CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aims of the investigation.

The thesis describes an investigation undertaken at S.N.D.T. Women's University, the subject of which was 'The development of a course in Spoken English at the college level and the study of its effectiveness'. The investigation had two main aims. The first aim was the preparation of a set of courses in Spoken English at the Basic, Intermediate and Advanced levels, with a concentration on the Basic Course. The investigation hence involved the study of a variety of approaches to course design and teaching methodology as a foundation for the rationale and design of the new courses. The courses were then taught over a period of three years to determine their effectiveness as courses aiming at the achievement of proficiency in speech, a skill always mentioned among the objectives of teaching English as a foreign language in India, but rarely taught in practice. The Basic Course received three try-outs on a large scale, the Intermediate Course one try-out. The Advanced Course will be tried out in 1980-81.

The second aim was to investigate whether greater attention to speech would result in a transfer of learning, leading to improved proficiency in the other language skills, namely aural comprehension, reading and writing. The problem
was thus a two-fold one, involving the teaching of spoken English both as an end in itself and as a means to a further end, the improvement of general language proficiency. For the second aspect of the investigation an experiment was designed with matched control groups.

The account of the two aspects of the research will be given separately in Part I and Part II of the thesis although some overlap is inevitable. The second and third versions of the Basic Course and the third version of the Intermediate Course have been attached as supplements to the thesis. As earlier versions were substantially altered they have not been attached. There has been no opportunity to experiment with the Advanced Course. Hence only a draft outline of the course and some specimen lessons will be included. Attention will be concentrated on the Basic Course since it formed the starting point of the investigation and required greater originality of approach. The entire experiment on transfer of skills centred on the Basic Course. At the same time the complete course in Spoken English was from the outset envisaged as a three stage course spread over three years covering B.A. Part I, Part II and Part III. The Intermediate Course was designed on the basis of a functional syllabus while the Basic Course was designed on the basis of a structural syllabus. The reasons for the difference in approach will be explained in due course. Thus an opportunity to compare the effectiveness of these two approaches also presented itself.
In this introduction it is necessary to say something about the circumstances which led to the investigation. It is also necessary to give an account of the position of English at S.N.D.T. Women's University where the experiment was conducted. The question as to whether English is to be regarded as a second language or a foreign language in the Indian context must also be considered. The rest of the chapter will briefly indicate the scope of the research which will be more fully discussed in subsequent chapters.

1.2 The background to the investigation.

The researcher, in the course of twenty-five years' experience of teaching Compulsory English at various colleges affiliated to the University of Bombay, had been constantly engaged in the preparation of materials, designing of courses and conducting of teacher training programmes, all directed at the improvement of the teaching of the English language. The importance of training in language skills had come to be recognized by syllabus framers, leading to a change in the materials and methods used at university level. Literary works and selections to be expounded by means of the lecture method and to be tested by means of content-based questions were replaced by reading materials which were designed to train the students to read independently. Even when selections continued to be prescribed and content-based questions asked, teachers were encouraged as far as possible to use the passages in the selections for practice in reading. The students were expected
to read silently with the help of a glossary and they were led to an understanding of the text through question and answer instead of explanation and comment. Training in listening comprehension was introduced, although there was no possibility of its inclusion in the formal syllabus as long as the final examination remained an external one confined to writing. Courses in remedial grammar and guided composition were also prepared and taught.

Although all the trends outlined above were part of an endeavour to equip the students to handle English effectively as the medium of instruction for their own subjects of specialization, the general experience was that students remained ill equipped to use English as the medium, learning became a matter of rote learning and the very process of thought was impeded as students did not possess an adequate command of the language which was the instrument of thought. As regards proficiency in English itself, it was found that a large number of students even in their final year were unable to undertake reference reading in their subject or to read books and journals of general interest, to follow normal English spoken at normal speed, to construct grammatically correct sentences or to communicate effectively through speech or writing. This observation has been confirmed by teachers and examiners of English as well as of other subjects where English was the medium. The few exceptions were students who either came from homes where English was virtually the first language,
or who came from good English medium schools or from Indian
language medium schools with good English departments or who
were themselves so capable that they would have been successful
under any circumstances.

