CHAPTER - I

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Efforts at maintaining a conversation between theory and practice in the teaching of ESL requires concerted preoccupation, with the shifting and tenuous relationship between theory and practice on the part of practising teachers. The profession's attention away from a serious concern with polemically oriented speculations regarding what is known as language teaching specialism, towards consideration of what actually happens in the classroom marks a breakthrough in the history of ESL. This underscoring of the importance of practice is effected by Keith Morrow and Marita Schocker's poser "how in a monolingual class, does the teacher ensure that activities based on the text are carried out in the foreign language when any authentic response to it will inevitably be expressed in the native language?".

The poser is followed by the authors' pointing out to the conspicuous absence of "discussion in methodology handbooks" of the question. The question is highly relevant to the Indian context where generation of the target language in the classroom is pivoted around "the prescribed text book". The direction of the 90's in ESL stakes out that real advancement in language education can be brought in by regarding speculations as validated against specific contexts.

Specific contexts cannot be regarded in isolation however. They include a discussion on methods, models of second language learning, variables like societal factors, the individual learner's personality traits and ego states, her mental and
physical age, motivational factors etc. Bernard Spolsky iterates the necessity of formulating a single theoretical model which would highlight "necessary conditions" of language learning along with certain "graded conditions", "in which there is a relation between the amount or extent to which the condition is met and the nature of the outcome,". He continues, "others again are typicality conditions that apply typically not necessarily".

Spolsky's enumeration of 74 conditions for second language learning in his seminal work *Conditions for Second Language Learning*, projects the complexity involved in building a single theoretical model based on speculative repertory of all the fields which inform language teaching and learning, as well as the practical constraints obtaining in a wide variety of contexts. As a consequence of the non-feasibility of developing a comprehensive model combined with the overwhelmingly complex collection of constraints that surface when specific contexts are examined, any discussion on methodology is terminated with "the face-saving formula" that "there is no best method". Such a termination according to Prabhu, "succeeds in preserving conversational peace", but causes "a loss of the productive potential of professional debate". Attempts at recording what goes on in a formal language learning context projects a study of how a particular grammatical morpheme is learnt against or in keeping with the natural order of acquisition. Rod Ellis points to the fact that "there was no account of what went on in the classrooms themselves" in studies which attempted to confirm the relative utility of formal instruction. He also affirms that
there is only "insufficient evidence" to establish the validity of formal instruction with definite criterial factors. He also concludes. "It is not likely that such evidence will be forthcoming until there are more qualitative studies of the classroom discourse that results from formal instruction and of the linguistic development that such discourse induces ".

Craig Chaudron in his Second Language Classrooms makes a survey of research conducted in actual classrooms, in order to identify salient features of research based on classroom contexts like the nature of teacher-student exchange in the classroom. The validity of such reviews is conceptualized in the following perspective. "... some classroom processes may aid the acquisition of certain structures (e.g. vocabulary) without influencing the others (syntax). By noting differential effects, classroom oriented research can guide the teacher, researcher, curriculum developer or administrator toward principles of effective instruction". The studies reported in Second Language Classrooms give an overview of the actual interactions that take place between teachers and pupils, the types of questioning behaviours of the teachers, the rate of speech of teacher input, its syntactic complexity and repetition etc,. Such studies require trained observers as well as observation instruments which would record and evaluate fleeting phenomena like "conversation facilitation" in the classroom context. They also require instruments of measurements, recording facilities and research designs previously tested to control contextual variables. Such studies may not bring in success orientation owing to a lack of research tradition in the Indian context.
Deriving insights from such research, studies can be conducted within the constraints of ESL teaching in the classroom.

