2.0 Mapping Issues and Perspectives in the English Language Curriculum

'Long lasting transformations in education often are shaped not by the work of educators and researchers, but by social movements that push our more political economic and cultural institutions in specific directions.' (Apple: 2000, p. xvii)

Education in India is at the crossroads today. Just as education defines struggle, struggle also defines education. Interestingly, most of these struggles consistently attest ill-matched or even unequal contestants. In the light of Michael Apple’s (2000) insight, it will be worthwhile to look at some of the ideas generated through struggles that have enriched the field of literacy as the take-off of critical pedagogy. In this context, educational reforms are understood better when read against larger social transformations and constellations. ‘Keying’ of education, as Ervine Goffman might call it, tell us much about the emerging shape of the social order and its patterns of control.

In this chapter, we will look at two incidents in 1980s in India which called into question the notion of equitable education. A Prime Minister’s proposal
known henceforth as Mandal Commission, which proposed the reservation of 42% of jobs for backward classes in the government sector. The second incident is that of a tribal girl, Chuni Kotal. These two incidents and their analysis would take us to the theoretical discussion of the issue of education, language and literacy. These two separate incidents go into showing that the well-defined notions of education, literacy and social structure can be shaken up by historical policies, people and processes. The notion of education that prevails today is a product of such major (Mandal Commission) and minor (Chuni Kotal) processes.

Let us now look at these two incidents in detail, as a starting point, after which we will link these up to the theoretical discourses of language education and literacy.

2.1 The Mandal Commission Report

Posing the Debate

7 August 1990. The Mandal Manifesto opened a dramatic chapter in contemporary history and unearthed the more seedy side of democracy. Heterogeneity and diversity, supposedly settled issues now, were charged with rhetoric. All along the preceding decades burgeoning polyphonic badgering of the culturally different learner within education had become terrifyingly deafening. Considered a nuisance, this was generally glossed over as cacophony, babel, or simply, empty noise — non-comprehensibility
was conveniently made a natural attribute of the 'culture of silence'. Silence in education became the definer's property articulated in reprehensible terms. This logic made the linguistic bias of inequality suddenly apparent. At these crossroads, education stood nonplussed. The cutting question seemed to be if all are called why are few chosen? Who were they? What is education up to? What did the galloping figure of school failure hide? Not the poor woman or child, and the other lesser beings cast as underlings? Does this reflect the present crises of English Education in India today, 'an education that is divorced from the material condition in which it is practised?' (Apple: 2000)

The democratic content of the Mandal was unanimously conceded. The Prime Minister proposed reserving jobs for the 'backward' classes in the country. The PM's statement and the call for transparency of the notions of 'merit' and 'efficiency' opened up public debates. In the metropolitan cities, emotions ran so high that a near-riot situation prevailed.

In order to look more closely at the persisting inequality within education, we need to follow debates on this issue a little more closely. Can education be made to exist at the cost of the present social condition, social mediation of language, language that is culture and identity?
Why PM's proposal misfired?

Widespread criticism followed PM's proposal on the Mandal policy on two counts:

1. Critics alleged that ‘merit’ and ‘efficiency’ are socially determined categories and it works inherently against the underprivileged.

2. Reserving jobs is a misplaced arrangement of power deflecting attention from the need of structural change in society.

The assumptions and arguments in the public debates that followed seemed to point to the structure of power that was in place. The notion of empowerment that was being mobilized had important implications for education. PM's proposal exposed the terms of the debate and how the 'backward' classes were being defined. Critiques challenged framing the backward in deterministic and essentializing terms as a 'naturalized' group. Empowerment being practiced, therefore, appeared as a unitary, prefixed, centrist stand all the while maintaining power to articulate the terms in which empowerment can be stated. This was an 'ideological' standpoint which drew the line between those empowering the lesser powered. Structures, which reproduce these inequalities and injustices, work in invisible ways.

Whither Mandal?

One way in which this is visible in the mainstream curriculum is its maintenance of inequality. At this juncture, Chuni Kotal's identity as a tribal
woman who had aspired to an academic career is classic. Eighties were troubled years. More so for education, a largely upper class, upper caste, and gendered stronghold so far was being assailed with unquiet.

16 August 1992. Chuni Kotal, a 27-year-old Lodha girl, the first woman graduate among the Lodha-Savara and Kheria-Savara tribe of West Bengal, hanged herself. Chuni’s graduation had made news... ³ Her specific identity made her invisible. Such treacherous discrepancies hardly have any relation to any theoretical models but theoretical models however do not remain untouched by such histories.

From Chuni’s career it is clear that to be educated cannot be known in what is known in the vocabularies of schooling for that is a compelling story out of a competing many. To a certain extent what it means to be educated can be known in what it is not to be educated. Social events like the Mandal / Reservation Policy, and the particular instance of Chuni Kotal, enact in both canny and uncanny ways what is education and what it is to be educated simultaneously. When the conditions of change are predicated by such social events like the Mandal there is a peculiar tendency to revert to centrifugal anti-modernist and politically correct stances within language education. This provokes us into thinking of education as a site of culture and produced by it. If we understand knowledge to be socially constructed and emerging out of cultural struggles, serving some people more than
others, where the social and the critical constitute and are constitutive of meaning then what are its implications for education? Are these the new directions to praxis in engaging with the challenges posed by this enormous contemporary reality?

To position within these debates argues for a language education, which is not simply the eradication of illiteracy as understood by mainstream thinking but also practicing citizenship and justice.

The general turn of discussions on inequality in schooling, in India as well as other countries, has centered on school failures, which often take the force of public debates. How are language and culture perceived within these debates? What accents for the subject? Why is it that pursuing the twin goals of linguistic and communicative competence *only* does not sound so comfortable as they used to earlier?

