CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Brief History of English Language teaching in India

India was invaded and ruled by different colonizers. The British rule was lasted for nearly three hundred years. The official history of English in India started at the end of the eighteenth century. It could be divided into three phases. The first phase named missionary phase when the Christian missionaries entered Indian subcontinents to proselytize the Indians (Duff; Sherring; Richter). In the second phase, few prominent Indians took efforts to localize English to persuade British officials. Employment opportunities were made available for the Indians who studied English. By 1852, 1,185 mission schools were established with thirty eight thousand students. Then by 1854, there were 169 government secondary schools with 18,335 students (Zaidi). By, 1902 Indian ‘Pathasalas’ system started disappearing because the new system of education enabled western culture to intrude India and science education through English (Naik&Syed). Indian University act came into existence by 1904 with the help of Viceroy Lord Curzon to reform Indian education system. It provided post graduate programmes, faculty of arts and science programmes in English. By 1937, modern Indian languages became medium of instruction at the primary and secondary levels but English continued to be the medium of instruction for the higher education. English became a part of social and emotional heritage in 1947. During the time of independence (1947) there were different religious groups and linguistic forms. A number of states were established in accordance with the language groups. English enjoyed the status of official language of the country. English became the
language of national and international business of India. After independence, in most of the Indian states English was introduced at grade five and continued to be a compulsory subject for undergraduate programme. Then a number of private schools appeared in which English was the only medium of instruction.

1.2 The Development of English as academic language

In the early nineteenth century Britain underwent an unprecedented social and technological change during when English language helped to shape nation’s unity and identity (Leith, Graddol). Colonies in the world started teaching English to maintain the cultural and religious values and unity of the nation (Howatt, Widdowson). English was just a subject fit for marginal women and workers in nineteenth century. In 1930s Cambridge and Oxford Universities declared English as the necessary subject to study. Then English became the main subject and highlighted the importance of ideology and elevation in the English society (Eagleton). From 1970s to the beginning of the twenty first century consolidation of globalization process continued. Hence, English became a necessary tool for modernization in various countries. Access to the global economy and the interaction among the societies were made easier because of English language. (Graddol).

1.3 The present condition of English language

English has become the common language of the world. Roughly only one out of four is native speaker of English language (David Crystal). English has become the contact language among the non native speakers of English. At present English is defined in a number of ways such as, ‘English as an International language” (Jenkinks; Mc Arthur; Melchers and Shaw), ‘English as a global language’ (Crystal; Gnutzmann), English as a world language (Mair), and ‘World English’(Brutt-Griffler). English is chosen as the
means of communication in some countries where people come from different first
language background. A vast number of verbal exchanges in English are not made by
native speaker of English but by non-native speakers. Native speakers of English are also
making systematic study of the nature of World English. The teaching of English language
has found new directions and new justifications for its existence. The approaches of teaching
English language have changed along with the changes in political ideologies. New approaches
and methodologies have been formed. English has become a common language to
express the ideas.

1.4 A brief overview of undergraduate programmes in India

After independence, the number of students enrolling for college education had
increased substantially in India. The level of higher education is determined by three
indicators such as number of educational universities and colleges, number of teachers
and number of students enrolled. UGC Report of 2008 showed a drastic improvement in
all the factors of higher education. “The higher education in India has witnessed many
fold increase in its institutional capacity since independence. Between 1950 and 2008, the
number of universities increased from 20 to about 431, colleges from 500 to 20,677 and
the teachers from 15,000 to nearly 5.05 lakhs. Consequently, the enrolment of students
has increased from a mere 1.00 lakh in 1950 to over 116.12 lakhs” (University Grants
Commission, 2008). In addition there are a number of private universities and private
colleges affiliated to Government universities. The expansion in the education system
demands qualitative skills from the learners. An average student normally looks upon
the university or the college for the degree which will bring him good employment
opportunities. In this situation only educational programmes based on
practical needs can serve as bridge between education and employment. Therefore, the
dire need for creating an educational framework to reduce the mismatch between higher
education and manpower is realised. The situation calls for special efforts and suitable
programmes in the university to develop the human resources to fulfill the requirements
of the contemporary society thereby to create new employment opportunities in public
and private sectors and in conventional and non-traditional areas (Khanna). Real skills of
permanent value should be imparted to the learners than tailor-made technical skills. It is
important that “educational and training institutions should show an awareness and appreciation
of the social and economic changes which demands from the system to produce persons with
knowledge, skills and attitudes for assuming productive and creative roles in society
(UGC Report on Vocationalisation of education 1). Thus the policy of skilled power is
needed to empower students with appropriate attitudes and life skills.

