Chapter II

MATERIALS IN USE

To believe as truth without examination another man's thoughts whether a classroom lecturer or a textbook author, is a parody on education

— J A Battle and Robert L Shannon

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter has given the scope of this research and argued for a reconsideration of the materials for ELT at the tertiary level to make them more effective and purposeful. It has been hypothesized that materials for intensive study will serve their purpose better if they are socially and culturally appropriate to the contemporary Indian context. In the light of this stand taken by the researcher, it is necessary to examine the suitability of the materials which are usually prescribed for intensive reading. This chapter first considers the role of the textbook in its normal use in teaching and learning English and then discusses the present state of affairs in the Indian context. The term 'textbook' is used in the broad sense of an organized and prepackaged set of teaching/learning materials. The materials may be found in just one book or a set of several books.

2.1 CENTRALITY OF THE TEXT

The prescribed books are the main centre of the student's attention of studies both in the school/college and at home. The presence of textbooks in the teaching of English as a second/foreign language is of vital importance. What is a textbook? A textbook is a book intended for the students of a particular age.
group and it covers items given in the syllabus. Such a book forms the basis of teaching-learning in the class. A textbook is the central string around which the whole teaching-learning process is woven. It also fixes a target for the teacher and the taught. We generally think of textbooks as providers of input into classroom lessons in the form of texts, activities, explanations, and so on.

Since the textbook is the only frame of reference, education has become textbook-centred even if some faint noises are sometimes heard about the ideal of student-centredness. Whether in the handful of more progressive institutions across the country where some teaching is done in an imaginative way through activities and experimental learning methods, (e.g., the Loyola Project), or in the numerous run-of-the-mill schools and colleges, the teacher still holds on to the textbook as his Bible, for it is the textbook which defines in its pages the scope and content of the syllabus, it is the textbook which is the 'authority' to be quoted in case of a question about what was taught, it is the textbook that the students will quote when they fail to understand or they need legitimacy, it is the textbook which furnishes readymade questions to 'test' the outcome of the learning process. That any tool, and especially if it is almost the only tool, should be effective goes without saying.

Teachers, learners and paper-setters are now so used to the idea of 'prescribed texts' that they will not know what to do in class if textbooks are removed all of a sudden. So what is needed at this stage is a different kind of textbook that fully exploits the resourcefulness of teachers and learners by motivating the learner to participate in the learning process. Within the constraints prevailing in India, we can select materials more thoughtfully to achieve this end.

In preparing or appraising textual materials, we need to be clear about what we want to teach. Often, this is prescribed by external bodies, along with
some expectations about the organization of the content and the way it will be taught. Any textual material used needs to cover the content competently to the appropriate level and be organized properly. According to Newton (1990: 17), two major factors affect communication through text: what the reader brings to the text, and what the text brings to the reader. As far as the text is concerned, it is not just what is said that is important. How it is said, how it is used, and what the text invites the reader to do about it are powerful determinants of comprehension and learning. The student then has two teachers—the live one and the text. Allwright (1981) characterizes the lesson as an interaction between the three elements of teacher, learners, and materials, and this interaction produces opportunities to learn. While choosing the materials, the teachers should have some awareness of the aims and the teaching techniques appropriate to the taught. Otherwise, there is the danger of using materials that reflect unsuitable aims, content, and teaching strategies.

Block (1991 211) observes that, despite the bounteous harvest of ELT materials, the published materials do not always provide the types of texts and activities that a teacher is seeking for a given class. While much has been published on second language acquisition, syllabus design, skills development, and a multitude of topics relevant to language teaching, there have been fewer books on materials development. Harmer (1983) and Bowen et al. (1985) have done some substantial work in this neglected area. Some books on curriculum and syllabus design—general books like that of Dubin and Olshtain (1986) or more specific ones like that of Hutchinson and Waters (1987)—devote at least one unit or chapter to the subject.

While such small attention might suggest that materials design is generally considered, at least implicitly, to be something of a subset of course design, other books suggest the opposite view. White (1988) and Nunan (1988) devote little
space to materials and Johnson (1989) has only one chapter on the subject out of 17 chapters. Authors who have dealt with materials, for instance, Williams (1983), Cunningworth (1984), Sheldon (1987, 1988), have tended to focus on their selection and evaluation. But while some evaluation checklists might be used rapidly and efficiently, others like that of Breen and Candlin (1987) are extremely complex. Whether they are simple or complex, such checklists are invariably intended or used only for the evaluation of published materials.

2.2 MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

The role of materials as a support to teaching is obvious. Teaching is a translation of syllabus intentions into classroom events, which consists of two stages. The first stage is materials development, which involves the selection of appropriate language samples and cognitive content, the designing and construction of useful activities or exercises for learners to attempt, and the sequencing or cyclic arrangement of such activities so as to fit them into lesson units, and facilitate cumulative learning. The second stage, namely classroom teaching, includes the planning and carrying out of actual classroom procedures which enable learners to benefit from those materials (Prabhu 1990).

The stage of materials development manifests itself in the prescribed text which is a prerequisite to the realization of the stated objectives. Curriculum development theory grapples with such questions as what should be taught, how it should be taught, and how what is taught should be evaluated. Taba (1962) lists seven curriculum planning elements:

1. the diagnosis of the learner's needs
2. formulation of objectives
3. selection of content
4. organization of content
5. selection of learning experiences
6. organization of learning experiences

7 determination of what to evaluate and the means of doing it.

Taba recognizes that an assessment of learner's needs is the first step in developing a curriculum, before formulating the objectives. The needs of the learner, both as an individual and as a member of the society, serve as criteria for setting objectives. Johnson (1977) distinguishes between objectives and goals. Goals are general statements describing the qualities which the educated or trained individual is expected to develop and possess as a result of instruction. Goals are long-term in nature. In the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) programme, one general goal is to master the basic skills of communication and reasoning essential to living a full and productive life.

Objectives, on the other hand, are statements describing the more immediate qualities that a learner should develop or possess as a result of instruction (Finder 1976). They are short-term in nature, and when invested with the intention that they be learned, become curriculum items (Johnson 1967). Some examples of short-term objectives are to identify the major or minor points in a given reading passage, to be able to use the correct tense of the English verb in writing a narrative, and to be able to write a coherent report.

To achieve the set of goals, the objectives are to be taken care of first. Since they are the curriculum items with which the teacher in the ESL classroom is immediately concerned, curriculum content is chosen only after objectives have been set. Taba makes a distinction between objectives and content, because, for her, content is the actualization of objectives in a curriculum. One does not teach objectives, but rather content that is justified by objectives. So, curriculum items are justified by curriculum objectives. At the same time, curriculum items should be teachable, that is, interesting and relevant, in the sense that classroom interaction will result in the learning outcome being realized in the learner. If
curriculum evaluation indicates that a particular curriculum item cannot be done, then the planner must decide whether to keep or to modify the curriculum item. These curriculum items are organized into lessons and exercises, and labelled 'the prescribed text'.

