II. AETIOLOGY OF DISADVANTAGE.

Seasons change but the agony abides.

T.S.Eliot.

A. Theories Explaining Disadvantage.

Having specified the group of learners this study is concerned with and having set down the directions the study should take, in this chapter we shall review some theories offering speculative and empirical explanations for learning disadvantagedness. There appears little theorization attempted on the problems of the disadvantaged groups specific to foreign language learning. However, interesting propositions have been advanced with reference to their general educational attainment. And, though linguistic competence is often thought of as being specific, at a broader level its functions, especially concept formation, analytic capacities and scholastic aptitudes coalesce with those of general educational needs. We shall therefore, analyse some of these explanations and try to focus on what is relevant to second language acquisition.

So many different explanations have been offered as to why some people are more educationally disadvantaged than others. In fact there are as many explanations as
there are authors. The following broad labels represent the main issues and trends of argument and codify them into theories:

a) Genetic Inferiority theory,
b) Dearth in socialisation theory,
c) Cultural deprivation theory,
d) Cumulative deficit theory,
e) Divergence theory, and
f) Institutional bias theory.

1. Genetic Inferiority Theory

In substance, the dearth of intelligence or genetic endowment theory proposes that the disadvantaged learners are from birth inferior in their individual genetic make-up and cognitive capacities in relation to the control group. It is this paucity of intelligence, the theory argues, that makes learning difficult for this group. The alleged dearth is reflected mainly in the psychometric tests, mainly the IQ test. It assumes that such tests portray human intelligence and that intelligence is mainly hereditary. Because the disadvantaged learners fair poorly in these tests, it is concluded that they are born with inferior mental capacities.
In a foreign language learning situation, that would mean that the disadvantaged learners lack from birth the wherewithal for successful language acquisition. It is a deterministic theory that implies that the requisite skills like concept formation, rule deduction, hypothesis formation, rule referred creation etc. are abilities beyond the reach of the level of intelligence these learners are endowed with.

The very premiss on which the theory bases itself - that the IQ score is an objective reflection of a person's potential intelligence is open to question. And as practising teachers, we know that barring mentally handicapped learners mild variations in intelligence do not surely handicap learning.

The problem may well be not so much concerned with the inherent potential as in its actualisation by the learners. And, intelligence is a vague concept; and when defined refers to a pattern of behaviour, carried out in relation to others and meeting a specific response to these others. As Henderson (1976:147) points out definitions of intelligence have ideological loading and are 'tailor made' to suit the vested interests, reflecting the values of the dominant stratum of the society, "in that they correspond closely with ways of thought that are already existent in the middle class,"
due to the patterns of social relationship in which members of this class find themselves".

Thus IQ is not always a measure of intelligence per se but rather a measure of the congruence to the thought and behaviour of the dominant class. In fact, more often than not, it acts as a mechanism of social control restricting mobility and legitimizing the allocation of higher status positions. And IQ tests, as Rutter and Madge (1977:81) emphasize, "are devised to predict achievement in industrialized countries and they are of dubious values in other cultures". Liehlin et al (in Reddy 1988) argue that the observed difference in the IQ of the privileged and the disadvantaged groups reflects in part the inadequacies and biases of the tests themselves.

Also, the nature of intelligence itself is not as yet understood sufficiently well, to warrant valid comparisons on the basis of existing tests. What the Standard Binet Intelligence Test does, is to flit around the peripheries, giving an occasional foggy glimpse of something that may be intelligence. (See also Sternberg 1988, Gardiner 1972.) Quoting Burt (1955), Rutter and Madge (1977) dismiss the claim that a well constructed intelligence test assesses:
a) the subject's innate ability, and

b) that it does this in a way that is virtually free of cultural influences.

Besides the suspect validity of the IQ score, the fact that learners with differential IQ scores have succeeded in mastering learning (see Reddy 1988) is proof enough to discount the over-emphasis this theory lays on innate potential. The common belief that mental age, derived from IQ scores, sets the upper limit on achievement, is shown to be quite invalid. It is rather that the ability to deploy the intelligence in terms of strategies and skills that may well be the problem. In an experiment to demonstrate the validity of this insight, Bereiter (1969) approached "early education of disadvantaged children, not trying to 'stimulate the growth of intelligence', but to teach academic skills having little or nothing to do with skills called for in IQ tests (in Moss 1975:29)". Yet judging by the outcome of the achievement tests the programme did achieve significant success. Compared with the children who performed at a level consonant with their IQs, these children with remarkably low IQ (the middle nineties) could still acquire an academic level equal to that of children with ten or twenty points higher in IQ. An important result from the Bereiter-Englemann programme is
that a highly concentrated and direct instruction enhances scholastic achievement even without a commensurate level of IQ and dismisses the equation between IQ and scholastic achievement.

Among the other empirical researches in this area, we record Reddy (1988) who reports that his null hypothesis—that there is no difference in the general mental ability and aptitude between the disadvantaged castes and others—is verified in the study he conducted. On the basis of elaborate data collected from a group of over 2000 Indian students, matched on variables like age, sex and school grades, he reports, lack of exposure, motivation, faulty study habits and learning methods are the real problems causing difference in school achievement.

The intellectual potential for academic success does not then appear to be denied to the disadvantaged group; at best it might be said that in them the potentials are not realized. 'The gems of purest ray serene' seem to lie locked up 'in the deep unfathomed caves' of their minds. A programme of intervention based on imparting better study skills and remedial tutorial, Dr. Reddy shows, reasonably enhances the students' scholastic performance.
Also, the result of the Progressive Matrices Test conducted by Rath et al. (1979:36) for the socially disadvantaged children in primary schools of Orissa, India, shows that intelligence did not significantly vary between the upper caste and the lower caste children.

Brahmin children (B): 19.94;
Scheduled caste (SC) children: 19.08; and
Scheduled tribe (ST) children: 18.29.

However, coming to academic achievement the ratio for the same groups was 40.15 : 33.9 : 32.31, while failure in examination and detentions read:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of failures and detentions</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.T</th>
<th>S.C</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>twice or more</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>once</td>
<td>10.53</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>37.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B = brahmins
ST = scheduled tribe.
SC = scheduled caste.
The conclusion we might at this stage hazard, is that:

i) IQ scores need not necessarily tap the range of human intelligence;

ii) the disadvantaged learners do not appear to be deficient in terms of intelligence;

iii) IQ cannot categorically be attributed to hereditary factors.

Of greater significance is the insight that rather than the dearth of intelligence, these learners face handicaps in the deployment of this intelligence and the realization of the dormant potential, in particular to classroom requirements. What causes this and the dynamics of its operation might be worth pursuing.

2. Dearth in Socialisation

This theory attempts to answer the question we are left with after reviewing the dearth in endowment theory, i.e. if the disadvantaged have the requisite intelligence to acquire a new language but are prevented from using that intelligence, what then, causes the problem? Implicit in this theory is the
belief that the process of communicating with varied people, in varied situations is the virtual training ground for the learners to deploy the resident intelligence to the task of language learning. And when learners are denied in their early formation, occasions for communicative interaction through which they grasp the intrinsic logic of the language they learn, their future capacity to learn other languages is handicapped. It is based on the principle that later language acquisition corresponds very much to early socialisation, specially to mother-child interaction; and the perceived dearth in this area is what causes problems in later acquisition.

