Chapter 1  
The Indian Context

English language in India has a long history. It was implanted in the Indian soil through colonization and its influence in the Indian minds grew through the processes of colonial education. Though colonization exploited India, it gave India the advantage of the knowledge of English over countries like China, Japan and Germany. The nation has come to terms with English and educated Indians realize that English is an economic necessity, as it opens the doors to education and employment. Education and knowledge of English are valued globally and this has increased the emphasis given to English education. Globalization has increased international business, travel and communication. The opportunities in varied realms of business and relationships can be made use of only through English.

The policies of liberalization, privatisation and globalization during the 1990s increased the pace of development in India especially in the urban areas. To meet the challenges of development and to benefit from the global trends India has to equip itself with knowledge and technical know-how. Two major advantages that India has over many other nations is the language advantage in relation to English and the high percentage of youth and child population. The report of the National Knowledge Commission, NKC, states -“To get the real demographic dividends we need to empower and educate the 550 million young below the age of 25 through proper education to build future growth and prosperity. The destiny of India is in their hands” (NKC Foreword). The development and prosperity of the nation can be assured if these sections of the population are nurtured through education. The
government of India realizes that the nation’s economic growth and status in global politics can be ensured only through thoughtful planning in relation to the generation, utilization and management of knowledge. The access to higher education and the attainment of knowledge are possible for Indians through English language.

Based on scientific analysis of the existing conditions and the possibilities regarding the future of the nation, the National Knowledge Commission, NKC, constituted in 2005 as an apex advisory body to the Prime Minister of India has presented its reports to the nation from 2007. The recommendations of NKC cover diverse areas like Right to Education, English Language, National Knowledge network, Vocational Education, Higher Education, Legal, Medical, Management, Open and Distance education, Open Access and Open Educational Resources, and School Education with the aim of transforming India into a knowledge hub. “Knowledge has been recognized as the key driving force in the 21st century and India’s ability to emerge as a globally competitive player will substantially depend on its knowledge resources” (NKC Intro). The enrichment of the national knowledge resources depends on the enrichment of the nation’s human capital with knowledge, through education. The NKC recommends that the children of the nation should be given access to quality schooling – “Ensuring quality school education to all is the foundation upon which any further advances towards a knowledge society must be based” (43). The NKC specifies that as the English language has a prime role in the sphere of education and employment all children entering school should be given access to the English language. To this end it is suggested that English
language teaching has to be introduced from first standard onwards and that one of
the subject areas has to be taught in English from third standard.

The recommendations of the NKC are given due consideration in the national
level planning and in the making of policy decisions. The Right of Children to Free
and Compulsory Education Act 2009 was formulated in accordance with the
recommendations of the NKC to ensure free and compulsory education to children
aged 6-14 years. The eleventh five year plan adopted by the National Development
Council places a high priority on education. “This is reflected in the proposed
allocation of Rs. 3 trillion, a four-fold increase over the Tenth Plan. The share of
Education in the total Plan will accordingly increase from 7.7 to 20 per cent,
representing a credible progress towards the target of 6 per cent of GDP” (N K C
Foreword). The priority given to education in the eleventh plan proves the
commitment of the nation to continuing growth, employment generation and
development.

