making fun'.

Further, majority of students from both the streams consider that *speaking* first and then *writing* make them anxious. Only a few students feel anxious in learning the receptive skills in English.

IV. The fourth and the last social psychological factor we have looked at is *Self Assessment* in terms of

*Real life and Entertainment based use of English*
- 1. Context embedded activities
- 2. Entertainment oriented activities
**Academic and Knowledge/information based use of English**

1. Cognitively challenging activities
2. Information oriented activities

Though, in this context, students from both the streams lack exposure to context embedded, real life oriented uses of English, they find these activities easier than cognitively challenging activities. However, they are more confident with using English for information oriented activities as opposed to entertainment oriented activities.

In the foregoing section we have discussed the social psychological factors in terms of the perceptions of the tertiary level students. We have therefore discussed similarities/differences in the perceptions of students who came to this level from two separate streams of Telugu medium and English medium. The analysis pointed to Telugu medium people being different on certain accounts on some of these categories. We shall now summarize the analysis taken up, of the actual frameworks of practice.

**B. Actual frameworks of operation of social psychological perceptions**

The second part of the analysis of data looked at the second research question which examines the learners' educational and parental background; and the instructional context. In answering this question we tried to discuss the following:

1. *Students' exposure to English or their willingness to use English*
2. *Students' Performance on the Proficiency test*
3. *Textbooks*
4. *Classroom procedures*
5. *Parental background*
1. Students' exposure to English or their willingness to use English

English medium students are differing among themselves in terms of their exposure to English. However the TM students are comparable to each other, being concentrated in the same levels of exposure. Further, EM students seem to have had more opportunities for being exposed to English through different activities and channels and are comfortable with using English in the social domain also. Students from both the streams are used to bilingual code switching.

2. Students' Performance on the Proficiency test

Further, the performance on the test, gives a picture of the students' proficiency levels. The TM students lag behind the EM noticeably in their facility in the use of vocabulary and expressions and the creative use of English. The English medium students are able to read between the lines and comprehend vocabulary in context. The TM students do comprehend factual details but are not able to represent that properly in the presentation of their answers through writing.

3. Textbooks

The Texts as well as tasks and exercises expose students to a good variety though they lack in communication orientation which the students aspire for. The linguistic difficulty these texts pose to the TM students is also high. The methodology that complements these texts is basically content oriented thus the texts are not exploited for teaching language skills. Thus, in terms of content the lessons are lengthy and loaded with complex vocabulary and expressions. The tasks and exercises come at the end of the lesson and remain as an appendage and not allow taking conscious advantage of it for language study.
4. Classroom procedures

The Classroom procedures used in this context also are monotonous and teacher controlled giving little scope for student participation. Neither is there a skill focus and therefore teacher feedback is also of no relevance here.

5. Parental background

Finally, we have found that economically the differences between students who studied in English medium and Telugu medium do not seem to have much impact on neither exposure nor their social psychological orientation. The differences in parental education however, have an effect on exposure levels but not on the social psychological perceptions of the students.

Therefore through this study we have arrived at a description of differences and similarities between students form Telugu medium and English medium students in terms of their background. It is clear from here that the TM students are held back by teacher practices, teacher perceptions etc.

6.2 Implications of the study

In the study it has been found that the perceptions and actual practice are interrelated. This integrates the learner and the social context and takes into account the socially and historically constructed relationships between the learner and the L2. However, this relationship is viewed based on an interactional rather than structural perspective. It takes the view that people negotiate and alter social identities, thus they are always in a flux and not static identities. Thus, in order to rightly inform the existing frameworks that fix learners' perceptions, the study draws implications for the following:
6.2.1 Implications for the school

The educational program at any level should involve the social context of learning. Knowledge transmitted in schools therefore should not be only theoretical, and divorced from everyday life; rather it should be viewed as preparation for open partnership in society. Knowledge transmitted therefore should be practical use oriented, in a way that is considered of use to both the individual and society. 'Sociology of Knowledge' from Positivist and Critical emphasis on the primacy of the society and the ruling class in assigning knowledge should be substituted by the interactionist and social constructivist view that knowledge is socially constructed through negotiation of the individual with society. Curriculum thus ceases to be 'fact' but becomes 'practice'. This becomes all the more important with respect to language since language pervades the whole experience of education in terms of language across the curriculum. Language from this perspective therefore cannot be seen as a collection of facts but a means for creation of ideas themselves. Schools have to perceive knowledge differently since it is still being perceived as portions. Only a few schools which perceive it as meaning making which in turn gives importance to process not product. This practice will help students to have an appropriate view of the nature of language learning.

