CHAPTER 4

LANGUAGE TEACHING-LEARNING: A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
CHAPTER 4

LANGUAGE TEACHING-LEARNING: A PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

4 Changes: ELT and its Related Areas

Against the backdrop of survey analysis some theoretical cognition is essential on the part of teachers to deal with H. S. English in the classroom. This chapter would try to reflect over several aspects of existing language teaching practice in English (Group B) at the +2 level in the state in the light of some prevalent language teaching theories and results of survey analysis. Such a focus on the entire gamut of the ELT context in this place alongside some current approach and attitudes would be enlightening for practising teachers. Such an ‘informed’ group of teaching personnel would definitely be able to work out some feasible approach and means to strike the goal set forth in the syllabus. But this study would in no way aspire after evolving any readymade, foolproof remedy to the crux of the problem, that is, meeting all the existing challenges of classroom activities with any fixed, ready-made solutions. So, the discussion to follow is not claimed to be a ‘how to do’ recipe (McDonough and Shaw: 1993) for the purpose whatsoever. Rather, the effort would travel towards the humble goal of reaching classroom level to explore possible potentials of all teaching-learning resources for English studies there. Apart from those advantages pointed out in Chapter III, Section 3, there are yet some other difficulties inherent in the system which are expected to be squarely met by the classroom teachers with their own resources. To equip themselves with the necessary and relevant current management style they need to inculcate in themselves fresh attitudes and approaches in the fast changing teaching situations in general and the English teaching situations in particular in the context of development just referred to in Introduction and Chapter I. If any model be offered at all, it would be a possible way in the thick of many for the teachers to prepare themselves for.

Along with the ‘multi-structure’ syllabus or rather ‘multi-syllabus’ (Lewis 2000: 171) there are model questions which are provided in the textbooks, where there are some
exercises at the end of each text piece. Exercise A is content-based while Exercise B
language-based. The nature of the syllabus is of an ‘integrated’ type framed up after some of
those criteria set down by Richards (2001: 164). Moreover, the approach adopted this
time, according to the Council’s own assertion, is modelled after the fashion of Secondary
English course. The teachers are expected to overcome any great problem in extending their
practice at the Secondary level to the H. S. level. Yet, the individual teachers’ insights are to
be used to overcome some of the shortcomings as statedly inherent in the whole process.
First, two final examinations of equal weightage may be misconstrued in two different ways.
In the interaction with learners it has come out to prove as true the apprehension that
learners are very likely to neglect the significance of Class XI Examination as being just an
appendage. Another very chronic aspect with the reform that is incidence here, is its
delatory nature; there is much dithering among the syllabusframers to take up necessary
drastic measures in the form of reforms. Yet, it turns out to be positive so far as the Council
takes its own time to proceed with relevant reforms at one’s own pace. The time the
Council has been taking may be a sign of some sort of both dithering and deliberations on its
part at least. Yet, its ultimate responses each time, as it has been emerging with, definitely
indicate much deliberation on its behalf before those measures are taken. As professionals,
teachers had better take a positive attitude to any such move(s) in their field of work. It is
the way the syllabus can realise its open-ended character. It involves the scientific process
of growing up inwardly for assessment and evaluation of newly introduced aspects of
language learning.

Then, the obscurity of literary texts is further augmented by its eccentric or rather
deviant use of language. The language learners in a literature-based course have to be
‘creative’ in their reception of language, but very strangely remain ‘conformist’ in their
productive use of language (Widdowson). The result is that learners’ world would gradually
be imitative of other people’s work. That paradox of reading literature for an opposite
purpose of producing critical answers is thwarting learners’ basic goal of reading literature
as a creative product. Even the rapid reader prescribed in the syllabus is also literary as an
autobiography.
The Council has been taking its turn to iron out both academic and administrative hiccups. Its other associated duty is to very intimately involve practising teachers in a large number so that its ‘consumers’ can be made aware of what and how things are taking place at the highest level. It may not be possible to include the other related and valuable ‘consumers’, the students and their guardians. If it be practically impossible to involve the latter right now, their teachers would be an effectual alternative. What the Council have been doing in the name of reforms now, are actually a set of amendments against those in the previous syllabus that had not produced desired results. In the latest amendment² of the RS (Samsad Parachiti 2005: 35) the Council has introduced the annual split-up structure of the two-year course. In this fresh restructuring of the course it has dropped some items from the original draft of RS (2003), like ‘translation’, writing substance from ‘unseen’ poems along with some other textual literary pieces. This last type of change, though having arrived midsession, is part of a regular exercise of reshuffle in textual materials design. This may not raise much difficulty for the teachers in the classroom, however.

The dichotomy of the syllabus lies in its application of an approach known as language through literature (LTL), and another approach of teaching basic literature through language.

The present syllabi are designed to develop the language skills of the students in English. It is hoped that these syllabi will enable the students to have a good command over English language and literature. The selection of pieces has been made in accordance with those objectives. (Preface to Selections 2005)

It means that the course ingredients are literary texts whereas the target or objectives are set at the acquisition of a few language skills. Widdowson (1985: 180, in Quirk and Widdowson eds.) has pointed it out by saying that there are two major hurdles here in dealing with literature in a language classroom. First, literary language has its own internal order even in a non-linear sequencing. In other words, it has its unity even in its diverse, sometimes discursive, obscure language use. This is against the linear cumulative process of language development. It may be closer to the current learning theory of non-linear development against the traditional linear approach. Secondly, its obscurity is further augmented by its eccentric use of language. The result is that the language learners in a
literature course have to be creative in their reception of language, but 'conformist' in their production. The result is that the learners may unconsciously transfer their receptive understanding of the language into their 'productive performances' (ibid.: 180).

New Syllabus or rather Revised Syllabus (RS) introduces a new set of textbooks with some fresh textual pieces and some new grammatical items. The new pattern of the course evenly distributes course contents between the two classes of XI and XII. There will be two separate examinations at the end of Class X and Class XII, to be conducted by the Council itself. But as usual, there will be no separate sets of question paper for three different streams of Humanities, Science and Commerce unlike the compulsory English component. In the latter case questions on the same syllabus are set differently for three streams at the degree level. The Council as usual has prepared textbooks. The other text materials on composition are as in the past set aside for private publishers to provide. This provision has the likelihood to invite uncontrolled materials from publishers' appointed authors from outside with the final approval of the Council, of course.