From the time of Independence education became a priority of the nation with
the national level realization about the necessity of quality education for progress.
The colonial system of education with schools, colleges, universities and their
respective curricula carried on functioning after independence. This education
infrastructure was further developed by establishing more educational institutions
from the school to the university level. It was realized that to cater to the educational
and development needs of the various states and peoples of the country, the
educational system had to be improved. Several commissions and committees were
appointed to study the problems related to education and to suggest remedial
measures. The Radhakrishnan Commission 1948-49, Committee on Primary Education 1951, The Mudhaliyar Commission 1952-53, The Official Language Commission 1956, and the All India Language Conference 1958, preceded the Indian Education Commission popularly known as the Kothari commission of 1964-66. The Kothari Commission made remarkable impact on the education system of the nation. The Kothari Commission pointed out that the expansion of the education network that was done after Independence was at the cost of the quality of education. It suggested that the people of the various regions, states, cultures and languages had to be encouraged to participate in the education process. The need for an overall development of the education system considering the whole nation as a unit which would in turn contribute to social and national integration was pointed out. The commission alerted the nation that the modernization of the nation and the increasing of the productivity of the various sectors of the national economy depended on the quality of the education system. The need for greater emphasis on vocational education, and the establishment of universities of excellence along with giving due consideration to the needs and status of the teachers on whom the educational processes greatly depended were also pointed out. The recommendations of the Kothari Commission gave impetus to national level policies which catered to the development of the education sector.

Two decades after the Kothari Commission report the National Policy on Education, NPE, was formulated in 1986. It was qualified by greater clarity about the educational requirements of the nation and led to the formation of the National System of Education, which took into consideration the regional education needs.
The NPE stressed on higher spending on education. It recognized the need for effective and wide reaching reform in the primary and secondary sectors.

The central government of India also reinforced the Programme of Action, POA, in 1986 to invigorate the sphere of education in the country. It was with the same purpose that the government launched the District Primary Education Programme, DPEP. In 2001, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme, SSA, was initiated to achieve the Universalisation of Elementary Education, UEE, within a specified time-frame. The SSA programmes are being implemented all over the nation in partnership with the various state governments. It is as a part of the educational policy of the central government of India that Central Schools and the Navodaya Vidyalayas are run in various states to ensure quality education. The central government also funds the establishment and upkeep of IITs IIMs and Central Universities and funds the various states to ensure that the benefits of education reach the grass root levels.

Realizing the value of the language in education, employment and economic and technological development, the teaching and learning of English has been given priority since Independence. As Kumaravadivelu says, India realizes that “the colonial history of the language should not be allowed to become an impediment to the economic health of the nation” (46). The British Council still operates in India to promote the teaching and learning of English and monitors the testing of English language proficiency of Indians who intend to go to English speaking countries for the purposes of education, employment or settlement. To invigorate the teaching and learning of English the first English Language Teaching Institute, ELTI, was
established in Allahabad in 1954 with the collaboration of the British Council. With the support of the British Council the government established the Central Institute of English, now known as the English and Foreign Languages University, EFLU, at Hyderabad in 1958. It was established to provide training to teachers of English, to produce teaching-learning materials and thereby to improve the standard of English teaching in India. To cater to the English language teaching-learning needs of two regions, one Regional Institute of English, RIE, was established in Bangalore and another in Chandigarh. ELTIs have been established all over India to impart training to teachers in the teaching of English. Some states started their own State Institutes of English others have special officers appointed for the purpose of monitoring the teaching of English. In a few states of the country District centres of English have been started for the training of teachers at the school level.

The curricula of the primary secondary and the tertiary levels have all given priority to the teaching and learning of English. The increased emphasis given by the nation to education and the teaching and learning of English since the last decades of the twentieth century find a continuation in the recommendations of the NKC. The NKC points out that access to knowledge is possible for the students of India only if they are empowered in the use of the English language which is an inevitable necessity in higher education and employment

... the significance of language, not only as a medium of instruction or a means of communication but also as a determinant of access. An understanding and command over the English language is a most important determinant of access to higher education, employment possibilities and social opportunities. School-leavers who are not
adequately trained in English as a language are always at a handicap in the world of higher education. (NKC 27)

Though the nation has devoted much planning and funds to the teaching and learning of English the results have not met the expected levels. The various commissions suggested that measures need to be taken to make the methodology of English language teaching more efficient. The National Curriculum Framework, NCF, 2005 pointed out that the English language teaching curriculum at the school level has to abandon the methods of rote-learning and needs to be updated in keeping with the best practices in other parts of the world. As the English language curriculum does not suit the tastes and needs of the students the NKC suggests that it needs to be made relevant to the lives of the children “The pedagogy of language learning as well as teaching should be more suitably contextualized” and the learning measures have to be made realistic by linking them to “the actual life situations of the students” (NKC 10). As the multiplicity of Indian culture affects the thinking and the learning processes of the children belonging to the separate cultural groups, the English language teaching methods need to take into account the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students. It is to be made flexible enough to suit a variety of needs. “The system of education must recognize that there is bound to be diversity and pluralism and avoid a uniform one-size-fits-all approach” (NKC Foreword).

