CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

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CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

III.1 MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

A study of how students who have passed the class X public examination and are now in class XI, studying in the Central board of Secondary Education and in the State board of Tamil Nadu, perform a skill based test in English, has been taken up with the following main objectives:

1. To draft course objectives for teaching English in classes XI & XII
2. To draft a skill based test and conduct it for the selected sample of students in the CBSE and the State Board schools
3. To assess and analyse the answer scripts of the student sample section wise and award scores.
4. To find the correlation between the students' school board exam marks and the marks in the skill based test conducted by the researcher.
5. To compare the skill based test scores of the students who studied through the matriculation syllabus upto class X with those who studied upto class X through the CBSE.
6. To compare the skill based test scores of the students from the private schools with those from the aided schools.
7. To identify the areas of weakness i.e. the skills in which the students are lacking or inadequate in
8. To analyse the differences in the scores of the students and the probable causes or lacunae and
9. To suggest remedial measures to rectify inadequacies.
III.2. MAJOR HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Bearing the above objectives in mind, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the students of the CBSE and those of the matriculation board in the skill based test.

H2. There is no significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the student sample of the CBSE and the matriculation board in the reading section of the skill based test.

H3. There is no significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the student sample of the CBSE and the matriculation board in the writing section of the skill based test.

H4. There is no significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the student sample of the CBSE and the matriculation board in the grammar section of the skill based test.

H5. There is no significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the student sample of the CBSE and the matriculation board in the listening section of the skill based test.

H6. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the student sample of the private schools and the aided schools in the skill based test.
H7. There is no significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the student sample of the private schools and the aided schools in the reading section of the skill based test.

H8. There is no significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the student sample of the private schools and the aided schools in the writing section of the skill based test.

H9. There is no significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the student sample of the private schools and the aided schools in the grammar section of the skill based test.

H10. There is no significant difference between the means of the scores obtained by the student sample of the private schools and the aided schools in the listening section of the skill based test.

III.3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

MODEL OF SKILL BASED TEACHING AND TESTING OF ENGLISH

The teaching and testing of a language which in itself is a system with innumerable components, is basically different from the teaching and testing of a subject in the fact that the focus is on the skills in a language while the focus in a subject is on the content. So, when English is taught as a second language, the framework envisages many components and factors as depicted...
Teachers
(Contents for developing skills)

Evaluation
Skill based testing

Feedback
Remedial Measures

Developing Communicative Competence
Methodology Philosophy or Ideology

[Communicative Approach]

Language Input

Learner

Language Output

Vocabulary

Pronunciation

Conversation

Listening Speaking

Reading Comprehension

Fluency

Writing

Content

Fluency Style

Accuracy cogency Format

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Today's curriculum is learner centered and is no longer teacher centered. The learner is the main feature of the system as he or she imbibes the language input in to the system and manipulates it as per the requirements. So language input acquires great importance. It is in this language input, the curriculum we use in school plays a vital role.

As communicative competence through the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing—is the ultimate goal of teaching English, developing communicative competence forms the main objective of the given design. This objective forms the basis or foundation for the selection of the content for teaching which in turn create opportunities for developing the language skills by providing suitable contexts for it. The well selected content should be complemented by efficient teachers who employ apt strategies and approaches—the right methodology, as specified in chapter III—to develop the skills specified in the syllabus from time to time, in the students. Communicative Approach being the basis, the methodology and the materials should be in agreement with it. In order to find the extent to which skills have been acquired and to study how effectively and efficiently the language input has taken place, evaluation is done periodically through skill based testing which gives us a meaningful feedback, an effective backwash, based on which we can not only get a clear picture of the extent to which our students have acquired the skills but also about what modifications should be incorporated in the materials, methodology as well as in the objectives, if necessary. If the students lack in a particular skill or sub-skill, remedial teaching can be taken up as and when necessary. Diagnostic tests can be given, if necessary, to identify the exact area of weakness. Thus a well knit system of objectives, materials, methodology and periodical evaluation lead to interesting and enjoyable language input.
A language learner’s role is very significant. It is well stated that there is a mini language system in him which manipulates the language according to the situation using the system of grammar rules that his / her brain formulates. Accordingly we get the language output from which we assess the skills acquired by him. The learner covers a wide spectrum of the language aspects through his output. From the student’s speech and conversation, we can gauge his /her listening and speaking skills. Incidentally his active vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation can also be checked. In the area of reading both comprehension skills and word attack skills are covered. While reading comprehension skills range from the basic comprehension of the given content to the capacity to evaluate the characters, plot etc of the given content, word attack skills help them know the antonyms and synonyms of words thus enhancing their vocabulary. The writing skills exhibited through the language output reflect upon the content of the message/write up, the fluency with which the student feels facile with operating the language through the use of his fund of vocabulary expressing thoughts in a coherent, cogent and concise manner using an appropriate style to suit the context. Fluency in expression of ideas is complemented by the student’s accuracy in spellings, syntax and punctuation.

