

FRAMING OF CURRICULUM / SYLLABUS AND TEXTBOOK WRITING FOR ENGLISH FOR STANDARDS I AND II

INTRODUCTION

There has been an increasing demand from the parents and public at large, who send their wards to Government/Aided/Corporation/Panchayat Union Schools, for giving enough exposure in English, so that the children should not have the feeling that they are less privileged for want of initiation to English right from Std. I. To meet the challenges and competition from those of other streams namely, Matriculation and Anglo-Indian, it's high time that the parents' requirement was met with. It will be a grave injustice if the language rights are denied to those from socio-economically impoverished sectors. By not being offered English from Std. I, they are forced to face a linguistic handicap, which in the long run would affect their prospects in life.

In the primary school curriculum of Tamilnadu, Tamil, English, Mathematics, Science and Social Science are taught to lay an academic foundation in the young children. Basic knowledge of the environment, basic skills for useful living and fundamental experience for practical approach to human life are gradually developed during these five years in the schools of the State Board system. While English is taught only from Standard III in these schools, it is a subject of study from Standard I in Matriculation and Anglo-Indian Schools. As most children of today have developed school-going habit even from 2 ½ years of age by attending Nursery, Kindergarten and Montessori schools, they get divided between the three prevailing school systems in Tamilnadu. A sort of social disparity is caused in this manner and pupils joining the State Board Schools carry a stigma of lesser standard. Parents aspire to educate their wards in the best way possible irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds. If infants learn English at the age of 2 ½ years, and surprisingly enough even before that age in the so-called play schools, children at the age of 5 + years have to continue their learning without a gap between their exit point of early childhood education and their starting point of learning English in primary schools.

The present scenario leaves much to be desired, as, when they encounter English in Std. III, they are obsessed with Anglophobia. Their approach to language is xenophobic. A vast majority of the children are studying only in Government/Aided/ Corporation/Panchayat Union Schools. There is a total black-out of exposure to the language, as the home environment and immediate neighbourhood are not conducive to get exposed to English. So the sole place of hope for such children is the classroom.

Moreover, starting a new subject at the middle of the primary level of education somewhat unsettles the other smooth curricular transactions throughout the primary section. It would be both logical and practical to start any subject from Class I. In states like Maharashtra and West Bengal also English is included from Std. I of the primary education curriculum.

In fact the English curriculum was initially designed and developed for Stds. I to V, thereafter the parts for Std. I to III to Std. III was compressed, resulting in a sort of overloading in Std. III. Therefore it is in tune with the principles of curriculum making, to distribute the same over the entire span of 5 years of primary education.

Unless we catch them young, they would have wasted two precious years during their lifetime for learning this language. These years are very sensitive and formative to language learning.

Up to the age of 12, children could easily pick up any number of languages as vouched by the developmental and cognitive psychologists on the one hand and neuro-scientists on the other hand. It is therefore timely and fruitful to fill the gap of two years with continuance of learning English in Primary schools. This will therefore not be a burden.

Globalisation of English came much earlier, but this did not reach the vast majority of less privileged children who look up to Government/ Aided/ Corporation/ Panchayat Union Schools for learning and education. It's high time we started English from Standard I, so that the benefits of this language reach them too.

THE SYLLABUS COMMITTEE

The Committee constituted as per the G.O. (M.S.) No. 55 dated 21.04.2003, met in the Chamber of the Director of Elementary Education on the 28th of April 2003 by 10.00 a.m. and deliberated on the modern trend and present need for framing the new syllabus for Stds. I & II. Accordingly guidelines and modalities were formulated. The Committee consisted of the following members.

Chairperson	1.	Prof. S. Swaminathapillai Director of Distance Education (Retd.) Bharathiar University Coimbatore
Members	1	Thiru. R. Lakshmi Narayanan Educationist 50 A, Lakshmi Illam 4 th Street, Narayanan Nagar Salem 636 015
	2	Thiru S. Paramasivan Director of School Education Chennai 600 006
	3	Thiru R. Kannan Director of Elementary Education Chennai 600 006
	4	Thiru R. Narayanasamy Director of Matriculation Schools Chennai 600 006
	5	Thiru P. Soundararajan Director of Teacher Education Research and Training Chennai 600 006
	6	Thiru P. Kulasekaran Secretary Tamilnadu Text Book Corporation Chennai 600 006
	7	Thiru S. Gomathinathan, Educationist W 302 (New 5), 19 th Street 'C' Sector, Annanagar Western Extension Chennai 600 101
	8	Thiru C. Rajapandian Principal District Institute of Teacher Education and Training Chennai 600 005

Member Secretary 9 Selvi R Nagarathinammal, Educationist
Headmistress
Ganeshbai Galada Higher Sec. School
Mint Street, Chennai 600 003
Tmt. J. Uma Maheswari
Joint Director of Elementary Education
Chennai 600 006.

