V.1. introduction

The introduction (Chapter I) has examined the historical background of the development of the concept of autonomous learning, taking the social, political, economic and academic background into consideration. Also it was clearly said that the term ‘learner autonomy’ is taken in a qualitative sense, which means autonomy relating to notions of awareness of learning goals, participation in decision making and personal assumptions of responsibility. We quoted Holec (1979) for a definition and the very foundation of the concept of autonomy revolves around the explanation of Holec.

Later studies also proved that, to make our learners autonomous and creative, all supporting elements of learning and teaching should undergo drastic change. But the present Kerala situation – academic and pedagogic – which claims to believe in teaching English not as L2 but as L1 has turned out to be a ‘failed pedagogy’ as far as teaching/learning English is considered. The reasons may vary but the results remain the same. Hence this research puts forward the suggestions under three heads: men, methods and management. Men include learners, teachers, and other stakeholders in general. By methods, classroom instruction, teacher training and testing and evaluation are meant. Management
means curriculum planning, syllabus designing and material production in this context.

V.2. Leading to the springboard of suggestions

When methods in strategy instruction of autonomous learning are discussed, the approach or theory (the pedagogy) that is accepted by the policy makers is to be seriously thought of. As discussed in Chapter I and Chapter III, the theories of language learning in general and of second language learning in particular have influenced our policy makers in forming the decision to which direction the pedagogy should guide the next generation. The kind of theories which have influenced the curriculum designers reflect in the National Curriculum Framework 2005:

The goals for a second language curriculum are twofold: attainment of a basic proficiency, such as is acquired in natural learning, and the development of language into an instrument for abstract thought and knowledge acquisition (for e.g.) literacy. (p.39)

NCF 2005 again says that if we see all teaching as, in a sense, language teaching, the gap between ‘English as subject’ and ‘English as a medium’ will be bridged (p 39). About the pedagogical influence, it clearly states:
Approaches and methods need not be exclusive but may be mutually supportive within a broad cognitive philosophy (incorporating Vygotskian, Chomskyan and Piagetian principles). Higher order skills can be developed once fundamental competencies are ensured (p.39).

Bruner’s cognitive approach is not mentioned here, but the thread that runs through the whole work is based on Bruners’ ideas of constructivism and cognitive theories: for instance, “Attitudes, emotions and morals are thus an integral part of cognitive development, and are linked to the development of language, mental representation, concepts and reasoning” (p.15).

Hence the NCF 2005, which is the reflection of the government policy on education up to class 12, clearly states that the government expects the curriculum to emphasize “the process of constructing knowledge” because learning to learn and willingness to unlearn and relearn are important as means of responding to new situations in a flexible and creative manner (p.11). The Vygotskyan concept of social constructivism is the very foundation on which the curriculum framework is built. On every page this idea is clearly specified.

As to pedagogy, the curriculum thinks in terms of what Friar (1972) speaks of his critical pedagogy. “Students are not just young people for whom adults should device solutions. They are critical observers of their own conditions and
needs, and should be participants in discussions and problem solving related to their education… should be encouraged to develop the mental skills needed to think and reason independently and the courage to descent” (p.22). Critical pedagogy provides an opportunity to reflect critically on issues in terms of their political, social, economic and moral aspects. It entails the acceptance of multiple views on social issues and a commitment to democratic forms of interactions. This is important in view of the multiple contexts in which our schools function. A critical framework helps children to see social issues from different perspectives and understand how such issues are connected to their lives. For instance, understanding of democracy as a way of life can be charted through a path where children reflect on how they regard others (e.g. friends, neighbors, the opposite sex, elders, etc.), how they make choices (e.g. activities, play, friends, career, etc.), and how they cultivate the ability to make decisions, which can be seen as the most important aspect of autonomy. Likewise, issues related to human rights, caste, religion and gender can be critically reflected on by children in order to see how these issues are connected to their everyday experiences, and also how different forms of inequalities become compounded and are perpetuated. Critical pedagogy facilitates collective decision making through open discussion and by encouraging and recognizing multiple views.
These opportunities lead the learners to use language in the most natural manner and finally will result in language acquisition.

Learning to question received knowledge critically, whether it is found in a ‘biased’ textbook, or other literary sources in their own environment, can be built by encouraging learners to comment, compare and think about elements that exist in their own environment. For example, in Kerala, the folklore is a strong medium through which any form of criticism can be expressed. *Ottam thullal, koothu, theyyam, thera* and other folk traditions can be used as powerful media for discussion, comment, and analysis. Linking these media to create interest in acquiring English by either translating or commenting on them in English will result in better learning experience. This ensures inclusive education and motivates the marginalized to use the language with a purpose.

Participatory learning and teaching, is another principle which is included in formulating the pedagogic goals under NCF. Along with participatory learning and teaching, emotion and experience need to have a definite and valued place in the classroom. While class participation is a powerful strategy, it loses its pedagogic edge when it is ritualized, or merely becomes an instrument to enable teachers to meet their own ends. True participation starts from the experiences of both students and teachers, says NCF. Individual and collective experiences
without fear of judgment, using conflict as a pedagogic strategy, learning to question received knowledge critically, using native arts and songs to create dynamic interactions among learners, a pedagogy that is sensitive to gender, class, caste and global inequalities should be addressed by teachers, demands the curriculum.

About constructing knowledge, the curricular objectives are clearly illustrative. In the constructivist perspective, learning is a process of the construction of knowledge. Learners actively construct their own knowledge by connecting new ideas on the basis of materials/activities presented to them (experience). For example, using a text or a set of pictures/visuals on a transport system coupled with discussions will allow young learners to be facilitated to construct the idea of a transport system. (p.17)

In conclusion, every reader of the NCF 2005 can see the direct influence of the theories and methods selected and highlighted in this study strictly coinciding with the objectives and principles specified in NCF 2005. One of the major shifts in teacher education program envisaged by NCF is ‘from teacher directions and decisions to learner autonomy. (p.110), for other shifts see Chapter I)

All these facts point to the relevance of this study in the context of educational paradigm shift, and special focus on the so called ‘Critical Point’ –
period of adolescence – with special attention to learning/teaching of ESL, as the
time demanding autonomy in every respect. Principles and methods of
autonomous learning in ESL context were discussed in detail in chapters 2, 3 &
4, with special focus on senior secondary students of Kerala.

In the light of the theories and the learning strategies already examined and
of the existing teaching/learning ESL scenario of the target group,
recommendations are put forward in methods of teaching under which different
areas like role of cultural background, impact of different theories on pedagogy,
role of teachers in strategy training, peer coaching and study buddy concepts,
goal orientation and motivation, importance of needs analysis, inculcating
problem solving, reciprocal teaching, different strategies and role of teachers in
training the learners in these strategies, concept of self-access etc. are
considered. Under materials, this paper proposes changes in course books and
source books, materials for self-learning, ICT, and self-access centers.

Management, in this context is the education agency – the Ministry of Human
Resources in the Country, and the Ministry of Education in the State under which
we have the curriculum committee, academic council, NCERT, SCERT and
other directorates and Boards – and the decision makers. These agencies
decide the curriculum, syllabus, nature of evaluation, criteria for promotion and
detention, basic competence of teachers and their roles, the type of
infrastructure and the like. This paper looks up to the Government to design
teacher education programs—both pre-service and in-service—to nurture autonomy so that they become competent and proficient teachers who are irreplaceable by any technological innovations.