The language output gives adequate scope for changes that can be brought in the language input as per the requirement of the learner. For example, in the case of a student, if he lacks in writing skills, in particular in spellings, the teacher can give him individual attention by bringing in dictation as part of her methodology to help him out of his inadequacy. In case the student is good at spellings but weak in construction of sentences, the teacher can bring in more of guided and controlled composition exercises in the materials and enhance the number of written assignments. On the other hand, if a student lacks speed in reading, graded exercises – graded in vocabulary, syntax and length of the
sentences- can be made use of. Loud reading can also facilitate practice of right pronunciation and accent.

In developing communicative competence in a student, when the emphasis shifts from the content to the skills acquired, studying the areas of weakness during the learning process becomes easy especially when we test the acquisition of specific skills. The feedback we obtain clearly shows which skill the learner is proficient or deficient in, and accordingly the methodology and remedial teaching can be employed.

A point worth mentioning is, any language skill can never be treated in isolation as it is unauthentic. But, if, in the Reading section, we test the comprehension skills of the students, which can cover a wide range of reading skills – local, global, inferential, evaluative comprehension skills, by making them give short responses in a multiple choice question, completion of summary by supplying a suitable word or phrase, tick the right answer, fill in the blank type questions and assess the answers based on their reading comprehension only – not penalising them for the errors in spelling or grammar- then the feedback we get will be effective and meaningful with reference to reading skills alone, thus helping us with useful backwash effect. In the same way, students’ competence can be effectively enhanced by helping them improve not only in the language skills but also in acquiring accuracy and fluency in the language.

III.4. TOOLS USED

The following tools have been used for the study:

- A skill based test question paper carrying 50 marks for 2 hours:
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- The list(s) of marks obtained by students in the respective board examinations from the respective schools where the sampling was done.

- Teachers’ opinions through group discussions and interviews at seminars and workshops attended as well as organised by the researcher.

- Personal diary entry of students’ and teachers’ opinions of the new test drafts and their views on the content based testing of English as a second language and the skill based test.

### III.4.1. Preparation of the skill based test question paper

Before setting the skill based test question paper, the investigator analysed the class X public exam question papers of the Matriculation board of Tamil Nadu and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The details regarding the question papers are given below:

#### A. Class X question paper of the Matriculation Board

The students take two examinations at the end of class X in English, each carrying 100 marks with a time limit of two and a half hours.
*English paper I:*

Prose (short answers) \(6 \times 2 = 12\) marks

And

Poetry

Explain with reference to the given context 4 questions \(4 \times 3 = 12\) marks

(Prose and Poetry)

Essay type answers 2 from Prose and 2 from poetry - \(4 \times 10 = 40\) marks

Quote from memory (Poetry) 6 marks

Grammar 30 marks

(Synonyms, Antonyms, Articles, Prepositions, Tense forms, Direct and Indirect speech and Types of sentences)

*English Paper II:*

Covers the 2 Non-Detailed texts – Scarlet Pimperial and One Act plays.

The students should attempt totally 3 essays form both the books

\(15 \times 3 = 45\) marks.

Comprehension of an unseen passage carrying short answers 10 marks.

Comprehension of an unseen poem carrying short answers 10 marks.

(sometimes the students are asked to give a suitable title for the poem or the passage)

Dialogue completion 5 marks

Precis writing 10 marks

Letter writing 10 marks

Expansion of the given outline into a paragraph 10 marks
B. CLASS X QUESTION PAPER OF THE CBSE

The students take only one public examination in English at the end of the year for 3 hours which carries 100 marks.

