Chapter II

Classroom Interaction and Interaction Analysis

This chapter undertakes a closer study of the two theoretical concerns of this project: Classroom Interaction (CI) and Interaction Analysis (IA). It browse over certain important issues/definitions/concerns in both, and also discusses the various aspects, categories, advantages and disadvantages of the quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

2.1. The Classroom

The primary importance of the classroom lies in the fact that it is the customary territory of the language learner. The classroom is not merely a segregated space in the building of the school where teachers and learners meet for formal teaching and learning of a subject. It has more dimensions and energies than that meet the eye.

It is an acknowledged fact that learning cannot take place without a learning environment. The various theories about learning and acquisition have one thing in common: there is an environment which may encourage or hinder the learning process. Whether it be the Piagetian theory, which advocates the individualism of a child, or the social constructivist approach, which argues that learning is a result of
social interactions, no theory has ignored the context in which learning takes place. As far as the formal learning of an L2 is concerned, classroom is the most obvious and immediate context in which learning occurs.

Psychologists have often called for an understanding of the context in which an event takes place. Something that is judged to be good or nice in one context may be judged otherwise in another context. Understanding the learning atmosphere created in the classroom is of particular importance to language teachers, learners and researchers.

The cultural context and educational system prevalent in a country will have a definitive impact on the learning environment. A specific ethos will be present within a school itself, which will mould the kind of learning that takes place in that school. “At an even more basic level, the immediate physical environment of the classroom and the nature of the personal interactions which occur within it will have a profound influence upon whether, what and how any individual learns a language” (Williams and Burden, 1997: 189). The particular learning climate that arises in a classroom results from the personal interactions that occur in that classroom. Whether that climate is construed as facilitative or not depends on the members of that class, who interpret it in their own ways, according to their own cultural, social, racial and individual differences. Each classroom then is an entity by itself, with its own identity, learning climate, codes of conduct, and even its own sense of humour. What may be a good joke for one learning group need not be so
for another group, or even for an outsider. It transpires that the classroom acts as a microcosm to the macrocosm of social life.

Any analysis of classroom language learning must take account of the social facts of classrooms as particular social institutions in which the local contexts of particular participation must be connected to the broader social forces governing the school as a predominantly ‘languaged’ institution. [...] Any approach to classroom behaviour, especially one that is ethnographic in character, must make [...] a link between the classroom as a social setting which is illustrative of, and contributes to, higher order social forces. (Candlin, TCLL xii)

In fact, one strong objection raised against the scientific approach to L2 classroom is that it neglects the social context of interaction. Devoid of the social context, even the cause-effect relationships cannot be fully understood.

The classroom may be a relatively ‘inefficient’ environment for the methodical mastery of a language system, just as it is limited in providing opportunities for ‘real world’ communication in a new language. But the classroom has its own communicative potential and its own authentic meta-communicative purpose. It can be a particular social context for the intensification of the cultural experience of learning. (Breen, qtd. in TCLL xiv)

Though first-language classrooms have been the focus of many studies, and have yielded valuable information about the experiences and explorations of teachers
and learners in the classroom, there is a dearth of similar studies of the L2 and ESL classrooms, a fact which is lamented by ELT scholars in particular, according to whom “by and large descriptive evidence about L2 learning in and out of classrooms is almost non-existent” (TCLL 79). Van Lier asserts the importance of studying the classroom as a context when he says:

In strictly practical terms the classroom aims to be a short cut to language development. In a limited amount of time, measured in classroom periods, it aims to make up for the continuous and long-term exposure, and the vital need for communication that characterize the child’s acquisition of the mother tongue. In pedagogical terms there is a tacit contract between teacher and learners, or school and learner, which govern purposes, roles and relationships, and rules for appropriate classroom conduct. In social terms the classroom is a group of people with overt and hidden aims, patterns of behaviour, standards for judging participation, efforts and solidarity, etc., similar to other groups. (TCLL 78)

In other words, the classroom becomes more than a four-walled room, more than a segregated space for formal learning. It acquires a multifaceted dimension, with patterns of personal, behavioural and verbal interactions dovetailing and overlapping each other, evolving into a dynamic context for L2 learning.
2.1.1. Features of the Classroom

Though “our understanding of classrooms, and what goes on in them is still very limited” (Stenhouse qtd. in TCLL 78), researchers have identified certain features which are common to all classrooms. Chief among them are classroom structure and classroom climate. Other features such as the atmosphere, the chemistry of the group, teacher behaviour and individual perceptions can be grouped under these two major features.

2.1.1.1. Classroom Structure

By the term “classroom structure” researchers mean the patterns of organization of learning experiences. The three main structures or environments that are identified are competitive, co-operative and individualistic (Williams and Burden, 1997: 192). Though the terms are more or less self-descriptive, a few words of elucidation will render them clearer.

The competitive structure is the standard one found in classrooms and schools. It promotes competition among learners by stressing the competitive reward structures. The drawback of this situation is that it can promote only those learners with high self-esteem and drive. For those with low self-opinion, the situation becomes detrimental and non-conducive to learning language, thus building up the fear of making mistakes, and blocking their urge to communicate.

In cooperative structures, the learners depend upon each other for success. Group works and organizing learners into groups are the basic assumptions of this
structure. Research has shown that the success or failure of the group can affect and even improve individual satisfaction and self-opinion, but it will be modified by the strength of self-concept.

Individualized or master-based structures promote self-improvement by emphasizing the comparison of present and previous performances of the individual. Here, all learners have an opportunity to win some reward, since achievements result from independent efforts and personal strategies. Though it can concentrate more on the process of learning, and create autonomous self-directed learners, and is thus more goal-oriented than the other two, it neglects the more important aspects of social interaction and communication.

2.1.1.2. Classroom Climate

It was Phillip Jackson’s *Life in Classrooms* (1968) that stimulated the accumulation of literature on the perceptions of learners and teachers about their classroom environment. Interestingly, it was Rudolf Moos, a psychiatrist, and Herbert Walberg, a social psychologist, who piloted the way, and not educational researchers. A number of techniques or observation schemes have been developed over the past thirty years, such as the Classroom Environment Scale (CES), Learning Environment Inventory (LEI), My Class Inventory (MCI), and Individualistic Classroom Environment Questionnaire (ICEQ).

Out of these studies investigating the relationship of various classroom structures to learning outcomes have emerged four cardinal conclusions:
Classes oriented towards innovation and building relationships help to create learner satisfaction and interest in the subject matter. They enhance social and personal growth, but do less well in facilitating traditional achievement scores.

Classes which emphasize task achievement at the expense of warmth often do foster high achievement, but perform far less well in facilitating learner interest, morale or creativity.

Classes that are kept rigidly under the teacher's control are more likely to lead to dissatisfaction and alienation and do not facilitate personal, social or academic growth.