The textbook writers are expected to take the initial step in choosing or developing the material; diagnosing the needs of the target learners. Pierson and Fredericks (1981 33) say that there are two sources from which needs-data can be obtained: one is the learner himself and the other is the society that makes demands on the learner. Society is defined here as the university that is making demands on the learners. In the context of teaching English as a second language in India, little has been done towards the first approach. Generally, it is the community at the university (the Board of Studies) that makes the requisite academic demands and accordingly sets the objectives and prescribes the textbooks. Often, the textbook offers a mismatch between the learners' interest and the content chosen. It affects the instructional episodes what Taba calls learning experiences by which curriculum content is translated into classroom activities. As a result, the objectives set out in the curriculum are unlikely to be realized.

Johnson (1989 3) makes a distinction between means and ends. Ends specification relates to objectives, and means specification to methods. When a teaching-learning programme is implemented, programme resources play a very important role linking the teacher with the student. Only when resources are interesting and relevant means/ends specifications have some meaning and can be realized satisfactorily.

Teaching and learning materials provide the corpus of the curriculum. They normally exist as physical entities and are open to analysis, evaluation, and revision in ways that teaching and learning acts are not, and they have a direct
influence upon what happens in classrooms, while policy documents, syllabuses, and teacher-training courses do not (Johnson 1989: 7). If the ends/means specifications constrain the materials writer too rigidly, creativity tends to be stifled. If the ends/means specifications are too loose, then there is the possibility of a mismatch, with the materials writer introducing an alternative curriculum which cannot easily be detected. Johnson feels that, ideally, the materials writer should be closely associated in the process of ends/means specification (as a member of the syllabus committee, for example), but should have considerable freedom in actual implementation. In reality, this is rarely practised.

Government curriculum units may be too rigidly constrained, while commercial writers too little. The latter are usually excluded from syllabus committees on principle to avoid charges of favouring particular publishers and may have little understanding of the particular educational context they are writing for, particularly if they have an international rather than a specific market in mind. Commercially produced materials are sometimes piloted in schools and colleges before they are formally released, at least by reputable publishers, and materials are often significantly modified as a result. In India, even this appears doubtful. However, this exercise is generally aimed at adjusting the product to the potential market rather than at evaluating the product itself.

Financial and practical considerations ensure that the publisher must accommodate to the market and not the market to the publisher. Many excellent language teaching programmes have failed, their promoters falling into the hands of receivers or multinationals, because the materials were too alien, too complex, or too expensive for local taste (Johnson 1989: 8). To date, most foreign and local publishers suggest only books that give a good or near enough 'fit' to the existing teaching traditions, but "the spectre of wholesale 'dumping' of superficially attractive books unsuitable to the local conditions needs to be borne in mind."
(Rixon 1992: 83). Teachers' guides offer advice at the level of 'procedure', stating often in considerable detail what to do with the materials, but not why the materials exist in the form that they do.

2.2.1 ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES IN MATERIALS DESIGN

Low (1989, 136-154) states that there can be a set of organizing principles in materials design which seem most readily generalizable across educational contexts. He points out that other decisions, such as what is relevant, interesting and appropriate, can only be considered within the context of a particular teaching and learning situation. So the role of the materials writer is of critical importance.

As Krishnaswamy and Sriraman (1994 30-31) put it, keeping the Indian context in mind, “alternative materials that will be in tune with the new perceptions, changing realities, and post-colonial objectives will have to be evolved.” While teachers of the conventional textbooks say that teaching has become a frustrating experience, they have done precious little to change the system because the existing power structure in the class and the 'colonialism in the classroom' suits them. The conventional prose and poetry anthologies must necessarily 'elevate' the teacher to the position of a 'performer' and reduce the learner to the level of a 'receiver'.

The structure and design of the conventional textbook itself is the reason why the textbook has failed in its declared objective of teaching (Krishnaswamy and Sriraman 1990 164). Such a book consists of about a dozen essays, usually by the acknowledged masters of prose, with the length of each essay ranging between six and ten pages. The very nature and quantum of the pieces seem to preclude any direct encounter between the learner and the materials for learning. At worst, the student is driven to a sense of apathy, unreality and irrelevance; at best, he learns to be a passive listener.
The lessons and poems do not usually demand an emotional involvement from the students and besides other problems, the students are at a loss to come to terms with the cultural and social descriptions that are alien to them and also with the conceptual aspects that are above the level of their comprehension. The materials do not usually encourage them to react to what they read, and learn the skills required for proficiency in English.

To most of these students, therefore, their command of English as a language is not sufficient to enable them either to discuss great works of literature or to understand and appreciate them fully. In other words, the superstructure is more weighty than the foundations could support, and the only sensible solution is to repair and strengthen the foundation; that is, to give the students training in the practical use of English (Halliday et al. 1964: 184). Since the second-language classroom at present depends heavily upon texts, the texts themselves should invite the students' engagement through accessibility, variety geared to learners' interests, and grading according to their linguistic, conceptual and cultural level with reference to the immediate needs of the society in which the learners live.

In instructional materials, especially when the topic is complex, it is a good idea to orient the reader, to indicate the purpose and the structure of the exposition, and to point to its important conclusions. But practically this will consume a lot of time in the classroom when the teacher has hardly two hours a week at the tertiary level to teach 10-15 lessons of considerable length within a stipulated time-frame, sometimes unpredictably cut short by various problems. Despite the preliminaries used by the teacher to prepare the ground (that is, informal introduction), the subject-matter is still complex and incomprehensible owing to the cultural complexity, unfamiliar and rather uninteresting nature of the textual material. Textual material, as many argue, is expected to teach facts,
procedures, concepts, theories, and principles. But the language teaching material has a primary function of providing a minimum language proficiency through various skills, along with teaching those stated items.

At the tertiary level in India, students generally "bring with them four to six years of English and even then find it difficult to use it in real-life situations" (Verma 1995). Most pupils have study materials thrust upon them. We often need to attract, allure and absorb the reader and encourage a willingness to use the aids offered. The principle of motivation suggests ways of catching attention, engaging interest, and developing a willingness in the reader to study the textual material in the way intended (Klausmeier and Ripple 1971).

In the use of any material, catching the attention of the reader is the first step, and to maintain attention, the material should fulfil some of his needs. These might be a psychological need, like curiosity, or the need to feel competent, or a more functional need, like requiring information for another task, or a combination of such needs. Providing human interest is a useful way of maintaining attention. With some material, its human interest can be enhanced by encouraging the students to read it as though it applied to themselves. This self-referencing technique has been found to enhance recall of content (Reeder et al 1987).

Most students need to feel competent and able to take control of the elements of their environment. They need to experience a degree of success in what they do. Without some success, interest is extinguished, attention wanes and motivation deteriorates (Klausmeier and Ripple 1971). A primary success is that the student develops a liking for the material supplied. As far as a learning text is concerned, the topic should be pitched at the right level, it should be readable, and the reader should generally be successful in constructing meaning (Newton 1990: 128-29).
While mild anxiety can prepare the learner for activity and may increase attention and learning, acute anxiety is disabling, leads to low performance and erratic conduct (Covington and Omelich 1987). Some students bring high anxiety with them to the task and their performance often suffers. To compound the effect of stress and anxiety, there is also the effect of mood. A sense of elation seems to sharpen the ability to evaluate information and leads to better recall (Hettena and Ballif 1981) Hence, we should at least avoid materials which would reinforce states of the mind that are nonconducive to learning.

