Chapter - One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction:

At present the most crucial problem faced by foreign language syllabus designers and materials producers in the field of second language teaching (SLT) is:

How to achieve the target communicative competence?

The basis of the problem is a reluctance to begin with the learners rather than the text and lack of rigorous system for finding out the communication needs. The upsurge of interest in the content of the language syllabus following the concerns with communicative competence generated by Dell Hymes (1971) reflects a feeling that we ought to know much more about what it is that should be taught and learnt if a non-native is to be communicatively competent in English. As English has become the major language all over the world. The teaching of English as a second language/ foreign language is a major enterprise. In Aligarh Muslim University, it has been taught since the establishment of the University and since then it has become the focus of learning and acquiring knowledge. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who was a great scholar of his time, set up the university. He felt the need of modern education for Muslims and therefore started a school in 1875 which later became a college, ‘The Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College’. The foundation of the college was formed keeping in mind the upliftment of Muslims through scientific knowledge therefore the need to teach English had arisen and the medium of instruction was adopted as English, and since then it has been one of the essential medium and subject to be taught in secondary schools and colleges of Aligarh Muslim University. Aligarh is the centre of heterogeneous community; it has become a multicultural city. Students from the different parts of the country come to study here. These students belong to various backgrounds, cultures and vary in many factors such as they differ in schooling, upbringing, learning styles and many more. Students from different parts of the country come to study here. Overseas students also join the university. They speak different languages and bring multiculturalism within the class. Dealing with the diversity in the classroom is the greatest challenge for a teacher to deal with the varied learners. Teaching in a linguistically and culturally diverse classroom requires planning and motivation. In AMU secondary schools the teaching of other languages Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Hindi is done to maintain heritage of the
university. English has always been one of the major languages to be taught. With the change in the approach of language teaching the view towards teaching English has gained prominence. English has always been thought to be the language of progress and source of information, and knowledge as most of the research is being done in the West, where English is the native language. Since the materials for language teaching has undergone a great change. Students are eager to learn English language competently, proficiently and effectively.

1.2 Place of English Language in Aligarh Muslim University at Secondary Level Education:

Language is an essential part in human life and its development ought to be in accordance with the sequence. There are literally many individuals hard to count who are engaged today in the learning of the language which is not their Mother Tongue. Some pursue this activity independently outside formal classrooms, but most foreign or second language learners are enrolled in institutionalized instruction of some kind. English at the secondary level at AMU is aimed to enable the learners learn the language so that they could use the language in day-to-day life, but unfortunately the present scenario of schools run by AMU is not up to the desired level. Therefore, most of the students who come from very poor educational background remain poor speakers. There are no activities done in the classrooms to make the students shed their inhibitions and communicate confidently. The medium of instruction for other subjects is English. English has the central position in the classrooms but due to many constraints within the classroom, the mission has not been accomplished. Despite such obvious obstacles, motivation is the starting point of the learning process. Language aptitude and amount of time spent on teaching are the most significant factors that characterize second language learning. Students need encouragement to devote their quality time in learning English. In schools teachers are the only guides to students who can supervise their learning. Students usually spend 5-6 hrs of a day in school. This time could be made qualitative and conducive if the teachers seriously think about their students learning and development in education. Teachers play a very significant role in the life of students especially the school students. Teachers in India always play a very pivotal role. With the change in time and space it has undergone several changes. Teachers are interpreted
differently in different countries. Some maintain a friendly relation with their students, others remain stern, and while there are teachers who modulate their behavior in need of the situation where they feel it could benefit their learners These are the interpretations of several teachers of different countries about the second language development particularly Reading.

To read; particularly scientific and technical English, so as to be able to extract information relevant to the practice of the student's profession and important to the development of the country as a whole.

(Mexico)

(Rivers and Melvin cited in Alatis et.al 1981:85)

In addition, to learn a language means –

To be able to communicate with persons from other countries; to be able to read and understand newspaper; to be able to understand what is said on T.V and Radio.

(Sweden)

(Ibid)

To develop the students' proficiency in English language it is necessary to develop academic skills, which enables them to learn in accordance with the system. One of the important skills highly prominent and particularly related to academics is Reading Skill. The students who are pursuing school education have ample material to read. While reading a piece of text, a reader has an active interaction with the reading materials. As readers read, they use their background knowledge and compare it with what they know with what they read and question the text. As the author is not present to respond to the questions, therefore a reader has to find the answers from the reading matter itself. Reading has been defined as the act of responding to the printed symbols so that meaning is created. Since long it has been recognized that getting meaning from the printed page and the interpretation of the meaning is vital element of all reading. Reading is a form of Thinking, Problem-solving, Reasoning which also involves Analyzing and Discriminating, Judging, Evaluating and Synthesizing. Reading also includes Interpretation and Construction of meaning. For better comprehension, it is important to gather the main idea of the context both at the literal level and between the lines. Evaluation and Interpretation have often been linked under the label of critical reading.
Reading is one of the prime modes of receptive learning tool if the readers are both critical and discriminating. It is only the one aspect of language growth and development. Reading is the receptive skill and calls for the amalgamation with other language activities within the class such as reading and responding to the questions, writing and reading out for the class and listening and answering the questions. Teaching the skills collectively yields effective results since learning of skills never gains proficiency in isolation. Mac Donough and Shaw (1993) suggest that reading is one of the most significant foreign language skills, particularly in cases where students have to read English materials of their own. It is often thought to be easier to supply a written text to be read than to understand it. William (1984) classifies reading into:

- Getting general information from a text.
- Getting specific information from a text.
- Reading for pleasure / interest.

