CHAPTER III

EPISTEMOLOGY OF SL COMMUNICATION

The Creator gathered all his creations and said: ‘I want to hide something from humans until they are ready for it. It is the realisation that they create their own reality. The eagle said, ‘Give it to me, I will take it to the moon’! The Creator said, no, one day, they will go there and find it’. The salmon said, ‘I’ll hide it on the bottom of the ocean’. ‘No, they will go there too’. The buffalo said, ‘I’ll bury it on the great plains. The grandmother mole who lives in the breast of Mother Earth, and who has no physical eyes, and sees with spiritual eyes, said: ‘Put it inside them’. Soon the Creator said, ‘It’s done’.

(Sioux Legend: Source: - Internet)

3.1 Nature and Processes of Learning

Learning is a complex process involving many cognitive operations that finally lead to some kind of discovery, and communication, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, strengthens the discovery procedure. In the case of language learning, communication becomes an active means of learning as the processes involved in it not only consolidate what is learned but also help the learners discover new structures and possibilities. Thus, the element of discovery is in any kind of learning that makes use of the creative faculty, and language learning is no exception.
The concept of discovery learning, thus, offers great promise with all its features like creativity, problem solving, reflection and analysis that are supported by facilitative teaching methods and guided learning strategies. It involves procedures that use cognition in such a way that implicit knowledge develops into explicit knowledge through the processes of discovery. This is the kind of learning taking place within the individual with his/her full awareness of the discovery of knowledge as well as the strategies used in it. Since there are elements of discovery even in the acts of communication, it is necessary to consider its creative aspects including the opportunities it offers to language learning. Communication is a composite skill that demands the coordination of various skills and activities operating in and outside the individual who constantly discovers newer possibilities.

Traditional teaching and learning methods, particularly in S L learning, are found wanting in their ability to fulfil the requirements of the industry and the environment. They may have succeeded in imparting knowledge to a certain extent, but success with regard to its application and use largely remains dubious. This has prompted the enquiry into why the instructional strategies in S L communication fails to produce results before searching for ways to improvise them to bring about greater success in learning. In this connection, an attempt has been made to look into the nature and processes involved in learning that has been a characteristic human undertaking.

3.1.1 Learning as Discovery

Learning, in essence, is a voyage of discovery, and the real voyage of discovery, as Petras states, lies not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes (1995). It is
manifest in different ways in different people at different times. However, the hidden realisation does not always come to light so easily. The search for knowledge, also known as learning, or the exploration of the environment leading to discovery, has characterised the human race from time immemorial. Thus, discovery learning occurs most notably in problem solving situations where the learner draws on his own experience and prior knowledge to discover things with the help of the processes of thought, reflection and analysis in an internal, constructivist kind of learning environment.

According to Bruner, the emphasis on discovery in learning influences the learners in such a way that they become constructionists capable of organising what they are encountering (1960). They do it in a manner not only designed to discover things, but also to express them without any information drift that hinders its use. Thus, the discovered knowledge becomes part of the learners’ pragmatic functionalism; in the case of language learning, it becomes their improvised tool for social negotiation.

In discovery learning, there is a focus shift from the product or learning outcome to the process of learning. This idea was later taken up by Breen and Candlin (1980) in their discussion on process versus product syllabuses. The core of discovery learning is to analyse and interpret information to understand what is learned rather than produce the correct answer from rote memorisation. Process-oriented learning can deviate into other topics instead of producing ‘the correct answer’ to match a question that is typical of product-oriented learning. Discovery learning leads the learners to a deeper level of understanding in which the emphasis is on mastery and application of skills leading to discovery and problem solving. It can be understood as exploring and problem solving
to create, integrate, and generalise knowledge in learner centred, interest-based activities. In such activities, the learners have the freedom to integrate new knowledge into their own existing knowledge base using comfortable methods and style.

Thus, discovery learning is different from traditional forms of learning in the sense that it is active and process-oriented rather than passive and content-oriented. There is also an attempt to analyse feedback and review the processes. In discovery learning, learning is not defined as simply absorbing what is being said or read, but actively seeking new knowledge with the assistance of mental faculties. The learners are engaged in hands-on activities that are often real problems needing solutions. They also have a sense of purpose in learning and finding answers to problems concerning themselves and the environment. In the case of S L learning, it can be argued that learning aims to solve some communication problem taking assistance from cognitive faculties and the already existing L1 structures.

In addition, discovery learning does not look down upon failure; rather it provides an opportunity to try out newer strategies. Thomas Edison is said to have tried 1,200 designs for an electric bulb before finding the one that worked (Love 1996). When someone asked Edison if he felt discouraged by so many failures, he responded that he never felt discouraged because he had learned thousands of designs that did not work. This clearly shows that even failure can play a constructive role in the process of learning. Failure can also assist learning, and since the focus is on the learning process, failure and success can contribute to learning almost equally.
In language learning too, breakdown in communication opens up the possibilities of discovering and using new strategies. Failure or success in communication is determined not by the accuracy of the structures, but by the effect of the action on the people and the environment. Therefore, it is natural for individuals to resort to communication strategies that work giving less discomfort and anxiety to them. When we say that we learn languages in communication, we will also have to concede the role of L1 structures that help us avoid communication breakdowns to a considerable extent.

The attributes of discovery learning also show a great deal of relationship with creativity and problem solving. The act of discovery essentially sustains curiosity and stimulates further interest in learning. Through exploring and problem solving, the learners take on an active role to create, integrate, and generalize knowledge. The learners get an opportunity to establish broader applications of skills through activities that encourage risk-taking, problem solving, and analysis of unique experiences. The same approach is used in the expression of information in communication where the learners invariably seek ways and strategies of expression that are less intimidating or inhibiting.

The outcome of the discovery procedure is believed to influence the learner’s self-concept, and will quicken his movement towards being self-directed. Discovery learning helps the learner maintain concentration and it takes place in situations where there are more cognitive applications (Ausubel 1968). In such situations, relating the subject matter to the learners’ own experience seems more logical to them, and consequently, it ensures more learner-interest and involvement. This applies to S L learning too where learner-involvement is a precondition, and the use of existing
knowledge is a procedural requirement. Therefore, the characteristic features of
discovery learning need to be incorporated into the S L classroom communication failing
which the communication strategies we implement in the classroom will render
themselves impotent.

Another feature of discovery learning is that it allows the learners to learn at their
own pace. Through discovery learning, some degree of flexibility in sequencing and
frequency with learning activities can be achieved. In discovery learning, learning is not
a static progression of lessons and activities and this contributes greatly to the learners’
motivation and sense of responsibility for their learning. In addition, discovery learning is
based on the principle of using existing knowledge as a basis to build new knowledge.
Familiar knowledge and situations allow the students to build on their existing
knowledge by extending what they already know to discover new ideas and solutions to
the problems.

However, language learning cannot be equated with mere discovery of
knowledge. The ability to use language does not come with the items of knowledge the
learners discover in a linear progression. We isolate certain linguistic features of
language and enclose them in some theories for the sake of descriptive convenience,
but these items, as such, do not have any relevance to the process of developing
language skills. The concepts may be internalised by the learners who might reproduce
them correctly to get through the examinations. The challenge, however, is to transform
their ‘discovered knowledge’ into a productive skill by activating communicative
interactions.
In S L communication, existing knowledge is largely confined to the ability to use the L1 structures and it will be difficult for the learners to communicate without taking help from the L1 structures directly or indirectly. Hence the view that the use of the L1 is going to do more harm than good to the learners is without foundation. The processes leading to discovery too presuppose the use of spontaneous thought, expression and action, thus keeping an endowment as the L1 entirely out of action in S L instructional communication does not seem a sensible proposition.