The University education system in India has implemented towards “integrative
development” (Kolb 208) by introducing vocational course at undergraduate level. Integrative
development consists of development of unique capabilities of the whole personality
towards creativity and integrity. By integrative development learners develop the capacity to
adapt themselves to reality and acquire the capacity to make choices and transform the
reality. ‘Communicative English’ is one of the optional courses offered as vocational
courses at undergraduate level. It aims at training young men and women in oral and
written communication skills. In order to provide the relevant course it is necessary to
understand the undergraduate scene in India.
1.5 Present need for English in India

Till today English continues to serve as connecting link between speakers of various languages. Though Hindi is recognized as official national language, a number of regional states still have the influence of English language in the educational sector. Krishnaswamy and Sriraman put it, “Macaulay might have thought that the knowledge of English was essential for civilizing Indians, earlier generations might have thought English was necessary for shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense, but the present generation is convinced that English is needed for mobility and social and economic advancement. English is the language of opportunities because it takes one outside one’s own country to places where more opportunities are available for professional and economic growth. That is why there is a great demand for English; it has a lot of ‘surrender value’ and teachers might want to cash on it”(50). Students of India know that English language is important to express about their identity, language, society, culture, technology and personality to the world. It is important for the undergraduate learners to realize that English is the language not for westernization but for modernization (Krishnaswamy, Sriraman). To increase the skills of English at the undergraduate level, it is necessary to consider the competency of the entry level Under-Graduate students. “Though the aims and objectives of the general English, Special English and English main courses are intended to cater to the heterogeneous tertiary level student population, they do not equip learners with the necessary language skills for functioning in English” (Vindhya S.Singh 7). Though many universities have brought advanced technologies to teach language, it is necessary to make the provision for communicative competence of entry level students by offering appropriate courses.
1.6 Problem and solution

“In second language acquisition research talent is defined as aptitude” (Sarah Mercer, Stephen Ryan 436). Learners’ belief about the role of aptitude plays a significant part in language learning and communication skills. Mindset is the major factor that influences the aptitude of the learner. Individuals have two sorts of mind sets such as growth mind set and fixed mind set (Dweck) The person believing the natural talent as gift for successful learning is said to have a fixed mind set and a person believing his own efforts and hard work to affect the learning abilities is said to have growth mind set (Sarah Mercer & Stephen Ryan). Dweck (Messages that motivate: How praise molds students’ beliefs) found evidence of differing mind sets across different domains as music, sport, geography and language learning. Similarly, learners hold different mindset across different skill domains in the aspects of language. Learners’ belief about their speaking skills differed from writing skills. If a learner believes that the natural talent is necessary to acquire language skills, he/she has to believe that they possess the natural talent to attain a particular goal (Sarah Mercer & Stephen Ryan). Similarly if learners believe that language proficiency is a natural talent, they need to believe that they possess the talent of reaping success. It is suggested, in order to promote growth mindset in learners, one has to encourage learners to put more effort, cope better with setbacks and accept failures as encouragement to develop positive attitudes and to acquire effective communicative competence. “Reference to one’s own achievements and subsequent developing of a sense of personal progress may help to nurture a growth mind set” (Sarah Mercer & Stephen Ryan 442). Mindsets affect the whole system of the individual. It has the capacity to interact with all key factors of the mind as strategies, motivation, personality, proficiency, self concepts, proficiency and aptitudes.
Human mind is filled with descriptive concepts. Thinking is the best tool to furnish the mind with elevated concepts (De Bono Thinking Course 17). “Our experience forms certain concepts, patterns and organizations. We follow along this pattern. In order to progress we may have to backtrack and change to another pattern which is more appropriate for the conditions” (De Bono Thinking Course 51). The mind is using and creating patterns to make sense of the world and to live. Once it starts forming a pattern, it continues to create the same sort of pattern automatically. But changing the pattern of mind is necessary from time to time to tackle a number of situations. New patterns are needed to tackle the demands of everyday life.