The developments in education after Independence were built upon the structural and pedagogic foundations laid by the British. No serious attempt was made to redefine the methods of teaching English or to evolve indigenous
approaches. The dominant tendency was to follow the practices of the past though some of the commissions suggested that the methodology of teaching had to be revamped to suit the changing times and emerging demands. The NKC observed that the system ails from de-contextualized methods and practices. The NCF 2005 suggested that the educational system has to move away from rote-methods and adopt better and more scientific ones. Even after such suggestions the Indian system of education revolved around rote-learning strategies.

The problem of de-contextualization has its roots in the colonial past of the nation when a foreign system of education was transplanted in India by the colonizers to suit their needs of trade, power and exploitation. The Western system of education with its European thought content was communicated through English employing Macaulay’s system. Education and the English language were the weapons the British used as a part of their colonial agenda. Macaulay argued that English education would in the long run prove to be profitable for the British Empire.

To trade with civilized man is definitely more profitable than to govern savages. That would, indeed, by a doting wisdom, which, in order that India might remain a dependency, would make it a useless and costly dependency, which would keep a hundred millions of men from being our customers in order that they might continue to be our slaves. (Macaulay 584)

With the aim of conquest, using education and cultural transplantation, the successive governors- general and directors of the East India Company framed their policies which led to the gradual and systematic establishment of the Western system of education in India. Charles Grant, a director of the East India Company
considered as the father of modern education in India prepared the first blueprint of western education in India in 1792. He argued that

In considering the affairs of the world as under the control of the supreme Disposer, and those distant territories providentially put into our hand, is it not necessary to conclude that they were given to us, not merely that we might draw an annual profit from them but that we might diffuse among their inhabitants, long sunk in darkness, vice and misery, the light and benign influence of the truth, the blessings of well-regulated society and the comforts of active industry? In every progressive step of this work, we shall also serve the original design still so important to this country – the expansion of our commerce. (Ling 351)

He asked the British government to introduce the English language in India forcefully with the conviction that the Hindu ways of life and thought were to be channelled into the ways of truth and light.

The true curse of darkness is the introduction of light. The Hindus err because they are ignorant and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their children and this remedy is proposed from a full conviction that if judiciously and patiently applied, it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honourable and advantageous for us. (Syed 11)

The English language and the Western system of education were used for the cultural and religious conquest of the Hindus with the ultimate aim of making India dependent on Britain. 1829 William Bentinck wrote to the Committee of Public Instruction highlighting the need to make English the official language of the Government and the language of education.
. . . his Lordship in Council has no hesitation in stating to your Committee and in authorizing you to announce to all concerned in the superintendence of your native seminaries that it is the wish and admitted policy of the British Government to render its own language gradually and eventually the language of public business throughout the country, and that it will omit no opportunity of giving every reasonable and practical degree of encouragement to the extension of this project. (Edwards 114)

Macaulay believed that English education and Christian belief would dispel the darkness in the Indian mind and intended education to pave the way for proselytization.

