Factors that Influence the Teaching-Learning Process in English Language Classes in Government High Schools of Tiruwallur District: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

There has been growing discontent over the English language competency of graduates in the past few years. Many surveys conducted by various agencies have reaffirmed the fact that Indian graduates lack English language skills. In a globalized tech-dependent world today, English language proficiency has become mandatory to attain success in any field. There were questions about the reasons for the lack of English language proficiency of Indian graduates, inspite, of their English education both in school and college. This research study is both qualitative and quantitative. It was attempted to explore how English was taught in schools in and around Tiruwallur district of Tamilnadu, with specific focus to class IX in government schools. This study at the end highlights various factors that impact the teaching-learning process in English language classes in these schools.

Key words: Teaching-learning process, Classroom Observation, Language skills, Teacher Training, Syllabus Revision

Introduction

English is one of the global languages which has entered all the fields of study and also established its firm roots in India. According to Krishnaswamy and Sriraman (1994), English is necessary for social and economic success in the world. In the prevailing scenario, English language proficiency has become mandatory to attain success in any field of study, therefore, English has become an integral part of the Indian education system. But the fact is that, Aspiring Minds, a leading employability credentialing firm revealed, “67% of engineers do not possess any English language skills” (Hindustan Times, 2016). Various other reports of National Spoken English Skills of Engineers and National Employability Report for Engineering graduates all reported similar findings. These reports instigated the question ‘Why engineering graduates lack English language skills?’ and this study started as an exploratory study to find where the problem is and how English has been taught in schools and colleges.
India is a developing country and it has twenty-nine states, and the tenth largest state is Tamil Nadu which has thirty-three districts. The demographical area selected for this study was Tiruvallur district of Tamilnadu. Tiruvallur is located at a distance of approximately forty-four kilometers from Chennai, the capital of Tamilnadu. It is neither completely rural nor completely urban but a semi-urban district. It is a developing city of industrial and commercial importance and it has many academic institutions, temples, religious monuments etc., There are schools run by SB (State Board), CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) and ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education) in Tiruvallur district. In all these schools English is learnt as a second language from class I irrespective of the medium of instruction. ICSE schools are considered elite schools which follow national syllabus and are very less in number. CBSE schools are located only in the main parts of the districts and are also limited in number. Moreover, their syllabus is designed at national level like ICSE. On the other hand, government schools are more in number and the syllabus for these schools is designed by the state itself. There are one hundred forty-five Government High Schools (from class I to X) and one hundred and eighteen Government Higher Secondary Schools (from class I to XII) in Tiruvallur district and these are located in all parts (rural and town) of the district. Due to the huge number of government schools, more students opt government schools for education than CBSE and ICSE schools. Moreover, government schools are more affordable than private schools and many parents preferred sending their wards to government schools to educate their children. The number of students enrolling for engineering studies was higher in government schools compared to CBSE and ICSE schools. Hence, this study is extensively carried out in select government schools of Tiruvallur district. Furthermore, in Tamilnadu, the education is almost similar in all small towns and villages.

English is taught as a compulsory subject from class I to XII at the school level, whereas, at the tertiary level, it is taught only for one or two semesters. An interaction with the college teachers, school teachers and the college students revealed that most of the students at the college level consider English class as a relaxation hour and do not pay necessary attention to enhance their language skills. This shows college students’ attitude towards English classes. College teachers, in their interaction, had mentioned that the time period at tertiary level is too short to get to know all students and their requirements. They felt that they did not have enough time to give more attention to make the students acquire language. So, the college teachers had recommended that focus to English language skills should start from school level. Even at the school level, the teachers said that the students of class X and XII are committed in board exams, and students till class VIII are not responsible enough to realize the importance of English language. Analyzing all these suggestions and responses, it was decided to study the teaching-learning process at the school level, particularly for classes IX and XI.

**English in the Pre-Independent and Post-Independent India**

English was introduced in India initially for the purpose of trade and commerce. As the traders gave more importance to English language, the British, started educating Indians in English language and formed a committee under the chairmanship of Lord Macaulay in 1835. “Macaulay looked for people who are Indians in color and blood but English in terms of opinions, taste, morals, and intellect” (Macaulay’s Minutes, 1835, ). In 1857, the British replaced English as the medium of instruction in schools and also built Universities with English as the medium of instruction. Indians with English knowledge were given job preference. Meantime, Indians also started realizing the necessity of English language for a government job.
The post-independent India marked several developments in the field of education such as universalization of education, free and compulsory education etc., When the Indian government had to decide its language policy, it made Hindi, the official language. As majority of the states were non-Hindi speaking states, they opposed the initiative of removing English and making Hindi the official language. Taking opposing states into consideration, the Indian government made English, the associate official language for fifteen years with an expectation that the non-Hindi speaking states will learn Hindi within the stipulated time of fifteen years. Meanwhile, English entered all the fields and people even from neglected society came forward to learn English. The Indian government too understood the benefits that India could derive from making English the official language of communication, as it already attained the status of lingua franca and universal language. Thus, English had its firm roots in the pre and post-independent India. According to Estaji and Savarabadi (2020) the major reasons for Indians to learn English is for job opportunities, continuing education, immigration and commercial purposes. Hence, it is necessary to improve English language competency.