The best results are likely to occur when there is a combination of warm and supportive relationships, an emphasis on specific academic tasks and accomplishments, and a reasonably clear, orderly and well-structured milieu. (Williams and Burden, 1997: 196-97)

The third and fourth conclusions are especially relevant to this research. The third is the situation found in the English classrooms in this part of the world, from time-immemorial, and the fourth is probably the best solution that can be offered.

These results or conclusions were not obtained from studies conducted exclusively about language classes, but they are very much relevant to language classes, and ESL classes at that. The crux of these results is that it is always the democratic class that is preferable to the formal class, be it a subject or language
class, be it an elite or below average school, be it a developed or under-developed nation. It also becomes evident that classroom climate is by no means a negligible component of classroom learning process. In an L2 classroom the classroom environment becomes even more important, because it can either hinder or promote interaction and communication, both of which are essential to the learning of an L2.

A number of factors contribute to the creation of classroom atmosphere. Chief among them are the teacher and the learners. Their personalities, experiences, expectations and chemistry play a definitive role in the setting up of the classroom climate. For establishing a cooperative atmosphere, the chemistry of the learners becomes important. Hadfield and Malderez, while investigating the concerns of teachers in the classroom, found out that in the UK, the language teachers were, in fact, more bothered about the classroom environment and the chemistry of the group of learners than about the issues of teaching the language (Williams and Burden, 1997: 194).

The teacher’s behaviour and attitude also play a role in the fashioning of the classroom environment. The managerial facility, leadership quality, and understanding faculty of a teacher will naturally impinge upon the classroom climate.

Equally important is individual perceptions of the learners. The way they interpret the happenings in the classroom – including teacher behaviour, peer interaction, the physical setting, the social organization and so on – will differ from
learner to learner, depending on their personal experiences and expectations. And quite often this perception will be different from that of the teacher.

The fact remains that the learner is at the centre of the process of learning, and hence the learner’s perception of the learning environment is what really matters. Without the learner, there will be no learning process, only teaching. And so everything has to be geared in a way towards the learner in order to facilitate optimum learning. Therefore,

(language classrooms in particular need to be places where learners are encouraged to use the new language to communicate, to try out new ways of expressing meanings, to negotiate, to make mistakes without fear, and to learn to learn from successes and failures. Emotionally a suitable environment for language learning should be one that enhances the trust needed to communicate and which enhances confidence and self-esteem. (Williams and Burden, 1997: 202)

Studies have revealed that there is no such condition as an ideal class-climate: what is successful in one context may fail completely in a different context. Moreover, each learner will construct his own impression of the learning environment. Democratizing the classroom structure by striking an easy rapport with the learners will, to a great extent, help the teacher in providing a relaxed and conducive learning environment for the learning process.
2.2. Classroom Interaction (CI)

The chief objective of teaching is for learning to take place. Between the processes of teaching and learning, interaction takes on the role of a mediator. Learning is actually an individual achievement, and language learning is more particularly so. The L2 classroom becomes a public context where the private process of learning an L2 is taking place. The sole mission of CI is identified as providing situations for learning to occur. In order to have a better understanding of CI it becomes important to study the factors that make up this interaction.

Trying to fit the meaning of the terms *interaction* and *classroom interaction* into a fixed and limited frame of a definite definition is rather impossible as well as unjustifiable. Many scholars, nevertheless, have attempted to construe a definition of these terms. “Linguistic interaction is a collaborative activity [involving] the establishment of a triangular relationship between the sender, the receiver and the context of situation,” says Wells (qtd. in Rivers n.d : 4).

Interaction involves not just expression of one’s own ideas but comprehension of those of others. One listens to others; one responds (directly or indirectly); others listen and respond. The participants work out interpretations of meaning through this interaction, which is always understood in a context, physical or experimental, with nonverbal cues adding aspects of meaning beyond the verbal. (Rivers, n.d: 4)
"Action and reaction are not interaction," says Malamah-Thomas in her book Classroom Interaction (Classroom).

Interaction is more than this, more than action followed by reaction. Interaction means acting reciprocally, acting upon each other. [...] The teacher acts upon the class, but the class reaction subsequently modifies his next action, and so on. The class reaction becomes in itself an action, evoking a reaction in the teacher, which influences his subsequent action. There is a constant pattern of mutual influence and adjustment. (Classroom: 6-7)

She summarizes her explanation with the help of the following diagram, which exemplifies the pattern of ideal CI.

![Diagram of interaction between teacher and class]

Fig. 2. (Classroom 7)

She goes on to say that

Interaction is a two-way process. It can proceed harmoniously [...] or it can be fraught with tensions. It can be a positive state, where the interactants feel that something worthwhile is being achieved as a result of the interaction, or it can be a negative one. Every interaction situation has the potential for co-operation or conflict.
How the situation actually develops depends on the attitudes and intentions of the people involved, and on their interpretations of each other’s attitudes and intentions. (Classroom 8)

One other vital aspect of interaction is communication. “Where there is no interaction, but only action and reaction, there can be no communication. Where there is conflict in interaction, communication breaks down”. (Classroom 11)

Amy B. M. Tsui, in her book *Introducing Classroom Interaction* (ICI), describes interaction as “a co-operative effort among participants. Each participant has as much to contribute as every other participant in determining the direction and outcome of the interaction” (ICI 6). She goes on to quote Allwright and Bailey that “interaction, in class or anywhere, has to be managed, as it goes along, no matter how much has gone into it beforehand [. . .] it has to be managed by everyone taking part, not just by the teacher, because interaction is not something you just do to people, but something people do together, collectively” (Allwright and Bailey, qtd. in ICI 7).

The basic necessities for interaction to take place thus seem to be the presence of more than one element or participant, reciprocity of action among these participants, and, of course, positive communication. In the classroom, interaction is perhaps more clearly out-lined, in that there is a definiteness about the participants involved: the teacher and the learners. In fact, the classroom itself has been identified as “the ‘crucible’ in which [these] elements interact” (ICI 5). If the teacher and the learners constitute the major elements, then, their
expectations, experiences, both in learning and life, their particular and personal reasons, requirements and desires which are hoped to be met with, form the rest of the ingredients. “These elements constantly interact with each other, and it is the chemistry among these elements that determines the progress of the lesson, the kind of learning opportunities that are made available and finally the learning that takes place” (Allwright and Bailey, qtd. in ICI 5).

In other words, the role of interaction that takes place in the classroom, or CI, in relation to the process of learning is crucial, and can never be underestimated. In language learning especially, where language is learned to be used, CI or more specifically, interaction between the teacher and the learners, assumes greater importance. In certain cases, the classroom might prove to be the only place where the learners get a chance to practice what they have learnt.

And yet it remains a sad fact that in most classrooms the teaching hours are strangled by the hurry to “cover the portions” before the examinations confront the learners, and CI gives way to monotonous monologues from teachers.