The question therefore arose as to why, in spite of
the improvements introduced in the compulsory English courses,
the final level of proficiency remained so unsatisfactory.
Over certain factors the English teacher had, of course, no
control. These included the absence of any satisfactory
criteria for selection at entry and the admission of vast
numbers of students which resulted in a very low teacher-
student ratio. But as far as the English language courses
were concerned, the researcher had come to the conclusion that
certain innovations might lead to better results. Three lines
of approach seemed worth exploring. These will be discussed
at some length in the next section, as they form the starting-
point of the present piece of research.

1.3 New lines of approach.

In the first place it was possible that if far greater
stress was laid on speech, students might, through constant
use, assimilate the patterns of English till their reproduction
in speech or writing became a matter of automatic habit. In
the second place, such a command of the patterns appeared to
demand a greater emphasis on the teaching of structure than of
systems. And linked with this was the third main feature of
the new approach, the introduction of these patterns should be
graded and should commence with the simplest patterns, taking no prior knowledge for granted. To a large extent what was envisaged was the application of the same principles of syllabus and course construction at college level which were already accepted at school level. The introduction of each of the three lines of approach needs to be justified, however, if they are introduced at the college level.

1.3. An oral approach.

Proficiency in the skill of speech is important as an end in itself and this aspect will be discussed in due course. (Section 1.4) Prior to that its impact on the learning of the language will be considered. The case rests on the belief that proficiency in speech enhances motivation, thereby creating more favourable attitudes to learning. Equally important, it enables the student to acquire greater control over the structure of the language, resulting in an improvement in writing, aural comprehension and reading. The grounds for such a belief are as follows:

(a) The students will be studying the language as a living language. At present the language is so remote from their experience that it is virtually a dead language to them. The experience of speaking a few words, even of reading out dialogues in a natural manner as if they were actually conversing in English, is a novel one for them. The fact that they can do it at all will provide a sense of achievement and encourage them to persist.
(b) Through constant use of the language in speech, the students will internalize its rules and begin to acquire control over its grammatical system, its syntactical patterns, its morphology, the paradigmatic systems of tense, number etc. and function words. Writing ability will thus be strengthened. Hitherto it has been found that no matter how carefully the students are led from blank-filling, transformations and other exercises, through controlled and guided composition to free composition, the most elementary errors are apt to recur even at the final stage.

(c) The students' ability to comprehend spoken English will improve through constant opportunities of listening to the teacher and to one another. The exposure to spoken English would otherwise be limited to lessons in aural comprehension and to the teacher's explanations, instructions and questions when teaching reading or writing.

(d) Reading ability will also improve if students learn to use meaningful phrases as units of thought. At present they tend to read word by word so that the process of comprehension is impeded and the habit of thinking in phrases is not formed.

Thus there are sound pedagogical reasons for treating speech as the foundation for courses in language learning. It does not by any means follow that one should relegate the teaching of other skills to a position of minor importance. The preparation of more innovative courses in writing, listening and reading must proceed side by side with the preparation of courses.
In speech. What the researcher wished to explore was whether, through the assignment of a key position to the speech component of the course, a considerable improvement would result in proficiency in other skills. This could be tested by means of a comparison with control groups which did not receive any such training in speech.

