Chapter I

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – 2005 strongly advocates multilingualism in school education. This confers definite cognitive advantages. The NCF – 2005 provides the following guidelines for language education in schools:

- *Language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of the number of languages offered to children but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource.*

- *Home language(s) of children should be the medium of learning in schools.*

- *If a school does not have provision for teaching in the children’s home language(s) at the higher levels, primary school education must still be covered through the home language(s). It is imperative that we honour the child’s home language(s). According to Article 350A of our Constitution, ‘it shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups’.*
• **Children will receive multilingual education from the outset. The three language formula needs to be implemented in its true spirit, promoting multilingual communicative abilities for a multilingual country.**

• **In the non-Hindi speaking states, children learn Hindi. In the case of Hindi speaking states, children learn a language not spoken in their area. Sanskrit may also be studied as Modern Indian Language (MIL) in addition to these languages.**

• **At later stages, study of classical and foreign languages may be introduced.** (3.1.1. Language Education, NCF, 2005, p.37).

The post-colonial period witnessed an increasing emphasis on using mother tongue as the medium of instruction and UNESCO’s (as cited in Agnihotri and Khanna, 1997, p.33) recommendation that psychologically, socially and educationally a child learns better and faster through their mother tongue, was quoted by many language planning authorities everywhere. As a matter of fact, after independence, our language teaching policy has consistently advocated the teaching of mother tongue at the primary school level. Our main stream education envisages mother tongue as the medium of instruction. The ‘three language formula’ advocated the teaching of a) mother tongue, b) one other modern Indian language, and c) one international language, mainly at the secondary school level. HRD minister Kapil Sibal restated the policy:
We need our children to learn mother tongue, Hindi and English – mother tongue for better understanding of the subjects at elementary stage. Hindi at secondary stage for integrating to national level and English at university level for connecting to the world (Indian Express, 14 September 2009, as cited in Graddol, 2010, p.83).

There is a great diversity in the Indian education system in terms of the medium of education. In most states, primary education is provided in regional and minority languages, in addition to English. At the same time in many states where English is not an official language of the state, children in government schools are generally taught through regional language and in private schools through English. However, more children in India are being taught through English as English is increasing in government schools. Education being on the concurrent list, various states have gone through a gradual shift in language teaching policy, leading to a situation where in English is now introduced at an earlier level – with the result that the teaching of English begins in a large number of states from class III, and in some states from class I. This policy shift has brought in millions of new learners in the ambit of ELT in India.

Eventually, a large population of new learners at primary level has become the first-generation learners who are likely to face real challenges in learning
English like little support from their family and community, insufficient or inappropriate learning materials, and much rely on learning at school where teachers themselves are likely to have little English. The introduction of English at primary level at an early stage in many states has also inserted a challenge to manage this major innovation. Graddol (2010, p.122) discusses the possible alternatives to face this challenge by stating that successful change in language education involves three principles:

a) Partnership between all stakeholders i.e. members of educational system, parents, community leaders, politicians and employers.

b) Continuous support over time.

c) Recognition that teachers possess important experience.

While on one hand this gradual shift discussed above has led to a demand for instruction materials and for massive teacher training programmes at the primary school level, on the other hand serious attention needs to be paid to determine the real basis for the prescription of the various languages for their study in schools and their use as media in different states and union territories.
1.1 Background of the Study

In the report on the Third All India Educational Survey published by NCERT, New Delhi (1981), one of the volumes is devoted to ‘Languages and Media of Instruction in Indian Schools’, which discusses the language education scene in India:

Although the Education Commission (1964-66) has suggested a new graduated three-language formula as a policy base for prescribing languages to be studied at the different stages of school education and (alongwith its three-language formula) have generally been accepted by the State Governments, the states and the union territories differ with each other in regard to the number of languages prescribed to be taught throughout school education, and the forms in which different languages are to be introduced. Similarly, while the Education Commission has suggested only mother tongues to be used as media of instruction at the school stage, different policies are being pursued in different states and union territories regarding the medium of instruction at different stages of school education. (p.32)

The report goes on to highlight the issues in our language policy and the linguistic reality in the country, and states that:
it is obvious that at the school stage of our educational system, we have to provide for the teaching of all those languages which are or are to be used in the administrative, commercial, industrial, socio-cultural, scientific and literary fields on a relatively larger scale. Therefore, it is necessary that we select for teaching purposes only such languages on the basis of some objective criteria, such as the number of speakers, spread of speakers in the different areas, the literary cultivation of the language, etc. But the real basis for the prescription of the various languages for their study in schools and their use as media in different states and union territories are not clear. We can, however, conclude on the basis of the NCERT survey that at present 58 languages, Indian as well as foreign, modern as well as classical, are studied and used as media of instruction in the different states and union territories; they are, therefore, called educational languages.