Arnold (1977, 16) once said “What we have most to wish for is the guidance of a good book.” But what is a good book? In the words of Newton (1990, 142), the “short answer might be ‘one which covers what we want the way we want it.’” However, this conceals a lot of difficult decisions and tells us nothing about how to take them. A teacher at the tertiary level often has no choice of textual materials. Therefore, he should at least know the strengths and weaknesses of the materials thrust on him. With a knowledge of what it does well, what it does badly, and what it does not do at all, a teacher will be able to take a few decisions about the use of those materials. Even if he finds the best materials, he may want to modify or supplement them, or make his own selection from them in terms of the students’ needs. However, when suitable textual material is not available, he may have to produce his own. So, a fairly clear picture of aims and needs increases the chance that our homespun materials would be effective (Newton 1990, 142).

The teacher or the professional writer must have perhaps gone for certain kinds of material in their own student days, and this appeal may predispose them to continue to select materials of the same flavour, although they may no longer be well suited to the needs of the present situation (Ibe-Bassey 1988: 17-27). Thus, even books from the teacher’s school days can influence the
choice of books now and in this sense, there is a danger of our past experience unconsciously closing our minds to other alternatives.

Many senior college teachers teaching English have been fed on 'classics' and the 'best' of English literature and also a bit of American literature. For instance, Steuart King's anthology, *New Vistas in English Prose*, prescribed in the early 70s in Madras University has now been prescribed in Pondicherry University. The teachers who were educated in the 1960s and 70s, and who are now in a position to take decisions by virtue of their seniority must have liked the book then and even now.

It is also desirable to proceed from the known to the unknown, or from the familiar to the unfamiliar topics in materials selection (Sachdeva 1991: 270) For instance, in science, we can begin with the familiar materials of everyday life, such as water, common salt, vinegar, and baking powder, and proceed to the less familiar solvents, salts, acids, and bases. Similarly, a topic on the solar system might begin with the Earth as a planet. In teaching history, it is possible to start with present-day familiar events and explore their causes. This is an example of a learner-related principle (Posner and Strike 1976). Similarly, while teaching compulsory second language, it is desirable to use content that is culturally familiar, socially relevant, and conceptually accessible, so that the student could gain a minimum fluency for communication in life and an interest for acquiring more and more knowledge that he is especially interested in. In other words, information should be presented in a way that makes learning easier.

So a review of the prose materials for second language learning that have been in use in India is undertaken. Most of the materials may be re-used in subsequent years. Unlike the human teacher, the text cannot update itself. Although successive groups of students will share many characteristics, they will also be different. As time passes, the match between the students' needs and
the materials may decline, at first subtly but, in the long term, very obviously. In particular, materials dealing with 'contemporary' issues need updating. Values and ways of addressing students of different periods change. Russell's words have some relevance here: "It is because modern education is so seldom inspired by a great hope that it so seldom achieves a great result. The wish to preserve the past rather than the hope of creating the future dominates the mind of those who control the teaching of the young" (cited in Battle and Shannon 1968. 5)

What is important at this stage is that the teacher should know what he wants to teach, what kind of learning the students are aiming for, and whether the requirements of the students are taken care of. The next step is to find or prepare material which will fit the bill. If new material is to play a key role in a course, it will be useful to have it appraised by students. Since courses are usually planned and materials bought sometime ahead, it may not be possible to test commercial texts on those who will use them but there is often an equivalent group who could provide useful feedback. So, care should be taken to have the material tested with students similar to those who will eventually use it. Such an involvement of students in the selection process can be used to raise their awareness of the provision for learning and comprehension that may be made in textual material and how they could benefit from it (Muther and Conrad 1988. 70-80).

2.3 MATERIALS EVALUATION

There seem to be boundaries between educational evaluation and educational research, but at times they overlap. Evaluation has much in common with research and on the whole, as Norris (1993. 100) states, "... we are not speaking of separate communities of researchers and evaluators." The relationship between the two is sometimes conceived as a continuum. For example, in terms of methodology, evaluation has been viewed as an extension of research, "sharing its roots, using its methods and skills" (Nisbet 1980, cited in
Rea-Dickins 1994: 71). However, there are some (e.g., Glass and Worthen 1971, cited in Norris 1993) who identify a number of critical features that distinguish between evaluation and research. A commonly held distinction between evaluation and research is that the former feeds into decision-making and has immediate utility for policy and practice whereas the latter does not. But, as Rea-Dickins (1994: 71) points out, the picture is not as straightforward as this.

For obvious reasons, the literature on materials evaluation has tended to concentrate on the analysis of the 'product', that is, the textbook itself. However, Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992) distinguish between the theoretical (that is, construct) and the empirical value of materials and, after Breen (1989), distinguish three phases in the materials evaluation process: workplan or construct (referring to the theoretical validity of materials), materials in use, and outcomes in terms of student performance. These would appear by and large to correspond to Sheldon's (1988) view.

An early article by Moore (1981) is devoted to the construct of materials development and discusses different criteria with specific reference to materials design and evaluation process in an English for Academic Purpose (EAP) setting. Kroes and Walker (1988), analyzing the communicative needs of pupils of Standard 3, also provide an example of a theoretical evaluation of textbooks already in use in schools.

Evaluation of materials 'in use' will generate information about the ways in which learners and teachers actually use and respond to those materials, a dimension referred to by Breen and Candlin (1987) and West (1987). McDonough and Shaw (1993: 79) explicitly mention that the success of materials can only be judged "after classroom implementation and feedback", the point made by Brumfit in his Preface to Sheldon (1987). The third stage is that of 'outcomes', which reflects the relative achievement of learners, typically evaluated through test results.
A few others mention different purposes for evaluating materials. Apart from the obvious one of selecting the most appropriate textbook, McDonough and Shaw (1993) extend this to the adaptation of materials, and Hutchinson (1987) draws attention to the role of materials evaluation in developing teachers' awareness of their own teaching and learning situation.

While, for example, Cunningworth (1984) provides the most comprehensive commercially available checklist, much of his work fails to take into account an evaluation of materials in use, that is, the concurrent validity of materials. Given the pivotal role of materials in the classroom as detailed by Allwright (1981), this is surprising, in view of the heavy investments made in money or in time. It seems equally important to set aside time for evaluative activities designed to establish the concurrent validity of the materials in use. In the words of Kroes and Walker (1988 2), a "solely theoretical consideration, however, has the potential disadvantage that it may not be able accurately to predict the extent to which the potential of a course will be realized in practice."

If evaluation in ELT is to be effective, as Rea-Dickins observes (1994 84), there has to be "a stronger integration of evaluation within practice, as part of an individual's professionalism and an increase in collaborative activity where teachers (and other relevant practitioners) are actively engaged in the monitoring process." An example of such an integration is the Central Board for Secondary Education ELT Project (India) where teachers are involved in monitoring the implementation of their new curriculum. This should involve the use of formative and developmental data for wider accountability and change of policy, leading to a "sustainable development" in ELT.

Although the "practice of evaluation is fast becoming an indispensable activity within the context of new and old programmes alike" (Mackay 1994. 142), there are still bridges to be built between educational evaluation and evaluation in
LT. In any evaluation process, there must be a discussion of the relationships between evaluation, policy, and practice, as well as the important political, ethical, and cross-cultural issues that are raised. There is also a need for a better understanding of the appropriateness of methods to suit the evaluation purpose(s) and context, which implies diversity of approaches and procedures. We should, therefore, look closely at these rich experiences already gained by the researchers in this field and build upon them. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.

