Conclusion
Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

This chapter is divided into six major sections:

A. Preamble
B. Summary of Findings organised by investigation Modes
C. Summary of Findings organised by hypotheses
D. Implications for further Action
E. Suggestions for Further Research
F. Models/ Synthesis

A. PREAMBLE

Significance of the Study

India was the most populous Anglophone country even before independence. Macaulay’s Minutes was an important factor in promoting it. The demand from the native population itself was no less important. Even after gaining independence the demand for English is growing more and more – as a source for modern knowledge, especially in science and mathematics as a language of international communication and from several other points of view. In the school curriculum, though many states call English second language or even third language, it is given most importance – in terms of number of time spent inside and outside the school in trying to learn it, number of students who fail in School final examination for want of the required minimum in the subject, in terms of holding the pass word for entry into coveted jobs outside the country and even inside.
Throughout the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century, only a minority of the population was attending school and with intense motivation. With the move towards universalisation of education, a large number of first generation learners, unable to adjust to the school culture, particularly the English culture. The problem is compounded by the large strength in classes, inadequate facilities, unqualified teachers teaching English, contradictory signals given by the authorities in revision of the curriculum, mechanical models of coaching displacing real teaching, incredibly liberal modes of evaluation in an attempt to ‘improve results without heed to standards.’. The result is that a number pupils go up the grades without really improving in competency in the language. Thus arises the problem of Cumulative Backwardness of High School Students in English with special reference to the Socially and Culturally Disadvantaged Sections: Diagnosis and Remediation Models - with which this investigation is concerned.

Objectives:
1. To study the phenomenon of backwardness with special reference to cumulative backwardness in English.
2. To analyse the probable causes of backwardness.
3. To analyse the cumulative backwardness in English in a manner that lends itself to some gradation.
4. To analyse the errors of children and how teachers view these errors.
5. To study how the components of English that may appear dissonant from the South Indian languages could contribute to the backwardness.
6. To obtain the judgment of teachers on textbooks, course materials, and strategy-related items.
7. To develop remedial constructs and approaches and try them out in various settings.
8. To synthesise the results and process them for application modes by teachers.
Hypotheses:

This is a kind of study in which many relevant hypotheses arose during the research. But a few hypotheses are set out in the beginning in order to give direction to the study. The major ones are presented below:

1. There is avoidable cumulative backwardness in English among high pupils in the Kerala school system.

2. Much of this backwardness can be attributed to cultural, home and school factors.

3. In particular the textual material and strategies employed in the transaction of the curriculum contribute a lot to this backwardness.

4. The way the pupils, teachers and the authorities are reacting to this situation has generally an adverse effect on really overcoming the problem.

5. The revolutionary approaches in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), and particularly the Second Language Acquisition Programme (SLAP) developed as an extension of it in select schools did seem to show the way to lay a holistic, firm and dynamic foundation for learning of English as second language even for the most disadvantaged pupils.

6. The counter-revolutionary action in the curriculum of Class 8 in June 2000 was a negative factor in really vitalising education on modern lines. The effect was perhaps most disastrous in English.

7. The (at least verbally) re-revolutionary changes in curriculum in June 2001 which continues up to now do help the bright pupils to achieve far more than even before, but for the majority of pupils it contributes to development of cumulative deficiencies in English and errors, unimaginable by those who have not actually seen the practice books and other ‘products’ of the pupils.
B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ORGANISED BY INVESTIGATION MODES)

Survey Results from Questionnaire to Teachers

The causes of backwardness analysed from the survey (Teachers’ responses) yield some major findings:

The causes checked highest by the teachers include: (a) ‘There is none to help them in studies at home’ with the highest rating, 2.14 [3 is the maximum possible score, 0 minimum and 1.5 the median position], (b) The backward children have very poor home background’ (1.91); (c) There is none to help them in studies in the neighbourhood (1.66). [Government schools tend to draw children with poorer home background.] (d) Children spend their free time playing or gossiping with peers instead of studying’ (1.87); (e) They lack intrinsic motivation to study’ (1.81). [Teachers specifically check that ‘Even external / extrinsic motivation such as punishments and rewards have failed to direct them to studies gets a mean rating’ (1.58)].

