CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In his educational credo, My Pedagogic Creed (1897), Dewey says that "true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself... to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs". (1966:45)

The value of education appeals to all sections of society. It has been looked upon as a means for social advancement in terms of employability, wealth gains, security and social status. This has been the reality over a century in the Indian context. However, as times change so do social trends and the same change may be reflected in the demands made on educational goals. In the words of Basil Bernstein, (1972:119) "much of the context of our schools is unwittingly drawn from aspects of the symbolic world of the middle class, and so when the child steps into school he is stepping into a symbolic system which does not provide for him a linkage with his life outside". In the multi-lingual context of India, English is a word that exists in the villages, towns, cities and metropolises of India. Sometimes one feels that English exists not just as a language but also as a singularly inseparable part of the communication practices among people across the sub-continent. In the daily life of an average Indian, English exists as an
accessible word kit. For even the simplest forms of communication occur with the help of a sprinkling of English.

The spread of English has created a greater number of people who desire access to it. In a multilingual setting, languages exist more in the fluidity of use rather than the rigidities of usage. The possibility of the use of English gains more importance than the correctness of usage. The multilingual context in India is a rich field for the English language to become a literacy goal serving the different sections of society, more often, the socially and economically disadvantaged.

In a multilingual context, language is used for a great deal of social construction in terms of communication. Language lives in “the commonsense reality of everyday life” (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) and “the developing human being not only interrelates with a particular natural environment, but with a specific cultural and social order, which is mediated to him by the significant others who have charge of him”. (ibid:51). It may be assumed that “the developing human being” in terms of economic and social mobility, is the socially backward and the downtrodden. He is not only in interaction with his particular natural environment; his home and socio-economic group culture but is also part of a specific cultural and social order.
Relating Dewey's definition to the socially and economically disadvantaged learner's urge to write in L2 in a bilingual context at the tertiary level, one would be able to see the demands of the social situations in which the learner finds himself, and his attempts to rise over these demands as an educated person.

For the economically and socially disadvantaged learner, then, schools have to serve a “renewed function within our changing societies. This entails building school cultures that operate as mutual communities of learners, involved jointly in solving problems with all contributing to the process of educating one another” (Bruner, 1986: 81-82).

The socially backward user of English approaches English through an awareness of a possibility for communication or literacy for the purposes of social mobility. In language use for written communication, especially L2, the emphasis may be on literacy, which, in turn, means the availability of the language to a greater number of users. The choice of writing may be imposed in a bilingual, official/academic environment but the readiness to write despite the difficulties of writing in a second language gains importance. This readiness to write needs to be recognized as a “literate mentality” (Clanchy, 1979 in Street, 1984). The readiness to write overcomes the norm-oriented features of grammaticality and syntax. Learners don’t write haphazardly. They write because they begin to find
themselves confident in using the language. Moreover, according to Berger and Luckmann (1972: 69), “since everyday life is dominated by the pragmatic motive, recipe knowledge, that is, knowledge limited to pragmatic competence in routine performances, occupies a prominent place in the social stock of knowledge”.

Schools or educational institutions deal with larger complex aims rather than narrow, simple objectives. For example, literacy is a large and more complex a goal than proficiency, which is a narrow simple one of excluding and certifying to increase marginalisation of learners. In the changing times, for the economically and socially disadvantaged learner, then, schools have to serve a distinctively different function. Schools have to assimilate socio-economic cultures in order to ensure that the scope of education is available to the greatest number of aspirants. Thus, “learning in its full complexity involves the creation and negotiation of meaning in a larger culture”. (Bruner, 1996: 84). Therefore, the disadvantaged learner’s attempt to use L2 in a bilingual context in a multilingual setting may be seen as learning that happens with a lot of complexity. This learning demands the negotiation of meaning from the disadvantaged learner who is also part of the larger culture of languages’ use. But, of course, “the nature of meaning as such is not clear” according to Vygotsky. (1962: 5). In order to understand the disadvantaged learner’s use of words in L2, it may be useful to follow Vygotsky’s “generalization” which means that a “word does not refer to a single object but to a group or a class of objects”. (ibid: 5). This occurs as a belief
in psychological development because of the benefits of education, which is a fundamental human activity. Therefore, the disadvantaged learner’s struggle to grapple with meaning with the help of “generalization” is evidence of basic human engagement with efforts in educating himself.

Following the tradition of the tendency to “generalize” in the search for meaning, and that “generalization makes communication possible”, (Edward and Sapir in Vygotsky, 1962:5) it may be argued that the bilingual’s attempt to use L₂ is “true human communication which presupposes a generalizing attitude, which is an advanced stage in the development of word meanings”. (ibid: 7). The disadvantaged learner is a bilingual. His L₁ meets several day-to-day needs in oral communication and L₂ meets specific needs in written communication.

