I.1. Introduction

The story of education begins in the mists of pre-recorded time. There it had nothing to do with books. It was for living. Children learned by experience, by practice and by imitation of adults, mainly at home. Young people learned through living. It was only with the invention of writing that a new kind of education arose first in Egypt and Babylonia, and later in Greece, which gave rise to schools, since the task of teaching was now too skilled to be carried out at home; so the first step was taken on the road which was to lead education farther and farther away from living, through the sterile marshes of scholasticism, until, after many centuries, it was to begin to circle back to its true purposes.

The story of education is not a simple one, it ebbs and flows. The first written record on the subject of education comes from the 5th century B.C. In the span of twenty five centuries which separates us from the ancient Greeks we have added little to their high conception of the purposes of education, and have hardly begun to translate their great ideas into practice.

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Note: The learner has been referred to as male and the teacher has been referred to as female throughout this dissertation, for the sake of convenience.
In the centuries that followed, the beacon flame was almost extinguished. At times it burned dangerously low, but in every age there appeared certain individuals, of faith and mission, who fanned it back in to life. Often it seemed as if the darkness must overwhelm it, but slowly the light grew, as each of the great reformers voiced again the same basic philosophy, adding something of his thought and experience in the process. So the ideas were passed on and preserved, often in the face of great opposition. Looking back over the succession of writers on education who have contributed to what are considered modern theory and practice, it is clear that one common theme runs through all their work, a theme from which all else develops, that is, the belief in an inner power of growth, that it is in the nature of man to turn towards the light. Development is the unfolding of the latent powers within man, and the educator can trust this power. In consequence of this belief-- that it is in man’s nature to grow and develop-- the child must have already within him the power to learn, and, unless he has been seriously mishandled, the desire also.

From this fundamental belief in ‘the inner light’ stems the rest of the theory and practice which we call ‘modern’: education is a drawing out rather than a putting in; the aim of education is the development of the whole man; attention must therefore be paid not only to the development of the intellect, but the
refinement of the feelings, the judgment and creative powers; its purpose is the formation of character, not the development of brain alone; knowledge is not enough; children learn through their own experience and discovery and they should be given things before books; their needs change as they grow and develop, and education should be adapted to their changing needs and interests; each child must be educated according to his individual abilities; their education must not be watered down adult diet; children should develop in company with one another, by living and working together; discipline is a matter of inner self control, not of order imposed from outside.

Growth is paradoxically a natural miracle. The task of the teacher then, is not to teach, in the usual sense, but to create the conditions under which the child can most satisfactorily learn for himself. To use the common simile of the garden, the teacher, like the gardener, believing in the power of the seeds to grow, prepares the soil, and does his best to ensure the right conditions for the growth of his plant; but he does not do the growing for it; it is the plant that grows. This is the exact analogy given to the concept of ‘autonomous learning’ mentioned in this research.
I.2. Nature of the study

This study is predominantly a qualitative one. Thirty long years of teaching experience in various classrooms under varying conditions throughout the State of Kerala and some parts of South India, has shaped this researcher's opinion regarding different factors contributing to learning ESL. Originally triggered as a series of amateur action research, this study has its firm roots in classroom experiences. The present study may be viewed as the result of a quest seeking the underlined reasons of success and failures in ESL classrooms during the long career as a teacher and for a short period as a teacher trainer. The quest related to the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of isolated classroom strategies led to some of the theoretical underpinnings related to learning in general, language learning in particular and specifically, learning a second language through formal instruction.

I.3. Context of the study

The context of the study has social as well as educational, and universal as well as specific needs behind it. In the present century, we have added little significance to these educational ideals --the ones mentioned above-- of promoting self-learning because of many external pressures of the society which demand top ranking in result- oriented examinations, without providing
encouragement and inspiration for learning. Most of the decisions are made by adults. The methodology is primarily pivoting on instruction rather than construction. The great educationalist of the past like Socrates to the living legend Chomsky, all have stressed this one point of bringing out the self into its full potential. Twenty five centuries ago, Plato laid out the ground plan of modern educational theory, “education must help the soul to know the reality which lives beyond the world as it is perceived by the physical senses and so to free itself from the limitations which result from ignorance of the truth”. Socrates in Meno says: “the truth about reality is always in our soul”. The ideal of education to the Greeks was the new man fully developed in all his powers, able to play his part in society.

Though Romans (Pliny, Quintilas, Seneca, Plutarck) derived most of their system of education from Greece, they were more practical, they narrowed education to those skills which would produce the good orator and the good citizen, rejecting the liberality and breadth of the Greek ideal. But the Roman methods were so perfect that they were adopted across the West and retained for centuries. Now, all are trying to bring back the broad conception of Greek education.
In the 21st century, nothing is as natural to us as learning and accomplishment. We hunger for it from our first breath. We enter school already skilled in it and eager for more. We pursue it, often with passion, for the rest of our lives. The need to survive, to become competent, to find intimacy, and to sustain self-esteem presses us forward on all life fronts. We search for a role and work of significance; for companionship, partner and family; for understanding each other and ourselves; for mastery over something and for fulfillment. Our species is irrepressibly curious and restless; we question everything and seek answers; we see a need or possibility and press forward to see if we can make it real. The drive to learn can be suppressed -- we can be deprived, beaten, and drugged-- but these are only frictions to the unstoppable learning momentum that has propelled our species from its prehistoric beginnings to its current civilized state.

