

Chapter 1

Introduction

English has been extensively used in India both as an official language and as a language for communication for a long time. Article 343 of the Constitution of India gives English the status of an official language. Learning English has gained wide currency in the last few decades to the extent that English Communication skills is considered a prerequisite for better job opportunities and career progression (Jain, 2019). Vijayalakshmi & Babu (2014) refer to the English language as a global language and “the lingua franca of the modern era and currently the language most often taught as a second language around the world” (p. 1). In fact, English is not only the language of communication within India as it is a multilingual nation but it connects India with the outside world as well.

Technology and social media have influenced English language in different ways over the years (Abbasi, 2020; Akbarov, 2016; Axtman, 2002). Similarly, changes in the social, political, cultural or technological landscape trigger a lot of changes in varied aspects of language usage; in turn, these transformations require to bring about a shift in the teaching of the language accordingly. English Language Teaching (ELT) has also undergone many changes due to technology and various methodological interventions during this time. Among several important conceptual and methodological changes, Multimodality found its way into the educational system focussing at the improvement in the process of meaning-making and creation of multimodal texts for today’s “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1). ‘Mode’ is the defining feature of ‘Multimodality’. Bezemer and Kress (2008) define mode as “a socially and culturally shaped resource for making meaning” (p. 171). Examples of modes include, but are not limited to, images, videos, symbols, charts, tables, graphs, and oral/written language (Grapin, 2018). Thus, Multimodality refers to the “use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20). While referring to the use

and meaning of the term ‘multimodality’ in language education theory and research, Dressman (2019) states that this term refers to “the coordination of multiple different systems of signification to communicate a single, or at least a unified, message or meaning” (p. 39).

During the last few years, a lot of research has been carried out in the field of Multimodal literacy (Albers, 2006; Sefarini, 2015; Fontenelle, 2013) and as a result, many educationally advanced countries such as Australia and Singapore have recognised its potential benefits and have redesigned the English syllabi bearing in mind the attainment of multimodal communicative competence. Researchers have studied the way multimodality has been integrated in the syllabi in Australia and Singapore (Jetnikoff, 2015; Lim, 2011; Lim, et al, 2020). O’Halloran & Lim (2011) propose the term ‘multimodal literacy’ for an interplay among the different modes of communication such as audio, video, images, text, gesture, posture, etc. Considering the fact that India is ready to stride its path with the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 focussing on the holistic development of learners, it becomes important to explore the possibility of inclusion of Multimodality in the curriculum framework of any academic programme.

The present research focusses on the study of secondary grade English syllabus mainly for two reasons: one, that the existing textbooks prescribed by CBSE for the secondary grade have not been updated since 2007. Textbooks play a very important part for a language programme. Highlighting the importance of textbooks, Richards (2021) states that the textbooks “serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom. They may provide the basis for the content of the lessons, the balance of skills taught and the kinds of language practice the students take part in” (p. 1); and two, it is essential to understand whether the syllabus meets the demands of the rapidly changing communication patterns and learning aptitude. These two issues have motivated the researcher to identify the gaps in the secondary grade English syllabus from the teachers’ point of view as they are the

actual practitioners of the syllabus. The developments in patterns of communication and ICT in education have motivated towards exploring the possibility of inclusion of multimodal tools as a solution for bringing improvements in the syllabus to make it more learner-oriented for better language learning outcomes in the secondary grade.

This chapter provides an outline of the present study by presenting the background to the study, rationale for the study, objectives of the study, research methodology used for data collection and its analysis, limitations of the study and thesis structure.

1.1 Background to the Study

Information and Communication Technology has changed the way we communicate with people. The traditional ways of teaching seem to be challenged by the effect produced by the effect of technology and social media on the students because they are surrounded by them more than ever today. Presently, students have a reach to the different online and offline platforms which have shown a great impact on their communication skills. About the effects of the technological interventions in communication and their effects on the students of today, Prensky (2001) argues

“Our students have changed radically. Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach... Today’s students – K through college – represent the first generations to grow up with this new technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age.” (p. 1)

