

## The New English Curriculum - Perceptions of Teachers

A. Bharathi, M.Sc., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.

### Abstract

**Introduction** - If we strongly intend to raise the standards of students to international levels and reap the benefits of the time and on-going global changes, there lies the necessity to reform the English language curriculum. The government of Andhra Pradesh thus has introduced English for the first time for class I in 2011-12 and class II in 2012-13 in all Non-English medium schools. The text book for I, II & III classes at the primary level and VI and VII classes at the upper primary level have been changed for the academic year 2012-13. So, all classes from I to X have English as one of the subjects, irrespective of the medium of instruction. A common English text book was introduced from June 2012.

**Aim** - The present study is an attempt to study how the lately revised English language curriculum of the VI and VII classes is being implemented by the teachers and to determine the factors that influence its implementation as perceived by the teachers.

**Methodology of Study** - The investigators adopted the 'Survey Method,' for study about the English curriculum implementation in VI and VII classes on a random sample of 435 teachers of English in Government and private schools of both English and Telugu medium in Krishna District.

**Findings** - A moderate 65% of teachers had good perceptions i.e. to an extent of 66% about the goals and objectives of English curriculum. And, out of all the variables under study, age, gender, type of school and the type of management made a significant difference on the perceptions of the teachers. A moderate 72% of teachers had good perceptions i.e. to an extent of 76% about the content of English curriculum. And, out of all the variables under study, location of the school, gender, educational qualification and type of management made a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum.

**Key words:** Language Curriculum, Curriculum implementation, Teachers' perceptions

## Introduction

The backbone of all human interaction is language. Language is the link to comprehending and transferring knowledge from the abstract to the concrete. Language taken away from the learning process leaves one in a big void. Be it Mathematics, Science, Social studies, Physical education, Craft, Music or any branch of knowledge, the common thread that binds them together is language. It is the language skill that helps the learner comprehend or express ideas. Language helps one to thrive successfully in a social environment, improves one's imagination and creativity. A language is a highly complex set of systems, structures, and rules and consequently the process of learning is fairly complicated. Therefore, a learner who wishes to learn a language, has to first learn how to do it, and has to build up his/her confidence in his/her ability to do it.

Researchers have shown that the more languages one knows, the better would be their knowledge and scholastic development. Developing a language curriculum for a multilingual country like India which has over 1,650 languages is a tough proposition. The educational authorities though realize the importance of developing multilingual abilities in the learners, the dilemma exists not merely in the choice of L<sub>1</sub>, L<sub>2</sub> or L<sub>3</sub> but in making the right decision on the quantum of each language in the curriculum. The choice of the first language, most education commissions say, should be the mother tongue which more often is the regional language. For cultural, social, political, and economic reasons and more to keep ourselves in touch with the ever growing knowledge on the international arena, English was given a due status in the Indian Educational system. And, Hindi is our national language, promotion of which is a necessity.

When it comes to English language, the Central Advisory Board on Education (1956), which proposed and adopted the three language formula as early as in 1961, made English an integral part of the school education, along with the regional language and another modern Indian language. National Educational Policies also accentuated the teaching/ learning of English. English taught as a 5 year course was expected to enable the learner to use English as a library language so as to keep himself abreast of the dynamic changes in the different fields of knowledge and also enable the learner to pursue higher or professional education apart from adorning him/her with a linguistic competence and communicative proficiency. The English language course comes to an end, but not all the pupils learn everything by the end of the course. They leave school even when there is far too much to learn. Stern points out, "The learner of a second language should be able to use it as efficiently as they use their first language" (Sharma 2011, p.30). This paved way to the need for a

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A. Bharathi, M.Sc., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.