1.3.2 An emphasis on structure as against system.

In the 1950s and 1960s an increasing need had been felt for the teaching of remedial grammar at the First Year College level. In spite of a certain amount of initial resistance to the idea, it had come to be largely accepted by teachers as well as by Boards of Studies. Some of the courses most widely used were *Living English Structure* by W. Stannard Allen, *An Intermediate English Practice Book* by S. Pit Corder, *A Remedial English Grammar for Foreign Students* by F.T. Wood, the exercise booklets accompanying *A Practical English Grammar for Foreign Students* by A.J. Thomson and A.V. Martinet and, at a more difficult level, *Exercises in English Patterns and Usage* by Ronald Mackin. In addition some colleges and universities had designed their own courses and work-books. The researcher, along with her colleagues at Patkar College affiliated to the University of Bombay, had prepared a course in remedial grammar for First Year Arts and Science students. S.N.D.T. University had prepared work-books at the Pre-university and Intermediate levels. Much had been hoped for from the introduction of these courses. But it was found that very little transfer took place...
when students came to writing compositions or other pieces of connected writing. At best the rules were understood and applied in the course of working out a set of exercises. But they were not internalized, and improvement in writing was, consequently, negligible.

In an effort to understand the reasons for such a failure, the researcher came to the conclusion that all these courses, including the one she herself had prepared, concentrated on the teaching of systems rather than structure. They took up areas such as the use of tenses, articles or prepositions, gave careful explanations with examples, followed by fairly copious practice. The practice might involve, say, the contrasting use of the simple present and the present continuous tenses or the definite and indefinite articles. These are items in language systems, the items standing in paradigmatic relation with each other, substituting for each other at a particular point in a grammatical structure, though of course in a particular meaning context only one of the options is available. The students' attention was concentrated on the options available in the system and the choice of the appropriate one in the context. The sentences containing the item in question indiscriminately included a wide variety of sentence patterns, many of them being complex sentence patterns. Such a variety of sentence structure, it seemed, led to confusion, resulting not only in a failure to assimilate the structure of the sentence as a whole but also in a failure to assimilate the
specific grammatical point being drilled.

Some illustrations will clarify the issue. A good example is Exercise 7 from Living English Structure by W. Stannard Allen (1947). The exercise is labelled as 'Elementary' and is designed to practice the use of the articles. The following sentences occur in close succession:

No.17 ... vegetables are good for ... health.
No.18 ... girls do not often wear ... hats.
No.19 I have ... new dress with ... long sleeves.
No.20 ... door of ... garage is broken.
No.21 There are ... beautiful flowers in ... park.
No.24 It is not good to smoke ... cigarette before ...
meal.

All the sentences except the last are simple sentences. The last is definitely a complex construction with anticipatory 'it' followed by a 'to-infinitive' construction as the real subject. The first five sentences would appear to be very straightforward. But it will be noted that in all five there are different patterns. No.17 contains a copula followed by an adjective + prepositional phrase. In No.18 there is a transitive verb in the present tense in the negative. No.19 contains a noun modified by a prepositional phrase. In No.20 the passive occurs while in No.21 a construction with 'there are' is used. Does this variety of over-all sentence patterns matter? Does it interfere with the understanding of the rules
regarding article usage and the internalisation of the rules so that articles will be correctly employed when the student's attention is not specifically directed to their use? The researcher had come to believe that possibly the variety of over-all structure-patterns, even in sentences as simple as these, might be a cause of confusion. Whether this was so, needed to be examined. Consequently it was felt that course materials, whether they were for the teaching of remedial grammar, speech or composition, should be so designed as to bring together sentences with identical structure.

Whether, in that case, conscious attention was to be directed to the structure of the sentence or whether assimilation of the pattern could be expected to take place with constant practice, was the next point at issue. If the greater emphasis on structure was to be linked with greater emphasis on speech, it seemed best to rely on assimilation through practice. In any case the break-down in structure was so conspicuous a feature of the written composition of students that it seemed well worthwhile to make a new departure by laying greater emphasis on structure than on systems. Systems were not to be neglected but they were to be introduced within a framework of identical structure-patterns and only after basis sentence patterns had been firmly established.