Madison (2013) supports the argument and states, “in terms of theory, technologies have opened new communicative possibilities, enabling and constraining new, hybridized genres that can challenge the literacy traditions of the academy” (p.106). While discussing the impact of social media and technology on the language, Abbas (2009) claims that social media and

electronic communication technology have revolutionized the process of composing English writing and speech. These developments are a key to revolutions in the language-associated fields as well. Graddol (1997) highlights the way the creation of new forms of social network or social affiliation can change the way speech communities are created and maintained. He states that “new communications technology, such as the internet, for example may be encouraging for formation of new kinds of social affiliation and new discourse communities” (p.16). This integration of the multimodal tools has not only affected the communication patterns but also the field of education. According to Dressman (2019), “the coordination of input from multimodal sources exceeds the intentional combining of the spoken, the written, and the visual” (p. 39). It incorporates the growing use of the screen in the present world as well. The effect of screen has crossed all geographical boundaries and as mentioned above, this effect has been acknowledged by different experts in the field of education. ELT is not an exception in this regard. There have been numerous developments in the pedagogy of ELT which, owing to the advent of ICT and Multimodality in education, have improved the learning outcomes and have improved the engagement of the students in the classrooms (Sankey, Birch & Gardiner, 2010; Smith, 2013). Sankey et al. (2010) argues

The key motivation for incorporating educational technologies into the curricula is unquestionably the desire to improve the engagement and learning of students. To assist with this the increasing use of multimedia in teaching has provided many opportunities to present multiple representations of content (text, video, audio, images, interactive elements) to cater more effectively to the different learning styles of an increasingly diverse student body. (p. 852)

These advancements have started to be reflected in the syllabi of different countries in the world. As mentioned above, countries such as Australia and Singapore have already

incorporated Multimodality in the syllabi focussing on the interpretation and creation of multimodal texts (The Australian Curriculum, 2010; English Language Syllabus 2010, 2020; Lim, 2011). Although Multimodality has certain advantages of being integrated into the syllabus, yet several challenges are expected in its implementation keeping in mind the Indian context where there are several issues related to the reach of technology in the hands of all the learners and teachers. It poses a requirement of a study into the possibility of its integration in the syllabus in India context.

The present study focuses on the syllabus of English for secondary grade in Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) affiliated schools. Although CBSE, New Delhi publishes its curriculum document every year but the syllabus of English has not been revised as per the demands of the changing time after 2007. After going through the curriculum documents, it has been found that only a few major changes have been introduced in the last ten years' time. The major revisions have been the introduction of ASL for IX to XI grades in the year 2012 (Ahmed & Agarwal, 2012), Open Text Book Assessment (OTBA), and the introduction of long-reading texts in the form of some novels. Initially, CBSE had tried hard to implement ASL in the schools properly. The board conducted many teacher-training programmes to update the teachers regarding the process of the implementation and marking scheme of ASL. The weightage for ASL was 20 marks. But it has now been reduced to 5 marks for the secondary grade i.e. IX and X grades. Mathews (2018) has analysed the reduction in the weightage of marks allotted for ASL and states that it will hamper the students' learning of the key skills of listening and speaking in the long-run to "acceptable levels".

OTBA which was introduced in March, 2014 was withdrawn from the syllabus in the year 2017 with a reason that it was hindering the development of critical abilities of the students (CBSE Notification, 2017; Times of India, 2017). At the same time, the novels which were introduced as long-reading texts for improving the reading skills of the students have also been removed

from the syllabus. The syllabus of secondary grade had two courses i.e. ‘Course A: English-Communicative’ and ‘Course B: Language and Literature’ upto the session 2018-19 (CBSE Secondary Curriculum 2018); later on, the CBSE withdrew ‘Course A’ and kept only ‘Course-B’ in the syllabus. On the other hand, it is important to note that the textbooks of the Communicative syllabus had been revised in the year 2009 after their first publication in the year 2004 (Joshi, 2011) but the textbooks of ‘Course B: Language and Literature’ have not been revised since their first publication in the year 2007 (First Flight, 2019). The facts cited above reflect that the existing syllabus for secondary grade has not been revised for a considerable period of time. As discussed above, communication patterns have undergone numerous changes in the past few years with the advancements in the ICT, social media and technology which make it important for the language syllabi to be updated as per the changing needs of the time.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

The developments in the field of ICT in education, the need to keep pace with the changing patterns of communication in the world and to improvise the English syllabus of secondary grade in the country make it necessary to check the efficacy of the existing syllabus and explore the possibility of integration of multimodal tools in the syllabus. Thus, the present study aims to understand the teachers’ perception regarding the existing CBSE Secondary grade syllabus of English regarding the parameters of syllabus i.e. Objectives, Content, Calendar, Methodology and Evaluation as defined by Dubin & Olshtain (1992). At the same time, the study also aims to investigate the possibility of inclusion of multimodal tools in the syllabus. There have been various studies in the field of use of multimodality in the academics, curriculum development and textbook evaluation (Kim & Kang, 2020; Akbar, 2021; Fitriana & Wirza, 2020; Rinantanti, Rahman, Atmowardoyo, & Tahir, 2017; Smith, Pacheco & Almeida, 2017; Sefarini, 2015; Fontenelle, 2013; Yassine, 2012; Højslet, 2011; Roehrich,

