INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study:
The present study aims at finding out the proficiency acquired by Bengali Speaking Students in writing correct English sentences at the end of the Secondary School stage. Hence a survey was conducted with six hundred students who got themselves admitted to Class X in different educational institutions in Calcutta and the rural areas of North 24 Parganas after passing the "Higher" or Equivalent Examination.

At present a young learner of English in a Bengali Medium School spends five years, learning English at a rate ranging from six to eight 40-minute periods per week. This means that a Bengalee learner of English in any Secondary School spends no less than five hundred hours in learning the language. This should enable him, in theory, to communicate fluently and efficiently through correct English sentences. However, this is not the case. Most of them fail to internalise the basic structures and the collocation patterns of the English language. From his experience as a teacher and examiner the researcher has seen that the errors in English among young Bengalee learners stem from various sources, such as, interference from the mother...
tongue, over-generalizations, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, the building of false system and concepts, and carelessness. If the young learner is sufficiently motivated to overcome these difficulties he will certainly acquire proficiency in English and will be able to express himself in correct English sentences. With this idea in mind the researcher framed a questionnaire to collect data from the students and to measure their English language skills.

After a systematic analysis of the data the researcher is in a position to state how far towards the goal the young Bengalee learners of English have progressed and, consequently, what remains for them to learn.

1.2. State of the art in language acquisition studies

In this section an attempt is made to explain briefly some concepts relating to second language acquisition. Linguists consider them to be relevant to teaching and learning of a second language. "A conscious understanding of SLA is a basis for modifying and improving teaching."(1)

1.2.1 Language Acquisition and Language Learning:
These two terms are often contrasted on the assumption that these are two different processes. While the former

(1) Ellis Rod (1933) - Understanding Second Language Acquisition. O.U.P., London.
refers to the unconscious study of a second language through exposure, the latter refers to the conscious study of a language. However, since linguists differ on this, it is better to use them interchangeably.

1.2.2 **Second Language Acquisition (S.L.A.):**

S.L.A may be of two different types. One may be called a spontaneous (untutored) S.L.A and the other guided (or tutored).

Spontaneous Second Language acquisition means acquiring a language in everyday communication, free from systematic guidance. In this kind of acquisition both verbal and nonverbal means are used by the learner to communicate with the speaker of the target language. In this kind of acquisition only marginal attention is paid to the language itself. The learner does not make any serious effort to master the structures of the language perfectly.

Then the learner wants to acquire a second language as another tool of communication alongside the first language, he is under an obligation to master the structures of the second language as perfectly as possible. Hence, teachers and course designers prepare materials in digested form and in an order which will enable the young learner to acquire the structures of the target language
easily. Needless to say that SLA studies in India are mainly concerned with guided Second Language learning because English is not merely another language, but the most useful and powerful language which is the gateway to higher studies and higher status.

1.2.3 Distinction between FLA and FLA:

By first language acquisition we mean that someone without a language so far is going to acquire one (children acquiring a language). If it is one language, it is called monolingual FLA, and if any one learns two languages simultaneously it is called bilingual FLA. First language acquisition goes side by side with the child's cognitive and social development. He becomes a carrier of both word and concept and a social creature. In course of his first language acquisition a child acquires temporal concepts such as present, past, future and the like. He also learns the diectic terms such as 'I', 'here' now in course of FLA or even before it. Then learning a second language one does not require to relearn them.

Chomsky is of the opinion that a child can acquire the grammar of his native language within a short time since certain structural properties of grammar are innate. But Chomsky has been criticised on the ground that his theory
does not explain why the influence of universal traits is not available in case of learning a second language. Klein suggests that in course of FLA a child acquires a social identity while the identity of the second language learner is more or less fixed. "The adult is much less willing to give up his well-established social identity." (1) But experience shows that suitably motivated adults have been found capable of mastering a second language perfectly and within a short time. Hence, nothing can be said conclusively on the distinction between FLA and SLA.

