

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION1.0.0 Introduction

With the increase in trade and commerce among various countries of the world, particularly with the discovery of new lands and the establishment of colonial rule in the hey days of merchantilism in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, teaching of foreign languages came to assume greater importance. Of course it was mostly the rulers language that came to be taught to the natives. And the motives behind doing so ranged from political to pragmatic. Lord Macaulay, for example, stated his motive in 1835 through his Minute stating that we want a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. The school programmes in the countries particularly of Asia and Africa, were thus tremendously influenced by the compulsive interests of their rulers, particularly in respect of their language contents. With the attainment of freedom in the present century by the erstwhile colonies, foreign languages have not lost either their relevance or utility with them, the present century, particularly of the second world war, has been characterised by greater international co-operation, explosion of knowledge and phenomenal advancement of science and technology. These factors have increased the thirst for

knowledge and desire for the modernisation and industrialisation in those countries. Hence the demand for teaching foreign languages, particularly English, has increased beyond imagination. This is reflected in the school curricula of those countries. And India is no exception. The language problem in India is four fold from an educational point of view. It concerns the number of languages that a child is expected to study, the relative importance given to each of these languages, the grade level at which the child is expected to learn the second and third languages and the medium through which at school and university level, instruction and examination take place. The national pattern is so full of variety, that though the pattern itself is held together closely by an underlying unity, its natural that the role of language would evoke considerable controversy and lead to a striking divergence of views.

The adoption of English as the medium of instruction for the higher level of education naturally determined its use as a medium of instruction in secondary schools. Woods famous Education Despatch of 1854, expressed the view that English and the modern Indian languages together would become the media for the dissemination of European knowledge at the secondary stage. But as it happened English became the sole medium in secondary schools. The study of English thus dominated the entire school curriculum. 'The Progress of Education in India' (1901-2), an official publication,

summed up the situation in plain terms : 'The English secondary courses aims at giving school education. The teaching of English is the prime object throughout the course and in the higher classes instruction in all the subjects is given through the medium of English.

1.1.0 Position of English in Pre-Independence

Its an established fact that British commerce imported English in our country. It was Macaulay who aimed at its being the medium of instruction in our schools and colleges. He was of the opinion that "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern".¹

Lord William Bentick and his successors were also of the same opinion. This indicates that in the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a controversy regarding the medium of instruction. However, the authorities then, arrived at a firm decision that English was the only possible medium for education in European literature, Philosophy and science. English thus became an unchallenged medium of instruction at the higher level.

1. Syed Nurullah and J.P. Naik. 'A History of Education', (India : Bombay : MacMillan and Company Ltd. 1951), p. 113.

The adoption of English as the medium of instruction for higher education naturally determined its use as the medium of instruction in secondary schools.

As a result of all these attempts, English became the sole medium of instruction in secondary schools and dominated the entire school curriculum. The Indian languages were neglected and English was taught both as language and literature.

English then was the official language for courts and the link language for different Indian provinces, and virtually became the language of commerce.

"The works of John Stuart Mill, Burke, Macaulay, Abraham Lincoln, Carlyle, Ruskin and a host of others stimulated independent thoughts among Indians and made them conscious of their political subjection as well as political rights. It was this consciousness that inspired the pioneers in the fight for political re-organisation of the country. Thus the unity of the country, the political emancipation of the people and the attainment of independence are largely due to the impact of English thoughts on the minds of Indians".²

2. T.K.N. Menon and M.S. Patel, "The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language", (Baroda : Acharya Book Depot, 1963), p. 2.

Thus it can be threshed out that English enjoyed prominent position in Indian education and life during pre-independence era.