The New English Curriculum - Perceptions of Teachers

systematic review of prevailing English Language curriculum and English Language Teaching (ELT) practices

The National Curriculum Frame Work 2005 (NCF–2005) envisaged that the three language formula needs to be implemented in its right spirit promoting multi-lingual communicative abilities. It determined the goals of language education in general and English in particular as twofold:

1. Attainment of basic fluency such as is required in natural language learning
  2. The development of language as an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition
- NCF – 2005 ( NCERT 2005, p.39)

### **The English Language Curriculum**

The very purpose of the language education will be reflected in the curriculum and its content. The curricular areas, syllabus in the text book, learning material and class room transactions reflect the aims and goals of language education. First, curriculum renewal has moved forward from a preoccupation with the formal structure of language to its major notions and functions. With it has come an acceptance of the learner's centrality in the entire operation. Awareness that the learner's efforts at working out and arriving at meanings hold the key to success, has provided researchers with the incentive to discover and enhance the value of learning strategies. Also, reform in methodology has begun to include innovative ways of organizing group/pair work and co-operative learning on the one hand, and task based and reflected teaching on the other.

When it comes to the development of English language curriculum, decisions on primary objectives in teaching English are very important, as these decisions determine the approach, curriculum, content, syllabus, methods, techniques, testing and assessment procedures. It is equally important to decide on when to introduce English in schools. In consideration of the status English takes on the world stage and the reflection of this in the national arena, and also taking into view the people's aspirations, a relatively late introduction of English in the school curriculum as recommended in spirit in policy documents has resulted in dissatisfaction. Alternatively, the Andhra Pradesh State Government introduced English in Non-English medium schools in class III. But on a careful survey on how best the curriculum has been implemented, it was understood that the number of effective users of English amongst the school leavers was abysmally low and felt the necessity to reform the English language curriculum.

Basing on the recommendations of NCF 2005, the Government of Andhra Pradesh prepared the Andhra Pradesh State Curriculum Framework (APSCF) in 2011 after a laborious research and consultations with English language teaching experts. The experts felt that the teaching of English should be revamped and the new text book in English for all classes should be prepared on a constructivist paradigm. New text book committees were formed for both primary and upper primary classes. Subsequently, the government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced English as a second language for the first time for class I in 2011-12 and class II in 2012-13 in all Non-English medium schools. The text book for I, II & III classes at the primary level and VI and VII classes at the upper primary level have been changed for the academic year 2012-13. So, all classes from I to X have English as one of the subjects, irrespective of the medium of instruction. In order to have parity among students of English and Non English medium schools, a common English text book was introduced from June 2012. This enables the Non English medium child to learn English as effectively as the child in an English medium does.

Owing to the well-established fact that proficiency in English is a major key to success, both, in national and international contexts, utmost care and significance is given to English language teaching and learning at all levels by the state Government. Elis (1996) mentions that for English as a Second Language (ESL) students' language learning is part and parcel of survival and growth. However, English language acquisition is still not at the desired level as, too many students at various levels complain about not knowing and using English. A major share of students is a failure when it comes to job interviews and higher education.

With due consideration to problems encountered in implementing a curriculum, the English curriculum framed by the educational authorities has always been dynamic and flexible accommodating all such changes resulting from the interaction with English teachers, students, materials and daily life in an English classroom. The present study is thus an attempt to study how the lately revised English language curriculum of the VI and VII classes that emerged from a laborious research and the collaborative efforts of English language teaching experts, teacher educators and experienced educationists, is perceived by the teachers teaching English and to determine the factors that influence its implementation

## **Review of Related Literature**

**Akinbote and Ogunsanwo. (2003)**, reported that the use of mother tongue in the process of teaching and learning in the early years helps, not only to preserve and value one's culture but

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 17:4 April 2017  
A. Bharathi, M.Sc., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.  
The New English Curriculum - Perceptions of Teachers

also to develop it lexically. According to the authors, the use of English language instead of mother tongue, in the early primary school makes the average primary school child unable to be sufficiently literate in either the mother tongue or English language. They felt that using English language at that level will lead the children to having a mental translation of all concepts presented in English language to their mother tongue in order to gain sufficient meaning of the concepts presented.

**Ali (2005)**, in the study on the use of English language in 3 primary schools in the East coast of Malaysia, found that the use of the English language was limited only to the English subject classroom and English as an interaction medium outside the classroom was “practically non-existent”. Students from other regular government schools and schools which are away from the influence of the main cities have less exposure to an English speaking environment. Besides, in areas away from cities, English is not a language that is commonly used as everyday language for transactions and even conversations.