Autonomous learning is designed to nurture this momentum, to broaden and deepen it, to help students channel and refine it. This design has been enhanced by a flood of recent discoveries about the brain. It has been found that the brain is a meaning-making machine that thrives in rich environments, seeks out patterns, builds on previous experiences, and functions best in non-threatening situations. Not only is the brain a dynamic, self-directing instrument of learning, it
is highly individualized as well. Recent studies on intelligence, learning style, and
talent or strengths affirm the great diversity in the ways people learn. Cognitive
psychology has also focussed on the importance of learning how to learn, that is,
on developing the strategies that can be applied to any learning task. Such
 portable skills prepare any learner for the ultimate challenge of lifelong learning.

This attention to learning for life reminds us-- as we address adolescent
students in the intermediate level- that we are dealing with a whole life-- not just
 intellect but emotions and performance as well. And it reminds us that
adolescence is a life between childhood and adulthood. Major changes in this
chaotic teenage period include development in personality, character, and talent
as well as in academics. The challenge of the transition is to leave childhood
behind and to stand on the threshold of adulthood with self- chosen purpose
and self-made confidence. This means maturing as a person, finding a social
place, becoming independent, and finding a focus for work. The key to such
readiness for students is self-efficacy, that feeling of certainty, forged in action,
that they can set a course and then make the journey.

The journey into adulthood—into the world—has seldom been more
challenging. Globalization is rapidly expanding the economic field of play.
Change is dramatically shifting the nature of life and work. Knowledge is
doubling every few years. Technology is transforming the way we live and the way we work. Work itself is transformed from the well-protected life-long job to the precarious short-term performance contract. Individuals will not be looked after from the cradle to the grave; increasingly, they must look after themselves. Students must know how to learn every day, how to adapt to rapidly shifting circumstances, and how to take independent initiative whenever in crisis. Learner autonomy prepares students for this new world in which the active learner survives best.

The historical background of the development of the very concept of learner autonomy is useful to understand the present day relevance of it better. The ideas of autonomy and self-direction became the subject of intense scrutiny, analysis and debate in the years following the Second World War. Since then these ideas have gone on to become familiar elements in educational research and practice. What was considered at one time as a cranky affront to educational common sense is now often seen as a thoughtful and efficient alternative to traditional teaching. There are numerous terms used in the literature of autonomy and the number has tended to increase as interest in the area has grown. The five most commonly encountered terms are: semi-autonomy, individualized instruction, self-instruction, self-directed learning, self-
-learning and self-access learning. Few social contingencies which contributed to the emergence and spread of these ideas are:

1. The wave of minority rights movements in Europe and the States that claimed special right to individual for education, learning and schooling.

2. Reaction against behaviorism was another reason. The sterile hubris of mechanical psychology which dared to extrapolate from dump animals to human beings was rejected by societies with their interest in the meaning and value of personal experience. Among the educationists who reacted against behaviorism were: Carl Rogers (1941-1972), Ivan Ellich (1970, 1973), Poulo Freire (1972), J Trim (1978), D Barnes (1976), and Henry Holec (1979). These people, all of them, emphasized the importance of the learner’s role and participation in the educational process. Linguists and philosophers of language like Austine (1962), Searle (1969), Apel (1976), Hymes (1972) Labov (1972), Trudghill (1975), Halliday (1973), and others shared a vision of language that was essentially pragmatic and social, language as a tool for ‘communication’, as the catch phrase had it, where individual with personal needs and intentions learned to
express themselves with its emphasis on communicative functions, individual needs, social norms, and autonomy. Within the field of psychology itself, there were two distinctive but not incompatible reactions against behaviorism; humanistic psychology and cognitive psychology (Ausubel (1968), Bruner et al. (1966), Donaldson (1978)). All emphasized learning as something learners do rather than something being done to them.

3. The interest in minority rights which was identified earlier as one of the main factors contributing to the emergence of autonomy as an educational ideal, had a direct influence on the development of adult education in Europe. Probably, the single most important manifestation of this influence was the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project, (CRAPEL), which was established in 1971 and which concentrated on the language needs of migrant workers. From its very inception, ‘autonomy’ was an important element in its work. Partly this was due to its logical entailment by the premises of the communicative approach, partly to the presence on the committee of experts of Yves Chalon. Chalon set in motion a series of projects implementing and investigating ‘autonomy’ and ‘self direction’ which
has continued to this day under Henry Holec, the present Director of
the CRAPEL.

4. Since the Second World War, the demand for foreign languages has
greatly increased as a result of political developments such as the
European Union and the United Nations, and the rise of multi-national
corporations and easier travel and tourism. The bourgeoning
internationalism, globalization and privatization favor language
learning of a non-scholastic type. These changes lead to the adoption
of more flexible learning programs for adult learning with varying
degrees of learner centeredness and self-direction, resulting in large
scale production of self-instructional materials suitable for
‘autonomous study’.

5. The commercialization of learning together with the movement of
consumer awareness has an influence on the way the language
learners' role is perceived. The learner is a consumer, making
informed choices in the market.

6. Developments in technology like the tape recorder, the fast copier, the
TV and Video recorder, the computer, the e-mail and internet, etc.
have made an undeniable contribution to the spread of ‘autonomy’ and ‘self access’; and need to learn English arose as something inevitable.

7. The increase in population, universalisation of education, compulsory education and people’s enthusiasm to know more and to take more degrees and get more information also contribute to the idea of distance education and to autonomous learning.