### 3.1.2 Learning as Behaviour Formation

Some psychologists view learning as a self-motivated process of structuring experience, which ultimately results in the modification of behaviour. Human behaviour is largely unpredictable because human learners are independent entities, who act on their own volition in response to various situations. For the same reason, it is difficult to control or predict the course and outcome of human learning that is unpredictably complex. This concept of learning has led to the idea that learning bestows self-liberating powers to the learner and the acquisition of knowledge is viewed as an indispensable part of self-development involving associations of ideas derived from direct contact with reality (Rousseau 1972). This discovery procedure and the subsequent knowledge acquisition involve the use of many tools including language that influences the learners’ efficiency and personality.

Learning, in this perspective, has come to be viewed as an active, dynamic and holistic process involving organic growth and assimilation starting from within (Goddard 1974). It involves various cognitive processes, such as memorizing, reasoning and divergent thinking and language provides the basic structural framework for these
operations to take place. It is manifest in human behaviour and helps each learner execute the learning and the associated activities embedded in it. The process of learning is also influenced by affective factors, the nature and functioning of which are dependent on the individuals' learning styles and their socio-psychological background. Therefore, effective learning presupposes the learner’s active involvement in the process of learning, and a teacher’s job is to create a favourable environment that enables learners to draw on their own experience.

To add to the complexity of the learning activity, all the processes involved in it are characterised by individual differences and varied styles of functioning. No two individuals have the same learning style, nor do they employ the same techniques to achieve learning. People greatly differ in their attitude towards learning, communication and the learning environment; their psychological orientations also vary considerably. Therefore, differences in both cognitive and non-cognitive factors determine learning outcome and the learning style of individuals. The complexity of a teaching-learning situation owes much to the diversity of both learning and teaching styles.

It is possible to assume that all forms of learning share an important attribute: they all bring about some alteration in the learner behaviour. To put it simply, all sorts of learning result in some behaviour modification. If we accept the argument that learning can never be imposed on the learner, and it is initiated and directed by the learner’s own self, we can clearly see that the behaviour modification achieved through learning arises out of a strong sense of necessity. In other words, learning occurs when the learners feel what they learn is as useful as the modified behaviour achieved through it.
The individuals find many forms of learning useful and necessary as they help them adapt to the changing circumstances. In the utilitarian view of learning, language is one such learning outcome relevant to the users’ functional efficiency, so it takes place effectively if it provides the learner with a tool that helps him in this struggle for survival or adaptation. Looking back at primitive learning instances, one can well understand the validity of the view that learning should help a person adapt to life’s demands. The skills and tricks learned by the primitive man can be viewed as survival tools that helped him adapt to the changing needs and circumstances.

It is, however, not intended to argue that everything that people learn should have some useful function. There are instances of disinterested enquiries that are unlikely to have any face value in terms of functions or utility. Instead, it is argued that a large proportion of the learning we deliberately undertake is controlled by the motivation derived from a sense of necessity, and the awareness of its functional value. Viewed in this background, S L learning too considers this functional perception as a major factor since the processes involved in it are more deliberate than natural.

Language is a symbolic system related to the conceptual system of the individual (Corder 1973). The conceptual system of an individual reflects his/her culture, worldview, and personal experiences. The symbolic system of language is thus embedded in the conceptual and behavioural systems that constitute one’s personality. Language acquisition takes place in children in the early stages of development, and it is acquired along with many other skills. The acquisition of these skills basically aims to make an individual self-sufficient or independent in his functioning.
The mediation between the conceptual and behavioural systems is done through language that modifies human behaviour and gets periodically modified in the process of learning. The complementary relationship between language and the acquisition of knowledge tells us that restricting the natural ways of expression will be detrimental to the cognitive processes involved in learning. When we force the learners to suppress natural linguistic behaviour for the sake of their perceived internalisation of an unfamiliar set of linguistic structures, it may not help activate the cognitive operations that produce learning. On the other hand, giving the learners’ freedom to experiment with mixed structures and altered forms and use simultaneously different linguistic codes seems a better option for appropriate behaviour modification.

The percept formed here is that language arises out of certain social and psychological needs that develop into a creative process in the learning of language structures. Such processes begin in the human mind and when they are influenced by the socio-psychological factors. Language behaviour matures and changes like any other dynamic system, and the environment greatly influences these changes. Thus, each language community develops a unique linguistic system in which the members exhibit language behaviour that reflects their worldview and childhood experience.

All this compels us to view language as a phenomenon of the individual as well, and consequently, we need to understand the linguistic behaviour of a person in relation to his psychological orientation. The language behaviour of individuals clearly indicates their traits and leanings and hence it is an expression of their personality. The terms, learning, memory, skill and perception are applicable to other kinds of behaviour too. However, linguistic behaviour also depends on the considerations of the subject matter
and the manner of expression. When questions are asked, or a topic is given for discussion, the students prefer not to talk not only because of lack of language skills but also due to the deficiency in terms of the subject matter.

Individuals differ so much in terms of their intellectual abilities, attitudes and personality that they adopt characteristically different approaches to learning, communication and other activities. Learners prefer styles they are most comfortable with, if there is no external compulsion to abandon them. As the abilities required for learning are highly individualistic, only the individuals can decide how they can be made use of in the most effective manner. When an individual uses these abilities in a unique and individualistic way, s/he becomes the most competent person to effectively control the nature and course of his/her learning. For this reason, many modern psychologists argue for learner autonomy and individualized instruction in S L learning and communication, without giving enough thought to their relevance to the formal classrooms.

3.1.3 Learning as Experience

The humanistic psychologists regard the discovery procedure involved in learning as ‘experiential learning’ (Kolb 1984). The word ‘experience’ derives from the Latin word experientia, meaning trial, proof, or experiment, all of which refer to the processes involved in learning. The humanists maintain that the learners have to experience and discover things on their own to benefit from experiential learning. This demands of the teacher a good understanding of how the learners’ perceptions and worldview influence their learning style. Rogers (1969) recommends respecting the
learners as ‘fully functioning individuals with great potential to experience and learn’. In language learning too, the humanism advocates freedom to learn by reflection and experience.

The humanists add another dimension to Rousseau’s concept of the centrality of learning, placing a great deal of emphasis on the learners’ affect, consciousness, self-awareness and intuition. An individual’s natural capacity to learn finds expression mostly by means of experiential learning, and in the process, self-direction and self-evaluation give learning a quality of personal involvement. Learning, therefore, takes place when the subject matter is perceived by the learners as having relevance to their purpose. This is sharply contrasted with pedantic learning that does not contribute to the learners’ understanding of situations they are likely to encounter outside the classroom.

In philosophy and psychology, learning has traditionally been regarded as a ‘potential solution to the problem of knowledge’ (Claxton 1985: 39). In this perspective, learning can be viewed as acquisition of useful knowledge and skills. If learning is an attempt to solve a problem by discovering knowledge, then this discovery is brought about best through the mediation of experience. The recurrent analysis and synthesis of experience lead to the occurrence of learning, and this is often induced by a problem caused by a knowledge gap.

Experiential learning does not refer only to learning through experience. It is rather an ability to permit into conscious awareness aspects of a person’s experience (Claxton 1985). It involves relearning to experience what one sees, but not to change the way one conceptualizes the same. It is, thus, an interactive process of
interpretation, integration and transformation of one’s experiential world. This is a process of active knowledge construction by the learner, often with the help of language. People are believed to be born with natural abilities to register experience and to learn from it. This involves the capacity to distil experience into useful generalizations about the external world that determines the nature of one’s self-concept and personality. The use of language too is an aspect of the individual’s synthesising of experience to practically fit him/her into the experiential world.

