CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Globalization is a process of the integration of different cultures, languages, organizations and countries from across the world. Through globalization, people from all over the world have started to come closer for personal, professional, educational and business purposes. Appadurai defines globalization as follows: “Globalization is a multi-way process involving flows of ideas, ideologies, people, goods, images, messages, technologies and techniques” (5).

1.1.1 Globalization and Education Reform

Like various other fields, education also has gone through many changes under the effect of globalization. In this regard, S.Chinnammai states, “Education is undergoing constant changes under the effects of globalization (1).” In the globalized world, people work hard to get jobs not only locally but also internationally. So, whether it is a developed country or a developing country, every country is under tremendous pressure to standardize education because of the globalization process and hence countries across the world are very serious to reform their education system.

Sir Ken Robinson in his lecture about education reform, “Changing Paradigms”, says that every country on the earth at this moment is reforming public education. There are two reasons for this process. The first one is economic. The children have to be educated to take their place in the economies of the 21st century. The second one is cultural. Every nation is interested in maintaining its identity.

Almost everywhere, educational systems are in a state of rapid change. Globalization has led to a desperate race in many countries to upgrade the skills of their workforce (David Graddol 70). An International Comparative Study of School Curriculum reports that there have been a variety of changes taking place in the school curriculum of participating countries over the past five to ten years. All countries have shown significant curriculum changes in their report over the last five to ten years. Foreign languages are one of the most commonly introduced subjects in school curriculum (147).
1.1.2 Globalization and English Language Teaching

Graddol views, “The phenomenon of English being a global language lies at the heart of globalization”(12). English is an extensively used language in the field of education, research, internet communication, business, social domains and personal relationships. Chew says, “Lack of a command in English would mean the continued marginalization of their children in a world that would continue to use the language to a greater degree. It would also deny them access to the extensive resources available in English-resources which have developed as a consequence of globalization” (41).

Crystal writes that there has never been a time when so many nations needed to talk to each other so much. Social and economic globalization has demanded the use of an international means of communication in the world. English has become the language of international communication (14). In many countries, English is an integral part of school curriculum (An International Comparative Study of School Curriculum 1999).

Consequently the power of English in globalization produces alteration and challenges to the conventional and current pedagogies in English Language Teaching. The same way English Language Curriculum and Syllabus also have faced many challenges. The latest emerging learning theories, methods and approaches in applied linguistics and ICT play a great role in the implementation of the English language curriculum and syllabus across the world.

1.1.3 English in India

Throughout India, there is an extraordinary belief, among almost all castes and classes, in both rural and urban areas, in the transformative power of English. English is seen not just as a useful skill but as a symbol of a better life, a pathway out of poverty and oppression (Graddol l0). English is no longer a language of the colonial masters in India. In some important domains of activity, it has become an integral part of the Indian multi-lingual repertoire. The attitudes of the contemporary Indians towards English are significantly more positive. But it is unfortunate that English has so far been closely associated with the rich, elite or upper middle class (Position Paper National Focus Group on Teaching of English 1).
1.1.4 The Status of English in Tamilnadu

The status of English in Tamilnadu is quite different from other states. During the 1960s the Dravidian Movement swept away Hindi from the state. Ultimately, English became the link language and it became the Second Language in Schools and Colleges. Tan Ngaronga (New Zealander), Chief Operating Officer of Satyam Cinemas, makes a significant comment regarding English in Tamilnadu. “I have lived and worked in many states in India. But it's only in Tamilnadu that I have never had a problem with English communication. Everybody understands English, all over the state” (CNN IBN News). But in reality, the English language skills of school and college students are not satisfactory. The study of Albert P’Rayan (Ph.D.dissertation, Engineering English: A Critical Evaluation) reveals that most of the Tamilnadu Engineering college students lack skills set by the recruiters who look for prospective employees. But English has been taught as a second language in schools from Class I through XII and college courses.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The present study is to validate the design of the English syllabus for various classes from the primary through secondary level in the State of Tamilnadu, India, within the curricular framework for schools known as Uniform System of School Education (USSE) Scheme which is generally known as Samacheer Kalvi in Tamil. The validation is in terms of the items included in the syllabus and the verticality of the distribution of the items through various classes with a reference back to NCERT English Syllabus based on National Curriculum Framework 2005 on the one hand, and the sample K-12 English–Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools on the other. The thesis finally traces the competence level of the items in relation to global standards as formulated in Common European Framework for Reference (CEFR), American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB).

1.3 Need for the Study

In 2011, the Government of Tamilnadu introduced USSE Scheme. There were voices for and against USSE Scheme syllabus among parents, teachers, educationists and private school administrators. Historically, students in Tamilnadu went through various systems of education such as Oriental, Matriculation, State Board and Anglo-Indian.
The aim of the program is to bring the various school education systems under one roof, with common goals, common syllabuses, common activities and common examinations.