The advocates of the deficit theory, Jensen (1973), Ogbu (in Feagans 1969), Henderson (1976) and others attribute the skewed educational performance of the disadvantaged learners to the dearth in the formative influences of the pre-school days. The main difference between the genetic and the deficit theories is that while the former theory posits that the learners are genetically deficient and possibly, not amenable to easy intervention, the latter theory focuses mainly on their formative deficiencies arising from linguistic interactions or the lack of it, and attributes the deficiency to the impoverished social environment they and their forebears in their turn,
have been nurtured in. Again, while the former theory attributed deficiency to nature, the latter blames nurture for the appalling academic conditions of the disadvantaged. The theory proposes that early socialisation in their family environment moulds these children's minds into a particular groove not suited to later academic requirements. And thus these learners enter schools without the wherewithal for success in education. That, according to the Dearth in socialisation theory explains their under achievement and failure in education.

It may be objected, however, that for the learners in question, dearth in socialisation cannot have direct bearing, for their concern is about learning a foreign language and not just a second language which means there is little chance for English to be used in the home environment. However, the fostering of the capacities underlying language learning, the theory points out, is affected and therefore these capacities are not available for transference to English language situations. There is a dearth in cognitive competence accruing from such a dearth in early socialisation that could affect the learning of a foreign language.

The literature suggests that the responsibility for making the child learn rests squarely with the mother. In a most instinctive way it is the mother who
with care and concern teases out of her child the resident cognitive competence through dialogue with the child, caring corrections, elaborations, feedbacks, etc. But the disadvantaged families tend to be larger than the middle class families and the siblings are more closely spaced and they often live in over crowded houses or ghettos situated in slums. The mother in such families, often is forced to work hard and earn more to make both ends meet. This leaves her with little time or energy to attend to her children's basic physical needs, much less to linguistic needs. The result is that the child lacks a rich source of information processing strategy, available through conversations with a caring mother.

Ogbu (1978, 1979) argues that the black (sic.) children he studied, are verbally deprived "because their parents do not provide them with the same amount and quality of verbal stimulation as do white middle class parents for their children in the suburbs" (in Feagans 1969:118). Other significant differences between the behaviour of the mothers from the two classes under study that reflect on their children's language acquisition, are that when the child can walk and begins to talk, the working class mother considers him/her competent enough to play alone, whereas the middle class mother considers him/her a budding
conversational partner. Farren and Hastings (Feagans et al. 1982:30) report that the middle class mothers "played with their three year olds twice as much as the working class mothers". The middle class mothers were also noticed talking with their toddlers and not to their toddlers. Snow et al. (in Feagans 1969) reveal that while working class mothers use more exact repetitions of their own speech, the middle class mothers use repetitions of their children's speech.

There appears to be no study made on the effect of early formation on the mental make-up of the Indian child. However, intuitively we feel the same is true the world over and if anything, the difference between the early socialisation patterns of the privileged and the disadvantaged in the subcontinent is much more pronounced.

Baratz and Baratz (1972) collectively label these two theories, as 'the social pathology model' and point out how the only difference between them 'lies in the attribution of causality, not in the analysis of the behaviours observed as sick, pathological, deviant, or underdeveloped'. (p.189). Moreover, the myth about linguistic deficit, in the Negro children for example, has been shattered by writers like Labov (1972) and others. These children are neither linguistically impoverished nor cognitively underdeveloped. Labov
(1972) convincingly rejected the concept of verbal deprivation among the black children. Joint archival and field studies by historical dialectologists, linguists and anthropologists established that "the verbal skills of ghetto people are among the most highly prized in their community". (in Feagans 1969:119)

Thus, that disadvantaged mothers produce cognitively and linguistically defective children who cannot learn, to say the least, is an ethnicist or racist statement. An intervention programme based on such a theory taken to its logical conclusion, would necessarily result in one or all of the following preposterous ways, Barataz and Barataz (1972:194) warn us about:

1. an increased preoccupation with very early intervention, at birth or shortly thereafter, to offset the alleged 'vicious' effects of the inadequate environment of the Negro child;

2. the complete rejection of the possibility of intervention effects
unless the child is totally removed from his environment to be cared for and educated by specialists; and

3. the total rejection of the egalitarian position in favour of a program of selective eugenics for those who seem to be totally unable to meet the demands of a technological racism.

Data presented in the inadequate mother hypothesis, at best reveal a correlation between patterns of child rearing and academic achievement; and by no stretch of imagination can this alone be proof of cause and effect. Again, the statement that in a standard educational environment the disadvantaged child is unable to learn, is not to deny its capability for learning. All said, there is not sufficient evidence to single out mother-child interaction as the sole factor affecting the child's language development. Perhaps, when combined with other socio-cultural factors it contributes to the retardation of certain language learning skills. There is certainly more to language learning than what is gained in a mother-child interaction.
What, however, cannot be denied is that their intellectual formation is restricted with particular reference to scholastic aptitudes by the circumstances they have been brought up in; but at the same time as Labov (1976) points out, they reveal special aptitudes in felicitous expression and use of imagery as in 'ritual abuse' etc. While their learning in the natural settings of an interactive mode is remarkably developed, the type of thinking and expression that might facilitate foreign language learning and indeed all school learning remains stunted.

3. Cultural Deprivation Theory

This theory focuses on the dimensions of learning ignored by the earlier theories. There is certainly more to language learning than developing grammatical and cognitive competences. A wide exposure to the reality all around one and consequently developing what is come to be known as 'the knowledge of the world' are of paramount importance if a learner has to master communication. One might become grammatically accurate but is disadvantaged if one is cut off from the rich experiences that form the content of communication.
Rutter and Madge (1977) who prefer the label Cultural Deprivation, suggest that the entire matrix of culture arising out of the life style of the disadvantaged group restricts their opportunities to succeed in education. In effect, this hypothesis traces the source of educational disadvantagedness back, not just to interactional or economic environment but to the larger social milieu, both present and the past. Economic poverty, by itself is the least of the problems. Indeed, poverty is not just an economic reality, it evolves into a set of beliefs and values bringing about in the poor, collectively, a distinct culture. Oscar Lewis (1968), termed this phenomenon "the culture of poverty" giving rise to a distinct system of thought and behaviour which are not always conducive to the development of the perceptual and attitudinal capacities required for educational attainment. It is also true that this culture of poverty restricts their "knowledge of the world" and the formative experiences associated with them. Explaining the effects of such a deprivation, Cummins (in Rivera 1984:63) says that "to the extent that the knowledge of the world presupposed in the text is culturally determined, a member of a different
background may not have the knowledge necessary to understand the text".

Also, as the Schema theory suggests, the process of comprehension is an active interaction between the information occurring in the text and the background knowledge of the reader stored in the form of schemata. Humans have a propensity to classify reality encountered according to broad frameworks called schema. These schemata serve them as cues to assimilate information, allocate them selectively, enable inferential elaboration and reconstruction. Acquisition of new knowledge becomes easy when it is an elaboration of an existing schema rather than when it is a question of developing a new one.