No Hindu, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy, but many profess themselves pure deists and some embrace Christianity. It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this will be affected without any effort to proselytize; without the smallest interference in their religious liberty; merely by the operation of knowledge and reflection. (Mayhew 15-16)

Macaulay propounded the filtration theory by which he meant that through English education, a special class of people were to be created and they in turn would teach the masses. Ensuring the welfare of the people as a whole through education was not his aim. He only wanted to create a special class of people who would serve British purposes as the representatives of the British and help them in the exploitation of the country.
When the British arrived, India had its own system of education and learning which was loosely knit and rooted in the oral tradition. Literature, philosophy and medicine were subjects of scholarly pursuit. The indigenous modes of learning were destroyed systematically to make way for colonial educational practices. According to Macaulay and others English was the only language worth knowing and English literature was the only literature worth the name. They also spread the notion that the vernacular languages could be enriched and improved only through English. Macaulay said

By annihilating native literature, by sweeping away all sources of pride and pleasure in their own mental efforts, by rendering a whole people dependent upon a remote and unknown country for all their ideas and for the very words in which to clothe them, we should degrade their character, depress their energies and render them incapable of aspiring for any intellectual distinction. (Krishna swami 40)

The policies of the colonizers in relation to education were double-edged as they took positive measures to ensure the spread of the English language and culture while stifling the growth of Indian languages and cultures through administrative and financial policies. In response to Macaulay’s Minute, General William Bentinck issued orders to the effect that the British government would promote European literature and science in India and cancelled the allocation of funds for the printing of Oriental works. He ordered that the native educational practices should not be promoted with government funds and that all funds are to be utilized exclusively for “imparting to the native population, knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language” (Sharp 131). It is evident from the
results of the colonial system of education that it did not suit the Indian mind. Despite all the teaching to instil English into the minds of the Indian students, it was found that the Indian students did not gain proficiency in the use of the language. The Indian Universities Commission pointed out that

Notwithstanding the prominent position given to English throughout the course, the results are most discouraging. Students after matriculation are found to be unable to understand lectures in English when they join a college. In some cases, the difficulty is said to disappear after a short time; but it appears to be the case many students pass through the entire university course without acquiring anything approaching a command of the language, and proceed to a degree without even learning to write a letter in English correctly and idiomatically. Even those who have acquired a considerable felicity in speaking and composition are, as we ourselves had many occasions of observing, lamentably deficient in pronunciation. (Krishnaswami 67)

The British impressed the Indians by their colour, dress, culture, language and education system. The colonial system of education was well received by the educated classes as it gave them respectability, employment and economic wellbeing. Indians appreciated the educational infrastructure which included schools, colleges and universities that the British set up in various parts of India. In the early part of the nineteenth century, a number of Christian schools and colleges like the Baptist Mission Schools, the Serampore College, the London Mission Society’s Schools, the Bishop’s College at Sibpur, the Calcutta School Society’s schools, the Jaya Narayan Ghoshal’s English School at Benares, were established. The introduction of the print media facilitated the easy availability of English books,
periodicals and newspapers and accelerated the spread of English. English news papers like *India Gazette, Calcutta Gazette Bengal Journal, Oriental Magazine of Calcutta Amusement and Calcutta Chronicle, Madras Courier, Madras Gazette, India Herald, Bombay Herald, Courier, Bombay Gazette* which were started in the latter half of the eighteenth century, promoted the spread of English language and culture.

The educational institutions established by the British and the English publications gave the Indian people the rather false notion that the nation was going through a Renaissance. India of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was beset with social evils like ‘sati’ and the caste system which the British helped to do away with through policy decisions and education. They looked up to the English education system as the panacea for the ills of Indian social life and flocked to the portals of the schools and the universities. Western education inspired them with a new spirit, new ideas and new hopes. In the early days of the colonial rule the Indian people, even the educated ones failed to realize that the educational strategies were designed with motives of exploitation of diverse kinds. They failed to recognize that their cultures and languages were gradually being displaced by western culture and education. In the background of the evils prevalent in the Indian social system young men looked up to Western education as a liberating and modernizing force.