### 2.2 Theoretical Roots/Routes of Inequality

Most theoretical approaches to critical perspectives in education came to be located in larger sociological debates. These mostly centered around the question of inequality and the dynamics of reproduction in schooling. The pursuits within the ‘New Sociology of Education’ probed the assumptions about educational knowledge and were directly related to who could participate in it. Industrialization and democratization processes in the West
gave rise to a new global phenomenon and dramatically changed social equations. Democracy, it is said, had many faces and gave rise to an experience that had a mixed flavour. Immigration in the 60s and 70s in the West, coupled with the civil rights movements were resetting agendas within education. Alieness gave way to alarm. This had become a regular feature in the colonies—Indian, Carribean, Latin American and African. Fantasized threats had the effects of facts. Working class children in British and American schools were seen as little deficits. But more as pollutants – defiling. Ethnic terms were coined. ‘Nigger’ and ‘black’ found their way into language with devastating connotations. This stemmed from the tremendous educational problems of the urban American ghettos - the failure to teach Negro and Puerto Rican youth the fundamental skills of reading and writing. This is quite like what we are having to cope in the classroom in India today with our first generation learners. Soon the margins acquired the features of the known. Thus, mystified / mythified theories multiplied. Language as constitutive of reality and as constituting reality was at play. Certain discursive formations told powerful stories. Throughout the 60s and 70s in the West the ‘deficit theory’, so powerful in the popular imagination, when many believed that Bernstein was responsible for the binary and hierarchy set forth by the “elaborate” code of the middle class and the “restricted” code of the working class. In the process of these investigations conducted by, Bernstein, he eventually demystified the power that goes with standard English by putting language variation into perspective.
For the newly freed colonies including India, the newly resourced educational thinking looked seductive enough to be imported wholesale plus the theoretical models of power that went with it. It decided and debated policies on who could be in and how in education. In short, previously ‘unrepresented’ sections of the population considered ‘rude’, ‘uncouth’ and ‘uncultured by ‘petty bourgeoisie’ middle class white male standards precipitated a crisis. They had become a problem. They were silent. They were made absent. In the following section, we look at two books/publications which destabilized the colonial enterprise of education. One which highlighted the racial bias in Educational Documents and the other the bias in schooling.

2.2.1 Deschooling and Inequality

In 1972, Christopher Jencks’ Inequality was in the US market. At once it was a publishing landmark. It had compiled the Coleman and Crowther Reports (1965) exposing the inbuilt racial bias of these surveys. Surveys On Equality of Educational Opportunity was largely carried out to fulfill the Civil Acts Right of 1964 to find out the functioning of society. Funding was high. It was also based on advanced ideas of education, sociology, social psychology, survey techniques and computing. The accounts failed on every count. Accounting gaps were enormous. Rationalistic modes of analyses were faulted. The inquisition of the reports opened the nation and its policies to contest.
As survey reports started pouring in variables multiplied disrupting the notions about a singular concept of 'equal opportunity'. The essential finding read '.... race/poverty nexus appears to correlate with low reading levels....'. Coleman argues that without knowing what inputs are important one cannot know whether opportunities are equal. And then first finding is that schools are remarkably similar in the way they relate to the achievement of their pupils when the socio economic background of the students is taken into account. Schools once thought to exert great influence on society, had not happened. Defining 'equality' thus was up to scrutiny.

At about the same time, Ivan Illich's *Deschooling* (1971) offered a powerful lens for looking at the relationship between schooling and society and the anguish suffered if school stood for truth values. Troubled by the artifice of meritocracy and credentialism littering the educational scenario, Illich unravels some of the myths surrounding it. Giving primacy to some of the myths and the fair lopsidedness of our priorities is the focus of this book. The ethics of education according to him seemed to lie elsewhere.

2.2.2 The Hidden Curriculum and Reproduction Theory

As unitary models of investigation were finding it more and more difficult to locate the origin of the problem, neo-Marxist theoretical approaches (Althusser:1971; Gramsci:1971) destabilized structuralist modes. Asserting the dialectical process of social being which disturbed the 'political
arithmetic' thesis of the functionalists. Illuminating conflict and contradiction as embodying and embedding the schooling process, Apple (1979) disclosed the complex ways by which reproduction occurred. The concept of the 'hidden curriculum' was considered one of the most powerful ways of looking at discourse.

The two theoretical approaches to analyzing the 'hidden curriculum' concept are often referred to as the Functionalists School and the Neo-Marxists School. During the 1960s and early 1970s surveys (William Labov:1970; Basil Bernstein:1970; Paul Willis:1977) studying the problem of class in working class children in British and American education proliferated. This imported evaluation criteria was grafted on to the colonial education system. The role instrumentation played is noteworthy. Correlation between cultural features of working class life and failures were attempted, bringing into force the play of ideology. This becomes a major articulation in Michael Apple (1979; 1982; 1986), Peirre Bourdieu (1977) and Antonio Gramsci (1971). Sociolinguistic theories of Basil Bernstein (1970; 1973) have provided linguistic data to add to these arguments. Phonocentricism was unable to accept or explain linguistic variation. Sociolinguistic resources instantly supplied terms to unravel the myths.

Instruments and tools set into place to study the phenomenon were largely inadequate to assess the situation. Deficits were conveniently identified in specific communities and not others.
The hidden curriculum debate projected the ‘correspondence thesis’ as a structural issue alone lending some of the arguments to be over determined, essentializing and fairly undifferentiated. Reproduction theorists argued that inequality follows a variety of routes, and no mediation between society and school is unproblematic. The main criticism against reproduction theorists is the peculiar underplaying of cultural and reproduction factors in the reproduction process. Both functionalists, Philip Jackson (1968) and Robert Dreeban (1968) and the neo-Marxists (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) seemed to agree that schools are major places where consent is preset in the very structures of learning the mainstream curriculum. This was very conducive for the manufacture of a large passive workforce important for the reproduction of the capitalist social order. Schools then become highly functional for this capitalistic system. Education is seen to correspond completely in both form and content to the economy. Schools produce a compliant work force and through credentials legitimize existing hierarchies. To the functionalists ‘working class’ emerged as a unit of analysis and an undifferentiated factor. Schools, in their paradigm, were reproducers of labour market consciousness.

Renegotiating the issue of inequality Michael Apple provided a new dimension to the debates. *Ideology and Curriculum* (1979), *Education and Power* (1982), and *Teachers and Texts* (1986) in very seminal ways pose the problem of education as being a serious adult modernity.
2.2.3 Resistance Theory

Unilinear diagnostic accounts are defeating and severely misplaced.