I.4. Situating autonomy in the ESL context

The term ‘learner autonomy’ was first coined in 1979 by Henry Holec, which has been used by different authors with slightly different reference of meanings. The main ambiguity surrounding the use of the term is whether it is a mode of study or a qualitative involvement of learners in their language study, as far as learner autonomy in second language is concerned. In the former sense ‘autonomy’ refers to various forms of independent or self-directed learning involving limited teacher intervention, generally outside a traditional classroom setting. In the latter, qualitative sense, autonomy relates to notions of awareness of learning goals, participation in decision making, and personal assumptions of responsibility. Over time, it is the second view of learner autonomy that has become the central object of concern, and it is in this sense that the term tends to be used in more recent writing. The reasons for this shift in
emphasis are relatively clear: learners may or may not wish to study in an independent manner, but their ability to make the decision and to implement it effectively is depended upon their strategic and attitudinal preparedness, in other words, on qualitative factors. It is in this perspective that Holec defines ‘autonomy’:

. . . an ability, a power or capacity to do something. . . and not a type of conduct, behavior ‘Autonomy’ is thus a term describing a potential capacity to act in given situation – in our case learning and not the actual behavior of an individual in that situation. (Holec, 1979)

Wenden (1991) views ‘autonomy’ in similar terms, describing the autonomous learner as one whom . . . has acquired the strategies and knowledge to take some (if not yet all) responsibility for her language learning and is willing and self-confident enough to do so (p.163)

Crabbe (1993) identifies three main reasons for fostering learner autonomy: ideological, psychological and economic (p. 443) and these reasons have already been examined.

Dickinson (1993) identifies five characteristics of autonomous learners:
1. They understand what is being taught, i.e. they have sufficient understanding of language learning, to understand the purpose of pedagogical choices.

2. They are able to formulate their own learning objectives.

3. They are able to select and make use of appropriate learning strategies.

4. They are able to monitor their use of these strategies.

5. They are able to self assess or monitor their own learning. (p.330-31)

On studying these characteristics one learns that this is quite an impressive array of learning skills, and not all students will spontaneously master them at the outset of their learning career. Consequently, concern with the development of learner autonomy has given rise to research into the means by which learners can be helped to acquire the insights into language learning, the relevant attitudinal traits and, crucially, the learning strategies they need in order to operate in an informed and self-directive manner. This process needs effective learner training and teacher training, authentic materials suitable for autonomous learning, a suitable curriculum design and a system of evaluation that encourages self-assessment and autonomous learning. These factors are dealt with in the coming chapters.
Once again, the term ‘autonomy’ is used with varying degrees of it by different people. The promotion of self direction encourages learners to make free choices, including the choice to follow a highly directed course. Self-instruction is where the learner undertakes parts, or all of the instructional tasks. Autonomy is where the learner takes responsibility for his learning and undertakes all the management tasks concerned with it. In making this distinction, we are departing from the way these terms are used by other educationalists. Knowles (1975:18), for example, uses the term ‘self-direction’ to mean the same as self-instruction as well as self-planned learning, self-education, self-teaching, self-study and autonomous learning. Holec (1980:5) makes the same distinction as that made here, but reverses the terms so that for him autonomy describes an attitude and self-direction, a mode of learning. There is no need to invest a lot of effort in attempting to disentangle these terms here. The important point is the distinction between an aptitude to the learning process which recognizes the learners’ responsibility in learning, and a mode of learning in which the learner takes over part, or all, of the instructional courses without the direct intervention of the teacher (does not mean no intervention at all), and finally reaching a stage where learners feel empowered to learn any difficult subject.
Facilitating learner autonomy involves teachers in a considerable amount of preparatory work, and involves both learners and teachers in learning new techniques of instruction and in adjusting their accustomed roles. Furthermore, as with much innovation in education there are many risks of things going wrong. Why then is autonomy suggested? The main reasons are discussed below.

(1) Special status and practical reasons: The special status of Kerala as the most literate state in our country demands more opportunities for higher education. The thickest in population and the smallest in geographical area, are sufficient reasons to make the quality of human resource in the State high when compared to the other states where vast areas of land is available for industrial/agricultural development. Prof. Myrdal (1967) proves to be right even now, when we think of the ‘problems of population quality’ in reference to the state of Kerala. The neo classical economic theory which widened the concept of capital investment to include, besides physical investment, ‘investment in man’ sometimes labeled ‘investment in human capability’ or ‘investment in human resources’, applies to this densely populated state that has characteristic ‘Asian lethargy’ and liberal communist influence (op. cited : p. 1540 – 51). The government has been investing a large chunk of its revenue on education and health. But, due to
reasons unpleasant the qualitative growth appears to be as obsolete as the abandoned and useless furniture in the attic of an old family homestead. So, now a new political economy is in the process of formulation equipping the people to think independently and rationally, and acting collectively for the progress of the society. Naturally this becomes one of social and political goals of education. With National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 insisting on universalization of education up to class XII, the need for learner training and teacher training for learner autonomy becomes the most crucial. Thus the intermediate level becomes the turning point, both in educational qualification and in academic and social perspective.

(2) For a new social order: Bertrand Russell (1932), in his famous work ‘Education and the Social Order’, begins with the chapter ‘The Individual Verses the Citizen’ and ends with ‘The Reconciliation of Individuality and Citizenship’. He dissects the motives behind much educational theory and practice and attacks the influence of chauvinism, snobbery and money. His constant search is to invent a system of education free from repression which made him write: “children should be free citizens of the universe”. Though his attempt was a disastrous failure during his time, now we are marching towards universal citizenship with the boundaries slowly fading
away in the minds of the modern man. A new social order has dawned, blinding the staunch believers of nationalism, patriotism and ethnocentrism. Asked if the individual or the citizen is more important, to Russell, “the education of the individual is to my mind a finer thing than the education of the citizen; but considered politically in needs of the time, the education of the citizen must, I fear, takes the first place” (p.20).