Re-vamping of the entire system has to be done at multiple-levels, right from syllabus-designing and teaching materials to teaching methodology and evaluation. Since teaching and learning in the educational system is a cohesive process, with each brick contributing its part and strength to the entire structure, re-designing one part of the entire procedure is neither plausible nor practical.
CI becomes the “key part” in the learning process, since the teaching and learning part can happen even without a pre-defined syllabus or textbooks or teaching hours, but never without interaction, however minimal it might be.

2.2.1. Participants in the CI

The teacher and the learners – as a group and as individuals – are the major participants in the interaction that happens in a classroom.

Malamah-Thomas (1987) identifies the textbook writer also as another participant in this mediation process. A session will definitely be based on a text, and thus there is a pattern of communication between the textbook writer and the class. The teacher might follow the textbook closely or loosely, adapting from the text. In both cases, the textbook, and hence the textbook writer becomes a transmitter of message (Classroom 13).

2.2.2. Patterns of CI

Studies have shown that there are several patterns of verbal interaction that could be found in an L2 classroom.

An ideal pattern of interaction in an L2 classroom, or any classroom, for that matter would be

\[ T \quad \longrightarrow \quad L \]

Fig. 3. (adapted from Classroom 7)
However, the usual pattern of interaction found in the majority of L2 classrooms around the world is

\[ T \rightarrow L \]

Fig. 4.  (Classroom 6)

If the textbook writer is considered as a participant in CI, then the pattern to be discerned will be

\[ T \rightarrow L \]

Teacher and learners have copies of textbook

\[ T \rightarrow L \]

TB

Fig. 6.

Teacher alone has the copy of the textbook

\[ T \rightarrow L \]

TB

Fig. 7.

Teacher adapting the material from textbook, the learners may or may not have access to the textbook.
As far back as in 1951, researchers had revealed the following broad patterns of communication in small groups.

Multi-channel  Circle  The ‘Y’  The ‘wheel’

Fig. 8.  Fig. 9.  Fig. 10.  Fig. 11.


These “organizational networks” are important while considering the patterns of interaction, particularly group activities in L2 classrooms. A teacher donning the role of a facilitator in a class where the students are doing group work will have the ‘wheel’ pattern, for example. Mathur has identified the following patterns of verbal interaction in language classrooms.

\[ T \rightarrow Ss \quad \text{Teacher addressing the class.} \]

\[ T \rightarrow S \quad \text{Teacher eliciting student response.} \]

If this is the pattern found in a traditional L2 classroom, there are a variety of variations in this pattern that are possible if the traditional lecture mode of teaching is modified.
Teacher acting as a facilitator

Students engaged in pair work.

Students engaged in group work.

Teacher helping students doing pair work.

Group of students monitored by the teacher.

A fellow student addressing/monitoring a group.

Teacher-student and student-teacher exchange.

Teacher and pair of students interacting.

2.2.3. Aspects of CI

Since teachers and students are the chief participants in CI, it is their behaviour and their talk that are the principal features of CI. Tsui (1995) identifies six aspects of CI.

i. Teacher questions

ii. Teacher feedback and error treatment

iii. Teacher explanations

iv. Modified input and interaction

v. Turn allocation and turn-taking behaviour

vi. Student talk

Teacher question, student response and teacher feedback is the prevailing form of interaction found in classrooms, irrespective of the subject taught. They are characteristic of the usual classroom exchange. Teacher question and teacher feedback dominate the interaction that takes place in a classroom, these two being the major tools with which the teacher decides the topic of interaction and who should participate in the interaction. Teacher talk asserts the authority and power of the teacher in the classroom resulting in the monopolizing of the interaction by the teacher.

i. Teacher questions

Teacher questions have been proved to be the chief stimulus for CI. The various types of question forms, the purpose for which these questions are employed, the nature of questions, the kind of response they elicit and the effect of
the question forms are major areas of study. Teachers usually employ a variety of question forms for a range of functions, ranging from comprehension check to discipline control.

Barnes (cited in ICI 24-25) classifies teacher questions into factual questions (beginning with *what, where, when, who*) and reasoning questions (beginning with *how and why*). He also refers to closed and open questions: the former is restrictive in eliciting the learners’ response by being elaborate, and the latter offers more scope for variety in learners’ response. Long and Sato (1983, cited in ICI 27) distinguish between *display* and *referential questions*. The first is used as knowledge-checking devices. The second is used when the teacher genuinely wants information. This distinction is quite important in the context of meaningful interaction and communication in the language classroom. It becomes important because in real-life communication, no one goes around asking display questions. If they do, the implication is challenge or aggression. Obviously then, increased use of referential questions can generate meaningful interactions reflective of social communication (ICI 24-28).

ii. Teacher feedback and error treatment.

The feedback provided by a teacher plays a crucial role in language learning. How the teacher evaluates and comments on learner performance is borne by the feedback of the teacher. It is so much a part of the routine of CI that its absence leads to the conclusion that the response is either wrong or unsatisfactory. The nature of the feedback inevitably affects the learners’ attitude to the language
learning process, and eventually to the language itself. For instance, a consistently negative feedback will result in the learners becoming frustrated, and will inhibit their contribution. On the other hand, if the feedback encourages learners’ contribution, it will lead to more learner participation and a relaxed learning atmosphere in the classroom, which will in turn encourage language learning and acquisition.

Error treatment is a major objective of teacher feedback, or rather it is the chief form of teacher feedback. Decisions about error correction - what is an error, should it be corrected, how and when should it be corrected - also play a decisive role in the language learning process. As such, there exist diametrically opposite views regarding error correction. Even as learners themselves agree that errors should be corrected - instead of letting a bad or wrong hypothesis about the target language getting established - they are not in favour of teachers who do it persistently, which hampers their confidence. The question of when to correct an error is also a serious issue in the language classroom. An immediate rectification might disrupt the learner’s response and thus frighten him off with the fear of failure. A delayed correction, on the other hand, may prove to be less effective.

Another problem is about how to correct the error. Should it be done explicitly or implicitly, should the teacher point out the error and correct it herself, or should she imply it so as to let the learner correct himself, should the learner be allowed to correct himself without the teacher pointing it out, should she let other
learners to correct it, and if she does so, how will peer-correction affect the individual learner?

Innumerable problems like the above-mentioned co-habit the area of error treatment, and no study has been able to point out the best and most effective way to correct learner errors. The risk rests entirely on the fragile shoulders of the teacher, who has to make the best of the not so ideal situations, challenges and limitations.

iii. Teacher explanations

After teacher questions, it is explanations that occupy the lion’s share of teacher talk in the classroom. It is used for explaining new concepts, new structures, organization of a lesson or even instructions about homework or a particular exercise. Studies have shown that in order to be effective, the explanation should be related to what the learner knows or is familiar with. Explaining is not the real problem, then, but explaining effectively is the issue. Judging the learners’ competence becomes important here, because a wrong judgment will lead to either over-teaching or under-teaching. Both will in turn lead to the break down of CI.

A rough division of explanations into procedural explanation and content explanation can be made in this context. When the teacher explains the organization of a lesson, for instance, or about homework, that is procedural explanation. When the explanation is about the subject matter of the lesson, then it is content explanation (ICI 30).
iv. Modified input and interaction.