**Kang (2007)**, concluded that teachers and students’ level of proficiency in communicating in English and adequate motivation are also very important in using English as a second language (L2) in the language classrooms. In the study conducted in Korea on TETE, Teaching English Through English, it has been found that the Korean EFL teachers viewed the practice of TETE as obstructing due to their lack of communicative competence as well as students’ low level of proficiency and inadequate motivation. Teachers’ limited proficiency has also been argued to be commonly found in Asian EFL context (**Kelly, 2002**)

**Kumar (2003)**, in a study on the English language teaching competencies and training needs of private and government school teachers of Allahabad, reported that 60% of the English teachers of both government and private schools felt the need of in-service training for developing the following competencies – identifying learning needs and interest of the students for operating the AV aids, adoption of group discussion technique, to establish association between sound and object, to enable pupils to think in English and adoption of structural approach.

**Manivelan and Dhivya (2015)** reported that the teaching of “grammar” through different activities like games is better than teaching grammar as a formal system that includes mere exercises in the textbook. The process of teaching grammar through game-based activities, attempts to improve students’ sentence constructing, writing without grammatical errors and other such language skills and abilities.

**Peter (2009)**, discussing the notion of best practices in the teaching of English, explores the elusive "silver bullet"—the teaching method that always works. In the study various approaches like the structured process approach and individualized teaching approaches were discussed. The study analyzed the merits and applicability of different approaches in social, cultural, and historical perspective. However, the study admits that there is no one best practice and so the author preferred to shift the term "best practice" to "principled practice," which invests a great deal of authority and responsibility in the teacher.

**Sultana (2014)** in her research study to understand why Bangladeshi students remain noticeably weak, even at tertiary level, in communicating in English though they have learned English academically for about twelve years before reaching that level, found that some of the major problems included the prevalent public examination systems, lack of both teachers' and students' proficiency, shortage of trained teachers, teacher beliefs, and lack of student motivation.

**Thangaswamy & Mary (2005)**, reported that the group of students taught through actions and oral practice was better in its oral comprehension and expression of the selected grammatical features in English than those taught by the conventional method – writing, reading and translating.

### **Demographic Variables**

The variables considered for the present study are location of the school, age, gender, educational qualification, type of school, teaching experience, type of management

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To find out the perceptions of the teachers towards the implementation of English curriculum.
2. To find out the perceptions of teachers towards the implementation of English curriculum with respect to the following areas and to classify them separately
  - a) The goals and objectives of English curriculum.
  - b) The content of English curriculum.
3. To find and analyse the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum with respect to the following dimensions.
  - a) Listening and speaking
  - b) Reading Comprehension

- c) Vocabulary
  - d) Grammar
  - e) Conventions of writing
  - f) Creative expression
4. To find and analyse the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum with respect to the following dimensions.
    - a) Listening and speaking
    - b) Reading Comprehension
    - c) Vocabulary
    - d) Grammar
    - e) Conventions of writing
    - f) Other components
  5. To find out the influence of the variables on the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum.
  6. To find out the influence of the variables on the perceptions of teachers about the content of English curriculum.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

In view of the above objectives, the following null hypotheses have been formulated for the purpose of the study.

#### **Hypothesis 1**

There would be no significant influence of the variables on the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum.

#### **Hypothesis 2**

There would be no significant influence of the variables on the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum.

### **Delimitations of the study**

1. The study was restricted to the English curriculum implementation of VI and VII classes only.
2. The study is restricted to the English curriculum which came into implementation in the academic year 2012-13 only.

3. The present study was limited to a sample of 435 teachers only.
4. The study was confined to the English language teachers in schools from both rural and urban areas of Krishna district only.
5. The study was limited to investigate the perceptions of English language teachers only.

### **Population and Sample**

The population for the study consisted of teachers teaching English in Government and private schools of both English and Telugu medium in Krishna District. The investigator had randomly selected a sample of 435 teachers from the rural and urban schools of Krishna District.

