CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context of Bilingualism

Bilingualism is a universal phenomenon that has existed from the beginning of language in human history. It is hard to find in our civilised world a society which is genuinely mono-linguistic. According to François Grosjean, “It is probably true that no language group has ever existed in isolation from other language groups and the history of languages is replete with examples of language contact leading to some form of bilingualism” (Grosjean 1). Commenting on the current world scenario, G. Richard Tucker points out that “there are many more bi-lingual or multi-lingual individuals in the world than there are mono-lingual. In addition, there are many more children throughout the world who have been and continue to be educated through a second or a later-acquired language, at least for some portion of their formal education, than there are children educated exclusively via the first language” (G. R. Tucker 1).

Thus, acquiring more than one language other than one’s mother tongue (L1) and making use of it for educational purposes has become the order of the day among the citizens of modern societies. This is true not only of the developed nations like the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, most parts of Europe, etc., but also of developing nations like India, China, Singapore, etc. “The need for second language learning is today not merely a linguistic nicety but almost a sine qua non of education and general progress” (Disanayaka 23).

1.2. Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition (SLA) is the process by which people learn a second language (L2). SLA is also the scientific discipline devoted to the study of this process. L2 refers to any language learned in addition to a person's mother tongue (L1). “Although the concept is called second language acquisition, it can also incorporate the learning of third, fourth, or subsequent languages” (Susan Gass and Larry Selinker
7). SLA refers to what learners do; it does not refer to practices in language teaching. The academic discipline of SLA is a sub-discipline of applied linguistics. It is broad-based and relatively new. Akin to the various branches of linguistics, SLA is also closely related to psychology, cognitive psychology, sociology, and education. To separate the academic discipline from the learning process, the terms like ‘second-language acquisition research’, ‘second-language studies’, and ‘second-language acquisition studies’ are also used.

SLA research began as an interdisciplinary field and because of this, it is difficult to identify a precise starting date. However, it does appear to have developed a great deal since the mid-1960s (Gass and Selinker 1). The term ‘acquisition’ was originally used to emphasise the sub-conscious nature of the learning process as opposed to ‘learning which is consciously carried out by the learner. However, learning and acquisition have become largely synonymous in the recent years.

1.3. SLA and Bilingualism

SLA can incorporate traditional language learning, but it does not usually incorporate bilingualism. Most SLA researchers see bilingualism as the result of learning a language, not the process itself, and see the term as referring to native-like fluency. Writers in fields such as education and psychology, however, often use bilingualism loosely to refer to all forms of multilingualism (Gass and Selinker 24-25). SLA is also not to be contrasted with the acquisition of a foreign language; rather, the learning of second languages and the learning of foreign languages involve the same fundamental processes in different situations. There has been much debate about exactly how language is learned but many issues are still unresolved. There have been many theories of SLA proposed but none has been accepted as an over-arching theory by all SLA researchers.
1.4. Learning through Mother Tongue or a Second Language

According to the latest information available, “Approximately 6,000 languages are spoken in the world, with widely varying distribution, and almost all of them have been learned as second languages by some portion of their speakers” (Saville-Troike, Introducing Second Language Acquisition 9). A recent study reveals that when compared to the 1,200 millions of L1 speakers of the Chinese language that has an L2 population of just 15 millions, the English language has just 427 millions of L1 speakers but 950 millions of L2 speakers (Zhu 146). Until a few centuries ago, just seven million people in England spoke English and the language consisted of dialects spoken by monolinguals. English is nowadays the dominant or official language in over 60 countries. There are more non-native users of English than the native users of the same. Kachru observes that “English has become the linguistic key used for opening borders: it is a global medium with local identities and messages” (Kachru, Crossing Borders 11, 14). This phenomenon of a local language becoming a popular language at the international arena makes an interesting study.

“A desire for occupational or social advancement which is furthered by knowledge of another language and an interest in knowing more about peoples of other cultures and having access to their technologies or literatures are the main reasons for the wide and rapid spreading of a language as L2” (Crystal). In the present globalised context, language plays a pivotal role in bringing together nations that tend to fall apart on political, economical, social, cultural, and commercial lines. It is needless to say that the English language has come to occupy the central stage at the international arena as the linking language.