Any textual material, whether it is used for independent learning or with teacher support, should be understood. Authors of textbooks have an enormous responsibility towards shaping the spirit of their readers, but unfortunately our language textbooks have not been able to relate the syllabus with the happenings a student can identify with.

The General English curriculum at the undergraduate level has undergone very few changes for several decades in India except by way of changing a few texts (essays and poems). The ad hoc character of these selections and their unrelatedness to the general curricular framework do not seem to have caused much concern among the teachers. Even these changes in texts have only been cosmetic rather than substantial, suggesting thereby that the impulse to change has come mainly from external pressures, not from a dynamics of change in the discipline itself, nor from a clearer perception of the curricular needs (Ramani 1992, 101).

Since our textbook writers, rather editors, depend largely on Western sources of information and our own Euro-centric media, the examples, models and illustrations in our books hardly open the windows on the Third World. Attempts are under way in textbooks for English to focus on the teaching of the language rather than the culture of Britain as has been the practice so far, but
these attempts appear to be half-hearted, causing only a mild flutter. Stories, passages for comprehension and poems by writers from the Third World countries are still neither adequately represented nor bestowed the status of 'classics', unless they happen to be the works of a Nobel Prize or a Booker Award winner.

Most learners have study materials thrust upon them. Do the materials excite interest or stimulate curiosity? Do they seem relevant to the readers' needs? If the answer to both these questions is 'yes', then they will encourage the learners' involvement and maintain interest (Hanson 1975). In this regard, an examination of the materials usually prescribed in India presents a depressingly pathetic picture. What Bessmertnyi (1992: 55) says about ELT in Russia is applicable to ELT in India also. "The trouble with most teaching materials in my country is that the texts become stale much too soon. Another drawback is that the authors are often rather dull by nature, and the students consequently lose interest in the language learning business. An English textbook should appeal to the mind and heart of the student, and it is specially difficult to find language material that will satisfy an advanced student." The danger with readymade textbooks is that they seem to absolve teachers of any responsibility. Instead of participating in the day-to-day decisions that have to be made about what to teach and how to teach it, it is easy to sit back and operate in the system, secure in the belief that the wise and virtuous people who produced the textbook knew what was good for us. Unfortunately, this has caused great damage to the teaching-learning process.

2.4 MATERIALS IN USE

An analysis of the textbooks prescribed in various universities of India for intensive prose study over the past three decades will help us to understand this point. A representative selection of 55 anthologies (appendix 1 for the titles and their contents) for intensive reading that have been dominating the scene since
the 1960s has been taken up for evaluation. Since it is unwieldy to evaluate everything in the ELT syllabus within the scope of the present study, the researcher has confined himself to the prose texts prescribed for intensive reading. The findings may as well apply to the other materials.

The criteria adopted by the editors of these textbooks for their respective selections are examined. The objectives of the editors for choosing such materials and their justification for realizing the stated objectives, if any, in the second language classroom are also examined. The fact that the anthologies, *Gateways to Prose and Poetry* edited by Macnicol (1959) and *New Vistas in English Prose* edited by Steuart H. King (1971), have now been prescribed in the mid-1990s without any change suggests the general tendency to prescribe textbooks without any understanding of the changes that have taken place in the ELT scene. The textbooks chosen for analysis have been listed chronologically in appendix 1 according to the year of first publication. The latest year of reprint given there shows that the same book has been making rounds in one Indian university or the other.

### 2.4.1 The fifties and sixties

Brander's (1954, vii) anthology, *Portrait of the Present*, "is a portrait of our own age, its ideas, its discoveries and its beliefs... The reading of English prose of the twentieth century makes us proud and also makes us feel a responsibility for carrying on the ideals which the first half of the century has sustained." Another 50 years have passed and many events and advancements have changed life on the earth. Simultaneously, many new problems have now surfaced to baffle humanity. So, we cannot expect the text to stimulate the students who are now waiting to step into the 21st century.

Sharma (1954: v), in his *Representative English Essays*, included "as wide a variety of styles as possible, and the student is almost certain to find in the
collection some author who will make an intimate appeal to him, intimate in the sense that the author will serve him as a kind of guide and exemplar." The editor has no doubt that students will enjoy reading these essays. He says further that "throughout, the emphasis is on the adventurousness of the human spirit" and "the young student will hear the call to probe the unknown." It is to be hoped that "the call will not go unheeded."

Macnicol's (1959) *Gateways to Prose and Poetry* has 15 essays classified into four categories: Stones (3) [the number in brackets indicates the number of essays under the category preceding it], Of Real Life (6), Essays and Sketches (5), and One-Act Play (1). He has not stated his aims or principles involved in the selection of the essays and poems. Unni (1963), in his *Gleanings from English Prose*, has classified his 13 selections into five categories: Essays (4), Speeches (2), Biography (3), Fiction (3), and Science (1). He has not stated his criteria for selection or the objectives.

Sharma (1965), in his *Silver Streams*, has classified his 16 selections into six categories: Essays (5), Civilization and Culture (2), Short Stories (3), Sport and Adventure (2), Speeches (2), and Science (2). He is silent on the objectives behind his classification and selection. Kumar and Bhalla (1966) have no editorial note in their *English Prose Selections*. They have simply divided their selections numbering 16 into six categories: Biographical (2), Adventure (2), Fiction (3), Humour (2), Science (2), and Literature and Civilization (5).

Knshnamurthi (1966), the editor of *Selections from E.M. Forster* "confidently hopes that the taste of the varied fare provided herein will serve to whet the appetite of students and encourage them to read more of Forster’s writings." Essays like "Notes on the English Character" and "My Wood" are much above the level of comprehension of a majority of second language learners in our colleges. Samuel (1966) has nothing to offer as aims and objectives regarding
his selections in *Living English*, and has simply categorized the seven lessons into Biography (1), Adventure (1), Science (1), Light Essays (2), and Short Stories (2).

The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL), Hyderabad brought out *Language Through Literature*, an anthology of prose in 1967. Gokak in the Preface to the book says that the various extracts from English prose were collected under a project and the level of language difficulty was assessed. Then a checklist for Indian culture was devised to ascertain the difficulty level of the thought content in the proposed selection. It was assumed that the student who had to study this book had mastered an essential English vocabulary of about 3000 words, such as are listed in the Nagpur list. It was also assumed that the student was familiar with all the ordinary and frequently used structures of English. One welcome aspect of the project was that the teaching community on their own had started thinking about the cultural relevance of the ELT materials.

Mishra (1968), in his *Charm of English Prose*, has selected 23 pieces and “the emphasis all through is on the readability of the material, whether it be a scene described by Jim Corbett, or a story told by Frank O'Connor or the ideas passed on to us by Dr Bronowski.” “The prose in this selection has been chosen with this end in view: to provide the young reader with prose which is primarily good reading and to encourage him to read more of it, so that the habit of reading will grow and, in course of time, become automatic.” The claims about “the readability of the material” and the capacity of such material “to encourage him [the learner] to read more of it” have not been validated to this day.

Dhavale and Rao (1969) have tried to bring together in their anthology, *A Design for Reading*, only such passages as they have themselves enjoyed for one reason or another. They contain a “good deal of social criticism and
introduce the reader to the problems of the modern world." The editors admit that their selections were influenced by their own likes and dislikes. The so-called "problems of the modern world" may not appeal to students of today.