Countering the functionalists approach, Apple argues that reproduction is a process of contradiction, conflict and mediation. School resistances for him became powerful ways of looking at the hidden agenda of participants. As he looks into the issue of identity, resistance can be read as the learner's idiom of agency. The passive subject hypothesis is as unacceptable as that of the unmediated subject, even within very trying and unequal power structures. He also emphasizes how the form and content of the formal curriculum influences the reproduction process. Teachers and texts in classrooms can always subvert oppressive kinds of reading. Ideology, agency and process are key concepts in Apple's critique.

Jean Anyon (1980), Ramsay Coleman (1965) and Everhart (1983) all seemed to find the concept of school resistances as significant for the hidden curriculum thesis. Paul Willis in his book Learning to Labor (1977) in trying to understand working class learning in Britain introduced ethnographic research as being more helpful to study on the ground as it were.

School achievement, and thereby, failure became a major preoccupation in education in both UK and US in the 70s. Linguistic explanation for school
failure became a worldwide debate. The following sections consider some of the more prominent investigations conducted at this time to dispel myths about the 'disadvantaged' learner and their 'nonstandard' use of English.

2.3 Linguistic Perspectives

Language Games: Elaborated and Restricted Codes

Basil Bernstein (1977) challenges the creation of this new demography of social failure - the persisting trend to victimize the culturally different learner. Stereotyping the culturally different working class resumed in many of the hate campaigns that surged up within schools. This was particularly experienced by the Latinos and Africans in the urban American ghetto schools. He had created certain key sociolinguistic concepts to throw light on the 'deficit hypothesis' coined by Bruner (1956), which gave currency to a very specific kind of alarm. His concept of 'elaborated' and 'restricted' speech codes sought to identify and understand speech patterns in context. In his study of familial socialization, which affects orientation towards the use of language. Soon these concepts of 'elaborated' and 'restricted' codes came to be interchangeable for schooled and unschooled children with negative behaviour references. However, Labov (1970, 1975) challenges and invalidates such deprivation or deficit theories in his work and describes the general setting in which they arose in America where there was a high
degree of failure at school among Negro children and segregated ethnic
groups in central urban ghettos, and upon which he pronounces as follows:

.... the myth of verbal deprivation is particularly dangerous,
because it diverts attention from real defects of our educational
system to imaginary defects of the child; and...leads its
sponsors inevitably to the hypothesis of the genetic inferiority of
negro children which it was originally designed to avoid.
(Labov, 1970:180)

According to Gumperz, the current state of our knowledge "provides little
justification for associating absolute differences in verbal skills with class or
ethnic background" (1972:220). 'Lexical elaboration', Gumperz's paraphrase
of Bernstein's term for 'elaborated code' which relies more heavily on the
expression of non-referential meaning through words, is one of these
devices but by no means the only one. Similar information, Gumperz
observes, can be conveyed through style-shifting, intonation, vocabulary,
topical selection and like devices. Gumperz distinguishes between "linguistic
competence" – the speaker's ability to produce grammatically correct
sentences" and "communicative competence" – his ability to select from the
totality of grammatically correct expressions available to him forms which
appropriately reflect the social norms governing behaviour in specific
encounters. Nor does it require much imagination to conceive of the lack of
confidence such an implication may engender in the person subjected to it in
unequal exchanges, for example, like teacher/student, policeman/client, and
of its potentially silencing power.
One advantage of these studies seemed to alert researchers to the inadequacies of the analytical tools so far used for studying such a complex phenomenon as language use. Soon two very distinct behavioural categories were identified – the middle class and the working class – though this was not what was meant. What was significant about these concepts is that the cultural variable, and the relationship of language and culture hitherto ignored was assuming important dimensions. It was found that it is the cultural concept that disadvantages the working class pupil, in schooled language learning.

Labov’s (1970) studies of black Americans in urban settings found children who were seen to be inarticulate in a formal interview situation could behave differently in situations that were more congenial and informal to them. Bernstein (1975) makes it clear that the concept of ‘restricted code’ should not be equated with ‘linguistic deprivation.’ Much of the cultural deprivation arguments in Compensatory Education did cite the Sapir Whorf Hypothesis (1956) or the linguistic relativity theory, which holds that language is in fact a map of the speaker’s reality. Thus, the language of each speaker is a marker of a different reality. That is, the range of language competency, usage, and differentiation within native speakers of language is also the range of realities lived among those people.
2.4 Psychological and Competency Perspectives

Certain representations of rationality were quickly consolidated in school practices. Psychological perspectives in language development theories acquired considerable significance for syllabus layout of stage-wise development of 'competency skills'. Models prevailing within the structuralist scheme of language development see a linear pattern of progression with the acquisition of more powerful higher order structures, where more development means more powerful structures. Moreover, these structures are seen as hierarchically organized so that missing early points in the sequence precludes later development. Some cultures 'push' cognitive development further than others. If you have not been pushed far you lack the more powerful cognitive structures. Superior and inferior cognitive structures were identified and rated in the quality control programs. This became the ground principle not only of Compensatory Education but governed second language education the world over.

The assumption of the approach is that a given task evokes the same kind of behaviour regardless of who performs the task. The logic of the task itself and the cognitive processes it taps are comparable, even though content may be subject to cultural variation. Perhaps the power of this understanding was the mainstay of ELT (English Language Teaching) in India.

Universality of the cognitive stages described by Piaget were contested and the specific optimal development outcome they lead to when we study other
cultures with different education and institutional structures of reality, we may find that the definition required of certain mental operation that are of interest to us are outside the episodic repertoires of that culture.

Others argue that social convention requires the elaborated code in the school and that children who do not have it suffer.

Another argument within language development theories of Jean Piaget which intellectualizes the issue of egocentric speech, and views the child as a rational problem solver, while the entire argument of Vygotsky centers around the socialization of the child as embodied in society.

Moll & Greenberg (1990), Gordon Wells (1995), Hundiede (1985) critique Piaget and expose the development conundrum by arguing that development can be considered a function of the learner's immediate sense of an activity.