It goes without saying that studies in language pedagogy have their natural influence on second language teaching and learning. Issues in language pedagogy begin with Grammar Translation methods (GT) in the context of the 19th century pre-structural linguistics and classical fallacy that was in the move at the time. A slow change from prescriptive grammars and GT methods gave rise to a whole lot of ‘direct methods’ and mim-mem drill methods dominating the scene with linguistics reoriented to structural and descriptive studies, inductive and discovery grammars, and also behaviorism at its peak in psycholinguistics. Reactions to behaviorism and structural linguistics came in the form of Chomskiyan innate hypothesis bringing about new perspectives on language and language acquisition; Universal Grammar(UG) and Transformational Generative Grammar(TG) models of grammar; language in relation to mind changing the intellectual scene for all times to come, nothing less than ‘cognitive
revolution’ which happened in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. It takes a while before the second paradigm shift takes place in language pedagogy. The stage was set for the cognitive paradigm but it was only in the 70’s that we found significant research in learner oriented language pedagogy, a direct fall out of the ‘cognitive revolution’. Thus in the 80’s, 90’s, and in this century too, a number of studies on L1-L2 relationship SL-FL situation, L2 acquisition, error analysis, contrastive analysis, nature of transfer and interference etc are taking place with an effort to predict where pedagogical research is heading to. This is done by bringing in the concept of ‘evolution of a method’ (Stern, 1984), by dwelling upon the factors in response to which language pedagogy has evolved.

It is interesting to note the relation between pedagogical theories and linguistic theories. Halliday et al (1964:9), put this relationship as ‘if linguistics can be used to make better description of language as it can, then this theory has a contribution to make in any situation in which language is being taught’. Similarly, Spolsky (1966,1969) insists that this relationship is indirect in the sense that one only draws ‘insights’ and ‘implications’ from linguistic theory which are of tremendous use to language teachers. Apart from this, it also helps write descriptions of language which are a necessary prerequisite to any language teaching program. Pedagogical theory in turn, helps rewrite descriptive
grammars into specific pedagogical grammars for specific language teaching situations. Apart from linguistics, the pedagogical theory takes note of the developments in the other related areas like psychology, sociology, education etc. whereas a pedagogical grammar is a linguistic grammar rewritten in order to suit a specific language teaching situation keeping in mind the specific socio-psychological, socio-economic, political, educational and other factors pertaining to that specific language teaching situation. The experience of using such a pedagogical grammar helps a teacher review and revise, the pedagogical theory. A linguistic grammar is a source and basis for writing pedagogical grammars. Thus in the evolution of this relationship and in the evolution of a method there is a gradual distancing between linguistics and actual language teaching.

I.5. Learner and autonomy: Across approaches and methods

Paradigm shifts in language pedagogy can be dealt with in the context of four major trends in linguistic theory and their impact on pedagogical theory and practice. These developments in linguistic theory were accompanied and influenced by certain developments in the other related disciplines. So, as regards to the evolution of a method, the picture is completed only when the other factors are also taken into account. Some of these factors are: needs and expectations of the society from education in general and language teaching in
particular at any given point of time, language teachers’ responses and reactions to the prevailing practices, their innovations and successes/failures with the same, learners’ attitude and aptitude, motivation and individual learning ability; also the socio-economic conditions and budget provisions/constraints which can lead to developing hi-tech multimedia language labs or cost effective classroom pedagogic practices.

The first paradigm shift was from GT methods to direct methods. GT methods developed out of pre-structural linguistics. Pre-structural phase of linguistics and the 19th century historicism is a continuation of admiration for the classical literary works and for the language of the classics. This admiration led people to believe that the language of the classics was pure, standard, high and correct as opposed to the spoken languages that were considered impure, non-standard, low and incorrect. All linguistic studies therefore aimed at preserving the purity of the classical language. Such a trend, usually referred to as ‘classical fallacy’, continued up to the 17th and 18th century. In the mean time languages changed, diversified, evolved and developed into many new forms. To accommodate this highly fluid state of languages, new thoughts and theories evolved.

Language teaching during this period was grammar oriented and the formal educational set up was meant to impart the knowledge of the formal styles and
their written forms. As a result, no distinction was made between a linguistic grammar and a pedagogical grammar. Similarly, no distinction was made between teaching of mother tongue and teaching of other tongue.

Another interesting development was the influence of structural linguistics on Direct Method. Structural linguistics, which emerged in reaction to the pre-structural phase of the 19th century historicism, was motivated by a need to describe contemporary variety of language, independent of their historical lineage. Synchronic linguistics became independent and autonomous than diachronic linguistics, which was considered important but a separate branch of linguistics. It was a change from prescriptive grammars to descriptive grammars. Since descriptive function of grammar was primary, descriptive adequacy was the criterion by which grammar could be judged. Data-based empirical studies were conducted leaving no room for any subjectivity; speech was considered primary and all forms of language in its various styles and varieties were recognized.

This phase of structural linguistics coincides with the well known behavioristic theories of learning in the area of psychology and psycholinguistics. The combined impact of structuralism and behaviorism on language pedagogy was revolutionary. The result was a shift from normative grammars to decretive
pedagogical grammars, and from knowledge oriented language teaching to skill oriented language teaching. Psychological learning theories were added to linguistic theories and psycholinguistic theories were formed. Direct methods of various kinds, inductive methods, methods giving primacy to speech and oral skills, structural syllabi etc. are a few which dominated the pedagogic scene for a number of years, this is considered the first paradigm shift in language pedagogy.

Apart from this linguistic and academic/intellectual factor, the other element which greatly influenced and brought to effect this paradigm shift was the socio-political context of great turmoil and unrest, that of World Wars I and II. This was the time when the whole world was facing unprecedented situations and circumstances, political pressures were mounting which ultimately culminated in the World War II. The aim and purpose of learning another language underwent change. There was a whole class of politically involved people and army men trying to learn the language of other people, in their vernacular forms, for their own very specific roles and obligations. Therefore, knowledge of subtle variation between social classes and their corresponding low or high speech habits became important. So it is the changing needs and ever changing expectations of the society from language education that has also been effective in bringing
about major changes. Innovations in materials and methods of teaching a
second language also caused a paradigm shift in language pedagogy, which will
be discussed later.