1.5. The Role of English Language in Colonial India and its Impact

In the colonial India, Lord Macaulay was responsible for advocating education in the English language for Indians to form “a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (Macaulay). On 7 March 1835, the
Minute received the Seal of Approval from Lord William Bentick and an official resolution on Macaulay’s resolution was passed. This resolution “formed the cornerstone of the implementation of a language policy in India and ultimately resulted in the diffusion of bilingualism in English” (Kachru 68). In India today, the English language has become the official language of communication for all governmental transactions. India is the third largest English-using population in the world, after the USA and the UK. According to Graddol, “Within a decade or so, the number of people who speak English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers.”

According to Kachru, the chief reasons for the dominance of English around the world are “its propensity for acquiring new identities, its power of assimilation, its adaptability to ‘decolonization’ as a language, its manifestation in a range of dialects, and its provision of a flexible medium for literary and other types of creativity across languages and cultures” (Kachru 207-228). Acquiring a certain level of proficiency in English has become the dream of most young people who like to climb the social ladder. Although the English education in India started with objectives like “to popularise the European culture and science among the Indian masses” and “to consolidate the position of British Raj in India” (Saraswathi 3), it is said that “India is only one of many countries in South and South-East Asia to now exploit its English-speaking colonial heritage and connect to the global economy” (Graddol). There is a mushrooming of coaching centres for Spoken English all over the country. English-medium schools are the most sought-after destination for most anxious parents who dream of an upward mobility of their children.

1.6. Nativisation of English in India

The process of nativisation of English is due both to the transfer from local languages as well as to the new cultural environment and communicative needs. Because of the deep social penetration and the extended range of functions of English in diverse sociolinguistic contexts, today there are several varieties, localised ‘registers’, and genres for articulating the social, cultural, and religious identities in India. Besides, factors such as the absence of a community of native speakers of English, inadequate pedagogical paradigms, the acquisitional limitations of learners, lack of exposure and facilities,
learning under compulsion, etc., have contributed to this process. In the view of Kandaiah, “The South Asian varieties of English are being nativised by acquiring new identities in new socio-cultural contexts. They have emerged as autonomous local varieties with their own set of rules that make it impossible to treat them simply as mistakes of deficient Englishes” (Kandiah 275). Kandiah calls this ‘fulguration’ which means a phenomenon whereby a ‘new variety of English’ acquires features not present in standard English or any of the other contact languages.

South Asian English has developed to a more distinctive level than in other countries where English is used as L2. English in India has evolved characteristic features at the phonological, lexical, syntactic, and even at discourse level. Initially, the purists who preferred ‘the Queen’s English’ to ‘the Indian English’ rejected these innovations but are becoming increasingly accepted now. English is no more treated as a foreign language; it is part of the cultural identity of India. As Anju Saghal points out, “These innovations have led to some problems related to pedagogical standards, national and international intelligibility, and typology” (Saghal 303). In her book, ‘Indian English’, Sailaja Pingali opines that “the number of people who can read and otherwise communicate in English is comparatively very large and growing.”

1.7. L2 under National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has taken note of the phenomenon of the upsurge of English language all over the country. In its report, it is said that, “English is in India today a symbol of people’s aspiration for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. Its colonial origins now forgotten or irrelevant, its initial role in independence India, tailored to high education now felt to be insufficiently inclusive socially and linguistically, the current state of English stems from its overwhelming presence on the world stage and the reflection of this in the national arena” (NCERT 1). English is introduced in class I or class III by 26 states or union territories out of 35 in the country and 7 states or union territories introduce it in class IV or V. English is a compulsory L2 in vernacular-medium as well as in English-medium schools and it is competing for the status of first language.
1.8. Evolution of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India

Due to its association with the British colonisers, English started not just as a foreign language (FL), but also as a much-hated language. From the despised instrument of oppression to the reluctantly adopted lingua franca and to the status symbol of the upper classes to its position today as L2, English has come a long way. In fact, it will not be an aberration to label it as L1 for some echelons of Indian society. Just as the status of the language has undergone constant re-invention, the whole ELT paradigm has also travelled the complete gamut of modification. As mentioned earlier, it was in 1835 that English was formally introduced as a medium of instruction as proposed by Macaulay and approved by Bentick. In 1857, Universities of Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta were established to actualise the intention of Macaulay. After independence in 1947, Free India chose to retain English as long as it was needed. As a unique country with 22 official languages and more than 2000 spoken languages, English was thought of as the ‘link-language’.