*Education Commissions v/s the Present Scenario of ELT*

In order to improve the quality of education, the government appointed several education commissions starting from 1948. Most of the education commissions focused on laying a firm foundation on English education in the school level itself. The commissions like University Education Commission, Secondary Education Commission, Kunzru Commission, Kothari Commission, National Education Policy (1968 & 2020) emphasized three-language formula with English as a compulsory language. Some of the commissions gave special focus to improve English language education, namely, Curriculum for Ten Year School which suggested activity-based teaching, Aacharya Ramamurthi Commission focused on setting English language proficiency level at each grade in schools, National Curriculum Framework and National Knowledge Commission tried to improve English language skills and communication skills, National Focus Group of Teaching English recommended the teachers of English to adopt L2 teaching methods suggested by ELT experts like Chomsky, Prabhu etc.,

Thus, it is evident that the government of India kept continuously monitoring English language education and also suggested necessary measures to enhance English education. Right from the time of independence to 2020, Commissions have tried various patterns of three-language formula. But in all these attempts, the importance given to English education never waned. There have been efforts to retain the importance of the native language. But the placement needs and technological requirements have ensured that English education cannot be compromised. Inspite of such recommendations, the implementation has always been not very satisfactory. Pathak (1999) in his book ‘Teaching English in India’ has observed how English has been taught in India, the difficulties faced by the learners and the setbacks in teaching English. He concludes saying that in India, inspite of the measures taken by the committees to impart English language skills during school and tertiary education there is not much progress. The sad truth is that, what has been observed by Pathak still exists. Inspite of such valid recommendations of several education commissions regarding English education, due to various reasons it has not been very successful in India. Nunan (2003) in his article about educational policies and practices uncovered the problems encountered in English education. He pointed that the age of initial instruction, lack of training for English teachers, a disjunction between curriculum rhetoric and pedagogical reality, ineffective language instruction and frequent changes in the policies and practices in all countries of Asia-Pacific region all these make language instruction unsuccessful. These issues exist in our country right from the initial years of post-independent India.
Literature Review

As mentioned earlier, this study attempts to find out the factors that influence the teaching-learning process in English language classes in government schools, here are some reviews that deal with the factors that affect the TLP in English classrooms. Good material is one of the factors for successful language learning. The material for language teaching has to be chosen with utmost care based on the needs and interests of the students. According to Cook (1996), the choice of materials impacts the motivation level of the students. Learning would take place at a faster rate when the materials used to teach increases students motivation level. He insists that motivation and materials are inter-related and together enhance language learning. Absence of any one will make language learning ineffective.

According to D’souza (2011), language learning is successful when the students are able to use the knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to the outside world, for which he identifies multi-sensory approach to teach English language to be an effective one. In this approach, English is taught using dramatic activities by employing verbal and non-verbal communication aspects to grab the attention of the students. Teachers have to provide opportunities for meaningful communication that relates to real life. This maximises student talk time, develops creativity and also intelligence. In India, it is always a matter of concern that teacher talk time is more than the student talk time and this in no way could enhance language skills. Hence, it is important to choose a method that would facilitate more student talk time.

Agnihotri and Khanna (1995) suggests that in the language classes the focus should be on language skills and the language teachers must be capable to hone students’ language skills without the help of the textbooks. Teachers must look beyond the textbook, teach not just for exams but for real life. In order to do these things, teachers will need regular training on latest theories, teaching methods and teaching strategies. Moving beyond the text will also provide students with proficiency in using English outside their academic environment. They also highlights the exam-oriented teaching-learning process that exists in the Indian education system. They noted that the students are merely coached for examination and not actually being taught. The authors try to explain the above concept more by comparing the education system with the scenario of getting a license. The below quote reveals that the exam system is text based and this leads to deterioration of creative, critical, analytical thinking of the students and fosters only rote learning.

A student in order to get license says the officer that his driving capability has to be tested only in the same university ground where he had been practicing so far. And testing outside other than the practiced area seems to be out of syllabus (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1995)

Hibbert and Foncha (2019) has highlighted the importance of frequent in-service training for teachers to make them gain sound knowledge of the language they teach in order to make teaching more effective and comprehensible and to maintain a successful language learning environment.

Apart from teachers, materials, education system, another important factor that affects teaching-learning process is the lack of adequate infrastructure. Rajeswari (1999) in her dissertation had pointed that institutional factor like library facility, basic amenities in the classroom, insufficient teaching aids, impacts English language learning in and outside the classroom. But as the review of other works indicates there are various other factors like
materials, curriculum and infrastructure that impacts teaching-learning process, this study attempts to identify those factors that hamper the teaching-learning process.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on six theories of which two theories are related to survey research- Daryl Bem’s Self-perception theory and George Homan’s Social Exchange Theory. Self-perception refers to attitude formation and according to this theory, one interprets his own actions from his own behavior. This interpretation is not out of willingness but only because of social influences (Bem, 1972). This study started with the issue of questionnaire, followed it up with interview with the teacher and observed their classes too. Teachers gained self-perception while answering the questionnaire and this reflected in the interview and also in the classroom teaching. Questionnaire became a tool to create awareness among teachers about their teaching and attitude toward ELT. As referred by Tittenbrun (2012), Social Exchange Theory asserts that individuals involve in exchange of information with an expectation of a reward which may not necessarily be monetary always, but, an alteration in the existing scenario. In this study, many teachers had taken part in the survey out of earnest wish to be a part of the change which George Homan’s refers to. No monetary reward was expected. The opportunity given to them to express their views or discrepancies is their chance to make a difference in the education system.

