IV. PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING THE INTERVENTION PROGRAMME.

The previous chapter in summary, argues that because of their unique socio-cultural reality the disadvantaged learners are left with a parsimonious use of the capacity to analyse, conceptualize and abstract. Such a restriction directly affects foreign language learning, because this leads to the lack of ease and felicity for consciously abstracting from the limited exposure to the target language "the underlying structure of the language by means of inductive and deductive inferences" (Jacobovits in Stern 1984:328).

The chapter further suggests, that an unconscious deployment of the faculties that appear to have been available for mother tongue learning, is prevented by the dearth in their exposure to the target language. Thus, following the insightful distinction Krashen (1982) made between natural acquisition and conscious learning, we might claim that the learners in question are disadvantaged on both counts. Against this background, the present chapter attempts to further explicate the problem and propose pedagogical principles and procedures that could overcome the hurdles faced by the disadvantaged learners. The first
part explores ways of inculcating the metacognitive competence required for language learning and the second, ways of maximizing exposure to the target language.

Even a cursory glance at the entry behaviour of the disadvantaged learners (cf. page 14) is sufficient to convince us of our hunch that the disadvantaged learners find the process of perceiving relationship that governs the language, difficult. Their language appears to be an early system of approximation answering the characteristics of Topic-Comment (T-C) structures, (where known information, also called the psychological subject, is stated first and new information, also known as the psychological object, is tagged on to it) avoidance of word modifications, problems with word order, position of auxiliaries, negations, etc. The tendency for them, in general, is to make the relationship between form and meaning as direct as possible, resulting necessarily in a deviant word order. Schumann (1987) uses the term basilang to describe their syntactic organisation based on their native language. The basilang lacks verb phrase morphology, does not have a time or aspectual distinctions and when temporal reference is crucial
discourse pragmatics is relied on. Rutherford (1987) has portrayed the salient features of such a stage thus:

a) the TL syntax is made to serve a need for keeping pieces of propositional contents separate from each other to whatever possible extent;

b) elements that bear a close semantic/syntactic relationship to each other occur adjacent to each other; and,

c) structural redundancy persists.

Their next stage of growth towards a target-like use of English involves learning to utilize syntactic devices instead of relying merely on linear order to maintain the necessary links between form and meaning. A close scrutiny and analysis of input data becomes essential if the present 'pragmatic mode' should yield place to a 'syntactic mode' (Givon in Sato 1988). Our need is to help learners process input and look out for the more regular and redundant patterns and make inferences about the target language. For language
learning calls for an 'applicative' skill, to use the phrase of Anderson et al. (1977), and learners need to make extensions and generalisations from their exposure to the target language. Spotting regularities and detecting patterns are the major skills language learning is built upon.

A. Conscious Learning

After the much discredited S-R model of the Behaviourists, the profession has found in the cognitive approach a plausible and practicable explanation of the process of language learning. Lenneberg (1967), Chomsky (1968) and others postulate, on an analogy with the Cartesian conceptions of innate ideas, that every human being is born with a universal grammar (UG) and a language acquisition device (LAD). The UG is conceived as a higher degree of abstraction entailing broad conceptual knowledge such as doer of the action, recipient, action (SOV), principles of time governed by tense, adverbials, etc. relationship between deep and surface structures, etc. Without such a capacity, we agree with Chomsky, it would be impossible for the novice-learner to abstract "the not only intricate but also quite abstract" (1966:47) systems that govern a language. Learning a language,
according to this principle is a process of adapting the language universal principles to the requirements of the specific grammar of the target language. For this to be made possible, the learner has to follow a meddling, muddling and modeling course till he/she perceives the rules of government and binding, word order, etc. peculiar to that language.

Currently the profession has identified two major ways of causing this change—one pertaining to conscious learning and the other unconscious acquisition. These two major strands may be summarized (i) in the words of Nation and McLaughlin that learners "abstract structural information from linguistic stimuli under conditions where subjects are simply exposed to exemplars with no instruction to learn the material or derive underlying rules" (in Skehan 1989:125). and (ii) in the words of Wells (1985:16) "'Cracking the code' may be the most difficult part of the total process (of a developmental progression) but before the child can embark on that task he or she first has to discover that there is a code to be cracked". Wells goes on to suggest that the first need is to perceive language as system before going on to language as communication. In essence these are the
beliefs of the structuralist and communicative approaches.