The Radha Krishnan Commission of 1948 recommended that English should continue to be taught in schools, colleges, and universities. In 1952-53, the Madras Presidency (which included the coastal Andhra and the Rayalaseema Regions of Andhra Pradesh (AP) along with several other parts of South India) introduced the Madras English Language Teaching Campaign with a structural syllabus prepared by the Institute of Education, London to train about 27,000 teachers at primary level. A few English Language Teaching Institutes (ELTIs) were set up in India with a view to promoting English Language education and the first one was at Allahabad. In 1956, the Central Education Recommendation Commission suggested the tri-lingual formula which was approved by all states in 1968 (Chandra and Sharma 2004:195). In 1957, the Nagpur Seminar for lecturers from those training institutes came up with a recommendation for a six-year course in English, involving the use of 3000 words and 300 structures.
In 1958, the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the Central Institute of English (CIE) which later became the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) in 1972 and from 2007 onwards, the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) trained teachers of English to prepare proper materials and pedagogy in L2. Nehru felt that “the tendency of the regional language to become the medium for university education, though desirable in many ways, may lead to the isolation of such universities from the rest of India, unless there is a link in the shape of an all-India language” (Nehru). Regional Institute of English (RIE) was set up in 1963 at Bangalore to train teachers in English with necessary skills in L2 teaching. The Syllabus Reform of 1977 by the University Grants Commission (UGC) was the outcome of the Report of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, after a series of regional and national workshops on ELT-related themes. In 1987, the UGC also instituted a Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) at Hyderabad to bring out a need-based and socially-relevant curriculum at various levels of teaching-learning.

Unlike Tamilnadu which showed great resistance to the imposition of the Aryan culture and Sanskritisation through Hindi language, AP was influenced both by the Nizam culture and the Urdu language as well as the Sanskritisation of the Telugu language. As per the directives of the Central Education Recommendation Commission, the tri-lingual formula was introduced in AP from 1968 and, as a consequence, Telugu or Urdu, English, and Hindi languages were taught as first, second, and third languages respectively at educational institutions in AP. Due to the advocacy of the bi-lingual formula, there was a greater adoption of English at schools and colleges in Tamilnadu. In AP, however, students’ attention was equally divided among the three languages. This led to poorer absorption of English in AP. In the closing years of the twentieth century when English began to emerge as the global language, the Indian classrooms were transformed because of the change in the environment of the learners. The liberalisation of the Indian economy ushered in many reasons to learn the language.
1.9. Communicative Competence and New Job Opportunities

Earlier in the century, students who had specialised in English joined either the teaching profession or the civil services, but now, a completely new spectrum of job opportunities has opened up. There are now call centres (BPOs and KPOs) that need trainers to equip their employees with communication skills. There are multi-nationals who have been recruiting marketing staff who need to be taught spoken English. There are medical transcription centres that need efficient translators and reporters. Those desirous of immigration to the west need professional help for clearing tests like the IELTS or TOEFL. Hence, the avenues where ELT has come to be required in India are unlimited today.

The change was first observed at the social, political, and economic levels. Suddenly, English has ceased to be the badge of status for the exclusive upper crust. Earlier, only the creamy layer of the Indian population and a few limited size groups were seen using English in everyday life. The middle class reserved it just for official purposes or those social occasions where they wished to leave an impression. The lower classes thought the use of English was beyond them and since the government schools of India made no effort to teach any kind of Spoken English, this category of people had no exposure to it.

1.10. Effect of Globalisation on the Job Market

Around the year 1995, the whole paradigm began to change. The liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation (LPG) of the Indian economy led to the advent of multinationals on the local soil, resulting in many developments like varied job opportunities which demanded a command of English, more English channels on the television, an increasing number of English publications, etc. An international lifestyle became a tempting option. Formerly, only a few fortunate ones from the higher echelons of the society were opting for English-medium schools but nowadays it has become normal for all people, including the ones from the lower economic strata of the Indian society to do so.
1.11. The ELT Scenario at Present

On the contrary, the quality of English language education in the majority of the Indian schools, colleges, and universities presents a very appalling picture. If one looks around, it will not take long to realise that all is not well with ELT in India today. With all its innumerable instructional objectives like the aural-oral skills of listening and speaking, graphic skills of reading and writing, appreciation, etc., it has become one of the most difficult subjects to teach in the Indian situation. This is all the more so because English is a language seldom heard in the streets of India. Perhaps, the classrooms and the libraries are the only places where the language can possibly be learned. There is not much scope for the ordinary people to get exposed to the native speakers’ language and culture. In reality, learners of English are constantly exposed to the local varieties of English (Hinglish, Tanglish, Tenglish, Manglish, etc.) which has been constantly influenced by the local languages and dialects spoken in different states of the country.