1.3.3 A graded approach.

The natural corollary of the above argument was that the
introduction of sentence patterns would have to be graded and
introduced step by step with rigid control exercised, so that
no structural item which had not yet been taught should appear
in a given lesson or exercise. It will be observed that this
is exactly the approach that was adopted several years ago in
the preparation of readers in English for the non-English-
medium schools in Maharashtra State. A structural syllabus was
drawn up and lessons were designed to teach the structure-patterns
in a graded sequence. The researcher had the idea that a similar
form of teaching should be adopted at the college entrance level.
Only it should be through a course in speech instead of in
reading.

What was essential was that one should begin at the
beginning so far as the structural items were concerned. This
stand needs some defence. So far all those who have prepared
'remedial' courses, including the researcher herself, have
proceeded on the assumption that a certain amount of learning
has taken place but there are areas where mistakes occur and
where 'remedial' teaching is consequently required. Now of
course it remains true that in the acquisition of vocabulary
for recognition and in reading comprehension some learning
has undoubtedly taken place. In the case of the abler
students, or the students who are more fortunately placed
as regards home environment and schooling facilities, some
command of sentence structure has likewise been acquired. But
a survey of compositions and answer scripts reveals that well
over fifty per cent of college entrants have not even mastered the structural items included in the reader for Std.V, the first year in which English is introduced in schools in Maharashtra. This statement may seem incredible to those who have no first-hand experience of teaching at the college level. But scripts of written compositions by college entrants can easily be produced to substantiate the point that fundamental items such as the S.V.O. word-order with transitive verbs, subject-verb concord, inversion of subject and verb in the interrogative, have not been grasped by over fifty per cent of the students.

Some possible reasons for this state of affairs will be discussed in a later chapter (Section 2.5.1). It is not necessarily a reflection on the ability of the teachers at the school level. As was stated earlier in the chapter, it was precisely because four years of further teaching at the college level likewise led to very little progress that the whole project of attempting new lines of approach was proposed. The fact remains, however, that the gap between the level of proficiency described in the syllabus for Std.I or Std.XII and the level of proficiency actually attained is so wide that the whole concept of 'remedial' grammar must be considered afresh. One is not justified in assuming as a basis any prior command over sentence structure which would allow one to concentrate on specific areas of weakness such as tenses or prepositions. The entire grammar of the language must be covered afresh.
How is this to be done in a fresh manner so that the students do not lose interest and slacken in attention? It was felt that this could be achieved by laying stress on the acquisition of the skill of speech rather than on the revision of grammatical items. In addition, the content of the course would be suited to the students' general level of development and their interests and communicative needs.

1.4 The courses in English at S.N.D.T. University surveyed as a framework to the investigation.

The genesis of the present research has been indicated through an account of the lines along which the writer had been thinking while still working at Patkar College, affiliated to the University of Bombay. An opportunity to experiment with the new approach presented itself on joining S.N.D.T. Women's University in June 1975. A brief account of the position of English at S.N.D.T. University will be in order at this point. The account will be confined to the teaching of Compulsory English in the Arts Faculty under the new three-year degree course, as that forms the background of the present experiment.

The medium of instruction in the Arts Faculty is the student's mother tongue, Marathi, Gujarati or Hindi. (Students opting for English as the medium are permitted to appear as private candidates but none of the Arts colleges offer instruction through English to the regular students. The study is not concerned with the private candidates and the
efforts being made to improve the facilities provided for them. So no more will be said about them at this point.) The policy of adopting the mother tongue as the medium is in keeping with the original policy of Dr. Karve, the founder of the University. It appears to be an eminently sound educational policy if the student is to acquire a real understanding of her chosen field of study. At the same time English is a compulsory subject of study for all three years for regular students registered in the conducted and affiliated colleges in the State of Maharashtra. Private students and students registered in the colleges affiliated to the University from the State of Gujarat are permitted to study Hindi instead of English as a compulsory language, as English is not compulsory at the school-leaving stage in Gujarat.