The understanding and communication of meaning in writing is a view of literacy associated with a “whole language” approach. Consequently whole language educators emphasize that “writing always happens in messy, non-reproducible contexts. If we want to study it, we have to study that messy, context-dependent practice, not some neatened up substitute”. (Edelsky, 1996:45). Writing in L₂ in the undergraduate classrooms where there is vernacular medium of instruction is one such “messy” context.
1.1 Background to the study: English at the undergraduate level in Andhra Pradesh

At the tertiary level of education after the +2 stage in Andhra Pradesh, all learners coming from the English medium of instruction and the vernacular medium of instruction have to pass an examination in L2 at the end of the first and second years of undergraduate programmes. The examination is content-based that is, written response to questions, to test reading comprehension. Paragraph and essay answers are expected for the prose, poetry and non-detail or stories' texts. The marks for English, L2, show the proficiency of the learner in terms of memorizing the content. However, the marks for English, L2, are not really counted for the final award of the undergraduate degree. The electives determine the first, second or pass division. The marks scored in the study of English as a language do not help to improve the overall grade of a learner in the final examination at the end of the third year of the undergraduate program.

At the university level, the post-graduate examinations have to be written in English. When the learner becomes a job seeker, the university certificate is understood by society as testimony for an undergraduate with requisite competence in English to handle all socio-official contexts of communication. It is believed by the prospective employment market that the higher education system fulfils a central aim of making "it possible for its graduates to take their place in society". (Spolsky, 1972:268). The learner also feels that certification
will keep him in good stead as it is ample proof of a formal learning system equated with educational success and achievement. O’Houle (1972:29) comments that “education has at least as much to do with the achievement of outstanding excellence as it does with bringing deficient people up to some kind of norm”.

The education system in India attempts to see that English as L2 is taught at the primary, secondary and tertiary stages of education in almost all the states in the country. Many undergraduate institutions or aided colleges function with aid or government funding for scholarships given to several economically and socially disadvantaged learners. Learners coming from distant, semi-urban, rural areas get the economic benefit of scholarships and the advantage of reasonably good infrastructure and experienced teachers. Pursuing an undergraduate program in an aided, affiliated system is inexpensive for the learner. In the affiliation system, the pressure of continuous, on-going assessment is little. Proficiency in L2 is least noted in the examination system and certification. Amidst the laid-back attitudes of teachers, educators, administrators and learners, a particular set of learners, the socially and economically disadvantaged desire for a working or functional literacy in L2 which will help them survive local contexts of use, that is, written communication in official and semi-official situations. The socially and economically disadvantaged learner lives in a ‘modern society where the demands of work and citizenship require some degree of literacy in a large proportion of population”. (Castell et al. 1986:7)
1.2 The social and economic environment of the disadvantaged learner

The socially and economically disadvantaged learner lives and functions in the larger multilingual context and specifically, in a bilingual context. The perceived need is to write in L2 and the real need is for a teaching-learning set-up which promises the strengthening of literacy or writing skills in L2 which will provide the learner the support required for a growing career and the realisation of economic goals in life.

Relating Dewey’s definition to the socially and economically disadvantaged learner’s urge to write in L2 in a bilingual context in a multilingual setting at the tertiary level, one would be able to see the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself and his attempts to rise over these demands as he sees himself as an educated person.

To help the learner in his efforts to get educated it is useful to consider Kroll’s view (1990:29) that those who hold the social constructivist view acknowledge that becoming an accepted member of an academic discourse community presents particular problems for “basic writers” with whom ESL students have a great deal in common in terms of “outsider” status. Patricia Bizzell (in Kroll, 1990: 29) writes about the social constructionist nature of discourse suggesting two approaches for teaching writers who are “outsider status”. The first, preferred by Bizzell, is “based on the promise that students
should not be forced to acquire and become part of the academic discourse community. Instead, it is the academy that must change to adapt to the many cultures that the students represent” (ibid).

As Goodman and Goodman… (in Vygotsky, 1990:234) observe, “schools have traditionally narrowly defined conventions of…, of learning, of language, of thinking,…It ought to be easier to learn in school than out of school because in school there are professional teachers to mediate the learning. But instead of adjusting school to the learners we require them to adjust to the school”.

The teachers in the institution observe and reflect that there is a real need for a teaching – learning set up which promises the strengthening of literacy or writing skills in L2. Teachers realise that the static nature of written language with its conventions and grammar emphasis do not make the disadvantaged learner a writer. An increasing awareness of the multifaceted nature of written language makes the learner conscious of the functions of written language in social contexts. In the educational system, the disadvantaged learner would be the appropriate beneficiary.

1.3 Who is the disadvantaged learner

A learner becomes disadvantaged due to several occurrences. He is seen to be linguistically deficient, academically unsuccessful and socially and
economically backward. Teachers as well as the society around him thus characterize the learner because he does not measure up to their expectations in spite of emerging out of an education system that promises academic skills and abilities. A closer look at the learners' performance as will be seen in Chapter IV shows that the educational system comprising teachers and the society are blind to the strengths of learners whose proficiency may not be normative. An incorrect perception on their part makes them label the learner as 'disadvantaged'. A greater focus on the learner would reveal the several deficiencies that are forced upon him. He has “few enriching stimuli at home with only rare opportunities to range beyond the immediate neighbourhood...not given materials to explore...nor do parents make an active attempt to glamorise education as a valued experience (Passow et al. 1967:2). The learner does not have a peer group with whom he can use the second language informally. He does not have a literate home background where he can practise what he has learnt at school. He lives in a conflicting situation where the home is not aware of the value of educational experiences and a school which is not able to value the learner's existing educational experience which he brings with him at the time of joining the institution. The learner's access to education, vocation and socialization with the greater community is severely limited and historically, such learners have been marginalized to an “inferior status despite individual attainment”. (Silberman in Passow, 1967:48)
1.4 The disadvantaged learner’s place in the education system