1.12. Hurdles on the Path of ELT

Besides the complexities of the skills of learning the language, alienation, and other problems such as differences in the levels of initiation of instruction, differences in the socio-economic status, differences in urban and rural backgrounds, paucity of teachers well-versed in content matter as well as the pedagogy, lack of adequate aids and instructional materials, etc., hamper the successful handling of English in the classroom. Moreover, there are problems created by the over-crowded classrooms as well as lethargy and indifference of students, parents, and educators. Under such hostile ecology, the teacher resorts to a kind of ‘hit or miss’ type of instruction which, very often, fails to click. For many decades, teaching English has been a challenging pursuit for the teachers, especially the area that covers the acquisition of four skills of language – Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW).

However, a cursory glance at the studies made on these four language skills reveals that listening has been the most neglected area of study, due to the misconception
fostered by many that learners imbibe this skill as they mentally mature. This particular language skill has been taken for granted under the assumption that without any conscious efforts, facility in listening can wholly be acquired.

1.13. ELT and Teacher Training

With the rapidly changing conditions in the life of the people, the old system of teacher training no longer seems to meet the present requirements of our educational institutions and our society. It is, however, difficult to reform the teacher training system very quickly and in a direction which is not heavily based upon the mastery of the subject matter. There is still considerable scope for research in teaching in order to discover the specific competencies that the teacher should develop. It is equally important to develop a training system that will not only encourage the development of such competencies in the short run but will also sustain it at a desirable level. Especially in the case of the language teacher, the language skills are acquired strictly so that, in future, they can make their students imbibe it at the very early stage of their learning. There is a lot of scope for improvement in the area of ELT. There should be an unambiguous re-focusing of the present teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred one. In fact, a greater emphasis must be given to English Language Learning (ELL), rather than English Language Teaching (ELT). Therefore, the researcher has deliberately chosen ELL rather than ELT as his whole spectrum in this endeavour. Teaching, as per the original sense, is leading or guiding others to learn, not to dominate the learners in the classroom. In a truly learner-centred ecology, learning should be the focus of concern, rather than teaching. These two terms have come to be used in tension and even in opposition to one another.

1.14. Early Developments in ELT Methodology

The developments that have occurred in the sphere of ELT methodology in the West took some time to reach Indian classrooms. The evolution of ELT in India, as in any other country, is linked with factors that are not pedagogic alone. Today, English cannot be termed as a FL in the Indian context, but in times past, it was so and its teaching had to take cognisance of all factors, pedagogic or otherwise. There are two different ways of tracing the growth of ELT because ELT pedagogy developed primarily in the West where political and social realities were different and the status of English was fixed.
whereas, in India, the same depends upon the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which the status of English keeps changing.

1.15. Present Status of ELT

Only around the year 1980 did English achieve adequate attention from policy makers, administrators, and teachers. Due to its chequered history in the country, its complete importance was realised more than three decades after independence. “Countries like India in which English is spoken extensively as a second language will play a major role in the development of global English” (Graddol 2006:9). However, apart from the one-year bachelor degree course (B. Ed.) in teacher training for school teachers, no other formal teacher training was given to the new recruits or practising teachers. There were orientation courses and refresher courses for teachers in general, but no course dealt with ELT directly. It is only recently that the British Council has introduced courses like Certificate in English Language Teaching for Adults (CELTA) and similar programmes. As these are quite expensive, teachers do not want to spend money on them and their institutions rarely sponsor them. The prevalent examination system is more achievement-oriented rather than performance-oriented, leading to an emphasis on grades and ranks rather than issues of fluency or proficiency. Indirectly, the teacher remains in many classrooms even today, as the facilitator of examinations rather than of linguistic or communicative proficiency.

1.16. Three Transient Stages of ELT Methodology

In spite of the slower rate of evolution, ELT in India has been widening in its approach and methods. The result is that there is an increasing tendency, scope, and intent of reaching the end of the ELT cone. At its own unique pace, ELT in India is moving abreast with the rest of the world today. Whereas the issue of methodology is concerned, ELT seems to be in three transient stages according to the different levels of the paradigm and its demands:

I. The first level is that of the institutions run by the government, mainly primary, secondary, and high schools. Since the primary goal of these institutions is to
provide education at affordable and subsidised levels to the public, ELT teaching
cannot be placed at the widest end of the cone for the basic reason that the
teachers there do not have much access to the latest research and materials for
reasons economic as well as geographic. Most of these institutions are the sole
providers of education in rural and remote settings where they can fulfil
adequately the basic requirements alone. In the urban localities, the planning
bodies are now moving towards upgrading through teacher training, syllabus
modification, and improved resources. Very soon, this level of ELT should
become more communicative in nature with language and literature fully
integrated.