1.7 Language and Thought

The relationship between language and thought is a persistent theme in many fields of education and psychology. Some kinds of thinking such as music, art, picture, painting, sculpture etc. convey ideas even without verbal support. They express their ideas in their own languages. Any art would become appreciable when it conveys the exact idea of the creator. It shows the effective communication ability. Communication will be effective when there is coordination between language and thought. As Vygotsky says, “Thought and language could not exist without each other. Articulating thoughts was an effective method to process connected thoughts in a conscious way to raise the awareness of mental activity and subsequently to create organized logic and meaning for oneself and others from these activities” (McGregor 10). Learners find it easy to express their ideas and innovative thoughts in their native language with appropriate words, stress and intonation rather than second language. As Vygotsky said, learning and thinking are social in origin; communication in second language obviously lacks the innovativeness of
native language. The first language users make use of communicative situations as frequently as possible and get their thinking skills activated. Language and social interactions are recognized as important elements in developing thinking skills. The major reason for the interruption in communication process is the environment, which does not allow thinking outside the box. This paper aims at recommending that the obstacle between thought and language can be removed through suitable tasks in a suitable environment. Krashen’s “the second language acquisition technique” and De Bono’s “Lateral Thinking” supports the study.

1.8 Educational and Cultural Background Vs Attitude in Acquisition

Learner variables such as aptitude, attitude, motivation, ethnocentrism, authoritarianism etc. play a prominent role in second language learning. A number of researchers emphasized the role of aptitude and motivation in the second language acquisition e.g. Anisfeld and Lambert; Feenstra; Gardner; Gardner and Lambert; Lambert et al. “Learners who have strong ethnocentric or authoritarian attitudes or who have learned to be prejudiced towards foreign people are unlikely to approach the language learning task with an integrative outlook” (Gardner and Lambert 16). Aptitude of learners in second language learning varies from individual to individual. Working memory has the capacity to control and maintain attention especially in the presence of irrelevant and distracting stimuli (Miyake, Shah). A favorable attitude towards target learning influences learners’ motivation to acquire and improve second language. It was found that introversion, soberness and self-sufficiency significantly correlated with oral communicative competence. Students with traits of imagination, placidness and low anxiety score high in written communicative competence (Bartz). Favorable attitude influences the motivation to learn English
positively. Two sorts of motivations help the learners to achieve the goal viz. Instrumental and integrated motivation (Krashen). Integrated motivation leads the learner to acquire the skills appropriately. Most of the students in India desire to learn English to get a job. They do not have integrative motivation but instrumental motivation. It may be because “there is no well defined socio cultural group with which students may wish to identify themselves” (A.L.Khana, R. K. Agnihotri 82). For Cartesians, “the cognitive power is called mind” (Noam Chomsky 36). It determines infinite class of linguistic expressions and performance system of the mind.

Learning takes place as a result of an interaction between learning and learning situation. (A.L.Khana ,R.K.Agnihotri). Descartes provided a sketchy account of the world in the name of mechanical philosophy. It asserts that the things affect one another by contact. Otto Jesperson says that structures never come into speakers mind when he speaks. Speaker speaks clearly even without any conscious focus on grammatical instruction because he uses innumerable sentences heard and understood. Abstract notion of the structure is sufficient communication. Chomsky says that creative aspect of language is produced when there is a free production of appropriate, coherent and intelligible thoughts produced without any compulsion.