One way of making teacher education programs more democratic, as Nair (2006) suggests, is to include action research as an integral component in them. Teacher education programs with an effective action research component in them vest much more authority in the trainees than the trainer, as it is the trainees than the trainer who set the agenda. Action research will be considered as an interface between teacher training and applied research. Classroom-based action research and action research in evaluation can be encouraged by institutions and organizations, proposes Nair (2006:148).

The role of social and cultural background is so crucial in the ways of learning and teaching. For instance, O’Malley et al. (1985 b) found resistance from Asian students to using strategies for imagery and grouping to learn vocabulary definition. In our context, especially when we think of inclusive education, any comment, word or activity we select should satisfy the marginalized or the disabled too. The context we select, illustrations we draw, examples we quote all should be from varying socio-cultural contexts. It is very difficult to pay
unnoticed attention and care to these learners. So, positive strategies can be explored in collaboration with fellow teachers or with organizations outside the school. In this context, every teacher should be aware of the exposure-poor environment of learners. And as Nair (2008) points out, the strategies selected should try to provide an exposure-rich environment to the learners through the teachers’ own talk, talking to their peers and to students (p12).

The role of teachers in helping the learner in ‘learning to learn’ is most crucial at this stage. First, teachers should feel their responsibility in pedagogic planning. To plan this, they have to conduct surveys or interviews or use questionnaires or opinionnaires (See Appendix ) to know what the learners need to know. This idea is explained in detail in Chapter III. Selection of extra materials and supporting materials to the CBs and PBs also come under Pedagogic planning. The diagram – illustrates the role of teachers suggested based on the observation made in the study. In the constructive paradigm, the role of teachers is to provide a safe space for children to express themselves, and simultaneously to build in certain forms of interactions. They need to step out of the role of ‘moral authority’ and learn to listen with empathy and without judgment, and to enable children to listen to each other. While consolidating and constructively stretching the limits of the learner’s understanding, they need to be conscious of how differences are expressed. An atmosphere of trust would
make the classroom a safe space, where children can share experiences, where conflict can be acknowledged and constructively questioned, and where solutions, however tentative, can be mutually worked out.

Another area to be considered seriously for locating learner autonomy is encouraging peer-learning and peer-coaching in groups. Though ‘study buddy’ concept is accepted worldwide, in practice, we fail to exploit this concept. For peer learning, co-operative learning principles are to be realized. The theoretical basis of this study, as well as the psycho-social requirement of our period, calls for creating a co-operative learning atmosphere among adolescents. Group assignments and group projects have a wider goal than mere academic performance. The groups should be smaller and teachers should join the groups and show the students how to work together. The teacher can also be a participant. The group task can be the broken parts of a complex task. If two groups are performing at different levels, it often helps to praise the productive groups and then the teacher can quietly join the less productive one and provide leadership. In peer-coaching all necessary materials and guidance should be provided. Need for proper planning, skills in note-making, different strategies that can be used, eliciting strategies used by learners, how to plan the blackboard work, summing up the topic, effect of recapitulation, and other necessary teaching strategies should have been discussed beforehand. Reflection on the
effect of peer coaching can be encouraged so that there will be improved
performance and better learning.

The present day teachers face a dilemma when they come across errors in
learners-- both in speaking and in writing. To Corder (1967), ‘error’ is a
systematic deviance in ESL learners’ performance, whereas ‘mistakes’ are slips
of the tongue (or pen) and mistakes would be recognized as mistakes by the
performer who would rectify them almost immediately on recognition. Combining
the concept of ‘inter language’ of Selinker (1972) and the ‘error-mistake’
distinction of Corder (1967), David (1995) questions Corder’s view in the case of
her studies.

When an ESL learner, who has not attained the level of the target proficiency in
ESL, performs spontaneously or is required to perform, weather in an oral or in a
written ESL task, he may employ one of the three following strategies:

1. Use certain rules which he knows to be accepted rules for his correct
   performance,

2. Formulate certain rules (in the absence of such knowledge), the way he
   habitually formulates them on such occasions, on the basis of his
   understanding of language use in general derived from his knowledge of
   the mother tongue or some other known language, Or
3. Give up all such efforts in frustration (when the task in hand is totally beyond him) and perform literally as it would seen fit to him on the spur of the moment. (p116)

She noticed while evaluating the scripts of her target group that most of her students had adopted the strategy mentioned at no.3 above: they had no system, and their errors had no systematicity about them. As the students were not in a position to correct their own mistakes, their mistakes were certainly not mistakes. Neither was they errors because there was no systematicity about them. As they had not system, each sentence produced was an idiosyncratic sentence and not a unit in an idiosyncratic dialect (Corder, 1971), which would be systematic. To David, those sentences had no ‘approximative systems’ as Nemeser (1974) mentioned or ‘transitional competence’ as Richards (1971) called it. She again says that the whole concept of inter language was found to be irrelevant in their case, and against this background Corders’ error-mistake distinction emerged to be questionable. (p. 117)

Whereas, in this study, the researcher observed all three categories of strategies mentioned by David above. But in the case of too poor performers, as David points out, they had no system at all. They were in the category 3.
For a long time it was a tenet of language teaching that errors are sins. Consequently, teaching strategies were often structured to minimize errors. But recently, there has emerged a greater tolerance of learner errors, which was taken for granted by teachers, and as a result teachers did not bother to edit the works of the learners. In certain cases a relatively positive view was taken to certain type of errors. Dulay and Burt (1974) supported this view saying errors can be taken as positive indications of the acquisition process at work, they may be considered provisional forms which, for a time, serve a communicative function in the learners’ use of the language and eventually be replaced by correct forms. OMalley and Chamot (1990) quote Higgs and Clifford (1982) that if not corrected, the language may become ‘learning proof’, that means unable to learn the correct forms at all. Many experienced language teachers have developed good intuitions about the ways in which different types of learners go through the learning process. They often recognize when a learner is going through a difficult stage, trying to cope with a new way of doing things in the second language, and can offer sympathetic support during that transition. Peer-help and self-help techniques with teachers’ supervision and limited intervention can be adopted here. When teachers’ identify some errors in production and reception during the skills developing stage, they should
understand that it is quite natural of all learning process. Robert de Beaugrande (1984) describes this phenomenon:

In real life, a significant accomplishment normally emerges from a painstaking series of approximations that are technically wrong or unsatisfactory, but point the way to something better… Similarly, entry into a new, unfamiliar domain or more complex skills is necessarily marked by an increase in errors over the previous stage of limited, but well-rehearsed skills (p.26)

This observation was discovered even a hundred years back by Herman Osthoff and Karl Brugman (1878):

When serious attempts at upset are directed against a procedure that one is used to and with which one feels comfortable, one is always more readily stimulated to ward off the disturbance than to undertake a thorough revision and possible alteration of the accustomed procedure (p.204)( cited in David, op. mentioned)

But this ‘getting by’ with a ‘limited, but well-rehearsed’ set of forms in L2 has a bad influence on learners. They may be unwilling to give up the security of that position and their performance in L2 might seem to deteriorate or it never gets improved. In psychology, this kind of ‘proactive interference' is described
as a negative influence as it interferes negatively with the new learning of an alternative procedure. That means learners fail to make necessary progress and manage with the little, may be erroneous language. Hence the needs analysis through different means is to be studied by the teacher before selection of tasks. Mere testing will not remedy the actual problem. At the target level of this study, one comes across a number of hackneyed expressions in the production of L2, which the learners have been using from class 5. This proves what Beaugrande (1984) and Osthoff (1878) expressed. Awareness to these aspects is the first phase of studying the needs of the senior secondary learners while analyzing the errors.