These conflicting claims have been progressing parallely and the studies reported have suffered from the requirements of research that have restricted these experiments scrupulously to procedures flowing from one or the other of these two approaches. However, actual language learning may not after all be a simplistic process following one of these dualistic divisions. In place of the dualistic 'either/or' approach imposed by the purist theoreticians, a more integrated 'both/and' approach may well be the answer.

B. Eclectic Approach

But before enunciating the principles based on such a premise, an important question needs to be first addressed i.e. whether the methods for creating conscious learning and the communicative procedures proposed for maximizing English language learning are at cross purposes. Now, the history of language pedagogy has always maintained a tension between language as knowledge and language as use. Unless a healthy combination can be effected language learning would not be successful. For, an excessive dependence
on communicative knowledge can lead to an ability to deploy a repertoire of phrases in correct contexts but fail to create a rule-referenced ability to create and decompose sentences. As Bialystok (1982:183) observes that "if knowledge is analysed, then certain uses can be made of that knowledge which cannot be made of knowledge that is unanalysed". And an exclusively structure focussed pedagogy would impair communicative competence, as Newmark demonstrates through the predicament of the stranger who wants his cigarette lit (in Allen and Campbell 1978:38). Ard and Gass (1987:235) argue "that the mere fact that relationships can be described syntactically is not enough guarantee that if relationships are learned, they must be learned syntactically". And if the 'Good Language Learner' study by Rubin (1975), Stern (1975), Naiman et al. (1978) and G.Jones (1988) is any pointer, focussing on communication besides attending to form and looking for patterns in language are essential for successful language learning. It follows that language learning involves both knowledge and use and the two approaches need not be contradictory and in fact can be made complementary.
Useful as the communicative activities are, given the exigencies of our classroom would it be realistic to expect that an exposure for a meagre 50 minutes a day, 4 days a week and less than 30 weeks a year a sufficient condition for natural acquisition? For the learners in question, all our well-meant instructions to make maximal use of all available sources of exposure to English outside the classroom, such as magazines, newspapers, radio, T.V., etc. can be no better than weak, impractical exhortations! Possibly then, if these learners have to acquire the language only from their limited classroom exposure, conscious learning must complement their attempts at natural acquisition. For without the luxury of a protracted exposure in a natural environment that ensures repeated presentations, frequency and range of language used and the urge for communication, there is little for the natural acquisition device to profit from. Today's English classroom whose exigencies severely limit the exposure provided to the learners, makes conscious awareness essential if the learner is to effectively extract the structure of the language, from his/her restricted exposure.
Though the processes involved in the two approaches apparently differ, the end-product is the same i.e. accuracy, appropriacy and fluency. Whether through conscious learning, or communicative activities, there is no escape for the learner from learning the rule governed relationships of the units or constitutive elements that make up the language. Further, the field of research on individual differences [see Skehan (1988), Wilson (1981), Pask (1975)] rather prescribe a need for a more eclectic approach in a classroom. Thus evolving pedagogical procedures that are based on principles of acquisition and learning then need not be at cross purposes with each other.

The learning capacities that the disadvantaged allegedly lack pertain largely to the metacognitive area. Therefore, what we advocate is not actual grammar teaching which somehow assumes that the grammar taught is the grammar learnt and the grammar employed. There need be no isomorphic parity between the internal grammar in operation in the learners' mind and the grammar taught. We cannot with certainty point to any existing grammar as being so comprehensive and systematic as to ensure that "by following its rules
and conventions we could produce all or any of the possible sentences of the language". (Palmer 1971:150) and all its shades and nuances.

In fact, there is a growing feeling, especially as the Parallel Distributed Processing (PDP) has been gaining currency that language is not generative from a basic level of phonemes/morphemes, nor even of lexis; as Widdowson (1989) suggests learning appears to be a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual demands. When the juxtaposition of these components by themselves do not yield meaning, grammatical rules are called in to assist, to adopt, and to adjust the units with whatever syntactic fillings are required. In this sense rules are not generative but as Widdowson suggests regulative and subservient. So language use is not rule based but rule referred. It therefore would require that the classroom draws the learners' attention to features like lexical co-occurrence, the morpho-syntactic changes that occur and also enable the learner to appreciate the need for grammaticalization by making him/her see that the
association of lexis and context alone very often is not sufficient to establish meaning. McLaughlin (1989) says that advances are made in language development precisely when learners take notice of the structural characteristics of the language they hear and use. Our classroom procedures then would have to build-in provisions for consciousness-raise while encouraging fluency activities.