Despite these findings, sociological explanations and findings to language learning were yet to be fully understand in order to incorporate into the school syllabi. Rather, Krashen's L1 and L2 thesis produced considerable interest to curriculum framers.
Krashen's Monitor model showed 'two independent systems of developing ability' with notions of 'acquisition' and 'learning' setting new syllabus tempos moving (Candlin: 1976; Widdowson: 1979; Brumfit: 1980; Allen: 1980; Grognat and Crandall: 1982; Prabhu: 1983). Structural approach to curriculum development stabilized the language development discourse. The inventory of different syllabus agendas was on the increase. Functional and Psychological perspectives gained exceptional force - the drill skill method of fostering language learning - a crude response-stimuli practice was being activated in language learning setups. Language as cultural langue can be observed in the changes being articulated in socio-cultural theories based on Vygotsky's theories of development, which is getting currency as constructivism – the theory of knowledge and its development. His concept of 'zone of proximal development' has powerful applications in second language development programmes and in classroom practice. It also serves as the ground principle of multicultural education today. The active identity of the learner is instituted as the entry point of learning. This is even more applicable in second language education which brings languages and cultures in contact. As a consequence, the possibility of conflict cannot be ruled out but rather serves as the new starting point. 'The historically and socially constructed identity of learners, influences the subject position they take up in the language classroom and the relationship they establish with language teacher.' (Norton: 2000) This seems to point to the fact that it is becoming more and more difficult to separate the linguistic needs of the
learners from their social needs. Belonging to the constructivists school, Henry Treuba (1994) has done extensive ethnographic study of Latino-American children and the problems they face the mainstream education. And Gordon Wells (1995) has studied how unschooled children excel in performing complex mathematical problems.

2.5 The Critical Pedagogy Perspective

2.5.1 Critical Consciousness

The sociological positions held by New Sociology of Education argued that the making of meaning or knowledge formation is historically framed within ideological structures and practices within society, which make for present inequalities. Positioning within Marxian dialectics, Paulo Freire (1970) rereads the world in his exceptionally innovative way. He asserts a pedagogy that is the history of people's lives. To a culture of domination, he proposes a pedagogy of liberation. He exposes the violence of the symbolic order, how the domination of the 'banking process' of mainstream education perpetuates false consciousness. In so doing, he shatters prevailing misconceptions about language and how it is learnt resolving some of the most crucial langue/ parole debates in language which continues to follow strange careers in most language teaching programs the world over.

Freire does not hesitate to expose whose view of what to learn and how to learn prevailed, and therefore who was being served revealing, the political
nature of education. This is the power of ‘conscientazio’ of reading the world in the word. It is important to note that such transformative praxis has to interrogate the culture of silence. There is no other route to learning. He locates the problem and praxis in the disjuncture of the sociopolitical order that not only 'petrifies', but also does large-scale violence to the very order of things. Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1976), pursues some of the issues involved in the traumas of subjugation.

While Freire (1973) sweeps aside the methodical crises in general literacy as a chicken and egg story. According to him, syntax brings thought with it locating the word as a linguistic and political unit at once. Lockstep method of ‘read and say’ phonics prevailing in most American language development programmes, he rejects as not sufficiently problematized to be applied to adult situations. A liberating education ‘is an act of knowledge’ and consciousness is ‘intention’ toward the world” (Freire 1985: 114).

Poverty and illiteracy are factors that both map and structure the culture of silence and not certain neurological problems that psychological perspectives in language education pose it to be. Learning to read and write essentially means training to read reality or in other words involves a *critical process of evaluating ones own environment in order to transform it* or Freire would say ‘humanize’ it.
Some of the key concepts essential to understanding Freire:

1. The theory of praxis that is a process of conscientizao
2. The critical concept of reading
3. The notations of agency - teachers and students
4. And within this the notion of dialogism

Two important Freirian tenets:

'Democratization of culture according to Freire has to start from what we are and what we do as a people not what some people want of us to do. 'We all learn from each other more than we already know. To that extent to be human is to be essentially pedagogical' (1976:81).

Following Freire, many critical theorists, not strictly belonging to the Frankfurt school, extended these arguments. Henry Giroux (1983, 1988) committed himself to 'the teacher as intellectual transformators thesis'; Ira Shor (1980) worked with less privileged open admissions students at the City University of New York. Taking the common burger as the text of the classroom provided an animating example of reading the world in the word of the classroom. Larry Aronowitz and Henry Giroux (1985,1991) and Peter McLaren (1995) made possible a more adequate and accurate 'reading' of the world, on the basis of which, as Freire put it, people can enter into 'rewriting' the world into a formation in which their interests, identities and
legitimate aspirations are more fully present and are present more equally.'
(Lankshear and McLaren, 1993: xviii)

Pedagogical Pitfalls

Empowered as 'transformative intellectuals', many critics feared, the teaching would generate anti-praxis, the very kind the discourse sought to disparage. Both Donaldo Macedo and Paulo Freire (1990) have discussed at length the increased responsibilities of teachers and a sliding to an anti-intellectual stand where the teacher abdicates authority in the name of promoting a specious kind of democracy or dialogue in the classroom. Striking anti-theory stances in the classroom is succumbing to sectionalism, not teaching. Freire shows an acute awareness of what he called the 'pedagogical consciousness'. By making the materiality of consciousness as his entry point, he identifies the knowing individual as the social. So the provisional state of knowledge as constitutive of reality is being reasserted. These are his proposals for praxis. Freirien praxis was problematized in the conditions of domination and imperialism. Empowerment obviously had different notations. In many ways language to Freire meant interrogating or as exemplified, in subverting the language of power.

Critiques of empowerment take issue with:

(1) Rationality, as a basis for critical pedagogy, as fragile and contested.

To work primarily in the realm of reason is value-laden. On assuming
coherent subjectivities is vulnerable. However, Giroux (1972:77) counters by saying: that for a critical pedagogy to be effective it must take into account the diverse complex ways in which people negotiate their lives.

(2) Authority to empower has the dangers of getting authoritarian. The discourse can get polarized on the premise of dialogue.

2.5.2 New Literacy Studies

Brian Street

Theoretical developments in the theory of literacy address these glaring gaps and mismatches to evolve a rethink and a new way of 'doing' literacy. Brian Street largely spearheaded some of the critical positions within what is known as the New Literacy Studies (NLS) more recently but which has its legacy in the Latin American school of thought in critical literacy of Paulo Feire, Shirley Scribner and Michael Cole in psychology, Shirley Brice Heath, Mike Baynham and James Gee in socio-linguistics.