1.9 Acquisition of communication skills

Vygotsky (Mind in Society) insisted the view that learning is a social and constructivist activity and the language is a tool for thinking. He pointed out that social interaction is a major phenomenon in developing language ability. Thought and language are separate at the initial stage but both become dependent during the acts of communication. Meaning is created through interaction. From the view of Vygotsky abstract thinking is
possible through language. Noam Chomsky said that the language of the child grows in the mind as the visual system especially for binocular vision. “Language acquisition is something that happens to a child placed in a certain environment, not something that child does” (Noam Chomsky 29). Lord Herbert said that a number of principles and notions implanted in the mind brings objects from within as a direct gift of natural perception and natural instinct. Vygotskian theory of inner speech states that when children discover that it is helpful to speak aloud about what they are doing they begin to do that. Speech for one self becomes internalized and continues to operate as the genesis of thought to become verbal thinking (cf. Joseph Foley 62-75). It is suggested that when an individual face a difficult task, he externalizes the inner order to regulate himself. It shows that the self-regulated individual has access to object and accept the regulations when he faces the difficulties.

Children initiate the process of self regulation with support from more experienced members of culture. The first stage is primary inter-subjectivity/mental representation of self and the other (Trevarthan). The second stage is named secondary inter-subjectivity. It is an active regulator of all experience “adapted to create new form of communication that leads not only towards understanding language but also to developments in the infant’s ideas of objects. The infant’s new reactions to persons is voluntary not reflexive” (Trevarthan183). This is also referred as holophrastic stage of language development during when recognition of words in target language begins to appear and utterance of multiple words occur. Child starts to see persons as conscious, effective and interested partners in giving and taking of meanings. It shows a growth of independence from caretaker. Interpersonal communication develops in conflict situation with the emergence
of individual acts of conscious intent. “Acquisition of a language is mastered first in
collaboration with an adult or a more competent peer solely with the object of communicating”
(Joseph Foley 67).

1.10 **Adult language learning aspect**

Acquisition of second language is different from the acquisition of first language. Christina Sanz insisted that second language learners follow different pattern to learn L₂ when compared to L₁. Their acquisition, process of learning varies in efficiency because of their interaction with external factors that determines language acquisition. Child acquisition of language is different from adult acquisition. In adult L₂ acquisition takes place after cognitive development. Adult learners make use of most of the resources to compensate the limitations imposed internally and externally. DeKeyser’ study reached the conclusion saying that there is no significant relationship between age and effect. Plasticity of mind also differs from L₁ and L₂ acquisition. L₁ entails the initial organization of a neural architecture whereas L₂ restructures the already formed steady neural architecture of the mind (Eubank and Gregg 1999). For adults the maturational constraints on cognition interact with social-psychological factors during when the socio-psychological factors overtake the cognition (Christina Sanz). Aging involves a number of effects such as, maturational effects, cognitive and socio-affective factors (Bialystok and Hakuta) on language acquisition. It affects L₂ components that results in asymmetrical outcomes. Zone of proximal development is also possible for adults. According to Vygotsky “…learning which is oriented towards developmental stages that have already been reached is in effective…the only good learning is which occurs in advance development” (Vygotsky Mind in society 891). Stensko and Arievitch says that “Psychological process emerges
first in collective behavior, in co-operation with other people, and only subsequently become internalized as the individual’s own possessions” (161). The term acquire is same for everyone. Krashen mentions that child-like internalization of rules underlying the target language is sufficient for adults as well as adolescents. “…second language acquisition process is at least partly the same for children and adults…they are not limited to it because they have passed the age of puberty” (Patsy M. Lightbown). In both the stages learners cannot acquire any aspect of language if they are not interested or not ready to learn/acquire it.