Further, the degree of 'investment' in a language is crucial in that the learners negotiate their social identity through language. Therefore, the choice of the type of educational program in terms of the language experiences that the learners are exposed to, determines their ways of understanding "their relationship to the world" across time and space and "their possibilities for the future" Norton (1997: 410). The school should not therefore limit linguistic activity as a means
through which mental activity is reflected but “the means through which higher mental functions derive their socio-cultural origins and through which a specifically human mind is organized and functions” (Lantolf and Appel, 1994).

There should not therefore be a differential treatment of students at the level of the policy determining access to languages of social value and economic advantage. Further, low achievers should not be viewed from a deficit point of view, but must be appreciated for the strengths they possess. The students from Telugu medium background specifically have reached the tertiary level in spite of their medium of education. They should not be identified by the school with low levels of intelligence, poor educational performance and socioeconomic stagnation. Therefore, language learning should be a social event where significant adults provide the learners with mediated experiences to help them to construct knowledge actively through interaction. Proper scaffolding by the teachers it is believed will lift these students to expand their zones of development. Adapting an ecological perspective, learning failure should, therefore, be seen in terms of disparity between what the individual brings to the learning situation and the demands and expectations of the environment.

A view of ‘language in the world’ and ‘the world in the language’ should consequently provide an implication for the school to view language education in terms of “Language Socialization” (LS). “Language is seen as integrated into sociocultural behavior, and both the result and creator of context and structure.” (Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen, 2003: 157). With regard to the analysis of social context, the factors that affect ultimate L2 proficiency are related to the learner’s opportunities and desire to use the L2 for particular purposes in social interaction. Therefore for each situation the nature of these purposes and the use of the L2 in social interaction, and how these are determined by the structural and historical factors affecting the social groups involved and their languages need to be considered. If the schools are not attuned to these purposes, a hidden curriculum, resulting from ‘a continual delay, denial, and interruption of their personal wishes and desires’ will emerge. (Jackson, 1968 as quoted by Robinson 1981: 130).
Finally a holistic approach or an ecological perspective to curriculum organization with a scope for encapsulating past histories and social demarcations must be emphasized and provision must be made for increasing exposure and opportunities. The school needs to give the right kind of scaffolding and support system that the students lack in this post modern situation. Interim goals need to be set especially with respect to the Telugu medium students. The strengths of these students need to be focused on more than their weaknesses. Instead of setting similar goals for every one schools need to set interim goals for students from different streams thereby becoming the emancipatory agents and agents that help bloom their individual potential instead of establishing differences in terms of their weaknesses.

6.2.2 Implications for English Language Teaching and Learning

It is important to view English language education against the backdrop of the historical and socio cultural conditions of the colonial and post colonial periods on one hand and on the other as identified with the powerful forces of globalization. It requires conceptualizing the English language classroom as a cultural space where various agendas are negotiated and contested. This requires putting forth even the political complexity of language pedagogy and disqualifying views of ELT as technical and apolitical. It is to break free from the linguistic imperialism of English. (Canagarajah, 1999). It implies that a macro social perspective as well as a micro social perspective needs to be taken stock of. This means that research focuses on both the broad spectrum of general factors in the society as a whole and the everyday encounters in the periphery classroom accounting for personal individual learner factors.

The teacher needs to be prepared to handle the periphery students' educational expectations and their ways of managing ideological tensions. The teacher needs to be aware of the individual learner differences and their influence on language learning.
It is the teacher who can mediate between the macro and the micro contextual factors and strive to foster right, informed attitudes and beliefs towards language learning. With the right kind of scaffolding it is assumed that the Telugu medium students will do much better. The teacher needs to establish a conducive environment for learning to take place besides building the learner’s confidence and a positive self image vis-à-vis language learning. It calls for an approach that focuses on the learner and is learner centred. A process orientation must be adapted to the teaching learning situation. The focus here should be on creation of meaning and give learners opportunities for negotiation of meaning. Interaction in the classroom needs to be fostered more instead of looking at students in terms of a banking model of learning (Freire, 1972). This means that the emphasis that is now given to ‘syllabus completion’ needs to be replaced by a skill focused learning content. A process syllabus to aid language learning to suit the learners’ needs must be worked out. Learner errors must be viewed in a proper perspective to further learning and not block or hamper it. Further, a rethinking about categories indicating success and proficiency is necessary. A Bilingual approach at the grass roots level and implications of it need to be worked out.