2013; Singh & Choudhary, 2015; Rahimpour & Hashemi, 2011; Doering, 2007; Lim, 2011; Dzekoe, 2013). Kim & Kang (2020) examined the focus of Korean EFL students' discussions during Multimodal composing and the relationship between interactive writing processes during collaborative multimodal composing and its outcomes. Akbar (2021) discovered the value of the pictures by analysing the English textbooks in terms of multimodality and the implications of textbooks using content analysis. Fitriana & Wirza (2020) analysed the aspects of verbal and visual elements in the textbooks and the role played by the visual elements in the process of understanding the verbal components. Rinantanti et al. (2017) reported the EFL Senior High School teachers' perception towards their own competence. The results of the study reflected that the teachers' competence was good.

Doering (2007) discusses the need of infusing multimodal tools into the English curriculum. He states, "The shift to active use of multimodal, interactive Web 2.0 tools suggests the need to redefine notions of reading, composing, and performing processes to infuse digital literacies that students use daily into English language arts curriculum" (p. 42). Similarly, Albers (2006) also studies the possibility of Multimodal curriculum design wherein she finds it interesting to see that such an integration will lead to an exciting future for English educators. Sefarini (2015) presents a framework for bringing theories of visual and multimodal literacies into the classroom. On the other hand, Kabir (2012) analyses the curriculum of secondary grade in Bangladesh and provides recommendations for qualitative improvements therein. Singh & Choudhary (2015) evaluated the textbooks of secondary grade on different parameters for their efficacy and recommended a better integration of the four language skills in the textbooks along with clear specification of communicative objectives in the syllabus.

1.3 Research Gap

The above discussion shows that there have been studies in the fields of multimodality in the curriculum, curriculum development and textbook evaluation. However, there has not been any study to analyse the CBSE secondary grade English syllabus for its efficacy and exploring the possibility of integration of Multimodality in the syllabus for enhancing its quality. Hence, the present study has been conducted in order to fill this gap and to provide suggestions for improvements in order to incorporate multimodality into the syllabus.

1.4 Scope and Objectives of the Study

The focus of the study is to understand the teachers' views on the existing syllabus of English as prescribed by the CBSE for secondary grade. However, as discussed above, two courses i.e. 'Course A: English Communicative' and 'Course B: Language and Literature' have been prescribed by the board over the span of 16 years since 2004. When the data for the present study was being collected, the 'Course B' was in practice and 'Course A' had been withdrawn from the syllabus by the CBSE. Hence, the present study has collected and analysed the views of the teachers regarding the different parameters of the 'Course B' syllabus.

On the basis of the above discussion, the objectives and research questions for the present study have been framed which are as follows:

1. To understand teachers' perception towards the existing CBSE Secondary Grade English syllabus.

Research questions

- a. What is teachers' understanding towards the syllabus of English?
- b. What is the teachers' understanding towards the different multimodal tools used in the existing syllabus?
- c. Is there any relationship among the constructs/variables of syllabus and multimedia tools as per teachers' understanding?

- d. Is there any difference among the constructs/variables of syllabus and multimedia tools as per teachers' understanding?
2. To understand teachers' perception towards the inclusion of multimodal tools in the syllabus.

Research Questions

- a. Do teachers think that the Multimodal tools will be helpful in improving the students' learning of English?
- b. What is teachers' perception about the inclusion of multimodal tools in the syllabus?