Input is important in any kind of learning process. According to Krashen, the Input Hypothesis “may be the single most important concept in second language acquisition today” (qtd. in Gregg, 1984: 87). Modified input becomes equally important for language learning because it is the usual practice of the teachers to modify their question or talk when the learners fail to respond appropriately or to respond at all. This is meant to improve comprehension, and elicit the appropriate response. Modification of questions can be related to syntax, semantics and lexis. There can be inclusion of clues or even the Socratic questioning – a series of questions leading to the answer to the first one.

Interactional modification is present in conversations between native and non-native speakers, and even among speakers of the same language. Inevitably, it is present in L2 classrooms, and is considered to be crucial for the negotiation of comprehensible input. A number of modification devices are identified, such as confirmation check, clarification request, repetition request, decomposition [modifying the initial question into simpler questions], comprehension check and self-repetition.

According to Long, decomposition, comprehension check and self-repetition are used when teachers are trying to make their input comprehensible. Confirmation checks, clarification requests and repetition requests are used when they want to understand the learners’ input (cited in ICI 70). Unfortunately in the teacher-dominated classroom the learners get little chance to try out these devices.
Had it been otherwise, it would result in an interaction that would be the dream of any researcher in the area.

v. **Turn-allocation and turn-taking behaviour.**

The turn-taking behaviour of learners is a pointer towards their involvement in CI. In a teacher-fronted classroom, this is affected by the turn-allocation behaviour of the teacher. It is quite common to find in L2 classrooms the teacher beginning with a general solicit and soon opting for a personal solicit when there is no response. This could be impeding for the learners, especially those who are shy and apprehensive. Because, in order to save time, the teachers might repeatedly nominate a few good learners. Even when the apparently poor learner is nominated, if the response is lagging, they might nominate the brighter learner, again to save time. It might even be to ward off embarrassment and silence. Whatever be the reason, it will adversely affect the introvert learner, who will tend to withdraw more and more from the classroom procedures.

The turn-taking behaviour of the learners can be broadly divided into solicited turns and un-solicited turns – the first is when they are nominated specifically and the second, when they take the initiative. Allwright (1980, cited in ICI 77) also mentions private turns, when some learners give a response or comment, but to themselves, rather than to the rest of the class or the teacher. There might also be cultural and social limitations that prevent a learner from taking an un-solicited turn. Teachers ought to be sensitive to the turn-taking behaviour of the learners in order to help the retractive ones to contribute more in the classroom.
vi. Student talk.

The participation of learners in CI is a significant form of their involvement in the learning process. Studies have revealed that in teacher-fronted classrooms student talk amounts to less than thirty percent, on an average. Learning to talk is not sufficient for a language learner, he needs to talk as well, in order to learn. That is why in a first language learning situation, children remain persistent questioners.

A common problem identified by ESL teachers is the general lack of response to questions on the part of learners. Perhaps it is the negligence of the teachers of the simple equation between learning and talking that is responsible for this situation. Many teachers forget the fact that when using the target language in their presence, the learners are in fact testing the hypotheses that they have formulated about the target language. Any wrong reaction on the part of the teacher will then, naturally, affect the language learning process adversely, and the learners will choose to remain silent instead of taking the risk.

A few major factors that promote learners’ reticence in the language classroom are low proficiency in the target language, the pressure to use the target language correctly or be mocked by either the teacher or peers or both, the teacher herself answering without waiting for the learners’ response, and the teacher’s tendency to nominate brighter students to save time.

All these lead to classroom anxiety, which is present in all classrooms, especially in L2 classrooms. It is generated by the power relationship between the teacher and the learners, which is uneven, and will lead to apprehension,
nervousness, fear and worry on the part of learners. The sort of classroom anxiety found in L2 classrooms is called *state anxiety*, meaning, specific to a particular situation, as opposed to *trait anxiety*, which is a personality trait. This type of anxiety may be *facilitating anxiety*, which spurs a learner to exert more and achieve more, or *debilitating anxiety*, which hinders performance. A big majority of learners suffer from debilitating classroom anxiety, which prevents them from active participation in the classroom learning procedures.

For the sake of convenience, this study proposes to group these six categories under two broad labels: teacher talk or teacher behaviour, and student talk or student behaviour.

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Fig. 12. Aspects of CI.
2.3. CI and Communication

Communication is one of the basic requisites for CI to take place. When there is a breakdown of communication, the process of CI becomes stalled. Every interaction situation, especially in the context of classroom, is a dynamic one, with "the potential for co-operation or conflict" (Classroom 8). If it develops into a conflict, there will be no scope for communication. Effective communication can occur only with co-operation, which will result in successful learning.

2.3.1. Participants

In the context of CI, the teacher and the learners, and sometimes the textbook writer are the participants. They transmit and receive messages between themselves. Problems crop up only when the personalities, and more importantly, the backgrounds of the participants differ. If a teacher shares the socio-economic background and educational experience of the learners, they will be able to relate easily, and communicate properly. If, on the other hand, there is a wide gulf between them, communication will become impossible unless the teacher attempts to learn about the learners, and is willing to make allowances for them, and the learners also make allowances for the teacher.

2.3.2. Purpose

The fundamental purpose of CI is pedagogic communication. The teacher transmits the knowledge she possesses to the learners. Though that is the basic function of classroom communication, the teacher will be communicating for a
range of other purposes too: organizational purposes, commands, reprimand, confirmation, even expressing emotions like sympathy or anger. In an L2 classroom, if the teacher uses the target language for these, it will be definitely beneficial to the learners who will be getting practice in the oral-aural skills of the target language.

2.3.3. Content

What is transmitted in the communication process is directly related to the purpose of communication. In a language classroom, especially, when communication is for pedagogic purposes, the message will be essentially about the language. Malamah-Thomas terms this classroom transaction, this “communication of information [which] is clearly in the control of the teacher, or the textbook writer, the possessor of the information.” She differentiates classroom interaction from this as “the establishment of rapport and a sense of community” (Classroom 15). She uses this distinction because

(i)t is personal interaction of this kind that is responsible for the overall classroom atmosphere or ambience. Clearly, the teacher can do much towards creating a positive atmosphere, but the influence of the learners and their attitudes is equally important. The particular interplay of personalities in any one classroom can often produce quite unpredictable results. (Classroom 16)
This research, however, does not strictly adhere to this distinction between classroom transaction and CI. As far as this research is concerned, classroom transaction is a part of the CI that is churned out when the teachers and learners interact in the classroom.

2.3.4. Resources

There are a number of means or resources, both verbal and non-verbal, that the participants employ in CI in order to communicate. Language, including the tone of voice, is the chief verbal means of communication. Non-verbal resources include facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms and even the dress code.

In language classrooms, the teacher should not restrict herself to using language alone as a means of communication. Even for pedagogic purposes, non-verbal resources can be usefully exploited for effective learning to take place. Scholars now recommend the use of a variety of resources for classroom communication as a sign of good teaching. Only, the teacher should know how to use them judiciously.