Precluded from the wide exposure to reality available to their more fortunate companions, trying to encounter the `new world' in and through the classroom becomes for them a laborious process of schema formation, whereas for the rest it is at best a process of modification or elaboration of an existing schemata. Thus the schema for letter writing, travelling abroad, supermarket, international affairs, and other commonplace themes in EFL text books, involves for the
disadvantaged learners an arduous process of constructing the basics.


Lewis' theory is inadequate to say the least, because it ignores the structural properties contributing to poverty and argues as if the poor are to be blamed for their poverty. Moreover, the theory is based on the questionable premiss that familial properties alone are responsible for the culture of poverty. Nevertheless, that such a culture exists and deeply affects linguistic formation cannot be denied. One of the marked features of the culture of poverty, to borrow Freire's (1972) term, is the 'culture of silence'. A people who have been subjugated for generations and have accepted subservience as a way of life can only respond in silence to the wishes of the dominant community. In their situation they have no choice but to surrender the right to 'reason why' and are, for practical reasons, content 'to do and die'.
There can be little quarrel with the explanatory power of cultural deprivation in causing learning disadvantages; however, this theory may at best be said to focus on the neglected aspects underpining learning, but cannot be taken as a comprehensive explanation for the disadvantagedness.

4. The Theory of Cumulative Deficit

Passow (1967) highlights in the Cumulative Deficit Theory, the chain reaction triggered by the disadvantage suffered in one area. Thus for example, the economic disadvantage inevitably leads to educational disadvantage which in turn gives rise to social, cultural, geographical, political and affective disadvantages. The result is a collective or cumulative disadvantage, interconnected in complex ways and affecting in imperceptible ways success in educational attainment. This problem of circularity stamps itself on the learners concerned along a scale of time and range affecting the so many different dimensions of the learning act in very many different ways and at different times. Alder Sol (1979) identifies the following crucial loci of deprivation: i.e economics, nutrition, lack of exposure to beneficial stimulation,
lack of pattern in the experiential world and absence of contingencies in the environment.

We shall endeavour to anchor the cumulative deficit on to some tangible sources, so that their significant points of origin may be later better tackled in the intervention programme.

A. Economic Factors

"Tell me the father's income and I'll tell you the student's grades in schools", Karl Deutsch is alleged to have said. That statement, underscores the educational disadvantage that accrues from economic factors when they are not compensated for. Success in education, as stated earlier, so much depends on the knowledge of the world gained through participation in the experiences common to the middle class of the majority society; and this is severely restricted for the disadvantaged children who because of their poor economic conditions cannot afford such luxuries. And when socio-economic status (SES) restricts knowledge of the world, the learners' sociolinguistic style and familiarity with the topic is constricted which in turn affects school achievement. The interactional patterns employed in school takes for granted both in its
content and logic what is typical to the middle class. Thus the disadvantaged find the themes that interest schools and the procedures employed to teach them, both alien and alienating.

It is evident that for the disadvantaged learners, the language acquisition contexts are restricted to paltry, unskilled formal teaching and a near total absence of informal language experience e.g. using the target language in informal verbal or written communication, watching movies or TV, listening to the radio, reading newspapers and magazines, etc. Such a lack of opportunity to familiarize oneself with the internal logic of the target language system, coupled with what Loretan and Umans (1966) point out as the existential conditions that shape their thought processes (i.e. depriving them of any logical pattern in life) are likely to result in a pattern of learning that is unhelpful to language acquisition.

Beggars are not choosers; and the disadvantaged learners who are also socio-economically disadvantaged subsist for each day; in their lives, things just happen; they live their permanent present, act in response to immediate stimuli and there is little
reason in their schema for second thoughts, planning or anticipating, and no experience in setting and proceeding towards goals or in evaluating or reviewing past actions; their intellectual world is restricted to the apparent, their experiences, as Loretan and Umans (1966) put it, is 'action experiences'. Their thought pattern too moulds itself on their socio-cultural pattern and so rather than a speculative or futuristic attitude their learning takes on a here-and-now pragmatic pattern.

Also, economic factors do directly influence intellectual maturation. According to the noted neurosurgeon B. Ramamurthy, 'The development of the brain in an infant depends entirely on the nutritive value of the food that the mother takes from the third month of her pregnancy till the child is eighteen months' (Indian Express, Feb. 17, 1992.) Birch (in Rutter and Madge 1977:107) suggests that malnutrition, an inevitable corollary of low SES, damages the central nervous system which affects learning capacities. Ill-health arising from dietary deficiencies interferes with learning opportunities and impairs responsiveness; inadequate food intake at critical times causes abnormalities in the direction and sequencing of
development. The evidence for the theory that malnutrition causes direct impairment to cognitive competence, it must be admitted, is so far weak and inconclusive; but there appears less doubt that it affects the psychological development through changes in attention, responsiveness and motivation.

B. Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors, according to Troike (1982), "may be much more powerful than purely linguistic factors in influencing educational achievement" (in Rivera 1984:48). The linguistic factors affecting the disadvantaged learners may be just a second or third order reflection of the socio-cultural deficiencies they suffer from. The different cultural assumptions, reflected in the use of language, cause what Lambert calls 'substractive bilingualism', a phenomenon contributing in the learner a "feeling of loss of identity from his (sic) own cultural background and a repulsion towards another (imposed) one". (Giles and St.Clair 1979). Similarly, a particular upbringing and socio-cultural background gives rise to a particular learning style, a consistent way of functioning that shape the outcome of learning
behaviour. It has been observed that the vast majority of the poor SC and ST students have failed to utilize educational and occupational opportunities mainly because of lack of logistic support at home and in educational institutions, and the failure is attributed to economic backwardness. (Battacharya 1986 in Dhahiwala S.M. 1991:234)

Halliday (1990) succinctly explains the difference in the choice of language used, based on the cultural assumptions of the users. He argues that any given grammar can be construed in consistently different ways by different groups focussing on the different possibilities within the linguistic system giving rise to different models of experience and different forms of social relationship. In the process of its evolution, the language of the middle class gets "ongoingly reconstructed in seemingly more abstract and objectified terms" (Halliday 1990:10). The social and pragmatic realities of the middle class culture for example employ the 'industrialized urban' end of the language continuum and the disadvantaged use the 'settled but not urbanized' style of the language. These are different renditions of the same language system and intrinsically there is no question of one
being better than the other. All the same, it is the language of the middle class that the academic circles favour, and to the extent one is not familiar with this type of language, one is disadvantaged.