2.4.2 The seventies

Green (1971) claims that "strange and alien backgrounds which create difficulty in comprehension and appreciation are excluded" from his selections in Contemporary English Prose. Ironically, most of the 19 selections have "strange and alien backgrounds" from the point of view of motivating the students, and their teachability at the tertiary level in India. For instance, "An Interview" by Harry Sootin, "Looking Back on Eighty Years" by Somerset Maugham, "A Fugitive seeks Refuge" by Churchill, and "Serendipity" by Walter B. Cannon prove the point.

One of the most delicate tasks before the anthologists like Srivastava (1971), the editor of Prose for Pleasure, is "to include only such material as is likely to train and encourage literary taste." He says that the division of the material comprising 14 extracts into 4 subject areas shows the range and variety of the themes and the lessons are "models of good English prose." But he is silent on the teachability of the material and also the students' ability to comprehend them.

King's (1971) selection "is limited to choice prose writings of some of the outstanding prose writers of the 20th century." He hopes that this anthology, New Vistas in English Prose, will "not only help the student acquire the ability to understand and express his ideas in idiomatic English but also stimulate his intellectual curiosity." King admits that a reappraisal of the aim and scope of the study of English should be periodically done to update the teaching materials and introduce modern language teaching techniques. Unfortunately, the text is now prescribed in Pondicherry University for the first year intensive reading programme.
in 1995-96. The editor is not to blame but only the syllabus designing body that fails to adjust the materials to the contemporary realities. This is a comedown from the previous few years' attempt initiated to involve the practising teachers in the process of materials selection (cf. Xavier and Raman 1987 later in this section).

Gausden (1971), in his *Life and Literature*, states that the main criteria for selection are "variety of theme and form, language suitability and whether the passage is interesting." The book includes "A Talk" by C. E. M. Joad, "Two English Lessons" by Maugham, "Without Glasses" by Robert Lynd and "Ups and Downs" by E. V. Lucas. Now, the students have no direct encounter with the lessons since they have no immediate appeal to them. Soar (1972) hopes that "students throughout India will find his anthology both enjoyable and useful" since he has included in his book, *The Language of Communication*, "selections from more of ten greatest communicators of this century." But, it is doubtful whether his selections like "Time and Action" by Aldous Huxley, "In Praise of Normal Woman" by J. B. Priestley and "Quality" by John Galsworthy will make second language learning both enjoyable and useful.

Andrews (1972) found that the usual prose selections were unsuitable. He says, "Their style was often subtle or abstract and beyond the comprehension of the students in the Pre-degree class; and the arbitrary vocabulary, and highly specialized 'registers' instead of leading them into the beauties of literature only confused them" (emphasis added). However, his selections, in his *Prose for Language Learning*, are not without E. V. Lucas, Maugham, O. Henry, Churchill, Jerome K. Jerome, Shaw, A. G. Gardiner and Charles Reade. Contrary to his aim, they really confuse the Indian General English learners since their style is often subtle or abstract and beyond the students' comprehension. Thus Andrews is guilty of the same charge that he has levelled against his predecessors and contemporaries.
Menon (1973) says, in his *Selected Prose for Degree Classes*, that the considerations which weighed with him in selecting the extracts were: (i) their intrinsic interest, (ii) the eminence of their authors, (iii) their variety in subject matter and treatment, and (iv) the excellence of their style. He also hopes that students will find the study of these texts both enjoyable and useful. A. G. Gardiner, Lynd, J. B. Prestley, Maugham, C. E. M. Joad, Orwell, Huxley, Russell, and Forster are some of his choices. He seems to have failed to ask himself: whether the selections are within the learners' comprehension or whether they will readily appeal to the learners. In this context, it is apt to quote Krishnaswamy and Sriram (1994, 20). "Since our curriculum must represent the best that is known and thought in the world (irrespective of the age and maturity of the learners), we should not give any importance to the common readers; they should only reproduce what the critic says, a reader is not a producer."

The CIEFL (1975) brought out *Language Through Literature-2* taking into consideration structural difficulty, stylistic variety that the student might like, the variety of theme and treatment, and also linguistic difficulty. The editors are aware that there is conceptual and cultural difficulty. In judging of the cultural difficulty, they state, "teacher intuition and subjective insight were drawn upon, since no validated difficulty schedule exists, relevant to the Indian context" (p.vi). Their assumptions about cultural difficulty were purely subjective.

Varadarajan and Jagadisan (1975) have included in their anthology, *Invitation to English Prose*, selections from Maugham, A. G. Gardiner, C. E. M. Joad, E. V. Lucas, and W. J. Turner and hope that the selection covering different varieties of prose "will stimulate the students to read more of English for purposes of acquisition of knowledge, appreciation and communication."

The anthology, *English Through Reading*, edited by Bhaskar and Prabhu (1975) includes ten reading passages "from modern English writings on a variety
of topics. Despite the provisions of Teacher's manual, it appeared that a
majority of the teachers began to deliver lectures on the units and explicate the
texts line by line, thus defeating the very purpose of the materials—texts as well
as exercises. Despite the carefully graded exercises, the text failed to find much
favour with both teachers and students because the materials selected had
conceptual and cultural difficulties from the point of view of teaching in the normal
second language classroom

Krishnamurthy's (1976) anthology, Prose for Today aims to provide
"examples of prose styles for students to follow and at the same time gives them
an insight into contemporary thinking on important subjects." The editor states
that care has been taken "to see that all the material is within the comprehension
of undergraduate students" and "calculated to fire the imagination." He has not
explicitly stated the steps to be taken to ensure this. Hilaire Belloc, A. G.
Gardiner, Orwell, Lynd, Haldane, Hemingway, and C. P. Snow are in this
anthology too and it is difficult to imagine how these selections would "fire the
imagination" of the learners of English as a second language.

Muthiah (1977) holds the view that "too often the editor has imposed his
interests and predilections on the students without taking into consideration the
capacity and taste of present-day youth" (p. vii). As a result, in his Modern Prose
Selections, he has included J. B. Pnestley, Jerome Weidman, Neville Cardus, C.
P. Snow, A. J. Cronin, and Joseph Wood Krutch in his anthology. The question
of how he concluded that this selection reflected "the capacity and taste of
present-day youth" remains to be answered. Thomas (1977) based his selections
in Prose for Communication on the feeling that the selections "by accomplished
writers with the gift for graceful, idiomatic and accurate expression should prove
interesting as well as thought-provoking."
In Sahane's (1978) anthology, *Mosaic: Modern English Prose* the accent in all the essays is "on individuality and on the quest for knowledge and wisdom." But the second language learners in India have a different quest, the quest for a minimum language proficiency. Kurup and Ardhanareeswaran (1978) have tried to present through their anthology, *New Patterns of Contemporary Prose*, "a kaleidoscope of prose styles of this century ranging from Sarvepalle Radhakrishnan to Bertrand Russell, the variety ranging from film-making [What they mean is "The Kid" by Charlie Chaplin] to futurology, from writing a story to winning the Nobel Prize." They also state that "the student's interest and grasping power, and problems of classroom discussion and treatment have been taken into consideration while choosing the extracts." But they have not stated what yardstick they followed to diagnose "the student's interest and grasping power."