Conducting experiments in a research-poor environment brings in a host of fundamental queries. Studies conducted to capture the validity of formal instruction ambiguously sets down that formal instruction aids language acquisition. Ambiguity arises because the technology referred to as 'formal instruction' is not narrowed down and specified to be identified in procedural terms. Ellis maintains a distinction between instruction orientated towards the formal aspects of language and instruction enabling the learner to produce her own meaning. Therefore in the account forwarded by Ellis there is no adequate evidence that creating an acquisition rich environment in the class results in the learner's acquiring the language. Another difficulty arises with the use of the terms 'acquisition' and 'learning'. Krashan's non-interface position posits that learning is the outcome of monitor activation while acquisition is an outcome of sub-conscious processes at work when learning takes place. Rod Ellis credits Krashan's distinction by theorizing that informal communicative approaches promote acquisition in the classroom while formal communicative approaches promote learning. But Ellis does not specify what formal and informal communicative approaches are. Very vaguely he suggests that in informal communicative approach the teacher has to 'abandon' her traditional role and 'the input will be determined by the natural process of adaptation and negotiation that all communicative enterprises generate'. Ellis does not concede to Krashan's non-interface position which rules out the possibility of
acquisition being transferred into learning and vice-versa. Other studies like Bialystok's conclude that there are two types of knowledge, 'implicit and explicit' and practice serves as a mechanism by which explicit knowledge turns into implicit knowledge. The studies do not reveal how formal or informal instruction promotes learning or acquisition.

The acquisition-learning distinction surfaces in the ends-means specification analysis of Keith Johnson. He writes "In many education systems, the key question for students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and even inspectors is not 'Are students gaining in communicative competence?' but 'Are they on course for the examination?". His main concern is that any policy promotion in ESL make explicit the hidden curriculum agenda. He observes "A great deal of classroom behaviour which appears inexplicable and even bizarre in terms of the official policy can be readily understood once the 'hidden' syllabus has been identified.

Classroom oriented research, therefore need not be obsessed with "installation of innovation". It can attempt to straighten the disjuncture between means and ends in a particular teaching context. However, this kind of research may not lead to conclusive evidence for advocating any teaching or learning methodology. In majority of the cases where the learners are unskilled with a low motivational level and from unfavourable socio-economic back ground may, in the words of Johnson. "have no strategies, i.e. no principled basis for making constructive use of learning opportunities, and it seems doubtful whether the acts
performed under these circumstances should be regarded as evidence of 'a learning style' anymore than the motions of some one drowning should be regarded as evidence of a 'swimming style'. In such instances the teacher's attempt at enabling the learners to acquire a survival level language is worth reporting.

The dominant thought pattern of the 80's and 90's in language teaching is biased towards an analysis of teaching and learning styles and strategies. A single teaching style following a single philosophy of language teaching is looked upon with suspicion. It is reasoned in the context of the present project that the concentration achieved through introducing a single method might help educational planners to guage the discrepancy between the current state of affairs and a desired future state in terms of teacher as well as learner performance. Language Teaching analysis can be promoted only when there are criterial levels of teaching and learning acts set up.

The choice of a methodology for language Teaching in a specific context would lend support to an attempt at viewing the course in progress as a unified whole. In Stern's view "the disappointment with research on global 'methods' such as comparisons between audiolingualism and cognitivism, had led to a shift of interest from research on teaching to research on learning". Stern's contention that "one has also to come to grips with language teaching and learning inside the classroom; the nettle has to be seized; to investigate the events of the language classroom itself and try to understand how and why language learning goes on there as well as how and why it often
fails to occur”, is a logical derivation of inconclusive results of 'methods research'. However it is not known what parameters can be set up to investigate the events of the classroom, apart from a teaching methodology.

In the Indian context a needs analysis approach similar to that of the Munby model would be least purposeful, as learner-interviews to pool together learner's assumptions about language learning and teaching, can be successful only in a context where the learners have an overt purpose in learning a foreign language. While detailing various designs to organize language teaching experience, Richard Berwick mentions several orientations instanced by designs based on 1. Organized body of knowledge; 2. Specific competencies; 3. Social activities and problems; 4. Cognitive or learning processes; 5. Feelings and attitudes; 6. Needs analysis and interests of the learner. Various programmes offered by the council of Europe's modern language project popularized needs based programming in language education in the past. There is no evidence that in this country the learners can make informed choices regarding suitable methodology as it happened in the localized model of Australian Adult Migrant Education Program.

As opposed to these experimental designs in language education, in the Indian context, treating language curriculum as an organized body of knowledge was the dominant mode of approach to ESL curriculum design. The structures of language as content might have been given a communicative orientation and there is no evidence to the contrary that structural teaching did not
promote communication in the target language. With the exit of the British from the country, the rich linguistic environment had disappeared and therefore, it is imperative that the target language is treated both as process as well as content in the language classroom, with a view to compensating what was lost, with the assistance of a methodology which considers affective, cognitive and experimental dimensions of teaching and learning.