1.5 Methodology

The study employs mixed method using various quantitative and qualitative methods for collecting and analysing the data. Ex-post facto research design (Kothari, 2004) has been used with Cross-sectional Survey Method. Purposive sampling (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2015) has been used to collect data from the respondents. The sample population is the teachers teaching English subject to the students of secondary grade in the CBSE affiliated schools at Jhunjhunu, Jaipur and Ajmer, Rewari, Delhi & NCR. Multivariate statistical tools have been used for data analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire has been checked using Cronbach's alpha (Taber, 2018). The values of Cronbach's Alpha were found to be within the acceptable range of above 0.7 making the data fit to be considered as reliable. Face validity and Content validity of the questionnaire have been ascertained by presenting the questionnaire to five professionals including the supervisor and co-supervisor of the researcher (Amin, 2005). Normality analysis (Kothari, 2004; Pallant, 2005) of the questionnaire has been carried out to decide the use of parametric or non-parametric tests. The data is normally distributed for the whole questionnaire making it fit for parametric tests. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) has been used for data reduction and to identify the dimensions of syllabus design from the data

(Watkins, 2018, p. 219). The EFA extracted four dimensions/parameters of syllabus design which have been named as Objectives & content, calendar, methodology, and evaluation. The fifth variable which is also the Section B of the study has been named as the ‘Inclusion of Multimodality in the syllabus (IMS)’. Correlation has been checked among the four parameters of syllabus design; and between the parameters and IMS. Paired sample T-test has been used for understanding the difference among the parameters of syllabus.

Mean values and frequencies have been extracted to understand the perception of the teacher-respondents towards the efficacy of the existing syllabus and IMS. To get an in-depth understanding of the perception of the teachers, a semi-structured interview schedule has been used. Point of saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) has been kept in mind for deciding the sample size. The recordings of the interviews have been transcribed and then the data has been coded. Themes have been extracted to identify the patterns of meaning across the data. According to Braun & Clark (2006), thematic analysis consists of organising and preparing, obtaining a general sense, coding, generating categories, or themes and interpreting the data. The use of quantitative and qualitative data has been used for data triangulation for better understanding of the teachers’ perception.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Following are the limitations of the present study:

- The study is limited to the parameters of syllabus design i.e. objectives, content, calendar, methodology, and evaluation; and does not deal with the broader areas of curriculum design such as administration and teacher-training.
- The sample size of the study is 366 and the sample population consists of teachers from the CBSE affiliated schools in Jhunjhunu, Jaipur, Rewari, Ajmer, Gurugram and New Delhi & NCR. This study does not claim to generalise the results to the larger

population of teachers teaching English to the secondary grade students in the whole country.

1.7 Thesis Structure

The present thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction of the research with a background to the study, rationale for the study, research gap, scope and objectives for the study. The chapter also discusses the methodology and limitations of the study.

The second chapter comprises an extensive review of literature. It begins with a discussion on the development of English language education in India focussing on the policies and commissions for ELT at secondary level in the country along with a discussion on the syllabus of secondary grade over the years. It also focusses upon the revision of secondary grade textbooks and the focus of the syllabus. Developments in the English Language Pedagogy have been discussed at length. The chapter also includes a discussion on the difference between the terms i.e. ‘curriculum’ and ‘syllabus’ and tries to understand the different aspects of syllabus design as described by different experts in the field. Further, the chapter analyses the technological interventions in the field of education with an emphasis on the use of Multimodality in different fields. The concepts of Multimodal Communicative Competence (MCC) and Multimodal Text have been discussed at length for developing an understanding of these key terms in the study. The chapter also presents case studies of the Multimodal English syllabus frameworks in Singapore and Australia where multimodality has already been integrated into the syllabus of English for secondary grade. The chapter also evaluates the different studies in the field of Multimodality in ELT and English Curriculum Development. After this extensive discussion, research gaps have been identified and presented; and finally the chapter lists the objectives of the study.

Chapter three deals with the research methodology employed in the present study. It discusses the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis strategies used for understanding the teachers' perception. It also discusses the details of the respondents for the study.

The data collected through questionnaire and interviews have been analysed and discussed in Chapter four. The chapter presents the analysis of the data in two parts: the analysis of quantitative data and the analysis of qualitative data as per the course objectives and research questions. The quantitative data analysis consists of descriptive and inferential statistics such as reliability analysis, normality test using z-scores, histogram and Q-Q plot, correlation coefficient, Exploratory Factor Analysis, Paired samples t-test, and frequency analysis. The qualitative analysis comprises the codes and themes which have emerged from the data. The thematic analysis presents a parameter-wise analysis of the findings. Finally, the chapter gives the discussion on the findings of the study while triangulating the results of the quantitative and qualitative data. Data triangulation provides an in-depth understanding of the issues along with their possible solutions.

Chapter five concludes the thesis with a conclusive discussion on objectives and research questions of the study. The chapter also presents the recommendations of the study for improvements in the syllabus through the integration of multimodal tools in the syllabus. Next, the chapter describes the contributions of the study and the future scope of research in this field.