### **The Tool (Questionnaire for Teachers)**

A self-constructed tool was prepared for the study. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the questionnaire for teachers was divided into two parts. Each part was so designed to cover one specific area considered for this study. The first section of the tool furnished 'Personal Information'.

The first area of study was 'Perceptions about goals and objectives of English Curriculum', and the second area was entitled 'Perceptions about content'.

Content validity was established with the help of subject experts and also by employing the statistical method, Chi-square analysis. Reliability of the tool was established by split half method and the reliability coefficient was 0.79.

### **Findings**

1. The perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum are to an extent of 66%. And, out of the total sample of 435 teachers, 91(21%) had low, 282 (65%) teachers had moderate and 62 (14%) had high perceptions on the goals and objectives of English curriculum.
2. The perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum are to an extent of 76%. Out of the total sample of 435 teachers, 47(11%) had low, 313 (72%) teachers had moderate and 75 (17%) had high perceptions on the content of English curriculum
3. The teachers have comparatively better perceptions about the goals and objectives of English curriculum with respect to reading comprehension, followed by listening and speaking,

- followed by conventions of writing, followed by vocabulary, followed by grammar, and followed by creative expression.
4. The teachers have comparatively better perceptions about the content of English curriculum with respect to grammar, followed by reading comprehension, followed by listening and speaking, followed by conventions of writing, followed by other components, and followed by vocabulary.
  5. Location of the school does not make a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum.
  6. Age makes a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum. Teachers of the age group 25-34 years significantly differ from teachers of the other age groups. It can be stated that teachers of the age group 25-34 have better perceptions about the goals and objectives of English curriculum when compared to teachers of the other age groups.
  7. Gender makes a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum. Male teachers significantly differ from female teachers. It can be stated that male teachers have better perceptions with regard to goals and objectives than female teachers.
  8. Educational qualification does not make a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum.
  9. Type of school makes a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum. Teachers from English medium schools significantly differ from teachers working in Telugu medium schools. It can be stated that teachers working in English medium schools have better perceptions about the goals and objectives of English curriculum when compared to their counterparts working in Telugu medium schools.
  10. Teaching experience does not make a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum.
  11. Type of management makes a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum. Private school teachers significantly differ from Government school teachers. It can be stated that private school teachers have better perceptions about the goals and objectives of English curriculum when compared to their counterparts.
  12. Location of the school makes a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum. Urban school teachers significantly differ from ru-

- ral school teachers. It can be stated that urban school teachers have better perceptions with regard to the content when compared to their counterparts.
13. Age does not make a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the goals and objectives of English curriculum.
  14. Gender makes a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum. Male teachers significantly differ from female teachers. It can be stated that male teachers have better perceptions with regard to the content when compared to their counterparts.
  15. Educational qualification makes a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum. PG English teachers and PG non-English teachers significantly differ from graduate teachers. It can be stated that PG English and PG non-English teachers have better perceptions with regard to the content when compared to graduate English and graduate non-English teachers.
  16. Type of school does not make a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum.
  17. Teaching experience does not make a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum.
  18. Type of management makes a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum. Private school teachers significantly differ from Government school teachers. It can be stated that private school teachers have better perceptions with regard to the content when compared to their counterparts.

### **Discussion of the Results on Perceptions about the Goals and Objectives of English Curriculum**

From the above findings, it may be concluded that a moderate 65% of teachers had good perceptions i.e. to an extent of 66% about the goals and objectives of English curriculum. And, out of all the variables under study, age, gender, type of school and the type of management made a significant difference on the perceptions of the teachers. From the findings it is clear that, teachers working in private and English medium schools have significantly better perceptions about the goals and objectives of English curriculum. It could be assumed that teachers working in the government schools, where the medium of instruction is Telugu, either did not have a clear idea about the goals and objectives based on which the English curriculum is designed or they differed in their ideas. The finding that, teachers of the age group 25-34 showed a significant difference from the rest of the teachers reveals that the teachers in the early years of their profession are more energetic

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A. Bharathi, M.Sc., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.

The New English Curriculum - Perceptions of Teachers

and enthusiastic in keeping themselves well informed about the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Such teachers obviously are expected to give their undivided attention towards the realization of the defined objectives with more commitment and will be more successful in the transacting the curriculum effectively.