The nature of the relationship between experience and learning shows that real learning is self-initiated and self-directed. Experiential learning requires the learner’s total involvement in the learning process with the ability to transform experience into generalizations. This ability is developed automatically with the learner’s attempts to solve the problems he faces, and to adjust with changing needs and circumstances. In this process, all the equipment, including language skills, the individual brings to the learning situation is vital because his experiencing and interpreting of feelings and events are constructive activities that help him deal with problematic situations. The learner has to learn to use whatever knowledge he has already gained in the process of selecting, analysing, interpreting and evaluating new experience. The tendency to use the existing knowledge to capture new knowledge and to adapt to emerging situations is characteristic of an active learner. This is manifest in situations of language use where existing knowledge is extensively employed to solve communication problems.

Knowledge comprises facts, concepts hypotheses and theories that ultimately generate learned behaviour, the manifestation of which is in the use of language. Language as such is a symbol system the elements of which form a systematic set of
words that can be used on the basis of certain rules and conventions. Knowledge develops from rudimentary to more articulated and defined forms. In the initial stages, knowledge is fragmentary and it is used for expressing needs, thoughts and emotions in a highly limited sphere. Language then becomes the medium by which the individuals coordinate their thoughts and actions. It enables an individual to go beyond the immediate sensory impressions and automatically develop a socio-cognitive equilibrium that makes him/her a member of a particular language community.

In the case of second language learning, it is necessary to provide the learners with enough space to widen the scope of their interactions to facilitate language acquisition. Apart from introducing the learners into the cultural world and serve as a model in the use of language, we need to help them use the target language in a meaningful but comfortable manner. Since language is also a means of developing knowledge, language skills have to be systematically enriched by encouraging flexible approaches that can provide the learners with valuable experience.

### 3.2 Learning and Communication Systems

Language is a highly complex, constantly evolving communication system embedded in a variety of cultural, social and historical contexts. This necessitates reviewing of the processes of teaching and learning in accordance with the increasingly eclectic, dynamic and complex nature of language and communication. As a result, language teaching has to become more learner-centred and facilitative. This view of language as a constantly evolving communication system is evident in the words of Crystal (1987) who describes it as a unique system of capturing the breadth of human
thought and endeavour that is characterised by a variety of several thousand languages and dialects, expressing a multiplicity of worldviews, literatures and ways of life. This bestows on language the status of an important human enterprise that allows us to look back and understand the thoughts of our predecessors, and at the same time, to look ahead and plan our future.

When communication systems operate side by side in a bilingual environment, it is natural that these systems intersect and cause the formation of varieties. There may be dominant and recessive systems, but it is unlikely that the existence of one system deters the development of the other, from the learners’ point of view. On the other hand, studies in language acquisition show that it is not possible for one to learn a language unless s/he already has a language. This means that learning of a natural language involves a prior capacity to grasp the basic structure and operations, which a person needs in order to use any other natural language. From the theoretical perspective, this consolidates the foundations of the possible existence of the brain language that Chomsky (1968) and Fodor (1975) describe respectively terming them as the ‘Universal Grammar’ and the ‘Language of Thought’.

Communication systems are also learning systems in the use of language, and more so, in the case of learning additional languages. The concept of linguistic competence needs to accommodate structural diversity of language resulting from creative operations of mental structures and psychological attributes. The views of Chomsky (1965) resulted in an immediate review of the earlier behaviourist practices based on drills, substitution tables and repetition practices. These postulates emphasise the creative aspects of languages, the abstractness of linguistic representations, the
The learners in a second language classroom face problems not only with regard to coping with culture specific events, but also in the proper grasping of the consequent language specific forms. This is perhaps the reason why they find it hard to extend their knowledge and skills to the contexts outside the classroom where actual communication takes place. This apparent contradiction between what happens in the second language classroom and outside makes the entire second language classroom activities highly complex and seldom effective. This situation necessitates enquiries to discover those missing links that can possibly bridge the gap between the instructional processes and unconventional communication strategies that are employed by the learners outside the classroom.

There is an evident disparity between second language acquisition theory and the classroom practices due to varying interpretations the concept of 'communication' carries with it. A version of it is text based in which communicative activities are provided as the end result of a lesson or segment. The students first 'learn' the material, and then 'use' it to communicate. In this view, communicative tasks are a measure of students' learning rather than a means by which to acquire language. Our learning strategies, however, should concentrate on the deliberate acts of communication with a view to consolidating language items learned, not on the kind of communication intended to fulfil interactive functions.
Second language learning should be viewed as an interactive process that occurs in dynamic interactions between the learners and the environment. The acquisition of language presupposes the learners’ exercising of control over the structure of the linguistic system. Linguistic competence necessarily emerges from social interactions, and the learning outcome will vary based on the backgrounds and goals each learner brings to the classroom and the differences in the patterns of interactions. The levels of learner participation in the classroom activities also determine the learning outcome. It is possible that the learners in the same classroom learn things differently based on how they engage in the affordances of the classroom setting. This view of language acquisition suggests that language is not just a unique product of the learners’ individual brain, but it is produced by the mind that actively draws on the interactive environment of the setting in which it is being used.

Linguistic communication is also a process in which cognitive factors get activated under the influence of socio-psychological factors. Any kind of learning, including language learning, can be considered as a process of competence building that is directed at achieving certain goals. In the cognitive and psychological processes of competence building, an individual keeps looking for ways to negotiate the challenges posed by the environment. The environmental hurdles work on the competence building process by way of the problem solving activities involved in it. In self-initiated attempts at problem solving, individuals summon up all the skills at their disposal to be put to use, and if any of these skills are found deficient with regard to their problem solving potential, there will be attempts to improve them. Linguistic and
communicative capabilities are also improved this way when the learner realises their inadequacy with regard to problem solving situations.

Thus, it can be argued that when the linguistic structures get internalised with the assistance of cognitive processes, language acquisition takes place. However, this kind of acquisition alone cannot make learners communicatively competent. A major share of learner-interaction takes place among the peer groups, and in a strictly peer interactive classroom setting, learners cannot go through the process of incorporating the second language into their interactive and cognitive processes. If they are to summon up all the monitoring the mind can manage for refining their target language skills, there should be some amount of T L use in their interactions. Social interactive processes should follow the internalisation of second language structures preferably by the alternate use of L1 and L2 in a bilingual setting.

Thus, classroom communication should take into consideration the diversities and constraints with regard to individual differences and learner inhibitions. Strategies that accommodate differences in learning styles and learning pace have to be incorporated into the instructional communication processes. It is now a generally accepted view that language is acquired through social interaction and in second or foreign language learning, interactive opportunities need to be provided as much as possible. However, such opportunities are generally confined to the classroom learning experience in formal learning. Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the nature of the learners’ interaction with the environment, which alone can promote the internalisation processes. In such processes, social interactions develop into the cognitive processes. Therefore, it can be argued that the social interactive processes need to be integrated
into the learners’ self and cognitive structures to generate the desired outcome, that is, the acquisition of language.

3.2.1 Language of Thought

The relationship between language and thought needs to be analysed based on the view that acquisition of knowledge is an intentional, goal-directed activity seeking to gain more power and functional efficiency. Therefore, it is an act of problem solving with a perception of utility where learners operate independently in a mastery-learning mode. In this kind of learning, the learners are expected to transfer their learning to the situations outside the learning environment, which is considered the ultimate goal of learning. Such intentional, goal directed language behaviour is propelled by the intentionality of thought employing the possibilities of representation offered by language.