The point of departure in 'methods' debate is effected when Moskowitz defined humanistic techniques in language teaching as those that "blend what the student feels, thinks and knows with what he is learning in the target language". The models based on the theory that language learning predominantly based on human cognition introduced the code as structured wholes taking advantage of the logicality of the internal arrangement of language, highlighting correspondences and correlation, the theory being that clusters of language are acquired through intense pre-occupation with the structural wholes, whether they are phonological, morphological or grammatical structures. The paradigm shift in learning theory from the items and arrangement of language to that of the learner's interlanguage coupled with Chomskyan emphasis on creativity and generation in language acquisition supports any venture in making language learning 'humanistic' as individual learners are not to be treated as mere automatons.

With the necessity of working from the target language structures, which form an ideal construct disappearing, the practising teacher has to become increasingly aware of the
possibility of working from the structures available with the learner. If the structures are available in the mother tongue, such structures are to be elicited through target language structures to be converted into data base for further learning. The processes that are involved here are deciphering and decoding the teacher-talk text language continuum into learner language. The concept of inter-language lends a perspective to this kind of speculation.

A methodology which will be impactive when generation of language being the aim of the course should provide enough scope for genuine as well as pseudo communication. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology creates a context for communication in the classroom. CLT gains in conceptual and executional value when it is discussed alongwith certain other 'humanistic' models, proposed in the 70s and 80s, the prominent among them being suggestopedia, total physical response the silent way and community Language Learning.

An exploration into the alternative proposals legitimize the increasing realization that any learning endeavour revolves around motivational factors, the learner's self-image, her attitude towards the target language culture, ability, willingness to take risks etc. In a human venture like learning, following scientific techniques strictly involves the risk of the teacher overlooking personality traits and individual learning styles. While a cognitive orientation to language learning through rule-governed behaviour provided limited opportunities for experimental learning, at the other end of the spectrum, the
'humanistic' methodologies claimed that they provided opportunities for learners to involve their whole persons as learning depended on affective factors as well. The subconscious and unconscious forces at work is capitalized when Lozonov propounded his suggestopedia basing learning principles on suggestology; Which is a "science concerned with systematic study of the non-rational, non-conscious influences" that human beings constantly respond to. The atmosphere of a suggestopedia classroom is described as follows: "The most conspicuous characteristics of suggestopedia are the decoration, furniture and arrangement of the classroom, the use of music and authoritative behaviour of the teacher." The theory of language implied in the procedures of suggestopedia, in the perception of Richards and Rodgers, is that lexis is central to language learning as projected by the procedure of memorization of vocabulary pair. Lozonov refers to "experiencing language in whole meaningful contexts". The materials, light hearted stories, were selected with the express purpose of appealing to the affective dimension of the learner's personality. Richards and Rodgers abstract the following evaluative conclusion after considering suggestopedia in all its aspects. "Lozonov's recommendation of such stories seems to be entirely motivational, however and does not represent a commitment to the view that language is pre-eminently learned for and used in its emotive function".

Total physical response, developed by Asher is linked to the trace theory of memory in psychology. The central tenet of TPR is again learner involvement in the absence of a stressful
atmosphere, while suggestopedia aims at fostering the learner’s capacity to retain chunks of language through memorization, TPR has as its aim the teaching of basic skills. Before commencement of teaching conversational skills, imperative drills leading to physical actions, constituted the preliminary stage of learning. The rationale behind such imperative drills is explained away by Richards and Rodgers as follows: "He (Asher) views the verb, and particularly the verb in the imperative, as the central linguistic activity around which language use and learning are organized". Richards and Rodgers observe "The experimental support for the effectiveness of Total Physical Response is sketchy and typically deals with only the very beginning stages of learning", while assessing the credentials of the method.

The silent way developed by Caleb Gattegno pitches on the importance of the teacher being silent and the learner producing as much language as possible. The principal learning and teaching philosophy of the silent way, in the words of Richards and Rodgers is stated as follows:

1. Learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects.
2. Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned.
3. Learning is facilitated by problem solving involving the material to be learned.