Chomsky revolutionized the linguistic/theoretical scene by his innate theory of
language and by his rationalistic theory oriented Universal Grammar (UG) in the
place of data based, empirical descriptions of language specific structures. To
him, there are highly abstract structures, and highly specific principles of
organization which are characteristic of all human languages, which are intrinsic
rather than acquired, which play a central role in the perception and production
of sentences and which provide the basis for the creative aspect of language us

A grammar capturing these properties of language in general is a UG.
Chomsky’s language acquisition device is an innate property of human mind to
acquire UG from the data received from the environment. Competence-
performance (more details in Chapter 3) was the important distinction between
deep structure and surface structure proposed by Chomsky. He thought of the
cognitive processes that go on in human mind while learning a language. But
Chomsky himself was rather skeptical about the application of his TG model of
grammar to language pedagogy. According to Chomsky, ‘neither linguistic theory
nor learning theory has achieved a level of understanding that it could provide us
with a model for language teaching', (1966 b: 43). Nevertheless this mentalist and rationalistic theory of language and the TG grammar not only enhanced our understanding of the language and the process of language learning, but also provided an operational framework to write language-specific descriptions. The real impact of this cognitive revolution, i.e., Chomsky’s contribution of innate hypothesis to language pedagogy, could only be felt/realized in the 80’s and the later years. But in the 70’s, Hymes’ (1972) ‘communicative competence’ gained attention over Chomsky’s ‘grammatical competence’. Dell Hymes (1972) talks about ‘communicative competence’ to account for the communicative functions of language. He also talks about the socio-cultural features of language and the need for including language acquisition skills through the process of socialization. Much of later developments in the name of communicative approaches and communicative syllabi for language teaching can be attributed to this notion of ‘communicative competence’.

However, there was a gap between these two notions – communicative competence and grammatical competence. Nair (2009) quotes Widdowson (1989) to differentiate the two:

Before trying to make suggestions on how to bridge the gap between grammatical competence and communicative competence, let us try to
assess the nature of the gap first. H. G. Widdowson, in one of his much discussed papers (1989), clearly points out the standpoints taken by Chomsky and Hymes and states that they do not refer to the same things, and therefore, there is no question of differentiating one from the other. Chomsky, says Widdowson, “is not interested in language use. Indeed he is not interested in language at all. He is interested in grammar. So Chomsky’s notion of competence has nothing to do with the actualization of language behavior, communication or otherwise. (Widdowson, 1989:129 quoted in Nair, 2009:29)

If the 60’s witnessed the first paradigm shift, towards the end of the 20th century, we find a new context in which communicative-function-oriented language teaching is directed towards making language pedagogy more and more learner oriented in need and purpose. So this change can be viewed as the second paradigm shift. This context can be explained with the help of the following:

- Pedagogy as a science of language teaching has acquired a certain amount of autonomy;

- Distinction between pedagogical theory and practical language teaching;
• Distinction between pedagogical grammar and linguistic grammar;

• Distinction between L1/L2 learning/acquisition;

• Distinction between second language (SL) and foreign language (FL);

• Register specific forms and functions of language teaching in tune with learners’ need and purpose;

• The process of learning being examined closely through a detailed study of learners’ language and errors.

Thus, the second paradigm shift which is ‘cognition and learning oriented paradigm’, though originated in the 60’s, developed only in the 80’s and 90’s. Steven Pinker in his groundbreaking book, *The Language Instinct* (1994), strongly substantiated his argument that language is instinctual rather than acquired. The 21st century has thus entered into the deep realms of human mind, seeking secrets of the brain with the help of neurosciences, dreaming to mould a new individual with more freedom of choice in learning and in living. The individual need and purpose is given more importance in learning and the pedagogy naturally aims inculcating self-learning habits so that the ultimate aim—autonomy—is attained.
A cognitive constructivist approach, stemmed out of psycholinguistic theories, is the theoretical basis for this research. Learning is determined by what goes on in people’s heads. The focus is on how people construct meaning and make sense of the world through cognitive processes. Cognition means ‘the act or process of knowing’ (Stein, 1973). To Skinner (1989) the behaviorist, “cognitive processes are behavioral processes; they are things people do” (p.17). As we know Jean Piaget, the first person to develop a systematic cognitive theory, called the mental structures of knowledge as ‘schemes’. Schemes are mental representations (actions, images, or symbols used to interpret interactions with the environment) of the world and changes in these schemes mean changes in the child’s knowledge of the world. Piaget’s studies saw a parallelism with biological theories of Darwin. As in biological studies, ‘adaptation' was the basic process for change even in mental studies, believed Piaget. He applied the theory; adaptation is equal to assimilation and accommodation, two reciprocal and complimentary processes to adaptation, to the cognitive development of a child. He saw cognitive development occurring in four qualitatively different stages namely: Sensory motor stage (birth - 24 months), pre-operational stage (2-7 years), concrete operational stage (7-11 years) and formal operational stage (12 years and up). The last stage is of more importance to this study, though the
other stages also are covered in general, at times. Formalization of the theory of constructivism also is generally attributed to Jean Piaget, who articulated mechanisms by which knowledge is internalized by learners. He suggested that through processes of ‘accommodation’ and ‘assimilation’, individuals ‘construct’ new knowledge from their experiences. When individuals assimilate, they incorporate the new experience into an already existing framework without changing that framework. This may occur when individuals' experiences are aligned with their internal representations of the world, but may also occur as a failure to change a faulty understanding; for example, they may not notice events, may misunderstand input from others, or may decide that an event is a fluke and is therefore unimportant as information about the world. In contrast, when individuals' experiences contradict their internal representations, they may change their perceptions of the experiences to fit their internal representations. According to the theory, accommodation is the process of reframing one’s mental representation of the external world to fit new experiences. Accommodation can be understood as the mechanism by which failure leads to learning: when we act on the expectation that the world operates in one way and it violates our expectations, we often fail, but by accommodating this new experience and reframing our model of the way the world works, we learn from
the experience of failure, or others' failure. This leads to individual construction of knowledge. Hence, the paradigm shifts in designed instruction; from behaviorism to cognitivism and now to constructivism (Cooper, 1993).