It is with a view to protecting the interests of the students in the competitive job situation that the study of English has been made compulsory in the colleges in Maharashtra. It has been found that in Bombay city in particular, many jobs and social opportunities are closed to those who do not possess an adequate knowledge of English. The University thus seeks to ensure that the students can grasp their own subject of specialization by providing instruction in the students’ own language. At the same time it seeks to ensure that they should not, after graduation, be at a disadvantage compared to students from English-medium universities, since the prevalent impression is that their knowledge of the language will automatically be inferior.
The syllabus for the entire three-year B.A. course in Compulsory English (1980-81) is included in Appendix A. (The syllabus for Part I in 1977-78, which was a year of transition, will be given in Chapter 7 where the experiment carried out in that year is described.) The syllabus has been designed keeping in mind the background of the students, their level of proficiency at entrance, their interests and the educational, social and professional purposes for which they will use the language. It will be seen that the courses contain language skill components, namely, reading, writing, listening comprehension (in Part I only) and speech (in Parts I and II). This is in keeping with the principle that the student needs to know a language for actual use. Selections are prescribed, not so that the students should acquire a knowledge of their contents, but so that they should acquire the skill of reading independently. The case for the teaching of language rather than literature to students of English as a second or foreign language scarcely needs to be argued any more; it has been accepted by syllabus framers at the national level. Those who wish to study English literature will take the course in English as a subject of specialization.

S.N.D.T. University has not however gone to the extent of excluding literature entirely from its syllabi for Compulsory English as, say, the University of Bombay has done. The retention of a literary text has been favoured as it is felt that the study of literature will arouse an interest in the
learning of the language itself. It will serve to motivate the student for whom the motivation provided by the more distant goal of the achievement of competence in the language is relatively weak. The student during her college career does not realize how necessary it will be for her after graduation to have acquired competence in English. Motivation is consequently relatively weak. Carefully selected literary texts, centred round themes and situations which are relevant and appealing, and in language which is easily comprehensible, have been definitely found to strengthen motivation.

As regards the weightage given to the four skills, it will be observed that listening and speech are assigned greater weightage in the earlier stages of learning, writing in the later stages, while reading occupies an important position throughout. Listening has been assigned more weightage initially as the students' progress in other areas of the course rests on aural comprehension of the teacher's instructions, explanations and comments and it has been observed that progress is severely impeded as a result of failure in aural comprehension. Once this skill has been acquired, it is not necessary to provide specific training in the second and third years. Improvement in listening ability will of course take place with greater exposure to the language. The manner in which the courses in speech have been modified to allow more scope for aural comprehension will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.
Speech has for the first time been assigned considerable weightage in the first two years. Not only is this a new departure in S.N.D.T. University, a perusal of the syllabi of other Indian universities indicates that the skill of speech is not assigned comparable weightage. Three factors may be regarded as contributing to the importance attached to speech and these will now be discussed.

It has already been argued at length that speech serves as a foundation for the learning of a language. It motivates, creates confidence and gives a feeling of inwardness with the language, while with reading or writing there is a feeling of foreignness and distance. It was argued that the structure-patterns are internalized through practice in the form of speech. The second part of the thesis deals with the experiment through which it was sought to establish this stand. To vindicate the stand fully, however, it is necessary to have more experience of teaching the course to successive batches of students. This will make it possible to observe the long-term effects of the course at the end of the three-year period. It will also make it possible to revise and improve the course in the light of experience so as to make it a more effective instrument for the achievement of the objectives of teaching.

Thus the weightage given to speech is justified even where the learning of spoken English is not important as an end in itself. It is of value to students of affiliated colleges in small towns such as Sangli and Bhavnagar, who may
not, on leaving college, ever find themselves in situations where they will need to speak English.