We do not also advocate presentation of gradual and sequenced sentences so cardinal to the Structural Approach as it militates against the insights derived from the interlanguage studies (cf. P. Corder 1981 and J. Richards 1981) It is emergingly clear that the grammar taught is not additively learnt and well-formed target-like structures do not blossom the day after instruction. 'Successive mastery of steadily accumulated structural entities' is not the path language learning takes, for language learning is holistic involving 'a continual revision/elaboration of a transitional competence, prompted by a new conflicting language data". (Prabhu 1984:9) He further says, since transitional competence is,

by its very nature not stable, not observable at any stage and not likely
to be uniform to a group of learners, it is not possible to determine what piece of language data is relevant to it and at what stage.

For Rutherford, interlanguage growth can be achieved by what he calls grammatical "consciousness-raising" (CR) -- a somewhat principled fashion in which the learner's attention is drawn to the features of the target language. The difference between grammar teaching and consciousness-raising would well be that CR involves the development of the learners' metacognitive awareness of the TL structure, while grammar teaching is an instructional method of exposing the learner to the TL structure.

C. Awareness-Analysis-Action Triad

Conscious analysis of data, we now feel comfortable to suggest, would form along with certain communicative principles, a part of the intervention programme for the disadvantaged learners. Now analysis of data is a mentalistic process and we appear to know mighty little about the actual process of analysis that takes place within our minds and there seems to be no proven method that directly causes successful analysis
of input from which to infer the structural properties of the language. So if there is no known ways causing analysis to happen, it is best that we leave the process of analysis to sort things out for itself; the next best we can do is to provide conditions that might facilitate for the learner, the process of analysis. Sharpening the learners' capacity to observe may possibly be one such way. That is, if we might picture the learning act as following an awareness-analysis-action triad, we might suggest that the unseen process of analysis may well be facilitated by heightening the learners' awareness of the stimuli and increasing their attention span and eye for details. As Van Pattan (1990) points out "intake is a subset of input that the learner actually perceives and processes." Awareness, in fact, is the missing link that can bridge the yawning gap Krashen (1982) leaves between 'comprehensible input' and acquisition. Learners would acquire a new language when they receive comprehensible input and begin consciously to notice the syntactic modifications they have undergone. The analysis that results from such heightened awareness may be further reinforced by action.
Broadly, awareness may be described as the act of making the learner conscious of all the features relevant to the task at hand and only those that are relevant; (that is the learner has to be taught to ignore trivial features and not omit the relevant ones.) Awareness, in addition to being made aware of the language-specific features (e.g. word order, morpho-syntactic changes, semantic nuances, etc.) includes also the learners' own awareness of the strategies (e.g. mnemonic, classificatory, etc.) involved in the learners' own act of knowing. It encompasses what is generally included under the head of metacognition i.e. being aware of oneself as a
learner and being conscious of the learning processes and strategies employed.

And analysis may be thought of as a mentalistic process that establishes a conceptual framework to make sense of the repeated presentation of the data. Economy of storage and efficiency of retrieval are the two most important characteristics of this mental construct. Action on the other hand may be thought of as the productive part of the triad that generates new language using the conceptual construct resulting from the analysis. However, action is a process rather than a product, because, on the merits of feedback, it causes reinforcement or restructuring to take place.

D. Metacognitive Processes

It is suggested that our learners be helped develop awareness techniques, and metacognitive strategies to improve their analytic capacities. If the disadvantaged learners have lacked such a supportive framework in their previous learning situations, they need to be provided assistance, precisely in these areas, at school. A methodology that treats the learner as a co-investigator in gaining insight into his or her own learning processes becomes inevitable. As Flavel
(Reeve and Brown 1985) suggests, this can be effective only if an individual consciously controls them. In the early learning days, for most advantaged learners the elders articulate for them the metacognitive processes—e.g. vocalizing plans and strategies and monitoring success (cf. Wertsch 1979, Malkin and Gilbride 1984)—involved in a task, often jointly solved. With time and experience, as the learner's skill improves, this responsibility is increasingly passed on to the learner and later the scaffolding is combined with shaping (correction, clarification and caring support) till the responsibility is totally ceded to the novice.