Self- monitoring or peer- monitoring tasks are the most effective ways suggested by recent researchers. But my experience with the target groups specified in this study makes me speculate that before self/peer monitoring the teacher can help the learners to greater awareness of language in general and of the processes of communication in language. Language awareness training is gaining momentum and knowledge of meta language and conscious awareness regarding learning process are two parts of awareness training programmes these days. Providing materials and tasks for self monitoring to free the language used from errors, though difficult in the crowded classrooms, can be recommended as the best solution.
We already examined the characteristic of good language learners in chapters 3 & 4. They have a wider repertoire of learning strategies and use a series of strategies rather than a single one when engaged in a learning task. Therefore, a training system in which multiple strategies are taught within a single package would be beneficial. Palinscar and Brown (1984) developed this multiple strategy program which they called Reciprocal Teaching. By using this program students practice using the new language for academic purposes as they develop the learning strategies with a general frame work of co-operative learning. Here language skills other than reading comprehension can be developed with group members sharing the responsibility for developing competence in a task. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) quote Ogle’s (1987) technique (K-W-L) in which students first identify what they already know about a topic, then state what they want to learn about the topic, and, after interacting with the new information, what they have learned about the topic. This sequence of strategies involves first elaboration (activation of prior knowledge), then selective attention to the particular content that they want to learn, and finally, summarizing the main points learned. The final phase also serves as a self evaluation activity in which the student identifies the personal learning outcomes of the task (p.170). This sequence of strategies is obviously useful for
any content area, including second language learning and learning of content in a second language (Ibid). (More explanation in Chapter IV.)

The proponents of good language learners argue that at least one difference between good language learners and the rest is that good learners have developed effective learning strategies. It may be the case, that if we were to train all learners in selection of the strategies used by good learners, then they would improve the efficiency of their learning.

Rubin (1981) and Cohen and Aphek (1981) investigated the strategies learners use in their learning and offer valuable lists – from which it would be possible to construct programmes of learner training.

Successful speakers are willing to talk and to make errors in the foreign language. They make decisions about when they want to be corrected and about what use they make of the corrections. They paraphrase what native speakers say. They check that their listeners are following what they are saying by using techniques such as asking the listener for a word - which the listener could only supply if he was following the discourse (Cohen). Rubin suggests that good learners create opportunities for practicing the language by initiating conversations with target language speakers including peers and teachers. They consciously use communication strategies like circumlocution, paraphrases,
synonyms, cognates, gestures and may even spell out or write a word to make the meaning clear. They learn social formulas by heart and they can even direct the conversation to their area of knowledge where they are confident to use their appropriate language. Another feature of good language learners are they are good and successful listeners they use their prerequisite knowledge of the given topic and available world knowledge to construct meaning of their own using cues from prior utterances within the discourse, word stress, knowledge of the speakers accent, the tone of voice, and the speakers body language. They are interested to create opportunities so that they can listen to and actively participate by asking for clarifications of meaning they can check their own understanding by summarizing the content of the exchange and, if needed expressing the meaning in their own words. Cohen and Aphek (1981) list out a number of techniques used to memorize vocabulary by successful learners – many of them we have come across in the previous pages. As it was mentioned earlier good language learners develop techniques and strategies of their own and the teachers should exploit these techniques and strategies to the benefit of the rest of the class. For example, they ask for more examples of how to use particular words or expressions, how to translate an expression into mother tongue what to repeat, how the meaning is expressed or difference in meaning exist, how to paraphrase how the rule is violated in certain usages etc. They
have various guessing strategies to get to meaning: use clues, syntactic structures the context and topic of discourse. They are really good at various deductive reasoning techniques to comprehend the target language, identify regular similarities and differences in the grammar rules of their mother tongue and the target language. They develop successful techniques for speaking, sometimes speaking to themselves, consciously applying grammatical rules and using new structures and words they learned. Successful learners use reading strategies like:

- skim for general meaning and scan for specific meaning
- choose a reading approach appropriate to the given text and their purpose in reading it
- repeat reading a sentence if their comprehension is blocked
- summarize as they go along
- tolerate vague meaning until they can clarify the meaning
- mark difficult words for further reference
- use dictionaries sparingly while reading
- use syntactic processing as a last resort.

Also it is beneficial for the teachers to know the writing strategies adopted by successful learners:
- planning, writing and reviewing are cyclic process
- maintain unity in each paragraph and in overall discourse
- consciously think of the organizational devices like cohesion and coherence
- at each stage take stock of what has already been written
- write for meaning first
- prepared to produce multiple drafts if necessary
- form awareness in the mechanics of writing and punctuation.

(Adopted and modified from Dickinson 1987)

Another area where special attention needed is assessment and evaluation.

In chapter 4, a detailed discussion is given. To conclude with, it is recommended that the management agency should think seriously to change the present way of assessment and evaluation. What we see now at the target level, is an unrealistic change in evaluation which is neither useful nor practical. Ambiguity in instructions, scope for too much of subjectivity in expected answers, lack of direction and guidance while preparing for exams, dependency by teachers on commercially prepared study guides, too much attention on process neglecting the product, the process monotony of the discourse based syllabus at the cost of learner proficiency and content etc. are a few areas where serious intervention is demanded. So, whether teacher-conducted assessment or self/peer
assessment, the tool used should have reliability, validity and feasibility. Hence the materials and methodology we use should have the right kind of tools to assess learning. With a right kind of tool, self-assessment is desirable since it is essential for a learner, preparing for autonomy, to be able to make some kind of judgment about the accuracy and appropriacy of his performance.

In this concluding chapter, it will not be a redundancy if the role of teachers in training the learners in strategy use is highlighted. The language teacher aiming at training her learners in using language learning strategies should learn about the students, their interests, motivations, and learning styles. The teacher can learn what language learning strategies students already appear to be using, observing their behavior in class. Do they ask for clarification, verification or correction? Do they cooperate with their peers or seem to have much contact outside of class with proficient foreign language users? Besides observing their behavior in class, the teacher can prepare a short questionnaire so that students can fill in at the beginning of a course to describe themselves and their language learning. Thus, the teacher can learn the purpose of their learning a language, their favorite / least favorite kinds of class activities, and the reason why they learn a language. The teacher can have adequate knowledge about the students, their goals, motivations, language learning strategies, and their understanding of the course to be taught. It is a fact that each learner within the
same classroom may have different learning styles and varied awareness of the use of strategies. The teacher cannot attribute importance to only one group and support the analytical approach or only give input by using the auditory mode. The language teacher should, therefore, provide a wide range of learning strategies in order to meet the needs and expectations of her students possessing different learning styles, motivations, strategy preferences, etc. Therefore, it can be stated that the most important teacher role in foreign language teaching is the provision of a range of tasks to match varied learning styles.

In addition to the students, the language teacher should also analyze her textbook to see whether the textbook already includes language learning strategies or language learning strategies training. The language teacher should look for new texts or other teaching materials if language learning strategies are not already included within her materials.

The language teacher should also study her own teaching method and overall classroom style. Analyzing her lesson plans, the language teacher can determine whether her lesson plans give learners chance to use a variety of learning styles and strategies or not. The teacher can see whether her teaching allows learners to approach the task at hand in different ways or not. The
language teacher can also be aware of whether her strategy training is implicit, explicit, or both. It should be emphasized that questioning herself about what she plans to do before each lesson and evaluating her lesson plan after the lesson in terms of strategy training, the teacher can become better prepared to focus on language learning strategies and strategy training during the process of her teaching (Lessard-Clouston; 1997:5).