II. At the second level are those institutions that are semi-government or are run by
private managing bodies but assisted through government funds. These also
include under-graduate colleges and postgraduate universities. Growth and
development can be seen here in spurts. In some classrooms, teachers have
reached the widest end of the cone and are aware of learners’ needs. They adjust
their methodology accordingly and use a judicious blend of interaction and
communication in the class. In others, an observer feels caught in a time warp
with pure ‘chalk-talk’ lectures that are mostly teacher-centred. The positive
observation is that there are practising teachers between these two poles who try
to change their teaching practice and look for an alternative methodology. Just as
there is a mixed bag of teaching practice, the institutions also range from being
indifferent to becoming pro-active. While there are places where even a small
audio player is not accessible, there are administrators who have invested heavily
in state-of-the-art language laboratories.

III. The third level comprises purely private sector academies that undertake to make
learners proficient English users within a stipulated period of time by charging a
fixed amount of fee. Since time means money for them, they are equipped with
the latest materials like interactive, multimedia software. Since jobs in the
academic area are sparse, an increasing number of qualified teachers find their
way to these places. The teacher profile gets younger, smarter, and techno-savvy,
resulting in increasing amounts of innovation and experimentation as far as methodology is concerned. While teachers belonging to the first level are content to remain mere followers, the third level of teachers influences their counterparts at the second level. When learners are in a rush as they need part-time employment or have an IELTS/TOEFL to clear, they often join academies in addition to their under-graduate classes.

1.17. The Rejuvenating Phase of ELT Methodology

Since the world seems to be jumping upon the ‘learn-English-bandwagon’, ELT methodology is undergoing rejuvenation at present. This creates a ripple effect which can be felt in three ways:

A. Many young teachers who work in under-graduate colleges work part-time at these academies. At these academies, they use the latest teaching aids and materials, since the purpose is to achieve fluency at the earliest. At their regular place of work, their teaching methodology undergoes a metamorphosis because they tend to use the interactive, task-based, and communicative methods more than the lecture methods used normally.

B. On taking into account the roaring business these academies are doing, the administrative bodies of some of the under-graduate colleges have woken up to the fact that a completely untapped market needs to be explored. Along with their regular degree classes, they are gearing up to introduce income-fetching (euphemistically called ‘self-supportive’) courses in the field of English proficiency open to the public. This leads to a spill-over effect in the under-graduate classes too as some teachers will be common to both courses and the same campus sees a lot of innovative teaching.

C. Parents of learners form an important component of the teaching paradigm in India. Earlier, any kind of change in courseware or teaching methodology would result in stiff opposition from them and the administrative body would
recommend the continuation of the age-old practices. As it is pointed out, “Attempts to introduce Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in countries with very different educational traditions from those in which CLT was developed (The UK, the US, and other English-speaking countries) have sometimes been described as ‘cultural imperialism’ because the assumptions and practices implicit in CLT are viewed as ‘correct’, whereas those of the target culture are seen in need of replacement” (J. C. Richards and T. S. Rodgers 248). Observing the winds of change resulting from the acceptance of the global status of English, parents today encourage innovation and experimentation in the classroom. After attending interactive classes at the academy, learners search for such stimulation in their regular classes too. This is a radical change, especially if one looks into the past. When CLT was introduced in India in the 1980s, it was a dismal fiasco for the first few years because of the lack of the right academic climate. Since this context stands firmly established in India today, learners are more receptive and are actively encouraging more learner-centred classes.

1.18. Socio-economic Factors and their Pivotal Role in ELT

The context of the entire teaching phenomenon started changing around the year 2000. Socio-economic factors played a pivotal role in the transformation that is dynamic even today. The liberalisation of the Indian economy led to the entry of many international brands into the learners’ mindset. Call centres, shopping malls, and trade fairs need young personnel with fluency in Business English. There is a mushrooming growth of institutes and academies of the third category mentioned above, offering the whole range of proficiency in English from clearing the IELTS/TOEFL to speaking it fluently. The Internet has played a major role in creating a resource-rich environment by offering the youth a wide range of exposure to English. Turning ‘computerate’ and ‘web-savvy’ has emerged, not just as a fad, but as the need of the day and this is possible only through English. These are just a few of the factors that have created a panacea for the deadlock that CLT found itself in earlier.