Gattegno's scepticism about the role of linguistic theory in language teaching methodology is expressed by his overmuch concern for experiential learning and his observation that the
composition of the language into its phonological and syntactical components is learnt when one has a 'feel' for the language.

Curran's community language learning (CLL) emphasizes the affective dimension of language as against the current practice in which "the intellectual and factual process alone are regarded as the main intent of learning, to the neglect and involvement of the self". Therefore, the learners and the teachers through 'an interaction', "experience a sense of their own wholeness". The learning of a new language involves the learner being born again, thus developing a "persona", "with all traits and challenges that are associated with birth and maturation". The actual teaching is modelled on Rogerian psychological counseling, "personal learning conflicts ...anger, anxiety and similar psychological disturbance - understood and responded to by the teacher's counseling sensitivity - are indicators of deep personal involvement".

It is clearly understood that the different methods discussed advocate different proposals for teaching and learning, theory development being the aim of each method. Communicative language teaching methodology, on the other hand is exemplified by its proponents not only in terms of underlying assumptions but concrete pedagogical proposals. In an institutionalized setting where principles of formal education are strictly adhered to, the atmosphere which facilitates learning in a suggestopedia classroom is hard to create. These humanistic methods are sometimes called "fringe" methodologies. While it may be
unsuitable to the educational ethos of the Indian context, to implement these proposals, an affective dimension to the official curriculum, which these methodologies insist upon, can be added. A methodology which is loosely codified as the CLT can incorporate the humanistic element into its concrete task proposals.

Task based teaching, the mainstay of the CLT methodology can have its own philosophy as an ideal construct against which the procedural activities of real time can be validated. Performing of tasks by the learners and evaluation of the same seem to be the central concern of any CLT curriculum. In the context of task-based communication promotion in the classroom Kumaravadivelu talks of teacher intentions and learner interpretations. The task is being paid increased attention by way of grading and formatting, while setting up different criterial levels of adequacy for learner response. Fashioning tasks to enlist increased learner involvement is one of the concerns of the 90's.

The queries relating to task based teaching triggers different methodological possibilities in task based teaching. Studies which project what is actually happening in a classroom should also project how an official syllabus is converted into a learning syllabus. An ethnographic account as opposed to codification of details into statistical terms is necessary to make manifest how the official syllabus is resolved into learning and teaching acts. It should also project, in the case of 'captive learners', how much of language learning can take place
language as a skill rather than a capacity to read and interpret texts.

An Indian experiment known worldwide as the Bangalore Project, which was also known as the Communicational Teaching Project, (CTP) provided a model to the experiment reported here, conducted within the constraints of a pre-designed curriculum with the given syllabus and the given subject population at the first degree level, suggesting largely that in an educational climate where the teacher is vested with the authority of an arbiter of knowledge she can become highly conscious of the ongoing events of learning only to effect an intervention suitable to the prevailing educational ethos.

The CTP also suggested that research in methodology need not depend on quantitative research designs alone by providing descriptive accounts of learning-teaching events, clearly interpreting these descriptions in terms of a robust Language Teaching philosophy. Critical to CTP philosophy, was the attempt at examining the relationship between theory and practice in the actual classroom setting, which would inform the perceptions of the practising teacher as well as the ESL Specialist. CTP also established that the communication situation in a classroom can best be subjected to negotiation between the teacher and the taught. The CTP offered to the ESL world a coherent account of what happened in a classroom context. When the strong version of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) is operationalised, the adjunct result is the procedural syllabus. Historically too, the CTP came out with brilliant ideas for future research at a time when the ESL world was looking for an alternative to the
structure-based teaching methodologies. Apart from outlining the contours of descriptive Research the CTP also provided convenient reference points to the project reported, in terms of which the present project realized its own conceptual and practical design.

The present project therefore, undertook to examine whether it would be possible to build a user-orientation into the prescribed course with the given syllabus. It is to be established that a course which professes to train learners for the conventional summative examination can incorporate skills and subskills, enabling the learner to derive maximum surrender value from the course, CLT both in its strong and weak versions provide an ideological backdrop, in terms of which the ongoing events of the classroom could be evaluated.