But it must also be emphasized that for many students of S.N.D.T. University the learning of spoken English is important as an end in itself. It is generally held that in a university in which English is not the medium of instruction, the only skill that is of importance in the teaching of English is the reading skill, so that students may be able to consult journals and reference books in their areas of specialization. The writer originally shared this belief and expected, on joining S.N.D.T. University, that the main focus would be on the teaching of English as a 'library language'. But a year's experience at S.N.D.T. University led to a change of opinion, and subsequent experience has strengthened the view that the skills of production, writing and speech, are as important as the reading skill.

One has to view syllabus design, not merely in the context of the academic needs of the student during the years spent at the university, but in the total context of future needs, professional and social, after graduation. Now the need for English as a library language undoubtedly exists. Teachers of other subjects constantly complain that there is a paucity of reading material in the mother tongue and the students are unable to supplement it through recourse to English text-books, as their knowledge of the language is inadequate for the purpose. Hence the English syllabus contains
a course-component for training in independent reading, both
intensive reading in the classroom as well as extensive
reading of supplementary readers at home. Apart from this,
a project is now on foot for the production of subject-
oriented reading materials for the students of B.A. Part III.
Thus training in reading and the teaching of English as a
'library language' are by no means neglected.

Nevertheless, viewed in the total context of the
students' communicative needs, it becomes apparent that a
sizeable number of students require English for jobs and for
the maintenance of social relationships rather than for academic
purposes. Many of them appear to have no marked academic
interest or aptitude. They do not, at the under-graduate stage,
intend to make a deep or extensive study of their subject which
would necessitate a reference to books or journals in English.
(The picture at most Indian universities would appear to be
similar, judging from the absenteeism, indiscipline and general
indifference to studies of which there is ample evidence.) On
the other hand many students will have to earn their living
after leaving college and if their skill of expression in
English is inadequate they will be at a grave disadvantage in
competing for jobs as well as in successfully carrying out
their duties on the job. Thus both the skills of speech
and writing will be of great importance.
There is another set of S.I.T. University students for whom the skill of speech is important as an end in itself. These are students coming from families where girls and women are not permitted to seek employment even if they desire to do so. Such girls sometimes come from fairly wealthy homes. As adults they require English for social purposes when conversing with their husbands' business associates or when accompanying their husbands abroad. They often marry into a social class where it is a matter of prestige to send the children to English medium schools. The mothers in such situations are unable to help the children with their homework and so develop a feeling of inferiority with regard to their own children. The children even feel ashamed of their mothers in the presence of their friends. Women who, as college students, did not take advantage of the opportunities offered to them, as they did not then appreciate the importance of English in their future lives, desperately join conversation classes at this stage. The Continuing Education department of S.I.T. University as well as other organisations which conduct such classes have confirmed that there does exist a group which requires spoken English for the reasons just discussed and a fair number of S.I.T. University students, at least in Bombay city, come within this category. Thus, for such students, speech is an important skill which they must acquire as an end in itself.

The final factor responsible for the greater weightage
attached to speech is the favourable attitude and administrative set-up at the University. Speech can only be taught in small classes and it can only be tested through a system of internal assessment. S.N.D.T. University is fortunate in that the university authorities have sanctioned the provision in the time-table of two tutorial periods for Compulsory English at B.A. Part I and II. The University has also adopted the system of internal assessment, according to which thirty per cent of the marks in each paper at the undergraduate level are allotted for tests and other assignments carried out throughout the year and assessed by the teachers teaching the subject. Thus skills and areas which cannot be tested in a final mass examination can be evaluated in the course of the year. By this means the teacher receives the necessary feedback and the students remain diligent throughout the year. Besides these favourable administrative conditions, the university authorities, many college managements and the body of English teachers are favourably inclined to innovative projects.