Language has a representational function, which includes the coordination of those characteristics of mental activities that are responsible for giving them their content and outward manifestation. Those contents are said to be “perspectival because the information they contain is necessarily slanted under the influence of social and attitudinal factors” (Lyons 1995: 2). Linguistic representation is a precursor to intentionality that controls all human actions by influencing the mental operations and behavioural output. The language faculty gets operational with the presence of certain contents to be expressed and these are being directed and controlled by intentionality. The outward manifestation of language is therefore just a small part of the entire mental process preceding it. The use of language forms as well as the choice of a particular
language for a specific context is the result of intentionality leading to the setting up of specific targets.

The trigger and control mechanisms of human language have their roots in cognition that can be observed in the way language develops in the course of its repeated use and applications. With the active assistance of the brain, an individual develops a linguistic framework to build up the structure of not only his/her first language but also other languages. Human beings are born with a cognitive learning capability that is genetically transmitted. Such cognition mechanisms rest on “highly intricate neural connections in the brain, and the mind possesses certain information-processing faculties to which language is bound” (Lyons 1995: 4). Language, therefore, can be considered an observable manifestation of hidden and highly abstract cognitive constructions.

Chomsky suggests that children are genetically endowed with an innate capacity to engage in those formal operations that enable them to learn whatever natural language is spoken in the environment (1968). He posits the theory of universal grammar (UG) to explain the effortless way in which children pick up language from the environment. In his view, the language of thought that we use for thinking and other mental operations could possibly be one of those natural languages with which we are most comfortable.

Fodor (1975) contests this view arguing that we have a language of thought, or the brain language, to perform thinking and mental computation that may be different from any natural language we use for communication. Thinking and other cognitive
processes take place through the language of thought, the result of which appears in the form of some natural language expression. Similarly, language of brain is the basis for our capacity to learn natural languages, acquire concepts, perceive things and carry out all kinds of mental activities. Along with language acquisition, children also pick up certain basic cultural concepts that get programmed into the linguistic structures. These might be in the form of codified information without representation which, in Lyons’ (1995) opinion, triggers and controls intentionality.

The transformation of information into representation gives language its natural form. We cannot ascertain what actually happens in this transformation; it could be the generation of grammar rules Chomsky (1968), or perhaps the formation of a “scheme for the expression of the aspectual intentional content” (Lyons 1995: 62). Both views share a common percept that recognises the role of the user-orientations in determining the nature and pace of representation that could be either linguistic or non-linguistic. This is the reason why we need to take into consideration the factors like intentionality and self-direction while designing and adapting methods and strategies for language teaching.

Interestingly, Fodor’s (1975) view of language processing and the concept of the language of brain corresponds to the working of the modern digital computer, which uses one language for computation processes but communicates the output in another. The internal machine language the computer uses is unknown to the user, but it gets transformed into a natural language when it finds outward expression. Fodor (1975) visualises a similar process in which the individual, for all kinds of cognitive processing, puts the language of brain to use, but the output is expressed in the form of a natural
language. He seems to reject the idea put forth by some cognitive psychologists that knowledge of a natural language is a precondition for concept formation or similar cognitive operations. In his view, it is the brain language, not any internalised version of natural language, which is responsible for concept formation and other cognitive processes.

All this lends credence to the view that the brain language is operational within a person, but at the same time, it is not a creation of the human mind. The brain language gets operational in many human ventures including the expression of thought and maintenance of human relationships. To lend support to his arguments, Fodor (1975) relies on certain concepts in linguistics and psychology. He draws our attention to the general assertion in linguistics that ‘one cannot learn a language unless one has a language’, and argues that it is sufficient to justify the existence of the brain language. This argument further substantiates the view that one needs an innate capacity to run through the formulae or set of rules in order to learn and correctly employ the words and sentences of any natural language (Lyons 1995).

Learning generally involves the processes of hypothesis formation, testing and confirmation, and language learning is no exception. Fodor (1975) argues that the language of thought plays a crucial role in the organisation of the thinking process. In his view, language is not monolithic in human brain but comprises more than one system including language of thought and language of perception. If we are to assume that these subsystems interact with each other in such a way that the outcome determines the nature of human behaviour and learning, then it should be clear that learning depends a great deal on volition and autonomous leanings.
If the brain system involving the language of thought needs to be activated to produce second language learning, then it is not hard to understand the role played by the L1 structures, volition and self-direction. When the learners start developing the logico-mathematical capabilities (Piaget 1973), their self-directional tendencies have a complementary development and these attributes come together to enhance learning efficiency. The status of the knowledge of the L1 and the learners’ leanings seem to control the cognitive operations in such a way that learning takes place only when the learners have their way in the processes aimed at producing learning. It is in this context that research on learning needs to pay more attention to the relationship between the self and cognitive operations within the individuals.

These arguments also demonstrate the importance of the role volition plays in organising and executing language forms in relation to the patterns of thought and other mental processes. If we can see substance in the argument that self-direction controls the execution of language forms, there is no reason to doubt its role in the acquisition of language. Unless self-directional tendencies are favourably inclined towards the learning of an additional language, the ‘self’ will neither employ its brain language in the acquisition of a new language, nor will it bring the brain language into organising and executing thought structures using the target language forms. Intention and volition have a free run only when expressions become spontaneous and effortless.

3.2.2 Competence Building

Since interactions in the classroom rest heavily on the nature of linguistic communication systems, a study of communicative competence and of the distinction
between communicative competence and actual processes of communication becomes relevant. In addition, we need to explore how we can bridge the gap between communicative competence and actual language use in the context of the learning and teaching of English in our context. It is hard to contest the idea that the activities in the language classroom should essentially be meaning-focused, but whenever we give primacy to the expression of meaning, the target language is often kept on the back burner. It is, therefore, worthwhile to look into what insights linguistics can provide with us in the sustenance of target language communication in the classroom.

Littlewood talks about four domains of skill that make up a person’s communicative competence. They include the “skill in manipulating the linguistic system, the ability to distinguish between various forms and their communicative functions, an awareness of social meaning of language forms and the skills and strategies employed in using language to communicate in natural situations” (1981:6). Of the four domains, it is the last one that defies the instructional parameters and hence needs greater consideration.

The strategies that consolidate the use of the newly acquired language depend greatly on the learners’ ability to use feedback and existing knowledge to judge success and remedy failure by trying out different forms of the target language in relation to the native language structures and appropriate non-linguistic knowledge. The strategies are important in understanding and interpreting language in actual use since the relationship between forms and functions is variable and unpredictable outside specific situations. Littlewood further clarifies this point:
The most efficient communicator in a foreign language is not always the person who is best at manipulating its structures. It is often the person who is most skilled at processing the complete situation, himself and his hearer, taking account of what knowledge is already shared between them and selecting items which will communicate his message effectively. (1981: 4)

The existing, shared, contextual and other kinds of knowledge are the communication boosters, which find expression mostly in the form of the native language structures. Linguistic forms inevitably realise functions that are influenced by sociolinguistic considerations. The realisation that there is no direct one to one correspondence between form and function has given rise to the feeling that the learners must be equipped with strategies for recognising the communicative function of utterances. This presupposes the development of the ability to make use of the existing knowledge shared between the speakers and learners.