All these external constraints are more likely to impinge upon actual classroom teaching practices. So, it turns out to be the essential duty of a teacher to try to formally adhere to the broad outline of the course in their classroom job. One of these external constraints upon the individual classroom cases, is the two centrally constructed assessment instruments, called examinations, the demands of which a classroom teacher can hardly afford to ignore. Informally and practically, of course, our teachers have to make several modifications upon the course framework to suit their separate, individual cases and contexts. In most of such cases, there is a greater likelihood for all these efforts to lack uniformity in approach and method whereas the evaluation would be made on the basis of these discrete classroom practices. Anyway, as the end-of-the-term examinations wield a pinching effect upon the classroom practice in its propensity to come closer to them, the classroom teachers had better make a part of their course address the test or assigned curriculum (Raimes 2003: 306). Above all, the RS has adopted a selective approach which is naturally free from any theoretical bias. In that sense, its basic nature is eclectic and pragmatic.
4.1 Teacher and Context

In a changed perspective as this the teacher as a ‘learning manager’ (Lewis 2000: 183) has to be flexible in attitude and approach to suit the changes. These changes at this level are neither upstart nor strange to the teacher. Most of the things brought in are already there in the Secondary course to which English teachers naturally belong. In spite of all this what needs to be urgently taken care of is the teacher attitude. While encountering a new, maybe dissatisfying, item, etc., the teacher as an educator ought to have an open and liberal approach to them all. The teachers must not outright reject any such things which may go even against their personal liking; rather they must take them to apply in their own contexts to find out their worth. Useful or not – that depends a lot on teacher application. Because, while it is true that teaching is equal to learning, at the same time it is another truism in pedagogical writing to say that whenever a teacher and a student meet with whatever tools they have, some learning is bound to take place. This is a matter in relation to the nature of mindset which can feel some sort of achievement on its part.

As regards approach, the teacher is to be ever-ready to shift the focus of what s/he does in the classroom as and when needs arise. The traditional approach in teaching, mainly the grammar-translation method, has had its full stress on accuracy as the first and last thing for learners to gain. With the advent of CLT in the 1970s and 1980s the focus has shifted from accuracy to fluency in SL acquisition. With stress on reading skill in the syllabus, the inclusion of a complete, authentic text as a rapid reader has proved its commitment to the development of fluency in reading skill. Though accuracy is completely done away with, fluency has rather had a big bite into the proportion of the former. But in the case of the other skill development, i. e. writing, the scope found in the syllabus is extremely scanty with regard to its fluency; in dealing with writing tasks offered in it the obsession with accuracy cannot be easily dismissed. For instance, whether writing a paragraph, a letter or a report or other tasks with text pieces, the students would have to work under the surveillance of a strict writing teacher who would constantly make it sure that the learners do not commit any
sort of mistake in language. But the fact is that one cannot learn without making any mistake. To quote a linguist, S. K. Verma (1998: IX, in Hui 1998),

... "you can't learn without goofing", "you can't teach without goofing", for 'goofing' is a normal, creative process.

In that way to move forward with necessary changes the teachers are found tied down to another congenial drawback which is both attitudinal and approach-based. It is the very familiar, much-talked-about issue of language-literature dichotomy in ELT studies. As pointed out earlier, the H. S. English course is basically a language course with all possible sorts of materials supporting its promotion. Of those materials literature shares a leading role, no doubt. To use a quote or two from Preface again by the side of the earlier one from the same source would not be out of place here. Rather it would become apparent how the two become mixed up in the following way.

Hence learning English for the purpose of communication has gained importance in the present perspective.

Or

The present syllabi are designed to develop the language skills of the students in English. (Preface to Selections 2005)

Traditionally, it has become a kind of approach to look upon one Paper as one of literature and the other as one of language in the academic circle. It is not only prevalent among the policy makers and others at the higher levels, but also among teachers. But to remind ourselves it is to be stated that this course is basically a language course, and literature is just one of other materials used as a means to that basic goal.

2 Learner

The learners in the intermediate English classes are divergent in purpose or goal setting. At this stage they have already set forth their future course of study from here itself. The study of English is to offer them a lot of prospects in their respective fields of study. That's why, as it is already stated, they are all offered English as the sole compulsory subject
in the syllabus. And from the survey results it is proved that learner motivation is quite high to pursue it alongside their main subjects. These positive aspects are to be exploited to promote English studies with actual results, both external and internal. They have already had a history of five to ten years' English education at their back before they arrive here for initiation into specialised areas of studies. So, they have a lot of English in them from earlier schooling, though it is not completely trouble-free.

Anyway, it is not simply a cakewalk for the teacher to motivate her/his students to learn English for fruitful purposes. It is not that learners are not ready to follow the lessons on their own. There are of course a number of reasons both internal and external to demoralise learners to pursue it further. The external reasons like career prospects are stronger than ever to work against it all for its easy success. The survey reveals that the social background of learners in most of the cases is not favourable for the goal. Both the social and economic background of learners cannot be accepted as encouraging for their studies. The academic context is equally unfavourable for it. The way of teaching in most of the cases is not learner-friendly. The trouble starts with the primary approach in educational policy which is top-down. And hence at the classroom level the approach is more teacher-friendly than otherwise. To overcome this shortcoming learners are to be placed at the centre of learning, not teachers nor any body or any thing else. The other point of learner involvement in classroom activities is not paid due attention even in a so-called changed context. Without it any education is bound to produce dissatisfactory results. And to involve learners in learning can be achieved through learner-centred activities, because in psycholinguistic light to do is to learn (Lewis 2000: 97). Passive learners however studious and obedient cannot be regarded as good learners; s/he can be a dunce. Because one learns well by doing.

Finally, the target of all learning is to produce independent learners. Learner autonomy can be achieved both through classroom process teaching and the process-oriented assessment of student writing (McDonough and Shaw 1993: 11; Peñaflorida 2003, in Richards and Renandya eds.; Mitchell & Myles 1998: 119). Usually, teacher-fronted teaching (Day and Bamford 1998) cares for just product, not the process involved in
developing it. It is rather process learning that is to be cultivated in two skill areas of reading and writing. In the first case learners have to develop into independent readers. The several stages of writing teaching which include stages like dictating, planning, drafting, revising, responding and checking, are attested by some of the researchers who advocate these to be inculcated in learners. These activities are tested to promote the development of autonomous writers among the learners. The planning stage may start with the ‘brain-storming’ (Raimes 1983: 10) activities over certain topics students are familiar with. This practice can be spread over the task of writing paragraphs. This activity is to help propel the growth of learner knowledge and conception. The knowledge from other subject areas can be made available to the learners for their full-fledged growth of these topics. After framing up the outline or framework of the essays, the pupils are to settle down to the main task of putting it down in black and white. This second part of the job is known as ‘drafting’. The scripts of the draft serve a useful job for looking into the threadbare details of the actual process of writing activities. In other words, generally the whole task broadly comprises two phases of function, called ‘reflective’ and ‘expressive’ in that sequence (Lucantoni 2002).

4.3.0 Classroom Method

Before going into teacher-learner roles relations in the present approach, some space can be devoted here to throw light upon the concepts of methods. Edward Anthony (1963, in Richards and Renandya eds. 2003) has given one of the most acceptable definitions of ‘method’. By ‘method’ he has meant an overall plan for systematic presentation of language based on a selective approach. The approach, in turn, means, after Anthony, a ‘set of assumptions dealing with the nature of language, learning and teaching (ibid.: 6). To look into it deeply, approach is thus, of course, a complex outlook to overall language teaching perspectives. And the method based on this approach, to be realistic and effectual, is to be equally complex. In spite of that, method cannot be so abstract as an approach is. Yet, it is the method that too remains just behind the screen, and supports, and rationalises the actual techniques the teachers employ in teaching. It is these techniques that
operate on the surface. In general, method is accepted as a set of theoretically unified classroom techniques thought to be generalisable across a wide variety of contexts and audiences (Brown 2003: 9, Richards and Renandya eds.).