The causes were grouped along certain classes: Home-based factors getting a group mean score of 1.45, Home-school dissonance factors (1.33), Pupil-school dissonance factors (1.39). The home-induced factors are analysed further into linguistic dissonance, quarrels and lack of study atmosphere. Though the ratings are lower than the medium, their existence at least is recognised. Some of the ratings of teachers compared to the direct observation of the homes and neighbourhoods of disadvantaged pupils suggest that teachers do not have high awareness of the retarded pupils’ home conditions, and even if they are aware of them, they don’t get clearly set in the context of the task of getting the pupils back into studies. Among the pupil-school work dissonance factors, the teachers’ recognition of some factors is a good sign: Lack of (general) self-confidence (1.71) ranks second in this table. Alienation from school (5) gets a mean score 1.44, just below mid-point. It could lead in the direction of long-term solution if remedial education on humanist lines can
supplement and even supplant the present model of extrinsic motivation, threat and punishment. It is recalled that the item, “They can be kept under control in the class only under threat or punishments” gets a mean score of 1.29 (Govt 1.39, Private 1.22). The score is a little below the mid-point, but it indicates that considerable number of teachers hold this view.

The teachers’ judgement of the extent of backwardness of pupils in English seems to be more accurate. The overall mean in this group is 1.97 whereas the overall mean of causes is only 1.40, a little below the median score of 1.50. The cumulative backwardness is therefore high in terms of teachers’ estimates. The analysis of this aspect in terms of subcomponents is interesting.

The subgroup ‘Extent of lack of competence in language,’ loaded with deficiency items, gets a group mean of 2.02 [A score of 2 implies that it covers ‘Most’ pupils. Total loss of confidence that they can not do well in English (2.11) is obviously an effect of cumulative deficiency. The item, “Their Competence in English is at least three grades lower than the class they are occupying. Its score gets 2.11. Two statements about the pupils in higher class not having mastery of even the basics of English and not having even the basic grammatical sense have mean ratings even higher (2.27 and 2.26).

The item which gets the highest mean rating (2.84) – almost near the All point is “When translation method is used then they understand the translation in Malayalam and not English” elicits an admission that teachers are aware of the uselessness of a common practice.

Cumulative deficiency is attested by several other item means: While reading they (pupils) are not able to group the words properly to get meaning (1.89); They are not able to understand even simple text book sentences unless the teacher or someone else helps (1.92); Children are not able to answer a
single question in English by themselves (1.63); Children are not able to do grammatical transformations by themselves’ (1.91). They are not able to write the different types of compositions on their own (1.97); They are not able to break longer sentences into smaller ones to get meaning (2.15). All these statements present a picture of the cumulative deficiency of pupils. Some of the statements also give a clue to how they can be tackled.

A special cause for cumulative deficiency in English is with the poor Muslim pupils who already have trouble with two different letter systems in Malayalam and Arabic at the primary stage; they are even more confused with English as a third system with more variation (1.52). In this and in most other items Government school pupils are rated to have more deficiency.

Three items related to the futility of rote-memory approach with a group mean of 1.89. The item “They depend entirely on rote memory” gets a very high score (2.22). Yet this approach is widely prevalent and promoted even officially.

The peculiar or dissonant factors within English language which causes difficulty form a group of two items with a group mean of 1.75. The spelling dissonance item gets a mean of 1.76 and the word order dissonance item, (English has a subject verb object structure where as Malayalam has SOV structure) gets 1.73.

The next group of items analysed pertain to Text-books and school-based strategies. [The items in this category were responded to on a five-point scale ranging from with scores ranging from 5 to one and 3 as the neutral point. The means should be interpreted accordingly.] Four items critical of the textbook presentation, exercises etc in a critical stance from the point of view of the average and below average pupils get mean scores ranging from 3.84 to 4.17 – implying a clear Agree position. While exploring solutions, the item, “The
new English text book of Std. VIII is more amenable to communicative approaches” gets a rating of 4.13. [But there is no evidence got through observation to indicate that teachers had used the new textbooks to that effect.]

Though teachers generally take the stand that liberal promotion is generally the cause of failures in SSLC and cumulative backwardness in upper classes, the items favouring liberal promotion in the constructionist context get means slightly above the Undecided point – on the Agreement side.

Two statements expressing the faith that cumulative backwardness can be overcome with the help of invitation rather than infliction and learner-centred pedagogy, and also building self-confidence and showing affection were suggested to the teachers. These items get scores of 4.19 and 4.55 – which is a good sign.

A series of remedial items, most of them of a progressive and positive nature were put before the teachers to elicit their opinion. It is gratifying to note that such positive items get high agreement score: A few items are cited. “Rather than (mechanical) repetition of (practical) items, recurrence under meaningful conditions of the same will be beneficial for the learners (4.29). 3: “Use of graded learning materials maintaining the content of the higher class lessons and varying the structures pertaining to different levels can work to some extent with retarded students” (4.58); “Methods like ‘Singlish’ using pedagogic songs embedding English structures and pictorial play with letters and words can help retarded and disinterested pupils” (4.20); “Use of small group methods will be more beneficial for backward learners” has the rationale that with a large number of cumulatively backward pupils the teacher will not have the time to give individual attention to each pupil. If small group work with heterogeneous group formation is used, each group may have at least one pupil who can help others. This item has a score 4.34. This is reinforced by another
Item: “In a class with pupils of varying abilities and skills, class teaching should be reduced to the minimum and practice in group should be increased” (4.03).