Contrary to the Behaviourist view, human language use depends on both creative and critical faculties that make a good use of cognition. The creative faculty gets stimulated by divergent actions, or to put it simply, by a little bit of disorder and unconventionality. The learners go deep into the reservoir of stored rules and patterns, assemble strings of language, and test them in use. At the same time, the critical faculty provides them with an awareness of what has been created making it possible for them to check, either before or after production, for the frequent slips of the tongue, grammatical errors, social infelicities and other deviations from norms (Morrison and Low 1983). The critical faculty, or monitor as Krashen (1985) describes it, thrives on deviations that are prompted by the creative faculty. The same processes are also
brought into play in our attempts to understand language strings generated by other users. When these two faculties are in harmony, or when they are complementary to each other, we succeed in our communication and relatively accurately interpret the responses of others in specific contexts.

The existence of the internal check mechanisms or monitoring systems can also be substantiated citing concepts from psychoanalysis that try to explore the interactions between the mind and the world of reality surrounding it. Freud (1976), for instance, describes the concept of ‘ego’ as a mediating force between the demands of the instinct and the subsequent action. Similarly, Krashen’s (1982) ‘monitor’ plays an identical role in the applications of learned language, whereas Fodor’s (1975) ‘language of thought’ generates the programme for the construction and reconstruction of linguistic structures. Such mechanisms get activated when the learners interact with the world outside and organise and reorganise behaviour on the basis of their experience.

In the implementation of teaching/learning programmes in a formal context, some activities are selected and executed but the dichotomy persists with regard to the nature of communication. The success of these programmes and activities depend largely on their ability to induce learning by means of the ability to communicate. While drawing a distinction between language learning and acquisition, Krashen (1982) says that the latter is preferable because the learner is able to use the target language rather than describe the features of it in a pedantic manner. In his view, learning is manifest in the deliberate actions of the conscious mind, but acquisition is what makes the learner capable of communicating. He writes:
Language acquisition is a subconscious process; language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication. Result of language acquisition, acquired competence, is also subconscious. We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the language we have acquired. Instead, we have a ‘feel’ for correctness. Grammatical sentences ‘sound’ right or ‘feel’ right, and errors ‘feel’ wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated. (1982: 10)

In an adult learner with a history of formal instruction in a second language, these processes result in two distinct internal systems, an acquired system and a learned one. The driving force behind any adult’s second language performance is assumed to be the acquired system, however, adults are also able to modify output through the application of the learned rule system. This phenomenon may be explained in the light of monitor hypothesis (Krashen 1978), which also explains why the process of communication is rather slow in the case of adult second language learners. This also seems to offer an explanation to the adult second language learners’ difficulty to maintain spontaneity and fluency while communicating in the target language.

The distinction between learning and acquisition appears to have some value in view of the S L learners’ inability to bridge the gap between the knowledge of language and the ability to use it in actual communication. However, the view that acquisition and learning are entirely different processes seems far-fetched. Conscious learning not only results in acquisition but also assists and supplements the processes of acquisition. It is a definite, concrete step towards acquisition, which is inevitable in formal S L learning contexts. Therefore, conscious learning is not only desirable but also inevitable in the classroom communicative activities intended to generate S L acquisition.
The dichotomy between learning and acquisition can be viewed in the light of the distinction between the processes of conscious learning and subconscious acquisition (Krashen 1982). In this view, the learners’ ability to use the language in communicative situations is determined by the acquired system, but the learned system does have a role in consolidating the acquired system because it acts as a ‘monitor’ to correct the output of the first system. However, as Jayaseelan rightly points out, monitoring can “take place only when the speaker has the leisure to pay attention to the form of the utterance; and this is seldom possible in communicative situations where the attention is on the message, not necessarily on the form” (1989: 52). In such situations, the involvement of L1 structures can perhaps offer the learners at least some help to pay attention to the form by means of comparison and contrast.

Monitoring demands a lot of individual initiative and conscious application of the mind since it involves the mediation by a learned system. Instruction and the environment appear to provide the learners with useful inputs and exposure to the target language but effective monitor use alone can ensure the quality of learning. For the adult language learners, we must realize that learning does not always turn into acquisition. It is hard to hold the view that we first learn grammar rules, and then they get internalized in use. Many of those who use second languages in communication have never received formal instruction, but have no difficulty in using them even without remembering accurately the rules they have internalised.

Though Krashen (1978) does not think that his monitor theory has any significance in the context of formal instruction, it seems to have some relevance to the classroom communication processes. Monitoring involves conscious application of
rules, which is a common strategy adult learners employ in their learning activities. The learners are capable of monitoring output in the learning of a second language using their own rule system and this effectively enhances self-correction. It also lends credence to the argument that the ideal monitor users do better at discrete point tests. In this connection, it can be argued that self-directed learners turn out to be better monitor users since they seem to depend more on cognition than environment. Though the role of self-correction in second language acquisition as a result of monitor use is not clearly understood, it is evident that it assists learning efficiency going by the statements of competent second language learners (cf. Appendix III).

According to Morrison and Low, an interpretation of an expanded monitor theory might state that monitoring is not merely a kind of quality control with which the user is able to edit out mistakes (1983). It could as well be a mechanism to mediate between conflicting internal rules coinciding with different stages in the evolution of the learners’ internal grammar. It is interesting to look at this ‘editing theory’ as the process of internal monitoring not only strengthens the faculty of self correction (cf. Appendix III) but also reinforces grammar rules that have been internalised. It also lends credence to the idea of cognitive activation, which is manifest in creative expressions involving cross-linguistic applications. Mostly, learners who are self-directed and thus have gained greater levels of self-efficacy can better utilise the possibilities such mental processes offer.

3.2.3 Pragmatic Functionalism
There is a view that semiotic mediation takes place in all practical activities associated with language use through linguistic signs. It assumes that language provides the best kind of mediation for the individual to interact with the environment. Language acquisition and development are processes taking place within the individual’s mind; however, communication is the social manifestation of language use, an activity that cannot be separated from the social context. Thus, language has to be understood as a communication system that has a social existence through the reference to a context that is outside of language (Lantolf 1994).

According to the socio-cultural theory, the social action and its material forms of socio-cultural mediation precede the emergence of individual forms of consciousness. The psycholinguistic processes are the reconstructions of the mediated social interactions in the mind of the individual (Vygotsky 1978). In such interactions, linguistic signs are created, borrowed, used and interpreted by the individual for all the practical purposes. This means that linguistic signs are signals aimed at some meaningful actions of social purposes that are not exhausted in the original intention of the sign maker (Lantolf 1994). In a bilingual context, signs can be discriminated, but in the expression of meaning, the systems cannot always be kept disparate. This explains fairly well the phenomenon of mutual intrusion of words and expressions into the systems of interacting languages in a bilingual environment.

In Vygotsky’s goal oriented semiotics, signs are means of regulating others’ and one’s own behaviour. They are not similar to ordinary tools discovered and used by people. Most of the approaches to language teaching consider language structures as tools to be used in communication, and thus, it is important to distinguish between the
concepts of signs and tools. In his view, the difference between signs and tools is that while tools serve to master nature, signs serve first to influence others, then to master oneself.

The tool’s function is to serve as the conductor of human influence on the object of activity; it is externally oriented; it must lead to changes in objects. The sign on the other hand, changes nothing in the object of a psychological operation. It is a means of internal activity aimed at mastering oneself; the sign is mentally oriented.

(Vygotsky 1978: 55)

All this shows that language is also a self-controlling device that develops into perfection when the mind constructing it receives inputs from the environment by means of social interactions. The view that language is a tool aimed at mastering oneself and the environment renders support to the possibility of the control exerted by the learners’ self. Thus, the involvement of the self in language development has to be viewed more seriously. No one can isolate himself/herself from the social environment, so the argument, linguistic signs are created arbitrarily, does not seem sufficiently convincing. It is possible for linguistic signs to have connotative social significance in specific social contexts, but they may not be easily discernible. Mastering such signs along with their structural organisation thus requires the involvement of the learners’ self and therefore, it is best done in a self-directed manner.