Still, there have been a number of objections against the very concept of method, and these can be seen just as a set of reactions against its application. For over a period of one hundred years there has always been a search for an ideal one for each and every classroom situation. But not a single one of them could ever succeed to come near the goal. Or, rather what the practising teaching community could find in them turned out to be quite irrelevant to their teaching situations. *Art-craft conceptions* (Richards and Renandya eds. 2003: 6) in teaching tries to see good teaching as something unique and personal to individual teachers. Theories like communicative language teaching (CLT), Critical Theory or Critical Pedagogy, are today mostly developed from one or the other ideological belief rather than research. Now, teaching is viewed as prompted by teachers' attempts to integrate theory with practice. For over a decade and a half now no new method has made its bid to rule over the education scenario after the CLT. Though Simon Andrews may express his frustration over the lack of any substitute for such a failure of the CLT, Brown and others (2003) reveal their sense of some relief over it. Rather they feel that this no-method state of affair would show the overall feeling of judgement over the bleak future of the method-search. It is the post-1980s period of the ELT situation so far that has been termed as the ‘post-methods era’ in Richards and Renandya (2003: 5). From this perspective Brown offers his choice for the term ‘pedagogy’ in place of ‘method’ (ibid.: 6). Theorists may want to convince teachers of the “correctness of the theory, to review their teaching to see to what extent it meets their values, and to seek to incorporate the relevant principles or values into their teaching” (ibid. 6). Theoretically, perhaps, such might be the final suggestion of this paper. Though without the actual first-hand ascertaining of this position the above approach would not lead us anywhere other than back to our usual practice. To overcome this limitation the next chapter would take up actual text pieces from the current H.S. English (Group B) syllabus for their useful classroom treatment against reference points of theories and experiences from across worldwide ESL contexts. For, the aim, as stated earlier, is not to support or organise any
fashionable teaching 'fad' (McRae 1996: 17; Richards and Renandya 2003), despite the H.S. official support for the application of the communicative mode. Actually, any theory by itself cannot be sound without reference to some contexts. Above all, admittedly there is no such thing as one ‘infallible’ methodology (McRae 1996: 24).

As teachers are directly associated with practice, they would of course need a structure to work in. Of course, they have got some structure to work in. But that structure(s) is monolithic and stereotypical, in the sense the teacher teaches more or less the same way as they themselves were taught in their student life. Or, rather it is the general academic set-up that dominates the ELT scenario as a whole. It is also true to say that they have to have a suitable framework which they themselves construct in the case of available ones being unsuitable. It is made available to them through their professional trainings or education (ibid. 6). It is said that teacher-education programmes offer teachers some foundations in academic theory and practice, which they have their own ways to testify against the actual conditions of teaching. Teachers’ acquaintance with the so-far invented methods through their professional learning is not totally out of place in their day-to-day teaching paradigm now. Even while teaching in a class, a professionally developed educator, despite all such negative outlook to method, would consciously or unconsciously take recourse to this or that theoretical viewpoint for his/her own pedagogical convenience. Otherwise, because of its being theory-based, method per se approves of some positive concession to the real situation what the classroom teaching is. That’s why it is straightaway dismissed as being altogether ‘prescriptive’ (ibid. 10). It is the teachers who are there all alone to meet the situation with their own ‘makeshift’ means (quote mine). Most of the earlier attempts for the invention of one scientific method, that is, the best method (Brown 2003: 10, in Richards and Renandya eds.), or rather ‘elixir’, appear futile. There is no such thing as an infallible methodology (ibid.) or ‘best way’ to teach (Lucantoni 2002: 1). To put in the other point, there is not a single method which when applied does not produce any learning as such. Yet, the search for an effectual structure in the state-wide course cannot be altogether given up in the theoretical maze. It may rather be the contexts to dictate the methods, not the other way round.
Despite a number of innovative reforms in the revision of the H.S. course along with its syllabus, the classroom is almost left out of its focus save for a stray step or two. For instance, the ‘split-up’ syllabus currently published in ‘Samsad Parichiti’ (2005: 35) just provides for two separate final examinations and allots the number of periods for the items against their allotted marks. Such a module is very brief and incomplete; yet it can and should be looked upon in a positive way. First, it marks a definitive move towards some of classroom work. Second, not being so very particular and above all, not passing any hard and fast stricture for its classroom pursuance the module can be looked upon as being optional to some degree leaving some free space to the practising teachers. The classroom teacher will get ample opportunity to manipulate it to his or her own professional advantage.

After the heyday of communicative teaching method in the 1980s and 1990s, a reverse swing has already set in. The CLT method has come under a strict scanner for its lack of authenticity, and it is blamed for the same sort of criticism CLT had put up earlier against all pervious structural method. The situations the CLT uses for the realistic interaction are themselves not authentic. The ‘particularity’ theory of B. Kumaravadilu (2004, in Andrews) refers to global English classes as being ‘unique’, and it has its own particular dynamics. For, it is a rich conglomeration of several factors, like students (age, needs, exposure, experience, expectations), teachers (native, non-native, training, outlook) and the social and cultural contexts (social relevance of English, economic resources, cultural attitudes, etc.). For Kumaravadilu all pedagogy is ‘local’, and “to ignore local exigencies is to ignore lived experiences”. Let us see how far several theories make themselves available for the needs of our teachers in the changed situation.

The classroom English teachers in most of the cases have got their own favourite style of teaching the subject mostly based on their practical understanding of the prevailing teaching-learning context. The most comprehensive attempt at syllabus design very conspicuously leaves out any indication as to a systematic way of handling the course save for a general framework. It is just the split-up syllabus (Samsad Parichiti August 2005: 35) that mentions the broad division of examinations as well as the number of periods against each of the items. The XI and XII classes will henceforth have two separate examinations to
be conducted centrally by the Council. The teacher would soon come up to meet the exigencies of reforms in the syllabus in their own way. It is true that they are not totally unaware of new methodological approaches, esp. CLT. They have been pursuing it in the Secondary English course. But the problem is of a different sort now. Here, the major portion of text materials is first of all authentic, not 'controlled' like Learning English series at the Secondary level. Secondly, it is literature dominated. Yet, it is true that proportion of literary pieces is reduced however marginally (85 marks from 100 marks). And there are a variety of texts and language items provided for classroom activities. At best, this aspect of variety opens up much space for teachers to act in.