2.4. Interaction Analysis (IA).

The analysis of interaction that takes place inside the L2 classroom has been one of the key questions addressed by Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers. Analyzing the interaction between teacher-students and student-
student within the classroom is considered to be important for providing vital clues regarding SLA. Umpteen numbers of methods for analyzing CI are available, which aim at decoding the dynamics of CI and the hidden potentials of the L2 classroom.

2.4.1. Aspects of IA.

The various methods for analysing CI basically try to look into the complex interrelationships involved in it, so as to understand the mechanics of CI. They try to analyse the language produced in the classroom to get at the secrets of the teaching and learning processes. Only the language that is produced in the classroom can be observed and analysed, and not the learning process or results.

The points of focus of the various methods are different. Some focus on the language, some on the affective factors, and some on the teaching and learning. All these can be grouped under the quantitative or systematic approach, which tries to quantify the data and analyse it.

Dissatisfaction with this approach was bound to set in, and soon there arose a clamour for the use of qualitative, especially ethnographic approach. The main reason for this was that the ethnographic approach aimed at eliciting natural data in its natural environment and analyzing it to get a holistic picture.
2.5. Systematic (Quantitative) Research

Known as the systematic observation, the quantitative approach wielded power in the sixties, and was chiefly used to distinguish and monitor the effectiveness of various methods of foreign-language teaching.

By systematic observation procedures, we mean those procedures in which the observer, deliberately refraining from participation in classroom activities, analyses aspects of these activities through the use of a predetermined set of categories or signs. This analysis may take place during the observation, or may be based on selective records such as audio and video recordings, or on transcripts of classroom discourse. (McIntyre and Macleod, qtd. in ICI 103)

A number of observation schedules for analyzing and describing the interaction produced in the classroom have evolved as a result of CR over the past years.

2.5.1. Systems of Systematic Research

"The basis of the 'interaction analysis' tradition [was] established with Flanders’ categories of description for classroom behaviour" (Classroom 20). The hundreds of classroom observation instruments that now exist are all in essence "adaptations, extensions, or simplifications of Flanders’ original categories" (Classroom 20). Hence it is described in detail here so as to provide a clear picture about the basic outlook of systematic approach.
2.5.1.1. Flanders’ Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC)

FIAC was primarily intended to look at the language used in the classroom to find out more about the processes of teaching and learning. The ten original categories of FIAC can be classified under two main categories: teacher talk and pupil talk, and a third category that covers the rest of the verbal behaviour as well as the absence of it.

**Teacher talk**

1. **Accepts feeling:** Accepts, clarifies an attitude or the feeling tone of a pupil, both positive and negative. Predicting and recalling feelings included.

2. **Praises/encourages:** Praises or encourages pupil action/behaviour. Jokes to release tension but not at the expense of another individual. Nodding head, saying ‘um hm?’ or ‘go on’ included.

3. **Accepts/uses ideas of pupil:** Clarifies, builds, or develops ideas suggested by a pupil. Teacher extensions of pupil ideas included, but as the teacher brings more of his or her own ideas into play, shifts to category five.

4. **Asks questions:** Asks a question about content or procedure based on teacher ideas, with the intent that a pupil will answer.

5. **Lecturing:** Gives facts or opinions about content or procedures; expresses own ideas, gives own explanations or cites an authority other than a pupil.
6. **Giving directions:** Directions, commands, orders which a pupil is expected to comply with.

7. **Criticizing/justifying authority:** Statements intended to change pupil behaviour from non-acceptable to acceptable pattern; bawls someone out; states why the teacher is doing what he or she is doing; extreme self-reference.

**Pupil talk**

8. **Response:** Talk by pupils in response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact, or solicits pupil statement, or structures the situation.

9. **Initiation:** Talk by pupils which they initiate. Expresses own ideas; initiates a new topic; freedom to develop opinions and a line of thought, like asking thoughtful questions; going beyond the existing structure.

**Silence.**

10. **Silence or confusion:** Pauses, short periods of silence and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer. (adapted from *Classroom* 20-21)

A classroom lesson coded according to FIAC might give an observer an analysis like this:

- **Category 5:** Teacher lectures 90%
- **Category 4:** Teacher asks questions 3%
- **Category 8:** Pupil response 2%
- **Category 10:** Silence 5%

( adapted from *Classroom* 21).
No judgment can be made about the success of the lesson from this analysis. It can proclaim about the teaching that took place in the classroom. But it cannot provide any clue as to whether or not the lesson was successful, in the sense whether or not learning took place, what were the purposes for which language was used in the classroom and a host of other similar, yet critical issues.

2.5.1.2. Some Other Observation Categories

Soon after its establishment in the 1970s, FIAC-inspired observation instruments began to be evolved, which took interaction analysis into language-teaching classrooms. A direct descendant of FIAC is Moskowitz’s Foreign Language Interaction (FLINT). The original ten categories of Flanders’ system were adapted and developed so as to be suitable for language classrooms.

Among the galaxy of observation schemes in the interaction analysis tradition, there are a few which are worth mentioning here. There is, for instance, the Bower’s Categories of Verbal Behaviour, developed in 1980, and considered to be “less cumbersome” (Classroom 25). Brown’s categories succeed in distinguishing the purposes of language use in the classroom: whether in direct relation to the teaching and learning processes, or for the usual social and organizational purposes.

Target Language Observation Scheme (TALOS), Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT), and Mitchell and Parkinson (M+P) are certain descriptive systems which focus on the analysis of “how interaction is realized as a
particular methodology, or set of language teaching strategies” (Classroom 26). The topic of the lesson is therefore included in these systems as a category of description. They look at both the what and how of classroom communication. Sinclair and Coulthard devised another system, with twenty-one acts, to examine the verbal interaction produced in the classroom. Theirs was a purely linguistic intention, using this data for their research in discourse analysis.

2.5.1.3. Brown’s Interaction Analysis System (BIAS)

Though not specifically meant for the language classroom, BIAS is a comparatively simple descriptive framework for analysing classroom verbal interaction. It can be used to scrutinize the sort of teaching and learning that is going on in the language classroom.

The basic categories of description in BIAS, which are in essence a simplified and reduced version of Flanders’ original ten categories, are as follows:

TL:  Teacher lectures, describes, explains, narrates, directs.

TQ:  Teacher questions, about content or procedure, which pupils are intended to answer.

TR:  Teacher responds, accepts feelings of the class; describes past and future feelings in a non-threatening way; praises, encourages, jokes with pupils, accepts or uses pupils’ ideas; builds upon pupil responses; uses mild criticism such as ‘no, not quite’.

PR:  Pupils respond  directly and predictably to teacher questions.
PV: *Pupils volunteer* information, comments or questions.

S: *Silence.* Pauses, short periods of silence.