The other three theories deal with teaching-learning process, among which the first theory, Astin’s (2017) Student Involvement Theory claims that along with the content, the three resources, fiscal, financial and human must be brought together for holistic involvement of students and for effective language teaching and learning. This theory in this study has been employed to understand the extent of students’ involvement in English language classes and to find out the reason or encouraging factor that captures student involvement.

The next theory, Gagne’s Conditions of Learning focuses on nine instructions to be followed for successful learning- gaining attention, informing learners of the objective, stimulating recall of prior learning, presenting the stimulus, providing learning guidance, eliciting performance, providing feedback, assessing performance, and enhancing retention and transfer (Gagne, 1965). This theory has been applied in this study during classroom observation to comprehend the teaching method and the way learning takes place in the classroom.

The third theory, Krathwohl’s Affective Domain Taxonomy focuses on the behavior of individuals and its impact on learning. The behavior is the outcome of one’s interest, awareness, attention, concern, responsibility, ability to listen and respond in interactions with others, and finally the ability to demonstrate. He also suggests five stages in his taxonomy, receiving, responding, valuing, organization and characterization by a value. The first three stages correspond to lower-order thinking skills, whereas, the last two corresponds to higher-order thinking skills (Krathwohl, 2011). In order to increase the intellectual ability, the students must be exposed to questions or situations that promote higher order thinking skills. Mere lower-order thinking skills would hinder students’ intellectual capacity. In this study, this theory has been used to categorize the questions raised in the English classroom. The questions were segregated into variables of Lower-order Thinking Skills and Higher-Order Thinking Skills.

This research study borrows concepts from Grounded Theory, developed by Graser and Strauss. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), Grounded Theory is an inductive approach
that provides systematic guidelines for gathering, synthesizing, analyzing and conceptualizing qualitative data for theory construction. This research study was initiated with a research question. Based on the research question, data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations. Further, the data were analysed in-depth and finally the theory was constructed. Thus, this research has adopted ideas from grounded theory, where a theory is constructed or developed at the end of the research study.

**Research Questions**

- What are the factors that impact the teaching-learning process in English classes at the high school level?
- Is there any impact of the revised syllabus, teacher training, and new materials in English language proficiency at the high school level?
- Is there any specific focus on language skills in the English classes at the high school level?

**Methodology of the Study**

This is an exploratory research study and survey method has been used to explore how English is taught to class IX students across Tiruvallur district. Questionnaire, interview, and classroom observation are the three tools used to gather data. As it is exploratory research, it is qualitative in nature, but also uses quantitative aspects for certain aspects of the study. The research started with the pilot study as an attempt to explore how English language is being taught in government schools for class IX and XI and also tried to find teachers' views on English language teaching. The schools chosen for this study were in and around Kanchipuram District. The sample for the pilot study were teachers who teach English for class IX and XI in government schools of Kanchipuram district. Twenty teachers were selected through cluster random sampling method. Questionnaire and Interviews were the tools used for the pilot study.

From the pilot study it was found that most of the students are of low-proficiency and first-generation students which mean the parents and siblings of these students do not hold a degree or even illiterate. The syllabus was also outdated with limited exercises and the testing focused only on rote learning i.e., memorization and reproduction and not on language skills. Because of the exam-oriented system the teachers focus on rote learning. Further, the infrastructure too does not make it conducive to impart language skills. There is no smart class, and the teacher-student ratio is 1:50. The teachers also gave their suggestions to enhance ELT in their classes. They needed more classes for English, all four skills to be properly tested, revised syllabus, 1:35 teacher-student ratio and smart classroom. One important finding was that the researcher was not permitted to study what happens in class XI as these students start learning class XII portions from mid of class XI itself.

**Syllabus Revision**

Samacheer Kalvi (SK) syllabus was followed in schools at the time of pilot study, but in the end of academic year 2016-17 SK syllabus faced severe criticism when Tamilnadu students underperformed in the National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) for medical admission, the pass percentage of state board students was only thirty-nine percent. It was said that students from SK were unable to answer application-oriented questions as SK syllabus encouraged only rote learning. Thus, SK faced severe criticisms and this resulted in the revision of syllabus. As
per the orders of the state government, the Curriculum Framework Committee decided to revise the syllabus and implemented in three phases. Initially, the syllabus was revised for classes I, VI, IX and XI from the academic year 2018-2019. In the second phase, the syllabus got revised for classes II, VII, X and XII and implemented from the academic year 2019-2020 and at the third phase, for classes III, IV, V, VIII from the academic year 2020-2021. The government even conducted a massive teacher training programme in June and July 2018 to make the teachers familiar with the ways to teach the new textbook. As the change in the syllabus will impact the teaching methodology and classroom learning, it became mandatory to learn more about the syllabus and the teacher training given. So, the researcher attended the training sessions with the permission from the school education department. This participation also allowed personal interaction with teachers who participated in the training to find their attitude towards language teaching.

**Analysis of the Teacher Training**

The mentors of the training succeeded in sustaining the attentiveness and interest of the teachers throughout the training. The resource persons did not only lecture but also used individual and group activities in the training. One interesting aspect to be noted was the enthusiasm shown by the participant teachers in taking part in this group, pair or individual activities. They were very involved and active throughout the training sessions. The sessions were considered to be an orientation to the new syllabus and textbook. Three main points were insisted in the teacher training. The first one was that the teachers were asked to focus on language skills to a greater extent rather than concentrating on the content. The second one was that teachers must use only English in the classroom for teaching and also for communication. Tamil can be used only for clarification but not for communication or teaching. The third point was that every class must begin with an activity to improve language skills and end with another such activity. After the inferences from the pilot study and the teacher training, the researcher planned to revise the tools and to make an in-depth comprehensive study on teaching-learning process in class IX.