Certainly one of the most influential views of learning during the last two decades of the 20th century is the perspective known as constructivism. Although by no means an entirely new conceptualization of learner and the process of learning (roots can be traced to John Dewey and progressive educators, to Piaget and Vygotsky and to Jerome Bruner and discovery learning), constructivist perspectives on learning have become increasingly influential in the past twenty years and can be said to represent a paradigm shift in the epistemology of knowledge and theory of learning. Fundamental conceptual changes in perceptions of teaching are clearly reflected in the guidelines of the National Curriculum Framework-2005. The increasingly prevalent literature-based approaches to reading, and process approaches to writing, both share constructivist roots (McCarthy, 1994); and perusal of current school textbooks reveals the influence of constructivist views of learning. Without question, there are widespread indicators that constructivist views of learning have captured the current zeitgeist in today’s educational arena.
The term constructivism most probably is derived from Piaget’s reference to his views as “constructivist” (Gruber & Voneche, 1977), as well as from Bruner’s description of discovery learning as “constructionist” (1966). Other terms are also used to refer to constructivist views of learning, including: generative learning (Wittrock, 1985); situated learning and authentic instruction (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989), postmodern curricula (Hlynka, 1991); and educational semiotic (Cunningham, 1992). Even though constructivists cannot be adequately represented by a single voice or an entirely universal point of view, there is a conception of learner and learning that is unmistakable in its central tenets and in its divergence from an objectivist tradition of learning theory based on either behaviorism (associationistic models of learning) or cognitivism (the cognitive science of information processing representations of learning).

Objectivism posits that knowledge of the world results from experiencing our world and representing it in an increasingly accurate way. Knowledge is believed to exist independently of the learner, and then to become internalized as it is transferred from its external reality to an internal reality of the learner that corresponds directly with outside phenomenon. Both behavioral and cognitive information-processing theories subscribe to this perspective from the objectivist tradition (Driscoll, 1994).
Constructivism proposes that learner conceptions of knowledge are derived from a meaning-making search in which learners engage in a process of constructing individual interpretations of their experiences. The constructions that result from the examination, questioning and analysis of tasks and experiences yields knowledge whose correspondence to external reality may have little verisimilitude. However, to the degree that most of our learning is filtered through a process of social negotiation or distributed cognition, generally shared meanings tend to be constructed. Even von Glaserfeld (1990) p. 87, widely recognized as a radical constructivist, has commented that, “[N]o individual can afford not to establish a relative fit with the consensual domain of the social environment”. Constructivism is an epistemological view of knowledge acquisition emphasizing knowledge construction rather than knowledge transmission and the recording of information conveyed by others. The role of the learner is conceived as one of building and transforming knowledge.

It is important to note that constructivism is not a particular pedagogy. In fact, constructivism is a theory describing how learning happens, regardless of whether learners are using their experiences to understand a lecture or following the instructions for building a model airplane. In both cases, the theory of constructivism suggests that learners construct knowledge out of their
experiences. However, constructivism is often associated with pedagogic approaches that promote active learning, or learning by doing. Thus this research perceives learning and teaching of ESL to take in the best suitable to ensure language use and at the same time making learners autonomous in learning ESL, weaning them from instruction and leading them to construction. (A detailed discussion on language learning theories is in Chapter III.)

The paradigm shift has its impact on all major contexts in education. For example, NCF2005 illustrates the major shifts as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher centric, stable designs</td>
<td>learner centric, flexible processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher directions and decisions</td>
<td>learner autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher guidance and monitoring</td>
<td>facilitates supports and encourages leaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive reception in learning</td>
<td>active participation in learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning within the four walls of the classroom</td>
<td>learning in the wider context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge as “given” and fixed</td>
<td>knowledge as it evolve created</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary focus</td>
<td>multidisciplinary, educational focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear exposure</td>
<td>multiple and divergent exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal, short, few</td>
<td>multifarious, continuous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As yet, a detailed introduction about the evolving of the concept of autonomy and the paradigm shift in educational goals has been examined.

I.6. Relevance of the study

The target group of this research is the intermediate learners of our country. With more than 40% attending English medium schools, the performance level of the senior secondary students (of state board schools) in English is rather pitiable. With the introduction of the new pedagogy, which claims to be of cognitive-constructivist paradigm, teachers of primary and high school classes fall under the mythical notion that learners construct knowledge on their own and no intervention is needed by the teachers. The much glorified term, ‘facilitator’, is taken as equal to that of a passive spectator to the chaotic mishaps in the English classrooms where phrases like, “I are going”, “she is died”, “I have going”, “she dancing”, etc. are used and get fossilized. Theories accepted in L1 contexts are gaining propaganda, and if anyone dares to give practice in writing patterns or spelling/structure drills, she will be penalized. “No repetition or drilling”, goes the strict warning of the DRGs, a group of LP/UP School teachers confided to this writer. Still, they (not all) practice what they consider will work for their learners, they said. This situation leads to the unpleasant fact that whatever
NCF 2005 envisages does not work at the grass route level. As for its guiding principles NCF 2005 evidently states:

A critical function of education for quality is to enable all learners to claim their rights as well as to contribute to society and the polity. We need to recognize that rights and choices in themselves cannot be exercised until central human capabilities are fulfilled. thus, in order to make it possible for marginalized learners, and especially girls, to claim their rights as well as play an active role in shaping collective life, education must empower them to overcome the disadvantages of unequal socialization and enable them to develop their capabilities of becoming autonomous and equal citizens. (p.6.original emphasize).