The disadvantaged learner who belongs to the lower middle class section in society may not be gaining from the goals of education, which seem to generally benefit the upper middle class and middle class learners. The learner comes to the educational institution and sits in the language classroom expecting to strengthen his L2. However, schooling appears to increase his marginalization in the guise of assimilating him into the mainstream culture and language. The learner is made to face “culturally induced backwardness transmitted and sustained through the effects of linguistic processing”. (Passow, 1967:240)

He is a misfit in a group culture unimpressed by the benefits of education. He is an outcaste to the guardians of the norm. Both cultures are blind to his language learning and using abilities.

The disadvantaged learner is caught between an educated section of people whose education is “insufficient” because they display discrimination and a socially, economically backward class “where equality is non-existent” because education is so “minimal”. (Passow, 1967:1). The eagerness to learn and the anxiety to participate in the broader society are browbeaten by two inimical sections of society. For the disadvantaged learner, the processes of socialization seem to be hostile. In spite of the constant odds that he contends with, he has the potential to learn through the supportive processes of L1 use and resource. This
language awareness or language strength is significant considering the number of disadvantages he is beset with. This language strength is quite often unrecognised and despised too because the linguistically privileged put him to further disadvantage by refusing to accept his ability to take up the challenge of language-learning and language use.

The disadvantaged learner's struggle to improve his L₂ and strengthen his L₂ literacy awareness can be better understood in the backdrop of educational rights. It is important to see that learning L₂ and learning to write in L₂ are different matters which need to be understood with a greater focus on human rights and, on particular, educational rights.

1.5 Education as a basic fundamental right

The socially and economically disadvantaged learner's struggle for literacy will find its relevance and support in some of the instruments which enlist the rights for education. These have been of immense value in understanding the complex, human processes of socialization through education, for instance. Illich (1974:75) states that a good educational system “would require the application of constitutional guarantees to education”.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) in the paragraph on education (26) appeals to ensure free universal education. The council of Europe
Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted in 1950 and in force since 1953, in its education section (first protocol, 2) says that "no person shall be denied the right to education". In practice, this means "an individual right of access to available education or, in more concrete terms, the right of access to the existing public educational institutions in a non-discriminatory way". (Ximena et al.1996:6). In 1998, Federico Mayor, the Chairman of UNESCO said that "if we truly believe in lifelong learning, and if we seriously believe in redressing the balance of learning in our societies, then we should seek to develop in every country an open and more enabling system of education". (The UNESCO Courier, 1998:41).

1.6 Language as an educational right

Across the world, societies now recognise the significance of linguistic human rights. Skutnabb Kangas and Phillipson (1994:102) discuss "necessary rights" which build up "the linguistic repertoire that is necessary for basic social and psychological survival and economic and political participation", "and to prevent subtractive language learning situations...and to promote additive language learning situations".

For the socially and economically disadvantaged leaner, learning L₂ in a bilingual context will enrich his linguistic repertoire and promote additive language learning situations for social and psychological survival and economic
and political participation. Moreover, learning L₂ does not pose any risk to his L₁. By learning L₂ he is able to accommodate himself into the larger bilingual culture in which L₂ has a special role to play for fulfilling some of his needs for communication.

1.7 The importance of L₂ writing for the disadvantaged learner

For the disadvantaged learner, the need for writing in L₂ is in terms of academic progress, economic growth and occupational mobility. For all the three needs, writing in L₂ is required. Therefore, writing in L₂ is inescapable, it results in writing in spite of the several traditional notions of writing that may not be adhered to. This L₂ writing may be called literacy. It does not mean, however, that literacy has no conventions. One of the foremost conventions of literacy is the written representation of language.

When language is represented in writing through the alphabet, it needs to be recognized that such a form of representation is literacy. In this notion of literacy, there is no gestation period between reading and writing. In fact, it should not be surprising to find that there is minimal reading-such as reading of advertisements, newspapers, notices etc. Reading of long texts, short stories, novels, dramas may not have occurred for writing to begin a little later with the formalities of coding, syntax, grammaticality and semantics to happen. Writing
begins without any form of extensive or intensive reading. Writing begins even without proper oral skills in L2.