**The Main Study**

The main study was carried over in government schools across Tiruvallur district so that to make the results generalizable to the entire region. This study adopted survey method with three tools, questionnaire, interview and classroom observation. The samples were selected through cluster random sampling method. The data were collected from one-hundred and thirty-three teacher questionnaire, three hundred and forty student questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with English teachers, principals, and academicians involved in the syllabus preparation, and eighty classroom observations with complete audio recordings. The questionnaire followed a mixed-format which comprised four types of questions- Closed-ended, Open-ended, Dichotomous and Ranking questions which were circulated in person. It had fourteen questions. Interview questions were semi-structured. Three tools namely, Academic Classroom Setting (ACRS) Template, TASR (Teacher Action Student Response) Category System, and Researcher journal were used during classroom observation. ACRS template was an adapted version of Wragg (1999) and Richards (2011) classroom observation templates. On the other hand, the TASR template which is an adapted category system of Flanders Interaction Analysis Category (FIAC) System, which was developed by Ned Flanders in the year 1975 to observe the verbal communication of teachers and students in the classroom (Amatari, 2015). In order to suit the purpose of this study, FIAC was revised and adapted according to the research context and termed as TASR Category System. This adapted version
suitable for this study has totally eleven categories, out of which seven categories were allotted for teacher-action and four for student-response. The teacher-action categories are Motivation (motivation questions, motivation lecture and telling jokes), Commanding or Directing, Lecturing, Questioning, Criticism or Scolding, Giving Feedback (praising, encouraging, correcting mistakes) and Dictating Notes. The student-response categories are Listening, Speaking (Restricted Response, Detailed Response, Initiated Interaction, Doubts), Reading (aloud reading, silent reading) and Writing. In this research study, all the classroom observations were audio recorded. After transcribing the recordings, the researcher started coding the TASR category system by marking the sequence of teacher actions and student response that took place for each half-a-minute separately for each class into particular categories. The same procedure of categorization had been followed for all the classes observed. Further, the TASR Categories of all the classes were merged to find out the percentage of teacher-action and student-response. The researcher's journal was used as a back up to verify the data collected from other sources. All the tools used focused on the teaching-learning process and its varied factors.

Findings

Findings from the Teacher Questionnaire and Interview

The teacher questionnaires and interviews revealed that ninety percent of teachers welcomed the new syllabus. Earlier in the pilot study, most of the teachers had wanted a change in the syllabus and the text book. So, most of these teachers were quite satisfied with the new book which had more exercises for language skills like listening, speaking, reading, writing as well as for grammar and vocabulary. The textbook seemed to be more attractive with many pictures and particularly the incorporation of technology (QR code) excited both teachers and students. QR Code given in the textbook had access to additional exercises and were learner-centric. Students were expected to explore these on their own. They also considered teacher training very useful as they were able to learn the various features of the new textbook and techniques to teach the new textbook. A few teachers had apprehension about the new textbook. They felt that the textbook had too many exercises to be completed within the stipulated time period. Further, they felt that grammar exercises were not graded from simple to complex. The vocabulary given in the text was not very easy and relatable to students. These teachers felt that this book was not suitable for government school students who were mostly first-generation students. These teachers further commented that as the existing classroom did not have adequate facilities that would help in accessing the QR code contents, the mere incorporation of technology integrated content would not be of much use to students unless they have access to it.

The teachers who liked the text also felt that existing hours would not be enough to practice all the given exercises in the text and QR code. They wanted an additional hour exclusively for teaching language skills. A large number of students strength in these classes also make it difficult for teachers from giving individual attention to these students. Students were encouraged to learn rote learning which would help them in scoring marks. The mark-centric assessment model was also not very helpful for real-time learning.

Findings from the Student Questionnaire

One of the major learning from the distribution of students’ questionnaire was that most of the students did not understand the questionnaire as it was in English. Each question had to be
explained by the teacher or the researcher for them to understand. So, if students had problems in understanding and answered blindly without asking for clarification, the data would not be completely credible. Based on their answers it could be inferred that they viewed English in two forms – one as a subject to get good marks and the other as a language for communication. They assumed both were separate. They were keen to improve their language skills. As they did not have enough opportunity to use English outside the classroom, their proficiency was affected. As many of these students were first-generation students, they were not bold enough to ask doubts to their teachers. Without asking and getting their doubts clarified, they would never be able to correct their mistakes.

**Findings from Classroom Observation**

Based on the findings from ACRS template, it can be inferred that poor infrastructure affects the teaching-learning process. Lack of light, ventilation, seating arrangements creates discomfort to both students and teachers and consequently teaching-learning process suffers. Teaching aids are supposed to help in the teaching-learning process. Blackboard and chart were predominantly utilized but lack of space for charts resulted in them being stored than displayed. The very purpose of using teaching aids gets defeated here.