An item criticising the present model of mechanical coaching scheme “Long hours of compulsory coaching in schools without student involvement is a waste of time” gets a score 3.92 which comes close to the Agree point. Hence teachers are aware of the weaknesses of the present model. If an alternative workable form is put to them in an acceptable form they might respond favourably.

The item 7 “Use of mother tongue in case of necessity followed by putting the child back into English (withdrawing the instrumental MT) can be helpful in acquiring competencies in English” (Mean 4.31) is a context where the Malayalam explanation is not the end-point but a Vygotskyan scaffold which would be withdrawn early after enabling the child to construct English learning by himself (Manuel).

The item: “Once pupils themselves start interacting with English materials, they will practise English even outside school hours and overcome cumulative backwardness” (4.24) brings out another model of direct meaningful interaction with English acceptable to teachers.

“Once the inter language constructed by the child is well understood the progress to the mastery of the target language can proceed fast” (4.08) is another item embedding one of Manuel’s favourite constructs, which develops Selinker’s concept of ‘Interlanguage’ in new contexts with many cumulatively disadvantaged learners in Kerala who are exposed to multiple languages.
The item: ‘When students, even the very backward ones, accept that the task of learning is their responsibility, they will improve’ (4.33) touches a major point correcting the present model of coaching, which is largely external.

The various strategies of dealing with cumulative backwardness is analysed. First those with a negative slant are taken up. The pessimistic view that “Once cumulative backwardness exceeds three years, there is no way of dealing with it effectively” gets a slight agreement score (3.32). Another questionable practice, pessimistic about the cumulatively deficient pupils, “In ordinary schools, instead of trying to coach all the pupils for the examination it would be more profitable to ignore the very weakest and concentrate on the just below pass mark group” also gets a slight agreement score (3.49). Another conservative view, ‘Repeated drill and special classes is the best method of helping the students retarded in their studies’ gets a much higher agreement score (3.87). However when it is suggested that “Such drill should start even from Class 5” the conservatism is relaxed, yielding a score of 3.00, exactly at the Undecided point.

An item prohibiting totally the use of the mother tongue in the English class gets a mean of 3.36. Its antithesis, ‘The students backward in English can understand only if every word and sentence is translated into the mother tongue’ stands marginally below the undecided point: 2.95

The General Approaches to Teaching and Attitude to the Retarded Learner was elicited from teachers. Seven items pertained to Positive approaches to the retarded learner. The group mean in this category is 3.97. The key concepts supported thus include confidence building in the pupils, their self activity and generative approaches, client-centred approach, partnership between teacher and learner in the educational practice, individual exploration and group exploration by pupils, democratic interaction in learning.
The negative approach towards the retarded learner as represented by four items and the group mean was 2.97, almost on the Undecided point but marginally tilting towards the Disagreement direction. Of the four items two evoke disagreement ratings: Rote memorization is the only method by which ordinary and backward pupils can be taught (2.36) and Pupils who do not master the English structures should be detained (2.45). The other two items elicit agreement ratings: The general tendency of students is to resist learning, which must be broken by a teacher (3.59) and The teacher should try to pour in as much knowledge as possible into the mind of the learner (3.33).

Thus, on the negative approach teachers are ambivalent, but when positive approaches are suggested, they tend to agree. This should be capitalised upon through working models.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Errors of Pupils was the last category elicited from teachers. The items in this category were divided into a positive group, which yielded a group mean of 3.69, and a negative group, which gave a mean of 3.37. From the negative side, two items, A good teacher is one who does not allow the students to commit any mistakes at all (2.28) and Pupils can be improved only through giving impositions (2.26) get close to Disagree ratings, which is a good sign. But this is partly compensated by close to Agree ratings got by the other two items: Every mistake that the pupils commit should be corrected (3.47) and A good teacher is one whose students commit the minimal mistakes (3.30). It must be admitted that these items have a positive look, and only the perspective of modern error theory in constructivist education can be seen as negative. It must also be admitted that teachers generally make a tick mark in pupils’ exercise books, which are full of mistakes, without making any corrections. Seen in this context we may infer that teachers on the whole react negatively to negative approaches to retarded students and react positively to positive approach embedded in statements.
Among the positive items the only point highlighted is that out of seven items, three statements presenting modern attitude to error in pedagogy have distinct Agreement ratings clearing the criterion mark of 4.0: Errors are a natural phase of the learning process and will gradually get eliminated in natural, trial and feedback 4.16; In order to encourage free, creative expression, a certain amount of errors should be tolerated 4.03. Errors are powerful resources in teaching language because they reveal to the teacher how the child thinks in an inter-lingual situation. 4.01. Thus the questionnaire has an educative value too. The other four items are not highlighted in this summary. They add no new insights.

