In the activity described below, the students of a class were divided into two groups, and they were given the freedom to choose a relevant topic they are comfortable with and present it in the form of a seminar. The first group of students were asked to adhere strictly to the use of English while engaging in all kinds of subsidiary activities related to the presentation but the other group had the freedom of code-switching on the basis of their perceived comfort levels. Following this, the behaviour of the learners during the activity and the learning outcome were closely observed and these observations are given below.

**Project I (Group I)**

Observations made after insisting on learner-communication only by the use of the target language.

1. **Motivation**

The learners seemed to be consistently less motivated as the sessions went on; their commitment to the programme showed signs of reduction. The response of the student-audience was relatively less enthusiastic since the learners couldn’t liberate themselves from the clutches of anxiety and nervousness. The participation in the activity was marked by reluctance and inhibitions and the signs of external compulsion were evident in it.

2. **Presentations**

The learners showed great eagerness to rush through the presentations; they were unable, or rather unwilling to focus on language points. Similarly, they were reluctant to offer explanations to queries and preferred reading out from the text of their presentations whenever questions were asked. They seemed to be eager to concentrate on the subject matter by strictly adhering to the textual points that could be read out, and tactfully evaded discussions on language structure and use.
3. Communication

The learners never appeared comfortable and spontaneous while trying to communicate in English. Only a few students tried to make an attempt to speak and most others could not progress beyond reading out from the text they had prepared in advance.

4. Use of Materials and Resources

Most of the learners depended only on the notes and materials they copied out from books and internet. They showed great reluctance to divert from the materials they had kept, and made no attempt to delve into the related areas or allied topics. They seemed absolutely unprepared to deal with issues related to language structure, use and meanings.

5. Learning Outcome

The quick spot evaluation conducted soon after the presentation showed hardly any signs of learning. The learners were concerned more with the completion of the task as a mandatory requirement than with the benefit they would gain out of it by way of learning English. They had got through the task experiencing a sense of relief rather than any satisfaction arising out of the progress they had made in language learning.

Project II (Group II)

Observations after giving the learners the freedom of bilingual communication using code-switching and code-mixing based on their own comfort levels.

1. Motivation

An optimum level of motivation could be sustained even in the learners with lower academic achievement. The level of anxiety and nervousness got considerably reduced with the learners feeling that they wouldn’t get stuck during their communicative activities since they had the freedom to switch over to their native language whenever they found it difficult to carry on with their target language use.
However, the tendency to evade the discussion of language items continued and the learners showed interest in sharing their experiences mostly in their mother tongue.

2. **Presentations**

Presentations appeared more meaning focussed than form focussed and the learners showed greater preference for their native language in their explanations, clarifications and description of personal experiences. There was also an increase in the level of learner participation in the discussion on the subject matter which also moved on to the related areas.

3. **Communication**

Though the level of participation in the classroom communication increased considerably, the whole process was marked by a limited use of the target language. However, a few students took care to see that they used the target language as much as they could. The strategy of expressing the ideas first in English and subsequently in the native language was also tried out with moderate success rates. The level of understanding of the subject matter seemed to improve considerably.

4. **The Use of Materials and Resources**

A little diversity in the use of materials could be observed in the sense that some students even relied on unconventional sources such as newspapers, magazines and other journals including those publications in the vernacular language, in addition to the materials recommended by the teacher. However, the learners in general, showed some reluctance with regard to the discussion of specific language items.
5. **Outcome**

In addition to solving problems in the area of the acquisition of knowledge, a greater linguistic awareness of the structural and semantic aspects of the target language was achieved by means of comparison and contrast between the native and target languages. This could be seen as a step towards developing interest in the study of language in general, and the way in which a second or foreign language functions in particular.

6. **Interpretation of the Outcome**

These observations point to mainly three factors that seem to be major characteristics of the English classroom in our country.

1) **Motivation is individualistic;** it cannot be promoted merely by overemphasizing the vaguely perceived importance of the target language and applying some common, generalised practices. It will also be counterproductive if we keep underplaying the role of the native language in a person’s educational development.