4.3.1 Means and Methods

Every teacher has had a repertoire of strategies through their professional training as well as their first-hand experiences of teaching and learning. The moment they enter the actual professional practice in the academic institutes, they try to forget those theoretical loads altogether. The reason is obvious. There is a yawning gulf between the teacher education syllabus for teacher development programme the vast majority of them have completed and the real teaching contexts. So, their professional education stays with the subjects, here the practising teachers as a huge unmanageable burden to carry with themselves all through their teaching career without much application, at least apparently. The theoretical assumptions of the size of a classroom, that is, the ideal teacher-student ratio which is at its highest 1: 40, hardly apply to the real context of teaching (Tickoo 2003: 6-7). In the away setup the norm is rather 1: 25 (ibid.; Lewis 2000).

First, it is the large size of the classes that threatens to thwart the above equation straightaway. The usual size is about double that magic number of, say, 30 to 40. Even where the size is near the ideal proportion, especially in some streams like science (laboratory-based), or commerce, the teacher usually keeps no option for him-/herself to reflect upon the application of any specific method(s). They seem to show no departure from their normal, perhaps stereotyped practice. Of course, there is a lack of infrastructural facilities needed for the shift of teaching paradigm in tune with the reforms implicit in the
current H.S. syllabus. The pressure of the syllabus and the time frame still remains big constraints for the teachers who then have to suffer from what is termed 'coverage syndrome' (Kramsch 1993/2001: 139). There is no corresponding teacher development programme(s) felt necessary for updating the existing English teaching faculty after a once-in-a-service-period training course. No regular summer or orientation courses, workshops are offered for professional brush-up. Further, the B.Ed. syllabus hardly comes to toe the line of the new ELT syllabus. With all such impoverished means in her/his academic set-up, the classroom teacher would have to meet all the challenges single-handedly for some results at least.

The actual academic resources rest heavily upon any reforms or changes introduced from the top. Apart from human resources, there is the acute dearth of academic facilities like well-furnished libraries, teaching aids and other apparatus. Still, the ultimate hope lies with the teaching faculty in such circumstances. In spite of their afore-said limitations, it is the teachers who alone can rescue the course from being a complete flop. An ‘informed’ teacher with her/his linguistic awareness can manipulate the materials and opportunities to help her/his students to develop linguistic insights. In place of the conventional method of ‘explanation’, there are of course a preference to ‘explore’ and ‘exploit’ the literary and whatever other texts that are there for language learning to take place (Scharle and Szabó 2001).

### 4.3.2 Current Approach

The classroom English teachers in our educational set-up have to cobble up the stray learning situations together, though, sometimes they have got very little to say in framing the context even from inside (Cook 2001). The matter among those thrust upon the teacher can be at first teaching materials (TM). The two ‘Selections’ contain text pieces, all ‘authentic’, that is, not written for classroom learning, and mostly from the native English authors (Cook 2001). They are of especially sophisticated register for literature, like essays, stories, plays and poetry. The language is quite suggestive and rhetorical, as with the aesthetic genres. Further, the texts are supplied with brief notes on authors and text pieces,
chapter-end ‘glossaries’ and exercises this time to work as some reliable guidelines to the practising teachers to work in with. As every aspect of teaching in the concerned English syllabus would be viewed from the lexical perspective in the main, the reading skill too can be better approached that way. If that cannot be the all round approach to the teaching paradigm, the lexical approach can be a good starting point. Even it would be a major one; it would be appropriate and largely comprehensive. For vocabulary development Coady (1997a, cited in Richards and Renandya 2002/2003: 258) has offered a three-step approach in vocabulary instruction and learning. These three processes are, (i) incidental learning, (ii) explicit instruction and (iii) independent strategy development. These measures will be applicable here and there in dealing with several pieces in the syllabus. For general outlook at overall teaching the second process of ‘explicit instruction’ seems to be appropriate for teaching less advanced, intermediate students. Anyway, the first two steps would lead learners on to the third stage of independent strategy development. And the final step is being dealt with at appropriate places in relation to learner autonomy later. In general, the approach to a classroom has shifted from teacher dominance to learner-centredness (Hedge 2003). Some other enthusiasts even prefer to call it ‘learning-centred’ approach in order to put a special stress on the goal of the learners (Cameron 2001: 1-2).

4.3.3 Actual Teacher Approach

Our English teachers have already got a strategy of his or her own, mostly unrecognised. To name it in a general way, it is the much-hyped ‘eclectic’ method, as is popularly known in the academic circle (Cook 2001: 228). Now, this eclectic method is further refined and redefined. For instance, the latest one is called the principled eclecticism. It is however not the fact that a classroom approach based on immediate or instantaneous convenience, and so not completely baseless or unsupported by any theory. Most of the time the general structure overrules even the teaching procedures openly or not. For instance, a teacher works out a lesson in relation to the structure of the course which includes syllabus, TM, evaluations and methodology. In terms of method s/he follows the GT method, direct method, structural method, functional-communicative method or a mix of all or most of them in various proportions. Truly, it is above all the convenience that seems to
be a kind of principle that is overruling the applications and choice(s), if available within the teacher’s repertoire. Still, it may fail to pinpoint, and address the actual practice that our teachers follow in their classroom situations. Of course, they are liable to mix up a number of known and unknown techniques, and do so quite indiscriminately for their immediate convenience in their day-to-day job. But actually it shows a strong pragmatic and practical way of dealing with classroom exigencies and other situational issues.

Yet, it is eclecticism neither well measured most of the time, nor no more ‘principled’, as stated above. If it is eclecticism at all, it would better be termed as ‘pragmatic’ eclecticism (my quote). And this outlook would require in the teacher some cognition, or rather a ‘metacognition’. This qualification may furnish the possessor with a basic sense of judgement which, when applied in exposure to the context, would gradually enrich the teacher with an understanding of their learners, their usual roles, rights, needs, motivations, strategies of learning the second language. This aptitude can further cover other related aspects of the situation, like the language teaching and learning, the roles of teachers, teaching materials, techniques, the actual uses of the languages in the life of the learners, or even the position and policy of language education in the country (Richards and Renandya eds. 2003). Our teachers are not simply to have a general conception of it all; they must have a clear cognisance of it. And if possible, they would do better if they write them up for distinct formulation of their respective context. To that end they would better utilise the space provided in the annual school magazine, for example. Already in some sporadic cases some teachers are already doing the very thing. Fortunately, almost every school in the state publishes an annual magazine with the help of both its teachers and students. The English teachers can try to utilise it to deal with their own practical issues in their academic context. They too can exchange their personal teaching experiences through it.