Also, the disadvantaged learners' process of learning is conditioned by their culture and in effect obstructs some effective paths of language learning. Thus the acceptable codes of communication, of their particular sub-culture, (cf. Wong-Fillmore 1989) does not advocate eye contact with the teachers, while for the middle class culture of the school, it is a perfectly appropriate behaviour in interpersonal communication. A people who for centuries have been held under subjugation, have been taught to express reverence to authority figures by not 'staring at' or returning their eye-contact. Language, in their experience, is often more a vehicle of authority than a means of communication. When elders in their community speak, they speak not to be contradicted but to instruct and buy compliance. Dialogue with elders is unheard of. In such an experience language of the elders is perceived as authority rather than as simple communication and the addressee is expected to be an unquestioning doer of the word. Thus, therefore, asking
questions and clarifications, may be construed as rude, in a culture that uses language as authority, while effective learning just demands such active interaction. It may then be surmised that these children because of their sub-cultural imperatives have problems with volunteering information, turn taking, topic maintenance and other pragmatic strategies demanded of a good learner as Naiman et al. (1978) affirm.

C. Socio-Emotive Factors

Glasser (1969) warns that affective factors crucial to language acquisition are overlooked because of the obsession with social, environmental and cultural factors affecting the learners. Poverty causes these learners to acquire a negative stereotype. The spectre of failure constantly haunts the disadvantaged learners. They see that their kind normally do not succeed in education and even if they do there is little chance of their getting employed. Poverty thus breeds a low self image which can block all attempts at successful learning. W.Glasser's (1969) comment that "people who fail fall back upon emotion to direct their
behaviour; people who succeed rely upon reason and logic," in this context, makes much sense.

Some empirical data from the classrooms of St. Joseph's college, Trichy, India, might make concrete the affective problems arising out of their perceived disadvantage. Wherever possible, we shall endeavour to corroborate our findings with those from other relevant research experiments in parallel situations.

Besides the testing and evaluating indices, during the little experiment set up in our college, it has been recorded, that disadvantaged students reveal a persistent pattern of late coming, absenteeism, introversion, dejection, reticence, withdrawal, stagnation, drop out, etc. Another noteworthy fact was that 72% of the disadvantaged students in St. Joseph's, Trichy, said that they deliberately chose seats away from the teacher's beam. These 'umbral' seats gave them a reprieve from the stress of participating in the classroom. Even when stray questions were occasionally directed towards them our experience has been facing a flushed face with eyes pleading to let them be, and hardly ever was a word heard in reply. Loretan and Umans (1966:14) suggest that these learners may be more
fearful of giving a wrong answer than of not answering at all.

If the argument that small group and pair activities are the answer to just these problems, we note that diary after diary of small group activities show that the withdrawn still remain withdrawn in the group. And when speaking becomes inevitable they confine their contribution to a monosyllabic 'yes' and 'no' and hardly ever contradict or differ from the position initiated by the vociferous privileged. Even the more venturesome, as seen in the protocols of Agnes and Abdullah (A. Frankel 1989) withdraw into their shells, the moment they face a threat, like their suggestion being turned down or their spelling, pronunciation or grammar being corrected; for the rest of the time they adopt a compliance strategy -- agreeing with all that is said -- and never offer suggestions or answers again. (cf. Appendix -B)

Passow has very correctly drawn our attention to the whole constellation of problems that beset the disadvantaged learner. This obviously calls for a concomitant approach to the remediation programme, rather than those based on discrete factors isolated
for special attention. But unfortunately, what this theory succeeds in doing is to offer a new label, and a rather a dismal one at that, to the problem. What remains to be done is to develop a holistic approach aimed at simultaneously tackling these multifarious problems.

5. The Divergence Theory

The divergence theory suggests that though the language of the disadvantaged is in its own right fully developed and adequate to deal with the different needs they face, it is different in the route and methods of communication from that of the middle class. Their language, the theory further suggests is different from that of the dominant middle class which is what educational institutions patronize. The classroom with its conceptualized language and its pedagogical procedures, is far removed from the experiences of the form and function of teaching and learning language, the disadvantaged are accustomed to.
Thus, Gloria Sheintuch's (1981) study of the communication strategies of the disadvantaged and privileged children in Israel suggests that the disadvantaged children practice the same type of pragmatic strategies of communication as the privileged children, although their actual linguistic performance may come through to non-middle class observers as less intelligent because they derive from the discrepancies existing between the backgrounds of such children and those of their interlocutors, rather than from genuine difference in linguistic competence. And, Tough (in Feagans 1982) citing the experiment of Hess and Shipman (1972) with a group of 163 Negro mothers and their 4-year old children, show that the children from both the control and experimental group had established similar knowledge about the language system, but had different orientation towards the use of language which accounts for the difference in the language performance. In fine, what the divergence theory does is to eschew any value judgement on the language and patterns of interaction of the disadvantaged class, and suggests that there is no deficit but just a difference in their approach to language because they have been socialized into a different process of acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes.
This difference in language and life style is likely to give rise to conflict in the learners, and cause learning impairment. Shantakumari (1982), analysing the learning behaviour of children from the Corporation schools in Madras, India, reports that the schools do create a conflict between the world the learners belong to and that which is imposed on them in the school. More specifically what Bernstein (1973) calls the 'restricted and elaborated codes' point to the main difference between the ways the two groups linguistically map reality. He speaks of an interrelationship between social structures, language use and individual behaviour causing difference in language performance. The socio-cultural structure fashions language possibility into a specific code, depending on:

a) what is available in the environment to be learnt,

b) the shared preference in the community of mapping reality

c) the conditions of learning, and

d) the constraints of subsequent learning.
And, for the disadvantaged the restricted code becomes wholly predictable. Their language realizes particularistic meanings which are implicit and takes for granted many shared meanings between the speaker and the hearer from that community. Early Bernstein describes Restricted code as short, grammatically simple and made up often of unfinished sentences, frequent use of short commands and questions, categoric statements, simple and repetitive use of conjunctions, over use of pronouns and rigid and limited use of adjectives and adverbs.

The Elaborated code is characterized by use of accurate grammatical order and syntax to regulate what is said; it uses complex sentences that employ a range of devices for conjunction and subordination; it employs prepositions to show relationships of both temporal and logical nature and uses a wide range of adjectives and adverbs, and allows remarks to be qualified (cf. Wardhaugh 1986:317).

Though to be fair to Bernstein, we need to state that the codes were advanced as sociological as well as linguistic constructs and he also speaks of 'voices' which make up for the possible equivocality that might
suggest themselves. In the natural every day communicative situations, the so called restricted code is shown to be equal, if not better, than the elaborate code. The two codes are shining examples of the divergence in the language use described in the theory. What, however, Bernstein highlights is that the language of the disadvantaged and the communicative acts they have been socialized into, are not functional in the school setting.

The difference in the language of the two cultural groups in question may also be placed along the two ends of the oral-literate continuum. Success in academic circles presupposes specific knowledge of the rules and conventions of the written mode. Quirk et al (1973:7) capture the principal reason for the marked difference between the spoken and the literate mode in the following words:

....many of the devices we use to transmit language by speech (stress, rhythm, intonation, tempo, for example) are impossible to represent with the crudely simple repertoire of conventional orthography...This means that the writer has often to reformulate
his (sic) sentence if he is to convey fully what he wants to express within the orthographic system.