The term learning style is defined in chapter 4 referring to different authors. Going through those definitions one can presume that it is used to encompass four aspects of the person: cognitive style, i.e., preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning; patterns of attitudes and interests that affect what an individual will pay most attention to in a learning situation; a tendency to seek situations compatible with one's own learning patterns; and a tendency to use certain learning strategies and avoid others. Learning style is inherent and pervasive (Willing, 1988) and is a blend of cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements (Oxford & Ehrman, 1988). Recent researches in this field bring out a number of dimensions to learning styles. A few of them will help teachers to think of these differences and thereby understand their learners better.

One of the most widely researched dimensions of learning style is field independence vs. dependence. Field independent learners easily separate key
details from a complex or confusing background, while their field dependent peers have trouble doing this. Field independent learners show significant advantages over field dependent learners in analytical tasks. Another one, "Analytic vs. global processing" seems to be closely allied with field independence vs. dependence, and indeed may be a more fundamental and more explanatory dimension of learning style. However, little foreign or second language learning research exists concerning the analytic-global dimension except in the context of brain hemisphericity. The left hemisphere of the brain deals with language through analysis and abstraction while the right hemisphere recognizes language as more global auditory or visual patterns (Willing, 1988). It is also speculated that right-brain learners--those who prefer the kinds of processing done by the right side of the brain--are more facile at learning intonation and rhythms of the target language, whereas left-brain learners deal more easily with analytic aspects of target language grammar. In the context of this study Cooperation vs. competition is of special focus. In studies where students were taught specifically to be cooperative, results revealed vast improvement in language skills as well as increased self-esteem, motivation, altruism, and positive attitudes toward others (Sharan et al., 1985). This has been discussed in previous chapters.
‘Tolerance for ambiguity’ is another style dimension of language learning. Learning a language can be a difficult and at times ambiguous endeavor, and students who can more readily tolerate ambiguity often show the best language learning performance (Naiman, Frohlich & Todesco, 1975). The dimensions are not limited to these four types. There are other authors who have formulated many different learning styles. The Myers-Briggs Type indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985) contributes four more dimensions to learning style: extraversion vs. introversion, sensing vs. intuition, thinking vs. feeling, and judging vs. perceiving (the last dimension referring to the immediateness of the need for closure). Several of these dimensions appear to significantly influence how students choose to learn languages, according to recent research (Ehrman & Oxford, 1988, 1989; Oxford & Ehrman, 1988).

Other important style aspects that may relate to language learning performance are: leveling-sharpening of detail, reflectivity-impulsivity, and constricted-flexible thinking. Additional research needs to be conducted on all style dimensions in order for teachers to understand more about the basic stylistic preferences of their students.

Thus we see that language learning strategies are the often-conscious steps or behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage,

Strategies can be assessed in a variety of ways, such as diaries, think-aloud procedures, observations, and surveys as mentioned before. Research both outside the language field and investigations with language learners frequently show that the most successful learners tend to use learning strategies that are appropriate to the material, to the task, and to their own goals, needs, and stage of learning, which is detailed in this chapter itself. More proficient learners appear to use a wider range of strategies in a greater number of situations than do less proficient learners, but the relationship between strategy use and proficiency is complex. Research indicates that language learners at all levels use strategies, but that some or most learners are not fully aware of the strategies they use or the strategies that might be most beneficial to employ.

In chapters 3 and 4, many different strategies used by language learners like: metacognitive techniques for organizing, focusing, and evaluating one’s own learning; affective strategies for handling emotions or attitudes; social strategies for cooperating with others in the learning process; cognitive strategies for linking new information with existing schemata and for analyzing and classifying it; memory strategies for entering new information into memory storage and for retrieving it when needed; and compensation strategies (such as guessing or using gestures) to overcome deficiencies and gaps in one’s current language
knowledge, were analyzed in detail. At the same time, language learning strategy research has suffered from an overemphasis on metacognitive and cognitive strategies, which are admittedly very important, at the expense of other strategy types that are also very useful. While studying the strategy types used by learners, teachers may seriously analyze the strategy type used by learners and if any type is found absent, the reasons can be traced.

Some preliminary research suggests the existence of sex differences in strategy use (see review by Oxford, Nyikos, & Ehrman, 1988). Choice of language strategies also relates strongly to ethnicity, language learning purpose, the nature of the task, and other factors (Politzer, 1983; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985; Oxford, 1989). As noted earlier, one of these related factors is, no doubt, learning style which was analyzed through the multiperspectives of different authors. Language teachers should bear in mind these factors when they come across individual differences in the acquisition of ESL. Besides, in becoming autonomous learners, learners perceive this notion in different ways. So teachers must realize their actual role in making learners autonomous. That means they are teaching the skills and providing the experience that students need to guide their own learning to meet their lives. It is teaching them what they need in order to solo safely and successfully in life. Teachers, like flight instructors, succeed when their students no longer need them.
As proved by researches, language learning styles and strategies appear to be among the most important variables influencing performance in a second language. Much more investigation is necessary to determine the precise role of styles and strategies, but even at this stage in our understanding we can state that teachers need to become more aware of both learning styles and learning strategies through appropriate teacher training. Teachers can help their students by designing instruction that meets the needs of individuals with different stylistic preferences and by teaching students how to improve their learning strategies. Research supports the effectiveness of using L2 learning strategies and has shown that successful language learners often use strategies in an orchestrated fashion. Some findings of Oxford (1994) as she refers to various researchers concerned are listed below:

- Use of appropriate language learning strategies often results in improved proficiency or achievement overall or in specific skill areas
- Successful language learners tend to select strategies that work well together in a highly orchestrated way, tailored to the requirements of the language task. These learners can easily explain the strategies they use and why they employ them (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).
• Cognitive (e.g., translating, analyzing) and metacognitive (e.g., planning, organizing) strategies are often used together, supporting each other (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Well tailored combinations of strategies often have more impact than single strategies.

• Certain strategies or clusters of strategies are linked to particular language skills or tasks. For example, L2 writing, like L1 writing, benefits from the learning strategies of planning, self-monitoring, deduction, and substitution. L2 speaking demands strategies such as risk-taking, paraphrasing, circumlocution, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. L2 listening comprehension gains from strategies of elaboration, inference, selective attention, and self-monitoring, while reading comprehension uses strategies like reading aloud, guessing, deduction, and summarizing (Oxford (1990b) gives a detailed chart that maps relevant strategies with listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

• The powerful social and affective strategies are found less often in L2 research. This is, perhaps, because these behaviors are not studied frequently by L2 researchers, and because learners are not familiar with paying attention to their own feelings and social relationships as part of the L2 learning process (Oxford, 1990b).
Oxford (1994) puts forward different factors influencing the choice of L2 learning strategies in the existing research and examines how those factors influence the choice of strategies used among students learning a second language:

1. **Motivation** More motivated students tended to use more strategies than less motivated students, and the particular reason for studying the language (motivational orientation, especially as related to career field) was important in the choice of strategies.  

2. **Gender.** Females reported greater overall strategy use than males in many studies (although sometimes males surpassed females in the use of a particular strategy).  

3. **Cultural background.** Rote memorization and other forms of memorization were more prevalent among some Asian students than among students from other cultural backgrounds. Certain other cultures also appeared to encourage this strategy among learners.  

4. **Attitudes and beliefs.** These were reported to have a profound effect on the strategies learners choose, with negative attitudes and beliefs often causing poor strategy use or lack of orchestration of strategies.  

5. **Type of task.** The nature of the task helped determine the strategies naturally employed to carry out the task.  