1.2.4 Role of Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis in SLA

The Contrastive theory was first formulated by Lado (1957) and was regarded as the bible of foreign language teachers. Lado (1957) says, "The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language with the native language of the students will know better what the real problems are and can provide for teaching them." (2) The origins of Contrastive Analysis, therefore, were pedagogic. Contrastive Analysis is theoretical because it does not help us to identify errors. Error Analysis is practical because it helps us to identify actual errors by analysing

2) Lado Robert (1957) — Linguistics Across Cultures. The University of Michigan, 1-2
a corpus of learner language. A learner's errors are significant in three different ways. First, as the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently what remains for him to learn. Secondly, they provide to the teacher or the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly, they are indispensable to the learner himself because the making or errors can be regarded as a device the learner uses in order to learn. Hence, Error Analysis is more practical than Contrastive Analysis. However, using a contrastive analysis is also important to a great extent, since it can explain why some errors occur.

1.2.5 Major theories on Second Language Acquisition

There has been a plethora of theories about SLA. In this section an attempt will be made to review the major of theories which have received considerable attention in SLA studies. They reflect the variety of perspectives evident in SLA studies. Some of these major theories are

(a) Identity hypothesis
(b) The Acculturation Model
(c) Contrastive hypothesis
(d) Accommodation theory
(e) Krashen's monitor theory and (f) Discourse theory.

(a) Identity hypothesis

This theory asserts that acquisition of first and second language is basically one and the same process. The notion of an essential identity of first and second language acquisition rests on the findings that in both cases a similarity is noticed in the acquisition order of some structures such as interrogatives, negation or certain morphemes (Bart and Dulay, 1980). This theory has not been fully accepted by linguists on the ground that there are basic differences between SLA and FLA. A child must acquire one deixis (a fundamental property of human language) plus the respective words of the native language. But in case of FLA, the learner has to acquire only the respective words of the target language. In case of FLA, social and conative development go side by side with linguistic development. Not so in case of SLA. Hence the conclusion is that similarities and differences exist between first and second language acquisition. Linguists have failed to arrive at a coherent theory of maximal generality.

(b) The Acculturation Model

Brown (1980 at:129) has defined Acculturation as "the process of becoming adapted to a new culture". Schumann (1971: 11) opines that "second language acquisition is just one aspect of the Acculturation model which is actually due to Schumann Brown has only redefined it. Reference to the earlier model is provided in the updated bibliography in the appendix."
of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the Second Language. The degree of social and psychological distance between the learner and the culture of the target language determines SLA to a great extent. A good learning situation occurs when the L2 groups and target language groups view each other as equal and both agree to share social facilities. But this model may be inappropriate in case of naturalistic SLA. It is not applicable to classroom SLA.

(c) **Contrastive hypothesis**

This theory asserts that the acquisition of a second language is largely determined by the structure of an earlier acquired language. That is to say if the structure of the language acquired first is similar to that of the target language the learner will acquire the L2 with great ease. In case of dissimilarity between the structures of the two languages the learning of L2 will present considerable difficulty and will give rise to errors. This theory was first formulated by Dado (1957) and was regarded as the bible of foreign language teachers. This theory does not help teachers to identify errors.
This can be used only to identify which errors are the result of interference.

(d) **Accommodation theory**
The Accommodation theory and the Acculturation theory have some similarities between them. Both Giles (Accommodation theory) and Schumann (Acculturation theory) opine that SLA is largely influenced by the relationships between the learner's social group and the target language community. Schumann treats social and psychological distance as static which determines the level of interaction between the learner and the native speakers. But Giles opines that intergroup relationship are dynamic and the interaction is subject to constant negotiation between the two groups.

(e) **Krashen's Monitor theory**
Krashen's Monitor theory is addressed to the relation between spontaneous and guided learning. Krashen thinks that language acquisition is of two kinds: sub-conscious acquisition and conscious acquisition. When a learner communicates with the speaker of the target language he is oriented to the content and effect of his utterances. He remains unaware of the rules and structures used in the process. Language learning according to Krashen consists in the internalization of explicit rules under conscious control. Learning, Krashen thinks, is effected through a 'monitor' or an effort on the part of the learner.
to control his language output and to self-correct it whenever necessary. Though the validity of Kreul's theory is open to debate, yet this theory carries important implications for language instruction.

(f) Discourse theory
Cherry (1979) and Hatch (1973) are the advocates of this theory. They think that through communication with people, children accomplish actions in the world and develop the rules of language structure and use. The main principles of this theory are as follows:

i) SLA follows a natural route in syntactic development.

ii) Native speakers adjust their speech in order to initiate meaning with non-native speakers.

iii) The conversational strategies used to negotiate meaning and the resulting adjusted input, influence the rate and route of SLA in a number of ways.

iv) The natural route is the result of learning how to hold conversations.