2.4.3 The eighties

Sivasankaran (1980) believes that any prose anthology, like his *Modern Prose Patterns*, "should have the representation of a sensible variety of authors whose presence legitimately indicates the changing mood of the essay and should deal with different types, light, learned and disquisition." Consequently, his anthology contains "the writings of most of the modern masters, yet with a few less known like E. F. Schumacher and E. R. Braithwite" besides those of Julian Huxley, Russell, Lynd, E. M. Forster and as usual, an extract from Nehru.

Raj's (1980), *English Prose for Advanced Skills*, seeks "to present the student with samples of authentic current English and, at the same time, to offer an anthology that moves away from the over-used stock of textbook pieces." He states further that "several texts that deal with alien social or cultural contexts have also been deliberately chosen, not only to increase interest through variety but, more importantly, to provide the learner with a specific kind of reading
tractice namely, inferring and understanding new and inexplicit norms and assumptions from the reading one does." Consequently, Don Jacobson, Anne Frank, Shiga Noaya, Forrest Reid, Alistair Cooke, Hardin B. Jones and Zohra Treeth and Victor Winstone in addition to an Indian writer, C V. Raman have found a place in the text.

Exercises on each lesson in this anthology are exhaustive and well done. The editor hopes that "the book will serve as an effective means of gaining mastery over communication skills" but he appears to be far from the reality since the lessons, on which these beautifully graded exercises have been framed, do not interact with students at the level of comprehension itself in view of their cultural and conceptual difficulties. So, the exercises fail to serve the intended purpose.

Jain and Singh (1981) decided that since their anthology, Today: Modern Prose for College Students, "was meant for an Indian audience, a special section on India was not out of place." So they had a separate part under the title 'India Today' with extracts from Gandhi, R K. Narayan, V S Naipaul, Nehru and Paul Theroux. It makes no difference since what others did in a scattered way these editors have done by putting them together in a separate part. The other two sections include as usual Forster, Schumacher, and a few less anthologized ones like W B Yeats, Ench Fromm, Edmund Leach and Lewis Thomas.

Prose selections by Madras University (1981) simply added one to the multiplicity of prose anthologies. An anthology brought out by a university could have been a model textbook but this anthology is a poor example. The editor says that "the present selections have been carefully chosen to provide students with a choice selection of good literary passages suitable to their requirements." However, it is a tall claim. Hilaire Belloc, Lynd, E. V. Lucas, G. K. Chesterton, James Boswell, Churchill, Nehru and Tagore have again come in.
In addition, there are no exercises except a few comprehension questions on each lesson. It was an opportunity lost. Ramarao (1982) claims that all the extracts in her anthology, *Current Prose Better Learning*, are “samples of the finest English prose that is being written today in India, England, Europe and the United States.” The samples included those of Stephen Leacock, Claude Metier, Nunzio, A. J. Cronin, William and Stella Nida, Thor Heyerdahl, and R. K. Narayan, Gandhi, and Vijayalakshmi Pandit.

Thaker, Desai and Purani (1982) in their *Developing English Skills* have done the same by selecting passages “from twentieth century writings with high imaginative value and appeal, by authors in different parts of the English-speaking world—England, America, India and Australia.” They have taken care “to bring in material of as much variety as possible, thematically and in terms of various forms and styles of writing.” But they have paid no sufficient attention to the level of comprehension at the intermediate level for which the text is meant and also the various cultural, conceptual and linguistic difficulties.

The passages in the collection, *Communication Through English*, edited by Joseph (1983) “represent different types of discourse ranging from objective description of facts to a short story,” and “are meant to be used as models of different kinds of writing.” His exercises merit our attention. His composition, grammar, comprehension and vocabulary exercises reflect the discourse features of the lessons, and are intended to increase student-centred activity in the classroom. But the lessons are not within the reach of the Indian students in terms of social and cultural aspects.

Prabhakar (1983) states that any text prescribed for the student at the collegiate level concentrates on the development of the language skills. So his rationale for the selection of lessons, in his *A New Anthology of English Prose*, is “to offer what is lively and stimulating in the contemporary prose.” With this aim,
he could have considered, besides lively and stimulating aspect, cultural and conceptual relevance of the material to the students for whom the lessons are meant. But he proceeded along the beaten path by taking care "to include truly representative selections from the British, American and Indian authors." Naturally, Russell, Orwell, Julian Huxley, W. A. Evans, Thurber, Nehru, Naipaul and others have found a place in this anthology.

Like most of the editors, Antony (1984) hopes that "teachers and students alike will find the selections interesting." So it is not surprising to find Ruskin Bond, J. B. Priestley, Thurber, Leacock, and R. K. Narayan in his anthology, A Taste of Good Prose. The editors of Selections from English Prose and Poetry for Colleges (1984) admit that their anthology is "more conventional in nature" and "presents a choice selection of modern prose." Here, Will and Ariel Durant have joined the ranks of A. G. Gardiner, E. V. Lucas, Russell, Aldous Huxley, Thurber, Sidney Cox, Alvin Toffler, Nehru and R. K. Narayan. The fact that emerges at this point is that a certain "convention" in choosing materials has already been established and perhaps the British editors initiated the process of introducing such a "convention" for reasons well known. One of the cultural problems in India is precisely that we are so feudally deferential to people with power, be they politicians, bureaucrats, parents, or even writers.

Sivadasan's (1985) anthology, Modern Prose for Colleges, has fifteen extracts "from the works of recognized writers and thinkers of the twentieth century" and they contain "material that can stimulate the minds of the young people in our colleges and universities." As usual, he hopes that "both students and teachers will find this anthology interesting and useful." Shaw, Aldous Huxley, J. B. S. Haldane, A. J. Cronin, F. D. Ommenney are expected to "stimulate" the second language learner.
Sebastian's (1985), *Prose for the Young Reader*, is of the so-called 'conventional' mould. He is concerned primarily with “teaching material with intrinsic literary worth combining efforts to promote language learning as a pleasurable experience,” not “with the utilitarian relevance of the English language to the foreign learner, a theme made too much of in the present day.” According to him, topics like “Food” by J. B. S. Haldane, “On Letter Writing” by Alpha of the Plough, “Water—The Elixir of Life” by C. V. Raman, and “The Ancestors” by Carl Sagan have the “built-in qualities” stated by the editor. The preoccupation of the language teachers and the educational administrators with the utilitarian relevance of English as a second language, the editor moans, “has done more harm than good, with the result that the teaching of English has, of late, become perfunctory and a melancholy task from which both teachers and young pupils have begun to shrink.” He has not explained or justified the reasons for his charges. But his anthology does not seem to have arrested the trend.

Panikkar (1985) has conceived his anthology, *A Garland of Prose*, “as a collection of some of the most readable specimens of English prose.” He adds that the “interests and requirements of our undergraduate students have been taken into account in the selection of passages: variety has been maintained in the choice of themes and literary forms.” “The Greek view of Life” by G. Lowes Dickinson, “Is Progress Real?” by Will Durant, “War” by Luigi Pirandello, “A city Night Piece” by Goldsmith, “Politics and the English Language” by Orwell, “The Bradford School Master” by J. B. Pnestley and “Science and Tradition” by Russell are said to appeal to “the interests and requirements of our undergraduate General English students.”