The approach has now come to take up the process of integration further. Literature is considered appropriate only for upper-intermediate learners and above. It is now recognised that language awareness and text awareness have to be encouraged and developed from the earliest stages of language learning. As for Cook (1996: 152, in Carter and McRae eds.) literature teaching requires a subtler negotiation between tradition, the
contemporary context, and the needs of students than either of these encounters separately suggests. The H. S. English students have had a taste of literary texts in the preceding Secondary course. But these literary pieces are meant for teaching language in the syllabus. Here, literature is not for the sake of literature only. And Widdowson (1985) has uttered a warning against another misuse of literature in classroom teaching. He thinks that the educational purpose of literature is: “...to develop a capacity for the understanding and appreciation of literature as a mode of meaning, rather than an accumulation of information and ideas about particular literary works”. To offer some examples of the popular practice of teaching literature in a traditional way, Widdowson has referred to some set questions from some question papers: ‘What does Shelley compare the West Wind with?’, ‘How does ‘Tintern Abbey’ reveal Wordsworth’s philosophy?’, etc.

The teacher must take in the text those things she/he thinks most useful to meet the course objectives. The bottom line has always to be the learning or results achieved. At least, a few minutes’ enjoyment may be rewarding for the learners as well as their learning. The former goal may work as the ‘internal motivation’, and the latter the ‘internal motivation’ (Scharle and Szabo 2000). There too some learning has to be achieved, some difference occurs in students’ perceptions of the language, the text or even the world. The move from the pre-text time to the post-text time is being allegorised as being a journey from the time of ‘innocence’ to that of ‘experience’ (McRae: 25). The learners are to see and feel the need of using a particular text in the classroom. The effort to evaluate the utility of that text would be repaying for the learners. Then, before the apparatus is made ready, there must be a pre-reading or pre-listening talk or discussion to stimulate the learner motivation. The caution is that such activity should not absorb much time in the class. Because, it is the texts that must preoccupy most of the class time as being the main object of study. The warm-up activity that goes too long can be distracting, taxing, and counter-productive. Yet, the pre-reading question can be formulated to build up the student confidence in what they know. The difficult things must be put aside for some time before the students get ready to meet them. If it is used in a balanced way, it can be a sign of
creative learning and interpretative autonomy (McRae: 26). For such imposed texts with uncommon problems, Basu (1989) referred to Collie and Slater (1987) who stated about detecting and problems, devising ways of overcoming them as part of screening of pre-reading activity. The authors add that more background work will be needed to fill the cultural gaps.

4.4 Vocabulary as a Skill

In line with the initial hypothesis of this paper, people like Tricia Hedge (2002: 110) have pointed out that it is the vocabulary that has been an object of recurrent ‘neglect’ in the study of English language teaching and learning. Particularly, during the 1970s and 1980s the word-study was pushed behind the emphasis on ‘schema’ theory (Koda 2005: 30). After the decline in the boom of CLT, it has again come up to the surface. Now, vocabulary research prefers its direct teaching being more beneficial than incidental one for comprehension gains (Koury 1996, in Koda: 256; Ryder and Graves 1994). Hedge has referred to Wilkins (1972: 109), for example, as one such to point it out that almost all linguistic studies have turned their back upon any concern with vocabulary and its theoretical implications. Another such support for Hedge (2002: 110) is from Meara (1980: 221) who has put into custody the case of applied linguistics for its apathy to any serious study of vocabulary acquisition. Pickett (1978: 71, Hedge 2002: 110) also stressed the need of learning words in his work. Hedge (ibid.: 111) has expressed surprise for this apathy by stating that it is words that cause more misleading errors than grammar.

This basic standpoint of our teachers in their respective contexts would come up to meet the syllabus objectives. They however may not match in toto with the actual textual implements like the text pieces and other linguistic items of teaching in the syllabus. The objectives should better be kept in sight all through the course of classroom teaching. But the ways or means of serving that purpose may not be all too high for all practical purposes. In an effort to find out a common, practical, and useful approach, everything appears to promote at first and at the most the cause of vocabulary. And to define that vocabulary unit of word it is not simply an individual word in the traditional sense. Here, it may mean either the ‘base word’ or ‘a word family’ on the one hand and a larger lexical unit like a phrase or
even an idiom on the other (Hunt and Beglar 2002/2003: 258). The range may form a kind of cline from word upwards within the morpho-syntactic area. For them, vocabulary learning is more than the study of an individual word. In a similar vein it is also stated by people like Wright Mills (1972: 62). Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) have proved that English in a great many cases is made up of lexical phrases ranging from phrasal verbs of two or three words to longer institutionalized expressions (Lewis 1997). For lexical phrases can often be learned as single units. Coady’s (1997b) solution to his own charge against the beginner’s paradox is to get students supplement extensive reading with 3000 commonest words study before arriving at the ‘sight vocabulary’ (Hunt and Beglar 2003: 260; Day and Bamford 1998: 13; Tickoo 2003: 35). The ultimate goal of all such targets ought to boil down to the move from reference to preference, from referential to personal preference (McRae 1996: 19). The possible learning strategies and structures have got a unique range from the rule-bound to the completely free play of fantasy (ibid.).

Vocabulary appears to be the single largest element in learning a new language, the second language in our case. The afore-said neglect of vocabulary can hardly match with the popular demand of learners for it the world over (Hedge 2002: 110). In our situation the position of vocabulary remains more or less the same, as it comes out through our survey results (Appendix). And it is also true that we have never been taught the majority of words we know. For Coady and Huckin (1997, in Carter and Nunan 2001: 44), vocabulary development is implicit and incidental beyond the proficiency level. And with our learners the teachers are to reach that level, and in that direction the necessity of the listing comes in. According to an estimate (Nation 1993, Laufer 1992, cited in Hulstijn, Jan H. in Robinson ed. 2001: 262) 5000 words may be the minimal necessity to follow the main points of non subject-specific texts. Another study of vocabulary comprehension (Hirsh and Nation 1992: 263) finds it essential to comprehend 95% of the words in the text for its overall knowledge. In its next turn, Hazenberg and Hulstijn (1996, cited in Robinson ed.2001: 263) tried to establish the fact that the 95% of word knowledge needs the command over 10,000 base words. But for Van Ek and Trim (1991, in Robinson ed. 2001: 263) the productive ‘Waystage’ level requires 1000 base words. It is just one of several ways, viz. six in
number, from ‘Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching’, which includes a whole band of six levels, such as Breakthrough, Waystage, Threshold, Vantage, Effective Operational Proficiency and mastery.