An account has been given in this chapter of the various factors related to learning theory, students' needs and practical considerations which have led to the assignment of an important position to spoken English. Why then, it will be asked, does it not figure as a course-component for B.A. Part III? The sole reason is the necessity for providing adequate scope for writing practice. As spoken English can
only be taught in tutorials, and as we have regarded speech as the foundation for the whole language-learning process, we have assigned both tutorials in Part I to speech. As a result justice cannot be done to the teaching of writing since it has to be taught in the full class. Once a sound foundation for language learning has been laid through the course in speech, it becomes possible to allow more time for writing. Hence in B.A. Part II one tutorial is allotted for speech and one for writing, while in B.A. Part III, the sole tutorial period available has been allotted to writing. This makes it impossible to provide a course-unit in speech in Part III.

The Advanced Course in Spoken English will therefore be offered as an optional subject under the 'Enrichment Component' in Part III. This again is a novel feature distinguishing the S.M.P.T. University curriculum from that of other universities. In addition to eighteen papers spread over three years, students audit courses, known as 'enrichment' courses, which cover a wide range. They include profession-oriented courses such as 'Office Management' and courses of special appeal to women such as 'Cosmetology'. From the point of view of English teaching not only does this provide the opportunity to offer an Advanced Course in Spoken English following on the Basic and Intermediate Courses, but it also affords a chance to colleges to offer courses in any of the skills as a supplement to the compulsory courses. Poetry-reading, play-reading or public speaking, for instance, could be...
offered as supplements to the speech course.

The syllabus in English has been surveyed as a background to the research undertaken. It will be evident that the development of a course in spoken English and the testing of its effectiveness not only fitted in within this framework and was in keeping with the principles according to which the syllabus was designed, but the course was an essential component of the new syllabus and formed indeed its very foundation. An equally important aspect of the research was to determine whether the course in spoken English was effective as a means to a further end, the acquirement of general proficiency in language skills. To determine whether any such transfer of learning took place it was necessary to arrange an experiment with a control group. Now it so happened that the academic year 1977-78 was particularly favourable for the planning of such an experiment; indeed it was the only year in which the experiment could be carried out. Although it was the first year of the introduction of the new three-year degree course, it was a year of transition, when many of the new course-materials for B.A. Part I, in English as well as in other subjects, were not yet ready, and hence some of the older course-components had to be retained. It was therefore possible to arrange for experimental groups taking the new Basic Course in Spoken English, with control groups studying grammar and composition and using the existing course materials. The course in speech could be revised and improved in the light of this experience. Once the course was finalised it would be made compulsory for all students and the
1.5 English - a second language or a foreign language?

Before proceeding further, an important issue must be considered, namely, is English to be regarded as a second language or a foreign language in the Indian context? Even when a language does not function as the mother tongue of any section of the population of a country, it may, none the less, fulfil such an important role within the country that it can be termed a second language. When a language has no such role to play, but is studied purely from a cultural or humanistic point of view by those interested in its literature or culture or from a utilitarian point of view by those who require it for purposes such as business relations or studies abroad, it may be termed a foreign language. In the case of a second language there is bound to be far more exposure to the language in the environment, greater motivation to learn and greater justification for making it a compulsory subject of study.

What is the role that English plays in India? Apart from the fact that there are small sections of the population that speak it with native proficiency, far better than they speak any Indian language, and who therefore claim that it is their mother tongue, English plays a very important role in education, business and administration. It is the medium of instruction for higher education, both academic and technological. Those who seek jobs in private companies or the professions must be proficient in English. It is recognized as an official
language for purposes of administration at the national level. It would follow that it should be considered as a second language rather than a foreign language. Looking at it from the point of view of the learner, one notes that exposure to English in large cities is considerable. In a city like Bombay, English language newspapers are widely read, English broadcasts form an important part of radio programmes, advertisements, shop-signs, street names, announcements at stations and other public places make use of English. Certainly no purely foreign language could occupy such a position.

