CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION
6.1 Notwithstanding suggestions put forth by various Commissions on SC/ST people for the reorganizations of schools to suit them, the typical school, with its middle class values, its medium of instruction, urban middle-class-oriented textbooks, its system of evaluation alien to SC/ST learners, develops in them a distorted view of life. As a consequence of teaching through a language other than their mother tongue, the learning skills of reading and writing are much less developed in them, as is evident from their performance in the proficiency test conducted by us. They were found to be very poor in their capacity to infer the meanings of words from contexts (Fig. 4.2). And, as our investigation reveals, the strategy of use of contextual clues is the least preferred by them (Fig. 5.16).

Our interview with the teachers indicated that the majority of them had little knowledge of SC/ST culture. They were found to have strong ethnocentric attitudes to SC/ST pupils, their languages and cultures. Very few teachers had any training in the teaching
of English. Most of them considered SC/ST languages underdeveloped and many of them wanted SC/ST to be assimilated into the mainstream culture.

The low socio-economic condition, as revealed by our inquiry, has many social and educational implications. The researcher observed from the seating patterns in classrooms that Non-SC/ST learners tend to stay away from SC/ST boys and girls. It has even affected interaction between teachers and SC/ST pupils. Their low socio-economic status has made inroads into the self-image of SC/ST students. The teacher's view that SC/ST learners are poor students and that English is too difficult for them is often responsible for creating the feeling among SC/ST students that they are really inferior to Non-SC/ST and that English is too difficult for them, though most of them have a great liking for learning the language. In the absence of a truly understanding attitude towards them, these learners may never feel encouraged to learn any language other than their mother tongue. In such a context like this it would be instructive to remember what Gardner and Lambert (1972:134-135) have to say:

Thus, we find that an integrative and friendly outlook toward the other group whose language is being learned can differently sensitize the learner to the audio-lingual features of the language, making him more perceptive to forms to pronunciation and accent than in the case for a learner without this open and friendly disposition. If the students' attitude is highly ethnocentric and hostile, we have seen that no progress to speak of will be made in acquiring any aspects of the language. Such a student not only is perceptually insensitive

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to the language, but apparently is also unwilling to modify or adjust his own response system to approximate the new pronunciational responses required in the other language.

Besides these educational implications of the low socio-economic status of SC/ST learners, it has the grave social effect of obstructing social mobility as it attempts to establish social stratification by classifying the individual in terms of caste and ethnic origin. This may be partly responsible for the SC/ST people's making little progress in their upward social mobility.

Most SC/ST students have socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and linguistic problems in education in general and in learning English in particular. Our study of their socio-economic backgrounds clearly revealed that they almost invariably hail from poor homes (Table 3.4). Of our subjects, 70 per cent of the SC/ST learners were first generation learners. Most of them cited poverty and the need to work at home as factors which prevented them from studying. SC/ST pupils cannot have education in good schools in towns and cities. They mostly cluster in rural or tribal schools where the expenses of maintenance of schools are borne by the state government. In India English is still the language of the elite (Verma, 1989), and rich and urban classes have greater exposure to it. A vast majority of the SC/ST pupils failed to obtain good marks in the proficiency test (Table 4.6) owing to less exposure to the language.

Their low socio-economic profile is also responsible for their poor educational and occupational aspirations. During our
interviews, most of them were uncertain about the kind of education they wanted to have after matriculation and were ready to take up any job after the +2 stage. The need for English in India is great in higher and technical education. The low educational and occupational aspirations of SC and ST learners are also responsible therefore for their lack of motivation for learning in general and learning English in particular. It was found from the interviews that SC/ST learners as well as their parents had purely instrumental attitudes to education and the learning of English, there being practically no interest in knowledge for its own sake. Gardner and Lambert's (1972) experiments in the Montreal setting convinced them that students with an integrative orientation were more successful in second language learning than those who were instrumentally oriented.

The examination of SC/ST learners' scripts indicates that they often have great linguistic problems in learning English, which is generally a third language for them. Most of the subjects performed poorly in composition and comprehension. This may be due to the interference from their mother tongue and Hindi. As Hindi, in many cases, is not their mother tongue, the Hindi equivalent of English words do not come to them naturally. This was obvious from their performance in translation items. The better performance of SC learners than STs (CR = 4.01, p .01) explains the former's higher frequency of 'social intercourse' with non-SC/ST people owing to the particular social structure in India.
The evidence pertaining to learning strategies suggests that techniques of memorization, pattern practice, use of dictionary and constant practice are the best predictors of competence in Non-SC/ST group. SC learners opted pattern practice, techniques of memorization, role-play and constant practice as their learning strategies. Our inquiry into learning strategies of Non-SC/ST, SC, and ST learners goes to prove the existence of certain universal language learning strategies (Bellugi and Brown, 1964).