The reformulation of the oral discourse into literate discourse is made evident in the growing distance between addresser and addressee. The oral discourse as Chafe (1982) and Tannen (1985) [in Zellermayer.1990:349] point out is a face-to-face mode involving both the speaker and the hearer, characterized by taken-for-grantedness, use of repetition, parallel structures, locus in context, shared knowledge, etc.

The literate discourse, (see Ong 1982, Gumperz 1982, Tannen 1985) on the other hand, is constructed to communicate unambiguously to an addressee removed in space, time and culture. Therefore the language is 'context disembedded' (Rivera 1984) and the text itself becomes the locus of meaning with its own textual strategies like explicitness, linear and thematic structure, endophoric references, cohesive devices and intertextual ties. Printed texts, then, pack loose information usual to the spoken mode into topic-controlled, hierarchically constructed, logically
ordered compact units. The reader then needs to be familiar with and deploy the strategies of the literate mode that enables him/her to tackle "problems without having to be sustained by human sense" (Donaldson in Feagans 1982:78).

Following the distinction made by Olson (in Anderson 1977:71), we might term the language of the classroom 'Academic language' (AL) and the language of the disadvantaged 'Common--sense Language' (CL). Olson makes insightful distinctions between these two types of languages.

Table 3. Difference between common sense and academic languages.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON SENSE LANGUAGE</th>
<th>ACADEMIC LANGUAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is coded for action.</td>
<td>is coded for reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is value laden</td>
<td>&quot;cuts its ties with values in the disinterested pursuit of truth&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is context embedded</td>
<td>employs generic and universal terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is often in the form of aphorisms and proverbs</td>
<td>built on sound logic and syllogistic presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is illustrative and replete with examples</td>
<td>is maximally precise and economic in expression</td>
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is socially conceived and structured. is conceived for non-interactional modes

A large chunk of the disadvantaged learners' impediments to academic success can thus be traced to a strong socio-cultural substratum. Their language modelled on the perceptual-verbal connections, is unsuited to the classroom which demands a verbal-verbal connection. As Bernstein (1973:13) suggests, this "differently focused experience may be disvalued and humiliated within school or seen, at best, as irrelevant to the educational endeavour".

6. Institutional Bias Theory:

The Institutional bias theory is the only one that comes closest to blaming the political factors in causing disadvantage. This school states that the social institutions have a built-in bias against promoting the interests of the disadvantaged. The theories of disadvantagedness reviewed above, as Bernstein (1973) would say, serve to direct attention away from the vested interests and the educational contexts of the schools by implying something is lacking in the individual, family and their environment. In reality, the child and its parents are
clearly victims of a system that perpetuates its own interests. The institutions promote the system that rewards them, so they would actually favour the middle class. Naturally then, the language of the disadvantaged is not valued because it does not match the specifications of the educational institutions, promoting the upper class values.

Schools in this way simply reproduce social structures (Bowles and Gintis 1976 in Rivera 1984:48). Radical critics call it a conspiracy of internal colonialism and refer to schools as being 'instruments of colonialism'. Consciously discriminating against the disadvantaged and treating them as duds, problems and never-do-wells by teacher/school/society, shape the learners' performance resulting in a Pygmalion effect, fashioning their disadvantage and preventing their success. Only those children who adapt themselves to the school's myth can succeed.

Loretan and Umans (1966) point out that the cycle of defeat starts almost immediately as they enter school. Instead of overcoming or at least compensating for the learning handicaps the disadvantaged encounter, "the school reinforces negative feelings
and now adds educational deprivation to cultural deprivation" (p.11). Holt (1977) is critical not only of the inability of the educational institutions to adjust to the world and values of the disadvantaged learners but what is more, of their indulging in "the ugly and anti-human business of people shaping" (p.8). Raquaiya Hasan (in Thornton 1974:13) captures the key argument of this school when she says,

educational failure may not be as much a result of the pupil's inability to master concepts as that of the educational system which fails to establish any relevance between these concepts and the pupil's living of life, especially where the life in school is not a single extension of life outside.

Therefore the educational problems of the disadvantaged children, are not so much related to inappropriate educational goals as to inadequate means of meeting these goals in the classrooms.

B. Factors Overlooked by the Theories

In summary, the review of the theories undertaken suggests that rather than narrowly focussing on the
socio-cultural factors themselves the formation of the cognitive faculty that results from them is responsible for the restricted performance of the disadvantaged learners, and calls for special attention. Secondly, on the affective side the environment fails to provide them with achievement motivation, a perspective of the future, perfectionism, fighting spirit, and indeed parental aspiration and stimulation. The resulting failure syndrome and the cultural discontinuities seriously hamper learning.

There are also other factors which affect learning which have been overlooked in the theories reviewed, nor have all the relevant aspects of these factors been taken into consideration. We shall first attempt to specify some salient features among them and later explore how these factors impinge on the current learning strategies of the disadvantaged learners.

1. Political Factors

Educational disadvantagedness can be the result of conscious or unconscious political decisions of the ruling class -- those pertaining to the government's educational and language policy. In a frank and
forthright statement, *The Challenge of Education* (1985:4.5) accepts that,

... education, like all other system, has a set of beneficiaries, who would lose many of their special and unjustified privileges if the education system is changed and its functions revamped to secure greater efficiency, equity and objectivity.

Basing themselves on massive sociological research, Galton et al. (1980) interpret the whole history of schooling as "primarily a sorting, classifying, selective mechanism" through which the country's population is streamed. In 19th century England, as Rose (1984) (in Tollefson 1991) remarks language education was a regulatory device preserving the class structure; classics were restricted to the wealthy, English Literature for the middle class and clear expression for the poor. Crabbe's cryptic lines:

For every class we have a school assign'd
Rules for all ranks and food for every mind.
poignantly lays bare the prevailing situation. Empowering the disadvantaged through access to ideas was seen as a dangerous enterprise. Fester's (1839) shocking revelation that to get funds released from the government, schools had to "avow how little it was that they pretended or presumed to teach," (in Bourne 1988:95) is surreptitiously carried out even today!

Educational planning is a political act and is carefully conceived to assign roles to the disadvantaged that would not upset the present balance of power. And to quote Tollefson (1991:8):

...modern hierarchical division of labour requires a small number of technicians and managers and a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Because these groups require different skills and amounts of education, the schools serve as gatekeepers for the labour force, determining which individual and groups will have which specific jobs. Language is one of the criteria for determining
which people will complete which levels of education.

In this way language and in general, education can be made a political tool to divert a section of people to fill up jobs of low prestige and thus to secure for their own kind jobs with high salaries and power. In India, English as a medium of instruction is an important factor in creating and sustaining social and economic divisions. Such divisions are subtly introduced when the governments permit mother tongue as the medium of instruction in tertiary institutions and also make provisions for the learner to write his/her exams, in the mother tongue even though the instructions are in English. It is noteworthy that no policy makers' child and none of the children from the upper classes ever take these options. Even the ambivalent policy of the government, and the effort to whip up jingoistic feelings about language in the unwary people amounts to a political strategy of divide et impera. About the Indian scene, Naik notes that,

the political system always dominates the entire social scene. ... The social groups in power have always manipulated the educational systems, especially when
these happen to depend upon the State for their very existence, to strengthen and perpetuate their privileged positions. (Naik 1977:78).