The new textbook had integrated technology but the classrooms were not equipped with appropriate infrastructure to access the additional exercises via QR code. Students were unable to utilize these resources though they were available to them. The short-sightedness in implementation can be blamed for this issue. Inspite of the teacher training, most of the classes were teacher-centric and lecturing. Teacher Talk Time was more than the Student Talk Time. In most of the classes’ language activities were not conducted. Again, teacher cannot be completely held responsible for this. Lack of time, mark-driven exam pattern and poor infrastructure led to teachers reverting back to old style of teaching. Teachers too have their own baggage. They have pre-conceived notion about what students can learn and what they can’t. They end up spoon-feeding and unconsciously hindering students’ language learning by making mistakes. Teachers feel they don’t have enough time to allow students to make mistakes and learn from them.

All the classroom recordings were transcribed, noted in the Teacher-Action and Student-Response (TASR) Category System and analyzed. Teacher action was forty-four percent and the student response was fifty-six percent. Though students’ responses had a higher percentage, most of their responses were passive listening. It was not spontaneous or original responses. It was either following teachers' directions, or responding with one-word answers, or just blindly obeying teacher's orders. Therefore, even if students' responses seemed higher, there was not much language used spontaneously. As far as the four skills LSRW are concerned, listening was more passive listening, speaking was mostly limited to one-word answers, reading was loud reading of the text or poem or discrete words, and writing was limited to copying from the board. Thus, Language learning was also more of rote learning than practicing language skills. The figure 1.1 and 1.2 depicts clearly the percentage of teacher action and student response categories.
Teachers seemed to spend their teaching time in lecturing, motivating, correcting errors and clarifying doubts in various percentages. In most of the classes which were teacher-centric, students were passive learners. They learnt their grammar items well but were not allowed to explore on their own in using the language. Tamil or bilingual was preferred in classroom communication. Though Tamil was their mother tongue, students responded better when they...
were scolded in English. This could be due to the association of English to authority figures - a colonial hangover.

Analysis of the Findings of Questionnaires, Interviews and Classroom Observations

The findings from all these tools of survey research gave inputs on various factors related to the teaching-learning process. In order to attempt to understand the underlying pattern and identifying the correlation between these factors, coding was used. This research study employs Gallicano’s coding method which would be helpful for a qualitative analysis of a research study. There are three types of coding: Open coding, Axial coding and Selective coding. Open coding identifies all types of phenomena that are being observed in the form of field notes or journal. The various elements or evidences are observed and noted down. A tentative label is created for chunks of data. Analyzing these chunks of data, a common relationship between these chunks is identified as categories. These categories form the axial coding. Studying the axial coding and arriving at a core category is called as Selective coding (Gallicano’s, 2014). The below tables present the qualitative data in chunks which is open coding. Axial coding tries to find the underlying relationship between these open codes. Selective coding, on the other hand, attempts to identify the core variables of these relationships. The axial and selective coding has been done for the open coding based on the research question.

RQ1: What are the factors that impact teaching-learning process in English classes at the high school level?

Table 1

Factors that impact TLP

| Open Coding                     | Axial Coding                                                                 | Selective Coding                                                                 |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Making mistakes while teaching | Teachers need more training to teach. No updating of teacher education       | • Teacher’s error gives a wrong role model for students to follow.                 |
| Teachers’ pre-conceived notion that government school students are not enough capable to understand English | Teachers’ need more counselling to change their own attitude                    | • Teacher’s attitude create obstacle in teaching-learning process.                 |
| Passive Learning               | Lecture method used by teacher                                              | • Teacher’s lack of experience                                                   |
| First-generation students      | Affective factors not addressed                                              | • Teacher’s need training in counselling students.                               |
| Students want to use English   | Students interest can be engaged in the right way                            | • Spoon-feeding by teacher to ensure hundred percentage pass percentage.          |
| Use of L1 to teach L2          | Focus should be on improving language skills rather transferring of content. | • Lack of time to allow students to experiment with language.                    |
| Rote Learning                  | Spoon feeding                                                                |                                                                                   |
Among various factors impacting teaching-learning process, teacher plays a vital role. Teacher’s attitude about their students, their capabilities and abilities impact what they decide to teach in class. Instead of L2, the target language, L1 is used in the L2 class to a larger extent. This in turn leaves the students without enough exposure to English language. Moreover, teacher with inadequate training can create further problem in students understanding of concepts. Teacher’s mistakes set a wrong role model for students who don’t have other avenue to learn the right models. Education system has also impacted the teaching-learning process in classroom. The overt importance to get good marks influence the teaching and learning process. Teachers end up spoon-feeding and students do rote-learning to get good marks. Eventually, in all these processes actual learning of language gets affected. Large classes and less time to practice too affects the teaching-learning process.

RQ2: Is there any impact of revised syllabus, new materials and teacher training on English language proficiency at the high school level?

Table 2

Impact of syllabus, materials and training

| Open Coding                      | Axial Coding                  | Selective Coding                                      |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Unrelatable content              | Lack of comprehension         | • No language production, only rote-learning          |
| Omission of Portions             | Lack of time                  | • No chance to promote language skills, this affects students’ language proficiency |
| Difficult to access QR Code      | Lack of Infrastructure        | • Impacts language learning inspite of available resources |
| Memory Based Questions (LOTS)    | Lack of Training              |                                                        |
| Focus more on comprehension than use | Content oriented teaching |                                                        |
Lack of opportunity to use the language  |  Students not given adequate time to experiment with L2  |  • Lack of teacher training affects classroom teaching resulting in low language proficiency of students.  
| Focus on making students pass  |  Spoon feeding  |  • Exam focused teaching- needs reforms in testing  
|  |  |  • Inadequate time given for language skills

With regard to syllabus, training and materials, teachers found the content culturally alien and felt students will not be able to understand. Lack of adequate training affected the way teachers could have explored the text and made it relatable to students. Systemic issues like improper testing of language skills impacted teaching-learning. Though syllabus was changed and new textbook introduced, because of the unchanged testing pattern teachers resorted to older style of teaching. Updated teacher training did not make any impact as testing did not change extensively. Infrastructural issues also stopped students from accessing online materials.