For Nation (1990) vocabulary lists are to be an effective means to quickly learn word-pair translations. To teach unfamiliar words, teachers expose more of a word than just its form (Channell 1988); they need to utter them aloud (Ellis & Beaton 1993; Fay & Cutler 1977). Then, the learners can use dictionaries in their own order as after Atkinson (1972, in Mitchell et al., 260). Because, syllable structure and pattern of a word is vital, for these are the moulds to store a word in memory (Fay & Cutler 1977). It is more effective to study words regularly over several short sessions than for one or two longer ones (Mitchell et al., 260). For forgetting in most cases occurs immediately after the initial exposure (Pimsleur 1967). Five to seven words are to be learned at a time, and thus to get repeated exposure to words, rather their larger groups (Mitchell and Myles: 261). Next, one should use keyword technique to promote deeper mental processing for better retention (Ibid. 260; Woolard 2000, in Lewis ed.: 33). They can be taught in association with already familiar words learners know. In teaching synonyms, antonyms, close pairs may cause confusion to learners despite their conventional practice so far. For instance, if a learner is exposed to two very close words together at the same time, there is every possibility for him/her to confuse them permanently. Words like ‘corporal’ and ‘corporeal’ both in sense and form are very close for the learners to confuse them easily. And there are many other similar cases. So, in teaching antonyms, teachers have to be very careful to weed our near-close pairs or rather ‘twins’ (my quote) for a mnemonic deal of their own. Should one teach one in association with the other, or rather teach them when and where they appear? Perhaps, it may be a case of over-caution to offer learners one with the other so as to at once clinch their distinctions for ever. Yet, it is not totally free from danger. To introduce the other over-enthusiastically may unnecessarily invite the muddle in the learner. If one gets a particular word settled, any future assault from other(s) may find it hard to destabilise the already fixed form. Despite the traditional teaching of words like ‘economic’ and ‘economical’ together, learners may face the same problem all along.
While reading a running text, attention must be given to verbal or visual elements, like morphology involved in punning, wordplay, sounds evoked or exploited, and also to what is new to students as well as what is known. They would also equally pay heed to what is patent in a text, what is latent, or to cultural references. This way they will get involved into the process of extension and elaboration of texts, their amplifications, illustrations, etc. For this purpose the earlier achieved linguistic knowledge may help them to recognise the register, the point of view, inferencing, ‘implicature’, questions of social status and cultural recognition (McRae 1996: 27). All this is to be built into textual knowledge through language awareness and its associative world around. For that matter some classes can be given over to Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) (Richards & Renandya eds.: 259).

It is the cognitive psychologists like Craik and Lockhart (1972), Craik and Tulvig (1975) who are of the view that the depth of processing a word for its form and meaning(s) makes its retention safe. Yet, this processing may also be ‘metacognitive’, as they are not always direct mental operations, but also indirect strategies which facilitate learning new words (Hedge 2002: 118). Of some strategies suggested there, it is only one of reactivating vocabulary in internal dialogue that one can notice in their learners’ practice from their insights as well as their own personal experiences. We often apply numerous workable strategies to suit our purpose of making newly encountered words as part of our preferably ‘productive’, if not so, at least ‘receptive’ vocabulary. To overcome the responsibility of that wide and ever-growing task it is always a learner style to make it easy in taking in as many of them as possible. Learners of all ages make use of this or that way in their day-to-day life. And a conscious teacher with the metaknowledge of dealing with learning problems would and should try to explore the learners’ own personal style of handling words as well as to supplement the learner stock of styles with the teacher’s own proven means. There are several other features like structural similarity, L1 approximation, idiomaticity in use, etc., in order to cope with this precarious condition of our learners in the face of the onrushing deluge of words. It is all the more true in a language like English with an ever-bulging stock of words. With the same breath it can be sounded as a word of caution that any blind use of these means without the help of a teacher may prove frustrating for learning. The teacher is
to pick and choose whatever she/he finds as clearly supportive to the job.

4.5.0 Reading Skill

It is a foremost literacy skill which is receptive apart from its twin receptive (but not passive) skill of listening (Bright and McGregor 1976). For Sir Francis Bacon ("Of Studies"), 'Reading maketh a full man', and obviously a good learner would definitely be an efficient reader. Much earlier in the twenties, as stated in Chapter I, Michael Philip West in his report, 'Bilingualism – with special reference to Bengal' (1926) presented the Bengali learners' needs for English as his starting point, and concluded that a reading knowledge of the language was of over-riding importance (Howatt 1994: 335). We learn language from exposure to it (Bright and McGregor 1976), and in the literary context the exposure involves the means of reading too. Further, in its most developed form, the Input Hypothesis theory of Krashen (1985, 1991) favours exposure to 'comprehensible input' as being necessary and sufficient for second language learning. To qualify the prospect of exposure a little more, a single exposure to a new item or word is not enough for its long-term retention. It cannot guarantee more than 10% of success with native speakers (Nagy, Herman and Anderson 1985). Quite appropriately, for that, reading skill of several sorts occupies a larger space than any other in the H.S. Syllabus. All texts together for reading go up to 130 marks out of 200 in the two-year course. As a study skill, reading has no parallel amongst the whole lot. Further, good writing is the product of reading too, but not through what it traditionally held as its great virtue, spelling and writing (Cross 1992: 255). Bright and McGregor (1970) give nine reasons why reading is regarded as the core of the syllabus. According to them, "Books provide most pupils with the situations in which learning takes place. Where there is little reading, there will be little language learning" (1970: 52-53). Again, it functions as a gateway to the world of knowledge on an individual score. For the development of autonomous readers, which appears to be a target in an intermediate course like this + 2 level, reading assumes considerable importance. This skill-based component directly covers 45 marks for the 'seen' section and 20 marks for the 'unseen' passage in the syllabus. The prescribed text-pieces which include authentic pieces (that is, those not written with learners in mind Cook 2001), will also provide learners with reading materials for their
academic pursuits.

The development of the skill in question here is of course a complex exercise. Primarily, reading implies at least two aspects, such as comprehension and speed (Rao 1989: 3-7). In another respect, it has got two primary goals: i. to decode forms in texts, and ii. decode information from texts (Kramsch 1993/2001: 7). The latter means how fast one can read a text in a second language with understanding. The optimal rates of processing prose texts may vary between 250 to 300 words per minute (Carver 1982, cited in Alderson 2000: 14, 57-8). The native speakers' normal rate of reading speed is 254 words per minute (Haynes and Carr 1990). The activities that constitute what is called reading are basically concerned with some general distinctions of approach known as 'levels of understanding' (Alderson 2000: 9-10). The levels may include a literal understanding of text, the perception of meanings not directly stated in text, or one of its main implications. These very facts in Gray (1960) are rather things like reading 'the lines', reading 'between the lines', and reading 'beyond the lines'. This denotes the ordered hierarchy of difficulty, or points out how to follow texts literally, how to approach texts critically, and to evaluate it. Alongside this, the hierarchy of acquisition follows suit. These 'ordered levels' have got steps like understanding the lines in order to read between them, and the better understanding leads to somewhere beyond them (Alderson 2000: 8). With Rosenblatt (1978: 25, in Kramsch 2001: 123) reading is of two sorts: 'efferent reading' (<Latin effere, to carry away) and 'aesthetic reading'. The former stresses out the way that the reader takes note of what remains of the actual reading instead of what is being read. This concerns itself with the information acquired, a logical solution to a problem, actions to be carried out, etc. In this respect the learners are instructed how to skim a text for its gist, to scan it for specific information, to predict from the titles, subtitles, illustrations, size, shape, etc. to infer the sense of certain words.