### **Discussion of the Results on Perceptions about the Vontent of the English Curriculum**

From the findings above, it may be concluded that a moderate 72% of teachers had good perceptions i.e. to an extent of 76% about the content of English curriculum. And, out of all the variables under study, location of the school, gender, educational qualification and type of management made a significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers about the content of English curriculum.

The private managements organize workshops where teachers are trained in the use of specific classroom strategies in order to develop their professional expertise. The teachers are provided with a platform to share and discuss innovative ideas. Thus, the private schools, especially those in urban areas are on a higher edge with respect to facilities and employment of trained teachers when compared to their counterparts. Also, in a classroom, with a group of students coming from a comparatively higher socio-economic group, the teachers find the English curriculum content comfortable and consequently perceive the curriculum better.

From the finding that post graduate teachers had better perceptions about the content of English curriculum over graduates, it can be presumed that the highly qualified teachers deal with the content in a better and efficient manner.

### **Educational Implications**

1. Every teacher is expected to have a clear understanding about the goals and objectives of the English curriculum. More intensive orientation courses have to be conducted for the teachers working in Government and Telugu medium schools.
2. Teaching a language like English requires competent teachers, adequately equipped with knowledge on pedagogy as well as on methodology. Pre- service and in-service programmes should focus on improving both the language and teaching competencies of the teachers, especially of those working in rural schools.
3. Support system involving teachers, teacher educators and resource persons should be evolved. Forming on-line groups and subject forums, and organizing seminars help teachers

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A. Bharathi, M.Sc., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.

The New English Curriculum - Perceptions of Teachers

develop their competence. These services should be accessible to every teacher in remote rural areas too.

4. The variable gender played a significant role in the present study. Male teachers had better perceptions with respect to goals and objectives and content of the English curriculum, but faced comparatively more problems in the transaction of curriculum and in student assessment. Male teachers should thus be given adequate in-school advisory support in dealing with the difficulties as raised in the present study.
5. Teachers are expected to expose the learners to relevant and adequate learning material- a variety of meaningful language inputs like posters, charts, notices, wall magazines, class library, self learning materials, interactive CD's, games, puzzles, newspapers and such other informative material. Teachers should involve the students to a maximum extent in the preparation and display of such material.

### **Conclusion and Outcome of the Study**

Like many states in India, the State of Andhra Pradesh has started the teaching of English early in the child's education, assuming that children learn languages easily. However, while this may be the case in regional language settings, it is not the case in the learning of a second language like English, where the quality of instruction relies on the expertise of the teacher, as well as the motivation of the learners. Earlier introduction of a subject inevitably requires adjustment to the curriculum and materials. Policy makers at the national level and in the state have adopted frameworks, methodologies, and materials, but it will often be adapted or even rejected by teachers and local administrators because of local contexts.

Further, a major change in curriculum requires several kinds of systemic adjustment in school systems. Such adjustments invariably involve the teachers having to reconsider their own perspectives on teaching/learning; being prepared to accept some degree of disruption – possibly major changes to the syllabus, materials, preparation of timetables, learning and assessment processes. However, adequate time should be allowed for the necessary adjustments and preparedness to face the challenges posed by the new curriculum. Based on the findings of the present study, it is appreciable to note that the teachers were good on their perceptions with regard to the goals and objectives and content. The results of the study pave way for a hope that far better results could be anticipated. A curriculum like this surely helps to achieve a native- like proficiency in English among the learners in the near future. Similarly, a competent teacher, well equipped with the upgraded methods, approaches and techniques in teaching English, in a classroom with an input rich commu-

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A. Bharathi, M.Sc., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.

The New English Curriculum - Perceptions of Teachers

nicational environment, amply motivates the learners to reach the level of expected proficiency in English.

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A. Bharathi, M.Sc., M.A., M.Ed., M.Phil.  
Assistant Professor  
MNR College of Education  
Hyderabad 500 073  
Telangana  
India  
[reachbharathi@live.in](mailto:reachbharathi@live.in)

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The New English Curriculum - Perceptions of Teachers