Chapter 3

Design of the Study

As a practising teacher of English at the tertiary level, the researcher has always felt the need to make teaching and learning of English more interesting and effective. A sizable number of the learners are highly disadvantaged as far as their English skills are concerned. The reasons could be such familiar ones as the quality of English teaching and evaluation especially in regional language schools; and the university curriculum which is predominantly content-based and which largely overlooks the development of language skills. But these explanations do not help one deal with the reality before one - ineffective teaching and learning of English as evidenced by poor results, disoriented and bored students and the lack of any significant change in their English skills. And the researcher has been aware of the feet this has to do as much with factors such as motivation, rapport, goals, and flexibility as with subject knowledge. Some ELT experts, after decades of experience with learners and teachers, go to the extent of saying that motivating the learner is the key to the language teaching-learning process; everything else is secondary.

When the researcher came across Neuro-Linguistic Programming, he felt it had the potential to be an effective tool in his classroom. It is an eminently practical approach to human life, which, at the same time, takes into account its extreme complexity. Thus this study took shape from the researcher's own classroom experiences and his willingness to experiment. Following the

suggestions of Tony Harris (refer to chapter 2), the researcher decided to value his own experiences and intuitions more than what experts had to say on this issue.

Objectives of the Study

This study has four objectives. Using NLP strategies and presuppositions, it proposes:

1.   to create interest in undergraduate students so that they are able to understand their general English texts better,

2.   to motivate the learners to approach the English language with confidence, interest, and purpose,

3.   to improve teacher-efflciency in terms of managing one's inner resources like confidence, creativity, flexibility, presentation skills, rapport-building skills, motivation skills, and classroom management skills; and

4.   to create teaching materials that would help the students understand even difficult texts.

Hypothesis of the Study

This study is based on the following hypothesis:

Neuro-Linguistic Programming strategies are effective tools in the teaching and learning of English in the general English undergraduate classes.

Sample of the Study

The researcher has selected, for this study, the first, the second, and the third year undergraduate students of his parent institution, St.

Berchmans College, Changanasserry. This college was selected because it is here that the researcher works as lecturer in English and it is here that the research problem arose from. A pilot study was conducted involving twenty volunteers from first year undergraduate classes. Then the first round of experiments was conducted in the third year BA English Literature class, which had the strength of 18 students. The second and final round of experiments was conducted in four second-year General English classes invol ving 245 students from various streams of study.

Profile of the College

St. Berchmans College, Changanasserry, is one of the oldest and high profile Arts and Science aided colleges in Kerala. Established in 1922, the college is owned and managed by the catholic Archdiocese of Changanasserry. It is affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala. It is basically a men's college. Only boys are admitted to the aided undergraduate programmes. And it is a mixed college at the postgraduate level. However, the college admits girls also to its unaided undergraduate programmes. There are no women on regular permanent staff, both teaching and non-teaching.

The college was accredited with Five Star status in 1999 and was reaccredited at A+ level in 2006 by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC). It also enjoys the CPE (Centre with Potential for Excellence) status awarded by the UGC. The college also bagged the prestigious R. Shankar Award instituted by the government of Kerala for the best first grade aided college in Kerala twice in a row, in 1996 and 1997.

The college envisions to be internationally recognised as a premier institute for value based learning and research.

The mission statement of the college reads as follows: "True to the vision of Christian charity, this college is committed to inspiring its students to attain nobility through compassion, strength of character, and dedication to the service of their fellow human beings; and achievement of excellence in all walks of life"(SB College Inner Cover page).

The following are two of the aims and objectives of the college:

1. Upholding the spiritual commitment of the Church, the college seeks to build up young men and women who will strive for excellence in every field. The college aims at imparting the best formation as well as information to its students in every possible way.

2. The college works hard to develop the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical and aesthetic powers of its students so that they may be good citizens useful to themselves and to society. (SB College 4)

The Locale

Changanasserry is part of the central Travancore area of the state of Kerala, India. It is twenty kilometres south of Kottayam, the district headquarters, and 110 kilometres north of Thiruvananthapuram, the. state capital. It is also the meeting place of land and water as the coastal district of Alapuzha, with, its large inland water bodies like the Vembanad lake and a number of major and minor rivers, lies adjacent to the west of Changanasserry town.