**Survey Results from structured Interviews with 80 low-scoring Pupils**

The result drawn from this mode of investigation is held even more important than that obtained from teachers because it is the cumulatively retarded pupils reacting directly under psychologically secure conditions on a problem crucial to them. Some items include technical points in learning modes in linguistics. But when the investigator explained the intricacies with illustrations they understood clearly and responded meaningfully. The pupils could have even developed insights to improve their study modes. Only the survey results are reported here.

The first part of the interview brought out the diagnostic analysis of the difficulties as estimated by the pupils themselves. The figure in brackets is the percentage of pupils who affirmed that they had felt the particular difficulty:

- (Pupil) is unable to understand English at all (83%)
- cannot understand a passage even when pupil has managed to read it (75%)
- has trouble with long and complex sentences in English (94%)
- cannot read English at all because the same letter is read with different sound (85%)
• spelling does not improve at all in spite of memorising spelling letter by letter (85%)
• cannot write or single correct sentence by himself (94%)
• cannot get the whole thing together after memorising the passage word by word pupil (95%)
• is not able to answer any question - grammar or factual - by myself except by copying the answer from the blackboard or from other's notebooks (94%)
• repeatedly tries to memorize long answers to questions but forgets them at the time of examinations (98%)
• memorizes the answers repeatedly looking at the correct answers only, without necessarily connecting it with the question (94%)
• repeatedly writes impositions - by simply copying the first from the book (original) and further writings from the previous one (93%)
• marks the word-filling and True-False questions in the exercise in the textbook itself, so that he can read out the correct answer and satisfy the teacher (99%)
• answers only the teacher-given tests - monthly and terminal arranged by the school (88%)
• selects and studies answers for only a few probable questions and tries his luck (89%)
• finds it too heavy to cover all or most of the portions (98%)
• simply goes out and plays after each test, and sees the question paper only if the teacher goes through them in the class (94%)
• If the teacher goes through the question paper after the test and tells the correct answer, simply listens and leaves it there (95%).

Remedial Approaches which Pupils themselves could undertake

This section is important because it elicits pupils’ reactions to possible remedial approaches which they themselves could undertaken and acquire independence in learning. The technical aspects of pedagogy and linguistics were explained to the pupils clearly. Thus it has an educative dimension but here only the survey aspect is presented.

The second part of the interview brought out response to the possible remedial approaches. Since this involved individual depth interview the response column could not be quantified. The typical response of the pupil group is indicated. The question is also presented in the direct mode.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Remedial Procedures</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Have you tried reading very simple sentences, simple phrases from cricket or from life?</td>
<td>No (No Confidence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have you tried to identify one or two <em>key words</em> which make sense?</td>
<td>No (new concept for most)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Have you tried to group words together in meaningful phrases? [This will help you to get marks for the question on breaking sentences]</td>
<td>Explanation needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Have you identified the major differences SVO (Eng) for Mal SOV, Prep-Noun (Eng) for Mal N-Vibhakti</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Have you attempted to arrange English words in group such that for the same vowel or vowel group, different arrays will emerge each representing different sounds?</td>
<td>Not so far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Have you attempted to see a letter or group as whole to produce a particular sound, e.g., 'igh' as 'ai', 'i-e' as 'ai', but 'i-' or -i- as 'e'?</td>
<td>No but when cards were given for reading, once triggered they mastered the business very early</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Have you attempted to write simple command or request sentences? Sentences with a noun and verb? And gradually make longer sentences?</td>
<td>They wrote but with many errors. But a beginning was made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Have you attempted to group words meaningfully and tried to fix the group in memory? Have you gradually increased the length of the group?</td>
<td>New concept for many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Have you attempted to select the simple type of question-&gt; answer transformation, where the answer word can be simply substituted in the place of the question word and the rest of the question simply copied? And then proceeded gradually to tackle questions in which there is change in word order to structures of question and answer?</td>
<td>They haven't, But once the type of graded questions were introduced, they were able to make a beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Have you attempted to locate the part of the answer in response to the question word and fix it in memory, put in appropriate position, and copy the rest of the words in the question to get the full answer?</td>
<td>No. But when demonstration was given with the help of learning material they managed it partly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>After one or two attempts to learn the answer by directly studying it, have you attempted to look at the question and recall the answer, noticing the gaps, and check with the answer?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>When you repeatedly write something - word or sentences - to master it, do you attempt to grasp the unit or the idea in the mind, so that further attempts can be written without reference to the original or the previous attempts?</td>
<td>No; things are done quite mechanically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Do you try to answer question yourself and then check the answer for correctness with some good source - a book or person? Have you tried to answer, cover the model answer with the fingers, and then uncover the answer and check?</td>
<td>No; One or two only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Do you do tests other than those given by the school? Who gives them?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Do you sometimes sit by yourself or as a member of a small group of fellow pupils and try to test yourselves in English?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Do you try to cover most of the portions, trying to reduce the load by grouping them in some way?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Have you noticed that once you get some mastery, studying more portions is not a load at all, because the first lessons, help to learn the second and so on?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>After the examination do you discuss with fellow pupils the right answers and go through the question paper again and answer it yourself?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>After the teacher’s review, do you go through the questions by yourself and try to recall the correct answers?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the table, the answers were mostly negative, but the climate was not negative. The children, though cumulatively deficient, did respond intelligently and positively. Approached this way continuously and encouragingly they could cover the deficiency gradually and even by spurts at a later stage some students did make a beginning and felt encouraged at least during the period on interview.
Content analysis of practice books