Brian Street provides powerful tools of critique and a theoretical framework to reconceptualize the field of literacy and thereby, education. The sophisticated epistemological shift is captured in the two models, the 'autonomous' and the 'ideological.' His scrutiny unpacks some of the myths surrounding the 'illiterate'. Consequently, he is able to unlock the
pedagogical practice of rendering certain categories of students, what has come to be understood in mandatory terms in literacy, as 'infantile' and 'invisible'. He looks at the literacy practices of reading and writing from a more grounded and realistic position and studies them as embedded as they are within social practices. The frame of reference has become complex and varied.

Brian Street proposed an 'autonomous' model of literacy which could be a useful framework to look at some of the theoretical developments in the field of literacy. It would help in understanding not only the problems afflicting strictly speaking literacy but also the educational scenario better.

**Brain Street: The Autonomous Model**

**Assumptions:**

1. Literacy did things to people regardless of context.
2. Social consequences are supposed to follow from literacy.
3. Without schooling there are performative and cognitive defects in adults.
4. Present forms of literacy are fixed, universal and given.
5. Literacy is a homogeneous mass of technical neutral skills to be imparted to all in equal measure.
6. Notions of literacy are cultural and ideological that imposes western conceptions of literacy.
The Ideological Model

1. Culturally sensitive view of literacy.

2. Western ethnocentric conceptions of 'standard' infantalizes local conceptions of literacy.

3. This model accounts for variation and interconnectedness of contemporary practice.

4. One, single, account of literacy is hardly reliable.

5. Variable practices are rooted in power relations.

6. Formal schooled 'autonomous' literacy practices have provided power to some.

The contested nature of literacy practices and the social nature of literacy makes Brian Street give a broader scope to the terms 'literacy practice'. Individual discrete skills of reading and writing practised in medical pedagogical scenario as cultural practice. The Streets (1991) argued that school literacy tends to define what counts as literacy, and that this constructs the lack of 'school literacy' in deficit terms, those who don't have it are considered as cases of deficit. This obscures the presence of other forms of literacy to the extent of making them 'invisible'.

The notion of literacy is intricately interwoven with the notion of language. Most of the discussions around student 'performance' within educational
contexts and outside seem to centre around the question of language. In the next section, we look at how language is defined in education and how it gets interwoven with the question of literacy.

2.6 Concepts of Praxis: Dialogue as Critical Educative

Praxis

Language as Social Consciousness: It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness (Marx, 1839).

Vygotsky in ‘Thought and Language’ (1962) has a vital lyrical metaphor for the whole sequence learning mediated through language. Affect is “the wind that puts into motion the cloud that gushes a shower of words” (1962: 150).

I will deal with certain key concepts that are very significant for instruction. They are praxis, empowerment, tabula rasa, invisibilization and infantilization.

Praxis: The voice that challenged the culture of silence emerged as the culture of voice – voice of critical consciousness.

The concept of empowerment has been contested on several grounds that it builds an unintended discourse of difference – between those who have
power and those who do not – into some kind of simplistic oppositional politics which can raise further problem rather than solving them.

The concept of *tabula rasa*, unconsciously in force even in the present teaching learning situations, was minted under the colonial discourse of oppression/dominance/suffering - in a culture of silence. The ideology that it has mobilised according to Brian Street is a praxis of 'invisibilization' and 'infantilization'.

The two concepts of *invisibilization* and *infantilization* are basically ideological concepts responsible for specific pedagogical practices. Infantilization was a major argument in Streets' ideological mode of adult intervention. Freire had called it the 'culture of silence'. Educational practices would proceed from treating the adult as a child and thereby a certain mode of passivizing the learner. In this perception the 'lived curriculum' of the learner is conveniently subsumed so that the authority of the teacher can prevail. The assumed nature of this authority of the teacher is what is at issue. The neutrality and objectivity of the pattern and content of teaching is therefore being rationalized. So a certain 'banking' model of learning is being premised. To cite an instance to expose how contradictory / schizoid our classrooms practices are – our undergraduates enjoy voting rights to active social participation but they are addressed as children in the rites and rituals of everyday classroom practice. Even the content of adult literacy
instruction are so full of the ‘housekeeping’ duties like dotting the ‘i’s and
crossing the ‘t’s better known in literacy parlance as ‘alphabetization’ or
‘syllabification’ so that the whole effort of education gets muddied. This often
gets bandied as commitment. But in both settings, the andragogue and the
pedagogue have to be assumed as tabula rasa before teaching can begin.
How well we do this is becoming an educational embarrassment and risk.

Some Vygotskian concepts basic to learning in general; which can also be
applied to language are:

1. Inner Speech
2. Scaffolded Assistance
3. Zone of Proximal Development

Do these concepts relate to adult situations?

2.6.1 Inner Voice

The internalization of socially acquired language is inner speech. This is also
referred to egocentric speech in Piagetian studies. Egocentric speech
increases when children are set particular tasks, in which they encounter
some material outside, to the successful completion of the task. The inner
speech acts as a way to organize thoughts, to solve complex problems and
to sort out problems.
For Vygotsky learning happens as a result of two theoretical concepts:

1. Problem solving
2. Formation of higher mental functions psycho-intellectual.

An alternative proposal to this explanation has been given in suggesting that rather than calling the child a rational problem solver, a better explanation for egocentric speech would be *learning to give voice to his or her own participation in and control of the regularities of socially significant, cross-coupling of the semiotic and the material* (Paul Thibault:1997). This may have significant implications for the theory of social learning. This has implication for adult learning as well, for thought that occurs in simultaneous whole images, do not coincide with the units of language. This creates problems. With affective volitional tendencies and desires this internalization goes through a series of transformations before it becomes a gush of words. This is one of the areas where there are marks of resemblances in learning between the two distinct groups, adults and children. There has to be a conscious effort to think about adult learning as a distinct learning group, though throughout the literature there has been an unproblematic overlap of the two. And there is no consistent research data on non-formal acquisitions, which is a big handicap to the ways literacy curriculum, could be organised.