1.11 Learning Strategies of learners of different countries

Researchers have proved that educational system and cultural background are affective factors in adapting strategies. Huang and van Naerssen’s study on the Chinese students’ showed the influence of Chinese tradition and educational system on the learning strategies used by the learners. Chinese learners used memorization strategy for second language learning. Chinese reverence for knowledge and wisdom made them go through prescribed books. Levine, Reves and Leaver observed strategies of Soviet immigrants in Israel which revealed their preference for mechanical memorization strategy for formal structured conscious learning. Bedell and Oxford’s evaluation on the use of learning strategies in learners of different educational and cultural background concedes that “learners often-though not always-behave in certain culturally approved and encouraged ways as they learn” (p.60). Indian learners use their own choice of strategy in learning second language. Learner from vernacular background in their schooling mostly prefer conscious learning to acquire L2. These learners use maximum number of strategies whereas vernacular medium learners use minimum number of strategies. Learners of
English medium schools in India use metacognitive and social strategies in the application. Medium of instruction plays a major role in the use of learning strategies. Ravi Sheorey explores strategy use in urban Indian learners. Observation on tertiary level learners through strategic questionnaire gave unexpected results. English Language Learning Strategies Inventory (ELLSI) questionnaire was based on four categories of language learning strategies such as Functional practice strategies, Cognitive Memory strategies, Metacognitive and systematic learning strategies, and Social strategies. It showed that most of the learners were looking for appropriate opportunities to practice English and many of them practiced L2 outside the classroom for comfort thereby using functional practice strategies. Memorization strategy fails to induce thinking skills in second language and leads to failure. Application of strategies is more crucial than identification of the strategies. It is the duty of the teacher to choose and teach the learner to apply appropriate strategy in all situations.

1.12 Application of needed strategies

In the Indian context of teaching – learning it has been found that most of the learners at tertiary level suffer from lack of communication a skill which is an affective factor. Application of strategies is possible through tasks. Educational values, cultural values and learners’ goals determine the types of tasks. Task based learning strategies use four categories such as “use what you know, use your imagination, use your organizational skills and use a variety of resources” (Chamot 17) Tasks must encourage the learner to follow appropriate strategies in the proper way. Guidance and support should be given through instruction. The general progression in the use of strategies increases the interaction process of target language. The degree of conscious and unconscious employment of particular strategies is one of
the probable factors to attain the goal in language acquisition. Experimental training of learners to employ selected significant strategies helps the learners to use it in all the situations and increase the effect of learning.

1.13 Strategies in the context of lateral thinking development

According to Rigney “a strategy may be interpreted as signifying operations and procedures that a learner may use to acquire, to retain and to retrieve different kinds of knowledge” (170-202). Dansereau said that “a strategy is considered to be a learner-based technique that, when acquired, would enable the individual function effectively when confront with the a) identification of important, unfamiliar and difficult material; b) application of techniques for comprehension and retention of circumstances c) efficient retrieval of information under appropriate circumstances, and d) effective coping with internal and external distractions while these other processes are being employed” (1-26).

1.14 Second Language acquisition at Tertiary level

Learners acquire the first language grammar naturally which allows them to present their ideas without any grammatical errors whereas they learn second language and the grammar consciously. Learning the language differs from acquiring the language. Ellis says “The term acquisition is used to refer to picking up a second language through exposure, whereas the term ‘learning’ is used to refer to the conscious study of second language” (Understanding Second Language Acquisition 6). The learners at tertiary level, that is first year Under Graduate students are in the advantageous position as they have already learnt grammar for more than twelve years of study in their school but struggling to express themselves innovatively. In this context the present study focuses on recommending a systematic ‘language acquisition’ method for mastering second
language (L₂) even at the beginning of tertiary level. Conscious Grammar learning is often considered as barrier for successful communication. Conscious use of rules hinders the creativity of the learners and acts as a barrier in activating their thinking skill.

“Conscious learning may be used to alter the output of the acquired system sometimes before or after the utterance is produced…conscious learning is available to the performer only as a Monitor” (Krashen 2-3). Communication aims at conveying information but in the monitored situation the learner concentrates on rules and fails to convey the message. Conscious rules inhibit learners’ thinking skills which leads to psychological inhibitions.