Section A – Reading Comprehension
7 passages with comprehension questions, 25 marks + 5 marks for vocabulary

Section B – Writing
A linguistically controlled short composition 5 marks
A short composition of not more than 50 words communicating information. e.g. Notice, Telegram etc. 5 marks
A long composition based on a verbal stimulus 10 marks
A long composition based on a visual stimulus 10 marks

Section C- Grammar
A variety of exercises, 3 to 5 in number testing grammar through gap filling, cloze, sentence completion, sentence reordering, editing, dialogue completion and sentence transformation. 15 marks

Section D – Literature
2 extracts from different poems with questions 8 marks
1 to 3 questions based on one of the drama texts 5 marks
1 global comprehension question based on the prose text 4 marks
1 extended question based on the prose text, extrapolatory in nature 8 marks
C. TESTING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TOEFL)

The investigator analysed the question paper of TOEFL- Testing of English as a Foreign Language Examination. The test carries in total 677 marks and is conducted for 2 1/2 hours. It carries 3 sections – the listening comprehension section with short and long passages carrying multiple choice type questions; the second section is on Grammar testing syntax through multiple choice questions; and the third section covers reading comprehension skills through 6 to 8 long and short reading passages followed by multiple choice questions. This test should be taken by the students who wish to pursue their undergraduate and graduate studies in U.S.A. form any other part of the world. A good score in this enables a student to get financial aid along with admission in the colleges in U.S.A..

D. GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATION (GRE)

This test should be taken by all those students who wish to do higher studies in U.S.A after completing their undergraduation for 4 years in any other country. The question paper carries 2400 marks, with 800 marks for analytical skills, 800 for Quantitative skills and 800 for Verbal skills. In the verbal section reading comprehension is tested through 2 reading passages (1 long and 1 short) carrying multiple choice questions. The other questions in the form of fill in the blanks and multiple choice cover analogies and vocabulary.

E. TEST OF WRITTEN ENGLISH (TWE)

This test is always administered along with the TOEFL wherein a student is expected to write an essay coherently and relevantly on the given topic.
assessment is done on a six point scale. This test is a prerequisite for admission in many universities in U.S.A.

7. TEST OF SPOKEN ENGLISH (TSE)

This is a short test in which a testee observes a given diagram or picture and answers a few questions posed to him based on which his performance is assessed out of 60 marks. This test is a prerequisite for getting financial assistance in the form of a Teaching Assistantship in many universities in U.S.A.

The researcher in consultation with co-teachers, after analysing the TOEFL, GRE, TSE and TWE question papers, decided on the four areas to be tested in the skill based test. Then the allocation of marks and time (as stipulated above) were decided before the question paper was actually set. Then the question paper was sent to six judges who are experts and veterans in teaching and testing English as a second language. They were the principal of the researcher’s school, the head of the department of English in a college, an ELT expert, the researcher’s guide and the heads of the department of English in a state board school and a CBSE school. The comments and suggestions received from them were analysed and changes were made in the question paper.

G. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TESTS MENTIONED IN THE A-F ABOVE

The English question papers of class X CBSE and Matriculation Board, the TOEFL, GRE, TWE and TSE question papers were compared and analysed for the commonalties, differences and also the extent to which the objectives drafted for class XI and XII by the investigator have been covered at the end of class X.
Reading skills

While the CBSE class X question paper covers testing reading skills through 30 marks using 3 different passages – factual, discursive and literary – through mostly objective type questions, in the Matriculation Board English paper II examination, reading skills are tested through an unseen passage and an unseen poem for 10 marks each through mostly wh- questions demanding short answers. While the CBSE question paper covered the reading skills of identifying main points and sub-points, completing the given summary and word attack skills (5 marks) the Matriculation board questions were mostly at the knowledge and understanding levels of comprehension, rarely testing the skill in students to provide a suitable title for the passage or poem. In the Matriculation paper synonyms and antonyms are covered for 3 – 5 marks in English paper I.

The GRE – Graduate Record Examination – tests reading comprehension in two or three sections each for 30 minutes through 5 – 7 short passages followed by multiple choice questions. The verbal ability section under which reading comprehension and word attack skills in which providing antonyms is tested totally carries 800 marks. The reading skills tested range from local comprehension to interpretative and evaluative comprehension.

In the TOEFL – Testing of English as a Foreign Language – the section of reading comprehension skills carries 6 to 8 long as well as short reading multiple choice questions. The passage as well as the testing of reading skills in TOEFL are comparatively easier. The reading skills cover almost the same objectives as the GRE.