X: *Unclassifiable.* Confusion in which communication cannot be understood; unusual activities such as reprimanding or criticizing pupils; demonstrating without accompanying teacher or pupil talk; short spates of blackboard work without accompanying teacher or pupil talk. (*Classroom* 48)

A time-line display sheet is used in the BIAS system, which is marked every three seconds for the duration of the observation. An example of this is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TL</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TQ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PR</td>
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<td>PV</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 13. (Classroom 49)**

This is the first minute or so of a lesson. A summary of the chief categories is provided at the head of the sheet for easy reference. The appropriate category in each column is marked every three seconds. At times category X will need to be
elaborated for clarifying what is happening, for instance, B = Blackboard work, R = Reprimanding students, and so on.

Once a lesson has been coded in this way, percentage for each category is calculated, and a picture of the lesson is built up, either in the form of distribution tables or histograms. Relevant and interesting information regarding the procedures in a classroom can in fact be decoded from the time-line display itself. “They demonstrate patterns and problems even before they are turned into tables of percentages and ratios” (*Classroom* 51). A session of language drill that is proceeding evenly, for instance, will show a time-line display like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TL</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TQ</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>/</td>
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<tr>
<td>PV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 14. (*Classroom* 51)

This research is an attempt to look into CI analytically, and proposes to use both quantitative and qualitative analyses complementarily in the process. Of the numerous quantitative descriptive systems available, BIAS seems appropriate for
examining the verbal interaction, and hence is selected to be used complementarily with the ethnographic approach.

2.5.1.4. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Systematic Approach

Systematic observation schemes were developed for the purpose of ensuring that particular, prescribed teaching methodologies were applied in the classroom. It was devised with the intent of identifying and scrutinizing “the effectiveness of different methods in foreign-language teaching” (ICI 103). With its pre-determined categories, it could make an objective evaluation, and provide feedback on the process of teaching.

The chief allegation against the systematic approach is that it is based on the quantitative analysis of data. Its findings, naturally, were criticized for being inconclusive. Its basis is the observable data, the language produced in the classroom. By common consent, learning is not solely something that is observable and can be recorded. The progress of a lesson, or perhaps that of a pupil, or even that of a particular teaching methodology can be recorded, described and examined, but not the process of learning. Van Lier observes:

> When observing an L2 classroom in action it is clear that no direct link can be made between observable behaviour and language development. Learning is not generally directly and immediately observable. In the first place, it is characterized by improved performance or increased knowledge, and manifested by the learner’s
behaviour at some point of time (unspecified) after the learning has occurred. Secondly, the learning itself may not be produced by one specifically identifiable event, but rather by the cumulative effect of a number of events, and how these events are related is not always immediately visible. [...] Thirdly, learning, as a process and as a result, may not be overtly signalled in ways that are observable by a researcher who does not intervene in the interaction. (TCLL 91)

All systematic observation schemes use pre-determined categories. This allegedly constrains the analysis of data. All information will need to be categorized, which will result in forcing the data to fit into the categories, thus presenting a “distorted picture of the classroom” (ICI 104). Information that may be vital to the lesson may tend to be treated as irrelevant, probably because it cannot be categorized. It is pointed out that the coding system thus results in treating the data as separate, individual units with little relationship to one another. This, Mehan says, rather makes the successive progression of the classroom events look non-sequential and obscure as well (qtd. in ICI 104). The context, which is considered so vital to CR, also gets affected by these codifications, and might never be re-produced.

Tsui goes on to outline the further limitations of systematic observation:

[Another] limitation is that the coder, as an outsider, may not be able to understand or may misinterpret the talk between the teacher and the students, among the students themselves, since he or she does not have access to their shared meanings, which are generated by the
cultural and historical context of that particular classroom [. . .] [Also] this kind of description does not take into account the meanings that participants give to their interaction. (ICI 104)

Delamont and Hamilton also remark that while focusing on the observable, that is, the verbal or non-verbal behaviour of the teacher and the students, what is left out is the non-observable part of their actions, such as how they perceive their own actions as well as those of the other participants (cited. in ICI 104).

This does not mean that systematic analysis of classroom interaction is not to be recommended at all or that it should be abandoned as a research approach. The disadvantages identified here only show that the analysis of data should not be limited to systematic analysis alone. It should be complemented with the qualitative analysis of data also, to unravel the mysteries of classroom proceedings, which will shed more light on the language learning/teaching process.

2.6. Qualitative Research

If quantitative approach is about generating statistics with the aid of various methods of systematic analysis, qualitative research is about exploring the dispositions, manners and affairs of particular groups of informants. It is a cover term usually used to include a range of methods of social research, “drawing on a variety of disciplines such as sociology, social anthropology and social psychology” (Denscombe, 1998: 207). It concerns itself with understanding the patterns of behaviour and meanings.
Human activity is seen as a product of symbols and meanings that are used by members of the social group to make sense of things. Such symbols and meanings need to be analysed as a ‘text’ – to be interpreted rather like a literary critic interprets a book. (Denscombe, 1998: 207)

Under qualitative approach come a number of research methodologies such as ethnography, action research, grounded theory and a host of others.

2.6.1. Varieties of Qualitative Approach

Unlike the systematic approach, there is no particular approach that is considered as the founding stone of the various qualitative approaches. The term “qualitative approach” is used as an umbrella term, under which come a multitude of methodologies. Though classified as qualitative approach, the different methodologies coming under it have different approaches and methods for collecting and analyzing the data.

Ethnography, for instance, is about studying the natural data in its natural settings, and discourages any sort of manipulation. Ethnographers live with their informants for a long period, thus familiarizing themselves with the ethics, codes of conduct, and deportments of their group of informants. The emphasis is on description and interpretation of the actions and mannerisms of the subjects.

Action research also requires the researcher to collaborate closely with the subjects of study, but unlike ethnographer, he “does not ‘do’ research ‘on’ people,
but instead works with them, acting as a facilitator” (Dawson, 2003: 16). It is usually employed in areas like “organizational management, community development, education and agriculture” (Dawson, 2003: 17).

Grounded theory is popularly employed in health research and education. Where other approaches resort to testing hypotheses that are formulated by the researcher, grounded theory is about generating theory that is “grounded in the data [meaning] that it has emerged from the data” (Dawson, 2003: 19).

2.6.1.1. Ethnography

The ethnographic approach is chosen as the qualitative approach to be used as complementary to BIAS, the quantitative approach chosen for this study. The following sections examine the aspects and features of the ethnographic research.

To arrive at an accurate and foolproof definition for ethnography is rather difficult, as is the case with most terms in ELT. Moreover, ethnography has closer links with anthropology than with ELT. Van Lier denominates anthropology as “its mother science”. According to him “(e)thnography is literally the description of culture (or of groups of people that are perceived as possessing some degree of cultural unity). It has always been a central concern of anthropology [. . .] “(TCLL 53). The ethnographic approach examines the data in its entire context with no pre-conceived notions. It attempts to describe the happenings inside the classroom from the perspective of the participants, in order to get a better understanding of what actually happens inside the classroom.
When adapted to CR, ethnography treats the classroom as an entity, more or less like a newly discovered culture. To make out the customs and codes of a new culture, those of another culture cannot be imposed upon it. Each classroom is unique, having its own rules of conduct and ethics. An understanding of these helps to understand the what, why and how of the actions of its participants in a better light.