The first type of reading focuses on what the reader will carry away from reading (Kramsch 2001: 123). It requires just a knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, or conventions of socio-linguistic types as enough to ensure reading speed and comprehension. The second type focuses upon the inner responses of the reader to what he/she reads. The
reader is all the while engaged in his/her efforts to retrieve the images, concepts or assertions that the words refer to. Along with this the associations, feelings, attitudes and ideas also absorb the reader in his/her while-reading activities. Here, it is not concerned with the practical outcome of reading, but the identification of one's own self with the author's or narrator's. Such an experience cannot otherwise be shared. In reading a creative work like a literary piece, poems, the short story, essays and the play, the students must come out with a mutually recreated text in the company of the author, the text as well as the reader him-/herself. All this takes place under the mediation of the written word. In such an aesthetic reading the reader's attention is centred directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text (Rosenblatt 1978: 25). The text otherwise remains incomplete and selective as the language is; it is the reader who helps to cover up the deficiencies through his/her negotiation with the text. This second type of reading would come closer to the needs of the learners here while handling their literary pieces in the H. S. course.

Rosenblatt and Roger Fowler (1986: 7), however, share the faith that the genres of texts as literary and non-literary are not the absolute criteria for reading purposes. It is the styles of reading, whether efferent or aesthetic, that matter most in reading activities. In spite of that, the nature of texts does play a role in the process of reading. Some texts are more likely to activate aesthetic dialogue than others. As Kramsch (2001) points out, the common, regular disappointment of intermediate language learners results from the misuse of reading styles for particular texts. To read a story efferently, not aesthetically, is a wrong choice for them. For a short story or a short literary account like Mokameh Ghat, etc. the reader should pursue it aesthetically, not efferently. It is, however, the intermediate students who want to read it not for some spatial and temporal, as well as the social terms. For reading purposes the readers then need their prior knowledge and experience of life. The researches (Lee 1986, Carrell et al. 1988, Barnett 1989, Bernhardt 1991 and Swaffar et al. 1991) have shown that for the second language readers the background knowledge can be a crucial factor on their reading ability. The simplistic processes of its application in reading may barely follow a pattern as such. This background knowledge (or called ‘frames’,
'scripts' or 'schemata', in Barlett 1932) helps the readers to anticipate incoming information, relate it to previous knowledge and thus make out a global sense of the text as it goes on unfolding itself. For Fillmore (1981, in Kramsch 2001: 124) schemata are of three kinds: text schemata (dealing with grammar and cohesive structure), genre schemata (of rhetorical structure of text genres like letters, newspaper articles, children's tales, etc.) and content schemata that deals with the topic.

Since language is hardly ever fully explicit, normal language processing requires the reader to draw inferences (Bransford et al. 1984, cited in Alderson 2000: 8). This can otherwise be stated to be a distinction between several comprehension levels like the one at the word level and the other at the sentence level (Kintsch and Yarbrough 1982). The one is 'microprocess' and the other a 'macroprocess' for people like Kintsch and van Dijk (1978). The subskill of inferencing which is the final target in a language reading course, refers to the 'the ability to answer a question relating to meanings not directly stated in text' (Alderson 2000: 9). Actual reading practice should continue along with the learning of the various aspects of the skill. That would give them practical experiences through the opportunity to use the skill. And while reading, they should focus on the message, not on the form of their utterances (Kramsch 1993/2001: 5). The teacher had better offer the class a cognitive awareness of the distinction of reading for information retrieval and for reading experience. The purpose of reading and the type of the reading text are to dictate reading modes like browsing, instense reading, scanning (for details), skimming (for general information), etc. (Kramsch 1993/2001: 140). For the first type of information retrieval the teacher may show the readers how to move the eyes back and forth, up, down and across the pages in search of relevant information. Some of these types are quite applicable to reading purposes set forth in the RS. This would come up in some detail in the next lesson.

Aesthetic reading, as stated above, is of a different sort. It sends the reader into his/her own mind as he/she reads. The eye stays there a little and again turns on to the page. The students read, pause and read again, pause to let the mind bring in associations, compare texts, weigh the uses of words and structures for any special effects (ibid.). The teacher is to present a congenial setup to encourage the students for the target activities
through the means of personalized questions, parallel texts within their cognizance, or even some writing ones. Unlike the usual way of straightaway going into the teaching item of reading, here reading a text, the teacher can find it useful to tune the student mindset accordingly, at first. To accomplish that purpose the teacher is to be equipped with the awareness of the learners’ content schemata and their genre schemata. On students’ asking he/she has to help them with the resetting of the text schemata for them. The other help is needed to provide the learners with the knowledge of the text genre like sonnet, short story, one-act play, essay, etc. In the H. S. syllabus the teacher needs to introduce at least one-act play, apart from other items. The H. S. students are to attempt reading such a text for the first time in their academic life. It would not, however, be proper for the teacher to inundate his/her students with the dry, literary terminology at the outset. Then going over to the text or day’s lesson the teacher takes up the text for reading line by line from the very beginning to the end. This is how he/she reads as well as explains it thoroughly. It is a too much taxation on the learners’ mental setup. Kramsch rather suggests that for the first reading the teacher can take up the first few lines or the first paragraph for reading and/or re-reading together in the class (ibid.: 141).

In reading poetry at first the text demands an aesthetic reading opposite to efferent or referential reading. The teacher usually sets out with the first treatment of ‘content space’ with ideas, facts and beliefs, and then with the more or less ‘rhetorical space’ (ibid.: 156). The latter is based on new ways of forming sounds, of shaping words, phrases, sentences, of structuring discourse and of relating it to other texts. For Kramsch the aesthetic reading that is suited to literary pieces, has got three ways to deal with a poetic text: i. ‘celebrate’ poetry, ii. to understand it and iii. to create poetry. The usual classroom practice chiefly centres around the second one to the relative neglect of the first and third ones. But the way our teachers treat a poem in a class, is an isolated activity instead of a group one (Kramsch 1993/2001: 157). To celebrate a poem is a group experience foregrounding the pleasure of form as content. For instance, to take up Wordsworth’s ‘The Solitary Reaper’, the teacher can better start reciting the poem himself or in a group. Or he/she can engage some students to read aloud the stanzas one each. The student/reciter should be picked up from among...
those with a good voice and distinct accent and, above all, with a good poetic sense. Because, ‘celebrating’ a poem means drawing conscious pleasure from its aural and prosodic features before analyzing their impact or nature. Stevik (1988: 67, cited in Kramsch 2001: 157) thinks that memorizing a poem helps one to make that poem one’s own. The students may be asked to conceive a title appropriate enough to encode the experience the poem is trying to express. And all these suggested titles would later on help to initiate a thought-provoking discussion in the class.