CLT as it is understood in the present context, is not a monolithic compendium of concepts, but an assortment of a set of prescriptions for the conduct of an ESL Lesson. CLT's emphasis on tasks has been capitalized because the assertion that a particular methodology is to be followed in a particular context remains inexplicit. This is supported by Swaffer et al, who write that:

Methodological labels assigned to teaching activities are, in themselves, not informative, because they refer to a pool of classroom practices which are universally used. The differences among major methodologies are to be found in the ordered hierarchy, the priorities assigned to tasks. Not what classroom activity is
used, but when and how form the crux of the matter in distinguishing methodological practice.

The scope and nature of the inquiry undertaken did not warrant a prescriptive ends-means research design. An experiment conducted in the actual classroom, if it depends wholly on a normative research design, by categorically setting out to provide, confirming or disconfirming evidence on learning, might miss out on the complexities involved in a problematic, real life situation. Moreover, the present experiment undertook to explore not only the direct relationship between teaching in the classroom and learner performance in the examination, but also whether communicative competence in a limited way can be achieved by the learners in such a taught course. A purely scientific design with a cause and effect orientation simplifies the process element in the teaching-learning continuum.

The pursuit of experimentation was not to be abandoned owing to the difficulty in controlling the variables of an actual classroom context. The necessity to empirically analyse the problems involved in ESL pedagogy is projected thus in the words of Christopher Brumfit and Rosamond Mitchell:

... - We have had far more scholarship than empirical investigation. The result of this is that exciting recommendations have abounded in the last twenty years: functional notional syllabuses, procedural syllabuses, needs analysis, authentic materials and graded objectives, to name only a few, but there has been remarkably little descriptive work.

In order to meet the complexity of the empirical-descriptive
Work ethnography was chosen among the research methods discussed by Craig Chaudron and summarized by David Nunan in the table reproduced below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tradition</th>
<th>Typical Issues</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychometric</td>
<td>Language gain from different methods, materials treatments</td>
<td>Experimental method - Pre and post tests with experimental and control groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Extent to which learner behaviour is a function of teacher determined interaction.</td>
<td>Coding classroom interactions in terms of various observation systems and schedules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>Analysis of classroom discourse in linguistic terms.</td>
<td>Study classroom transcripts and assign utterances to pre determined categories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographic</td>
<td>Obtain insights into the classroom as a 'cultural' system.</td>
<td>Naturalistic 'uncontrolled' observation and description</td>
</tr>
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The decision to impose a complex research design was born out of the realization that the ESL context is a system of interacting sub-systems whose complexity can be treated, to an extent by a dual design. Ethnographic research, thus can incorporate principles of statistics oriented nomological
research with a view not to rule out alternative explanations while arriving at tentative conclusions. As any educational enterprise is a multi-disciplinary activity research should combine methods to suit the context. Any bias towards a particular tradition would camouflage the real issues involved. In the words of Brumfit and Mitchell "too much interpretation and too little empirical study may result in myths being perpetuated without being tested against recent observation and experiment". They warn us against the other extreme tendency in making research studies. "Too much empirical study and too little interpretation may result in nothing being discussed that cannot be measured by the currently available technology, or only the currently fashionable research areas being considered relevant to the process of language learning". The Phenomenology of ESL demands a research design which would focus on the constituent elements of ESL as well as a wholistic perspective, the analytic and the synthetic forming a continuum.
NOTES
CHAPTER - I

1 Keith Morrow and Maria Schocker, "Using Texts in a communicative approach", ELT Journal 41.4 (October 1987) 249.


3 N.S. Prabhu, "There is no Best Method - Why", TESOL Quarterly 24.2 (Summer 1990) 163.


5 ibid., 241.


7 ibid.,

8 Rod Ellis, "Informal and formal approaches to communicative language Teaching", ELT Journal 36.2. (January 1982) 80.

9 ibid.,

10 Rod Ellis, Understanding second language acquisition 235.

ibid., 11.

ibid.,


ibid., 208.


ibid.,

ibid.,
21 Richards and Rodgers, "Approaches and Methods" 88.

22 ibid., 97.

23 Richards and Rodgers, "The silent way", *Approaches and methods* 99.

24 Richards and Rodgers, "Community Language Learning", *Approaches and methods*.

25 ibid.,

26 ibid.,


31 Brumfit and Mitchell, *Research in the language classroom*.

32 *ibid.*,