The ethnographic approach stands in contrast to the systematic approach on the following points:

- it is open-ended, avoiding pre-conceived ideas or questions. If at all categories are used, they are constructed from the data, rather than being pre-determined.
- it limits its focus to a single classroom or a single aspect or phenomenon in a small number of classrooms. This is then studied in detail.
- it tries to understand a particular situation or event or phenomenon from the point of view of the participants, and not that of an outsider.
- it is “empirical” and “naturalistic”, and also “holistic” (ICI 107), which means that it aims to reconstruct the situation in its entirety, and for this, first-hand accounts of the participants in their natural settings are gathered.
it is eclectic, in that it uses a variety of data collection techniques, thus giving scope for cross-checking the data collected using one method with the data collected using another method.

2.6.1.2. Definition(s)

David Nunan describes ethnography as a “non-manipulative study of the cultural characteristics of a group in real-world rather than laboratory settings, utilizing ethnographic techniques and providing a socio-cultural interpretation of the research data.” Ethnographic techniques are defined as those techniques “such as participant observation, non-participant observation, interviews, diaries, and journals for documenting socio-cultural aspects of behaviour in the natural settings in which those behaviours occur” (cited in McDonough, 1997: 230).

Bauman defines ethnography as “the process of constructing through direct personal observation of social behaviour, a theory of the working of a particular culture in terms as close as possible to the way members of that culture view the universe and organize their behaviour within it” (qtd. in Trueba, Guthrie and Au, 1981: 8). Hymes’ definition is more in terms of its application in educational research: “(t)o find out what [the children in schools] see and do, to convey that knowledge in a way that permitted some of the texture of their lives and world to come through, would be what I mean by ethnography” (qtd. in Trueba, Guthrie and Au, 1981: 8).
Hammersly and Atkinson identify ethnography as “one social research method, drawing on a wide range of sources of information”, whereas Lutz finds it to be “the holistic analysis of societies”. Spradley thinks it is “the elicitation of cultural knowledge”, but Walker takes it to be “essentially descriptive, a form of story telling”. For Gumperz it is “the detailed investigation of patterns of social interaction”, for Glaser and Strauss, and Denzin, it is “the development and testing of theory” (qtd. in TCLL 54).

Another humble attempt to define ethnography would be to describe it as “a specific research method and a perspective” that has as its focus the happenings in everyday life. Some ethnographers even name it as “the ‘science of everyday’, a science based on observation and absorption” (ideas bazaar, Online).

Trueba (1987: 1) points out that two centuries ago “ethnography was viewed as the purely descriptive task of recording observed behavioral events”. It was George Spindler, in the 1950s, who pioneered the application of the concept about cultural transmission, from anthropology to education. Soon other groups of science, such as sociology, social psychology and linguistics followed suit, recognizing the methodological and theoretical powers of ethnography and accepting it for better research results.

2.6.1.3. Classifications

Several practitioners of educational ethnography have attempted to classify the various strands of ethnography. Van Lier suggests that there is the strong view
of ethnography and the weak view of ethnography. The former is primarily theory-construction, and hence is considered to have evolved from phenomenology and ethnomethodology. The latter has ethnography as a tool, beginning with unclassified observation, moving on to identifying and describing the relevant concepts, and ending with generating testable hypotheses. He also mentions ethnographic monitoring, which would stand mid-way between these two. It is

(a)n essentially hybrid conception of ethnography which, in janus fashion, looks both ways, and aims to employ all reasonable methods of data gathering and analysis in order to investigate an educational setting or problem. Here both quantitative and qualitative techniques are combined as and when appropriate to setting, aim and tasks.

(TCLL 54 – 55)

Usually two other terms are mentioned alongside ethnographic monitoring: microethnography and constitutive ethnography. Frederick Erickson (1981) is considered to be the chief proponent of microethnography. As the name itself implies, microethnography, when compared to ethnography, or macroethnography, as some scholars call it, has a sharper focus, and narrower scope. Its hallmark is the extreme fine-grained approach to analysis. Its implications in the educational field, especially in studying minority culture groups, are quite far-reaching. Erickson stresses one vital aspect of this approach – in order to analyse the situation of classrooms minutely, it necessitates the close collaboration between the researcher and the teacher. This approach becomes very effective in teacher
education as well as teacher self-evaluation, where the teacher himself becomes the researcher.

As for the means employed for microethnographic studies, Erickson says there are chiefly two ways: asking and watching. He groups questionnaires and interviews under “asking” – these are methods for eliciting information. Observation, both participant and non-participant, is the chief method of “watching”. Thus through observation and elicitation, the microethnographer builds up the picture with minute details.

The microethnographic approach treats the classroom as a community whose social organization is collaboratively constructed by the interactional “work” of both teachers and students. This approach to ethnography describes the events that routinely occur in the classroom in terms of the practices and strategies which its participants employ to assemble the events. (Mehan, 1981: 49)

Hugh Mehan was hugely dissatisfied with both the quantitative approach and the field studies. He thus proposed constitutive ethnography, with the following characteristics: retrievability of data, comprehensive data treatment, convergence between the perspectives of the researcher and the participants, and interactional level of analysis (TCLL 61). Mehan aimed at constructing “a model that accounts for the organization of each and every instance of teacher-student interaction”, and at locating “‘the organizing machinery of classroom lessons in
the interaction’ in ‘the words and in the actions of the participants’ “ (Mehan 1979, qtd. in TCLL 61).

Ethnographers try not to impose categories or structures of description which are foreign to the situation being described. Instead, they look for meanings to emerge from within the situation, allowing the categories for description to be determined by the scene itself. The goal of the ethnography is to provide a description that resonates with the members’ point of view. (Mehan, 1981: 46-47)

Researchers also identify a strand of linguistic ethnography as the ethnography of communication, which was pioneered by Hymes and chiseled out by other stalwarts such as Erickson. It used to focus almost strictly on spoken interaction. Major literary theories have exerted their influence on it and helped it mature: New Literacy Studies insisted on the written texts mediating spoken interaction, Post modernism questioned many of its basic premises, and the Derridean theory stressed that supposedly coherent narratives can be contradictory and incompatible from within (Tusting, 2001: 2).