"This state of affairs continued till the Bombay University permitted the use of regional languages for answering question papers in certain school subjects at the Matriculation Examination. This enabled the schools to adopt the mother tongue of pupils as the medium of instruction. The switch-over from English to an Indian language as the medium of instruction at the secondary stage was almost complete by 1937".³

1.2.0 English After 1947

The place of English in the secondary schools curriculum of India and so of Gujarat owes its origin to the British rule, but its continuation in the post independence era, to the needs of economic development and social change. India has directed her educational endeavour and has deliberately provided for the teaching of English in her thousands of schools, for, in the context of Indian situation education, and not a violent revolution, can bring about

3. Report of the Committee appointed by the Government to re-examine the present syllabus in English for standards VIII, IX and X (Ahmedabad : Government of Gujarat, Education Department, 1961), p. 7.

peaceful, orderly and lasting change. That is why both the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) and the Education Commission (1964-66) recommended definite schemes of teaching English to the younger generation.

However, academically English, has historically a close link with the culture of this land. Therefore, it need to be recognised even as a library language. Reckoning this role, C. Rajagopalachari, the first Governor General of free India said :

"What Sanskrit did an Indian during her long and silent centuries in the past, what Latin did in Europe though divided into many states and nationalities. English is doing now in India, but it is the language that unites all different regions of India into one and India with herself with the rest of the world. It serves as the continuous vehicle that brings into its life the best from all parts of the civilized world".⁴

The curriculum of the secondary schools in Maharashtra and Gujarat has been characterized by the prominence of English in the scheme of the general programme of teaching languages to the secondary school pupils. This is again the replication of the history of curriculum development

4. C. Rajagopalachari. "The Question of English", (Madras : Bharathan Publications, 1962), p. 35.

under the British Rule in the Bombay Presidency before independence in 1947. In fact the concept of secondary education in the presidency was developed on the basis of the Minute of Lord Macaulay in 1833 which envisaged Indian Education as a replica of the British system with a very limited goal, very fittingly the early secondary schools were known as 'English Schools', signifying the pre-dominance of English in the curriculum,

This continued upto the formation of the popular Ministries in 1937, when English was replaced by the regional languages, as the medium of instruction and examination.

After independence, the position of the study of English in various stages of education was examined by several bodies like the University Education Commission 1948-49, the Secondary Education Commission 1952-53, and the Indian Education Commission 1964-66.

At the state level, the Government of Gujarat appointed a committee in 1960 to study the issue and suggest steps to revise the syllabus to meet the needs of a developing society. As a result Gujarat has a peculiar set up with regard to the teaching of English in schools. There are for example, English medium schools which teach English at a higher level as the students study different subjects through English which presumably becomes a first language

with them. However the number of such English medium schools is quite small.

After 1947, with a sharp reaction by the Indian towards English, so as to banish it from Educational Institutions and public life, English then came to be accepted as an associate official language by an act of the parliament.

This, however, does not imply that English paled into insignificance as a result of such measures. For example, the absolute number of students offering English at the S.S.C. examination in Gujarat has continued to rise and the percentage of students offering English has remained as high as between 69 percentage and 78 percentage.

On the other hand the pattern of higher education in Gujarat has continued to give importance to English as a compulsory subject because of its utility as a library language, which points towards a shift in emphasis of teaching English in India, which was recommended by the Kothari Commission of 1966 in terms of 'three language formula'.

1.3.0 Shift in Emphasis

English has to play two different roles now. First as the medium of science and technology, and secondly as the

medium of inter-state and international communication. In both these cases, the objective of teaching English could not be the attainment of Literary English, but to enable the students to have working knowledge of English, so that they may use it functionally, could be the tangible objective. Therefore the emphasis should be on the functional aspect of English language. The official language Commission has also stressed the same about teaching of English.