Mr. Karunaanantha, a retired Head of the Department of History, Vivekananda College, Chennai, points out a valid point in his speech on USSE Scheme, “There can be, there must be unity in diversity. But there can never be unity in disparity in diversity.” He also expresses that USSE Scheme does not mean filling in the gaps that exist between the syllabuses followed under various Boards of Education. But it is an effort to end educational inequality existing in society in terms of caste, economics and social status.14

There is a common question among the public whether USSE Scheme has standards equal to those offered by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), a unit under the Government of India scheme. One of the aims of this thesis is to analyze and validate the English syllabus of USSE Scheme with that of the English Syllabus formulated by NCERT.

1.4 Objectives

The objective of the study is to find out whether the English Syllabus of USSE Scheme is inclusive in the sense that it has incorporated appropriate skills for language learning in conformity with established global standards and to ensure if the syllabus maintains vertical conformity with established levels in global standards. While CEFR Illustrative scales, ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, CLB Global Performance Descriptors are taken into consideration for global standards norms, K-12 English-Language Arts Contents Standards for Californian Public School and the NCERT English Syllabus have been adapted for pedagogic standards.

1.5 Statement of Hypotheses

- The English Syllabus of USSE Scheme is inclusive of NCERT English Syllabus Standards in terms of having incorporated identical items in a similar vertical scale.
- The English Syllabus of USSE Scheme is inclusive of K-12 English-Language Arts Contents Standards for Californian Public School in terms of having incorporated identical items in a similar vertical scale.
- The English Syllabus of USSE Scheme is inclusive of Global Standards of CEFR, ACTFL and CLB in terms of having incorporated identical items in a similar vertical scale.
1.6 Limitations of the Study

- The study is limited to present English syllabus known as USSE Scheme assigned by the Government of Tamilnadu.
- The study has taken Competencies of LSRW Skills of the English Syllabus of USSE Scheme from Class I through Class X. The study has not taken vocabulary range, grammar items and language function from the syllabus.
- The study does not evaluate text book.
- The study does not assess students’ competency level.
- The correlating of LSRW skills of USSE Scheme is limited to NCERT English Syllabus, CEFR, ACTFL, CLB and K-12 English-Language Arts Contents Standards for Californian Public School.
- CBSE and ICSE syllabuses have not been taken for correlation.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

The first chapter provides information about the Background, Purpose, Objectives, Needs, Hypotheses and Limitations of the study.

The second chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the earlier studies conducted on ELT in Tamilnadu. It also provides information related to research methodology such as data collection and analysis.

The third chapter gives a brief introduction to ESL, EFL and language frameworks. It also describes and analyzes the three major language frameworks of CEFR, ACTFL and CLB.

The fourth chapter deals with standardization of school education in USA and K-12 education in general and in particular with reference to California K-12 model as a representative sample. It provides information about the history of English language teaching in India, National Policy on Education, NCERT and NCF 2005 in general and the English Syllabus in particular and it gives information related to the USSE Scheme in general and the English Syllabus in particular.

The fifth chapter provides information related to Listening Skill. It establishes the correlation between learning items for Listening Skill in the English Syllabus of USSE Scheme with similar items in CEFR, ACTFL, CLB, K-12 English-Language Arts
Contents Standards for Californian Public School and NCERT English Syllabus. In a progressive class-wise order from Class I to Class X, the ascending difficulty level of the English Syllabus of USSE scheme is found to synchronize with the ascending difficulty level of the other documents of standardization.

The sixth chapter provides information related to Speaking Skill. It establishes the correlation between learning items for Speaking Skill in the English Syllabus of USSE Scheme with similar items in CEFR, ACTFL, CLB, K-12 English-Language Arts Contents Standards for Californian Public School and NCERT English Syllabus. In a progressive class-wise order from Class I to Class X, the ascending difficulty level of the English Syllabus of USSE scheme is found to synchronize with the ascending difficulty level of the other documents of standardization.

The seventh chapter provides information related to Reading Skill. It establishes the correlation between learning items for Reading Skill in the English Syllabus of USSE Scheme with similar items in CEFR, ACTFL, CLB, K-12 English-Language Arts Contents Standards for Californian Public School and NCERT English Syllabus. In a progressive class-wise order from Class I to Class X, the ascending difficulty level of the English Syllabus of USSE scheme is found to synchronize with the ascending difficulty level of the other documents of standardization.

The eighth chapter provides information related to Writing Skill. It establishes the correlation between learning items for Writing Skill in the English Syllabus of USSE Scheme with similar items in CEFR, ACTFL, CLB, K-12 English-Language Arts Contents Standards for Californian Public School and NCERT English Syllabus. In a progressive class-wise order from Class I to Class X, the ascending difficulty level of the English Syllabus of USSE scheme is found to synchronize with the ascending difficulty level of the other documents of standardization.

The ninth chapter presents the summary of findings and conclusions. The Research Questions set for the study are found to have been validated. Almost all the competencies of LSRW skills incorporated in the English Syllabus of USSE Scheme from Class I through Class X are related to Level I through Level IV of the NCERT English Syllabus in appropriate Levels, from Kindergarten through Grade-6 Levels of K-12 English-Language Arts Contents Standards for Californian Public School, from A1 through B2
Level of CEFR, Novice through Advanced Levels of ACTFL, and from B.1 through B.9 Benchmarks of CLB.
List of References