The analysis of the practice books revealed the following facts:

1. The number of tasks in each worksheet are so many that most pupils are not able to do it themselves.
2. Many of the tasks given in the practice book are difficult to do even for the teachers.
3. Even above average students will not be able to all the exercises by themselves.
4. It will require about 4 times the time available to do all the exercises.
5. Most of the pupils simply copy the answers from printed notes or some other source. So the purpose of self activity is defeated.
6. Most of the teachers simply get the practice books filled by referring to notes. The process is not given much importance; only the product is valued.
7. Even if the pupils do not comprehend the passages and questions they simply write something which does not have any sense at all (structural, spelling wise or punctuation wise).

C. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ORGANISED BY HYPOTHESES

1. There is enormous cumulative backwardness in English for the majority of pupils in the Kerala State school system. In many schools – both Government and aided – a high percentage of schools even in class 10 cannot write a single sentence in English of their own. In the old system they could select some questions and memorise the answer, and if their probability guess is correct, the chances of pass is high. Though the portions are very vast, the testing field in the scheme up to SSLC 2004 was very limited. In the present scheme the questions purport to test thinking rather than rote memory. So the questions are made long,
sometimes with structures which pupils do not know. Long passages are
given which students must read and answer the question. The pupils
don’t have the competence. So they write something and still pass
because of the incredibly liberal valuation. The evidence suggests that
the cumulative deficiency in the new scheme is even greater than before.

The examination of the answer sheets of the pupils studying in
high schools, their responses to different test and even very abbreviated
versions of test eliciting even the simplest of sentence structures reveal
that pupils in the high school classes have absolutely no command of the
simplest structures which a pupil of class 5 should have got. In spelling
and grammar the most weird results are seen. There is no idea of the use
of tense. The whole thing appears to be a kind of hit or miss. In spite of all
these deficiencies the pupils continue go up the grades, and even pass
the school final examination. Intense work done with +2 pupils indicates
that they too have no command of even the basics of English barring a
small minority. The Textbooks and the practice books give a high
impression, but the achievement belies the expectation. Still most pupils
go up the grades because of incredibly liberal evaluation modes.

The findings thus got through participant observation and various
other qualitative modes were confirmed through the responses of
teachers and pupils in the survey and various pretests in the intervention
phase. That this cumulative deficiency is avoidable is seen from the fact
that in most of the interventions the deficient pupils show improvement
very quickly with the self-learning and confidence-instilling approaches.