A similar process is in operation when the government starves public educational institutions, especially of basic education in terms of resources, personnel and infra-structure, while lavishing money and attention on institutes of higher education and privileged institutes of specialisation, which almost exclusively cater to the dominant groups. Parekh's remarks on the Indian scenario is a case in point. He notes that 'as much as 30 per cent of the educational department's total budget last year was spent on higher and technical education. In fact, the department disbursed about Rs.150 crore on the nine IIMs and IITs alone; the remaining Rs.150 crore of its Rs.300 budget for technical education was shared by 28 other centrally-funded institutions. The report further suggests that the cost per IIM student is a staggering Rs.70,000 each year while the fees are only Rs.500. At the IITs, it costs the government Rs.40,000 per student and the fees are about Rs.300 (Indian Express, Madurai edn. Feb.15, 1992).
R. Jolly (in Gupta 1990) refers to the decisions of certain third world governments to cut back on their spending on education to pay back debts to some Western countries; and what is more shocking is when funds meant for education are diverted to pay for the growing military hardware. These indeed are political decisions that affect education and keep the disadvantaged always disadvantaged.

This class could thus, perpetuate unchallenged their control over political power and economic resources. It is thus in the interest of the present socio-political structure to leave the disadvantaged as disadvantaged by denying them opportunities for educational advancement.

In such a situation, the best resources and learning opportunities continue to be available from private schools which obviously charge an exorbitant fee for the specialized service they offer. It would imply that only those class of people who can afford to pay this fee get the benefit of this privileged education. The rest, passing through the assembly line of the public educational production unit would be no
match for those coming out of the well equipped and state of the art private educational institutes.

Therefore if political expediency has decreed that educational success is to be restricted to a few from select communities, it implies that the attempts to adapt the individual to the dominant system, that underlie the approaches of Schumann (1987), Krashen (1985), Giles (1979) Giora et al. (1975), Gardiner and Lambert (1972), etc., which ignore political policies of educational and language planning and use, will at best be tinkering at the peripheries.

2. Affective Factors

Turning next to the affective problems encountered by the disadvantaged, the sociologist, Benjamin Singer suggests that a person's educational and social development is heavily contingent upon his or her 'future-focussed role-image' (FFRI). Blur this image, he warns us, and we rob the child of motivation and personality structure.

The linkage of time, selfhood and change is particularly important in considering the problems of the poor, the ghettoized
and the inhabitants of the developing nations. For where FFRI is diffuse, these are the very individuals who compensate by depending on 'fate'." (in Toffler 1974:19)

Then, the disadvantaged living in an eternal present, are less likely to be willing to wait for the future, even in terms of linguistic acquisition.

Another feature overlooked by the theories reviewed earlier is the sense of alienation the participant structure of the school imposes on the disadvantaged learners, posing a serious threat to the learners ability to cope with the situation. An individual's capacity to profit from a teaching situation is facilitated, as Brundage and MacKercher (1980) put it, by:

a) the learners' perception of the situation as free from threat;

b) material which is personally relevant to the learner,
c) learning experiences and processes which are perceived as relevant to the learner's life experiences; and
d) presentation through a variety of sensory modes and experiences, with sufficient repetitions and variations on themes to allow fine distinctions in patterns to emerge.

Essentially for the disadvantaged learner these conditions are unfortunately negated in the classroom. Already under considerable socio-cultural and psychological stress, they are put under further stress when school as the primary socializing agent highlights and reinforces their differences from other learners of the dominant culture. And stress is additive and when accumulated can paralyse and frustrate all learning.

The stressors (factors that cause stress) in a classroom mainly take the shape of:

a) destabilizing environment,
b) classroom procedures,
c) materials, and
d) peer group.

The disadvantaged learner finds the school environment diametrically opposed to the participant structure he/she has experienced at home. What Simons refers to as "a constellation of norms, mutual rights and obligations that shape social relationships" (in Feagans et al. 1982:120) in the school setting, and a teaching strategy at cross purposes with the one they have acquired and come to value, ultimately prove to be the main stressors for these learners.

4. Alienation from Teachers.

Teachers, who usually belong to the privileged castes and class are more often than not unsympathetic to these learners and are perceived as acting in a manner prejudicial to their interests. Maizels (1970) points out that as many as one in four of the early leavers "saw their teachers as indifferent to what they did at school and were glad for them to leave" (in Lovell 1986:116).

The teachers' attitude to the disadvantaged learners are visible especially during the potential moments of crisis when learners are called upon to prove their productive (oral or written) skills. The
type and quality of teachers' response to the learners' production, as Vigil and Oller say (in Bailey et al. 1983:185) might be responsible for the fossilisation of their language forms. Allwright (1988) observes that the teachers' reaction to the learner will be the major factor in determining if and what learning takes place in the classroom. For example, when the learner does not understand a question, the teacher could either repeat the question as originally worded or rephrase it for the learner to understand it more easily. The first option, as Labov and Fanshell (in Bailey et al. 1983:184) point out, constitutes a form of criticism challenging the learners' competence, driving them deeper into their shell, never again to venture out. On the contrary, rephrasing the question can be an other-affirming and reassuring gesture, facilitative of learning. Most of the 39 'C' stream students forming the experimental group of this study when interviewed, report that their teachers appeared prejudiced, impatient and destructive in their comments and soon the hatred towards the teacher got transferred to the subject itself.
5. Materials as Stressors.

As part of a social system that promotes it, education is also manipulative in reflecting and perpetuating the stratifications that stigmatise the disadvantaged learners. This is done often through the choice of data and the perspective of that choice, that reinforce the disadvantaged learners as members of a "backward group". Materials are never neutral; they carry and convey hidden values, usually ones that favour those who seek dissemination and perpetuation of the present skewed world order.

Kumar (1989:66) referring to the Indian scenario, illustrates this point when he records, "if we consider materials prescribed for use in curriculum as microcosms of society, then Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes must be described as people who are invisible in the microcosm". In fact, many of them just do not stop with ignoring but positively seek to reinforce a negative stereotype of the disadvantaged learners and affirm their subservient position in society. Citing the example of a history lesson, (chapter 25 of R.S.Sharma's *Ancient History of India*), where Tribalism, *Tantricism* and Brahminism are
discussed, Kumar shows that in Sharma's text, Tribalism is derided and dismissed with scant respect, while Tantricism and Brahminism are glorified as the superior and revealed system of an enlightened people. He then goes on to show the devastating effect this passage has on the disadvantaged children. Another appalling example is an English lesson based on the epic Mahabaratha, where Ekalavya the legendary archer is made to offer his right thumb as gift to his guru, all because he belongs to the low caste and yet in archery, dared to fare better than his princely counterparts.

Examples of how teaching materials contain, communicate and perpetuate discrimination and ideologies of those in power are aplenty. Wright (1983) citing **Patterns in Geography-Two** (by W. Farleigh Rice, Longman 1982.) demonstrates how subtly the material injects racial prejudice in the minds of innocent children. A hunt through the 14 pages on South Africa offers just six lines on the majority Black South Africans.