Writing skills

The CBSE class X English question paper carries 2 shorter compositions each carrying 5 marks and 2 longer compositions each carrying 10 marks. The matriculation paper too allocates 30 marks for writing skills asking students to
write a precis, letter and develop a paragraph from the given outline each carrying 10 marks. The CBSE paper covers the following objectives:

- Write correctly using correct vocabulary and grammar
- Write in a style appropriate for communicative purpose
- Expand notes into a piece of sustained writing
- Draft clear, precise and cogent reports on events and experiments and
- Use an appropriate style and format to write letters (formal and informal), notices, posters, telegrams, reports and articles

The matriculation paper covers the following objectives:

- Write correctly using correct vocabulary and grammar
- Use an appropriate style and format to write formal, informal and business letters.
- Expand notes into a piece of sustained writing.

In the GRE, TSE and the TOEFL writing skills are not tested whereas in the TWE-Test of Written English-a student writes an essay on the given topic for 30 minutes and it is assessed on a 6 point scale. The writing skills covered are:

- Write correctly using correct vocabulary and grammar
- Write in a style appropriate for communicative purpose
- Compose an argumentative essay on the given topic of social/political interest.

**Grammar**

In the CBSE question paper grammar section carries 15 marks with objective type questions covering tenses, modals, passive voice, subject-verb
agreement, non-finites, connectors, comparison, nominalisation, determiners and prepositions. The Matriculation paper I allocates 30 marks covering tense forms, reported speech, types of sentences, articles and prepositions and dialogue completion for 5 marks is included in English paper II. TOEFL tests grammar syntax through multiple-choice questions in a separate section. The GRE, the TSE and the TWE do not have a grammar section.

**Conversation skills / Listening and Speaking skills**

While both the CBSE and the Matriculation Board question papers do not have listening and speaking skills covered in the year final examination, the CBSE insists on assessment of conversation skills to the extent of 20% as part of continuous assessment of a students’ acquisition of skills. While the GRE and the TWE do not cover conversation skills, the TOEFL has a listening comprehension section carrying short and long passages with multiple choice questions testing basic listening skills especially with reference to the American pronunciation. The TSE alone tests the skills in speaking by asking a few questions to the testee on a given diagram or picture based on which the assessment is done out of 60 marks.

**Testing of the content of the textbooks**

The testing of the content of the text books is done only in the CBSE and the matriculation board examinations. In the CBSE 25 marks are allocated for testing the literary content of poetry, prose and grammar in the last section D of the paper. The testing is done through short and long answers covering the understanding of the given text upto extrapolation and evaluation of characters and themes.

In the Matriculation board, the literature content covering prose, poetry and the non-detailed texts carry 70 marks in paper I and 45 marks in paper II.
In the skill based test, the investigator has not included literature as a component of the paper because the student sample belong to different boards of education. As their text books are different and as the focus is on testing the skills acquired, the literature section has been left out. But it must be remembered that literature should essentially form a part of any language teaching and testing as it has already been emphasised earlier that it is a vehicle of values and a reflection of our culture and civilisation.

III.4.2. VALIDITY OF THE TOOL

READING

Care was taken to chose reading comprehension passages that suit students who have passed Class X students by way of the right content, vocabulary, sentence construction, theme, word and time limit. While selecting the passage the following points were borne in mind:

- The length of the passage not to exceed 1000 words.
- Time for doing the reading skill exercises – maximum 45 minutes
- A variety – a narrative/descriptive and a literary passages
- The content of the passages should not be culturally alien or biased
- The content of the passages should not favour a section of the student sample
- The vocabulary, sentence structure and the matter(content) are within the reach of students who have passed Class X

In the Reading comprehension section a narrative passage with multiple choice questions and a poem were included. The narrative passage – The Ascent of Annapurna from the book TOEFL – Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary and a literary piece, a poem – There was an Indian- by J.C.Squire were taken from
the book titled "Once a week comprehension" by Haydn Perry. The reading comprehension of the narrative passage was tested using multiple choice questions and the reading comprehension of the poem was tested using fill in the blanks type exercise. Vocabulary / Word attack skills covered 5 marks, expecting the students to supply the right words from the comprehension passages.