So, it is the duty of the state governments to educate teachers and society so that their misconceptions regarding the paradigm shift can be removed and the unbridled freedom given to students in the pretext of discussions and knowledge construction can be controlled. For this purpose, strong theoretical and rational evidence should be provided to teachers and the public. The resource persons concerned are in blissful ignorance when it comes to explaining the theories underlying the changes in pedagogy. David (1995)
emphasizes the need for having a theory of human language acquisition at the basis of the current pedagogic principles by quoting Lamendella(1969):

….before adequate methods of language pedagogy can be developed; text book writers and teachers will have to have access to a theory of human language acquisition and an understanding of the psychological representation of linguistic knowledge in the mind. Anything less puts the teacher in the position of merely presenting data to the student in a hit and miss fashion with no principled basis for deciding what it is that should be taught, the order of presentation, or how to give adequate explanations.(pp.255-256; quoted by David on p. 56).

So does Nair (1991: 5) in his Ph. D. thesis, as he claims his study as ‘a humble attempt in emphasizing the need for a theory of instruction in ESL writing with a reliable and valid philosophy to support it.’

Hence a substantial and reliable theoretical background is significant and viable than a set of ‘hit and miss’ proposals and this study has taken it upon itself to clarify the theoretical stance in relation to the language acquisition process through autonomous learning with all its social and political requirements demanded by the time.
The classroom situations at the senior secondary level are not uniform as far as physical and academic nature is concerned. Students from both English medium and local medium schools sit in one class and interact with the same course books and practice books. That itself puts the English teacher in difficulty when learning tasks are set. Those from English medium schools are at a higher level of fluency and proficiency compared to the rest. Mere hard work and pseudo productions will not help the learners in the new paradigm to score high grades. Lack of useful libraries and trained librarians, absence of reading rooms and furniture, over load of syllabus, low proficiency of teachers and material producers, defective planning and teacher education are the important areas to be addressed before setting the stage for the implementation of the new paradigm. As to the examination scores, in Kerala, many students lose their A+ grade only in English. There are many reasons for this poor performance of the students at the target level. The paradigm shift in methodology, especially the notion that there is no difference in the learning process of L1 and L2, has created confusion among teachers with long experience of teaching English as a second language. The fact that the very notion itself is controversial has not been accepted by the English curriculum designers of the state. Moreover, the lack of proficiency and fluency of the English teachers make them less confident
to introduce the new paradigm. Knowledge in study skills and techniques to train
the learners in study skills are lacking among the new generation teachers. Many
of them depend on commercially available guides and notes that encourage
learners to rote learning and pseudo-production. Others, in general, are
confused as to how to be facilitators promoting learners to be knowledge
constructors rather than knowledge banks. Only a very few know their role in the
new paradigm. Hence, a probe into the vast repertoire of theories related to this
conceptual shift and their relevance in this new millennium in the pedagogy of
ESL become a daunting feeling to any person concerned. Studies and
researches based on experiments and observations in similar situations were
examined before arriving at a conclusion, though admitting honestly that no
conclusion is absolute or final.

I.7. Assumptions

The basic assumption of autonomous learning is that from birth to death,
we live lives of learning: we first learn to function, then to live well and finally to
make a difference. Learning is a natural process outlined by both the history of
our species and our history as individuals. Our success depends on the range,
depth, and quality of the learning we achieve. Each of us exhibits and develops
these natural capacities in an individual way according to the talents we are
endowed with, the experiences we encounter, the strengths we discover, the interests that begin to direct and motivate us, and the patterns of learning that we develop. Programs we design for autonomous learning should be congruent with these lifelong, natural, and individual learning drives.

This study has concentrated on the psychology of the target group—the senior secondary learners of the State of Kerala—and their specific problems related to their learning English in the new paradigm. As a teacher, teacher-trainer, material producer, and an individual who is always curious to know how children learn to use language, this researcher got many chances to interact with teachers teaching at different levels. Some of them are ready to encompass the need to change for better, whereas some others refuse to be flexible, and yet another group stick to the old methodology so adamantly that no training program can change them. However, the crux of the problem is not in accepting any paradigm, but in providing an environment-rich classroom where teachers fail to provide sufficient input—that too in listening and speaking, as Nair (2008) rightly puts it:

…..most of the teachers at school level feel helpless either because of the awareness of their own inadequate competence or because of other
reasons such as insufficient support and response from learners, fear of
being the target of professional jealousy and lack of confidence (p.14).

Anyway, as this study does not exclusively focus on the environment-poor
classrooms, the main concern here is to provide schools with resources to help
their teachers develop principles and practices associated with learning how to
learn. Teachers who develop in this way can help pupils to become autonomous,
independent learners, which is at the heart of learning how to learn—a crucial
aspect of learning in the fast moving world of the twenty-first century.

Instructional programs in autonomous mode should be congruent with a life of
learning, the natural ways we learn, and the unique methods by which each of us
learns best. Therefore an attempt to address these problems is worth the trouble
is the first motive behind this study. In short, the assumption on which this
research revolves is that the present teaching/learning scenario (of ESL) of the
senior secondary schools in our country lack a strong and convincing theoretical
basis for making the learners autonomous and knowledge constructors.