Our studies on SC and ST learners' socio-economic profile and their competence in learning English and the correlations between their income and competence \( (r=-0.27) \) prove that SC and ST students are poor in learning English as a second/foreign language because of the 'cultural deprivation' resulting from what Bernstein (1971) called 'Restricted Code' as against the 'Elaborated Code' of Non-SC/ST group. The socialization of the young in the family, according to Bernstein, proceeds within a set of the following four interrelated contexts:

1. the regulative context, where the child is made aware of the rules of the moral order;
2. the instructional context, where the child learns about the objective nature of objects and persons;
3. the imaginative or innovative contexts, where the child is encouraged to experiment and recreate his world on his own terms; and
4. the interpersonal context, where the child is made aware of his own and others' affective states.
In the case of working class children, (in our case, SC/ST pupils), the linguistic realization of these four contexts involved the predominant use of restricted speech variants. As Bernstein (1971: 81) suggests,

The net effect of the constraint of the restricted code will be to depress potential linguistic ability, raise the relevance of the concrete and descriptive level of response and inhibit generalizing ability at the higher ranges.

Thus the SC/ST students' poor school performance may largely be attributed to their impoverished environment—i.e., short, to their 'stimulus' and cultural deprivation.

6.2 We feel that learners can acquire better competence if they are helped in developing learning strategies and techniques that have been shown to relate to better results in language learning. It is a common practice among language teachers to advise their students to reach for the bilingual dictionary when they fail to understand a word. A better progress can be made if learners are taught how to infer meanings from contextual clues—a method which Guarino (1960) has shown can be taught effectively. Teaching the contextual clue approach presupposes the teaching of the rules pertaining to word order, syntax, and morphology. The linguistic knowledge needed does not have to be very deep or technical; it should be sufficient to assist the learner in the process of 'inferencing' when unfamiliar words or phrases are encountered. The emphasis on the teaching of rules should be on word forms and syntactic
structures as well as on the rules. Whether the rules are explicitly presented or are allowed to remain implicit, the students' attention should be directed to the meaning conveyed. Rivers and Melvin (1977: 169) have rightly remarked:

Since syntactic rules are inextricably interwoven with the expression of specific meanings, they cannot, and should not, be learnt in isolation, apart from attempts to convey these meanings.

Pattern practice can be really worthwhile when students are guided to express meanings that are true of themselves or of the situation the teacher has created verbally or with audio-visual aids, thereby giving the learner something to communicate. At the conclusion of pattern practice, the teacher can make explicit the grammatical rule or form that signals the meaning conveyed. If the teacher draws the students' attention to the recurrent features in the sentences practised and thus leads them to formulate hypotheses about the language, he is helping them to develop a strategy of inductive learning. Equipping the pupil with suitable linguistic knowledge also gives him the means of monitoring his own performance in the language. It has been proved that adult learners can and do monitor their speech and writing (Krashen, 1977).

As part of the rule-based approach to language learning, teachers can show their students how to learn vocabulary in context, which means learning not only isolated words associated with field but also the possible syntactic relations that go with
a word. Learning vocabulary in the context of meaningful discourse also ensures a more effective memorization and recall.

As for the government measures for the integral development of SC/ST people, they have been mainly in the form of concessional provisions through 'protective discrimination'. At the initial stage this may be necessary and desirable. But it should be temporary in nature, the ultimate aim being to level them up with the mainstream society. Even after 43 years of endeavour, this goal seems far off and, consequently, the stress is still on preferential treatment and reservations. But these measures can hardly produce the desired results unless these are used as means of making the SC/STs ready with the knowledge and skills which will enable them to compete with their advantaged counterparts on equal terms. As little is being done for this, reservations and concessional provisions tend to become permanent, and have adverse repercussions on both SCs/STs and Non-SC/STs. They have caused a lot of heart-burning among non-SC/STs as is evident from the recent anti-reservation agitation and many self-immolations by non-SC/ST students in the Northern States. Such are the unimaginative policies of the Government that "Even the well qualified from among the SCs and STs are likely to attract the doubt and suspicion of their colleagues regarding their real worth" (Chauhan, 1967 : 24). All these make them diffident and dissatisfied with their jobs. It would therefore be proper to favour education of SC/ST pupils through their own language and culture, creating in them a love for and pride in their culture.
and equipping them with skills and knowledge which will put them at par with their non-SC/ST people.