(p.32)

It is clear from the above discussion that there is lack of uniformity among states and union territories in terms of policy implementation regarding issues like introduction of languages at primary level and the medium of instruction at different stages of school education. The need is also realized to envisage objective criteria for the selection of language/s to be introduced at primary
It is necessary to examine the basis for the prescription of the study of various languages in schools and their use as media.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

It has been observed that the conceptual framework of English language teaching adopted at our universities as well as at the ELTIs depends heavily on theories developed in the West – in a social context that is monolingual. As stated by Singh (2000) the source of our knowledge about second language teaching is almost entirely located in the monolingual, English-speaking world. The theorizings of these writers emerge from contexts very different from ours. Till recently, bilingualism was viewed in the West as an ‘abnormal’ phenomenon. However, increasing mobility on the one hand and developments in communication technology on the other are rapidly changing the scene.

Almost everyone in contemporary Indian society is a multilingual person in a broad sense. In our country, a monolingual person is a rare phenomenon. The existing theories of linguistic competence (of native speaker’s competence) and of language acquisition (of one mother tongue) fail to account for a multilingual competence where a learner acquires more than one language in early childhood, and keeps using them for various purposes throughout his/her
life. This varying degree of importance assigned to different languages in the curriculum is also addressed in the NCERT document (NCERT, 1981).

In the Western countries, the first language studied is the mother tongue of the child which is also the medium of instruction throughout his education. All other languages taught are of secondary importance for them. But in India this is not always the situation. Many a time the language taught as second or third language becomes ultimately the language of prime importance, for the child’s mother tongue may not continue as medium of instruction in the higher classes. He may be required, therefore, to study some other language which is recognized as official and literary language. Although like any other foreign country, more than one language is being taught in schools, the purposes and situations of teaching are by no means identical. (p.37)

However, the survey does not focus on the sociolinguistic functions of various languages. Rather, the efforts devoted mainly to collection and analyses of data regarding the total number of schools and the languages being taught as a subject or as medium of instruction; languages discontinued as well as added; major first languages and second languages and rural urban divide of schools teaching various languages. Thus, while the NCERT survey provides some valuable information regarding language teaching in India, it did not cover
areas like learners’ socio-cultural background, people’s attitude towards various languages and the extent of exposure to those languages outside the schools.

As rightly observed by Jadeja (1988), while reviewing the literature on ‘language use in ELT’, “…language instruction is now viewed in a wider perspective. The process of classroom interaction are now seen as a part of the total socio-cultural context within which the teacher and the learners exist (p.51)”. Hence, the present study intends to pay adequate attention to the fact that our learners and teachers operate within a multilingual social context, as we can’t possibly hope to arrive at valid policy decisions regarding language teaching by neglecting that fact. For this to happen, we need to plug the gaps in our conceptualization of the language learner at the primary school level.

We need a clearer picture of the sociolinguistic perspective within which the stakeholders operate. Moreover, in the absence of a clear picture of the language needs of our learners in the primary school, in many states, we continue to work with syllabus statements that look like thinned out versions of the earlier syllabus at the secondary school level. We can arrive at need based syllabus statements and instruction materials only if we take up a study to carry out a sociolinguistic study of the linguistic behavior of learners in our primary schools.
1.3 Statement of the Problem

English Language Learner in Primary Schools of Gujarat: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

1.4 Operational Definition of Terms

*Primary School*: For the purpose of this study, the term Primary School would include the first three years of English in the concerned state.

*Sociolinguistic Conditions*: For the present study, these would include social factors like age, gender, SES (Socio-economic strata), parental education, perception towards language and language learning, self efficacy towards languages; and linguistic factors like number of languages, extent of exposure and opportunities for use.

*Bilingualism*: The ability to use two languages.

*Multilingualism*: The ability to use more than two languages.
SLA: A term that refers both to the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language subsequent to learning their first one as young children, and to the process of learning that language.

1.5 Aims

- To construct a data based scenario of language learning at Primary School level in multilingual social context of Gujarat.
- To create profile of the English language learner at Primary School level in multilingual social context of Gujarat.

