CHAPTER - II : HYPOTHESES

2.1 Introduction

Any subject matter, if it has to be studied scientifically, should give much importance to objective and universally verifiable data. Normally any scientific inquiry incorportes three kinds of procedures. They are:

1) collection of data
2) analysis of the data
and 3) interpretation and description of the results of the analysis made.

Any scientific inquiry also makes use of the discovery procedure, decision procedure, and evaluation procedure.

Some sciences which work on specific problems, operate by formulating certain assumptions or hypotheses or axioms which are already existing or newly constructed for the purpose of verification. At the assumption stage, pilot study will be conducted in order to formulate certain hypotheses related to some of the problems undertaken for research. Then, the relevant data will be collected from the subjects or target population selected through various types of techniques of elicitation of data. Observation method, etc. may be used as techniques of elicitation for necessary data collection.*

* Schedule elicitation, interview technique, questionnaire technique, etc. are some of the methods and techniques adopted for the data collection.
The data elicited on the basis of certain methods and also adopting certain techniques as referred above will be subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis, making use of certain methods and procedures. The methods and techniques may vary, depending upon the goal(s) of the analysis and types of hypotheses formulated. Discovery of elements that decide whether a particular hypothesis is right or wrong, grading the qualities of the hypotheses chosen, etc. are some of the factors which govern the analysis concerned. The data thus analysed will be used to assess the right and wrong nature of the hypotheses, and also to discard or support the existing ones.

The present study which sets before it, the goal of identifying the learning and teaching problems of the tribal children, in the school curriculum of the Nilgiris tribal setting is also based on certain hypotheses formulated specifically to test the problems of learning and teaching, the amount of learning of the instructional language by bilingual population, and the factors favouring and interfering in the second language learning.

A pilot study was conducted for the above said purpose in and around the Nilgiris. This pilot study concentrated on the attitudes of the teachers, students and parents of the students, by conducting certain interview sessions. The teachers in the tribal schools were interviewed with the help of a questionnaire consisting of questions related to the students' proficiency in the second language and the teachers' difficulties in providing relevant instructional materials to the students
on syllabus coverage. The students were also interviewed by asking questions related to their general proficiency in Tamil which is the dominant language (regional language in the Indian set-up) taught in the tribal schools of the Nilgiris. The tribal students studying in lower classes were contacted and interacted by the present researcher in their respective mother tongues and it was observed that they perform very well in their interaction. The interaction, it was also observed, failed considerably when the researcher switched to the school language, namely, Tamil. This shows the existence of poor Tamil knowledge among the tribal students studying in the lower classes. It is also found that the percentage of interaction of the students of tribal schools is at a lower degree. The students were also asked to give in writing and speech form, the names of flora and fauna, names of certain geographical items and also some items found in the text books. These questions favoured the investigator to formulate the assumptions viz., linguistic items related to their native environment are well preserved and used and are found in the active vocabulary domain.

Some questions were asked to the parents of the tribal students also to elicit their attitudes towards the education of their children, and towards the purpose of sending their children to school.

2.2 Hypotheses

Eventhough, from the pilot study, a wide spectrum of assumptions could be made, the assumptions or hypotheses were actually made in a
specific way with the purpose of focusing on bilingualism, factors favouring the learning or deficit learning of the second language, the role of skill teaching and curriculum.

2.3 Types of hypotheses and testing

The following are the five hypotheses selectively formulated to verify and highlight the problems of learning and teaching involved in the tribal school curriculum:

1) Bilingualism controls and brings down the learning problems i.e., in other words, if the tribal students are bilinguals at the entry level with competence in tribal mother tongue and the spoken variety of Tamil, the problems in learning the written variety of Tamil in the school will be less.

2) Learning problems will be less as the children move to the higher classes, because the amount of bilingualism increases as they go higher up from one class to another. In other words, when the tribal children become bilinguals due to the advancement of age and promotion from one class to another their learning problems will become less.

3) The degree of linguistic distance is directly proportional to the degree in the problem of learning. In other words, if the linguistic distance between the tribal mother tongue and Tamil which is taught in the class rooms is less, then their learning problems will be limited.
4) If the Tamil teaching is skill oriented, the problems will be less.

5) If the curriculum/school system takes into account the tribal children's early childhood experiences in terms of environment, culture and home language or dialect, then the learning problems will be less.

In the following chapters methodologies have been developed for the analysis of the data of the tribal environment curriculum with the intention of verifying the five hypotheses listed above.