RQ3: Is there any specific focus on language skills in the English classes at the high school level?

Table 3

Factors that impact teaching of language skills

| Open Coding | Axial Coding | Selective Coding |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Passive listening | Teacher-centered class | Teacher training needed |
| Less attention to students | Large classes | Systemic problem – student-teacher ratio and lack of time |
| Restricted Responses | Affective factors | Lack of proficiency is due to lack of practice |
| Lack of proficiency in English | Lack of confidence causing from affective factors | Teacher should be a counsellor – teacher training should address this. |
| Responding mostly in L1 | Lack of practice | Lack of practice in writing coherent passages |
| Loud reading | Focus is on pronunciation but not on comprehension and language production | Systemic problems like testing methods hinder language education. |
| Silent Reading | No language production but passive reading | Testing reforms needed |
| Reproducing in writing | Spoon feeding |  |
| Sentence level writing | Limited language production |  |
| Language skills not properly tested | Inefficient testing pattern |  |
| Lack of language Proficiency | No enough exposure and practice |  |

There are certain overlapping elements in the coding. The main aspects that can be inferred from the coding process are: teacher factors that influence the teaching-learning process are teachers’ preconceived notion that their students can’t understand and use English. So, they don’t encourage their students to use L2. Teachers themselves are not proficient in English.
which in turn affects the students. The teacher factors itself pave way for learner factors like spoon-feeding practiced by teachers in the classroom which affects students’ creativity. Lack of encouragement from teachers to use English leads to missing opportunities and lack of practice which in turn results in lack of proficiency in English. Affective factor of students too impacts their use of L2 in class. The other most important factor that impacts the teaching-learning process relates to the education system itself. Certain aspects of teaching-learning process which require permissions from higher authorities like large classes, mark-driven testing, less time for English classes, irrelevant content, inadequate teacher training, lack of attention to affective factors etc., affect the teaching-learning process on the whole. The coding process reveals that systemic change when happens, should take the ground reality into account and plan accordingly. Textbook revision, teacher training and classroom teaching should reflect this change appropriately. Teacher involvement and learner engagement are both considered very essential for an effective teaching-learning process to take place.

**Major Inferences from the Findings**

The questionnaire findings, interviews and classroom observations, and coding were organized and studied in detail, the major inferences drawn are as follows:

- Teachers, though told to follow learner-centered teaching, were able to offer teacher-centered classes only. Lecturing took up their maximum time in their teaching. In a class, which was intended to be skills-centered, the focus was more on the content than skills.
- Teachers’ use of the target language in class depended on the language proficiency of the students. As most of the students were first-generation students, teachers inevitably used Tamil in the classroom. The focus was on making students understand the lessons as well as teacher instructions. But interestingly, students preferred being scolded in English than their mother tongue. They were prompt in their response when they were scolded in English.
- As testing was content-specific, teaching was also content-based. Writing answers on the board, giving answers to text exercises and other such text-based activities encouraged rote learning and mechanical drilling of information.
- Extensive importance was given to reading and writing skills as they were only tested in the final exams. Even those skills were not taught and tested properly. It was merely of memorization and reproduction of content in the exams. Listening and speaking were relegated to occasional practice in the classes. Lack of proficiency is due to lack of practice.
- Teachers’ attitude and their preconceived notions about students did impact their teaching and affected students too. They believed that textbook exercises will be difficult for the students to answer on their own so they do not expect the students to write on their own. This low belief about these students affected the teaching-learning process.
- Lack of infrastructure too impacted the teaching-learning process. QR code, the unique feature of the new book was not easily accessed due to lack of technological support. Students missed out learning from QR code exercises.
- Lack of importance to languages in class X, XI and XII has also ended up with students’ lack of English language proficiency.
- In the teaching-learning process, teacher action occupied the majority of time whereas student response was minimal.
- Syllabus revision which happened to equip the students with necessary skills to get through NEET exam and other competitive exams and the teacher training given to
make the teachers understand language teaching was successfully done but, it faced challenges and problems when it was implemented.

- Inspite of these changes, classroom teaching remained the same. Teachers continued to lecture, write notes on the board and shout at children. But teachers too cannot be blamed because at times the reason for lack of implementation was other things like lack of infrastructure, lack of time, rigid testing pattern and students’ capabilities.
- For any changes to be accepted, all stakeholders need to be involved and held accountable.

The results and the hypotheses of this study is relatable to all small towns and villages particularly in south India and in these places, exposure to English has been restricted to schools as it is in Tiruvallur district. ELT researches in India has more focussed on single aspect like, teaching methodologies, analysis of syllabus, testing pattern etc., The unique feature of this research is that it is an empirical study done to identify the factors that impact English language teaching-learning process. This study emphasis that rather than focussing on factors impacting English language teaching and learning as discrete elements, it would be worthwhile if a holistic approach is done on how English language is being taught. Alexander Astin’s refers to Student Involvement Theory which says fiscal, financial and human resources, together contributes holistic involvement of the students for effective language learning. Hence, it is necessary to holistically look at the discrepancies related to all the factors involved in successful teaching-learning process in English classes and make necessary amendments.