### 2.6.2 Scaffolded Assistance

Any person's experience with the external world is mediated not only by symbolic systems but also by other persons. Vygotsky has given the name
'scaffolded assistance' to the difference between what a person can do alone and what he can do with assistance. The metaphoric sense of scaffold retains the importance to ever shifting, adjustable frameworks of learning. This idea is complementary to Bakhtin’s ‘dialogue’ in so far as it is interprets instructional processes.

2.6.3 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

In Vygotsky's own language the ‘zone of proximal development’ has been described as “the distance between the (child’s) actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.” (1962:187) Dialogue and language become intimately implicated in the whole social process of learning. The educational experience makes possible the internalization of the social processes so that dialogue stimulates the imagination for the participator. Central to the Vygotsky's cognitive theory is the entire mediated process of learning – the interpersonal and the 'subterranean'. The socialization process of the school provides both contexts and strategies for the learner. The frame shifts for preparation for further learning only if learning has been internalized according to the 'actual development of the learners'. Vygotsky's focus on the learning process with emerging capabilities of the learner is a major contribution to developmental psychology with significant implications for education.
Freire shares Vygotsky's position in addressing the learner and placing him in the context of his own history. Both seem to say that this is where crucial learning takes place. This process of 'conscientazio' is a dialogic process—an act of conscious, directed, epistemological curiosity. For both 'conscientazio' is a constantly shifting but ongoing process of change.

There are very a few safety zones in this kind of knowing. Sharing of learning and dialogical teaching must always be understood within social praxis. It entails both reflective and political action.

Throughout this study the concept of dialogism as critical consciousness is being conceptualized as adult participation in education.

2.7 Key Issues within the Pre-Independence English Education Project

Coming to some of the struggles closer home and coursing the intractable career of English Education in India it would be only too hard to ignore Macauley's Minutes. The English Curriculum offers an important lens not only into the rather unwieldy preindependent educational scenario but also as it impacts post-independent and even present day debates. The numerous crosscurrents and intricacies in no way debar a pithy discourse open to constant discussion and debate. It is clear that a study of the nature of English Education goes much beyond the study of language and literature. Hence, English Curriculum will be used here in a far more
comprehensive sense as it covers not only language and literature, also but looks beyond at the very terms of the education discourse.

2.7.1 2 February 1835. Macauley's Minutes

Macauley's Minutes (hereafter MM), controversial in its own time, brought to surface and set into motion public debates around the key issue of the social relevance of English Education to the goals of change and thereby, empire building. The alienation that stemmed from the proposals of a conquering class to justify educational measures 'to civilize' and rule, found its way into schools of thought that are more familiar to us as the Orientalists, Anglicists, and the Utilitarians and lent a certain leavening to the issues stated above.

Two important but contradictory claims within the Minutes were significant. The edict conveyed, very boldly, that education was not for everybody and every language was not suited for this purpose. Under a strange mix of 'linguistic casteism' English education in India was ushered in but once and for all putting the imperial seal on it. Which meant, henceforth, in any meaningful discussion on education, the more militant desires of imperialism would be inseparable from the desires of learning English.

What were the chief arguments of this document?

1. The language of the Act of Parliament (1813) by which a sum of one lakh rupees was set apart 'for the revival and promotion of literature
and encouragement of the learned natives of India', etc., should be interpreted to mean the literature and science of Europe, since a government policy of encouraging the Indians to study their ancient literature is tantamount to encouraging Indians to study their hieroglyphics and obelisks in preference to modern learning, here is no reason to think therefore that the Act pledged the government to promoting the study of Indian lore.

2. Sanskrit and Arabic literatures put together are not worth 'a single shelf of a good European library' (p.722). The same is true of all the other branches of knowledge in India and Arabia.

3. European history itself shows how a great intellectual revival took place under the influence of Latin and Greek in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In more modern times, Russia, 'which in the time of our grandfathers was probably behind the Punjab may, in the time of our grandchildren, be pressing close to France and Britain' (p.724) by the study of the languages of Western Europe.

4. Indian learners have to be paid to study their own language and culture, which proves that they have no respect and appeal for the latter. But, contrarywise, they themselves pay to learn English.

5. Indian students take longer to pass at the Sanskrit College (of Calcutta) than English students take to learn Greek and even enjoy and imitate Greek authors. ‘Less than half the time which enables an English youth
to read Herodotus and, Sophocles, ought to enable a Hindoo to read Hume and Milton (p.729).

6. The Benaras College and the Sanskrit and the Delhi College for Arabic have been enough in the way of encouraging Indian Studies, and if they are at all to be retained, no stipends are to be given to the scholars, so that ‘the people shall be left to make their choice between the rival systems of education without being bribed’. The funds that would be thus saved ‘would enable us to give larger encouragement to the Hindoo college at Calcutta, and to establish in the principal cities throughout the Presidencies of Fort William and Agra schools in which the English language might be well and thoroughly taught (p.730).

7. The anti-English lobby has indeed been strengthened by British Orientalists. All the murmurings are coming from them but from the native society left to itself, we have no difficulties to apprehend’ (p.727).\textsuperscript{7}

Macauley’s Minutes closed the chapter on the humanist project. The more democratic vision of the Orientalists, with their goals of ‘vernacularization’, and thereby, ‘indigenation’ of English education was temporarily forestalled.

How did some of the intentions underlining the pages of this document impact the nature of these policies?
- The subject and nature of policies as control rather than any overt effect of learning.
- The political function of policy and its regulation and control of the content of curriculum.
- The rationale for funding which will be a pressing preoccupation of subsequent policy matters.
- The content of policies and their function.
- Moralizing on linguistic, cultural and learning issues.

Reading through these policies certain assumptions about language and learning are being implied. As far as the government was concerned
- education was not to be extended to the masses
- education was meant for the upper classes
- the focus was on higher education

The acculturation theory so central to the Minutes that would train 'a class of people brown in colour but English in taste and culture' would eventually create the need for English education to be re-enforced by Holt Mackenzie, Secretary to the Government in the Territorial Department. In his letter of instruction, dated 31st July, 1823 to the Committee of Public Instruction he said, 'the support and establishment of colleges for the instructions of what may be called, the educated and the influential classes seem to be more
immediate objects of the care government than the support and establishment of elementary schools, though these in particular places may claim attention.'