I.8. Hypothesis

Based on the assumptions related to the present status of ESL instruction in
Kerala and generally in the country, this study hypothesizes that learning and
teaching of English as a second language at the intermediate level will be more
productive and cost-effective (in terms of time, energy and money) if learners and teachers are made aware of:

(1) the rich potentials of pedagogic constructs such as learner autonomy, learning strategies and communication strategies, and

(2) the implications of psycholinguistic factors such as metacognitive knowledge and metalinguistic knowledge at all levels of instruction, namely, curriculum planning, syllabus designing, material production, classroom instruction, teacher training, and testing and evaluation.

I.9. The study in a nutshell

If the introductory chapter has explored the background of the rise of the individual—autonomy—with special focus on adolescents and their learning contexts in our country, Chapter II addresses special psychological features and characteristic behavioral patterns of the adolescent group. The learning disorders are just mentioned as there is no scope for an elaborate study of the subject in the context of this study. The focus of discussion is on the self-esteem of the adolescents which can be effectively geared to self-learning and self-satisfaction through motivation. As autonomous learning fathoms the depth of the “self” in each adolescent learner, to be aware of those deep lying urge, to
dive into those realms and delve out those urges of proving one’s self, the concept of motivation becomes a satisfying challenge for teachers. If learners are to be viewed as knowledge constructors, teachers have to construct knowledge about them—the adolescents. Constructing knowledge about the adolescents demands the kind of approach one selects. Although cognitive approach is used to understand the adolescents, behavioral approaches are not neglected totally. Along with the problems and trends in adolescence, the effect of motivation is given importance, because motivation is the most crucial means to attain this end—autonomy in learning.

In Chapter III, the philosophical as well as the psychological perspectives converging towards the idea of autonomous learning (learning how to learn) and the central concept of autonomy—the cognitive-constructionist concept—are discussed. Though the main thread running through the different perspectives—humanistic, collaborative, cooperative, experiential etc.—is the same, it is more convincing and relieving to learn that all researches of the past and present converge to the same. In the case of psycholinguistic theories, it is never a total replacement, it is always a modification. Even the latest studies retain a portion of the oldest, thus adding more and more, discarding small bits, though. So, this chapter examines the theories of learning in general and learning language and
second language in particular. As part of implementation of these theories into autonomous learning, needs analysis is also discussed. Before we think of what to do we must know the purpose of doing it. Our purpose need not correspond with that of the students’. So, to know what the students want to know, what they do not know, and what they should know become crucial to any kind of teaching. Chapter 3 deals with this particular aspect of ‘needs’ and analyses the needs as ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’. Individual differences and learning styles are also included. Strategy use is another area where a lot of studies are conducted. In this chapter only a peripheral portion is mentioned. Think-aloud protocol ---one of the strategy elicitation methods -- is discussed. A few tools for need analysis are lifted from Allwright(1982) and Harding Esch(1982).

Preparing the ground is essential before any event, so, Chapter IV suggests some ways of preparing the learners and teachers for self-learning through different strategies in the present formal set up of schools, and also the role of self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher-assessment in autonomous learning. Learning styles and strategies from the most authentic studies, and their role in autonomous learning, are the topics included in this chapter. As we know that 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 teachers need to become more aware of both learning styles and learning strategies through appropriate teacher training and teacher education. To add to, in our experience, assessment is something that happens after teaching and learning. But in autonomous learning, the idea of assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning requiring a significant shift in our thinking. Chapter IV defines assessment in three different dimensions: teacher assessment, self-assessment and peer-assessment. Though the main thrust is on self-assessment, peer assessment is considered complementary to self-assessment (Sheerin: 1989). In autonomous learning, teacher assessment takes a different direction—‘to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there’. In other words, evaluation and assessment as the dead-end versus evaluation and assessment as a means to improve quality and interest in learning; as a product versus process through which learners know themselves.

As mentioned under the nature of the study, this researcher’s experience as a teacher and teacher trainer propelled her to explore some sort of a theoretical backing to the better results of learning. A brief report of her loose and unstructured classroom procedures, classroom experiments which were
undertaken as amateur action research programs has been included in this chapter. Apart from those experiences in the classroom, this researcher’s own reflections based on experiences, books and articles, interactions with colleagues and educators, associations with material producers and resource persons, participation in many seminars, and of course through a series of arguments in which unlearning, learning and relearning were taking place continuously, were all responsible to shape this study along the selected line.

In Chapter V, Conclusion, the suggestions based on the qualitative research, amateur action researches and the long term experience as a teacher, teacher trainer and material producer are included. Instead of simply listing the suggestions, the conclusions arrived at based on the entire theoretical evidence are pin pointed. At times, the basic concepts for the suggestions are revisited to prove how these concepts go hand in hand with the guiding principles of NCF 2005. The Role of teachers in realizing each suggestion takes more thrust than any other component of study. A few doubts regarding the viability of the constructive paradigm shared by teachers in general have been listed and addressed in chapter V. A few other practical strategies are also included hoping it would be useful to teachers and teacher trainers. In a nutshell, Chapter V clearly puts forward suggestions to explicate how the psycholinguistic factors
(metacognitive knowledge and metalinguistic knowledge) and pedagogic constructs (learner autonomy, learning strategies and communication strategies) get reflected in curriculum planning, syllabus designing, material production, teacher training and in testing and evaluation.

I.10. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the evolution of the concept of autonomy, the socio-political as well as economic contingencies for accepting the concept of learner autonomy in the case of ESL instruction in our country, the context of the study, the assumption on which this research proceeds, and the hypothesis formed. Before going to the psycholinguistic and cognitive constructive theories of learning how to learn, the target group, that is, the adolescents, and their characteristic behavior demands more attention. Hence the next chapter deals with about the so called ‘critical period’ – adolescence-- and their motivational beliefs to be geared towards behavioral, emotional and cognitive autonomy, with more attention on learner autonomy.