In the acquisition of a foreign language, one cannot perform any speech activity without securing essential linguistic equipment. The view that language is developed only through natural communication cannot hold water in this context, and thus, the idea
of promoting communication in the classroom by the provision of spontaneous, natural communicative activities needs to be examined. In the teaching of a second or foreign language, the consciousness of the learner needs to be taken into consideration along with his self-concept and cultural perceptions. In addition, special attention should be paid to the learners’ functionalist motives for learning a second language. The basic social function underlying the whole process needs to be emphasised in the first place; they should also be made aware of the relevance of learning a second language as a means of broadening their worldview and improving other cognitive and academic skills.

The functionalist viewpoint explains some aspects of language development, but does not offer satisfactory explanation to the phenomena like individualism, creativity and other unique forms of expressions. From the functionalist point of view, the second language learning is an attempt by the learners to gain functional efficiency. Thus, the objective of learning a language, as Corder (1973) puts it, is not merely to get the learners over an important educational hurdle, but to enable them to participate, for certain purposes, as members of a community other than their own. It is in this kind of functioning that the learners get acquainted with the actual communicative language that is markedly different from the one that is taught in the classroom.

This functionalist view of language seems to have evolved from the theories put forth by anthropologists who see a close link between the development of language and the growth of practical intelligence. In the process of striving for more functional efficiency, the individuals design and discover tools; and language development is looked upon by the anthropologists as another aspect of tool use. Halliday quotes the
views and examples put forth by the well-known anthropologist, Malinowski, to substantiate the functionalist view of language development he proposes.

Why is language as it is? The nature of language is closely related to the demands that we make on it, the functions it has to serve. In the most concrete terms, these functions are specific to a culture: the use of language to organise fishing expeditions in Trobriand described half a century ago by Malinowski, has no parallel in our own society. But underlying such specific instances of language use are more general functions which are common to all cultures.

(Halliday1970: 41)

This functional description of language has its own flaws. It fails to satisfactorily explain the expressive uses of language, the type we come across in aesthetic, figurative and literary expressions. It is possible to show that certain personal, subjective cravings of the human mind tend to seek perfection through the application of the imaginative faculty. However, it is not limited to literature. Even in ordinary interactions, creative expressions crop up as part of people’s intention to convey some genuine feelings or experience. Such expressions may appear corrupt, impure, or adulterated but they have definitely a function of their own.

However, second language learning takes place in individuals at a later stage when they have established a specific pattern of language behaviour. Thus, the learners’ desire for learning a second language is prompted by the need to increase functional efficiency by acquiring new skills. Therefore, it can be easily assumed that an awareness of the need for acquiring a new language and the perception of its uses should combine with the ability to carry out the task of learning independently to
produce efficiency in their interactions with the environment. The preoccupation with meaning-focused, function-based communication may make language ‘corrupt’ by letting cultural invasions, neologisms and code mixing.

In this perspective, learner development can be analysed by examining the nature of tasks and the learners’ perception of their own role in such activities. Language learning may result from certain activities that come together to form a functional system formed by different components of mechanisms that work together to produce learning. Hence, the production of language can be considered as the outcome of the “formation and execution of different functional systems at different levels” (Ohta 2000: 4). For the learners performing a task, the collaboration of their peers or teachers may be part of the functional system needed for the performance of the task. As their competence grows, the components of the functional system may change, with the learners independently accomplishing functions that were only possible collaboratively at earlier stages. Thus, each learner becomes part of a plurality of functional systems that include the individual as well as the local environment. In this view, language acquisition is not only a process of internalising the language of the interactive environment, but also involves the development of the skills needed for the learners to utilise the language for their own purposes.

3.2.4 Reflexivity and Inner-dialogue

The dialogical, reflexive modes of enquiry characterise the communicative learning methods, and they have numerous other applications too. We can find them in ancient systems of knowledge as important means of discovering knowledge. The
teacher-disciple interactions that led to many a discovery in ancient Greece had employed this mode of enquiry. In clinical psychiatry, counsellors and therapists use queries to guide clients to the process of discovery. The potential of reflection and negotiation has been put to use by business organizations to increase their productivity. The managers of corporate houses realize that establishing relationships through interactive dialogue is a better way to gain commitment than giving concise instructions.

Reflection as a way of learning has ancient roots. The renowned processes in the Indian knowledge acquisition system, *dhyan* and *thapas*, involve an extensive use of meditation and reflection that lead to the discovery of knowledge. Similarly, in the Buddhist philosophy, the practice of integrating the experience of one’s body, emotions, feeling, mind, and spirit for cultivating awareness is crucial to developing learning or behaviour modification. Greek philosophers like Plato and Socrates are believed to have used similar methods of enquiry and reflection in their attempts to discover the nature of virtue. The same approach can also be found in John Locke, one of the founders of modern philosophy, who believed that the act of knowing is purely a function of thoughtful reaction to experience.

In self-reflexivity, there is an intrapersonal effort to review and modify behavioural outcomes. The process is characterised by one’s ongoing inner dialogue with one’s own self about what one is experiencing as a learner or an individual functioning in society. In communication, self-reflexivity assists the monitoring process leading to efficiency enhancement both in learning and interactive activities. The individuals think about what took place after an event occurred, their role in it, others’ reactions and their responses
to them. They can review it through thinking, writing, and discussing it with other persons.

One of the goals of engaging in reflection is to “learn from one's experiences with an intention to improve the quality of one's interactions with others in prospective encounters” (Nagata 2004: 143). We can see such attempts at quality improvement in many activities, especially language use where each new encounter shows signs of improvisation. They include reflection, analysis and application of modified structures that take clues from experience. In this process, these components keep influencing each other in a circular way, all through the processes of reflecting and acting. In multicultural communication settings, there are encounters resulting in different types of communicative interaction depending on the contexts and people. The success of communicative interaction in such settings will depend largely be on the meaning-focussed communication processes in which selection of languages and application of linguistic codes become quite unstable. This feature of situational response characterises natural communication.

Dialogue is also one of the basic forms of communication activity that relies largely on spontaneity of thought and expression. The best medium for spontaneous expression is always one’s native language, however, when individuals are required to carry out communication tasks in a second language, they are invariably assisted by the thought structures developed in their L1. Reflection, however, makes use of the L1 structures as much as any other major cognitive process. Since S L learning relies heavily on most such cognitive processes, it is neither logical nor practicable to keep L1 entirely out of the L2 learning situations.
Vygotsky proposes the concept of inner speech that arises out of social consciousness and manifests in the thought process (1978). This thesis argues that this concept of inner dialogue can be applied to the subsequent processes of comparison, correlation, translation and transcoding taking place in S L communication. Inner dialogue is activated when the outer external dialogue unfolds in unhindered meaningful expressions. It takes place between the individual and the self and it is akin to the ‘egocentric speech’ (Piaget 1972) manifest in children during their development. When the learners go through the processes of instructional communication, the T L structures get an additional impetus and consolidation through the inner dialogue. This happens because the adult second language learners too, like children learning their first language, go through developmental stages where they tend to revert to the ways they used while learning their first language.