At present there are two other major theories on language learning—one is the Audio-Lingual Habit Theory or Behaviouristic theory and the other cognitive theory. All the earlier theories of learning belong to one or the other of these two theories. The advocates of the first theory believe
learning is basically a process of conditioning. The Behaviourists view of the language learning process is one of providing the student with sufficient practice to acquire the appropriate language response. Language, they feel, is a mechanical, not a mental, process and should be learned mechanistically. Thus, like, Pavlov, Guthrie, Skinner, Hull and Bloomfield are advocates of this theory.

The basic tenets of behaviouristic learning theories have been challenged by the cognitive psychologists who suggest that the mind plays a conscious role in learning a language. This theory is, therefore, said to be mentalistic. Ausubel (1963), Spolsky (1966) and Chomsky (1966) feel that the learning process must be one of meaningful learning. Information acquired in a rote fashion is of little use to the learner and is quickly forgotten.

From the above discussion we find that the language teacher is now confronted with two opposing philosophies of language teaching. How should he choose between the two different views? The answer seems to be that he cannot or should not. In different studies conducted by Chastain (1969, 1970), Linn (1963), Mueller and Harris (1966) show that different groups of students learn differently. While some students prefer the Skinnerian approach, others learn better in materials that are based on cognitive theories of learning. Hence the two theories should be viewed as complementary to each other.
1.3 EFL/ESL studies done in India

In spite of debates and controversies about the position of English in South Asia, English has attained the status of an intranational and international language in the area. In India the English-knowing population is distributed in practically every State. English newspapers are published in almost all the States or Union Territories. Moreover, the percentage of books published in English is higher than that in any other language in India. English is a major language in Parliament. It is the language of the legal system and a preferred language in the Universities and all-India Competitive examinations for Senior administrative, engineering and foreign service positions. Hence EFL/ESL studies are vigorously pursued in India and by Indians in foreign countries.

It is gratifying to note that quite an impressive number of publications relating to EFL/ESL studies have appeared since Independence. Prof. P.L. Mehta who taught English at Punjab University and some of the leading public schools in India emphasised the importance of learning English in Independent India. In his book, *The Teaching of English in India (1950)* (Orient Longman), Prof. Mehta discussed the problems of learning English and suggested remedies for
overcoming these problems. Prof. V.K. Cokak in his "The Poetic Approach to Language" (OUP, 1952) says, "Indian English represents the evolution of a distinct standard - the form of which is correct English usage, but whose soul is Indian in colour, thought and imagery". Another eminent contributor to EFL/ESL studies in India, is Prof. A. Chandrashekhar of Delhi University. In his book, A new approach to language teaching (1965) Prof. Chandrashekhar has sought to probe the current methods and techniques of teaching English as a second language. (Ashok Kelkar's Marathi English): A study in foreign accent (1967) shows how Marathi structure and English structure overlap and how some sort of composite emerges. Pandit (1965) in his "Indian Readjustments in the English Consonant System" gives the consonantal systems of both English and Indian languages and states how some consonants of English not found in South Asian languages are realized in these systems.

Prof. B. Kachru (1965, 1966, 1969) has devoted considerable attention to describing the linguistic properties of Indian English. Prof. Bansal's The Intelligibility of Indian English (1969) is yet another landmark in EFL/ESL studies in India. He suggests the development of a style of spoken English that would be comprehensible to American and British ESL Speakers. Among recent publications mention may be made of
(a) *A Dictionary of Collocations* for Indian users of *English* by Prof. Priya Hosali (Hyderabad, 1939), (b) *Developing English Comprehension* by Kamala Nanda, New Delhi, Sterling, 1939, (c) B. Kachru's *The Alchemy of English* (OUP, 1939), and (d) Prof. C. Paul Verghese's *Teaching English* as a second language (Sterling, New Delhi, 1939).

Prof. Verghese has made an attempt to put the teaching of English as a second language in its proper perspective, to its aims and objectives and indicate the lines on which the system can be scientifically overhauled and the teaching made effective. Besides, individual authors the different commissions and study groups on English appointed by the Education Ministry, Govt. of India, have contributed a great deal to TEL/ESL studies in India. The Regional Institutes of English, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad along with the Post graduate departments of in different universities have been making commendable contributions to the teaching and learning of English as a second language.