The British succeeded in the transplantation of Western education system with the consent of the natives and by 1850 English education got firmly consolidated. The Wood’s Despatch of 1854 was the policy statement of the British
Government and the East India Company on education which carefully and clearly stated the aim of making English and the vernacular languages the instruments for the diffusion of European knowledge. This firmly established the supremacy of the British education system over the indigenous methods. Through the planned transplantation of the Western education system and Western values, the whole of India was made a viable administrative unit.

The impact of western education in India was fatal. As Lord Curzon pointed out “Ever since the cold breath of Macaulay’s rhetoric passed over the field of the Indian languages and Indian text books, the elementary education of the people in their own tongues has shrivelled and pined”. Through the processes of English education and the resultant transplantation of western ideologies the country’s indigenous systems of knowledge and learning were lost. It led to the neglect of the richness of the Indian culture and literatures which gradually died out. Lord Curzon pointed out that the Indians “started by a too slavish imitation of English models” while there were models of the best creations, classics which are “famous treasures of literature”. The ideas and ideologies which germinated in the land were abandoned in favour of received or foreign knowledge which always remains outside the system. The Indian education was rendered meaningless by the onslaught of the western system which does not contain contextual relevance and is removed from actual Indian life. As Lord Curzon pointed out—“everywhere it was words that were being studied, not ideas” and that Indian education was just a “mere shell with no kernel in it” (Krishnaswami 66). The soul of India, the sap of its culture were lost to its people by the adoption of the foreign system of teaching and learning which
goes on as a continuous process polluting the minds and thought processes of generations. The colonial de-contextualized mode of education ruined the native education systems so very completely that it has made the reinvention of the native cultural energies impossible. What Thiong’O, says of Africa is also true of India – language was the most important vehicle through which the power of the colonizers fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet led to physical subjugation and language paved the way for spiritual subjugation (Krishnaswami 172).

Indians were late to realize the wrongs done to them by colonization through exploitative educational and administrative policies. The realization came on gradually and English educated Indians communicated using English, which was not possible previously. The common language assisted the growth of nationalism and the freedom struggle. The political freedom that the nation gained through struggle gives us the freedom to design the varied aspects of our national life including education.

In independent India, the educational infrastructure that the British established and the paradigm they followed were continued rather uncritically. Even when changes were introduced after the independence in the areas of education and English language teaching the changes were effected as per the practices followed in the west. The behaviourist paradigm and the behaviourist and structuralist methods of language teaching were adopted as the best and only possible methods of teaching. The English culture continued to be reflected in the English language curricula from the Kindergarten to the university levels. When children are initiated into the learning of English they are taught lessons and stories that reflect the
English culture and English ways of thought. Even the nursery rhymes are purely British in nature. Rhymes like, Johnny, Johnny, Yes Papa, Ba Ba Black Sheep and others belong to an English context, of which Indian children know nothing. Most of the lessons in almost all the school classes contain western thought and culture. The pitfalls of the Behaviourist paradigm and its ineffectiveness were realized in the west in the middle of the twentieth century and they attempted better methods and paradigms, but the Indian education system is still mostly rooted in the behaviourist paradigm and its methods. When education commissions were appointed after the Independence the prominent tendency was to look to the West for inspiration, to update the Indian education system.

The people of Kerala value education and education-related problems are discussed openly through the media. It was as a result of wide discussions combined with the educational initiatives of the central government, that the 1990s witnessed a new awakening in the state’s education. Upon the realization that the state’s education was ailing from the faults of the curriculum and the flaws of the methodology a remaking of the entire school curriculum and the study materials was undertaken as per the directions of the DPEP.