The problem, in summary, is to make the learners know what to learn and how to learn consciously drawing their attention to the structural properties is one promising way of achieving this. Holt (in Nisbet et al. 1988:35) says "the poor student who does not, so to speak, watch himself trying to understand, does not know most of the time whether he understands or not." Our plans must lead them to harness relevant metacognitive capacities and deploy them effectively to develop and operate appropriate strategies for learning.
If awareness may be equated with consciousness-raising, we might speak of action as consciousness-using. The declarative knowledge accruing from awareness becomes proceduralized with use and the interaction that results, aids analysis. And, though, for the sake of conceptual clarity, we speak as if awareness, analysis and action as being consecutive, there is no assertion that the three constructs identified earlier do not work simultaneously. In fact, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between what activities constitute awareness and what analysis and action; also we could find in both awareness and action, properties that could rather be included under analysis. However, there is little reason to doubt that awareness -- both perceptual and metacognitive, is a skill to be mastered if learning can take place effectively.

Awareness, as is eloquently illustrated by the different narration of eye witness to a crime or accident in a court of law, and in quiz-like competitions when called upon to point out inconsistencies and anomalies in a visual or narrative sequence, does not come easy to most learners,
especially the disadvantaged learners. In the classroom we have so often noted that these exhibit abysmal lack of awareness when for example, they copy erroneously in their answer books, even words that appear in the question paper. It is an area that pays to cultivate. For one can see and see but notice so little; hear and not listen; look and not observe. And because the data available through partial observation of input would be inadequate for any meaningful analysis, classrooms must develop the strategy of becoming aware in the learners. Lindemann, E. (1982:58) illustrates that perception is not a passive act. And as gestalt psychology tells us, one does not just perceive stimuli in their totality; one imposes patterns in them and actively composes them.

F. Topic-Specific Noticing:

Failure to observe apart, there is the additional problem of willingly ignoring certain features of the data presented. In other words, noticing is task-specific rather than generic. The principle of economy in cognition prompts us to eschew detail not central to the function at hand. Thus Lindemann (1982) demonstrates with the five of spades example that all that the participants in a game of card care
about is the number and the suit of the cards; therefore they are seldom able to represent from memory the arrangement, position, shape etc. of the five tokens of the symbol—in this case spades.

Similarly the reader/listener tends to select from the input what he/she thinks are significant for the restricted needs at hand (e.g. semantic rather than syntactic features) and de-emphasizes or ignores what appears not to matter. Thus those whose purposes are satisfied by recognition or the receptive skills, as well as students who feel sufficiently rewarded in their exams, for non-syntactic language would not expend energy to notice details such as morpho-syntactic changes, the rules governing articles, prepositions, etc. in the input.

Our learners do appear to have been content with the pragmatic rather than the syntactic mode of writing, because in the past they have been handsomely rewarded just for this mode. They therefore do not exert themselves to pay attention to the morpho-syntactic features in the input. It is of interest to quote one of the learners from our experimental group, who contended that he should be awarded better marks for the following piece of composition,
Martin cobbler basement house of live. Use good the materials and was did not charge the Martin much.

when he meant to say:

Martin was a cobbler living in the basement of a house. He worked well, used good materials and did not charge much.

because all the words that are needed appear in his answer even though grammatically inexact.

Richard Schmidt's report of his experience (n.d.) with 'noticing', in his attempts to learn Portuguese lends credibility to the theory that noticing facilitates analysis. Schmidt suggests that learning comes easy when conscious attention is paid to what is learnt and by noticing what is learnt actually used in context.

There have been other interesting studies reported in Reeve and Brown.(1985) showing that the intellectual performance of children with learning problems is considerably enhanced by metacognitive training. Though in these instances metacognition is conceived as being
conceptually larger than awareness, these studies still appear to suggest that learners succeed, if awareness is enhanced.

Success has also been reported in other pertinent experiments inculcating in the learners' ability "to monitor, to plan, and to self-regulate problem-solving activities" (Reeve and Brown 1985:345). It is concerned with the individual's understanding of the task demands, an appraisal of one's capacities to meet the goals, evolving strategies that would lead them to the goals set and monitoring and coordinating these activities.

Awareness as a metacognitive strategy, at least as it interests us, is the process of making the learner aware of himself/herself and being conscious of the learning strategies and processes employed. To make the concept useful, in pedagogical terms we shall proceduralize it as including noticing, conceptualizing, modelling, scaffolding, experimentation and evaluating. Our teaching hopes to induce:

i) noticing the word order, morpho-syntactic changes, etc.;
ii) identifying and naming their grammatical categories;

iii) applying the model learnt in creative situations;

iv) provision for verbal guidance and external cues, to support learners endeavours;

v) verifying the resultant language with the model and those of others; and

vi) further experimenting as teacher support is fading.