Hence Hypothesis 1 “There is avoidable cumulative backwardness
in English among high pupils in the Kerala school system” is found
tenable.
2. Teachers very often blame the home and local environment for this backwardness. It is true to some extent as seen from the qualitative and survey findings but teachers and other school factors are also responsible. Many of the pupils have much domestic work to do at home. Girls have to look after the younger children and help in cooking. Some boys take up part-time work outside to supplement the family income. The parents are not able to help the pupils in the school work, particularly in English. In the case of above average pupils one or more elders in the home may have functional competence in English and would be able to help the pupils with the difficulties posed by the present texts. This help is not available for most pupils and this causes cumulative backwardness. The investigator and the supervising teacher visited several colonies of tribals, scheduled cast children and other economically deprived sections and found the problems of cultural dissonance of also. Thus we can infer that much of this backwardness can be attributed to cultural, home and school factors. The school factors responsible for cumulative backwardness include: giving wrong signals regarding curriculum revision, promoting mechanical models of teaching and coaching, setting impossible task targets, and finally diluting it when it comes to actual practice. In order to overcome this, special methods of overcoming cultural disadvantages have been developed over the past four decades (vide Passow). But even among experts very few have paid attention to this kind of work.

Hence Hypothesis 2: “Much of this backwardness can be attributed to cultural, home and school factors” is tenable.

3. The textual materials and strategies employed in the transaction of the curriculum also contribute to this problem. Till 1986 the text books in
English used in Kerala were following an approach in which the words and structures were controlled almost up to the end of the school final class. The 1986 text attempted to present varieties of real English – Segments of British, American and Indian writers in English, extracts from classical and modern works and other kinds of discourses. Some of them are new even to teachers. So even from classics long passages with the emphasis on literature and daily English discourse. Many teachers are unable to cope with the problem. So in effect they quickly read through the book giving the meaning of a few words and expect pupils to memorise the questions given at the end along with the answers. Much of them are actually got from Bazaar notes. So this became the curriculum. The new books used after 2002 went even farther. They attempted to help to present real discourse, but they were more costly. Since the setting for the discourse was not clear to the teacher, the whole process was mechanical and meaningless. A large number of tasks are given, which an ordinary teacher or an average pupil cannot do by himself. So this was also copied from notes. Teachers simply give a tick mark against the pupils’ work without correcting the mistakes not only because the amount written is very large, but also because many teachers do not know the correct response. The term ‘formative evaluation’ began to be used in the sense of the mid-term test, and the test given by the school at the end of each term is called ‘summative’. Actually both were summative; because the end in both cases was to give a grade component and not to serve continuous teaching-learning function. A variety of teaching approaches are expected to be followed now, e.g., the listening comprehension with passages to be ‘spoken’ by the teacher and pupils expected to answer the comprehension questions. Almost all the schools tend to skip this. Very few teachers have the competency to perform the task expected of them. Hence Hypothesis 3: “In particular the textual material and strategies employed in the
transaction of the curriculum contribute a lot to this backwardness” is accepted.

4. The new syllabus expects the teachers to promote innovative and flexible thinking in English. It requires teachers who have high mastery of English language and pedagogy – which the vast majority do not have. Innovative teachers are not encouraged. Among the pupils the most competent ones take advantage of the freedom now available and do very good work - several times more than they used to do earlier. But for the others a creative scheme is done in a routine way and even the routine tasks are not really achieved. They solve this problem by extremely liberal valuation. Hence Hypothesis 4: “The way the pupils, teachers and the authorities are reacting to this situation has generally an adverse effect on really overcoming the problem” is acceptable.

5. Actually cumulative backwardness can be tackled effectively only if the best approaches are used even from the earliest class in which English is taught. Hence Second Language Acquisition Programme (SLAP) was attempted as an experimental dimension in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in select schools. Really effective approaches were used, even by supplementing ‘static texts’ with dynamic texts. Those schools did very well. The children were able to communicate in English with visiting experts from North India. The external experts were all praise for the scheme. But the local experts who believed in top down approaches on the whole opposed it. If this scheme had been allowed to go naturally a powerful solution to the problem of cumulative disadvantage would have been promoted. But it was not to be. In any case Hypothesis 5 as it stands in the historical context: “The revolutionary approaches in District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), and particularly the Second Language Acquisition Programme (SLAP)
developed as an extension of it in select schools did seem to show the way to lay a holistic, firm and dynamic foundation for learning of English as second language even for the most disadvantaged pupils” has been validated in the study, especially the Review of SLAP in Chapter II.

6. An extraordinary thing happened in Kerala in June 2001. The improved texts in English which were devised on modern lines with plenty of help for teachers to transact an interactive English curriculum had been approved, print-composed and almost ready for use. But the improved 8th standard texts were stopped by fiat from above without assigning any reason. Then they decided to reprint the old text books, which actually took nearly six months. During this period the entire English curriculum amounted to memorizing the question answers relating to the book from bazaar notes. This can be termed as counter revolution in English education. Thus Hypothesis 6: “The counter-revolutionary action in the curriculum of Class 8 in June 2000 was a negative factor in really vitalising education on modern lines. The effect was perhaps most disastrous in English.” stands confirmed.