1.6 Objectives

- To create a sociolinguistic perspectives in language learning in relation to variables like age, gender, parental education, SES, self efficacy towards languages, extent of exposure and opportunities for use;
- To study the linguistic behaviour of the children at the entry point;
- To study the prevailing classroom environment;
- To study the societal perceptions about English language and learning;
- To identify the factors that have an influence on language learning;
- To construct a sociolinguistic perspective of English language learning prevailing in Gujarat.
1.7 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the current study:

1. What do the questionnaires tell us about students’ geographic location, gender, age, parental education, SES, perception towards language and language learning, self efficacy towards languages, extent of exposure and opportunities for use of English?

2. Are there significant relationships among the following variables: geographic location, gender, age, parental education, SES, perception towards language and language learning, self efficacy towards languages, extent of exposure and opportunities for use English?

3. What is learners’ general perception of English?

4. What kind of language environment is available to the learner at home?

5. What kind of language environment is available to the learner at school and in neighbourhood?

6. What is the learner’s perception towards English as the medium of instruction?

7. Do rural learners lack exposure to English in comparison to their counterparts in the urban areas?

8. Do the learners of English medium schools use English more frequently than the learners studying in vernacular medium schools?

9. What is teachers’ perception of using English along with other languages?
10. What are teachers’ beliefs regarding learning English?

11. What is teachers’ and parents’ attitude towards English as the medium of instruction?

1.8 Hypotheses

1. The learning condition for the learners whose parents use English at home are better as compared to those of whose parents do not use English at home.

2. The urban learners have better exposure to English than the learners living in rural area;

3. There is a significant difference between and among the various income group’s exposure to English;

4. The male learner’s use of English at home is more frequent compared to female learner;

5. There is a significant difference between male and female respondents’ use of English at school;

6. There is a significant difference between the male and female respondents’ attitude to English as the medium of instruction;

7. There is a significant difference between urban and rural respondents’ attitude to English as the medium of instruction;
8. The teachers’ attitude to English as the medium of instruction is different from the learners’ parents.

1.9 Research Design

The research was conducted using the survey method. Since it was a survey type research, it involved data collection on a large scale. Therefore, it was decided to collect information on selected variables with the help of questionnaires. For this purpose, three master tools were produced in English, and were subsequently translated into Gujarati. These master tools were:

1. A Questionnaire for the Learners,
2. A Questionnaire for the Parents, and
3. A Questionnaire for the Teachers.

The target population for the study was the learners of English at the Primary School level in various parts of Gujarat. The scope of the study was narrowed down by delimiting the target population as only those learners of English who were at the beginner’s level in the respective region. Further, it was decided to collect relevant data regarding other stakeholders such as the parents and the teachers.
1.10 Scheme of Chapterization

Chapter I Introduction

This chapter introduces the background of the study. It problamatizes the language education scene in India in the light of the Third All India Educational Survey published by NCERT, New Delhi in 1981. Further, while discussing the rationale the chapter advocates adequate attention to be paid to study learners and teachers in a multilingual context in order to plug the gaps in our conceptualization of the language learner at the primary school level and her education. In this context, the chapter describes the problem, the purpose of the study, hypotheses, the research questions and objectives that were intended to guide the investigation, followed by a list of definitions of the key terms used in this study, research design and methodology, scheme of chapters and conclusion.

Chapter II Review of Related Literature

This chapter reviews empirical research conducted on sociolinguistic conditions around the world. Along with that, it also traces a brief historical perspective of sociolinguistics while discussing the issues related to language policy and planning in India, and Second Language Acquisition in multilingual context. In addition to this, the chapter also gives an account of language
teaching at primary school level in general and on teaching of English in India and Gujarat in particular.

Chapter III Research Design

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodological principles and procedures adopted for the study. A detailed account of the research setting and the sample for the study is given followed by the tools adopted for the study. Each of the tools is discussed in detail from the designing point of view, and finally it presents the procedure of data collection with a step wise summary.

Chapter IV Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter depicts the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered through questionnaires. The hypotheses are reiterated and examined through various statistical tests and measures such as Pearson correlations test, cross tabulations, factor analysis, weightage mean and so on. These measures are employed in order to examine interrelations between variables like geographical area, gender, parental education, perception towards language and language learning, self efficacy towards languages, self-choice of studying English at a private school, extent of exposure and opportunity to use language.
The interpretations are taken into consideration for deriving the findings and arriving at a conclusion.

**Chapter V  Findings and Recommendations**

The chapter provides an overview of the study and states the findings arrived at through the analysis of the data. It also presents the implications of the study based on the findings of the research. In addition, the chapter also offers recommendations for further research.

**1.11 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the background and context of the current research. The chapter then discussed the rationale of the study in detail followed by the research questions, scope of the study, hypotheses, aims and objectives, and research design. Finally, the scheme of chapterization provided an overview of the entire research study.