6. **Age and L2 learning stage.** Students of different ages and stages of L2 learning used different strategies, with certain strategies often being employed by older or
more advanced students. 7. Learning style. Learning style (general approach to language learning) often determined the choice of L2 learning strategies. For example, analytic-style students preferred strategies such as contrastive analysis, rule-learning, and dissecting words and phrases, while global students used strategies to find meaning (guessing, scanning, predicting) and to converse without knowing all the words (paraphrasing, gesturing). 8. Tolerance of ambiguity. Students who were more tolerant of ambiguity used significantly different learning strategies in some instances than did students who were less tolerant of ambiguity.

It is clear that students can be taught to use better strategies, and research suggests that better strategies improve language performance. Just how language learning strategies should be taught is open to question, but so far it has been confirmed that strategy training is generally more effective when woven into regular classroom activities than when presented as a separate strategy course. With this researcher’s experience as a teacher trainer, teaching -teachers across the state (not all, majority of them) found it more practical to train learners along with regular classroom activities. L2 strategy training is different from L1 strategy training, though not in all aspects. To sum up with,
based on L2 strategy training research, the following principles have been
tentatively suggested, subject to further investigation:

- L2 strategy training should be based clearly on students' attitudes, beliefs,
  and stated needs.

- Strategies should be chosen so that they mesh with and support each other
  and so that they fit the requirements of the language task, the learners’ goals,
  and the learners' style of learning.

- Training should, if possible, be integrated into regular L2 activities over a long
  period of time rather than taught as a separate, short intervention.

- Students should have plenty of opportunities for strategy training during
  language classes.

- Strategy training should include explanations, handouts, activities,
  brainstorming, and materials for reference and home study.

- Affective issues such as anxiety, motivation, beliefs, and interests -- all of
  which influence strategy choice -- should be directly addressed by L2
  strategy training.

- Strategy training should be explicit, overt, and relevant and should provide
  plenty of practice with varied L2 tasks involving authentic materials.
• Strategy training should not be solely tied to the class at hand; it should provide strategies that are transferable to future language tasks beyond a given class.

• Strategy training should be somewhat individualized, as different students prefer or need certain strategies for particular tasks.

• Strategy training should provide students with a mechanism to evaluate their own progress and to evaluate the success of the training and the value of the strategies in multiple tasks.

Another point to be reminded at this juncture is the overall attitude of the language teacher towards the present pedagogy. Paulo Frier (1972) asserted on the nature of pedagogy to be a problem posing one through which students learn by problem solving. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) also support the problem solving nature of learning activity saying:

…the comprehension of a second language was in a sense a problem – solving activity in which all pieces of information available from the text, from knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, and from prior knowledge of the topic needed to be brought in to correspondence in the construction of meaning’ (p. 145).

It was their experiment-based observations that made them say so. They came to know that individuals learn a language in non-classroom as well as
classroom settings and may develop their own implicit or explicit rules for how
the language functions, as has been described for inter-language. They refer to
second language learners as ‘opportunistic’ in this respect. Because individuals
may rely upon their own constructions of the rules governing how the second
language functions, or may operate initially by modeling words or phrases until
some of the underlying rules become apparent or are provided in a way that can
be retained. Besides in the development of a complex cognitive skill the context,
the task, and the outcome are specified by the investigator. With second
language acquisition, the learner must often analyze the language demands of
the setting, determine what kinds of language skills are required, and proceed
to device ways of acquiring the information and levels of skilled performance
that will enable satisfactory functioning in the second language at the level
required in that setting. Thus, O’Malley and Chamot conclude that second
language has parallels with problem solving in both classroom and non-
classroom settings. From the experience of this researcher the problem solving
method in second language instruction was found both interesting and useful for
the learners in the acquisition of the language. So this study suggests teachers
to approach the language task with a problem solving attitude.

Approaching an L2 learning task in a problem solving manner needs a good
procedural knowledge along with a declarative knowledge. To O’Malley and
Chamot, students understand language through accessing declarative knowledge, tapping into schemata relate to the language topic, and calling upon that information to assist in their comprehension and production. It is through procedural knowledge as represented in the production systems that the goal oriented nature of learning is illustrated. Goal directedness, adaptability, and contingent planning are evident in learning strategies and in language. That means there is some positive transfer in the procedural knowledge, which McLaughlin and Nayak call as ‘metaprocedural’, from learning languages in that procedures in language learning may become automatic, like free attention for more demanding aspects of the task that are required in either comprehension or production.

Here I would like teachers to train the learners by adopting Wenden’s (1983) self directed L2 learning strategies in class (see appendix). These strategies will definitely help the learners both at in-class settings and out-class settings because Wenden formulated these questions for self-directed learning. Brown and Palinscar (1982) use most of the characteristics that Wenden used to describe metalinguistic strategies. Hence, if trained properly, our learners will learn to learn on their own in a variety of social settings.

Since the term ‘self-instruction’ is mentioned in the above paragraph, teachers should be reminded that while making the learners autonomous,
teachers are actually leading the learners through the stages of ‘self-directed instruction’, as they slowly struggle toward their ultimate aim—autonomy.

Under materials, the different sources and selection are important. Dickinson (1987) identifies three sources of materials: authentic texts used directly by the learner; commercially available courses and other materials, used as they are or after adaptation; and materials that are written by the staff of the institution. She identified these materials for self instruction. But in our case it is better to consider Ellis and Sinclair (1989) who have developed actual instructional materials to be used with intermediate-level EFL and ESL students in the language classroom. Their objectives are to help students become more effective and more responsible language learners, to provide the language teacher with a model for learner training, and to show the teacher how to integrate learner training with language instruction. That means this approach calls for integrated training of strategies and language, even though the materials themselves address strategy instruction only. But in our context and from teacher’s point of view it is better to integrate strategy instruction with regular classroom activities, which has been recommended earlier in this chapter. Hence blending models of strategy instruction with the given course books and practice books are recommended. This was the principle adopted by ELTIF when we designed and developed activities for practicing at different
schools. Dickinson adapts Ellis and Sinclair model which identifies three cognitive strategies:

1. personal strategies, in which learners discover the different learning strategies that work for them;

2. risk taking, in which learners involve themselves actively in the language learning process; and

3. getting organized in which learners organize their time and their materials (p.208)

These strategies include a cluster of metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies of O’Malley and Chamot (see appendix)

A few suggestions for self-assessment and peer-assessment strategies, hope, will not be redundant. Mary James et al (2006) suggest a number of strategies to promote self-assessment and peer-assessment (pp 47-49), of which most of them can be adapted to our situation. Involving learners in marking will help them in reflecting on how far their work fulfills the expectations of the teacher. Marking in groups is another alternative where the focus should be on a recently completed piece of work and members of the group should help one another to assess the work against agreed criteria and suggest ways in which the work could be improved. Marking strategy can be helpful for group discussion through which learners see how closely their work measures up
against an ideal solution. Individual self-assessment sheets can be used to invite learners to reflect on the extent to which their work has achieved identified criteria. Through this strategy learners even become aware of what they need to do to improve. A popular strategy named “Traffic Lights” is very interesting to learners in general. When they self-assess, if they feel confident, they use a green indicator (a green marker or crayon) to mark the part of the task. If the learners are not quite sure of their understanding of the task, they use amber. If they are very uncertain, they use a red indicator. Through these markings, learners think about what they need to do to move from red/amber to green. Learners indicating green could be used to advise those who used amber while the teacher can work with those who used red. Instead of “Traffic Lights” three versions of smiley faces or post-it-notes can also be used. Videoing group presentations are another strategy that allows reflection and review of the learner’s knowledge and further feedback from other members of the class.