In a situation of literacy, written representation and literacy therefore assumes importance rather than the linearity of skill acquisition, which has been theoretically acclaimed. The recognition of a risk-taking ability in representing language through writing and the "willingness to communicate" (Dornyei, 2003) result in literacy which could be different from writing, that is expected to follow conventions. The rigidities, conventions, frozenness of language evident in writing are set aside in literacy. Language that is flexible for communication is used. Language that has a thought process and with less emphasis on usage may be called literacy. However, considering the several background drawbacks of home and environment, the constraints of time and distance, the disadvantaged learners need a longer time to master the conventions and grammaticality in writing. While the language policy of instruction in Telugu or vernacular helps the learner to cope with cognitive challenges, the absence of L2 linguistic environment stands in sharp contrast to the need of the learner to gain practice in L2 spoken and written communication. The disadvantaged learner is beset with economic, academic necessities to use L2 in writing. But he has L1 as a cognitive resource to cope with academics and day-to-day living. With the demands of the society on him and with the help of L1 to meet the demands in L2, the learner attempts to fulfil short-term needs. This urge to write in L2 to fulfil short-term
needs indicates literacy in L2. We term it functional literacy in L2 because he writes in L2 when there is an absolute need to write. He doesn't run away from the responsibility of writing. He takes the risk of writing. This risk taking ability, or, acceptance of his responsibility to write, leads him to write in the L2 that he possesses, rather than the L2 that is expected by the society.

L2 writing can be seen as a broad concern, which subsumes literacy...language use, communication and understanding. This is the situation that the disadvantaged learner faces in his day-to-day living in a bilingual context.

1.8 The concept of literacy and the disadvantaged learner

Literacy in L2 is a wide-ranging term for the disadvantaged learner. But because his writing capacities in L2 need to be strengthened a lot by a rich linguistic environment which is not present, the L2 disadvantaged learner begins with self-help, that is, by writing whatever occurs to him as L2 in his thought process. In this process, he may show adequate competence. In the multilingual setting that he is in, a representation of writing, which does not fulfil structural aspects need not be condemned. The literacy that he shows is indicative of functional literacy, that is, an ability to use the language for limited purposes of communication whenever there is a definite need. It is difficult for the learner to learn all the forms of language as a prerequisite to their use. Therefore, the literacy that is relevant to the practical aspects of everyday life for society as a
whole is the instrumental perspective, which may be called functional literacy. DeCastell et al (1986:8) say that the “apparent neutrality of the concept and the vagueness of its formulation, in conjunction with its pragmatic, utilitarian appeal, attract extensive approval”. While examining the appendices, and in the analysis of data in Chapter IV, it becomes evident that “a contextually adequate definition of functional literacy therefore, must consider not only the limited literacy demands of interpersonal and vocational practice, but also the broader literacy needs for social and political practice, as determined by the demands of any truly participatory democracy”. (ibid:12). Functional literacy in L₂ for the socially and economically disadvantaged learner at the tertiary level places the learner in a democratic context such as the benefit of education. Meanwhile, his risk-taking abilities with L₂ are proved through his readiness to answer or write in L₂ without fearing to be called as a non-standard user. Literacy practice in L₂ is a form of empowerment, which engages him in the pursuit of academic knowledge and democratic use of language.

1.9 The importance of functional literacy in L₂

For the L₂ learner and user, language needs to be integrated. Language is not just linguistic phenomena; “nor is it concerned with every aspect of communication. Its focus is on communication as a means of articulating human relations and human experience...language is the area in which all matters pertinent to human affairs-questions of advantage, disadvantage, kinship, love,
hate, work, play, duty, war, peace, etc – come into reckoning and affect communication”. (Harris, 2000:162-163). Therefore, language is not just L₁ or just L₂. Language is something more than the name it may carry such as Greek, Roman, English, Hindi, Telugu etc. It is a device by which the user attempts to tackle a greater number of issues in life.

In the literature on philosophical studies of language, Wittgenstein (in Katz, 1971) had studied the question of the logical form of language from dimensions other than a pure linguistic approach. Katz (1971:7-8) says that “the early Wittgenstein has assumed that the precise representation of the logical form of a sentence is a reduction of it to a set of logical simples and their relations; the latter Wittgenstein assumes that clarity about logical form or logical grammar comes not from penetrating the logical depths of sentential structure to reveal logical simples but from comparing and contrasting the ways in which different sentences are used in different realms of”.

First and second language pedagogy, literacy, bilingualism, the role of language in goodwill relations among institutions are all important concerns in second language education. These issues become significant in multilingual settings and in educational settings such as the formal education system and the L₂ language teacher. The L₂ language teacher also has a different responsibility towards the understanding of linguistic phenomena.
According to Wilkins, "since a language teacher is responsible for creating in students the capacity to use a second language, the knowledge required is not only of the elements of the language system itself in its universal and particular aspects, but also of the principles on which it generally operates in communication". (from Spolksy, 1999:9)

For the L₂ user, a philosophy of language that operates on the principles of communication but without undermining the concerns of form and grammaticality is the advantage. As Roy Harris says (in Nigel, 1990:141) "linguistic knowledge is, in the widest application of Austin's phrase, knowing" how to do things with words”. Making use of words appropriately in L₂ written communication in a multi-lingual setting could be, therefore, a feature of functional literacy. Not just a multi-lingual setting but the central argument will be that English is bound up in a wealth of social, cultural, economic and political complexities. (Pennycook, 1994). The philosophy of language has to take up the concern that global understanding of English includes the idea that 'global' means not only around the world but also in the world that English is embedded in multiple contexts of use. In educational theory too, Giroux (1987) suggests that the predominant culture of positivism dealt with the questions of efficiency in learning and teaching, and not for questions such as the extent to which schools acted as agents of social and cultural reproduction in a society marked by significant inequities in wealth, power and privilege. English language teaching has to have connections with
international relations, development studies, theories of culture or intercultural contact, or the politics or sociology of language or education.