2) **The idea of using the target language for all the purposes of communication in the classroom is greatly constrained;** such communication can never be made genuine or natural as it is propagated to be. The learners are naturally inclined to using their native language but they are not averse to using English if they find that frequent code-switching is acceptable and never considered awkward.

3) **Bilingualism is a reality;** it is integrated into the national culture as well as the learners’ selves. There is no point attempting to suppress the streaks of bilingual behaviour in the classroom for the sake of developing target language proficiency. Optimum participation presupposes each learner’s understanding of his/her comfort level with regard to language use.

**APPENDIX II**
The following are some of the bilingual activities that are found useful in second language learning. Some of these have been tried out in the class and the results testify to the potential of the L1 in developing L2 competence in formal instructional situations.

1. **Bilingual Reading**

   This involves simultaneous reading of the two texts expressing the same content in two languages. English and vernacular dailies may be put to use in this activity. The learner first reads the native language newspaper and understands the content without difficulty and then moves onto read the same item in the English newspaper. In the second phase of reading, the learners will have a smooth going since the already assimilated content appears before them in its new apparel. After a few such sessions, the reading order may be reversed; reading in English takes the first turn followed by the reading of the same content in the native language. In the second phase of this activity, imperfections are removed and consolidation takes place.

2. **Bilingual Listening**

   In this activity, simultaneous listening to news broadcasts in the aforementioned manner could be tried out. Listening to the news broadcast of English and the vernacular news channels airing the same news content could improve the prospect of sustaining learner interest just for the reason that the learners needn’t put in so much of effort to make sense of what they listen to. In addition to the information they gather, they get to know the way in which the same content is expressed in each language, and with the exposure spreading out to longer durations, the internal processing of the language structure results in more effective learning.
3. **Bilingual Speaking**

When it comes to speaking, bilingual applications can occur in the classroom activities intermittently and they are determined by the comfort levels on which each learner places himself/herself. If they are given the freedom to switch and mix codes freely with a view to making their communication flow in an unhindered manner, they will be able to ward off their anxiety and inhibitions to a considerable extent. Though there is a danger of the learners keeping their English use to a minimum level at the initial stages, things might show improvement in due course because of the extended possibilities of code-switching and code-mixing.

4. **Bilingual Writing**

This activity closely resembles translation in which the learners translate what they have expressed through writing in their native language into English. In all the other activities, there is no strict use of translation which is more painstaking and time consuming. The learners deal with original creations in the first three activities mentioned above. But in bilingual writing, translation, with all its potential for review, reconsideration and subsequent fine-tuning of the language structures, serves to consolidate the necessary theoretical back up the learning process requires.

**Experiment**

In an experiment conducted as part of this research, the students who generally found it hard to read and understand English newspapers were asked to try out ‘bilingual reading’ in two phases. In the first phase, they read certain news items in the vernacular language newspaper, and then read the same news items in an English newspaper. This simultaneous reading activity, which the students enjoyed, went on for about a month, and they no longer found it hard to understand what they had read in the English newspapers since they had had a pre-knowledge of the contents. Moreover, the activity seemed to considerably stimulate their translinguistic code transferring mechanism. In the second phase, the order of reading was reversed. The students read the English newspaper first; they communicated the content by means of speaking
and writing, and then at the consolidation stage, they read the same news items in the vernacular newspaper.
APPENDIX III

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How often do you use English for communication in the classroom?
   Always/ Sometimes/ Never

2. Do you try to answer the teacher-questions in English whenever you get a chance?
   Yes/ Sometimes/ No

3. Do you try to answer peer-questions in English whenever you get an opportunity?

4. Are you able to recognise the errors you make while speaking English?
   Yes/ No / Some errors

5. How often do you attempt self-correction while speaking English?
   Always/ Sometimes/ Never

6. How often do you attempt self-correction while writing English?
   Always/ Sometimes/ Never

7. How well are you able to make the self-correction mechanism in your communication activities?
   Very well/ Fairly well/ Poorly/ Not at all

8. How do you rate the role of self-correction mechanism in your learning of English?
   Very important/ Marginally important/ Not important at all

9. Which mode of correction do you find more effective, self-correction or Teacher-correction? Give your reasons.

Response Analysis
Most of the respondents felt that communicating in English in the classroom was an anxiety evoking process, and they never felt like doing so, especially in the absence of the teacher. Whenever they could switch over to the L1, much of their tension eased because the inhibitions caused by the fear of distortion of meaning and breakdown of communication could be kept low. In peer interactions, most of them used the L1, but did not mind an occasional use of T L words and expressions, often not-so-well-formed. However, discussions with peers on learning items, though not with the help of the T L, helped the consolidation of the T L structures, and occasionally, the use of it in communication.