G. Blind Vs. Informed Training.

In a pedagogical set up it is essential to devise instructional routines to help these students acquire these skills and thus learn to learn. The present practices in classrooms appear to favour a teaching approach that aims at just transferring new items to the students' repertoire of vocabulary, idioms and phrases, structures, etc. Brown et al. (1981) call this approach 'blind teaching'. By this they mean, the
students are not active participants in the learning processes. The teacher often suggests to them strategies of learning at different instances but "without a concurrent understanding of the significance of that understanding" (Brown et al. 1981:15). In this trend, the learners have no idea why they adopt the strategies the teachers have taught them or what types of performances are helped by it or to which activities can these strategies be transformed. The blind teaching, may lead to enhanced performance in a test situation, because the learners use the appropriate strategy. But they are seen to fail in their ability to generalize and transfer learning to other relevant situations. Thus unless we teach the learners, along with what strategy to use, why we use that strategy "the children neither use the activity subsequently on their own volition nor transfer the activity to similar learning situations" (Brown et al. 1981:15).

The method opposed to blind teaching, which Brown et al. call 'informed training' is one where the learners are both induced to use a strategy and are given information regarding the importance of the activity. They are made to see the utility of the strategy through training in multiple contexts. They
are also taught to rehearse and get feedback concerning improvement. Informed training, thus becomes, 'self-control training' which is the technique seen as most successful in enhancing the learners' own knowledge and permitting transfer of training to appropriate areas. The teaching aims at the use of strategies and is accompanied by explicit instruction on how to employ, monitor, check and evaluate that strategy.

Brown et al. in a laboratory study used a long list of pictures (too long to memorize without employing a conscious mnemonic or other memory strategy) to test the effectiveness of the client's learning strategy. The group that was exposed to self control training improved their performance from 55% correct to almost perfect accuracy. The result was also durable, as seen from the results of post-test conducted a year after the initial training. The control group, on the other hand, did not differ significantly from their original level of performance.

Similarly, self-control teaching as Day (1988) used them for strategies of summarization of passages shows encouraging results. And in a read and recall protocol performance such training helped the learners
out-perform the rest on the following four measures of efficiency:

i) total amount recalled;

ii) the ratio of vital and trivial material recalled;

iii) time spent preparing for the test; and

iv) overt indices of strategy use (e.g. lip movement, looking away and self testing, etc.).

The following characteristics of a good teacher from Schalbert and Kleiman's (in Nisbet et al. 1988:51) list, appear particularly suited to help the learner respond to the cognitive goals involved in learning. A good teacher, they point out:

i) tailors the input to suit the learner's existing level of understanding;

ii) draws the learner's attention to the links ideas and topics already encountered;
iii) focuses on the essentials and shows the learner as well, how to leave aside the trivial; and

iv) monitors the learner's comprehension of the task.

One might also add to this list, making learners conscious of their own strategies, and highlighting the inconsistencies within and consequence of such strategies. (cf. Ramsden 1988:277). Learners so profit from experiences that help them become aware that their conceptions are inappropriate, which is far more powerful than teaching them it is wrong.

It can be concluded that as Spada (1985) points out, language learning "requires opportunities for both form-focussed and function focussed practice in the development of particular skill areas and if one or the other is lacking they do not appear to benefit too much."

H. Presentation and Practice

The second issue identified in the previous chapter as being critical if the disadvantaged learners
were to make progress was exposure. Maximizing exposure, it was noted, is a must if the disadvantaged learners have to progress towards a target-like use of English. Such an approach would basically rely on the insights of the communicative methodology. Included in it is the belief the deployment of fluency is necessary before the mastery of accuracy; that the act of focussing on meaning, in as yet unexplained ways results in the mastery of linguistic forms; and that interaction is an assured path to language acquisition.

Further, it was suggested, productive use of English would cause analysis of structure to take place. The following paragraphs attempts at enunciating the theoretical principles behind our assertion, specifying the nature of exposure and suggesting some pedagogical procedures.