V.3. Clearing the misconceptions

Finally, regarding a few misconceptions about constructivism. The general criticism against the classroom practice in the constructivist paradigm is that there is no focus for learning, no clear goal in constructivist-based instruction. Constructivism maintains that learning is purposeful, intentional and collaborative
and that learners will actively strive to achieve a cognitive objective. However, constructivism does not prescribe a particular set of activities and thought processes in which the learner must engage in order to achieve intended learning. Rather, it emphasizes the design of learning environments that focus on knowledge construction, instead of reproduction (Duffy & Jonassen, 1993). Such environments, as Jonassen (1991) puts it, “are not unregulated, anarchic, sink-or-swim, open-discovery learning cesspools that many fear” (p. 136). In Chapter III, the principles of this new paradigm have been looked into.

Constructivist learning environments are carefully designed for a knowledge construction task. Designing such a constructivist learning environment is admittedly a difficult task because there is a certain degree of unpredictability of outcome and complexity in knowledge construction process. Hence language teachers’ insight about the concept should be real and clear.

Careful preparation is less important than in traditional instruction is the belief of the majority and this ignorance of the teacher community is responsible for the pitiable performance of our learners of English. They are never told that in a constructivist learning environment, clear educational goals are established, authentic tasks and real-world; case-based experiences and contexts (rather than pre-determined instructional sequences) are carefully designed and
sufficient verbal interaction between the teacher and students and among students must be ensured.

Another misconception is that there is an absence of structure for learning in a constructivist learning environment. Structure in a constructivist learning environment emerges in two ways. On the one hand, a curriculum or a lesson has an organizing topic, task or question (a written complaint to the sub-inspector of police about disturbance caused by ads using loudspeakers near your school) that sets the initial direction of the classroom conversation (Applebee, 1996). This overall focus provides direction for decisions for creating a seminal learning experience and key essential learning materials, as well as what will be peripheral to the principal topic or task. The judgment of which potentially related topics will be relevant to the learning of the broader instructional goal, however, will continue to evolve in response to the interests and knowledge of each group of students.

How can we assume that learning takes place as long as learners are involved in discussion and other forms of social interaction? This is yet another anxiety. In a constructivist learning environment, teachers must monitor discussions carefully to see if students get off track or develop misunderstandings about the topic, or if there is a need to intervene and redirect the discussion. It is imperative that the teacher carefully monitor group work and
whole-class discussion and intervene as necessary to keep students on track, to stimulate consideration of key issues and perspectives, and to lead students to correct their misunderstandings. This calls for highly sophisticated teaching, requiring careful teacher judgment, essential aspects of the constructivist teacher’s role.

Teachers’ role in the constructivist classroom is controversial in many of the teacher training programs these days. In a constructivist learning environment, the teacher is certainly no less important; but the role of the teacher changes so that the focus is on guiding rather than telling the learner, on learning than teaching. Indeed, an argument can be made that teachers’ roles are both more important and more difficult when teaching is based on constructivist views of learning. Guiding students to genuine understanding is a sophisticated process; no rules tell us when to intervene or how extensive the intervention should be. Teachers must make these decisions on their own, based on their knowledge of subject matter, learners, and learners’ past experiences. Moreover, the number of on-the-spot decisions that teachers must make in a constructivist learning environment requires skillful, reflective and spontaneous teachers who are capable of mentoring, coaching and facilitating students’ learning.

Hence my humble suggestion in this paper is to reorient the teacher educators and teacher trainers so that a massive and intensive training cum
educational programs should be immediately organized to educate the teachers about the theoretical and experimental support to the new pedagogy. This can be organized by the concerned educational agencies that were mentioned earlier. Otherwise, the objectives of education and particularly that of ESL can never be attained. The phrases like: teacher is only a facilitator/ instructor/ demonstrator/ project manager/ consultant/ resource provider/ questioner/ explicator/ observer/ model learner/ co-learner etc. must not be glorified as a substitute for the term ‘teacher’. Personally I feel a teacher is all encompassing and all these.

V. 4. Practices beyond classrooms: Self-access centers

Another important recommendation (to the management agencies) to promote learner autonomy is setting up self-access centers for learning English (along with other subjects) in the very Indian context. The concept of computer aided language learning (CALL) is no more exotic to us. ICT is at our door-step. So, self-access sounds like sans teachers, to (at least) a few educational writers. But our context is different from the Western contexts. The idea of self-access center that this researcher has in mind is the one suitable to our society.

Self-access is one of the terms encountered in self-instruction. The term "self-access" is often used as though it was a method or technique; it is, of course, neither. There are many definitions given to this term. Leslie Dickinson (1987)
says: Self-access means that the learner can do the following things, though she may not have to do them:

- Decide on what to do; this may include decisions on what objectives to work on, what particular skill area to work on and so on.
- Find the appropriate material to work on for the objectives decided on, or do further practice on something that was begun in class.
- Use the material; this includes such matters as knowing how to do particular activities, what to do first, and next, as well as how to assess you on the achievement of the objectives (p.106).

He also gives another definition (p.10) "Self-access refers to the organization of learning materials (and possibly equipment) to make them directly available to the learner". All of these have to be possible without help from a tutor; this does not mean that a tutor will never be available, but the whole point of a self-access resource centre is that learners can work on a variety of different tasks without direct supervision.

McCafferty (1982) and Harding-Esch (1982) view the self-access resource as the central facility in the provision made for learning. Learners select this approach to learning either because there are no alternatives (Harding-Esch) or because they positively choose self-instruction (McCafferty). In contrast, self-access learning is used by many other institutions as an addition to the normal
classroom provision of a course. Brown (1980: 17) says that in her institution the self-access provision caters for students working individually to answer three needs:

- Remedial
- Specific interest
- Practice in particular skills

McCafferty (ND:24) summarizes the functions of a self access centre as follows:

1. *Access to materials.* This means facilities for perusing, selecting, listening, viewing, sampling, getting copies of print or audio to takeaway.

2. *Access to activities.* The learner needs people to talk to, to listen to, to discuss, argue and exchange information with, to write to, to practice with, to learn from. The centre has to bring learners together; has to provide a meeting place; to create the basis and purpose for activities and to provide either monitoring or endorsement of activities.

3. *Access to helpers.* This means facilities for making appointments contracting by telephone, by note etc.

Susan Sheerin (1989) is of the opinion that self-access facility should enable learning to take place independently of teaching. She believes that students are able to choose and use self-access material on their own and the material gives them the ability to correct or assess their own performance. By using such a self-
access facility students are able to direct their own learning. Among these different perspectives, the ideal self-access facility is the one that McCafferty describes, and Susan Sheerin believes.

Higher secondary course is the deviation point both academically and professionally. Learning to learn becomes the most essential element for the individual at this point. Any attempt to cater more for the individual needs of students inevitably means a lot of hard work and effort on the part of teachers in terms of the provision of materials and in the general change of attitude and approach required. It is no easy option. On the contrary "It takes better teachers to focus on the learner", Strevens (1980).

In an ideal world a study centre would include a library section and a self-access section. A library section can house books, newspapers and magazines that may cater for study skills and reference skills, to gather information for projects, to read extensively for pleasure etc. Whereas, a self-access section should contain language materials which students can use on their own. The material must be easily accessible to each level and need. Also self-evaluation or self-checking should be made easier by availing keys or model answers. There should be separate sections for organizing materials for reading, speaking, listening, writing, grammar, vocabulary and social English. Equipments
like cassette recorders, language labs, games, computers with internet, video stations etc. must be available for use.