Any educational reform has to begin from the ground level, i.e., from the students, teachers and finally to the stake holders. But in India, the educational policies so far implemented was not much successful because it was a top-down approach i.e., it gave least importance to the area where it is going to be implemented. There was no attention paid to change the teachers’ attitude and pre-conceived notion that students are incapable and students too blindly adhere to the teachers and without giving equal importance to the teachers, students, stakeholders, infrastructure, teaching methods, testing pattern, the new policies become unsuccessful. Hence, a bottom-up approach in policies is essential to make the teaching learning process effective.

The Hypotheses

This research has adopted ideas from grounded theory and followed an inductive approach, where hypothesis is constructed or developed at the end of the research study. After analysing the results, the following hypotheses have been derived:

- Positive changes in the teaching-learning process will happen if bottom-up approach is adopted by addressing preconceived notions and faulty perceptions of both teachers and students.
- Change of syllabus along with new materials focusing on all four language skills complemented by teacher training will be effective only if the testing pattern is also changed.
- Student engagement in the learning process, teacher involvement, use of authentic materials, access to appropriate technology, the practice of all four language skills, infrastructural support, interactive content, and learner-centered classroom all lead to a positive language learning environment.
Conclusion

For any successful educational reforms to transfer effectively to the classroom, the policy change should be properly reflected at the grass-root level. Thus, for successful implementation of any policy, we need to have all stakeholders- government, schools, teachers, academicians, parents, students to take equal responsibility and accountability to ensure the success of the teaching-learning process. UNESCO's new Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/18 as mentioned in 'The Hindu' (2017) points out that providing universal quality education is a shared responsibility of several stakeholders like governments, schools, teachers, parents, the media, international organizations and private sector. To conclude, the government should foresee the students’ future and provide needed support like frequent teacher training, regular updating of syllabus and quality education, infrastructural support and a learner-centered teaching environment. The schools have to monitor the implementation of the curriculum and would buy the necessary teaching-learning materials that are essential to achieve the goals of the curriculum. Teachers should inculcate the importance of education in the students’ minds. They must keep updating themselves in every aspect of teaching like methodology, materials etc., through all available means. They must keep students engaged in the learning process. With the right involvement of both teachers and students, the use of appropriate materials in an advantageous environment will lead to an effective English language teaching-learning scenario.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Classroom Observation Transcription**

M – Motivation, L – Lecture, Q – Questions, C – Commands, L – Listening, RR – Restricted Response, DR – Detailed Response, R (A) – Reading (Aloud)

Table 4

| Minutes | Transcription                                                                                                                                 | Category |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 00:00   | SS - Good Afternoon miss<br>T - Good Afternoon<br>T - take the poem stopping by woods on a snowy evening                                       | RR<br>M<br>C |
| 00:30   | T - Is it a memory poem or what?<br>SS - Memory poem<br>T - Who is the poet?<br>SS - Robert Frost                                                                 | Q<br>RR<br>Q<br>RR |
| 01:00   | T - Robert Frost is a nature poet. He loves nature and he enjoys nature and he writes about nature. Now we are going to see the poem Stopping by woods on a snowy | L |
evening. Look into your books. Teacher starts reading the lines.

| Time  | Activity                                                                 |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1:30  | T - Continues reading                                                      |
| 2:00  | T - Continues reading, explains                                           |
|       | T - Where is the poet going?                                              |
|       | SS - Going to the forest                                                  |
| 2:30  | T - What is woods? explaining forest in detail                             |
| 3:00  | T - Woods mean what did I say?                                            |
|       | SS - Forest                                                               |
|       | T - Explains more about forest                                            |
| 3:30  | T - Explanation Continues                                                |
| 4:00  | T - Who is watching the snowfall?                                        |
|       | SS - Robert Frost                                                         |
|       | Interruption                                                             |
| 4:30  | Interruption                                                             |
|       | T - Queer means what?                                                    |
|       | SS - Strange                                                             |
| 5:00  | T - Explains the poem                                                     |
|       | T - Where he is stopping?                                                |
|       | SS - Forest                                                               |