It has been generally accepted that it is advisable to develop the reading skills in the learner's mother tongue. Experts in reading also believe that the skills of reading in one language are easily transferred to another language. A student who already knows how to read in one language does not have to contend with the difficulties of reading all over again. Where the languages are closely related, there is almost complete transfer of reading ability. Even when the languages are entirely unrelated, the essential process involved in decoding graphic symbols remains the same. West (1986) proved on the basis of his experiments with Bengali children that practice in the skills of reading in English improved the speed of reading in the mother tongue, i.e. Bengali. Clarke's (1979) studies with Spanish children have also indicated that the skills of reading in Spanish can be transferred to English. Most writers agree that it is easy to develop this skill in the mother tongue first before introducing the second/foreign language. To quote Alatis (1976: 11),

The mother language and culture are equally essential, and I believe we can all agree that it is better to teach a child to read and write in his native language before introducing him to the second language and that 'initial instruction' and literacy in the language is an effective means for teaching children both subject matter and content in English.
From the above discussion it becomes necessary that tribals be taught their own language first. But owing to the presence of a great number of tribes and their diverse languages, teaching through the mother tongues often becomes a nearly impossible task. The problem can, however, be initially sorted out by introducing mother tongue education for the dominant tribes in each state.

In the Indian context bilingual and bicultural education for SC/ST children at the primary level can be of great help. The Central School system, in which the social sciences and humanities are taught through Hindi and the Physical sciences through English, may represent a close approximation to bilingual education, though it would not be considered bilingual education in the true sense of the term. Bilingual education need not include necessarily bicultural education; it involves the use of two languages as medium of instruction. It does not categorically aim at enabling the learner to participate in two cultures which bicultural education does. Whether bilingual education will include bicultural education depends on the composition of the society at large. If a society is multicultural and the aim of education is to make the students bilingual (or even multilingual), responsive to the ideals and customs of the diverse cultures, including those of the dominant majority in the society, bilingual education can be considered bicultural as well (Poster, 1979). Thus in the Indian context and in the context of the education of the SCs/STs in particular it may include both.
The 'transfer model' of bilingual elementary education suggested by the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore (Pattanayak, 1977) can be adopted for the education of SC/ST children. The scheme envisages introduction of teaching, reading and writing in the mother tongue and the exposure of the child to the spoken mainstream language. In the second phase, reading and writing in the mainstream language is to be taught along with those in the mother tongue. In the third phase, the emphasis on the mainstream language is increased. This might equip the SC/ST learner to take full advantage of the mainstream education through the regional language. This 'transfer model' of the CIIL is neutral between loss and maintenance of the mother tongue.

To overcome the limiting effects of cultural deprivation due to low socio-economic status and inadequate environmental stimulation for learning in SC/ST children, appropriate compensatory programmes should be devised to suit local needs and the needs of the SC/ST learners in question. In order to prevent such cultural deprivation, pre-school programmes should be introduced to put SC/ST pupils at par with their Non-SC/ST counterparts. Remedial programmes should also be arranged for them at different levels to compensate for 'cumulative deficits'. Besides, pre-examination training centres should be opened for preparing unemployed SC/ST candidates for competitive examinations. Free accommodation and study facilities should be provided to candidates selected for training.
The existing school curriculum is partial to and prejudiced in favour of the dominant culture. The history books, for example, make little mention of the ethnic SC/ST, communities. As Lange (1980 : 95) observes,

The basic problem with instruction that is not multi-ethnic is that it ignores students' background and denies them their true identities. Rather than a bridge between childhood and adult life, education becomes a foreign no-man's land, where students are at odds with their past and unsure of their future.