Today in India, a whole new generation is coming up – a generation which travels a lot in countries where English is a first language, works in places where English is the lingua franca and, as a result, carries home to other generations the same English as a medium of communication. Hence, the empowerment of teachers in future has come sooner than expected, due to changes in the context of the new teaching paradigm. The emerging trend is linking pedagogy with the context. As Bax remarks, “In my view, methodology can – if treated with excessive reverence – act as a brake on teachers. If we are not careful, we hinder teachers from developing their abilities to analyse and respond to the context productively. ... Some teachers do break out of the straitjacket, but why can’t the profession empower them to do so? ... The teacher is not to be merely ‘reactive’ to the context – teachers should not only be sensitive to the context, but also provide the key ingredients for language learning such as opportunities for input, output, attention to accuracy, and so on” (Bax 295-296). Unless the context is supportive of upgrading the performance of the teacher in English – which should be inclusive of communicative competence – no teacher training or upgrading of methodology can be productive and useful. This is one of the significant conclusions that can be drawn from the Indian situation.

1.20. ELT and the Role of Learners at Present

The results of all these changes stand reflected in the classrooms where CLT is still practised. The whole process of curriculum change is riddled with cumbersome and time-consuming procedures in India. In spite of the limited success of CLT, it has not been removed from courses. This, in the long run, has been for the better because while on the one hand, the teachers have been able to familiarise themselves with its approach and methodology but on the other hand, the changed and changing context has encouraged its growing success today. Since learners are a part of the whole context, they are aware of the growing need for proficiency, both linguistic and communicative, in English.
As Xavier Alphonse rightly points out, “Students’ satisfaction is the most important validation of quality. The set of competencies students acquire as a result of education is one measurement of institutional quality. Many educationists today are critical of teacher-centric narrative mode of pedagogy of education. Students’ participation in pedagogical matters is beginning to be widely recognized as a definitive value addition to quality” (Alphonse 263). Today, more and more students take up part-time work (which requires fluency in English) along with their studies. What was earlier an aberration has now become the norm.

1.21. ELT as an Autonomous Discipline of Study

ELT in India has come a long way from 1880 when only a small number of primary schools used English as the medium for teaching. Up to 1940, the grammar-translation method flourished and the spread of English remained confined to education and office circles, yet again in a haphazard manner. By 1970, structural linguistics started making its presence felt in Indian classrooms in the shape of drills and exercises. Around this time, all professional courses began to be taught in English, which had also become established as a library language and a subject for independent study. As compared to its establishment as an autonomous subject in other English-as-first-language countries around 1940, ELT emerged as an autonomous subject in India as late as 1980. Similarly, the language laboratory also became a part of the ELT paradigm around 1985 as compared to the 1940s of these countries. Computer-Assisted Language Instruction (CALI) reached most classrooms of the world in 1960 but it came to the Indian classroom around 1985.

1.22. The Road Ahead for ELT in India: More CA Inclusive

At present, in some places, ELT has evolved into Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Both CALI and CALL have not been adopted widely due to the obvious constraints of finance and the typically Indian mindset that learning cannot take place without the presence of a human teacher. In the Indian context, Tickoo’s distinction between CALI and CALL took on special significance. He writes that “CALI
was mainly an extension of programmed learning which was extensively used alongside language laboratories in the 1960s. It uses linear or branching programmes as a kind of self-instructional support. The learner mainly responds to stimuli on the screen and receives positive or negative feedback or, in the case of a branching programme, some analysis of the wrong response followed by some additional information. Although such a lesson does facilitate a limited amount of self-learning, it does not provide much room for learner involvement or interaction. … CALL marks a shift from teaching to learning. Computers with multimedia facilities are now used to offer far more interactive programmes. … CALL’s reaches have of late been spreading fast with language media centres being seen as an integral part of a well-equipped language classroom” (M. L. Tickoo 274-275). While it is true that multinationals, call centres, and some private institutes are encouraging CALL, it is CALI that has unfortunately gained wider acceptance in India.

1.23. An Eclectic ELT Pedagogy with a Communicative Approach

India, after 1995, has made up for the slow elephant years by broadening the apex of the ELT cone with a generous mix of so many methodologies that come under the generic category of the Communicative Approach (CA). As it has been pointed out, “Mainstream teaching on both sides of the Atlantic opted for Communicative Language teaching (CLT) as the recommended basis for language teaching methodology in the 1980s and it continues to be the most plausible basis for language teaching today, although CLT is today understood to mean little more than a set of very general principles that can be applied and interpreted in a variety of ways” (Richards and Rodgers 2002:244).