| Time  | Activity                                                                 |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5:30  | T - Explains                                                             |
|       | T - Frozen means what?                                                   |
|       | SS - புழக்கும் (Tamil translation)                                       |
| 6:00  | T - Explains the poem                                                     |
|       | T - Lake means what?                                                     |
|       | SS - ஏரி (Tamil translation)                                             |
| 6:30  | T - Explains                                                             |
| 7:00  | T - Explains                                                             |
| 7:30  | T - Explains                                                             |
|       | T - Who has harness bells?                                               |
|       | SS - Horse                                                               |
| 8:00  | T - Explains                                                             |
| 8:30  | T - Explains                                                             |
|       | T - What is that?                                                        |
|       | SS - Snowfall                                                            |
| 9:00  | T - Explains                                                             |
|       | T - Lovely means?                                                        |
|       | SS - Beautiful                                                           |
| 9:30  | T - Explains                                                             |
| 10:00 | T - Explains                                                             |
| 10:30 | T - Explains, gives conclusion                                           |
| 11:00 | T - Explains Figures of speech                                           |
|       | T - What are the rhyming word in the first stanza?                       |
| Time  | Question                                                                 | Answer |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 11.30 | T - In the second stanza?                                                | RR Q   |
|       | SS – queer, near, year                                                  | RR Q   |
|       | T - In the third stanza?                                                | RR Q   |
|       | SS – shake, flake, mistake                                              | RR Q   |
|       | T - In the fourth stanza?                                               | RR Q   |
|       | SS – deep, keep, sleep, sleep                                            | RR Q   |
| 12.00 | T - What is the first stanza rhyme scheme?                               | Q RR   |
|       | SS - AABA                                                                | RR Q   |
|       | T - What words you see to identify scheme?                               | Q RR   |
|       | SS – Last words                                                          | RR Q   |
|       | T - What is second stanza rhyme scheme?                                  | Q RR   |
|       | SS – BBCB                                                                | RR Q   |
| 12:30 | T - For third stanza?                                                   | Q RR   |
|       | SS - CCDC                                                                | RR Q   |
|       | T - For fourth stanza?                                                  | Q RR   |
|       | SS - DDDDD                                                               | RR Q   |
|       | T - Do you know what is alliteration?                                    | Q RR   |
|       | SS - Yes miss                                                            | RR Q   |
| 13:00 | T - What is alliteration in the fourth line?                             | Q RR   |
|       | SS - Watch woods                                                         | RR Q   |
|       | T - What is alliteration? The repetition of consonant letters           | RR Q   |
| 13:30 | T - Third stanza first line alliteration?                                | Q RR   |
|       | SS - His harness                                                        | RR Q   |
| 14:00 | T - Lecture on personification                                          | L RR   |
|       | T - What is personification in third stanza?                            | Q RR   |
|       | SS - He                                                                  | RR Q   |
| 14:30 | T - Any one stand and start reading the first stanza and next other girls| C RR   |
|       | SS - Student stands and reads, and this continues                       | R (A)  |
| 15:00 | SS - Student reads                                                       | R (A)  |
| 15:30 | SS - Student reads                                                       | R (A)  |
|       | T - Take exercise question pg 107.                                       | C RR   |
| 16.00 | T - Who does he refer to?                                               | Q RR   |
|       | SS - Owner of the forest                                                 | DR Q   |
|       | T - What season is it?                                                  | RR Q   |
|       | SS - Winter                                                              | RR Q   |
|       | T - Who is the speaker?                                                 | RR Q   |
|       | SS - Poet                                                                | RR Q   |
| 16:30 | T - Pick rhyming words? SS – Queer, near                                 | RR Q   |
| 17:00 | T - He refers to whom?                                                  | RR Q   |
|       | SS - Horse                                                               | RR Q   |
|       | T - How horse communicates?                                             | RR Q   |
|       | SS - By shaking the bells                                                | DR Q   |
|       | T - How are the woods?                                                  | RR Q   |
|       | SS - The woods are lovely dark and deep                                   | RR Q   |
| 17:30 | T - I refer to whom?                                                    | RR Q   |
|       | SS - Poet                                                                | RR Q   |
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| T -Who is the poet? |
|---------------------|
| SS - Robert Frost   |
| T – What promises you have in your life, like the speaker? |

| 18:00 |
|-------|
| T -Summarizing the poem |
| T –Thankyou |
| SS –Thank you miss |

L – 37 (Student Listening was counted for half a minute)

Appendix B: TASR Coding Sheet

Table 5

TASR Coding Table

| Teacher Action Categories (TAC) | Student Response Categories (SRC) | Total |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| L / C Q D / C M C / S FB DN LS SPK RD WR | RR DR II D A SI |       |
| 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 | | | |
LCT – Lecture, Q – Questioning, D/C – Directing/Commanding, M – Motivation, C/S – Criticism/Scolding, FB – Feedback, DN – Dictating Notes, LS- Listening, SPK – Speaking, RR- Restricted Response, DR – Detailed Response, II- Initiated Interaction, D – Doubts, RD – Reading, A – Aloud, S – Silent, WR - Writing

Percentage of Teacher Action:
(Categories 1+2+3+4+5+6+7) * 100 / Total No. of all Categories = 64*100/141
= 45.39%

Percentage of Student Response:
(Categories 8+9+10+11) * 100/Total No. of all Categories = 77*100/141
= 54.60%

Percentage of Lecturing:
Category 1*100/Total No. of all Teacher Action Categories = 21*100/64 = 32.81%

Percentage of Questioning:
Category 2*100/Total No. of all Teacher Action Categories = 37*100/64 =57.81%

Percentage of Directing:
Category 3*100/Total No. of all Teacher Action Categories = 4*100/64 =6.25%

Percentage of Motivation:
Category 4*100/Total No. of all Teacher Action Categories = 2*100/64 =3.12%

Percentage of Student Listening:
Category 8*100/Total No. of all Student Response Categories =37*100/77 =48.05%

Percentage of Student Speaking:
Category 9*100/Total No. of all Student Response = 37*100/77 =48.05%

Percentage of Student Restricted Response:
Category 9(RR) *100/Total No. of all Student Response = 33*100/77 =42.85%

Percentage of Student Detailed Response:
Category 9(DR)*100/Total No. of all Student Response = 4*100/77 =5.19%

Percentage of Student Reading Activity:
Category 10(A)*100/Total No. of all Student Response Categories = 3*100/77 =3.89%

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