All six sentences can be questioned in terms of facts and implications,...there is no suggestion in the text or the
photographs that Africans live in towns: towns are presumably for white people? There is no discussion of justice or injustice; or of government control. Africans work on farms and in mines; their labour is cheap; that is all that needs to be said. Six sentences are sufficient; all the other pages concern the people who really matter: the whites (1983:4).

Both Kundu (1985) and Peter (1987) argue that culturally and emotionally relevant teaching material with teaching strategies geared to the specific learners help improve acquisition of language by the tribal learners in India. Kundu advocates what Goodman and Melcheor call the anthropoliteracy approach. The rationale for the approach is best stated in the words of Pearson (1971):

Since linguistically deficient learners usually enter school with poor self-concept, in ESL programmes we need to use that literary concept which
emphasizes the value of the learners' cultural heritage.

He suggests stories and biographies of strong willed folk heroes and characters with whom the learners in question can easily identify, as possible teaching materials. Ethnically oriented instructional strategies, because they build on the 'overlooked positives' of the disadvantaged group, Peter demonstrates, improve the attitudes and learning skills of the tribal learners. His study shows that following these principles the tribal learners showed remarkable improvement, towards the language (by 42.3%), towards the task (by 56%) and towards the teacher (by 45.11%).

As seen earlier, it is the restricted knowledge of the world and schemata that partly cause for the disadvantaged learners problems in following the language instruction. Then material based on folk heroes and role models could at best be a starting point to get language learning going. Without exposure to a wide variety of topics and a repertoire of lexes and structures relating to life in all its many splendours, there can be no way of equipping the disadvantaged learners on par with the rest.
6. Pressure from Peers

Again, peer treatment forces the disadvantaged students to form a clique for reasons of emotional and sociological security. The difference in the manner and material of dress, recreational preferences, topics of conversation, mode of behaviour, etc. both in and outside the class mark them out as an out-group and for reasons of survival they bond together among themselves. In fact, the Tajfel theory of intergroup distinctiveness (Giles and St.Clair 1979) tells us that members of different groups tend to compare themselves on exactly the dimensions listed above. These comparisons, the authors aver, lead individuals to search for and even create dimensions on which they can make themselves very distinct from the out group. Very often, speech divergence is an important strategy for making oneself psychologically and favourably distinct from the out-group.

Cooley's looking glass theory of self-image (in Lovell 1986) suggests that "our self image is constructed largely from the way we think we see ourselves reflected back from the minds of others" (p.115). And when learners experience educational institutes in their varied aspects as humiliating,
shattering and threatening, they can never learn what such a system is offering them.

C. Some Programmes of Intervention

Having analysed some of the theories explaining disadvantagedness, we shall now look at some programmes of intervention aiming at enhancing the academic performance of the disadvantaged learner. At least, implicitly many of the programmes reviewed below acknowledge the factors at operation stunting the growth of some learners, and some of the programmes stress one or the other factors as hyperordinate and work out on that basis a programme of enhancement. We shall restrict ourselves to some of the most typical programmes and those that are representative of the different theories about the problem and philosophies of correction. Though there have been isolated attempts at evolving compensatory programmes for the disadvantaged learners in India, there appears to be no clearly enunciated or centrally monitored project under way. And even the isolated attempts (See Kulkarni et al 1985) largely follow the models form the West discussed below.
1 Compensatory Education

The notion of compensatory education rests upon the assumption that conditions in the environment have restricted the development of the disadvantaged learners, and that they can be reversed by educational methods and the deficits compensated for by intense coaching and new techniques —primarily of the sort known as 'enrichment'. As a case in point, we shall familiarize ourselves with two important versions of compensatory education programmes from both sides of the Atlantic.

A. Project Upward Bound

Though differently realized by the different centres, this federally funded American programme aims at assisting the disadvantaged youth to conclude high school and go on to higher education. Basically compensatory in nature, the project runs tutorials, individual and small group work, educational, personal, career and financial counselling. Some centres provide enrichment activities in reading, English, Maths, and Science. Most centres have an intensive week end programme during the academic year and a summer residential programme.
Using the California Achievement Tests, the programme organisers claim that the gains of the participants far exceeded that of the control group. But the orientation and methodologies of the project appear to be so diffuse that in the words of Frank (1984) "after 20 years of experience it is difficult, if not impossible, to say from a public policy or research perspective what types of interventions work with what types of students to what degree".

B. The Head Start Programmes.

The Head Start is a pre-school educational programme. Like the American version, this English model too differs from each other in the clientele, course content and duration. Again, Cladwell's criticism (in Moss 1975:31) of the programme parallels Frank's. Cladwell questions the possibility that a six-week programme could,

- hope to develop a positive self-concept,
- produce new levels of language competence, discover and correct an accumulation of five years' worth of medical and nutritional problems, and
- convince the parents that education was
the solution to all their problems. Plus many other miracles.

And as the first trickles of evaluatory data began to show "an initial rise followed by a plateau or a decline, initial superiority over control groups followed rather quickly by a catch up phenomenon".

Baratz and Baratz (1972) epitomize the reason for rejecting the concept of compensatory education when they say, "larger doses of the same medicine in a new bottle do not appear capable of curing the ills of urban education" (in Carter 1971). The so called deficits identified are so disparate that they include problems with visual and auditory perceptions, short span of attention, low level of motivation, unfamiliarity with school subjects, etc. Bernstein's telling comment that education cannot compensate for society, summarizes our reaction.

Clark and Clark (in Rutter and Madge 1977:132) are positively critical of the programme. They claim that it is naive to expect a brief exposure would cure the ill-effects of abiding deprivation. Also, with no real needs analysis done (in 1967, 456,000 children were enroled in the 8-week summer programme and 218,000 for
the year-long programme) the programme merely provided free activity along the lines of traditional schools. The basic fallacy in the programmes is the assumption that the disadvantaged learners needed and could make use of the same experience as the children from the privileged sectors.

C. The EPA Project.

The Educational Priority Areas (EPA) was the British model of compensatory education, focussing on home-based intervention with the parent-child as the specific target. It has a laudable aim of including the parents as the agents of intervention. Three basic approaches characterized the project: home contact was essentially seen as a complement to school programme, the liaison was maintained through a home visitor and the main interest centred round familial context, at improving understanding and communication between the members of the family.

The results seem encouraging, and not just the learner but the siblings at home too benefited from the programme. The effect of the programme was day long as against the just on the specific child and during the specific teaching situations, as in the case of the
other compensatory programmes. The drawback, as expected, was that the programme was demanding on the parents, who soon gave up the attempt. In any case such an attempt, given the sheer size of the problem and the area, would be a near impossible task in India.

2. The Indian Scenario

Specifically in India, even before the National Curriculum Development Committee in 1987 recommended action 'geared to needs of the weak learners', remediation has been an important feature. Many of the early attempts were not thorough, sustained and systematic efforts at remediation. The mushrooming of a number of tutorial and coaching centres reveals the felt need for learning English, but most of these institutions ended up suggesting short cuts to exams "teaching the students how to arrive without travelling" (Saraswathi 1990 n.p).