7. After scrutinising the new text draft carefully they could not find any serious mistakes. They reprinted the book with minor cosmetic touches and introduced it in 2002 June as if it was a product of the new dispensation. A number of conservatives suddenly turned leaders for an innovative scheme. This can be called a re-revolution with doubtful effectiveness. At the moment the books up to class X are good for a good student. But for an ordinary or a retarded people taught by an ordinary teacher this can be a hazard. It is in this set up that remedial measures have to be found in a desperate situation. These historical facts lend tenability to Hypothesis 7: “The (at least verbally) re-revolutionary changes in curriculum in June 2001 which continues up to
now do help the bright pupils to achieve far more than even before, but for the majority of pupils it contributes to development of cumulative deficiencies in English and errors, unimaginable by those who have not actually seen the practice books and other ‘products’ of the pupils.”

D. IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

This study has shown that a high component of cumulative deficiency in English has arisen largely due to school factors: changing the curriculum without getting the stakeholders ready for it, making precipitate changes without any proper academic analysis, reversing the changes with equal absurdity, implementing a progressive curriculum through conservative administrative modes, prescribing mechanical and externalist modes of coaching instead of nurturing genuine teaching and learning. It has also shown that cumulative deficiency can be overcome through pupil-centric, self-learning, confidence-building approaches, preferably with graded material using minimal generative components to begin with for the extremely retarded pupils. The following suggestions for action are therefore recommended:

1. Educational management must be accountable as well as academically sound.

2. Prescriptions which can be seen to be futile or even-counterproductive through sane reflection and foresight or through analysing even recent history should not be imposed from above.

3. On issues involving where high thought component as well a multiplicity of stakeholders.

4. Precipitate action should be avoided. A broad based dialogue among the different stakeholders as well a competent synthesis of the best of academic deliberations is needed before action.
5. A vast amount of functional theory has emerged in second language learning (SLL) and second language acquisition (SLA) during the recent decades. (Vide Conceptual Review Chapter II). Some of these are based on opposing postulates and conceptualisations. Much harm has come through promoting the principles of one school using the action modes of the opposite school. The concept of dialectical resolution has not been thought of. Genuine dialectical resolution points should not be fixed from the top power points, but evolved through dialogue, trial and evaluation at points of action considering the context, competence and resources available locally and client population needs.

6. Politically propelled expertise, expertise which pleads vehemently for one extreme view, expertise which merely thrives on jargon and opportunistic expertise should be exposed.

7. Expertise which can combine the best theory with committed practice and expertise drawn from innovative teachers should be found out and used, and given greater weightage than merely positioned expertise.

8. Teachers should be empowered to help in the process, not through pressure techniques using the political strengths of Unions, but through the opportunities to increase their academic and professional competence to conduct studies and discussion on positive lines unmade secure and responsible conditions. When such teaching expertise emerges, it should be given greater weightage than the type of expertise mentioned in 4.

9. Within the type of expertise emerging out of innovative, informed teachers those committed to the cause of the deprived child should be given a very high weightage in exploring solutions of the problem of cumulative deficiency. The most important functional ideas are more likely to come from this group of teacher-investigators than from merely positioned expertise. [At the moment of writing this the investigator became aware of
the value of a book acquired by her own college library: Kylene Beer (2003), *When Kids can’t read, what can the teacher do?* Heineman. The author started as a middle school teacher, and became a real expert by working patiently with her weaker pupils, particularly George, to whom she dedicates the book. She has now emerged as one of the world’s leading experts in this area. In Kerala too we have at least one case in . K.N. Anandan who started as primary teacher later obtained doctoral degree from Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages and whose work is appreciated in Kerala seasonally. In developed systems the recognition of academic expertise does not depend so much on the political tides.]

10. Besides making the academic attack on the problem positive, unbiased and informed, there are many problems with the socially, culturally and economically disadvantaged sections, which cannot be solved by the education sector alone. The Departments of Social Welfare and those of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Welfare should supplement the work of the education Department. At the moment they are providing plenty of financial help. Much of it goes to enhance the drinking provision of the fathers or to spend the money in cheap cinema. They need a lot of social education and counselling.

**E. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In the view of the investigator and of several others with whom segments of the study approach, review and findings were shared this study has brought out several new concepts in English language learning as applied to the learning of the very disadvantaged, that have not become current in teacher education thinking in Kerala. This is also a study in English language education on the basis of which workable suggestions are offered – which very few psychometric-
modelled theses can claim. On the basis of this experience the following suggestions for further research are offered.