Changanasserry is also known for its religious and communal harmony. Three prominent religious communities in Kerala - the Nairs. the Syrian Christians, and the Muslims - have a strong presence here and live in harmony. The Nair Service Society (NSS), the flagship organisation of the Nair community, has its headquarters in Changanasserry. Changanasserry is one of the oldest Christian centres in India. Niranam, one of the seven churches believed to be founded by St. Thomas the Apostle, is hardly 15 kilometres away from Changanasserry. And the Archdiocese of Changanasserry is one of the first two Syrian Christian dioceses in Kerala. The Muslims, with a sizable population and their business acumen, also play a major role in the social and cultural life of Changanasserry.

There are two important indicators of the famous secular mindset of Changanasserry. First, three important places of worship in Changanasserry - the Kavil Temple, St. Mary's Metropolitan Church, and the Old Mosque - are situated close to each other as the three stones of an oven, symbolising the harmonious coexistence of the three communities. Second, the famous procession in connection with Chandanakkudam, a rare Muslim festival in Kerala, begins from Puthurpally (another mosque in Changanasserry), and is accorded a warm reception at St. Mary's Metropolitan Church and then at the Kavil Temple. More significantly, the Chandanakkudam festival coincides with Christmas celebrations and the festival at Kavil Temple in the last week of the year. Similarly, the festivals of each community are also considered as part of local heritage by the other communities.

Changanasserry is also a well-known educational centre in central Travancore. There are seven colleges and a host of prestigious schools in and around Changanasserry. In fact, one of the first non-European run schools in Kerala - St. Berchmans High School - was established in Changanasserry in 1890. An erstwhile prominent commercial centre because of its accessibility by water, rail and road, Changanasserry is now confirming its position as an educational hub.

Courses **and the Faculty**

There are eleven postgraduate departments in **the** college. They are the departments of English, Malayalam, Economics, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Commerce, Management Studies, and Library Science. Together they offer thirteen undergraduate programmes, sixteen postgraduate programmes, one M. Phil programme and eight doctoral programmes. Of these, three undergraduate programmes are in the unaided stream. All others are aided courses. The undergraduate programmes have been following the credit and semester system since the 2009-2010 academic year. The postgraduate programmes are on course to this change; currently they are in the semester mode only. There are about 1600 students in the college in the various undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The college attracts students from across Kerala. However, the majority of students are from Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, Alapuzha, and Idukki districts. A good number of non-resident **Malayalees** send their children to this college. There are no foreign students in the college except for some Tibetan refugee students. There are about 110

regular members and forty temporary members on the teaching staff. There are about fifty members on the non-teaching staff as well.

The Department of English

The Department of English offers two undergraduate programmes and one postgraduate programme. The undergraduate programmes are BA English Language and Literature and BA Vocational English with Literature and Journalism as the major subjects. And the postgraduate programme is MA English Language and Literature. On an average there are about twenty students per batch for each of these courses. Thus the department has a total strength of about 160 students. There are twelve permanent lecturers and three guest lecturers in the department.

The department has a long and illustrious history dating back to the founding days of the college. Many stalwarts of English language teaching in South India such as MP Paul, CA Sheppard, T O'Brien, and Kulandaswamy are part of its legacy. One of the unique features of the department is its famous Shakespeare theatre. Started in 1937 by the doyen of modern Malayalam criticism, Professor MP Paul, it has been nurtured carefully and matured in the hands of Professor CA Sheppard. The tradition has been carefully and proudly preserved to this date. The theatre stages full length Shakespeare plays in the original Shakespeare language at regular intervals with little professional help.

The department has a well-equipped language lab and a library cum reading room with around 2000 books and a variety of magazines and journals.

Another unique feature of the department is the weekly seminar sessions it conducts for the postgraduate students. Each student is required to prepare a

paper on one book for non-detailed study and present il in front of the class and two teachers-in-charge. The presentation is followed by discussion. Generations of students have testified that this exposure has helped them improve their oral skills and presentation skills and has stood them in good stead at the time of viva voce. Finally, the department is an approved research centre of English, of Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. And there are six research guides partnered with this research centre.

College **Library**

The college library is one of the best in the state. It has about one hundred and fifty thousand titles in its shelves. Its operations are fully automated. The library has a digital wing as well with subscription to Infolib, which makes available hundreds of professional academic journals free of cost to the college community.