TEL/ESL studies are being done vigorously in India as the Government and educated people fully realise the importance of English. English is no longer the language of Great Britain only. It is the language required by the world for better understanding. "It is the most international of languages." (1)

1.4. Policy of the Central Government relating to the teaching of English in India and teaching of English in the Secondary Schools in West Bengal.

1.4.1 Policy of the Central Government regarding teaching of English in India.

Since Independence Government of India has been trying to formulate a clear language policy. A number of committees and Study Groups were formed from time to time who seriously thought about the place of English in our system of education. It is evident from the findings of these committees and Study Groups that there never was a time when they tried to undermine the importance of English as a second language. Free from the yoke of foreign rule they could look at the subject in a dispassionate manner. Each Successive Committee has only redefined the objectives of learning English.

In 1963 the Central Government passed the Official Language Act according to which English was to continue indefinitely as an Associate Official Language for communication between the States and the Centre.

Later the Study Group appointed by the Ministry of Education in 1964 examined the situation in the light of changed circumstances. The members of the Commission were alarmed at the gradual lowering of the Standard of English and of education as a whole.
Later in March 1969 another Study Group was appointed by the Ministry of Education, Government of India under the Chairmanship of Prof. V.K. Gokak. The Committee noted that the recommendations of the previous Committees were not implemented. However, the involvement of N.C.E.R.T., C.I.I.E. and G.I.F.T. in the production of school books is an outcome of the suggestion of the previous Education Commissions.

However, all the three Commissions have recognised the importance of English as a second language and they all agree that in the changed circumstances English should serve the following purposes:

(a) As a lingua franca of India for interstate communication and communication between the State and the Centre.

(b) As a library language.

(c) As an international link language.

The Study Group under the Chairmanship of Prof. V.K. Gokak suggested that there should be a five year course for English which should generally begin from Class-VI and continue upto the end of the Secondary School stage.

The objectives of the course as laid down by the Committee are as follows:

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By the end of the course, a student should be able to:

(a) read with fluency and understand passages of texts written within the limits of the teaching points and necessary vocabulary suggested in the syllabus, (b) understand a simple talk on a subject within his experience, and (c) use the language correctly in speech and writing within the limits of teaching points and active vocabulary detailed in the Syllabus 1.

1.4. Teaching of English in the Secondary Schools in West Bengal.

From January 1934 English was introduced as the second language for the first time in Class-VI in all recognised Secondary Schools in West Bengal. The Board authorities in co-operation with the Institute of English, Calcutta, British Council and other experts have constructed new types of text books with a novel approach known as Functional Communicative Approach. It means that the students will be familiar with the functions expressed by certain phrases, grammatical structures etc. from which are more important than the phrases and the structures themselves. In all the books of Learning English the emphasis has been on functional aspect of the language. The main objective aimed at, is the acquisition of four skills — reading, writing, speaking and listening.

1. Teaching of English —
Ministry of Education, Govt. of India (1971)
(Page No. 47)

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and oral-aural skills. Board authorities feel that greater emphasis should be laid on the acquisition of reading and writing skills. However, novel the method may be, the main purpose of the Syllabus is to enable the Students to express themselves in grammatically correct sentences at the end of the Secondary School Stage. At present a young learner of English in a Bengali Medium School in West Bengal spends five years, learning English at a rate ranging from six to eight 40-minute periods per week. This means that a student spends a considerable period of time in learning the language. This should enable him to express his ideas in correct English sentences.

The analysis of the data collected from different schools will indicate how far towards the goal the young Bengali learners have progressed.

Organization of the Study

The present study is divided into six chapters and an appendix. The first chapter explains the purpose of the Study, *Entitle to the art* in SLA studies and a brief reference to the IIT/IISL studies done in India. It also discusses the policy of the Central Government relating to the teaching and learning of English and the present system of teaching English in West Bengal. The second chapter deals with the methods followed in the present study. The third chapter presents an analysis of
the students' performance in the spelling test and the results of the same are given in tabular form. Inflectional and other grammatical errors are discussed in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter deals with syntactical errors. The sixth chapter presents a review of what has been done in the previous chapters. It also presents general conclusions on what emerges from the analysis of the data. The questionnaire is given in the Appendix and is followed by the Bibliography.