1.10 The ‘worldliness’ of English language

Pennycook (1994) explores the position of English in the world saying that it seems to constantly seek a new future in view of the Balkanisation of the Soviet Union and Eastern European states. He states that “English and English Language Teaching seem ubiquitous in the world, playing a role everywhere from large-scale global politics to the intricacies of people’s lives”. (Pennycook, 1994:5)

Pennycook’s central argument is that English is bound up in a wealth of social, cultural, economic and political complexities. The argument discusses that a global understanding of English includes the idea that ‘global’ means not only around the world but also in the world that English is embedded in multiple contexts of use. Pennycook’s view is that the basic challenge is to find ways to come to terms pedagogically with the cultural politics of English as an international language. The argument continues to explore the extent to which English functions as a gatekeeper to positions of prestige in a society. With English taking up an important position in many educational systems around the world, it has become one of the most powerful means of inclusion into or exclusion from further education, employment or social positions. He says that
we need to account for the extent to which language is embedded in social, economic and political struggles. His grievance is that linguistic theory doesn’t talk of connections between language and social, economic, cultural, political and historical contingencies.

The philosophy of language also addresses the worldliness of language because the idea of worldliness is between the structuralist linguistic perspective which sees language as an idealized, abstract system disconnected to its surroundings and the sociolinguistic perspective which reduces language to its contexts and, therefore, sees language use as determined by worldly circumstances.

Worldliness may mean not just the description of a language, or the description of the use of a language but how this language acts as a bridge between different contexts. Yet there are gaps because it is not all that accessible. It is there everywhere but still not within the grasp of some people. It is the teacher who feels the guilt more because she is sensitised to the economic and social inequalities in society through her learners. With regard to the teacher’s duty in understanding the unconventional features of written language as the “worldliness of language” in the socially and economically disadvantaged learner, it is useful to relate the teacher’s efforts to Roy Harris’s (1981) call for a “demythologised linguistics that would involve an investigation of the renewal of

The notion of worldliness is concerned with a challenge to the dominant dichotomies of structuralism such as individual and society, langue and parole, synchronic and diachronic linguistics, with an understanding of language and discourse in the world, with the relationships of power and knowledge. It is not an attempt to find a relationship between the individual or language and society, but rather to suggest that they are inseparably intertwined.

The key aspects to the notion of worldliness are:

1. English is worldly by dint of its vast global expansion.
2. English is worldly in the sense that a person may be called worldly: it has been and is constantly in the process of being changed by its position in the world.
3. It is part of the world: it is in the world; to use English is to engage in social action that produces and reproduces social and cultural relations.

The worldliness of English in both its local and global senses implies relationships to the larger world and to the local context different from those of other languages.
For the socially and economically disadvantaged learner, $L_2$, English, is located in social action. Learners wish to write. They learn to write for the sake of upward mobility. The "worldliness of the language" (Pennycook, 1994) helps the learner to find ways to think about how he can come to use the language. It helps the learner to come out of state of helplessness. It helps him to break away from his personal and social context. Therefore, the worldliness of $L_2$ removes him from a disadvantageous position. The worldliness of English language in a way helps the learner to overcome norm constraints and linguistic awareness "which is conscious attention to linguistic form rather than the contents that are conveyed by language...linguistic awareness is thus awareness of language itself, its structure, variations etc., rather than the actual uses of language". (Elbro Carsten et al in Verhoeven, 2002:17).

1.11 Literacy in $L_2$ as an education goal in a bilingual context

Literacy in $L_2$ is an educational goal in bilingual contexts and multilingual settings. Democratic communities inspire learners to pursue the use of languages with the belief that it will help in the processes of socialisation. The goals of education need to take care of the motivation of learners who are in less fortunate social and economic circumstances. Bruner (1977:70) says that "we have no illusions about the difficulty of such a course, yet it is the only one open to us if we are to pursue excellence and at the same time honour the diversity of talents, we must educate".
An important aspect of an educational goal is to improve knowledge of social practices. The widespread use of L2 can be viewed as social practice. Language use is always situated. It may not be exactly the domain of sociolinguistics, which argues that context or participants determine meaning. The situated use of language argues that language is always located within larger discursive frameworks and is always part of the cultural and political events of the day. The 'worldliness' of L2, English, in both its local and global senses, implies relationships with the larger contexts and with the local contexts, which are different from those of other languages.