Grants' thesis as expressed in the 'Observation', supports the main argument that the nature of Hindoostan had to be radically changed if the British Empire was to succeed. He wanted the simultaneous operation of English Education and conversion to achieve that goal. Macaulayism and Evangelism contained the main thesis of the Anglicists.

The Orientalists / Anglicists and the Utilitarians all seemed to agree on the cause of British rule as potential agent of social change in India. However, following different ideologies they expressed two major concerns: the content of education and the language/medium of learning very differently advocating change and relevance for very different kinds of education. That higher learning was not possible in the native languages, indirectly making English a fit vehicle for the teaching of science, was imputing divisive language policies and the functions and roles that would have far reaching effects in society. The 'division of labour' basically referring to the intellectual labour that the Indian languages would be made to perform or deliberately debarred in society can trace its root to some of these colonial debates. Contrarily, the Orientalists held native literature as a fit subject of study and the native language the natural media for the teaching of European literature and science.
2.7.2 The Orientalists Argument

The Orientalists contested Macaulayism on a very basic premise of learning. They advocated that learning takes place best in one's mother tongue or the language of culture of the learner. But also to put the vernacular languages on an equal footing in the educational exchange was being proposed. Undisputedly, this has resonance for the more current debates within English Education today.

Brian H. Hodgson, a vernacularist, chief spokesperson of the Serampore School (Calcutta) of Orientalists like William Carey, William Ward, and John Marshman was able to propagate an important aspect of learning arguing contrary to the Anglicists that, ‘the sciences could be brought to cast their light on the whole social spectrum only through the vernaculars’.

Perhaps Hodgson was the first to observe the intimate relationship of upper caste and its hold on the learned languages: ‘Two circumstances remarkably distinguish and designate the social system of India. One, its inseparable connection with a recondite literature; the other, the universal precurrency of its divine sanctions through all the offices of life, so as to have no corner of the field of human action as neutral ground.' Knowledge in order to be beneficial must be identified ‘with familiar general thoughts and feelings of the land where on to analyse the elitist nature of Indian society and found in English education a parallel it is planted.'
He pointed out the ‘double iniquity’ of anglicizing both the education and administration of the country, and asserted that the vernacular medium alone would secure a general diffusion and household identification. Not only that it would give rise to servile intellectual habits. Hodgson warned; ‘Knowledge is power: English knowledge in India power of the most formidable character, and if that power do but get associated with office, is it possible to doubt its becoming in the hands of those natives who possess it, an instrument for the oppression of their fellows more formidable than the present priestly monopoly of learning?’

2.7.3 The Utilitarians

Comparatively, the Utilitarians, consisting chiefly of James Mill (1820), and his son, John Stuart Mill were secularists in their attitude and orientation. They were clearly not in favour of imposing an alien tongue as an instructional means. However, the teaching of the European Sciences strengthened the case for English indirectly. More conciliatory and expedient and less belligerent than the Anglicists in their approach they showed keen awareness that language is the groundwork upon which all future knowledge depended.
2.8 Landmarks in Contemporary History of Education

2.8.1 The Nationalist Discourse

Sabarmati and Santiniketan

The surge of rediscovery and a renewed self-consciousness that followed the colonial contact brought along with it the painful burden of the double self. Both Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi were acutely aware of it and sought to rewrite history in their own terms. A saga of experiments unfolded culminating in Santiniketan and Sabarmati. Both bore rich fruits and harvested experimental and sensitively textured educational ideas.

Tagore's quest in his Santiniketan was a quest for self-respect. He was more open to the idea of outside influence as a democratic mode of transaction and therefore, learning. He made it very clear that he was not opposed to Western Knowledge but imperial rule. But he was also fighting the culture of silence and subjugation that such a rule brings with it. His institute of higher learning was an alternative proposal but a fit answer to the damage of imperial education. Santiniketan soon became the Mecca of 'national' education. All languages were given adequate stress. At least, education without the supreme rule of English was quite feasible.

Gandhi too sought self-respect but in moral and political ways. Satyagraha for Swaraj was the new language and political tool, while Khadi and the
Charkha symbolized independence and self-sufficiency. The National Movement had created in the people a pride in the language and a climate to work for their advancement. At least in Sabarmati (25 May, 1915), 'an attempt is made in the Ashram to impart such education as is conducive to national welfare...character building is attended to in the smallest way'. Character building was commensurate with nation building. Tagore sought the universal man, very close to his idea of internationalism.

However, the parameters of Public Education to act as a democratic principle of change could be framed only if, as Gandhi believed, 'Education should be free'.

It has become a convention to accept the twin discourses of Santiniketan and Sabarmati, both in the indegenation process. But recent studies reveal like S. Bhattacharya in his book, *The Contested Terrain* (1998); that a totalizing concept of education is a myth. The Nationalist discourse is not a homogeneous product but a history of struggles fragmented into efforts subject to numerous routes and directions. A critique of the Nationalist discourse argues the ethical and moral goals of education where the training of character serves the same purpose as the colonial discourse. So the ideological bias cannot be ignored.
2.8.2 Standpoints

Some of the directions and routes readily identified in the contemporary Indian scenario would have to be kept in mind for the proposals of change and relevance.

1. The Brahminic Ideology: Ram Mohun Roy, Tilak, Gandhi, Golwalkar, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee

2. The Dalit-Bahujan Ideology: Jyotirao Phule, B.R. Ambedkar, Periyar, Sree Narayana Guru


4. The Liberal Democratic Ideology: Nehru

2.8.3 Critical Voice

Obviously critical perspectives in education were largely framed within the effects of the colonial experience. But the underbelly lay in the social configurations of more contemporary history--the experience of the peasant uprisings, post-emergency, the massive student unrest, the mandal and dalit resistances and various faces of the women’s movement. The story of what it was to be educated in his master’s voice burst the seams. This mesh seemed to be posing several questions within and outside academia. The relevance of texts took on a new urgency and provided new direction to the critique.
Who was going to talk about what it is to be educated?

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) disputing the prevailing norms, charted the new discourse. For Gauri Viswanathan (1989), critical perspectives in matters of education are entirely dependent on perceiving and illuminating the unique role of such representation in producing and sustaining structures of domination.