It is true that mostly this CA is practised in the institutes that belong to the third category above but the ripple effect created is gradually reaching the ELT classroom. Most institutes that target the language users who need proficiency in a hurry or who need to clear certain examinations invest heavily in teaching materials from publishing houses like the Cambridge University Press (CUP). Since all materials published in such places of repute are state-of-the-art in terms of methodology, teachers and learners are in
a position of maximum benefit. Moreover, teachers at these centres are usually young post-graduates who are receptive to novelty and innovation. They borrow heavily from such materials and often create an eclectic pedagogy of their own by using combinations of audio-lingual or situational or functional or interactive or task-based or communicative or even the direct method language teaching.

All these approaches and methods can be spread through a course or can even be used in one class, depending upon the learners’ response. This pedagogy is still CA-oriented, even if not restricted to one approach. Again, teachers – especially the younger ones – are increasingly moving towards increasing the extent to which lessons are centred on CA.

1.24. Signs of Hope on the ELT Horizon: The Emerging Sensitivity to the Learner

As Jill and Peter suggest, “To be successful in establishing truly functional speech, any language training programme must, at some point of time, create a context in which the student has something to say” (G. Jill de Villiers and A. Peter Villiers 271). The most significant impact of this approach is its sensitivity to learners’ needs and responses. This sensitivity is what has been lacking in the academic aspect of ELT in India. The whole academic process is so unwieldy that it fails to respond to learners’ needs. The learners’ response is too often ignored. As Beetham and Sharpe observe, “The present trends in pedagogical thinking amount to a new emphasis on the individual capacities and needs of learners. Learners are no longer seen as passive recipients of knowledge and skills but as active participants in the learning process” (H. Beetham and R. Sharp 2).

The ELT cone of India is broadening at the base today because of the factors that have little to do with the ELT classroom in academic institutions. The irony of the situation is that while academicians label these learning centres and academies as ‘shops’ or ‘commercial institutes’, it is these establishments that are a major influence behind the changing face of the ELT paradigm in India today.
1.25. ELT Research and the EFLU, Hyderabad

CLT reached both the regions (India and the West) between the years 1970-1980, with the difference that the Indian context was not ready for CLT. Hence, it took around two decades to gain acceptance among learners and teachers. Language-literature integration gained recognition among teachers around the same time. As it was already pointed out, one significant development was the pioneering research in ELT undertaken at CIEFL/EFLU from its inception in 1958. Its concerns included improving standards of teaching English and foreign languages, training teachers in methods and approaches appropriate to the Indian context, producing innovative teaching-learning materials, evolving appropriate ways of testing language proficiency. In addition, this Central University now provides expertise in language and teacher education to professionals from many non-English speaking countries. The All India English Language Testing Authority (AIELTA) is EFLU’s most recent contribution to the improvement of standards of English in the country. It is currently engaged in the design and development of a range of English Language Tests to assess the language proficiency of users of English in India (http://www.efluniversity.ac.in/announcements/AIELT/ ).

1.26. The ‘Project English’ of the British Council

The ‘Project English’ of the British Council (BC) was launched in 2007 with the goal of reaching millions of teachers and learners of English in India and Sri Lanka and to provide them with access to the best resources from the UK. BC promotes the following activities:

1. Working with partners to develop ELT and improve communication skills of young people;
2. Connecting industry and education sectors so as to facilitate a better understanding of each other’s needs and priorities;
3. Developing professional communities and networks;
4. Supporting the needs of the government, corporate organisations, and the education sector through materials, curriculum design, and teacher training;
5. Bringing together policy makers to initiate English language reform.

The ‘Project English’ has three strands:

A. State Partnerships: This strand aims to develop partnerships with the policy makers like the state and central governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) foundations along with teachers and trainers to facilitate reform in English language education and to improve the levels of language learning and teaching. The collaboration is in the area of design, delivery, and evaluation of cascade teacher education programmes.

B. Corporate Training: Through this strand of ‘Project English’, BC is working on consultancy projects with corporate organisations in the information technology (IT) and information technology-enabled services (ITES) sectors. Typical areas of work include trainer training, inter-cultural communication training, UK culture training, role profiling, pre-service voice testing, recruitment, assessment, and e-learning.

C. Direct Teaching: This strand delivers training on English language, communication, and inter-personal skills to adult learners through BC teaching centres in New Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, and Hyderabad.