Corder (1981:8) emphatically states the importance of exposure when he says, "given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to it." But the word exposure here is misleadingly ambiguous. One needs to specify the quantity and quality as well as the types of the exposure, if a sufficiently motivated learner can be guaranteed to learn. It would be, therefore, better to
break up the cover term 'exposure', into 'presentation' of language i.e opportunities to come in contact with a variety of situations in the spoken and written modes in which English is used, both in terms of teacher-talk and teaching materials and we may speak of 'practice' in the sense Swain (1985) uses the phrase 'opportunities for learners to produce' both in the spoken and the written modes.

If from the presentation the learner is able to form a hypothesis about the way language works, he/she needs to test it in production, get feedback and if need be modify the hypothesis. The notion of interlanguage specifies the role of the productive skills and further reveals that the process of language learning is incremental in nature and progresses with practice. In other words, it is not enough just to provide an environment to inculcate the receptive skills. Providing occasions for the productive skills is a necessary and perhaps a more rewarding procedure in the process of learning.

I. Constrictions in the Classrooms.

It follows that, given the fact that the disadvantaged learners have very little opportunity
outside, the classroom will have to maximize input both in terms of teacher-controlled presentation and student-initiated practice. Study after study has revealed that 2/3 of the time in the present classrooms is taken up by speech, and 2/3 of this time is taken up by the teacher's speech, leaving the learners a paltry 1% of the total day for their speech. (cf. Flanders 1970, Stubbs 1976, Wells 1991. etc.) And even the 1% of speech is restricted to those within the 'action zone', that is those with whom the teacher can easily make eye contact.

Fig. 2
As Dykman and Reisen (1979) point out nearly half the number in such a class, either by chance or choice stay away from the teacher's beam, in 'umbral' positions (back and margin seats). Students in these positions, "receive fewer communication, respond less frequently, learn less;" (in Salomon 1987:24). Data collected from the experimental group of learners in St. Joseph's college reveals that over 80% of them were in the umbral zone during their school days. (fig. 2.). And Jackson and Lahaderene show that the proportion of teacher-student interactions between students in the 'action zone' and those in the 'umbral zone' could be as high as 5:120! (in Adams and Biddle 1987:30 also cf. Schinke-Llano 1983). The brighter students normally occupy the action zone and these more often volunteer answers as opposed to those in the umbral zone who are occasionally asked to respond to questions posed by the teachers.

A sociometry (Nunan 1989) of such a classroom reveals the presence of 'stars', (those students who are sought after, receive and initiate lots of interaction from both the peers and the teachers), 'isolates' (who have very few friends to interact with), and 'rejectees' (those practically nobody likes
to associate with and neither receive nor initiate any significant number of interactions from the peers as well as the teachers.) The rejectees certainly, and the isolates to an extent are kept off even from the little interaction today's classroom provide. There is little doubt that disadvantaged learners fall mostly into the isolate and the reject categories.

What goes on inside even an ELT classroom is under the name of lecture teacher talk, — "an extended monologic exposition of a topic, often interspersed with sequence of display questions (i.e. questions to which the questioner already knows the correct response)" (Wells 1991). By and large, nearly one third of the time is spent in the teacher dictating 'notes' which cryptically summarises the lecture but ends up being memorised and reproduced verbatim in the examinations. Apart from this notes taking, there is hardly any place for the learners to engage in any writing on their own. It is evident then, that there is hardly any place in these classrooms for the learners to deploy their productive skills of speaking and writing.

Besides display questions described above, the classroom follows a model of interaction peculiar to
itself. Often the teacher initiates (I) a dialogue of sorts by usually asking a display question, the learner responds (R) and the teacher provides a feedback (F). Besides this familiar IRF patterns of interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard 1988), the classroom, to borrow the terms of Heath (1986) use, 'genres of language use' (in Wells 1986:4) like:

'label quests' (where items are named or learners are asked to provide the name),

'meaning quests' (where the teacher asks for explanation of what is meant or intended),

'recounts' (where the teacher retells experience or information known both to the teacher and the learners),

'accounts' (generated by the teacher, concerning information new to the learner or the new interpretations thereof), and

'eventcasts' (running narratives on events currently in attention of the
teller and the listener or forecasts events to be accomplished in the future).

Thus even the little interaction in the classroom is teacher-initiated and is almost always didactic rather than reciprocal.