Some facts need mention in the light of the curricular initiatives undertaken in Kerala. The first one is that despite the efforts of the central government’s initiatives through schemes like DPEP, the paradigm shift was not attempted equally through out the nation. Some of the Indian states and many of the educational agencies clung on to the behaviourist paradigm as if it were the only paradigm possible. Even in those states where the paradigm was changed the education
departments and the governmental agencies had to face severe criticism from a large section of the people who were misdirected into criticism by the media and some in the academia who resisted change and preferred to hold on to the behaviourist methods. Most people, who had been educated in the behaviourist paradigm, resisted the revision of paradigm mostly because of the lack of insight into the nature of the mind of the students. Yet another fact is that though the change of paradigm helped to breathe life into the education system in its own way, the new constructivist paradigm too was not indigenously developed. The constructivist paradigm was designed according to the theories of Western scholars like Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner. Borrowing a paradigm for the good of generations of Indian students is not to be blamed; what needs to be pointed out is that a learning methodology that suits the cultural and intellectual backgrounds of the Indian students has failed to emerge indigenously. It could be attributed to the tendency to borrow which slackens husbandry and kills innovation in the realm of Indian academics.

The revision of the school curriculum in Kerala has been an ambitious project of the State Council of Educational Research and Training, SCERT, and the Department of Education of Kerala State, as it entailed a drastic shift from the behaviourist to the constructivist paradigm. Though the curriculum revision was introduced in the lower classes in 1992, at the +2 level the paradigm shift was implemented only in 2005-06. The adoption of the new paradigm was gradual as it kept pace with the progress of the students from one standard of study to the next. The revision embraced all the subjects and the languages taught in the school and
brought changes into the methods and practices of teaching English. The
behaviourist paradigm was replaced by “the new activity-based, learner-centred,
interactive curriculum” (*Course book 1*, 5).

This study aims to find out the effectiveness of the paradigm shift
implemented in the teaching and learning of English the second language with prime
focus on the second language achievement of the students at the +2/ higher
secondary level. The students who were schooled under the new paradigm from
standard 2 to standard 12, who learned English in the revised constructivist
paradigm have left school from 2007 onwards on completion of the +2 course.
During the years of their schooling the curriculum was student-centred; they
performed a large number of language activities alone, in pairs and in groups in all
the classes. Throughout the years of schooling prior to the higher secondary level,
the students were exposed to English. They read English in their *Course Books* and
did the language activities in connection with the lessons. The activities gave them
considerable opportunities to speak and write in English. They listened to the
English from the radio, the television, audio cassettes in addition to what their
teachers spoke in and out of classes. The Foreword to the *English Course Book* of
standard VIII which introduces the learners to English at the secondary level says

> The basic assumption on which the *Course Book* is based is that a
language is best learned through a rich exposure to the language and
through practice in using it for communication. In an acquisition-poor
environment, in which there are few real-life opportunities for
listening to and using English, exposure to the language is limited to
the prescribed instructional materials and teacher-talk. It is therefore
imperative that these should be made as rich as possible. This set of books offers opportunities for interacting in English through classroom conversations, reading texts, listening activities and writing tasks. (*Course iii*)

The *English Course Book* of standard VIII informs the teachers that the new paradigm consists of language activities, exposure to the language and actual use of the target language

First, more importance has been given in developing the learner’s listening and speaking skills than the one given in the earlier approach. Secondly, using English in the classroom to a great extent, and outside the classroom to a certain extent (both in its oral and written forms) is given greater priority than learning the rules of grammar. It is hoped that constant use of English language with the help of these and other supplementary materials will lead to the mastery of the essential rules of grammar. Thirdly, any language is best learned, when the learners engage themselves in some sort of activities in which they are unknowingly forced to use that language. A lot of such activities are spread over in these materials. (*Course iv*)

The same methods and practices of the lower primary, primary and secondary classes are carried on in the higher secondary classes too. The preface to the *Source book* says

The main objectives of this curriculum are construction of language and development of language skills through increased opportunities for communication and interaction in the classroom. The basic premise behind the text is that the earners will read the materials provided, perform the various language leaning activities (individually and in groups) and become equipped to use English appropriately in real life situations. (2)
The English curriculum has been prepared to enable the students to ‘use English in real life situations’ by taking them through language related activities individually and in groups. It is only reasonable to assume that everything positive to ensure the construction of the second language in the minds of the students was done. Ten years of study with the definite aim of learning and using English with continuous exposure to the language, rigorous teaching through facilitation by teachers in classes the actual use of English in language activities and proving their merit in evaluation procedures like examinations means much for every student in terms of academic work. All these students passed in the English language examinations along with examinations in the other subjects and languages and got promoted. Considering these factors, it is natural to assume that they are in command of the language and use it with ease, for their academic and non-academic purposes. The merit of the curriculum can be analyzed from the performance of the students who are the proof of the pedagogy.