The process of reflection also corresponds to the ‘monitor use’ (Krashen 1982), and has a bearing upon language learning and communication. When the learners engage in reflection, they analyse events and experience in the mind, examine relationships with other experiences, and filter them through their personal value visions. From the perspective of learning, individuals develop inferences and apply them in their interactions with the external world. The catalysts for the reflection may be external or internal; they may occur in process in the form of interactive processes. Reflection, in this context, can be viewed as the process of stepping back from an experience to ponder, carefully and persistently, its relevance to the self through the development of inferences. In S L learning too, reflection results in a review of the process of interaction with an intention to incorporate modifications and rectifications.
Like many other cognitive activities, reflection is often a spontaneous corrective measure that can take place outside an individual's awareness. The same sort of spontaneous reflective analysis of existing information occurs even during certain physical activities when the individual is not conscious of what information is being processed in the brain. While learning a second language, there is an attempt by the learner to internalize the new linguistic structures by drawing comparisons and exploring associations with the already internalised structures. Reflection and subsequent analysis seem to play a crucial role in this kind of language processing which can often take place without the learners' conscious knowledge.

It is an indisputable fact that there is immense learning potential hidden not only in individuals but also in their everyday experience. However, such recognition has to be supported and efforts should be made to help the learners make sense out of their developmental experiences. The efficacy of experiential learning in which there is an evaluation of work and experiences involving trial-and-error experiments has already been established. Viewed in this way, what is needed in a learning activity is a process of analysis that explores causes, develops and tests hypotheses, incorporates reflection and eventually produces new knowledge.

The cognitive approaches to learning emphasize in glowing terms the need for consciously analyzing experience. The kind of experience that incorporates reflection yields its full measure of learning; and reflection is followed by testing new hypotheses to consolidate learning. Thus, knowledge structures will not become part of the learner's repertoire until they have been meaningfully recycled on a subjective level. Reflection plays an important role in this process by providing a bridge between experience and
knowledge construction. The process of learning can be seen in this context as the recycling of experience in an interactive environment.

Reflection, thus, improves the quality of communication and learning by better tapping the potentials of self-direction, pre-existing knowledge and personal experience. Communication is a rich and complex process that involves the employment of multiple tools by means of multiple signal systems. Culture too has a pervasive influence on the encoding of both verbal and nonverbal signals, and the subsequent decoding of the same. Because of this influence, application of language forms in a multilingual, multicultural setting becomes a complex activity. Behavioural systems need to be modified in view of the existing knowledge and possibilities; and the rules governing behaviour and structure of one’s own cultural system need to undergo changes in the newly discovered contexts of pluralism. The way to master a new linguistic system is to seek out systems that are different from one’s own, and in this process, the learners can make use of their existing knowledge as a springboard to propel themselves into the areas of new knowledge. The qualities of self-reflexivity and self-direction can be of great help to the learners in their creative pursuit of knowledge.

Though reflection forms the major part of a learner’s learning experience, but its potential has not been fully used in the modern curricula. The power of it can be utilized to boost the efficiency of learning in collaboration with the principles and practices of communicative, self-directed learning. One of the techniques for increasing the learning power by means of reflection is posing and answering questions. Formal educational systems have been using marginally the power of questioning as a tool for reflection but its potential to enhance communicative efficiency has not been fully utilised. Questions
are used in class discussions, become topics for papers, stimulate debates and reinforce learning, but unless they generate appropriate responses, as in the case of the S L classrooms, they render themselves impotent.

Reflecting on a challenging problem can significantly generate creative solutions and increase the learning outcome. The S L classrooms can also adopt the same kind of reflection based on negotiation to widen the scope of learning opportunities. If we want it done, we will have to adopt a more flexible approach to the issue of using L1, or any other kind of knowledge, that the learners might bring to the learning arena. In language teaching, such an approach would be two-pronged in the sense that it brings the best out of classroom communication, and at the same time, provides more room for reflection and self-direction to grow.

All these show that the process of reflection is as natural and familiar as the processes involved in self-directed learning, and that there is a link between the two. Therefore, it will certainly be appropriate and natural for the language learners to use reflective practices as a way to boost learning efficiency. In the S L learning context, reflection may correspond to the ‘monitor use’ in which a review and correction mechanism is activated to refine target language skills. This mechanism works in tandem with the system rules generated by the L1 induced linguistic knowledge.

A second language classroom is a communication setting where group work with the requirement to reflect on what happened may have a good impact. Cultivating the ability to be aware of reflection and its impact on learning, and then adjusting oneself to changing situations may confer immediate benefits. If one develops the skill and
flexibility to creatively use his existing knowledge, it may be possible to marshal all the inner resources to manage communication. Similarly, interacting with the peers and its subsequent reassurance can go a long way ensuring communicative effectiveness. Inner conversations that develop in self-reflexive analysis, is similar to the ‘egocentric speech’ of children and the occasional ‘thinking aloud’ in adults. Talking to oneself is doubtlessly a learning strategy employed by many a diligent S L learner.

3.2.5 Authenticity and Naturalness

Authentic communication is nothing but a natural process of social interaction in which there is a high degree of creativity and unpredictability. It takes places in socio-cultural contexts that impose constraints with regard to the spontaneous expressions and correct interpretations of utterances. Successful communication involves continuous evaluation and negotiation of meaning on the part of the participants with an intention to achieve specific objectives. However, communication that we try to simulate in our classrooms seldom shows these characteristics. This kind of contrived communication process cannot give the students a genuine feeling of communication. Therefore, the communicative objectives become irrelevant and incompatible in view of their perception of communicative needs.

Gaining communicative skills in a second language is an ongoing process that is characterised by an incessant struggle by the learners with the factors confronting them in the learning environment. The learners are aware that they have to frequently confront roadblocks while communicating both in terms of the clarity of the message and its understanding by the listeners. A second language classroom seems to simulate
the same situation. The idea of gaining communicative competence through actual communication in a simulated situation often takes the punch out of the communicative activities. Though the learners are aware that gaining proficiency in the target language is the objective of the whole process, they find it hard to accomplish communicative competence through communicative ventures that are apparently unnatural. Another problem is that learners withdraw themselves from all such activities when they realise that they are unable to keep pace with a few other learners in terms of the learning outcome. If all the learners cannot progress together by making use of the classroom communicative environment, the individual learner will have to depend on his/her own capacity to use the ‘monitor’.

On most occasions, the moment the teacher switches over to the target language for either didactic or communicative purposes, artificiality downs its curtain over the natural communication scenario. It is then very hard to convince the students who belong to the same local language community of the need for using the target language for communication. In this context, it is relevant to think of how we can effectively manipulate the self-directional tendencies that are operational in problem solving situations. It is logical to argue that “the self-directional tendencies get a self-start when an individual finds himself in a problem solving situation, and if the link between self-direction and problem solving can be effectively manipulated in second language learning, better results could be achieved” (James 1992: 85).

Krashen’s (1985) hypotheses support the view that conscious learning is not a sufficient condition for language learning to occur. Although many of his ideas have been often criticised for their inflexibility, they seem to have helped strengthen the
concept of communicative language teaching. His views such as “speech cannot be taught directly but emerges on its own as a result of the processing of the comprehensible input”, and ‘when the filter is down, comprehensible input is absorbed well to facilitate acquisition” (Krashen 1985:2), consolidate the theoretical foundations of communicative language teaching. Based on these views, the language teachers evolve practices that insist on providing the learners with an exposure to genuine, natural target language communication.

While we agree with the argument that natural communication is the best way to gain proficiency in language use, we cannot say that it is the only way to learn a language, particularly at the initial stages of SL learning. There are SL or FL contexts where providing natural communicative situations is not practicable. Cognitive psychologists propose an information-processing approach to language development in which learners obtain knowledge of language by thinking through the rules until they become automatic. This view is quite contrary to the assertions of Krashen’s hypotheses since it endorses the role of rules in the learners' comprehension of the structural aspects of the language. The rules, along with their application and testing, are viewed as natural constituents of language, the internalising of which is part of the process of acquisition of language.