Other Facilities in the College

The department of Religion and Value Education with forty volunteer teachers on the staff imparts religious instructions to all catholic students and moral instructions to all non-catholic students once a week. The college has an HRD department, which conducts training sessions for various batches of students. There is a counselling centre to help the students with their psychological problems. The National Service Scheme (NSS), and the army and naval units of NCC of the college organize activities to impart practical lessons in discipline, nation-building and national integration to its members. There are five hostels for the college. Three of them are undergraduate hostels and the other two are postgraduate hostels. The college also has a well-functioning department

of Physical Education. There are two basketball grounds, two football grounds, and two volleyball grounds in addition to facilities for other games, on the campus. There is a government-funded sports hostel for the college, which attracts talented sports students to the college. The Career Guidance Centre (COC), Gandhian Study Centre, Nature Club, Film Club, Tourism Club, Quiz Club, and Debating Club all of which offer opportunities to students to identify their special interests and develop them.

Rationale of the Sample

The researcher chose his parent institution as the site of the experiment and his own students as the sample of the study for two reasons: first, the researcher felt that the strategies used in the teaching and learning of English fell short of helping his students with their English skills as well as their Engl ish marks. This meant that his own students were in real need of a better strategy in their English studies. Second, the researcher had easy accessibility to the students. And there was flexibility in timings as well as in the availability of students. For these reasons, he chose to do the experiment at St. Berchmans College, Changanasserry.

Methodology

The researcher adopted the methodology of action research for the purpose of this study. He used a mix of quantitative approaches such as questionnaires, pre-tests, post-tests, written feedback, and recording of some of the classes; and qualitative approaches such as classroom observation, and verbal and non verbal feedback from students and peer teachers. The researcher chose

not to keep a control group as lie was aware of the skills of his students and as the study was conducted at a micro level.

First, the researcher conducted a pilot study for one month, in October 2009, involving twenty student volunteers from various first year undergraduate courses. The purpose of the study was to test the effect of NLP strategies in enhancing the word-power and speaking skills of the students. For the pilot study, the researcher used a questionnaire with eight questions to assess the students' exposure to English. And a pre-test was conducted to assess their current standard of Engli sh. He relied on classroom observation, verbal and non-verbal feedback from students, peer observation, video recording of some of the classes and a post-test to assess the effect of the classes.

In January 2010, the researcher conducted the first round of experiments in the third year BA English Literature class with the strength of eighteen students. The purpose of the experiment was to assess the efficacy of using NLP strategies in making literary theory accessible to students. For this study also, he used a pre-test and a questionnaire to assess the students' current status as far as their English skills were concerned. And he made use of classroom observation, verbal and non-verbal feedback from students, and post-test as result-assessment tools.

In June 2010, the second and final round of experiments was conducted. The study was conducted in the second year General English classes involving students of all the regular undergraduate programmes. There were 245 students in four batches each batch consisting of about 60 students. For this study, the researcher did away with pre-test. For, he observed that the pre-test conducted in

the last two cycles of experiments did put off the students. They felt that they were being *used* as specimen for experiments. And this made them put on artificial airs and very self-conscious. Consequently the researcher had some difficulty in bringing them back to their natural selves. A similar problem occurred with video recording of the classes. In front of the camera, the natural responses of the students were muffled. And therefore these two methods also were shelved.

Instead, the researcher based his initial assessment of the students in terms of their English skills on their internal assessment scores for English of the previous semester as well as on the questionnaire on their exposure to English. And he used classroom observation, oral, written, and non-verbal feedback from students, post-test, oral question-answer sessions, discussions, informal and indirect feedback from students through other teachers, and peer observation. A questi onnaire was also used to assess the background of the students.

The objective of the experiment was to assess the efficacy of using NLP strategies in teaching prose lessons to students in the General English class. The researcher took five hours per batch to teach one prose lesson. In addition to this he used one hour for the post-test and one hour to get the questionnaires answered and the feedback written.

The two phases of the experiment including the pilot study are described in detail in the fifth chapter of the thesis. All the NLP strategies used in the experiment including how and why they are used, are also explained there. Now that the methodology is explained, it is important to see how the study is presented as a thesis, and what each chapter contains.

Structure of **the** Thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the relevant learning theories, approaches and methods of teaching English, the research area - Neuro-Linguistic Programming - and connects it with the relevant learning theories and ELT approaches and methods. The second chapter reviews literature on earlier researches in the field. The third chapter describes the design of the study. The fourth chapter gives the profile of the participants. The fifth chapter presents the data collected from the experiments and analyses it. And the sixth and final chapter interprets the data to arrive at relevant findings and sums up the study.

Limits and Further Scope of the Study

The researcher limited himself to one college, and used only prose lessons. The study could be expanded to involve students of other colleges across the district or even the state. And the other types of texts, like poetry, drama, short stories etc., could also be used.