Augustine (1985), in his *Selected Prose Models*, has brought together various types of modern English prose for use in our college classes and they “represent a cross section of the best that has been thought and said in English

Das and Chand's (1987) selections in Delights of Prose "ask searching questions on some of the problems that confront man today." There are passages on education, language, sociology, psychology, religion, nationalism and other related topics. In a sense they centre upon a single theme, that is, life. The selections include "Why Socialism" by Albert Einstein, "Fear of Living" by J. Krishnamoorthi, and "The Functions of a Teacher" by Russell. One can hardly think that "the classroom reading of these texts is intended to promote language proficiency in general and reading skills in particular," and it is doubtful whether they are practically realizable.

Learning English can be great fun after you attain a certain level of proficiency. Once you know the language, the entire territory of human knowledge will be almost at your doorstep for one to explore. With this aim in mind, Xavier and Raman1 (1987), as an innovative measure in Pondicherry University, edited Developing Reading Skills-I taking into consideration the following factors:

i) Grading of texts not merely in terms of lexical and structural complexity but also in terms of cultural and conceptual accessibility.

ii) Student interest, that is, related to the needs and interests of the learners and hence motivating.

iii) Variety, catering to the varying levels of learners and of different literary types.

The exercises that follow the texts are of vital importance. They are planned in such a way as to facilitate and reinforce comprehension and not merely test comprehension. However, the editors have trodden the conventional path in the matter of selecting the texts but with a slight difference. Fifty per cent
of the prose passages are from Indian Writing in English and it is a welcome step. But all the passages have become stale as they have already been overused in various anthologies. It may be argued that this cannot prevent the student from enjoying the passages since he comes to study them afresh in the class. But on the contrary, they fail to appeal to the students immediately.

The editors have not taken care to connect the syllabi with happenings a student today can identify with. We often need to attract, allure and absorb the reader and encourage a willingness to use the materials offered. While what we provide and the way we provide it is important, the outcome is also determined by what the student brings to the task. Interest in a topic and liking for a subject increase the likelihood of a deeper and longer engagement with the text. This point needs further emphasis in the ELT scene in India where English is compulsory and students' attitude towards the language is rather equivocal.

The passages in Developing Reading Skills-II by Xavier and Ramani (1987) remind one again of the invisible convention that the editors have implicitly adhered to down the decades. Despite the involvement of a few practising senior teachers from various colleges affiliated to Pondicherry university in this enterprise, the inclusion of lessons, like “Death of A Clerk” by A. P. Checkov, “My Wood” by Forster, and “The Complete Man” by Prince Philip seem to go against the editors' criteria for selection in terms of cultural and conceptual factors. These practitioners all were fed on the literary-humanistic tradition of the fifties and they had little understanding of the recent developments in ELT. The editors admit that no anthology of passages and exercises can ever prove to be a perfect one and there is still room for modification or replacement “in the light of actual classroom experience”, thus viewing curriculum development as an ongoing process.
In contrast to the Madras University prose anthologies, the Department of English of Marathwada University has taken the welcome initiative of making its own selection titled *Effusions*, keeping in mind "the special needs and problems of Indian students." Dr. B. H. Rajurkar, Vice-chancellor, of that university in his Foreword to the textbook rightly points out: "...students of a particular area or region have their unique needs, capabilities and difficulties. Their teachers are obviously in a vantage position to decide on the quantum of material required, its nature, the level of complexity as well as the kind of explanatory and exercise material required."

The Editorial Board (1987) of *Effusions* observes: "The intention behind giving a large representation to Indian writers, both in prose and poetry, has been to minimize the difficulties that our students face when confronted with alien cultures in studying foreign languages." As students and then as practising teachers, they themselves experienced the problems that the Indian second language learners face with regard to culture in language learning. However, a large representation to Indian writing alone will not solve the problem. To motivate the students with materials that grip them, the anthologist must also consistently update the text by considering matters of contemporary relevance and interests with which the students today are immediately concerned.

Santhakumary (1989) says that she has prepared her anthology, *A Choice Collection of Essays*, “with certain clear aims and objectives” and “with a difference”. She immediately contradicts herself “Like many other anthologies of prose, our collection proposes to familiarize the undergraduate students of Indian Universities with varieties of English prose.” The only aim she has is the aim of “highlighting an area of study—Environmental Science”, and so there is environmental science throughout the anthology of 15 essays like “Whence Water” by John A. Loraine, “Smells like Rain” by Magnus Pike, “The Miracle of Grass” by Joseph Wood Krutch, and “Good Housekeeping in an Age of Waste” by John Seymour and Herbert Girardet.

Devasia (1989) has taken special care to make his “assortment as palatable and varied as possible.” His anthology, *The Art of Exposition*, comprises the works of English, American, Russian and Indian writers. Variety is provided under four heads: Uncommon Daring, Life Sketches, Social Awareness and Diverse Patterns of Exposition. The “palatable assortment” includes “Courtship through the Ages” by James Thurber, “On The Conduct of Life” by William Hazlitt, “On National Prejudices” by Goldsmith, “One Life” by Christiaan Barnard, and so on. But such selections distance themselves from, rather than move closer to, the learners’ real needs and interests.

Raju (1989) has edited *Global English* to effect “a meaningful and interesting interaction between teachers and learners of English in college classrooms.” He adds: “The twelve writers represented in this anthology belong to ten different countries. . . This collection is in effect a tribute to adaptability of this universal language.” His exhaustive glossaries and exercises will be more purposeful and effective if he has really “brought back the delight of language-learning” by choosing the reading materials that grip the learners.
According to Vasudev (1989), her anthology, *Spring Blossoms* comprises some of the most readable specimens of English prose and variety has been maintained in the choice of themes and ideas. "Glimpses of Indian culture have been provided against the larger background of issues of universal interest. A student of the English language would do well, therefore, to benefit by a study of these pieces, which he may not have a chance to get acquainted with, later on in life." But the student has to study even now only Lynd, J. B. Prestley, Leacock, Thurber, Churchill, Orwell, W. R. Inge, Lincoln Barnett, C. Rajagopalachari, and Tagore.

### 2.4.4 The nineties

Ramamurti's (1990) selections, *Perspectives on Modern English Prose* "represent not only a good number of contemporary writers but also a wide variety of subjects and interests ranging from fiction and 'loose sallies of the mind' to contemporary history and scientific and philosophical writing." Except this, other factors have been sidelined and hence the inclusion of Forster, Lynd, Mark Twain, A. J. Cronin, A. G. Gardiner, Valentin Petrushin, Churchill, Toynbee, R. K. Narayan, and S. Radhakrishnan. In his view, successful learning depends more "on the imagination and skill with which it is used by the teacher" than on the selection of the learning materials.

Tickoo and Gunashekar (1991) are very practical in their approach. They say that studies into the reading achievement of college entrants have shown that the vast majority of them lack activities that are needed to comprehend materials that they must read for their work—academic or professional. They also point out that "their level of comprehension, their ability to grasp essential meanings (not to speak of inferring meaning, evaluating view-points, judging attitudes, and so on), and their reading speed, all fall well below the minimum required competence. The result is that they fail to get what they should from the printed page."
Recognition of this reality is a signpost for the consideration of cultural familiarity, social relevance and conceptual simplicity. In their anthology, *Reading for Meaning*, Tickoo and Gunashekar have taken a right step towards making the language material lovable and enjoyable by acknowledging the linguistic level pragmatically appropriate to the present-day Indian context at the tertiary level.