1.15 Research in Second language studies

Patsy M. Lightbown (Second Language Acquisition Research 173-176) classified and arranged the second language studies in three broad categories. Studies were categorized based on the methodological differences, they are

a) Descriptive studies

b) Longitudinal studies

c) Hypothesis testing studies

d) Experimental pedagogical studies

a) **Descriptive Studies**: Descriptive study collects samples of natural or spontaneous speech and writing of second language learners. It provides elicitation procedures to induce the learner to talk. Example, Dulay and Burt.

b) **Longitudinal studies**: In Longitudinal studies, In the first step, a learner or a group of learners will be observed over a period of time e.g. Lightbown (The acquisition and use of questions by French L2 learners). In the second step, the learners will be
examined at a single point (e.g. Bailey et al. 1974). In the third step, the consistency and variations in the performance will be described and interpreted.

c) **Hypothesis Testing:** The research starts from specific hypothesis about learners’ knowledge and seeks to test them. Example, Input hypothesis of Krashen suggested that learners produce interesting language when they are at ease during when affective filters also goes down. Any research can test this standard hypothesis .This is called as hypothesis testing research.

d) **Experimental Pedagogical studies:** It studies the effects of manipulations on language acquisition and produces the results. Results determine the application of research findings to second language pedagogy.

1.16 Review of Literature

A brief review of earlier works in the field of study is given below.

Jayashree Mukherjee in the doctoral dissertation “Learning from lectures: A study of cognitive demands and learning strategies at the tertiary level” concentrated on the cognitive processes involved in listening to comprehend lectures and retrieval for use of lecture based information from the storage of information. It suggested that model based on the understanding of the basic nature of discipline would lead to an improvement in students and appropriate use of particular strategies would be more effective. It emphasized the need to induce the subject specific skill to make the learner more competent in subject matter.

Madhuri Dubey, in the Doctoral dissertation entitled “The ESL curriculum at the tertiary level-An ethnographic critique” provided an account of critical reconstruction of the curricular site. An attempt had been made to explore the potential for empowerment
and emancipation for teachers and learners by bringing out the underlying assumptions and hidden assumptions of an autonomous context. The micro level issues referred to the syllabus specific concerns and macro level issues referred to educational concerns emerging from the social, political and cultural factors.

Kesari Varalaxmi Naidu, in her M.Phil dissertation entitled “Learner Training in learning strategies for second language development” insisted on training as necessary step to develop self-directedness. It attempted to provide content-based learner training in learning strategies to help in language learning. It explored the relationship between first language learning and second language learning and also the possibility of learners’ training to promote learner autonomy.

V.Maruthi Kumari, in her Doctoral dissertation entitled “English spoken by Engineering Students- A study in Intelligibility” analyzed the intelligibility of the spoken English of final year Under Graduate students of Andhra University. It reflected the present standard of spoken English of students from engineering colleges. It gave remedial measures for improvement in spoken language. The project suggested teaching with special emphasis on accent, rhythm and intonation.

G.Suvarna Lakshmi, in her Doctoral dissertation entitled “Developing critical skills strategy training: A task based approach” proved that developing critical thinking skills in second language learners enhance the language and learning abilities. It was suggested that designing tasks focusing on different thinking skills played a crucial role in the success of learning.
1.17 Problem

Indian educational system is very complex. Students at the entry level of Under Graduate programme come from various states and central boards of education with different language competency level. English is offered along with regional languages in most of the schools. The medium of instruction is either in English or in regional language. This acquisition complexity has its own impact on the language competency of students when they enter the Under Graduate programmes. The present study revolves around these entrants and their language development. Though students learn English for about twelve years before entering college education, they struggle in expressing themselves effectively. The major problem is their struggle in overcoming the complicated language learning methodology in the higher education. It affects second language acquisition and proficiency at the college level. In this context it was assumed by the researcher that the lack of skillful thinking impeded the process of learning English. Hence the implementation of strategies to activate lateral thinking skills was suggested.

1.18 Aim of the study

The purpose of this study was to enhance communication skills by implementing lateral thinking skills as strategies through tasks so as to enable second language (L₂) learners at tertiary level to attain appropriate and desirable competency level.

The objectives of the study were,

1. To enhance the learners’ language proficiency by developing lateral thinking skills.
   These include creative thinking and problem solving abilities.