The common errors approach, remedial grammar, etc. usually after streaming the learners into homogeneous groups are some of the methods widely employed. Most of these methods suffer from deficiencies noted in connection with the programmes reviewed above. As Saraswathi (1990) rightly suggests remediation should
be based on extensive reteaching rather than attempts at spot repair; it should build on the neglected positives rather than carping on failures and shortcomings. Grammar based remedial courses, she stresses, equips the learner with knowledge about the language but not of the language.

The Bridge Intensive Course (1969) was widely adopted in Tamil Nadu in the early 70's. It aimed at providing 'a rapid intensive revision of English for college entrants enabling them to follow their courses in the English medium.' The five components i.e. Spoken English, Comprehension, Composition, Study Methods and Group work would form the five hours of each day for ten days. However, the course soon faced declining popularity largely because of the presumption that ten days of remedial coaching would work miracles that were not possible in the six years prior to that. Moreover, in the process of dissemination the original intent was so watered down that the course became ineffectual. Above all, the onus on the teacher handling the Bridge course was so great that none but the exceptionally gifted and committed teacher could pull the rabbit out of the BIC hat!
The other serious attempt at English teaching for the disadvantaged was based on the Communicative approach. As a case in point, we shall take up for review the project of A. Joseph et al. (1992) which aimed at developing fluency through transactional activities (DFTA). The clientele was 42 disadvantaged Tamil medium children of standard VI in the suburbs of Trichy. The classes were held outside the regular school hours, and the content had no direct bearing on the lessons done in the class. Communicative activities, riddles, games, etc. formed the main recipe for causing fluency.

Unfortunately, no systematic evaluation was planned, for the investigators were more learner-centred than learning-centred in the sense Prabhu uses the terms. But the fact that these learners could stand before the members of the public at an open meeting, answer questions and solve puzzles posed to them, is proof enough of progress. And the growth that the investigators have recorded, in terms of the quantum of vocabulary and syntactic patterns and the evidence of the 'slowest learner marshalling all his resources of the English Language to express his 'self', is all there is to know and all one needs to know.
The DFTA indeed has a limited focus and may have been beset with a myriad ideological and practical problems. One may wonder how the investigators plan to 'handover' the project to be continued by the local teachers with a fixed syllabus to cover; still, the project demonstrates that a communicative approach through a function-to-form mapping, helps learners take giant strides both lexically and syntactically, which have not been evident in the form-to-function followed in their regular classrooms. However, such transactional activities for the learners we have in mind enable the learner for functional communication, which can be carried out with limited structures and vocabulary, (what Stubbs would call nuclear English) but the learner may be at sea when confronted with higher order lexis and structure in the advanced text books. In other words, the transactional activities can be structure avoiding rather than structure promoting.

3. A Critique

All these programmes of intervention focus on some aspects of the problem which they pick out for special treatment, but any action plan without a more fundamental approach that captures the multidimensional
effects of the socio-cultural factors on the disadvantaged learners and pins down concretely their essential and tangential effects on language acquisition, will only be a piece meal solution.

The atomistic approaches suggested in the programmes of intervention, as correctives for the problems that beset the disadvantaged appear to treat them as victims of a particular deprivation e.g. social, cultural, political, economic, etc., and so have accumulated a debt of unfulfilled promises as the initial spurt in results soon begins to plateau. Dearth of exposure to the target language, interiorization of low self-worth, use of unstimulating methods and materials are seen to cause parsimonious acquisition of language. However, none of these problems in isolation can satisfactorily explain the disadvantaged learners' poor performance. These band-aid approaches, exemplify perhaps attempts at cosmetic changes, focusing on one or more causal factors, but ignoring on the whole, what an interaction of these various factors collectively result in.

That does not mean to deny the influence of these adverse factors on the learners in question; all we can
say at this stage is that these factors taken individually do affect in little known ways the very processes of thinking. The need, therefore is not so much to find which of the variables affect these learners but rather if they do collectively act to alter or impose restrictions on their learning processes or lead them to strategies that circumvent certain cognitive capacities considered integral to advanced skills of language learning. The area of concern, in other words, shifts from focusing on the factors that cause disadvantagedness, to how their cognitive processes stand affected by these factors. It is a diagnosis that goes beyond a wild goose chase for the causes of the educational malaise, to a pragmatic approach of finding what they do result in.

And, it must be conceded, that all these factors, despite a high degree of intuitive plausibility, fail to enlighten our understanding about the effects of specific experiences on the processes of cognition. (Wolf, Schogan, Yarrow, Gevirtz, etc have attempted to establish a direct and unambiguous causal relationship between the adverse environmental conditions and the differential cognitive development, but with limited success.) These factors taken individually, as
statistics will bear out, do not affect every individual stricken by them. There are many instances in which learners from a given situation replete with adverse conditions reach high levels of functioning. These factors do not by themselves guarantee productive cognitive development, though their absence is shown to affect such a development. Interestingly, these facts are reassuring because it either means:

a) the adverse conditions are not fate-fully deterministic, but amenable to corrective intervention and enhancement, or

b) that a certain lethal combination of environmentally determined factors affect cognitive performance, not directly but through an intermediary mechanism.

There appears to be only two options for us at this stage. The first is a hard option: that of working for a societal transformation, that will cure not just the disease but the very breeding ground of all these problems. With Illich we agree, that the problems that this study has unearthed are really systemic and the
solutions lie deep in the social core. Therefore any partial or affirmative analysis that would only effect cosmetic changes without challenging the dominant ideological forms that cause and perpetuate disadvantage, would at best yield partial results, possibly for a paltry few. This course of thinking may lead to very different sorts of action, often taking a confrontationist path with all the messy tangles involved in it.

And especially when such action is undertaken concomitantly with programmes for social transformation there is bound to be good result. This is not to deny that family is more influential than school in shaping educational achievement. Recognizing this **Challenge to Education** stresses that "education, with all its ramification, cannot be altered materially unless the overall socio-political system requires such alterations for its survival." (1985:no.3.5)

The other is a soft option: a socio-linguistic and psycho-linguistic intervention programme. This may be an example of what Bruner (1986) calls 'a patient pursuit of the possible', but paving the way for an ultimate and radical reformation instead of a violent
revolution. For, it is recognized that society as an interrelated system of systems can be brought closer to the egalitarian reality by reforms and committed action in the educational sector. The equalizing effects of education can, in the final analysis, counter the divisive forces and debilitating tendencies in society, generated elsewhere in the system.

However, the role of the professional is mainly in the academic front. Sharing with their counterparts in the political front a transformative ideology, the educationists need to concentrate on the educational system vis-a-vis social transformation. The approach would best be a two-tiered one first, to remove or at least reduce the influences of the adverse socio-economic and cultural reality and all its aspects referred to above. And secondly, to repair the residual ill-effects of their influences on the learner, particularly on the cognitive front. Taking for granted a simultaneous political action, we now focus on the latter part. This is not, however, to deny that the language learning (and all learning for that matter) is a socio-cultural as well as a cognitive act.