**WRITING**

In the Writing section the aim was to find out the extent to which the students vary in their writing skills. So the students were made to attempt a simple fill in the blank type exercise by providing them a smooth take off through this controlled exercise( B1). The content of the exercise was on Basilisk lizard. Details of this lizard were given in note form to be supplied in the blanks provided in a paragraph of write up about it. Care was taken to cover phrases and clauses, short and lengthy written responses to be provided by the students. The question carried 5 marks at 1 mark for each correct answer. This exercise intends to check if students have mastered basic writing skills.

The fairly simple controlled exercise(B1) was followed by a free writing exercise based on verbal and visual input carrying 10 marks. In order to help students with the basic details on which they can build their composition work from the magazine “Down to Earth” a bar graph showing the exhaust emissions in the main cities of India, and a table titled traffic chaos indicating the annual increase in the number of vehicles in major Indian cities in % were given as visual and verbal clues. To facilitate students’ authentic response, the essay was based on the burning problem of pollution today. This section carried 15 marks and care was taken to facilitate the students’ completing the section in not more than 45 minutes.
GRAMMAR

Section C attempted at making grammar testing not only authentic but also interesting through integrated grammar practice. This section carried 8 marks with 2 exercises. The first exercise (C1) was an integrated grammar exercise making students to edit the given paragraph by rectifying an error in each line. A sample answer was provided at the beginning of the exercise. This exercise covered the grammar areas of verbs in right tense forms, prepositions, phrasal verbs, articles and connectors. The second exercise (C2) involved completion of news items based on newspaper headlines carrying 3 marks. It tested verbs in different tense forms and the passive forms of verbs – the areas in grammar where students often go wrong and in fact students lose marks in the written composition exercises because of the errors in these grammar aspects.

LISTENING

Section D carried a telephone conversation (D1) after listening to which the students were asked to complete a message. D2 was the factual description of Lincoln Memorial taken from Barrons guide for students preparing for higher studies abroad. The exercise involved completing a paragraph provided with blanks after listening to the description of the monument by a guide. In order to sustain the students' interest and facilitate their understanding, the listening inputs had been provided by the selected few students of Class XI from the researcher's school. To provide a variety, 2 different listening inputs- a telephone conversation and a factual description have been included and the output exercises also carried a variety – filling in the blanks in a message using one or two words only after listening for specific information and completing a summary by supplying phrases and sentences using relevant information from the listening input.
After revising the question paper, the opinion of the five judges mentioned above was sought. The researcher, in one of her workshops in Delhi, asked about forty students of Class XI to work out the question paper and received their feedback on the question paper. The overwhelming response of the students and the positive feedback of the judges led to the final draft of the question paper.

III.4.3. Concurrent Validity of the tool

To prove the validity of the tool, the total marks scored by all the students in the skill based test were calculated and tabulated. As the different sections in the test carried different maximum marks, all the section totals have been converted into percentage for statistical convenience. The scores of the whole student sample in the Class X public examination are tabulated.

Then the correlation between the students' skill based test scores and the students' public exam scores was calculated through product moment correlation i.e.

\[ r = 0.590135 \]

Thus there is positive correlation between the students' skill based test scores and the scores obtained in class X public examination. Thus the tool has concurrent validity.

III.5. SAMPLE FOR THE MAIN STUDY

As the study is to investigate the acquisition of skills in English as a second language in the students who have passed out through the Tamilnadu State board and the CBSE, stratified random sampling technique has been followed. In order
to get a fairly wide sample, 148 students who passed class X have been included from 3 State board schools in Chennai and 163 students who passed class X from 4 CBSE schools have been included.

Out of the 148 students, 97 students were randomly chosen from the three different streams of studies in Class XI – Computer Science, Biology and Commerce from Sri Krishnaswamy Matriculation Senior Secondary School, K.K.Nagar, 32 students from Sri Malathy Matriculation Senior Secondary School, Chennai and 19 from S.M.S matriculation Senior Secondary School, Chennai.

From the CBSE schools 163 students were randomly selected from the three different streams of studies in Class XI – 37 from Army public school, Bangalore, 44 from St.John’s Senior Secondary School, Besant Nagar, 28 from Kendriya Vidyalaya (CRPF), Chennai, 54 from Padma Seshadri Senior Secondary School, K.K.Nagar, Chennai. Thus in selecting the sample Incidental random sampling and Non-Proportionate stratified random sampling have been followed.