Sriraman’s (1991) *College English*, now prescribed in Pondicherry University, is a selection of overused selections often found in various prose anthologies. In the Preface, he says that every student “needs to develop the ability to understand English and to express himself fluently and precisely” and has “therefore included in this book not only English writers, like C. E. M. Joad and Virginia Woolf but great writers of non-English origin like Katherine Mansfield, G. B. Shaw, Nehru and Thurber”

David (1994) claims to have “carefully selected the prose pieces, keeping in mind the linguistic level of the students, and the variety of subject matter, style and genres.” However, her anthology, *New Strides in English*, is a run-of-the-mill type comprising the oft-repeated pieces and their accompanying dullness.

An analysis of the contents of the 55 anthologies reveals the tricks of the trade. The majority of editors act in accordance with the conventional norms with the result that a particular set of authors, even worse, a particular set of selections gets repeated very often. Of nearly 210 authors, 30 are Indian writers writing in English. Nearly 86% of the textbook materials are from other literatures and hardly 14% is from Indian Writing in English. Bertrand Russell, Robert Lynd, and A. G. Gardiner are each represented in 40% of the anthologies studied. Forster, Maugham, C. E. M. Joad, J. B. Priestley, Stephen Leacock, Winston Churchill, James Thurber and George Orwell get 25%-30% representation. Julian Huxley, Aldous Huxley, Shaw, J. Bronowski, J. B. S. Haldane, Hilaire Belloc, A. J. Cronin, Jim Corbett and Sir Harold Nicolson get nearly 25% representation.
Other writers have been introduced from time to time either for "variety's sake" or for "novelty's sake" in order to distinguish a new product commercially from the others in the market. Nearly all the selections are subjective and the students' interest is seldom considered. The anthologies edited by the Department of English, Marathwada University appears to be slightly more student-centred than the other texts. On the Indian side, Nehru and R. K. Narayan have 60% representation. Gandhi, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, Tagore, C. Rajagopalachari, and Nird Chaudhuri have 25% representation. Khushwant Singh figures in 3 anthologies, while the rest appear only once.

Most of the material has been taken from the writings of the early decades of this century. Frequently, a considerable amount of material has been included from the previous centuries—for instance, Oliver Goldsmith, Jane Austen, James Boswell, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Virginia Woolf, and Hazlitt. Some materials might have been timely and contemporarily interesting in the sixties and seventies. For instance, excerpts dealing with the conquest of Mount Everest, man's landing on the Moon; speeches in the post-world war scenario like those of Martin Luther King, John F. Kennedy, and W. H. Auden that had once a topical appeal have lost their charm and do not grip the Indian students in the 1990s. It shows that there has been too much dependence on canonical materials and this overdependence often manifests itself in the thoughtless repetition of the materials regardless of the needs and wants of students.

Nearly 90% of the material is not up-to-date and the same lesson gets repeated in various anthologies. For instance, C. E. M. Joad's "A talk on civilization" and Nirad Chaudhuri's "Indian Crowds" appear in half a dozen anthologies edited in the 1970s as well as in the early 1990s. More than 15 anthologies have no prefatory note and the editors have not stated their aims and objectives, but such anthologies are thrust on the hapless second language
learners. As Brumfit (1985: 118) has observed, some thought might occasionally have gone into the selection of texts "but the rest of the activity is frequently unplanned and random."

The analysis confirms the principle that an instructional programme, if it is to be more than a hit-or-miss effort, must be systematically organized and implemented with the guidance of rational principles (Pratt 1978). The programme should contain a set of clearly articulated objectives which serve as criteria for subsequent decision-making. The objectives themselves should be generated from data that identify both the societal and individual needs of the learner. Objectives, no matter how great their desirability, must be teachable and attainable by instructional means; otherwise, they cannot be justifiably included in the programme. Finally, an instructional programme must have the means to evaluate the degree to which it has attained the stated objectives.

2.5 CRITERIA FOR MATERIALS SELECTION

To match the material to the Indian situation, the selection of materials warrants a set of criteria to make the learning of English as a second language purposeful and enjoyable. In the light of the argument in the previous sections, three important criteria are proposed here, besides the overriding criterion of appropriate linguistic level, for selection of materials for intensive reading. The materials that are included in any reading programme must be chosen on the basis of some clearly defined principles, although it is difficult to combine language requirements with a consideration of students’ maturity, interest, and motivation.

In the second language context in India, the text that is read should be contemporary, written in the modern idiom. Surely, students would be more strongly motivated by writings which treat the contemporary scene, sociological, cultural and scientific, than the writings of earlier periods. Instead of attempting
to present the whole panorama of English writing from the seventeenth century, “college course books should provide specimens of twentieth-century prose—direct and straight forward “ (Ghosh et al. 1977: 88). There is little or nothing to be gained from subjecting the student to archaic forms of the language, obsolescent meanings of words, and subject matter that requires historical interpretation. Given the heavy current output in English in all English-speaking countries, we have so much to choose from and so little that can be taught, so it would seem to be self-defeating to include anything but texts of contemporary relevance. In the present context, it is doubtful whether canonical texts can be read with profit in compulsory General English classes at the tertiary level, especially when only two out of six hours are generally allotted to intensive reading work.

Very often, the pieces selected are overloaded with allusions, local references, and technical or foreign words. The subject matter, the situation, and some amount of vocabulary belong too often to an unfamiliar culture. Students have to work through such material with little motivation or interest. The result is that they spend too much time on the context of the lessons and not enough time on the language in which that content has been prepared. So it is essential to minimize the time spent on teaching ‘cultures’ unfamiliar to the students and maximize the use of the class hours for teaching the students how to use the language functionally both inside and outside the campus.

Since the teaching materials are expected to be contemporary and familiar, they may also be gathered from standard magazines and journals like *The Reader’s Digest*, *The Times*, and *The India Today*, or newspapers like *The Hindu*, and *The Times of India*. Though they are treated as ‘non-conventional’ or ‘non-canonical’ by most of the textbook editors, they will prove to be very useful in their immediate appeal to the students in terms of contemporaneity and
familiarity, particularly because our age is an age of wide readership and mass communication. In such a context, to continue to believe that only the privileged, canonical texts can train and cultivate our imagination will be an exercise in self-deception.

2.6 CONCLUSION

"It is a well-known fact that there is a wide gap between the level of competence in English required by college students and the one that they actually possess" (Reddy 1995) In his opinion, what is needed, therefore, as outlined in the Programme of Action (1986: 165), is the development of the language skills of students for cognitive development and further learning.

In addition to the practical goals of learning English as a second language, it is possible to provide intellectual challenge and develop a humanness and sensitivity beyond purely practical and vocational concerns by making our students read about people of India with a curious multiplicity of habits and customs, traditions and faiths.

Moreover, through the materials used in the second language classroom, the students should be trained to become more proficient readers in English. This objective can be realized better if the texts presented to them are chosen in such a way that the students can interact freely and confidently with the text on their own without too much of mediation by the teacher or by other means.

With these basic concerns in view, an attempt was made to get feedback from the students on their textbooks through a needs analysis questionnaire, the details of which are reported in the next chapter.