BC is aware of the fact that despite being home to a sizable pool of English speaking population in India, the region is grappled with a massive language skill gap. This is indicated by the fact that demand for competent English speaking milieu continues to outstrip supply and that a large portion of the graduate pool lacks communicative fluency in English and interpersonal skills. This, in turn, limits the ability of the industry and services sector to find professionals with skills required for modern-day working. The silver lining is that in recent years, increased awareness and subsequent government
initiatives are beginning to have an impact on ELT in the region. BC, with global expertise in English language teaching, training, and research, aims at facilitating the reform process through partnership and with key stakeholders (http://www.britishcouncil.org/india-english-englishforprogress.htm).

1.27. Status of ELT Classrooms at Degree Colleges in AP

As on March 1, 2012, the UGC has recognised 456 Degree Colleges in AP under section 2(f) & 12(B) of the UGC Act of 1956. (http://www.ugc.ac.in/inside/browse_reco_colleges.php?st=Andhra%20Pradesh). These colleges which include 61 autonomous ones (http://www.ugc.ac.in/inside/374autocolleges_april11.pdf) receive financial assistance from the Central Government. A critical analysis of these colleges reveals that it is largely a monolithic system perpetuating a kind of education which has resulted in a set of practices adopted for development of curriculum, syllabus, and textbooks that is guided by the patterns and requirements of the examination system, rather than by the needs determined by a blend of criteria based on learners’ learning requirements, goals of education, the socio-cultural contexts of learners, and the demands of the job-market. A marked feature of educational practices in most AP Degree Colleges is a dull routine with bored teachers and learners, and rote system of learning. What is ironical is the dichotomy between the Telugu Diaspora communities which have been reigning supreme in the IT industry especially in the USA and the native Telugu population that seems to be ill at ease with strategies for training of its youth for the future.

As it is pointed out, “It is most important that the teacher creates in the classroom the sort of climate most conducive to the learning of the FL. In certain cases, this may be just as important for the success of language class as is the suitability of method” (Mackey, Language Teaching Analysis 333). However, resource-challenged classrooms, unwieldy class strength, out-dated syllabus, uninspiring teachers, lethargic learners, uninviting ambience of the campus, etc., have become the order of the day in AP. “Often in many ELT situations, teachers are compelled to work with material that is not of their choice,
but imposed on them” (Gamarra, A Problem shared 48). This is very true of L2 teachers in AP colleges.

Many teachers have been trapped in the examination-preparatory struggle and feel that communicative and humanistic methodologies are luxuries they can ill-afford in their profession, as they have to complete their syllabus. Often sound teaching practices are sacrificed at the altar of syllabus-covering. This apathy has adversely affected the ELT classrooms of Degree Colleges in AP. It is ironical that AP which was the precursor of IT Revolution in India seems to be in a pathetic state now with regard to ELT.

1.28. Need for a Fully Individualised ELT Method

One Gordian knot to be untied in ELT is the basic question as to why some learners learn L2 better or worse than others. These learner differences are both old - from the time of Hippocrates and his physician/successor Galen and the four humours - and new - with increasing understanding of how much their application can increase the success margin of LT and can enhance learner autonomy through appropriate meta-cognition and targeted learning strategies. ELT methodologies have come and gone, each leaving traces on how we currently teach the L2. However, there is increased awareness of the limitations of these approaches too. We are yet to develop a fully individualised programme in which each learner’s purposes, interests, level of motivation, learning styles, resources along with his/her social background are considered in order to draw on the best that the multiple methodologies of the past century and new ones to come have to offer and certainly some nascent models of such learner-centred instruction have been proposed.

Researchers have been exploring all these questions. The more we learn about the individual learner differences (ILD), the more complex the field becomes. This seems to be a very fertile time for unravelling the issues that relate to how individuals learn languages, how and why they undertake and succeed in L2 study, and how one person differs from the others in their styles, strategies, and motivations, among other attributes,
yet succeeds in his or her own way. What is universal and what is individual is, indeed, a challenging mystery to unravel.

1.29. Summary of the Chapter

For various reasons, a vast majority of people in the world learn more than one language. L1 is usually learned effortlessly and with nearly invariant success. SLA involves multiple and divergent conditions and processes but the success rate is different. It may be true that their L2 learning may be influenced by the knowledge of their L1. Besides, several learner characteristics and learning conditions have an impact on their L2 performance. The researcher has endeavoured to offer a bird’s eye view of the overall development of the ELT phenomenon in India with the relevant issues and the possible remedies. The main thrust of the emerging Indian ELT paradigm is how to adopt a learner-centred orientation in ELT with a communicative approach. The main challenge is how to address the vital question of variation among learners with regard to L2 performance. The researcher addresses this crucial issue in a detailed fashion in the next chapter.