Revoicing of texts became the new agenda for critical scholarship. Seminars, conferences and publishing provided a text and a context for these dialogues. Women teachers from English departments adopted the mantle of transformative intellectuals and resounded the silence. The Empire was writing back. And this time in a different voice - the voice of silence.

From academia: Is the aim of literature to train students in ways of reading to enable them to decode the code of the culture that gives dominant values?

From an educationist: *What is Worth Teaching?* ⁹

From a dalit: *Why I Am Not a Hindu.*

From the students: What student experiences have been included in a curriculum that is framed precariously to maintain status quo?

From the margins: *Can the subaltern speak?*

From the peasant: Tebhaga¹⁰

### 2.9 Conclusion

The review of literature traverses a variety of distinct disciplines and concerns in education. This is generally seen to be so because education itself has close connections with a number of social scientific disciplines and traditions such as sociology, social policy, anthropology, politics, psychology and law. Education is also interesting and useful, partly because of its role in incorporating and transmitting cultural values.

In studying the question of reform within education, policy documents seem to provide the best juncture to observe where a variety of concerns seem to intersect. Therefore, a much broader notion of triangulation and methodological pluralism is used as a means of checking insights drawn from different sources of data and to gain a deeper and clearer understanding of the situation. To select policy documents is to read
between the lines of our material world. It also throws light on how larger global socio-political configurations is resetting the agenda of national education policy. This is best seen, for instance, in the liberalization agenda introduced by the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986. The propagated ethos of ‘human resource development’ of this policy has divided society further into race, caste, class, and gender lines. Within this education discourse the new modern literate citizen is born, where, the development of the human person has been reduced to human resource development; democracy has been substituted by market democracy; people’s rights over their resources, labour and lives are under constant attack; literacy has become synonymous with formal education; commitment to elementary school education has diluted; the indigenous cultures are being homogenized; vocational education is merely concerned with livelihood (Jain:2004).

The legacy of colonialism is readily identifiable here and bears similarities with New educational Policy,1986. The colonial project was a cultural one. Civilizing the masses was not free of the political and moral intent - the improvement of ‘natives’ into ‘citizens’.

Unequal, feudal, utilitarian relationship was and still is envisaged in the assumptions of current policies. As a result, the idea of a ‘literate citizen’ came to be rooted in the ideas of race, class inequality, gender division, caste hierarchy, notions of difference and inferiority of the ‘other’. The
curriculum ideology that it generated, as discussed in the review of literature, has remained to this day, contradictions assailing education – the culture of silence, the politics of absence, domestication, infantilization, feminization. In the next chapter we look into the role of policy documents play in developing and understanding about citizenship and justice as practiced in the language classroom.

Notes

1Mandal Report: Backward Classes Commission 1979-90 Reports, Controller of Publication, New Delhi, 1989. The Backward Classes Commission in India, better known as the Mandal Commission, looks into the provision of the constitution for the uplift of the Tribal and Scheduled Castes. In the mid-1990s the debate centered around the newly implemented Mandal Commission recommendations. In the Economic and Political Weekly both in the September and December 1990 issues under the headings Mandal Commission and the Left and the other, Elites Battle for Status Quo. Sumantra Bose: 'Hindu Nationalism' and the Crises of the Indian State, discusses the dimensions of the employment issues,' the classification scheme employed by the Commission...would have been minor – only some 40,000 jobs would be affected annually in a country where aspiring workforce entrants every year number in the millions'

2 Paulo Freire: Cultural Action for Freedom: 1975, in making analyses of the levels of consciousness in Latin American reality invokes the notion of the culture of silence- an analyses he points but does not preclude its application to other areas, areas in the third world, nor to those worlds in the metropolises which identify themselves with the third world as area of silence.

Kotal the first woman from 'primitive' tribe, to have passed the HS exam, remained unemployed till 1982...From the very first day at local Vidyasagar University as an MSc student in Anthropology...a certain male professor started abusing her a member of a criminal tribe, a lowborn who had no right to study MSc. This man was allowed to mark her absent though she was present for days. And Chuni was debarred from sitting for the exam on grounds of irregular attendance...The University Inquiry Committee submitted its report in a hurry after Chuni committed suicide. Its findings were that all allegations of her harassment made by her were correct. The Ganguly Commission set up to inquire into her suicide found that she committed suicide for 'personal reasons'.

4 The Functionalist tradition, consisting of Robert Dreeban (1970), Phillip Jackson (1968) and the neo-Marxists like Bowles & Gintis (1976) debated the unwritten agenda of schools. They focused on the relationships of educational systems to occupational status. The claims of the student's curriculum experience lead to conformity rather than creativity.

5 Phonocentricism like logocentricism in Western metaphysics and within Aristotelian tenet writing is secondary representation to speech.

6 Defining the learning process as an entirely individual process brushes aside the fact that socialization has the danger of blaming the pupil rather than looking at the socio-political structures of failure. Brian Street challenges the ideological position more at work defeating the claims of the 'autonomous' model in force in literacy programmes.

7 Hodgson's book was in fact a collection of letters to the weekly Friend of India written as rebuttals to Trevelyan's arguments. Pre-eminence of the Vernaculars (Serampore; Mission Press, 1837)

8 Castes refer to those belonging to the 'backward' classes and in education it is most evident in the way access works. Castes as a category are treated in the educational debate falling along the lines of 'haves' and 'have nots' The brahminic fold would align more closely to the upper castes in post independent India who
generally benefited from education. The Dalit and Communistic education would certainly be a counter position to the 'brahminic' class.

9 What is Worth Teaching, Krishna Kumar’s book, is in many ways seminal to the present issue of relevance of education. Kancha Iliah, Why I am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture & Political Economy (Samya: Calcutta 1996) talks from the subject position of the Dalit within main Hindutva assertions in India today. Gayatri Chakravorty, Spivak, Can the Subaltern Speak? are some of the voices of the ‘other' represents the paradigm shift within the entire educational scenario.

10 Tebhaga means ' tripartite' in Bengali and refers to the share cropper's rights of one-third share in the produce. Tebhaga refers to the 1946-47 peasant uprising in Bengal. The Naxalbari uprising in North Bengal during the 70s was similar to Tebhaga in the absence of basic agrarian reforms.