1.3 **Adaptation:**

English Language Teaching (ELT) has a range of different types syllabi which are integrated with language skills. The books contain different materials and exercises to develop skills of learners. Many a time the content of the text is not suitable for a particular group and hence it requires certain modification to bring its clear meaning and for the better comprehension. These modifications are done to achieve a sense of similarity between the text and the learner. The modification in the textbooks or any learning material is called *Adaptation*.

Adaptation is often required to increase motivation for learning- by making the language more real, the situations more relevant, the illustration more vivid and interesting. It is sometimes required to ensure greater ease of acquisition by providing sufficient practice, logical explanation plus examples or exercises that are on the level of the learner. It is done to ensure Appropriate, Accurate and Effective communication and to set up a bridge between the learner and the materials. Madsen and Bowen (1978) describe Adaptation takes place on three levels:

1. The individualizing of materials.
2. Modifying a text for purpose not intended or anticipated by the author.
3. Compensating for defects in textbooks.
Effective adaptation is a matter of achieving “Congruence”. The principle of congruence has an infinite variety of application. The text modified develops similarity with the learners’ demands and makes it compatible with his needs.

Teacher often does not have time to develop all of their materials from scratch. It is essential to provide such materials to student that is conducive to learning and understanding of the text in a better way. Adapting involves taking an existing resource and revising it to fit particular needs.

Adaptation in language teaching could not possibly meet all the required modifications but do provide relief from many aspects. Adaptation is done keeping in mind the skills of language. The materials are adapted to develop the skills for instance; Speaking, Reading, Writing and Listening. The major areas where the materials need adaptation are:

- The academic institutions, where a centralized body that governs the entire education system recommends the textbooks.
- Material designers who are unaware of the local needs of the learners design the books. In view of the fact that the materials designers are not aware of the learners who would be using the materials (textbooks), the recommended textbooks require localization to create a sense of similarity between the learners’ present level of proficiency.

Adaptation of the textbooks is significant to

- Develop a command of the four language skills in order to continue Education and take part in everyday affair.
- Foster fruitful understanding and work with the new and novel versions of the text.
- Ensure effective language instruction.

The text that is adapted and localized according to the needs of the learners reinforces confidence and motivation. Every simplified text is easier to read than the original version as it contains the vocabulary beyond learners’ level of understanding. The resultant dissatisfaction from the text due to difficulty in getting the meaning demotivates learners. Materials used in academic institutions have certain objectives; therefore, materials require adaptation vis-à-vis the skill. In academics, Reading is one of the most
significant skill that has been in use largely, it is the medium and the mode that the
learners use while studying, they receive the information from the printed text/resources,
transcribe the information and retain the information in their memory. In recent years,
materials in language teaching have undergone gradual development, with so many
researches going around the world in language teaching, the material developers have
begun to produce materials after needs analysis. The materials thus produced are
effective and informative. The teachers do not prepare the course materials for schools
and colleges. The learners belong to heterogeneous community eventually it has resulted
in learning problems. The present study has been designed to assess the extent of
adaptation adopted in the class to promote reading in class.

1.4 Objective of the Study: In every learning environment the skill that is
predominantly used is reading. The present study assess whether adaptation is adopted in
developing learners’ reading skills and its effect on the overall L2 learning.

1.4.1 Rationale of the study: The study has been conducted by observing the
classroom environment, teaching methods adopted and analyzing the textbooks
 taught.

1.4.2 Instruments used in the study: Two questionnaires were prepared for
teachers and students respectively focusing on the issues related to the classroom
learning and teaching (copies of the questionnaire in Appendices 1 and 2 at the
end of the thesis). The objectives of the two questionnaires are:

• The teachers’ questionnaire aims to check attitude of the learners in
  language classroom and the extent of adaptation adopted to make learning
  an exciting experience.

• Learners’ questionnaire attempts to evaluate learners’ attitude towards
  English and it investigates the methods and strategies implemented in class
  to develop Reading proficiency.

• Reading proficiency test was also conducted to assess the level of reading
  proficiency of the students at the end of the academic session. The test was
conducted in the Girls’ and Boys’ sections to present sample of the reading standard in AMU schools.

1.5 Pedagogical Implications:
Suggestions would be helpful to develop an idea to adapt the existing materials in order to increase motivation in reading comprehension. The strategies that need to be taught to comprehend the text and develop reading proficiency by learning the sub skills will definitely assist teachers and learners to teach and learn to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar concept and meaning from the text.
**Reference**