Selection of materials is very important in self-access centers. Materials for examination preparation (TOEFL, IELTS etc) and English for Special Purposes (business, engineering, science and technology, telecommunication, medicine, hotel and catering, travel and tourism, social purposes etc) should be organized. The location of the self-access centre is very important. Airy, spacious, light rooms should be selected. In Indian context, the room next to the staff room or office will be an ideal one. Adult supervision (direct or indirect) will only enhance the confidence of the learners. One or two staff can take turns to supervise what happens at the centre and to offer help if needed. Utilizing the organization of the centre, learners must be able to produce their own materials.

Staffing may sound ironic with the idea of self-access learning but in fact the provision of self-access facilities involves a lot of work, mostly by teachers.

There are three main areas where teachers’ help is needed:

- Preparing the materials and setting up the system
- Maintaining and adding to the system
- Supervision and counseling
With the formation of cluster groups in different subjects, teachers of English get a common platform where they can prepare materials for the self-access centre. Possibly the cluster centre can be selected for the purpose of setting up self-access. The local government bodies can fund the program, so that teachers can be remunerated. Instead of conducting workshops for many days, a fair rate of remuneration based on each product can be given. A few evening workshops with liquid refreshment on hand can be relatively painless way of providing an initial base of material and promoting staff cohesion and solidarity.

It is a good idea to keep some kind of statistical check on the use of materials. A separate folder can be maintained to ensure the frequency with which a particular item is used (or unused).

The role of teacher at the self-access centre should be entirely different. Here the teacher is a counselor motivating and guiding to the full and effective use of the self-access centre. Books and materials will disappear through carelessness, thoughtlessness and dishonesty unless centre is properly supervised. This new pedagogical role implies a new professional competence to teachers.

Student involvement in the maintenance and administration of their self-access centre is the most encouraging and motivating factor for independent learning. Such collaboration with the teachers or helpers provide better opportunities for getting to know the system well there by students become more
self-reliant and responsible and the very aim of setting up of a centre will be achieved. Besides, this kind of an involvement makes them better social beings and thereby knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the individual selves of the group. As Fromm (1965) argues: "Illusions about oneself can become crutches, useful to those who are not able to walk alone; but they increase a person's weakness. The individual's greatest strength is based on maximum of integration of his personality, and that means also on the maximum of transparence to himself. 'Know thyself' is one of the commands that aim at human strength and happiness." (p. 275)" the students when provided freedom, take part in decision making and know themselves.

Mary James et al (2006) attribute 'A culture of shared leadership' by providing the opportunity for the students to work together with teachers, peers and helpers (can be parents or anybody volunteering to be a counsel at the centre). Because learners themselves find out their strengths and weaknesses and select materials or methods at the centre (with only guidance from the helpers), they develop their own learning style free of any class-room instruction. The need for identifying what one wants to learn and how to learn will make the students responsible and they will actively participate in the further development of the self-access centre, resulting in an experience shared leadership.
At this juncture, it will be unfair, not to think of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). A self-access centre (SAC) is an ideal whetstone where the concept of ZPD and ‘scaffolding theory’ of Bruner can be sharpened to use in real life. The social and ideological relations within the classrooms of compartmentalized, timetable-bound schools are different from the experience in a larger world outside. SACs provide the students to be in a larger world outside because all sections of people visit SACs for different purposes. Getting involved in the various activities of the centre, students develop self-confidence and leadership quality. Moreover the ‘scaffolding’ is possible not only in language learning but in constructing knowledge about the real life challenges.

Given the self-access facilities, oriented the students to the system, helped to reach their correct level, teachers may be tempted to feel that all that can be done has been done. Left to sink or swim in this way, most students will sink. So, facilities should be arranged according to the changing needs of the users of the centre. Needs of the users should be identified by questionnaires, direct interviews, opinion gathering from experienced teachers.

Level assessment is yet another stage of preparation for an SAC. It is nothing but finding out the level of the system appropriate for the students to work at. Levels are not absolute. They vary from one situation to another, in their number and division. They can be divided into elementary, pre-intermediate,
intermediate, post-intermediate and advanced. Levels could be numbered: 1, 2, 3... or A, B, C. They may also differ from one school / area to another. There are various ways in which level can be determined (Sheerin pp.37-40):

1. Informal assessment: Students can be assessed informally by teachers on their performance in class for the first few days, and then advised on the level they should look for in self-access center.

2. Placement testing: Any given standard placement test (like Oxford Placement Tests) can be given at the various levels of self-access material over a period of time. The key and the guide to the test can be given to the students so that they themselves mark the test and thus notice their own problems. An objective test may be more reliable.

3. Self-assessment: This is one of the best ways to promote responsibility and independence of learning, which is in tune with the philosophy behind self-access learning. This make them know their own strengths and weaknesses. If not done honestly it may result in wrong judgment of the student. Self-assessment may be more useful for purposes of needs analysis at each level/stage.

4. Ongoing assessment: After a couple of months at the SAC, student should be given reassessment to see if their level has changed. There can also be self-assessment after each level so that the students
themselves take a decision whether to move to a higher level or not.

After needs analysis and level assessment, both for academic and social purposes, the next step at work is setting targets. Students themselves set targets so that their work has a purpose. These learning targets are to be realistic and set down clearly on paper. A format with date, name, level, and number of hours a week to be spent on private study, the time of the day one can best study, the things one need to improve etc can be included in the study plan format. A study time table can be prepared by each learner and a study contract (an agreement between the learner and the tutor or between the learner and himself) can be made, signed and witnessed so that the students feel responsible and free and motivated to achieve their aim. Besides, they must enjoy self-access learning that they can make progress without being ‘taught at’.

The different types of materials at the centre should be clearly advertised and new arrivals should be displayed in the most attractive way. Occasional introduction of bright signs and posters which change every couple of weeks highlighting some particular activity or area of the system and can be made it seem inviting. For higher secondary learners, notices, invitations, posters, organizing programs, making speeches, review of books, appreciation of poems and fiction, investigative projects etc are part of the syllabus. So taking active participation in such activities at the centre will be challenging, at the same time
useful for them. When someone who can give classes on speaking or reading or writing is available in the area, they can be invited to the centre and their services can be utilized. Socially useful projects like awareness programs and interactive sessions with traffic police, health inspectors, health workers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, journalists and other useful professionals can be arranged at the SAC. As far as possible such programs should be made in English. From such input students may consciously or unconsciously acquire new language at the same time as they are focusing on another task connected with their course.

Monitoring and evaluation of all the activities should be encouraged keeping records of work they have done. It is better to train the learner how to make standard record forms for each activity. This will help them to fill the proper record with specific information and later on to conduct discussions and self evaluation. For example, a book review record and a listening task sheet can be prepared like:
REVIEW SHEET

Title: ............................................................................................................................

Author: ......................................................................................................................

Publisher: .................................................................................................................

Category: (tick one)

Romance ................. Historical ................. Horror .................
Science fiction ................. Crime ................. Other (describe).................
Spy .................

The most important characters:.................................................................

Summary of the story: .........................................................................................

What I liked: ........................................................................................................

What I disliked: ................................................................................................

I do / do not recommend this book:
.........................................................................................................................
LISTENING TASK SHEET

The speakers

■ How many speakers are there?

■ How many women? How many men?

■ What are the names of the speakers?

■ Very roughly, how old are the speakers?

■ Do any of the words below apply to the speakers? If so, write down the word from the list, and the name of the speakers you think it applies to: happy, unhappy, calm, excited, angry, friendly, ill, healthy

Relationships between the speakers

■ Do you think any of the speakers are related?

■ If so, who is related to whom, and what is the relationship question?

■ Do the speakers know one another well?