In fine today, as Iillich says, "schools are designed on the assumption that there is a secret to everything in life; that the quality of life depends on knowing that secret; the secrets can be known only in orderly succession; and that only teachers can properly reveal these secrets" (Iillich 1973). What we find in these classrooms is a mechanistic model of education, following the organisational principles of an assembly line mass production based on the mistaken assumption that well prepared input is all that is required to obtain the desired output.

The underlying theory of psychology of learning that informs these type of classrooms is adequately captured by the transmission model. According to this model the teacher is the 'knower' and through instruction pre-packaged knowledge is transformed to the learner. Like Mr. Gradgrind in Dickens' *Hard Times*,
these children may see learners as 'little...pitchers ... to be filled so full of facts." Freire (1972) calls this a banking-concept of education where the teacher's instruction is banked additively in the learner's brain along a linear path and retrieved in its original form when required, as for examination purposes.

J. The Constructionist Model

In the recent decades, however, educational psychologists (Piaget and Inhelder 1969, Bower 1974, Brown 1973, Donaldson 1978, Bruner 1978, Vygotsky 1978, Feurestein 1986, etc.) have seriously challenged this view of acquisition of knowledge. The learner, they show, is not a passive recipient of information passed on and that a text or a lecture is no repository of meaning. The constructionists theory suggest that knowledge depends so much on the strategies of meaning-making that the learner brings to bear on the data that confronts him/her in a situation in which he/she is purposefully engaged.

This model avers that knowledge can only be interiorized by individual learners as they interact with an input and actively construct or reconstruct knowledge, making sense of the new information in terms
of what is already known. Such acquisition occurs only when the learners are actively engaged in all the processes involved. It is thus clear that our programme of intervention must model itself on an interactive form of constructing knowledge.

Piaget speaks of a double process of assimilation and accommodation leading to a constant enlargement of the learner's schema. Assimilation is the result of the process of incorporation of new ideas made available to the learner and accommodation refers to the changing of one's mental structure to fit the new experience that occur. Schemas or 'cognitive maps' (Downs and Stea 1973) are the abstract and generalizable rules that people generate "regarding certain regularities in the relationship among events. Once established they serve as a guide to behaviour and as a framework which influences the manner in which relevant new information will be assimilated" (Salomon 1987:60).

Knowledge, constructionists believe, is an organic process of meaning making, and interaction with others help calibrate their interiorization of information against those of other people and adjust, interface and modify their current mental models to achieve intersubjectivity with people they are communicating.
Bruner and Haste (1987) explain that learning takes place through:

a dialectical relationship between individual and the social where participants in conversation formulate linguistic representations in the light of understanding the matters in question and modify these representations in the light of feedback they receive on the appropriateness of their formulations in the contributions of other participants. (in Wells 1991).

Accepting the constructionists' principles, in our intervention programme "teaching can no longer be seen as imparting of information to relatively passive recipients and then checking to see they can correctly reproduce it" (Wells 1986:220). Small group activities, pair work etc. despite the fear of being 'junky data' can, especially under supervision be an effective way of maximizing exposure to the target language.
K. The Model Classroom.

For effective exposure to the target language to take place the programme of intervention should provide for:

a) meaningful contexts and engaging activities,

b) applicatory activities providing for the deployment of the learners' productive skills of speaking and writing, and

c) active engagement in knowledge construction and interacting with teachers and other learners.

This calls for a change in the physical arrangement of the classroom; but more essential is a change in the culture of the classroom and the attitude to teaching and learning that would promote wider participation of the learners and facilitate group and peer activities in the classroom. It should also enable the teacher to interact with all the learners and avoid umbral zones that some learners use to shield themselves from most of all that goes on inside the classroom.
The change in the physical arrangement itself will have no great effect on acquisition of knowledge unless it is used to help learners actively construct knowledge and that this is best done by interacting with others in pair work, group work and seminars and project work. (For some good examples of cooperative learning programmes e.g. Learning Together, Group Investigation, Teams-Games-Tournament, Jigsaw, Student Team-Achievement Division, Team Assisted Individuation etc. see Good and Brophy 1987:432-436).

The cooperative learning methods, it is true, have many important issues of theory and practice left unanswered. However, as Slavin (1985:128) suggests:

the research done up to the present has shown enough positive effects of cooperative learning, on a variety of outcomes, to force us to re-examine traditional instructional practices. ... We can no longer see the class as 30 or more individuals whose only instructionally useful interactions are with the teacher...
The big advantage of such activities, when many minds pour over a problem, is that the participants begin to enunciate themselves in coherent and detailed verbal formulations, in which process gaps and inconsistencies in each other's knowledge is revealed and the mutual supply of the missing details repair the understanding.