A sub-committee was set up comprising of the following members to prepare the syllabus.

- 1 Thiru S. Gomathinathan
- 2 Selvi R. Nagarathinammal
- 3 Thiru C. Rajapandian
- 4 Thiru Ranganathan
- 5 Selvi S. Priscilla Josephine Sarah
Lecturer (Dept. of English)
Loyola College
Chennai
- 6 Tmt. Shanthi
Teacher , Bala Mandir
T. Nagar
Chennai

The Committee again met on 12th May 2003, at 10.00 a.m. at the Chamber of the Director of Elementary Education, and discussed the prepared syllabus in detail and approved it.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE SYLLABUS

The recommended syllabus for Standard I & II is

- competency-based
- culturally oriented to local needs
- functionally relevant to the physical and mental maturity of primary children
- integrally related to the development of language needs
- wholesome, coordinating the teaching and learning efforts made in the classrooms
- academically sound and satisfying to pupil development
- comprehensively focused in all classroom activities
- focussed more on aural and oral skills, leading to reading and writing in a limited way

Above all, this syllabus would help the children when they come to Std. III to become psychologically motivated and linguistically prepared to face the language with ease. This syllabus is a launching pad for the final take-off from Std. III. It is, in fact, the paving of the runway for a smooth take-off.

SYLLABUS FORMAT

The Syllabus is competency-based. The various competencies are –

1. Listening to English speech sounds pronounced in simple words and expressions
2. Speaking to respond to real-life situations in occasional demands

3. Reading alphabetically and phonically simple expressions
4. Developing basic vocabulary for practicing the required skills
5. Performing communicative functions required in social contexts
6. Writing the 26 letters of the Alphabet (Writing has been kept to the bare minimum, keeping in mind the motor-coordination of the child that is yet to develop fully.)

The present syllabus in Standard III is considered as the midpoint for distributing the competencies in English for three years from Standard I to III, consequently leading to the modification of the syllabus for English for Standards IV & V.

Evaluation pattern:

The evaluation procedure set out in the syllabus needs to be considered for recording the progressive performance of pupils in Stds. I & II. Tasks composed by teachers should form the nuclear parts of total evaluation. If possible, profiles of proficiency can be drawn and kept on records for consideration.

Child-centred and Activity-oriented:

The syllabus is child-centred and activity-oriented. The content selection and the competency formulation have been done keeping in view the interests and attitudes of the children and the need for a large number of activities to facilitate, as far as possible, incidental language learning.

ALLOTMENT OF PERIODS

It was decided that 3 periods may be allotted per week to teaching English in Stds. I & II, taking two periods from LOE and one period from EVS of the current syllabus of I & II Standards.

GUIDELINES AND SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL SUGGESTIONS TO TEXT BOOK AUTHORS

The Sub-committee is to indicate certain overall guidelines to the text book writers so that these guidelines could be fully kept in mind while preparing the course books. This is to ensure that there would be no communication gap and transmission loss from the stage of development of syllabus to that of text book production.

NATURE OF THE CURRICULUM PACKAGE

As the syllabus clearly outlines the competency to be developed, the content, teaching/learning activity, instructional strategy, teaching aids and evaluation methods, the curriculum package will include the syllabus content and the course book, to facilitate proper implementation of the course content in the classrooms.

INSERVICE PROGRAMME FOR EXISTING TEACHERS

By using the teacher book prepared for the purpose of teachers' classroom use, all teachers of Stds I and II need to be offered a programme of preparing them to use the student materials for teaching English. Appropriate planning is needed to make all teachers ready for the purpose of introducing this syllabus from the academic year 2003-2004.