2. To develop learners’ ability in creating concepts for various contexts.
3. To develop learners’ ability in application of knowledge in different contexts.

4. To help learners’ to enhance autonomy in the process of learning.

**1.19 Uniqueness of the study:**

Larger classroom is a unique feature of Indian schools and colleges. It has been a challenge to handle any subject in such classes. Imparting language skills by a single teacher has been remarked as a herculean task. Shortage of man power does not allow team teaching. Grouping the students into various levels does not support the regular classes. Innovations in methodology have been helpful in imparting language skills. In this context, the present study is more relevant as it calls for innovation at every session and specific outcome at the end of every session. It is an experiment with one group of students to study their learning process with strict assessment at every session. The assessment and findings were made based on the comparative score among the group members of a single class.

**1.20 Scope of the Study**

Developing lateral thinking skills changes the attitude of the learners and enhances second language learners’ language abilities. Designing and grading of tasks with consistent focus on thinking skills are crucial to change the attitude of learners towards second language communication which increases the autonomy of learning. Cognitive, metacognitive strategies best help the learners to enhance thinking abilities. The grading of tasks helps learners to move to the next level of cognitive maturity gradually. The teachers’ capacity of allotting the task according to the level of learners increases learners’ involvement which enhances the process of learning.
The research questions of this study are,

1. How can lateral thinking skills facilitate language learning?
2. How to improve learner autonomy through lateral thinking skills?
3. Does training in lateral thinking skills enhance learning ability?
4. How can strategies help in the use of lateral thinking for language learning?
5. How does task based learning aid improving lateral thinking skills?

1.21 Limitations of the study

Despite the scientific approach in assessing language skills development, there were certain limitations on the claims of this study. The first was the duration of the study. It was limited to forty sessions. Considering language learning as an incremental process, the tasks were reasonably challenging at each level and graded accordingly but expecting learners to acquire all the required skills might appear too ambitious.

1.22 Selection of the target group

The target learners for this study were from various branches of Engineering viz. ECE (Electronic and communication engineering), IT (Information and technology of engineering), CSE(Computer science and Engineering), Mech. (Mechanical Engineering) and E&I (Electronics and Instrumentation engineering) and Bio-Technology. Since Case study methodology was adopted, sixty six students of the same age group from the same institution were chosen as respondents for the study. The cognitive demands for the tasks and their response to the demands played a crucial role in the study. Though the learners had been exposed to English as L2 for twelve years, most of them never had the opportunity to converse in English language outside the premises. However, few learners had some
exposure to English in the form of rules in their schools. Seventy-five percentage of the learners chosen for the study were first generation learners. The rest of them were second generation learners but most of their parents were not exposed to English.

1.23 Data Analysis

As the topic of the research calls for active action research, the data was collected in various forms. All the tasks included the written responses of the learners. The reasoning and thinking ability of the learners were captured by observing the ideas and information used in the task. Apart from written responses, the class room activities and conversations were audio recorded regularly. Feedback of the learners regarding the tasks they had taken up during the sessions was also audio recorded. Questionnaires were also used to record their feedback which included the questions regarding their awareness of the process of learning. Therefore, the metacognitive activities were inbuilt in regular tasks. Analysis of the response of learners for every task was followed by the histogram. The analysis was comprised of two parts such as surface level analysis and critical analysis. In the surface level analysis, responses were taken as a whole that dealt with the overall performance of the learners of the task. It included a discussion relating to the relevance of responses, level of responses at cognitive level and time taken by learners to fulfill the demands of tasks. Critical analysis focused more on lateral thinking skills exhibited by the learners in the form of response to the task.

1.24 Appendices

Appendices consisted of questionnaires. Questionnaire I consisted the details of the personal and educational background of the target group. This questionnaire helped to
categorize the learners’ level. Questionnaire II focused on examining the proficiency and lateral thinking skills of the learners. Questionnaire III aimed at examining the improvement of learners after the training. It became the significant sources of data elicitation.