1.12 Bakhtin's concept of literacy and the disadvantaged learner

To attempt to understand the concept of “worldliness” (Pennycook, 1994) and globalisation, it will be useful to understand how Bakhtin conceived language “as a living dialogue”, “every day language...as graduated rather than absolute”, “the enormous ocean of extra literacy genres” from which have emerged the “primary speech genres” and the “secondary speech genres” and, Bakhtin's emphasis on “openness”, on “unfinishedness” in language against the Kantian philosophy which “perceived system as a closed order rather than as an open-ended series of connections” (Bakhtin, 1986:x). They unfold enormous possibilities for “words not as they exist in the system...but rather as they are present in communication”. (p. xvi)
While Saussure concluded "that language as used by heterogeneous millions of such wilful subjects was unstudiable a chaotic jungle beyond the capacity of science to domesticate" (ibid: p xvi), Bakhtin felt that "language is transformed from the absolute dogma it has been within the narrow framework of a sealed-off and impermeable monoglossia into a working hypothesis for comprehending and expressing reality". (Bakhtin, 1981: 61).

The reality is the presence of various socio-economic, cultural and political forces in society vying with each other as well as against the dominant discourse, which tries to marginalize them in Saussurian terms. The utterances of people gain power from the particular contexts in which we speak plays an important role in determining what to say". (Bakhtin 1986: x)

Bakhtin continues to explain that "working as always with a specular subject (a self derived from the other), speakers always shape an utterance not only according to the object of discourse (what they are talking about) and their immediate addressee (whom they are speaking to), but also according to the particular image in which they model the belief they will be understood, a belief that is the a priori of all speech". (ibid: xviii).

The socially and economically disadvantaged learner, in the above Bakhtinian point of view, is in a constant state of understanding the rest of the
world while trying to make himself be understood by the rest of the world. The constant process of negotiation frees the learner from bigger disadvantages arising out of the centralizing, unifying tendencies of language which create “closedness” and “one-sidedness”.

The continuous effort of negotiation opens “dialogic encounters” (ibid) filled with imagination, interpretation and the possibilities of semantic values in different social and linguistic contexts. In a dialogic encounter there is a mutual respect for the differences, the unlimitedness of understanding, the unboundedness of interpretation which enriches different contexts in which the learners are placed and to which they aspire for.

If we were to consider the socially and economically deprived sections of society entering educational institutions as a political mechanism to ensure their socialization into the mainstream as a form of social justice, we are also faced with the fact of a new linguistic consciousness – heteroglossia – which tries to free itself from the “dominant discourse reflected as something more or less bounded, typical and characteristic of a particular era, aging, dying, ripe for change and renewal” (Bakhtin, 1981: 60).

While the sociological perspective of Bakhtin helps us to understand the unlimited possibilities of utterances not restricted by structure and form, other
perspectives lend interesting dimensions reinforcing the arguments discussed in this section.

1.13 Second language learning and L₂ functional literacy

Roger Andersen expatiating on the cognitive operating principles that govern the path the learner takes in developing an increasingly more native-like and more efficient and successful linguistic competence in a second language discusses the transfer to somewhere principle. This principle indicates that a grammatical form or structure will occur consistently to a large extent in the "inter-language" (Selinker, 1972) of the learner if the natural acquisitional principles are consistent with the L₁ structure. Further, in the transfer principle preference is given to ‘free’, ‘invariant’, “functionally simple morphemes which are congruent with the L₁ and L₂”. (Andersen 1983 in Patten et al 1990). This transfer to somewhere principle shows that it may not be possible to say that the learner’s “inter-language” of the second language has structure deficit. Even according to processability theory, “the task of acquiring a language includes the acquisition of the procedural skills needed for the processing of the language” (Pienemann, 1998:1). However, the procedures in the acquisition of L₁ and L₂ may not be similarly characterised. There is a difference in the procedures that underlie the production of morphosyntactic structures and the rules of grammar that are consciously learned. Bialystok (1991) and Karmiloff Smith (1986) also assume that the acquisition of linguistic skills moves from “implicit” to ‘explicit’
and that explicit linguistic knowledge does not have to be conscious. (Pienemann, 1998: 40-41).

For the disadvantaged learner, the implicit knowledge of language structures of L₁ help him in understanding the L₂ grammar rules. The procedural skills of acquiring L₁ help the learner to understand some similarities and differences in L₁ and L₂ language structure. This learning does not really require conscious learning of the grammatical rules of L₂. Elbro et al (Verhoeven, 2002) suggest that children have no obvious use for explicit knowledge of the grammar or phonology of their L₁ but it helps them understand similarities and differences in L₁ and L₂. With respect to the learner’s production of written L₂, it may be considered that the broad-based functions of written language help us in positing the disadvantaged learner’s written L₂ as literacy. It may be called literacy because the learner is able to use the language to convey meaningful messages for which grammaticality is less important.

Pienemann’s teachability hypothesis also has a two dimensional aspect consisting of the “developmental” dimension and the “variational” dimension, “along which learners are essentially located according to their degree of linguistic norm-orientedness, as evidenced by percentages of production of redundant items or structures within the developmental processing capacities of the learner”. (Pienemann 1998:48). This perspective helps us in understanding that the
disadvantaged learner is progressing towards the norm. It would be unfair to the learner if we look at his efforts from a layman's point of view and condemn him for inappropriacy of lexis or inaccuracy in usage.

Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada (1993:73) argue about the conditions for language learning when they say that "there is little pressure to perform at high levels of accuracy, and there is often a greater emphasis on comprehension than on production in the early stages of learning...In addition, other students speak a simplified language". Lightbown and Spada's observation regarding the lesser emphasis on production may not be totally acceptable. The teacher may not emphasise production on more written work when compared to oral practice. The difficulty may be in terms of time constraint in attempting to assess or correct or even read through several scripts in large classes. Unless the teacher is insightful or informed about literacy practices, it would be difficult for the teacher to accept broad-based writing efforts. In many second language classrooms, writing is considered to be a strenuous task because teachers are inflexible in attitudes and their expectations are more in consonance with that of the larger society. These expectations are about perfect products coming out of undergraduate institutions. On the contrary, a teacher with an interest in teaching and conscious about learner attitudes, needs and individual differences in learning may not demand high levels of accuracy in a L2 situation of writing. At the extreme is the society that expects accuracy in writing from a university graduate at the tertiary level. The system of
certification endorses the society’s expectations. However, it is necessary to understand that teaching efforts withstand the rigid expectations of society. They take into consideration the continuous, micro-processes of socialisation through the education system. There is thus a greater responsibility and accountability placed on the L₂ teacher who has to put in vast efforts to reconcile the different sets of learner needs and the unchanging expectations of society. The teacher’s efforts to understand the learner’s strengths in using language and the learner’s efforts to use the language are often obscured by certification.

In India, it is the non-native English speaking speech community consisting of educated Indians, which serves as a reference group for the learner of English. Considering a first generation learner whose immediate objective of learning English is occupational and social mobility, it may be agreed upon with Margie Berns that “not every learner will want or need the range of skills or level of proficiency to fulfil all roles”. (Margie Berns in Patten et al. 1990:8-9). This does not mean that the learner will be permanently in his present level of language use. Margie Berns’ observation helps us in the initial step to understand the abilities of the learner who will certainly use L₂ for more purposes during his lifetime. Claire J. Kramsch expands on the concept of language elaborately when she says that emphasis on skills detracts us from the global concern with communication. Foreign language learning research must consider language in its “total expressive and communicative thrust”, that language is “quintessentially
indeterminate and culturally relative". (Kramsch in Patten et al. 1990:3). Kramsch’s views are valuable because a language used in international contexts pays greater attention to cultural uses of words. This helps in the possibility of negotiation of meaning between interlocutors. Based on Kramsch’s views, the disadvantaged learner is in a position to use English because he can be understood through negotiation in meaning and the possibilities of meaning in utterances and texts that Bakhtin too talks about. The indeterminate quality of language is an important factor to consider in the use of a language according to Antonella Sorace. Linguistic intuitions, she feels need to be valued especially with “second language learner’s institutions, as they often have a metalinguistic as well as an inter-language norm available, or with respect to bilingual/multilingual communities, in which more than one grammar (associated with varying degrees of prestige) usually co-exist in speakers’ competence”. (Sorace in Pankhurst et al. 1988: 172-173). It is important to recognise that the disadvantaged learner performs a language task in writing by putting to use so many norms and still achieving meaning.

Vivian Cook also explicitly states that “at each stage learners have their own language systems; their speech show rules and patterns of its own. At each stage learners have their own language systems. The nature of these learner systems may be very different from that of the target language...they are nonetheless systematic”. (Cook, 1991:7). For the disadvantaged learner, his
learner system is condemned by society because it is easy for the society to take up the simple task of upholding a norm rather than looking at the complex processes of language learning.

1.14 Language for democratic education

Paulo Freire (1996:53) states that “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other”. In a multi lingual setting, the use of L₂ in different realms of life by different sections of people gives rise to the continuous invention of language by the user, which may apparently be in conflict with norms like acceptability, grammaticality and linguistic appropriacy. Freire’s problem-posing education—which accepts neither a “well-behaved” present nor a predetermined future-roots itself in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary”. (ibid: 65)

David Ludsted says that “knowledge is produced in the process of interaction, between writer, and reader at the moment of reading”. (in Giroux, 1989:63). Roger Simon says that “teaching and learning must be linked to the goal of educating students to take risks...to critically appropriate forms of knowledge that exist outside of their immediate experience, and to envisage versions of a world which...is “not yet” (ibid:67). For the socially and economically disadvantaged learner, writing in L₂ is taking a risk. However, the
teaching learning goal of educating students implies that they learn to gain knowledge of things that may not be immediately required such as keeping to the norm. But they would be on the way to the norm by beginning to take risks in writing which, for their present efforts could be termed as functional literacy.