"Since hereafter we need knowledge of English for different purposes, the content and character of that knowledge as well as the methods of imparting it have to undergo a change. English has to be taught hereafter principally as a "language of comprehension" rather than as literary language so as to develop, in the students learning it, a faculty for comprehending writings in the English language, more especially those relating to the subject matter of their specialised field of studies. No doubt, to a limited extent, a capacity for expression would also accrue and may usefully be cultivated along with the faculty of comprehension".⁵

All these proceedings lead to state that English is now taught as the language of comprehension. Therefore the students may or may not have the mastery over the whole

5. K.R. Sharma. 'The Teaching of English in India', (Jullunder : Punjab Kitabhagarh, 1965), p. 9.

language, which shows that more emphasis is laid on the comprehension in teaching English. The Gujarat State, Secondary School Certificate Examination Board also emphasises the comprehension side of English language teaching, because the distribution of marks in English question paper of 100 marks, 60 marks are provided for testing comprehension of the text, together with a passage for comprehension.

Teaching of language or language learning is specially ment for development of four skills viz., listening, speech, reading and writing. The first two skills are acquired through living contacts and the last two skills are acquired through deliberate efforts in the formal education set up. English in India has been taught generally in the formal educational set up. The scope of acquiring the first two skills through living situations is gradually reading. In English medium schools efforts are being made to help learners to acquire the primary skills of English language. However, the results are not very encouraging. It has already been discussed that English is gaining ever increasing ground as an international language. Hence the newly rich class has become conscious of its relevant importance and in its wake more and more English medium schools have been coming into existence. In these English medium school it has been found that the students seeking entry from K.G. class have little background of English or they are without the primary

skills. The result is this that children easily slip to the acquisition of secondary skills. The working of schools is also helping to develop secondary skills. Knowingly or unknowingly comprehension aspect rather than expressional aspect is given much importance. The majority of learning efforts are directed to develop comprehensional skills and that to level of reading comprehension skill. In such circumstances it is needed to know how far this skill has been acquired at the end of secondary stage. And so the investigator has come to the problem to investigate into their reading comprehension skill acquisition. As there was no reliable tool to measure the reading comprehension skills of English medium school children, the investigator has naturally thought it proper to construct a reliable valid tool to measure Reading Comprehension of students reaching to final year of the secondary stage. It is also believed that Sex, S.E.S., and personality traits play important role in acquisition of language skills, the investigator thought it proper to study reading comprehension in the context of psycho-socio factors. Thus the problem of the present investigation has been pin pointed. It is given below :

1.4.0 The Problem

The problem is "A study of Reading Comprehension in English of Students of English Medium Secondary Schools of Standard X of Central Gujarat in the context of some socio-psycho factors".

It is very essential on the part of the investigator to make precise, the connotation and the meaning of the terms involved in the statement of the problem. They are :

1. Reading Comprehension.
2. English medium schools.
3. S.S.C. pupils.
4. Socio-psycho factors.

1.4.1 Reading Comprehension

Here two terms are together. Its necessary to understand the term 'comprehension' first. To act or process of comprising. The act or action of grasping with intellect.⁶ Its the act of understanding the meaning of printed or spoken language as contrasted with the ability to perceive and pronounce words without reference to their meaning.⁷

The term 'Reading' is a present participle or general form of the verb class word 'read'. To read is an act of looking at and (be able to) understand (the written or printed).⁸

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6. Webster's 'Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary', (Calcutta: Scientific Book Agency, 22 Raja Woadmunt Street, 1967), p. 170.
 7. Good, Carter V. (Ed.) 'Dictionary of Education', (New York : McGraw Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 123.
 8. A.S. Horhy, Gatenby, E.V. and Wakefield, H., 'The Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English', (London : Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 180.

Taking these two terms together, one could grasp the meaning of them as an act of looking at the graphical symbols of functional sounds and grasp the meaning conveyed through them. It is physio-psycho activity.

1.4.2 English medium schools

English medium schools are those schools which teach English at a higher level as the students study different subjects through English, which presumably becomes a first language with them.

1.4.3 S.S.C. pupils

They are the pupils who are in Standard X as regular students and study English, both, as a higher level language, and as their medium of instruction, for the Secondary School Certificate Examination of the Gujarat State. This is the final stage or class for the secondary schools.