1. Studies which bypass the substantial findings of modern ELT, SLL, and SLA, but plunge into psychometric testing of generalised models à la Joyce and Weil work on the pure science frame. The statistical treatment using ANCOVA followed by t-test lends them a glamour. But after the degree is got they lie on the shelves. There is very little insight which can transfer to classroom practice. It is recommended that more studies in the present model applying fertile concepts in English language learning as applied to the learning of the very disadvantaged as well as learning for excellence should be conducted.

2. Qualitative methods of research offer more flexibility to work with multiple hypotheses to solve complex problems. These should be encouraged in pedagogical research. In developed systems, more and more studies in the qualitative research mode are coming out. In dominant pedagogic circles in Kerala there is bias in favour of ‘empirical’ research by which they mean studies displaying some statistics based on a survey or experiment whose content may be formal rather than functional or substantive. On the other hand studies like the present one touch real educational experience and in this sense more empirical and more trustworthy, more transferable to real learning and teaching.

3. Once worthwhile insights have emerged from qualitative studies it may be worth conducting quantitative studies, using surveys or event controlled experiments. That will accord with Whitehead’s analysis of the rhythm in the conquest of knowledge, romance, precision and generalisation. It will be seen that in the present study very useful findings emerged from the surveys with teachers and pupils. This was because the tools were based on a lot of insights drawn from earlier participant observation.
4. Participative research synthesised to form a sizeable unit, as well as action research in the emancipatory and more complex modes should become popular in doctoral as well as project research.

5. Research in the social work mode is also relevant in working with very disadvantaged sections. The Loyala College of Social Work is conducting several useful studies in this model. The client group covered in this study demands that such studies should become popular in education too.

6. In order to reach the most distant persons such as the tribal population research on how to present intricate concepts through the distant mode. Dr Madubala working under the guidance of Dr Mercy Abraham has already established an excellent model. Manuel has formulated a model of intersecting deep pedagogic interactive approaches into ASTER (Application of Science and Technology in Educational Reforms) – which includes a lot of distant education components too – introduced recently in the Atomic Energy Central Schools by the Chairman Dr. C.V. Ananda Bose.

F. MODEL/ SYNTHESIS

The simplest way in which the present study and its follow-up can be synthesised and followed up is through the formulation of some models. One such form is given below:

1. Behavioural Model

In this study plenty of self-learning models were used which involved the disadvantaged pupil to work directly with materials broken into small segments or graded steps which he can cope with and get feedback. This material allows a large number of retarded pupils to work at the same time. Much of language laboratory work is also built on Skinnerian lines. Even Ausubel recommends Skinnerian approach for some time with culturally disadvantaged learners. This
model could be a starting point with many pupils considered hopeless by the system. But gradually the pupil must start moving from within, taking larger steps than an external programme and move to higher models.

2. Informational, Constructivist and Creative Model

Some of Manuel’s self-instructional materials (e.g., the Question-Answer Transformation Schedule) had a top-down approach in which the pupil has to understand a principle and apply them. Once the principle is understood thousands of rote memorised components can be generated by the pupil himself. Since the weak pupils may not understand the symbolic form of the transformation, they still had the alternative of proceeding with the exercises in which the same type comes together. So, working on such specific examples the pupil may suddenly get sudden insights and move to a higher plane. [This is where the Manuel model differs from Skinner’s]. Plenty of constructivist and generative models à la Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsy and Chomsky were involved in such approaches. Creative approaches were involved in many rhythmic and in some SINGLISH forms.

3. Personal Model

In this study even the Skinnerian forms of breaking up the smallest unit and reinforcing the right answer had the effect of building confidence in the pupil that he can do something without the teacher’s direct help. Gradually the confidence grows and the pupil moves towards self-actualisation. Cricket is a typical theme which many pupils who have lost their academic self concept, use to rebuild based on their general self-concept. For the most backward Muslim boys in Hosdurg the ala al Tawilat experience ensured a transfer of Arabic self-concept into English self-concept. Once the pupil’s academic self-concept builds up they can take up even uninteresting tasks, work on it and overcome.
4. Social Model

Group work gives plenty of opportunity for pupils to bring social interaction and Group Investigation model to the service of English. When we form heterogeneous groups with at least one or two persons in each group with some understanding of English, and given some meaningful task which they (the more competent ones) can handle, we find that a large number of cumulatively deficient pupils to help to move up very quickly.

In order to reach the community setting of the weakest socially deprived groups the social work model developed by Loyola College – Dr. M.K. George, Dr Elizabeth et al) can help. For the remote tribals the models developed by Manuel and E.G. Joseph (Tribal Development Officer) at Mananthavady can help.
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