The relevance of this study arises from the observation that though the students of Kerala learn English in schools for ten years in the constructivist paradigm, a great percentage of them have not internalised the second language and are not able to use it with ease and correctness. Schooling under the constructivist paradigm is student friendly and does not inflict stress on the student mind. The pressures of studying daily lessons, memorization of data or the stress caused by the dictatorial measures of the teachers does not mark their schooling. Though there is work to do; it is easy to go about with the activities which take up a major share of school hours and academic work. The examinations are easy. The teachers who have
been trained to teach in the new curriculum facilitated as co-learners, the lessons and activities kept them positively engaged. Despite all these positive factors, most of the students who complete their schooling up to the +2 level are not able to comprehend sufficiently when someone speaks to them in English and they are not able to reply in English fluently. They are not able to read and understand English and are not able to communicate their ideas effectively in writing. This causes them great difficulty while they join for higher studies. To solve the deficiency in the knowledge of English a large number of students on completion of the +2 course take courses offered by private coaching centres. The coaching centres thrive on the diffidence of the students regarding the use of English.

It is found that all over Kerala, English is marketed through coaching centres and private institutions. Spoken English centres form a part of every small town in Kerala. The English language teaching industry in the private sector is booming and one can find boards and ads publicizing lessons in communicative English, spoken English, functional English, general English, English for Anglo-American admission requirements, and every other kind and brand of English, all over the state (Web. tesl-ej.org/ej47/al. 24 November 25, 2011).

In the cities there are centres that give exclusive coaching for IELTS and TOEFL along with other courses in spoken English. There is a lot of demand in the market for courses that assure competence in the use of English and these institutions are able to attract students in large numbers. It is a trend among many of those who have completed +2 to go to such institutes in preparation for the degree courses that they are about to pursue. This does not mean that all the students who
complete +2, go to such institutions. There is a general feeling that to study in colleges for degree courses requires a command over English which they have not been able to achieve through ten years of learning English at school.

A pilot study in connection with the analysis of the effectiveness of the constructivist higher secondary second language curriculum was done among students in the first year of degree courses in a few regular colleges in Calicut to assess their proficiency in English. This study was undertaken to gain a primary understanding of the second language capabilities of the students who completed the +2. To gain an understanding of the English language proficiency of these students, a questionnaire was prepared and given to some students (Appendix 1). It contained seven questions about the movie that they had seen. Of the seven questions, six demanded one-word or two-word answers and the seventh question asked them to write their comments about the movie in a few sentences.

Of the students who participated in the study, some studied in English medium schools up to the +2 level and the others in Malayalam medium. All the students who co-operated with the survey belonged to Calicut district and they had completed their schooling within the district. The simple questions which demanded one-word or two-word answers were answered correctly by all the students. The seventh which asked for their critical comments was answered well by the students from English medium schools. The others committed grammar and spelling mistakes and their comments were ill expressed. Sentences like the following prove their lack of command over the language

I like the film very much. It is the one of the most good film.
Its very nice and the film highlights love is greater than money.
This is very beautiful. In the background of the story is women’s college.
This is a wonderful film. The film based on the relationship between two brothers.
This is wonderful film. The action and performance also very nice.
I like the film very much. It is the one of the most good film which I saw in my life. It became one of my favourite film.