The role of English alongside the other languages in the learner’s and the community’s verbal repertoire should be reassessed. Thus, in such a situation, the school needs to revise its attitudes to different languages available in the society. Teachers need to recognize that children are capable of adding languages to their existing repertoires, subscribing to an additive model of bilingualism (Lambert, 1963b). Societal multilingualism must be recognized and patronized by the school.

6.2.3. Implications for the Teacher as a Researcher

Van Lier (1982) says, the focus of research in the language classroom must be to develop ‘rich descriptions of learning experiences to makeup a satisfactory theory of language acquisition. “...Studies of language acquisition should proceed simultaneously along routes concerned with psychological and internal processing and those examining
external and cultural factors” (Brumfit and Mitchel 1982). Therefore, if the research into language learning is to be valid it requires to probe into accounts of the individual learners on language learning. This necessitates, as Brumfit and Mitchel (1982) say, combinations of research from external perspectives, collaborative research by teachers and outsiders and research from within teaching itself. It requires, further, a multidisciplinary approach to research a social psychological view point into the process of language learning.

As early as 1975, Stenhouse called for “A research tradition which is accessible to teachers and which feeds teaching ...” The idea of “teacher as researcher” has been current in educational thinking particularly since Stenhouse popularized it as a "process model" in curriculum research and development. A research stance, he says, is a disposition to examine one's own practice critically and systematically. This study confirms the need for ‘context sensitive’ (Bax, 1997) teacher education. It advocates action research and reflective teaching. The worth of such a tradition lies basically in helping the teacher solve problems specific to the teacher’s own context and at the same time develop the teacher both as a person and as a practitioner. In teacher education it sets a trend for a “workplace based educational knowledge” and a “living educational theory” (Whitehead, 1993). Whitehead talks about this new form of workplace-based educational knowledge deriving from questioning oneself 'how do I improve my practice here? ’This he says is a dialectical materialists approach to the production of educational theory/epistemology'. Expressing a similar view, McNiff sees the development of educational knowledge as being “the process of an individual’s ever expanding consciousness, which is encouraged by the parallel processes of other expanding consciousnesses (McNiff, 1992). This development of individual and collective understanding promotes the evolution of our own society, transforms the world. In doing so, action research is leads to creating a good social order. Where the classroom has a culture as complex as the coral reef, Holliday (1994), says, the teacher cannot afford to be anything but a researcher. All techniques and methodologies must be continuously in question, and interpretive ethnography becomes the essential research approach".
Hinting at how teachers can contribute, Brumfit and Mitchel discuss interventionist and experimental studies that obscure the 'close relationship between learning and social contexts'. The rich descriptions of learning experiences that only a teacher can study first hand provide an essential element in building a satisfactory theory of language acquisition. Reflective teaching in this context, it is hoped, will help teachers to introspect their beliefs towards language learning and teaching. It will help teachers to delve into students' beliefs and to develop strategies to modify them. It will help teachers to work out ways in dealing with social psychological factors at a pragmatic level in their own class rooms.

In this study, we have found that the teachers as much as students approach the learning context with conscious beliefs and attitudes vis-à-vis their language learning and the students, which shape learning in the classroom. An orientation of being a researcher in the classroom it is understood will thus aid the teacher in reflecting on her own practice and bring about alterations in the teaching learning situation. It is the teacher who is responsible for mediation in the process of socializing learners into potential ways of responding to learning and society at large. The teachers need to therefore build the knowledge base of teaching with insights from their immediate classrooms to inform their own beliefs on language learning and language learners.

6.3 Suggestions for Further study

This study examines belief structures and perceptions as well as actual operating framework of social psychological factors in language learning. This study only attempted a description of these factors in operation in this context. Ethnographic case studies of how these social psychological factors take shape in individual language learners may be of benefit. However looking at particular language learning groups will help to provide teachers with the necessary insights they need about their learners.
It will be a useful exercise to see which social psychological profiles or clusters of beliefs about language learning can be associated with good strategies for language learning in the context under study here. Different models of bilingual education which ensue additive bilingualism need to be trialed out.

The purposes for which students use English need to be explored from an ecological perspective, through ethnographic studies. More interdisciplinary paradigms must be used to seek explanations for the role of language in society.