2.6.1.4. Characteristics of the Ethnographic approach

Technological advancements in the audio-visual area have enabled the ethnographer, who used to rely almost entirely on field notes for data, to diversify the modes of data collection and analysis. Videotape and film top the list, becoming a sort of appendaged exterior memory to the ethnographer, allowing repeated
viewings of entire details leading to the evolution of different interpretations. This brings in another term associated with ethnography: *triangulation*. Triangulation, to put it briefly, refers to the use of multiple theories, methods of analysis and also data. Van Lier quotes Denzin to point out the varieties of triangulation: *theoretical triangulation* [using different perspectives to analyse the same set of data], *data triangulation* [use of different strategies for observation], *investigator triangulation* [more than one observer], and *methodological triangulation* [more than one variety of the same method]. When all these triangulations are combined in a single investigation, it becomes *multiple triangulation* (TCLL 13).

Researchers stress the importance of triangulation in ethnography because it helps in building up the picture as a whole. This is why ethnography is often described as empirical, naturalistic, holistic and eclectic. It is an attempt at investigating from the point of view of the participants, from first hand accounts in the natural settings, an attempt to describe the entire event within its context from the data collected using a variety of techniques.

Along with holistic, van Lier associates another term: *emic*. It was Pike who gave currency to the term, and its sort-of antonym, *etic*. In the context of studying a particular group of people sharing the same cultural and linguistic codes, *emic* refers to the point of view of the insiders and *etic* is the perspective of the outsiders. Van Lier points out that the principles of *emic* and *holistic*, both demand “constant attention to the context of actions and to the viewpoints of the participants themselves, as a group and as individuals” (TCLL 16), and both are cardinal to
ethnography. The emic approach entails a researcher to be free of pre-concepts and prejudices. Any sort of pre-established standards and types – be it a mode of measurement or scheme or models or even opinions – are done away with, in the attempt to study the phenomenon completely from the perspective of the participants. In the context of educational ethnography it comes to mean that the “critical knowledge of the classroom derives from the study of the meaning that participants invest and develop in the social context of the classroom as is manifested through their interaction and various kinds of documentary evidence (such as interviews, conversations, lesson plans, notes, and so on)” (TCLL 55-56).

2.6.1.5. The Ethnographer

The role of the researcher as an observer is also of considerable importance, especially in ethnographic studies. Ethnography has as one of its basic concepts the trust between the researcher and the participants. The relationship between the researcher/observer and the participants becomes crucial because for studying a situation from the emic standpoint, the participants will have to be open to the researcher. Researchers and scholars agree that this open, warm relationship is essential for ethnographic studies. How far it is possible and practicable in real-life situations, specifically in relation to educational ethnography and CR, is a different issue. It is as common for the learners to accept the presence of the outsiders, as it is for the teachers to become self-conscious and even artificial in their presence. This results in the inability of the researcher to obtain natural data, since the teacher’s
behaviour affects the learners' behaviour, which in turn affects the nature of the primary data. Labov (1972, cited in Nunan, 1992: 63) uses the term *observer's paradox* to refer to this obviously trying issue. The researcher needs to tackle it appropriately, according to the demands of the situation, which might even challenge his ingenuity.

The image that the researcher projects thus assumes significance. If it is that of an evil figure "in the wings, faintly contemptuous, armed with the paraphernalia of expertise and tapping ominously [his] research findings" (Rosen, qtd. in TCELL 39), the entire enterprise of ethnography is reduced to rubbles. The success of ethnography depends on the crucial relationship between the researcher and the participants, which ought to be based on trust. If the observer, who will essentially be the outsider, is distrusted and misjudged to be judging them, the participants will naturally clamp up or try to project another image, which will make the data "not-natural".

As has been stressed repeatedly by scholars, an ethnographer *must* be non-judgmental and impartial. His neutrality prevails over the basic principles of ethnography.

Ethnography is based on trust; if ethnography were to be the basis for evaluation [. . .] ethnographic research would breed distrust on the part of the subjects. Only with trust and openness will people yield the knowledge of themselves that ethnography seeks. To have ethnography [as] an instrument of control, a spying effort, would be
In the context of educational ethnography and CR, there are two main types of observation: non-participant observation and participant observation. More or less self-explanatory, the former is the usual form of classroom observation, and is usually done by an outsider. In the case of participant observation, the observer will essentially be an insider – the teacher, learner or a fellow-teacher. Both types could utilize the quantitative or qualitative approach, but in ethnography of course, with its thrust on the context, and holistic and emic principles, measurement systems and tabulation charts are best done away with.

2.6.1.6. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Ethnographic Approach

The greatest advantage of the ethnographic approach in CR is said to be its ability to throw light on the events in the classroom from the perspective of the participants, that is, the teacher and the students. Why they did something or why they did not do something, can be better explicated, and perhaps, vindicated by the application of this approach.

Its open-endedness enables it to develop new theories based on the empirical facts observed and the data collected first-hand from the natural settings.

Another advantage is that it avoids generalizations and thus, passing judgments about an event or phenomenon. It is interested only in re-creating the event in its minutest details available.
The major drawback of this approach is that it can be used only for developing new theories, and not to test and improvise on the existing theories. Van Lier himself points out the flaw of unstructured ethnographic monitoring, which reduces ethnography to mere exploratory study. He compares the ethnographers here to the “advance crews staking out the route and preparing the terrain for engineers and constructors to build a new highway” (TCLL 54).

This approach can be judiciously used as part of the teacher-training programmes

- to create awareness of and sensitivity to the actions of both learners and teachers
- to explore the effectiveness of the teacher's lessons
- to give insights into what happens in the classroom.

Ethnography comes in handy when there is a necessity for generating detailed understanding of a phenomenon or several phenomena – be it a culture, an environment or even a market. It is now widely used in commercial projects in order to get a detailed understanding of the environment.

The benefits that ethnography offers include

- insights into myths and aspirations
- holistic and nuanced view of the total environment
- generating cross-cultural understanding
- fresh perspectives on familiar problems and scenarios
In the context of CR, all these advantages that ethnography offers are of prime importance. The fact that it can work effectively and successfully as part of other research methodologies is the greatest advantage of ethnography. Scholars advocate that it should not be used instead of quantitative approach, but that the two should be used complementarily.

2.7. Quantitative vis-à-vis Qualitative research

As Dawson (2003: 15) wisely points out, “(d)ifferent methodologies become popular at different social, political, historical and cultural times [...] and [...] all methodologies have their specific strengths and weaknesses”. The scholars often warn that a watertight distinction between these two approaches should never be encouraged since they are not “mutually exclusive”. They point out that the difference is only in the handling of data treatment, and hence one approach can never be judged as superior to the other.

Many scholars point out the differences between these two approaches to define the terms with better precision. The following are the points usually tabulated in relation to these approaches:
Table 1
Features of Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative research</th>
<th>Qualitative research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers as the unit of analysis</td>
<td>Words as the unit of analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(or statistical/analytical)</td>
<td>(or descriptive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually large-scale studies</td>
<td>Could be small-scale or large-scale studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific focus</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached researcher</td>
<td>Involvement of researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-determined research design</td>
<td>Emergent research design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtrusive and controlled measurement</td>
<td>Naturalistic and uncontrolled observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘outsider’ perspective (etic)</td>
<td>The ‘insider’ perspective (emic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>