Even while writing about a topic that is easy and within grasp, these students were unable to express their ideas confidently. All the students including those from the English medium schools were found to be inexpressive. This is proved by the fact that the comments of all the students did not exceed two sentences. Sixty percent of the students committed grammatical errors which prove their insufficient acquisition of the second language.

The inexpressiveness and the construction errors committed by the participants signify that the language activities and the discourses done by the students up to the higher secondary level failed to construct the second language in their minds. It is understood that despite the shift in the paradigm and the novelty of methods in the school language classrooms, the students are not able to comprehend written and spoken English with ease. Even those who are able to comprehend the language are not able to speak or write with confidence. Their English is ridden with grammar mistakes and faulty expressions. The curriculum revision and the pedagogic practices need to be analyzed in the light of these facts.

Though the majority of the students do not gain much of the second language through their study at the higher secondary level, it cannot be generalized that none
of the students gain anything at all. There is a minority that gains by the second language learning measures and possess knowledge of the language and are able to use it for their general and academic purposes. Their being better than the others, depends on a number of factors. It could be assumed that those who studied in English medium schools from the kindergarten level onwards, those who studied in residential schools where the language for communication is English, those who have exposure to English at home form this minority of successful students. Those who have a natural flair for language, those who had the luck to be tutored by excellent teachers, and those others who have exceptional intellectual calibre also have to be included in this minority. Such students may have gained by the strategies of the revised constructivist curriculum.

But these exceptional cases cannot be taken as proof of the effectiveness of the curriculum. It is to be evaluated by the analysis of the achievement of the majority. It is assumed that the amount of English they acquire is limited in comparison with the time they spent and the effort they put in. When the cause of the majority is not satisfactorily attended to, the revised constructivist curriculum cannot be considered effective.

The constructivist paradigm has been found effective in classrooms across the world which inspired the education planners to adopt it in Kerala. While the constructivist pedagogy has been successful in other places it has not been as successful in Kerala. Constructivism, social constructivism, and Multiple Intelligence theory that back the design and implementation of the curriculum are noted for their justifiability and effectiveness. This study attempts to take the second
language curriculum of the higher secondary level in Kerala through the filters of constructivist theories. A close scrutiny of the methodology, the classroom practices, the textbooks, the teacher roles, the student attitudes and academic activities is done to find out whether they conform to constructivist standards, which in turn justifies the title of the study. The study aims to find out whether the pedagogic practices have deviated from constructivist theory and to suggest remedies to improve the effectiveness of the curriculum.

A theory based analysis of the curriculum and evaluation of the pedagogic practices necessitates a study of the theory of constructivism and also of the theories of English Language Teaching. What is witnessed currently in pedagogic contexts is a fusion of cognitive and constructivist theories. The curriculum designers claim that the academic realizations regarding constructivist pedagogic practices and language teaching methods have been tapped to make the higher secondary second language curriculum effective in facilitating the acquisition of the second language. These claims are subjected to close scrutiny.

The study also seeks to find out the effectiveness of the curriculum by examining its effect among the students who were taught in this curriculum. To this end the feedback of the students is gathered through a state-wide sample field study. The actual second language capability of the students is measured and their opinions regarding the teaching learning procedures in the second language classes is analysed. The limitation of the study is that it does not analyse the opinions of the teachers, the parents and the immediate society around the schools. Such a wider study was not within the ambit of my analysis for this present work. The focus is on
the students who know the curricular practices more intimately than their parents or others. The opinions of the teachers about the curriculum were sought informally and have not been focused on as they are not at the receiving end of the curriculum as immediately as the students. The aim of this analytical study is to find the pitfalls of the higher secondary constructivist second language curriculum and to suggest remedies if necessary, to make it more beneficial for the students. It is hoped that the findings of the study and the remedial measures taken up in keeping with its suggestions will contribute to the betterment of the teaching learning process in the higher secondary English language classes of Kerala State and facilitate the better and easier acquisition of the second language by the students.