The respondents were nearly unanimous in their acceptance of the self-correction mechanism. Most of them could feel the working of it, but many felt they were not in a position to take full advantage of it. They also felt that the self-correction mechanism took a very long time to develop; conscious learning, teaching and an awareness of grammar contributed to its development. Most of them, however, agreed that it was an integral part of the processes of S L learning and communication.
Argument Analysis

The following is an analysis of the arguments and recommendations forwarded by De Costa (1987) in favour of the need for providing the learners with genuine, natural communicative situations in the S L classroom. All the seven points in the argument have been analysed threadbare and refuted with the help of a study of learner-behaviour in a typically rural S L classroom. This was undertaken during the course of this research with the help of the opinions taken from the students of English at the undergraduate level.

1. The situation should be relevant and immediately useful or at least of value at the termination of the activity if it is a more lengthy project.

2. The content should reflect the level of sophistication of the student and his knowledge of the world.

3. The language should at all times be natural.

4. The student should be encouraged to express personal insights.

5. There should be a variety of language samples through which the context is presented (dialogues, exposition, narration, description) to provide a diversity of language structures and styles as well as to allow for individual learner preferences.

6. The social dimension should be adhered to, with the status of each speaker determining his discourse type.

7. Sociolinguistic proficiency should be coupled with linguistic proficiency in appropriate language usage to a particular situation

(De Costa 1987:08)
All these suggestions sound logical and ideal for the purpose to be served and the outcome to be achieved; but there are inherent problems with regard to their implementation in a formal classroom setting. If they can be put into practice in totality and without being diluted, they might probably produce the desired results. However, most of them seem to have been located on an ideal plane with an inadequate consideration of their feasibility and practicability. Let us now critically examine each suggestion keeping in mind their applications in a formal second language classroom setting.

In the first place, we need to be frank enough to admit that the creation of a relevant and immediately useful situation is a near impossible task. The learners come to the second language classroom fully aware that they are part of a formal, rather contrived situation in which each they are supposed to act out their roles to perfection expecting that it will bring about language acquisition. However, the possibility of creating a natural learning environment in the classroom to generate genuine communication seems to be remote since the learners carry with them a feeling that they are learners, and are supposed to engage themselves in the classroom activities to learn the target language. This is sharply contrasted with the state of the same individuals who have gone out of their own language community in search of business or employment where they find themselves in a perfectly natural real life situation. The objective here is to get on with the job at hand, not to practice the language they wish to acquire.

The point is that a classroom will only be as natural as a classroom actually can be. The learners sit in a class while being aware that they are placed in a classroom specially arranged for implementing certain programmes and have gathered there to learn, practice and finally accomplish certain things. All that we can do therefore is to give them the best possible freedom within the constraints of the classroom, and encourage self-directional tendencies in their learning endeavours. We all know that a classroom situation does not permit absolute freedom; however, all that we can do is to allow the learners to be themselves to make them get the best out of their learning endeavours. They may be given guidance to exercise their freedom of choice, select
appropriate learning tasks, and work in a self-directed manner to achieve their goals. The learners have to be comfortably placed in a situation where they can uninhibitedly participate in the learning tasks even if they look contrived. It is impracticable to insist on their using the target language for all the classroom communication purposes. The choice of the language should be made considering the comfort zone each learner finds himself or herself in. This is expected to stimulate his/her ‘internal code switching mechanism’ as already mentioned in this thesis.