1.4.4 Socio-psycho factors

'Socio-psycho' is a united term, made up of two words belonging to different sets or fields 'socio' factors are those, that as the word suggests belong to the sociological set up. Similarly 'psycho' factors are those factors that belong to the psychological set up.

1.5.0 The Scope and Objectives of the Present Test and Studies

In India, although attempts have been made to develop some psychological tests and achievement tests in certain school subjects, due attention has not so far been given to the development of tests in the field of reading, except a few persons who have attempted to construct tests in this field on a small scale. Therefore, there is a vast scope for the present test in the field of Reading in Gujarat. Reading ability tests are of immense importance to teachers. They help the teachers to know their pupils reading ability and comprehension. The test would tell them about the level of the pupils or of the class in relation to the norms of a large number that took the test while the test was being standardized. The test would also be useful to classify pupils on the basis of the scores as excellent at reading comprehension, average and poor at reading comprehension. Therefore keeping in view the scope, the investigator laid down the following objectives:

- To construct test for measuring the reading comprehension of pupils of Standard X.
- To establish norms for reading comprehension for students of English medium schools of Central Gujarat.

- To provide the secondary schools with a valid and reliable tool for measuring the reading comprehension of students of Standard X.
- To study whether there are any sex differences with regard to reading comprehension.
- To study reading comprehension in the context of S.E.S.
- To study reading comprehension in the context of certain socio-psycho factors namely - test anxiety, emotional stability, leadership and radicalism versus conservatism.

1.6.0 Limitations

1. The present study is confined to the students studying in Standard X of English Medium Schools of Central Gujarat.
2. The present study is confined to English Medium Secondary Schools run by private trust, institutions and Gujarat Government and not those run by the Central Government.
3. The tests used for correlated studies are not constructed by the investigator, but are used for the present work by the permission of its producer. These tests are standardised.

4. The sample of the present study includes both boys and girls from the English medium secondary schools of Central Gujarat.

1.7.0 Plan and Procedure of the Present Work

Generally, the procedures of constructing different tests in the field of mental measurement more or less resemble with each other. The test generally has items based upon investigator's definition or concept of the ability or abilities to be measured. Therefore, one must be very clear about the definition of the ability to be measured before constructing the test. In order to be clear about the definition or concept of the mental ability, the investigator has to study them from different books and magazines together with the study of past work done in the field in which she proposes to construct the test. The same procedure is followed in the present investigation.

Secondly, an attempt has been made to define the nature of reading process. Some definitions of reading are described and discussed with a view to formulating the definition of reading.

The third chapter attempts to review the past work done in the field of reading comprehension, along with the study of some well known tests, with a view to add to the

definitions formulated through the theoretical discussion. The meaning of reading comprehension derived through theoretical discussion and review of some tests led the investigator to the planning of the test, selection of the proper material through which comprehension could be measured, have been described in chapter four.

The planning of the test has been divided into two phases, and this chapter deals with the first phase of the plan.

The fifth chapter is devoted to the experimental tryout of the test. Methods of selecting and discarding the test items are discussed and applied in order to reach the goal of preparing the final form of the test.

In sixth chapter the final form of the test is ready to be subjected to the process of standardization. All the physical aspects of the final testing, such as arrangement of test items, sub-tests, the answer sheet, scoring key, sample etc., are described, it also includes the fixation of norms and their discussion.

The seven chapter deals with the method of establishing the reliability of the test, which has been computed by applying several methods, which prove its reliability.

The eighth chapter deals with the validity of the test and is full of statistical calculations, which prove the validity of the text.

The ninth chapter describes the related studies, such as socio-psycho factors, which has been described with an objective to show the usefulness of the present work.

The last chapter deals with the summary and observations made during the work under process. The uses of the tests are also mentioned with the suggestion for further investigation into the field of reading.

Thus the thesis includes the full detail and discussion of all the necessary steps for the study of Reading Comprehension and for construction and standardization of a good, reliable and valid tool for measuring reading comprehension in English.

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