Yet there are aspects in which the position of English for many Indian learners is more akin to that of a foreign language than a second language. In Bombay city itself it is possible to satisfy all one's normal requirements with the aid of Hindi or Marathi. At stations, buses, shops, restaurants, banks, the use of English is not essential. Many students only read newspapers in their mother tongue, see Hindi films, confine themselves to radio and T.V. programmes in their mother tongue or Hindi. Exposure to English is thus limited. Added to this is the fact that both the structure of the language and the expression of concepts make it more difficult for an Indian to learn English than another Indian language. English thus becomes as alien to the learner as any other foreign language. How much more so would this be the case in small towns and rural areas. Learners there have scarcely any exposure to English outside the classroom. Most of them will
not in future take up occupations or move in an environment where they will make any use of English. They will not travel abroad and most will not go in for higher education.

Thus the position of English in India is in some respects akin to that of a second language, in some respects to that of a foreign language. A further complication, and a serious one, arises from the number of languages to be learnt and the order in which they are learnt. English may be the third language introduced in schools, after the mother tongue and Hindi. It may even be the fourth language when the mother tongue of the student is different from the regional language of the State. This complicated position forms the context in which course design and teaching must be planned.

1.6 **Part I of the investigation: the preparation and try-out of a course in Spoken English and a study of its effectiveness as a means towards the achievement of proficiency in speech.**

Chapters 2 to 5 discuss the first aspect of the investigation. The scope of the research included a study of contributions in the field of applied linguistics to the understanding of language structure and language function, of descriptive grammars based on a variety of models, as well as contributions in the areas of syllabus design and methods of teaching and evaluation. It also included the scrutiny of a large number of courses together with the accompanying tapes and cassettes. The majority of these were naturally courses in Spoken English and in pronunciation, but a number of remedial
grammar courses as well as integrated courses for learners were also examined.

In the light of this study, objectives were framed, a syllabus was drawn up and the course booklet for B.A. Part I, A Basic Course in Spoken English, was prepared. The try-out of this course and subsequent revision with repeated try-outs fell within the scope of the research. The evolution of appropriate methods of testing formed another important aspect of the research. Side by side work was commenced on the framing of the course-booklet for B.A. Part II, An Intermediate Course in Spoken English. The preparation of this course with its various revisions and try-outs also came within the scope of the research. Experiments with the use of hardware and software were carried out. As regards the Advanced Course intended for B.A. Part III, only an outline of the course and some specimen lessons are included in the thesis as there has been no opportunity for a try-out.

1.7 Part II of the investigation: the experiment testing the effectiveness of the course in Spoken English as a means towards the achievement of proficiency in other language skills.

Chapters 6 to 9 discuss the second aspect of the investigation. There were two issues to be examined, namely (i) the value of pattern practice as against the study of grammar and (ii) the value of practice in speech as against
practice in writing. The two hypotheses to be tested were accordingly framed as follows:--

(1) Greater competence in a second or foreign language is acquired through practice of its patterns in real-life situations presented in a systematically graded sequence than through explicit explanations of its grammatical rules followed by exercises in their application.

(2) Greater competence in all language skills is acquired through extensive practice in speech than through extensive practice in writing.

An experiment was conducted in 1977-78 involving ten pairs of groups in six colleges of the university located in Bombay. As a preliminary to the designing of the experiment it was necessary to make a study of theories of language learning and to obtain information on experiments already conducted in the field. Next the experiment with control groups was designed and conducted under close supervision. For this purpose a test was required covering the language elements and language skills. The preparation, try-out and revision of the test formed an important aspect of the research. This test was administered as a pre-test-exam-post-test to all the groups in order to measure their progress.

On conclusion of the experiment the data was analysed statistically. It was found that whereas the hypotheses could not be established as conclusively proved, the results lent
them a certain measure of support. A number of factors such as academic aptitude were also taken into account when analysing the results from various points of view.

Finally Chapter 10 of the thesis is a concluding chapter which presents the main findings reached as a result of both aspects of the investigation.