Language use in the S L classroom cannot be made natural since the natural kind of language may not necessarily fit into formal classroom situations. It may be possible to approximate ‘being natural’ to a certain extent, but there is no harm enacting prospective natural communicative elements in a formal, artificial setting if it helps to stimulate the internal code switching mechanism. There is no disputing of the fact that learning should reflect the level of sophistication of the learners and their knowledge of the world. However, the learners’ level of sophistication and their world view, are highly individualistic and it is hard to generalise them to make a common programme for so many students. This difficulty may be overcome by providing more space for each learner in such a way that there is a lot of room for deviation and diversification. A self-directed learner can probably set aside for the time being what he cannot cope with and take or modify what is given to suit his level and requirements using his own discretion.

Expressing personal insights and emotions sounds good, but it needs a lot of courage and uninhibited mental preparedness on the part of the learner. The major problem confronting teachers in this aspect is that it is very difficult to get the learners to express their personal insights and emotions in the target language. The only way to counter this problem is to encourage bilingual communication strategies in an unrestricted manner. The learners should have enough time and space to think clearly and express their thoughts using both the languages, their mother tongue and the target language, considering the comfort zones they have placed themselves in.

A variety of language samples can be incorporated into the classroom activities only by conceiving of various situations and framing appropriate language items or structures to be discussed in the classroom. It is likely to take a very long time for a
large variety of situations to naturally evolve. However, incorporating as many varieties as possible will definitely help, and at the same time, for the sake of intense practice or use, a voluntary bilingual communication practice may be tried out. In all these activities, the suggestion to allow individual learner preferences is definitely welcome. With regard to the status of the learners and the preferences for the corresponding discourse type, there is hardly any choice since the learners can only put to use the structures and styles they have internalised. The relationship between social status and the discourse type becomes evident only when the learners expand their operations outside the classroom for genuine, independent business interactions.

A strong foundation for a balanced growth of both linguistic and sociolinguistic competences should be laid with the help of the classroom communication activities. In such activities, independent thinking and commonsense play a significant role. The development of these two competencies seems to be complementary to each other and their balanced growth is an indication of efficiency in language use. When the learner becomes a self-directed participant in the communicative situations he/she encounters, these competencies develop faster complementing each other.

When we attempt to involve the learners in meaningful communicative activities in the second language classroom, we should keep in mind the fact that we are prompting them to switch over to a language we have just introduced to them. Until then they have been using their native language to integrate the acts of thinking and communication in all genuine, natural situations. This naturally renders the credibility of the claim that they can comfortably use the new language in communication questionable. It would be a dreamer’s fantasy to expect the learners to effect this switch over effortlessly and thus the possibility of genuine, natural target language communication seems out of the question.

The learners do try to communicate while being aware that it is unnatural and contrived; their aim is not to make natural communication but to successfully further academic activities by achieving reasonable proficiency in the second language. Since it is difficult to separate the two naturally integrated aspects of language use, the psychologically rooted thinking and socially oriented communication, the task becomes
all the more difficult or impracticable. These aspects should essentially stay integrated to facilitate the creation of an ‘educational discourse’ that ultimately leads the learners to educational development.

These arguments stress the need for setting aside unrealistic expectations and impracticable strategies and recognising the streaks of wisdom and pragmatism in the traditional practices. It is not correct to say that methods like grammar-translation never produced learning; it sure did. However, the perception of learning and its utility was different then. Therefore, the need of the hour is pragmatism and eclecticism in which adapting the time-tested old methods to suit the present-day conditions has inherent strength and thus, holds out great promise.

How then do we go about accomplishing the task of meaningful instructional communication in a second or foreign language classroom? Hypothesis formation tasks, wherein the learners can practice moving from the abstract to the concrete plane in which sequencing and recording of thought take precedence, can be preferred in the initial stages. Similarly, problem-solving tasks can be formulated based on simple reading, coupled with bilingual, bicultural group interactions. The given format can be combined with other activities in different proportions to fulfil more sophisticated functions with enhanced learning abilities. Grammatical and linguistic elements in this process will have a role of providing refinement and precision to the production and transmission of messages. Such linguistic activities need not be authentic or genuine, but they should essentially retain the quality of being purposeful and result oriented