In the communication based teaching programmes, language learning is viewed as a process that develops from the interaction taking place in the learning environment. This means that the learners’ communication skills will ‘develop in an arena of cooperative negotiation, joint interpretation and sharing expression, and be activated by a range of different text types in different media which the participants can make use of
to develop a variety of activities and tasks’ (Breen and Candlin 1980:95). However, the pragmatism in the argument that the S L learners take to these activities naturally, out of their own need to communicate, appears dubious.

The communicative approach claims to have the potential to use the second language classroom as a resource with its own communicative potential to be exploited to effect learning. It is true that the learners, teachers and texts have the potential to generate a variety of communication activities in the classroom, but this, in no way, means that communication thus generated will be absolutely natural. It seems to fit the description that the communicative language classroom is more like “a rehearsal studio where actors learn the lines from some pre-scripted target repertoire for a performance at a later time and place” (Breen and Candlin 1980: 99). It is in this studio where the learners practise their skills for the performance at a future time and place.

Most of the teaching and learning of English in our country is done for instrumental purposes, it is difficult to integrate natural communication into the classroom activities. We need to be candid enough to concede that our learning objectives are more instrumental than integrative and we have limitations with regard to creating natural communicative situations in the classroom. That is to say, we need English more for academic purposes than for general, informal interactions. This fact has been marginally recognised in the ‘procedural approach’ (Prabhu 1987), which makes a distinction between ‘communicational approach’ based on problem solving, and the ‘communicative approach’ based on the general, natural kind of communication. The procedural approach focuses on the use of problem solving tasks
assuming that when the learners’ minds are engaged in solving problems, the linguistic, conceptual resources that we need for the purpose are best perceived and internalised.

Such meaning-focused activities ensure the development of form or structure, but it is doubtful whether this objective is always realised in a second language classroom. The role of classroom communication should therefore be modified to provide practically reusable models for prospective communicators who are also able to engage themselves in a little bit of self-correction. One cannot develop the ability to correct oneself with regard to the communicative use of the target language if there is an insistence on the continuous occurrence of natural communication in the classroom. The learners’ correction mechanism will be submerged into the flurry of fluency imposed on them.

While examining the efficacy of communicative language teaching, it is important to remember that the learners do not have the same social objectives in learning languages. Their motivational faculties can be stimulated only when the teaching programme is conducive to their learning objectives. In the multilingual Indian context, we learn and teach English for various reasons and the learning environments are far from being natural, particularly those in the educational institutions. These factors seem to weaken the potency of the communicative approach in our second language learning classrooms.

A positive aspect of the communicative approach to second language teaching is that it implicitly encourages learners to take the responsibility for their language use in communication. However, the emphasis in the communicative language teaching, as in previous methods and approaches, has been on how to teach, with relatively little
attention paid to how learners learn. While teachers do communicate in English in the classroom, they can do precious little to ensure that the learners follow suit. Even today, when the communicative approach underlies a substantial number of syllabuses for speakers of other languages, and in spite of insights from research, it is hard to find textbooks that include learning and communication strategies in their material, notwithstanding the idea of the centrality of learning and the need for stimulating self-directional tendencies in second language learning.

However, our experience shows that genuine interaction may take place at the stage of ‘skill using’ (Rivers 1983: 43) where the individuals attempt to put to use their skills prompted by the desire to communicate. The competence at the skill using stage involves the learners’ capability to express ideas by selecting appropriate vocabulary or structures in response to communicative interactions that arise quite unpredictably during interactions. Such capabilities cannot be expected of the learners at the ‘skill getting stage’ (Rivers 1983: 43), where they form an awareness of the target language with the help of the cognitive processes of perception and abstraction leading to construction and articulation. This is the stage where cognitive processes get operational resulting in what Rivers calls ‘pseudo-communication’. She exposes the futility of attempting to deem it genuine, natural communication in our eagerness to provide the learners with genuine forms of target language in our formal second language classrooms:

No matter how much we relate these skill getting activities to real life situations, this practice rarely passes beyond pseudo-communication. It is extremely directed, not self-originating; it is dependent, not an independent activity. It is near communication with all the outward appearances of communication, but in these activities the student does
not have to demonstrate that great leap into autonomy—the leap that is crucial. We have always tended to assume that there would then be automatic transfer to performance in interaction.

(Rivers 1983: 43-44)

The kind of communicative competence we are concerned with is produced when the knowledge of the linguistic structures combines with necessary social skills to generate and transfer meaning. The learners of a language “must apply their mind to forming generalisations about conventions followed in the use of language and it is not possible for anyone to compose sentences by putting each word in its place through a conscious application of the knowledge of grammar and word meanings” (David 1989: 57). Thus, the two aspects of linguistic performance, the knowledge aspect and the skill aspect, should develop side by side, complementing each other as they develop into full-fledged communicative competence.

The issue of ‘natural communication’ has to be considered in the light of the views emphasising utilitarian and pragmatic policies. Since it is not possible for us to base our teaching and learning of English in our colleges on purely integrative purposes, we need to at least temporarily shelve the idea of always using English in genuine natural communication in the classroom. At the same time, we need to integrate language skills into our classroom communication activities where we face the challenges of finding strategies suitable for simulated communicative situations. The kind of English an average Indians use has a distinct character that has been evolved from their status as bilinguals who ‘switch codes’ in the sense that they are forced to use in communication more than a language for different purposes in different
situations. Our second language classroom communication has to be understood in the light of this reality and hence, it is impracticable to base our classroom communication strategies purely on the theory of ‘natural communication’. Rather, we need to reconcile with the ‘rehearsal studio’ view of classroom communication (Breen and Candlin 1980: 99), and initiate steps to ensure that the inputs turn into outputs and then get transferred to the actual scene of communication at a later point of time.

The functionalist approach based on the role of language as a medium of communication in everyday situation is not relevant to the Indian classroom context. We need to understand that our purpose is to communicate nationally, and to a limited extent internationally, not to use English in everyday communication at all times. We also use English in specialised situations of higher education, academic programmes related to research and development in various disciplines. These are not, strictly speaking, natural situations where you can communicate naturally putting to use all the aspects of natural communication in an unrestricted manner. It seems fallacious to argue that communication taking place in the second language classroom as part of the instructional procedure is a miniature form of the kind of communication taking place outside the classroom, and it is possible to incorporate all the features of genuine, natural communication into the classroom activities in a perfectly natural manner (cf. Appendix IV).

In a formal instructional situation, classroom communication acts need not try to assume the features of authentic communication because it is impracticable, and insulting to the learners’ sensibilities. Such attempts may not help develop positive attitudes to S L communication activities in the classroom. In fact, the activities involved
in second language learning are consciously undertaken, and what the learners need is not the authentication of the situation that is actually contrived. They desire nothing but an assurance of success that would go a long way towards sustaining their motivation that alone can maintain their interest in the communicative acts and desire to interact using the target language (cf. Appendix IV).

How then can we insist on making the classroom communication effective by using the target language ‘naturally’ for all communicative purposes? How can we expect the learners to move out of their comfort zones and use the T L for all communicative purposes when they are instructed to make it meaning focused? Can we expect them to ferry meanings across in situations that ‘naturally unwarrants’ the use of the T L, while being aware that they are inflicting heavy casualties on it in the process? So, such risk taking can be expected of them only when they realize that there is no way out of the communication tangle they are in because of the different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the interactants. Such an encounter is nearly out of the question in the English classrooms we have, especially in our rural areas.