The ways in which Indian society and history are presented in the school curriculum should be reconceptualized. Indian history should be approached and taught from various ethnic perspectives. History books and school textbooks should emphasize the history and culture of SC/ST people. The multi-ethnic curriculum of schools should help students break out of their ethnic enclaves and broaden their cultures and ethnic perspectives. Children of ethnic minorities should learn to function successfully within their own ethnic subsociety, other ethnic sub-societies and dominant ethnic societies. Introduction of ethnic studies in the school curriculum will help the tribal students in the following three ways:

(a) it will enable them to understand their own culture and be proud of it;
(b) it will discourage ethnic ethnocentrism; and
(c) it will help them learn to function within and across cultures.
From our study it is clear that reading and writing are the most important language skills in English which SC/ST learners need for their immediate social survival. Reading is an important skill in itself, and it also helps the other skills of language to develop. It is considered to be the most significant, interesting and easy aspect of language to acquire (West, 1941). Saville-Troeke (1976) aptly observes: "Reading is probably the single most important skill for survival in our educational system, but one which has been woefully neglected ...". It can be profitable to develop this skill, as said earlier, in the learner's mother tongue, which can be later transferred to the other languages he comes to learn. For the 'disadvantaged' learners reading has special importance. Invariably all the experts of the education for the 'disadvantaged' have emphasized the value of reading (e.g. Dunn, 1967; Llyod, 1966). For SC/STs reading is important for the following two reasons:

1. Reading will widen their outlook and help in removing their backwardness. The SC/ST people strictly believe in an unseen world full of spirits and witches. This fact is partly responsible for their narrow outlook and low aspirations in life. This "distorted psychological attitude towards so-called spirits and other beings of the invisible world has been responsible for many a social evil, tyranny over the witches and other females and superstitions and prejudices" (Dasgupta, 1963: 29). Moreover, most of them still live in remote villages and are little
exposed to mass media like the radio, T.V., etc. The skills of reading, if properly developed in SC/ST students, will be their most important 'window' on the outside world.

(2) The SC/ST people rely too much on their oral tradition. Most tribals do not have a script of their own and their tradition and culture are handed down orally from generation to generation. This has made them allergic to print. Studies carried out on the education of the SC/STs also point that Harijan students are poor in the skills of reading (Das et al., 1966). Reading skills are necessary for their higher education, particularly in science and technology, where their number is very low.

Attempts should be made to reduce the cultural gap between the SC/ST and Non-SC/ST learners. Wherever possible, the material in the English textbooks should try to foster in SC/ST learners a love for their own culture. Rapid Readers should be based on realistic stories featuring exciting adventures. These Readers and story books should be short and more in number. This will give them a sense of accomplishment in having read more books in a short time. As the majority of SC/ST learners come from working class families whose long-term goals are seldom sought, this will give them the sense of accomplishment at the earliest possible moment. In order to foster a sense of love and pride in SC/ST learners, the subject-matter should include topics on their culture, local traditions, festivals, folk-lore, history, music, art and biography of
important SC/ST people. The SC/ST people are highly musical people and have great love for songs and riddles. Some of their folk-songs should therefore be translated into English and prescribed for teaching purposes. Poems based on riddles, of musical value, can also be used effectively.

States with a substantial tribal population should establish autonomous Institutes of Tribal Languages to undertake research in their languages and dialects and publish books on tribal literature and languages. The University Grants Commission, which at present (under FIP) gives a special financial help to colleges having a good number of tribal students, should also earmark some research fellowships for carrying on research on tribal languages and literature.

6.3 There is a need for further research into the strategy of approaching language as a system, particularly into the efficacy of the processes of inductive learning and inferencing. Probably the most efficient way of seeing these learning processes at work and of gauging the amount of learning they produce, is through highly controlled studies, followed by interviews with the subjects involved. Interviews enable the researcher to probe into the learner's mind and ascertain if a particular strategy is in fact responsible for the linguistic product. The effectiveness of rule-based strategies of second/foreign language learning could also be related to language aptitude and verbal intelligence. Research in this area will only be possible after the development of measuring instruments for aptitude and
intelligence that are appropriate for the local, cultural and linguistic context.

The present researcher felt the dearth of valid information on the life styles of tribals and Scheduled Caste people, despite a spate of anthropological and sociological writings on some major tribal and Scheduled Caste communities. Researches should, therefore, be undertaken on their life styles, ways of learning and value systems. Contrastive studies of major tribal languages can be undertaken to find out their problems in learning regional languages. Contrastive analyses of English and major tribal languages will provide valuable information about their linguistic problems in learning English. In-depth experiments can also be conducted with some of the methods of teaching, including role-playing, recitation, group-work and story-telling, to ascertain their effectiveness in teaching English to the SC/ST learners.