1.25 Mechanical assessment-SPSS

Responses for pre task questionnaire were collected at the beginning of the study. Responses for strategic questionnaire were collected during the sessions and the responses for Post Questionnaire were collected at the end of the study. Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 16) was used to evaluate the responses. Paired sample T-test was used to compare responses of pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire.

1.26 Presentation

Chapter –I

The first chapter is an introduction where the problem taken for the research is introduced with sufficient description concerning the background to the study, statement of the problem, aim of the study, review of literature, data collection and data analysis. A description about teaching of English in India, its necessity, with focus on changing the attitude of entry level undergraduate learners towards second language communication skills to cope up with the present scenario are presented.

Chapter –II

Chapter II deals with theories related to second language learners’ psychology, thinking skills, language learning, and task based approach in enhancing second language. This section explains lateral thinking skills and its features. It covers major factors of lateral thinking which the researcher advocates as mandatory element for developing language skills.
The theories related to strategy training and task based learning in L₂ were discussed. It justifies that the task based learning approach was adopted to enable learner centered curriculum in the classroom with suitable reason. A number of language modules were developed based on Lateral thinking in the context of L₂ learning. Since language and thought are interrelated they help developing each other. The process of acquisition of knowledge and language depend on the factors related to thinking abilities. Therefore, the model of this study called for overpowering psychological inhibitions of learners by enhancing lateral thinking skills.

**Chapter –III**

Chapter III presents the details of the framework of the study. The tools and methods used for the study are elaborately discussed. The respondents were made to go through the new learning process, as the research question demanded training learners in developing lateral thinking skills. A series of tasks were designed to expose learners to the above-mentioned skills. The tasks were arranged in sixteen different sets ranging from cognitive complexities to problem solving levels. These sets provided a framework to include different types of tasks to make the learners get acquainted with specific skills. This chapter presents the details of the study conducted dealing with research question and the issues stated above.

**Chapter –IV**

Chapter IV presents the description of data and analysis of data. The data was presented in the same order in which it was collected. The tasks were graded based on their cognitive and linguistic complexity. A detailed description of each task mentioning the task, rationale, code-complexity, cognitive-complexity, time pressure and responses
were presented. Responses were presented in the form of histograms and critical analyses. Each histogram projected the level of learners with regard to language, relevance of the response, creative thinking and problem solving ability. The responses for the questionnaire were analyzed with the help of SPSS 16 software. As the variables were high in number, descriptive statistics, frequency tables and paired -sample T-test were used to analyze the responses of learners. The graded responses at the end of the task and the responses for questionnaire were compared to show the effectiveness of tasks. Frequency tables were used to assess the level of learners at the end of each task. Paired sample T-test was used to assess the responses of pre and post questionnaire. This chapter answers the research question raised in the first chapter and presents the results of tested hypothesis.

**Chapter –V**

This study led to the conclusion that training learners in learning strategies to develop lateral thinking skills enhanced the second language proficiency of target learners. It was noticed that the learners’ responses reflected independent thought production. The major findings of the study were,

i. Developing lateral thinking skills in second language learners enhanced their language abilities.

ii. Developing lateral thinking skill changed the attitude of the learners.

iii. Designing and grading of tasks with consistent focus on thinking skills was crucial for the success of learning.

iv. Learners displayed autonomy in their learning process. They started working independently without expecting any assistance from peers as well as from the teacher.
v. The grading of tasks helped learners to move to the next level of cognitive maturity gradually and enable the learners to work successfully on all the tasks given to them. In other words, as learners were successful in working on tasks they were able to move to the next level of cognitive maturity along with the tasks.

vi. The teacher initiated and directed the task according to the level of learners. It affected the involvement of learners and increased the process of learning.

vii. The tasks enabled the learners to be responsible for their own learning.

viii. It was proved in the study that feedback from the learners on the task enabled teacher to modify tasks.

ix. It was found that feedback from the teacher helped learners to activate their innate abilities and it motivated learners to increase self-assessment skills.

1.27 Author’s Note

The main focus of the study was to investigate the learning process of a specific group of students in a scientific way and project the progress that the learners showed in acquiring language skills.