Good and Brophy (1987:438) record experiments that prove, that giving explanations to other group members is positively correlated with later achievement scores, indicating that students who know what to ask about and succeed in getting their questions answered are likely to master the material. Again in the words of Wells (1985),

In developing the account, the role of cause and effect relationships, of inferences, generalizations, extrapolations and so on, is also made apparent, as are also failures to make such connections.

When the learners find the topic interesting and can learn by doing, assisted whenever necessary by peers and teachers, there is a very good chance of
cognitive competence to develop. Wells also notes that in real life learning takes place when the learner is personally committed to the task he/she is engaged in and is determined to achieve the goal and also when the task itself is intrinsically satisfying. Classrooms in our intervention programme, then have to mirror these features in the curriculum and methodology.

We might visualize the two factors cardinal to learning i.e interest and control, in the form of a window thus:

```
  Low
 I N T E R E S T
  |
  | 1  | 2 |
  |
  | 3  | 4 |
  High

CONTROL
Teacher Directed. Self Directed.
```

Fig. 3
Here we present a conceptual model of learning procedures where:

- **window 1** represents low interest and teacher control.
- **window 2** represents low interest and self control.
- **window 3** represents high interest and teacher control.
- **window 4** represents high interest and self control.

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 4**

Using this model, we can plot today's typical classroom as shown in Fig. 4 which is largely teacher controlled and of low interest.
The ideal classroom would be as shown in fig.5 with the largest window for the high interest and self controlled activities. This model has still room for window 1 and 2, because lectures we believe have got an important part to play at least in higher education (a) to generate interest and whet learners' appetite for learning, (b) to provide an overview of the topic to be covered, and (c) at the end, to recapitulate and summarize what has been learnt.

The teachers' role in the intervention programme will have to change largely to one of a friend, facilitator and guide. They are expected to lend their 'expert consciousness' to the novices providing them with 'an enabling framework','props' and 'scaffolding' (Bruner 1986) to enable the learner progress along 'the
zone of proximal development' which Vygotsky describes as "the distance between the actual developmental levels as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1987). It is hoped, that this process will lead to a 'handover' stage when the learners can progress even after the gradual withdrawal of the expert's assistance, unaided, along the path of meaning making and achieve an enlightened internalization of the task at hand.

The teachers' assistance in these processes, it must be noted, is in response to, not in lieu of learners' efforts. The learning sequence follows a labyrinthine path of meddling, muddling and modelling and therefore sufficient time for learning activities is essential. Furthermore the expert must resist the temptation to pose too many questions to the novices, especially questions that require minimal answers and therefore trigger the lowest level of intellectual activity.

There is little doubt that a successful process of knowing as explained by the constructionists theory of
learning that relies very much on the creation of a new
classroom climate will enable learners to develop
'intentional, strategic and integrative control of
their own learning' (Bereiter and Scaradamalia in Wells
1986.). -- the very goals set out at the outset of this
paper.

L. Attitude to Errors

Regarding error correction, rather than overt
correction, the teacher should employ 'expansion' - the
kind mothers use to help their children communicate.

E.g. Learner: I.. I was...was er..er..
write the exams tomorrow.

Teacher: Oh, so you wrote your
exams yesterday.

and 'paraphrasing'--an interpretive technique 'often
taught to counsellors and psychotherapists' (Tarone and
Yule 1989:114-5). It involves paraphrasing the
interlocutors entire message e.g.

Teacher: So you are saying that.........
(or) You mean .........
Thus, a combination of activities promoting communicative fluency in the disadvantaged learners along with an effort to focus the learners attention on the language-specific features of the target language, it is hoped, can be a complementary process in helping the disadvantaged learners allegedly suffering from latent analytic capacity and dearth of exposure to the target language. The programme of intervention envisaged would then make the disadvantaged learners focus attention on the structural properties and make them infer for themselves where and when morpho-syntactic changes take place; there would also be attention given to word order, the principles of embedding, etc. For the class in mind, the prescribed lessons would lend themselves easily to awareness raising; these would be complemented by communicative activities, those based on the themes of the lessons and those not directly connected with it. In any case the methodology would provide a lot of opportunity for learners to interact among themselves and with the teachers and in the spoken as well as the written modes.

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