Moving away from the traditional approach to second language learning by technical and developmental concerns, Antonio Gramsci’s notion of language that “every language contains elements of a conception of the world...language...plays an active role in constructing reality”. (Giroux, 1989:191). The disadvantaged learner’s efforts in constructing reality cannot be ignored. If the reality is social construction, then L2 writing or functional literacy in L2 is an important conception of the world. The struggle and effort of the learners needs to be greatly appreciated in that they project a positive outlook inspite of their several socio-economic disadvantages. In trying to find out the ways in which language plays an important role in reality construction in an educational setting, “student experience must be given pre-eminence in an emancipatory curriculum. But learning how to understand, affirm, and analyse such experience means not only understanding the cultural and social forms through which students learn how to define themselves, but also learning how to engage student experience in a way that neither unqualifiedly endorses nor delegitimates it”. (Giroux, 1989:197). Giroux’s view assumes importance with respect to the teaching-learning relationship with a set of socially and economically disadvantaged learners. The
concept of student experience is central to critical pedagogy and should be recognised as central to teacher education programmes. Teachers too need to train themselves in democratic attitudes towards language learning and use in multilingual settings and in formal education systems.

Early pointers to the idea of language in education are found in Berger and Lucknann's opinions that "language originates in and has its primary reference to everyday life, it refers above all to the reality I experience in a wide-awake consciousness, which is dominated by the pragmatic motive (i.e. the cluster of meanings directly pertaining to present or future actions) and which I share with others in a taken for granted manner". (in Routledge et al. 1972:67). A first or a second language learner will have pragmatic motives and "since everyday life is dominated by the pragmatic motive, recipe knowledge, that is, knowledge limited to pragmatic competence in routine performances, occupies a prominent place in the social stock of knowledge". (ibid: 69). For the disadvantaged learner, the need for L2 writing is a pragmatic motive occupying a prominent place in his social life, which is constantly constructing reality. For any learner in a mass education system in a multi-lingual setting in a developing world it is the "pragmatic competence" and "routine performance" which help him survive and think of social and upward mobility and, therefore, "my knowledge of everyday life is structured in terms of relevances. Some of these are determined by
immediate pragmatic interests of mine, others by my general situation in society”.
(ibid: 70).

1.15 Teacher’s role in the learner’s L₂ functional literacy experiences

As the learning experiences of the learner get valued, the teacher’s role becomes one of observing “…the pupil’s contributions, and what lies behind them, that is, their interpretations of what the teacher says and does” (Routledge, 1972:113). The teacher becomes a facilitator, receiving the disadvantaged learner’s contributions in writing and helping him walk through the different stages of language learning in a bi-lingual context at the tertiary level.

The teacher’s role extends further from his past learning of what is language to a concern that “…The capacity of language to adapt to new realities and social mores is stronger than the desire amongst certain members of the community to preserve what was once perceived to be the ‘standard’, or ‘acceptable’. (Valerie et al. 2003:33). The teacher’s learning experience undergoes a modification from a stage of norm-orientedness to a new horizon of critical pedagogy which subsumes variation in phonology, syntax, usage expanding the notion of L₂ production in writing to a slightly new, amorphous idea of functional literacy in L₂ with respect to the socially and economically disadvantaged learner. The teacher must choose to remember what Cazden said in discussing first language teaching with children:
We must always remember that language is learned, not because we want to talk or read or write about language, but because we want to talk and read and write about the world. Only linguists have language as their subject matter. For the rest of us...language is the medium of interpersonal relationships, the medium of our mental life, the medium of learning about the world. (in Bernard, 1986:2)

Our situation is L2 teaching-learning and, especially L2 writing for pragmatic purposes in bilingual contexts for socially and economically disadvantaged learners. Rigid attitudes of acceptability will have to be loosened a great deal to accommodate the social construction envisaged as an educational goal through functional literacy in L2.

Teachers working at the tertiary level in classrooms where socially and economically disadvantaged learners come to learn L2 writing will find it educative to understand that the “19th century die-hard attitudes” (Donsky, 1984) would do great injustice to learners’ learning efforts. Teachers may come to accept that educational goals can be reached through a long range of intermediate objectives fulfilling the demands of social construction in multi-lingual settings, in bi-lingual contexts and, in the post-modern times. It is useful to consider Hooks’s view (in O’Brien et al. 2001:37) that “teachers must consider the knowledge that their students bring to the classroom, take risks with their students …and become involved in the process of learning with students”. The process of learning involves the use of literacy for development and transmission of learning and uses.
"Written language as a social transaction that can organize and shape a person's everyday world...using written language in their everyday lives to construct, maintain and negotiate robust social relationships". (Oates in O’Brien et al. 2001: 237). If the learners can no more be called socially and economically disadvantaged through literacy learning experiences then, it may be understood that social construction is in process.

1.16 Conclusion

It has become necessary to recognize the global language English for the purpose of L₂ functional literacy so that the multilingual context may not face the danger of L₁ language loss L₂ and marginalization in terms of the mother tongue and English. It may be useful to recall Pattanayak’s (1981: 13) view that, “the current, simpleminded, internationally accepted definition of literacy obscures an alternate approach to book, print, and reading”. Therefore, functional literacy serves as the balancing point for English to survive among all groups of people in a multilingual context. Functional literacy in the global language can become the linguistic vehicle for empowerment while maintaining multilingualism. When literacy in a language gains importance, questions may be raised about the conformity to the structural aspects of language. However, the use of L₂ through literacy practices ensures wider sections of people gaining access to L₂, thus achieving written communication for greater number of tasks directed towards social mobility.