■ Are the speakers’ friends, enemies, or neither of these?

■ Which speaker is the most important? Why?

■ Which speaker talks the most? Why?

Your reactions

■ Which of the speakers would make a reliable friend? Why?

■ Which of the speakers would you turn to in an emergency? Why?

■ Which of the speakers would you not like to meet? Why?

■ Which of the speakers would you go to if you needed advice on a personal matter? Why?
Another model of listening task sheet can be prepared with a number of questions added to the model given. The two sheets given above are examples for records to be maintained for two particular activities at the SAC, more details to each sheet can be added also. For example, level, age, activity type (listening, study guide, reading, writing) topic, aim, preparation, instructions etc. Thus a number of records for each activity can be prepared.

An SAC should have materials and facilities to develop all four skills of language learning. If possible the listening and speaking sections can be arranged by the entrance, whereas the reading and writing sections can be at the farthest corner where students need silence and privacy. The timing of the centre can be selected from morning seven to ten and then again in the evening from four to nine. It is flexible according to the need of the people who use it. Counselors at the SAC can be retired persons, volunteers, part-time teachers and unemployed youth who can be trained as counselors. It is always better to make a tie up with the local self government for financial and managerial assistance. This will make the centre a public property which is to be protected, maintained and developed. In Kerala, the corporation of Kozhikode is planning such a centre as a five-year-plan project.
V.5. To the field: ELTIF

Before summing up, it will be fruitful to suggest a few integrated-skills activities which the ELTIF (mentioned in Chapter IV) tried with learners from different parts of Kerala and a few places in and around Selam and Pondicherry. The theoretical rationale and the relevance of these activities in the present scenario will be helpful to adopt those activities in other places. The hypothesis of the research clearly states the five factors – learner autonomy, learning strategies, communication strategies, metacognitive knowledge and metalinguistic knowledge — and their implications at all levels of instruction such as curriculum planning, syllabus designing, material production, classroom instruction, teacher training and lastly, in testing and evaluation. The curriculum planning should accommodate education at different planes such as political, economical, sociological and psychological. In a democratic nation like ours, due concern must be given for each adolescent as he has to grow into a responsible citizen who contributes his share to form a better India. At a sociological plane, the curriculum planners have to think how the individual become a contributory factor to his own speech community and at the same time how he shares the necessary and desirable value system which are the properties of the target language community.
Syllabus is a blueprint rather than a concrete manifestation of abstract ideas and ideals, envisaged by the society and the State. Those aims and objectives pervade all through the curriculum should be and will be reflected while stating the procedures of the classroom instruction and thereby in the syllabus. That means the pedagogic constructs can be fully explored and exploited through the classroom transactional devices that each teacher devices for her own students, because each situation demands its own devices. This is the reality that each person related to this field should bear in mind. The activities designed and conducted by ELTIF members fit into this reality. Hence, a few words about the real employment of these devices:

Activities are generally devised for collaborative and cooperative learning, individualized learning, investigative and exploratory learning, self-initiated learning, self-reflexive learning, interactive learning and experiential learning. Writing the profile of the barber, the plumber, the postman, the local medical practitioner, the legal worker, the midwife, the social and political worker, the farmer, the mason, the policeman and the like will definitely give room to accommodate the pedagogic constructs which have been discussed. These activities can be made more enjoyable if it can be planned as: ‘a day with the postman’, ‘a day with the policeman’ etc. ‘Walk and talk’ is another activity that can be tried. A team of three to four students along with their teacher goes for a
walk, to a quiet place. On the way they talk about whatever they see and express their opinion or make enquiries or even talk to people whom they come across. But only in English, fragmentary or any form. Hand in hand goes writing reports, descriptions, copying, sketching, word meanings, linguistic forms, proverbs and idioms etc. Finally the team writes a report individually and as a group product. Another activity that has psychological effect is ‘reflexive activity’. In Chapter IV, the influence of reflection on learner autonomy has been discussed. Done earnestly, this can be treated as a therapy. Suppose, the individual learner is conscious of his losing temperament or any behavior he wants to change. A structured format (a questionnaire or fill-the-gaps texts or a list of likes and dislikes with chance to introspect etc.) including certain linguistic forms selected by the teacher or designed by the learner will make him think and write what he truly feels about his conduct and gradually he may change himself as a better person. Though these activities are only little drops of water into the mighty ocean of strategies and techniques, ELTIF members radiate their enthusiasm and confidence which in turn will reflect on every teacher/learner who comes in touch with these activities. Samples of a few activities may inspire in designing better ones. (see Appendix)
V. 6. Conclusion

To sum up, this study has explored the vast repertoire of learning theories and SLA (second language acquisition) theories to rediscover the suitable ones for the adolescent learners, who are denied an exposure-rich environment at home as well as at school, to become autonomous learners in ESL. Based on these theoretical underpinnings, this study has put forward a few suggestions (in terms of ideas and practices) which may be considered by teachers, curriculum planners, evaluators, teacher educators, teacher trainers, material producers, decision makers and educational agencies. By interpreting theoretical constructs, this study has attempted to clarify the misconceptions of teachers and teacher educators/trainers regarding the paradigm shift in the present pedagogy—cognitive constructive paradigm. It is in fact a search for clarifying the teacher-researcher’s own confusion and doubt (shared by many of her colleagues), as a teacher trainer and a material producer. The theoretical background and experimental studies related to the new pedagogic context are examined before arriving at the conclusions. Indeed, the conclusions arrived at are not final, neither absolute. Personal experience as a learner and teacher of ESL has its telling on agreeing or disagreeing with the line of argument of any particular author or theoretician. Nevertheless, the most authentic writers are selected for conceiving the right concepts that underlie the new pedagogy. The
interface between instruction and construction, the emergence of the autonomous learner, at the ESL context of our country has been thoroughly weighed out, and strategies to assist this emergence of the individuals to rise to the levels of learning without frontiers have been compiled and a few of them modified for selection and reference.

By innovations in practices this study has put forward a number of practical suggestions for actual practice in the Indian context. Worth mentioning are: types of learner-contracts, think-aloud protocols, setting up of self-access centers, ELTI F- designed activities and the comprehensive list of techniques and strategies for self-learning and self-assessment.

The ideas and practices suggested in this study cannot claim the researcher’s own findings. Valuable sources of authentic written work on theoretical constructs and experimental findings, domain experts’ honest reports and interviews, public opinions from parents and stakeholders, unstructured interviews, incidental talks with learners and experts in other fields, all contributed their share. At times the distinction between L1 theories and L2 theories caused great confusion in arriving at a conclusion. The debate, Krashen vs Maclaughlin, is still going on. But my conclusion is antithetical to Krashen’s as far as learning English in the Indian contexts, especially with government and aided school students are concerned. Whether English is learned consciously or
not, the researcher would rather agree with Stern (1983) -- “..., we regard the use of the term ‘language acquisition’ as of no theoretical significance and treat it as a purely stylistic alternative to ‘language learning’” (p.19, orig. emphasis). One last word to remind: any shift in routine costs teachers dearly. It costs them time to learn the new approach, time to plan differently, time to gather new materials, and time to convince the heads of institutions, and parents of the value of this new approach. Unless the government provides organized, thoughtful, and long term continuing professional development, reduce the teacher student ratio and number of students in one division (it is 60 in Kerala), and prepare materials suitable for the age level and the new concept, the new pedagogy will be known as a failed pedagogy. Hope this humble attempt will help to realize the objectives envisaged by NCF-2005. Finally, it is recommended that there should be further research and experimentation to validate the conclusions drawn in this study.