In understanding the ‘content’ space the similarity relationships can work as cues to the meaning of the poem (Widdowson 1975, referred to in Kramsch 2001: 160). The repeat of a lexical term like ‘song’ (‘strain’, ‘lay’, ‘sound’, ‘notes’, ‘music’, etc.) in Wordsworth’s ‘The Solitary Reaper’ makes it turn into an icon of its all-pervasiveness in that place. The metaphor of overflowing marks it out doubly impressive. The students can be asked to narrate the landscape from the poem, and then they may be asked to compare that with the native Indian fields, Bengal in particular. This can work as a starting point to exploit the context in an optimal way, and the classroom teacher is well-placed to judge it. The next phase of exploiting the poem includes a ‘brainstorming’ session which is to initiate a discussion on the possible themes of the poem. The poetry teacher may stop with the line, ‘Will no one tell me what she sings?’, and invite a discussion about the theme of the song. Or, even the students can be led to meet the final message of the girl’s song for the poet. Actually, this frame is hoped to take the readers into their own inner world of feeling and thinking (reading beyond the line). The usual way of just analysing a poem in detail or exhaustively can rather cause harm to the poem itself. After the reading of the poem is completed, the students may be asked to paraphrase the poem read in the class. Their different versions can be an important point of discussion in later classes, and that would open up the scope of comparison among themselves. And further these paraphrases or even translations may lead to the next stage of creating poetry. Translations serve two ends: i. it by itself creates a new text, and ii. it recreates the original one (Miller 1992: 124, cited in Kramsch 2001: 168). The re-writing, for instance, can be in the form of a summary, a note on the title, etc. (ibid.). The poetry teacher is at liberty to take one/two classes for reading
the text, one class for its aesthetic study and one/two for writing tasks on the poem.

The matter of asking the students to write down the one or two words as found most moving, striking, falls under post-reading activities. Next, the advanced learners at the intermediate level are to utilize them from recasting the same event into different literary forms (Widdowson 1992a; Maley 1987: 108). This is the beginning of an aesthetic and critical attitude towards language that is essential for the personal and intellectual development. ‘Any truly creative voice can only be the second voice in the discourse’ (Bakhtin 1986: 110, cited in Kramsch 2001: 171). The lesson being over, the work of the teacher is only just beginning. Above all, while engaged in this lesson, the five period time has to be settled for this work in phases.

Complex as the skills are, reading has got a number of sub-skills which may vary from the eight of Davies (1968) to the thirty-six of the New York City Board of Education (Lunzer and Gardner 1979: 9), such as recalling word meanings, drawing inferences about word meaning, finding answers to questions, weaving together ideas in a content, etc. Munby’s (1978) taxonomy of ‘microskills’ includes deducing meaning and use of unfamiliar lexical items, skimming, scanning to locate required information, etc., though Munby’s is criticised as not being processes, but products. In the midst of all this debate, it appears more pragmatic and popular to take the traditional and influential outlook to reading (Alderson 2000: 11).

Alternative models comprise, first of all, Carver’s (1982, 1992a/b) model which proposes a three-part division, like word recognition skills, reading rate/fluency and problem-solving comprehension abilities. It is the problem-solving activities that may be attempted first. And this can be attended to by means of reading practices for comprehension purposes. Of course, at such an advanced stage of L2 learning some other means can also be availed of. As the problem-solving skill would support the building-up of first the recognition skill, the recognition skill in turn too would reciprocally expedite the rate of problem-solving speed. The more automatized the function of recognition becomes, the faster will be the reading fluency as well as the problem-solving skills.

Reading skill, like writing skill, is script-based. First, the text-bound scope for
reading is offered by selected pieces of prose, poetry, a play and the RR. Then, the text-free, open reading is again offered by the syllabus itself. The first type covers just 20 marks, though it would demand of necessity more space in learner study. Because, it is of the unseen type which would need an extensive work for a sound preparation. Second, the teacher would definitely give more time to it for learner development towards independent reading. It would also be the real testing ground for merit. Again, this item is likely to widen the background knowledge of the learners and their linguistic concepts. The comprehension skill associated with reading is mainly a script-based activity. That’s why it will in turn indirectly boost the other target skill of writing and vice versa (Cross: 255). Comprehension is thus the ultimate skill, the final achievement behind the whole repertoire of reading skill, its indirect contribution to the promotion of other skills being secondary.

4.5.1 Models of Teaching Reading: Skill and Sub-Skills

Grabe’s (1991) model offers six steps for fluent reading process: automatic recognition skills, words and structure, discourse, content/background knowledge, evaluative and metacognitive knowledge (Teacher Awareness; Alderson 2000: 13). The teacher has to constantly keep in mind the immediate, external needs of the learners, i.e. their test products. In the true sense, language learning means doing things, not knowing things (Cook 2001: 208). This process orientation in teaching-learning, though learner-centric, may prove teacher-friendly too. Such an approach in reading for ‘fluency’ to the exclusion of ‘accuracy’ may be helped by the reading-writing teacher asking students to re-write. The Council booklet (1989: 27) too puts stress on accuracy in lieu of writing as just ‘structurally correct’. While checking those scripts, the teacher-examiner (Hyland 2002: 7) may not commit any wrong by ignoring their linguistic errors, if any. Similar exercises can allow the teacher to place the responsibility for meaning making on the students. While presenting the lessons the teachers would not just take account of the products of learning, but also the way the learner re-lives her/his personal experiences. As regards one theory of reading (Vellutino and Scanlon 1987: 20), reading skill comprises three phases of activities like ‘phonetic decoding’, which is habitual or ‘automatic’ (Caron 1992), word structures, and encoding
syntactic properties. Our L2 learners have more or less achieved the last component on a general basis. It is just the second one that would need additional nurturing at this level, which is not simply what the learner responses always indicate. Because, if the reading students need to get the message through their exposure to some relevant material, knowledge of vocabulary mainly in its semantic terms would come to their immediate service. The majority of our learners with their very poor language proficiency, first of all, require the meanings of the lexical items. All other linguistic features are there just to support their semantic needs. Of course, their grammatical aspects possess their own values too. Yet, in a reading course whose basic purpose is the transmission of some message, just their lexical meanings would be enough to roughly serve that end. It is of course a better way to meet the primary needs of the average learners who are the majority. Further, this can go a long way into helping create some sort of encouragement among the students. All these findings greatly support the basis of the primary hypothesis postulated here in the light of classroom experiences.

Other strategies of a fluent reader include recognising more vital information in a text at once, adjusting reading rates, skimming, previewing, using the context to resolve misunderstanding, formulating questions about information, monitoring cognition, etc. Smith (1971, cited in Alderson 13), however, favours readers directly moving to meaning, but not via sound. And of course, not via teacher all the time. An alarm for the classroom teachers. During the practice of reading the learners have to be weaned away from several earlier habits like reading aloud, fingering the texts, head movement, sub-vocal utterances, etc. Those age-old habits and misconceptions about them would continually preoccupy the mindset of the learners. For Bright and McGregor (1970: 56), “The expert reader does not read aloud to himself or make visible articulatory movements. He does not look at each word; his eyes stop only three or four times a line”. Even after several prompting from teachers, parents, guardians or whoever else can it be, the students linger with the ideas and practice of following their old habits like reading loudly, ‘sight’ vocabulary, fingering words, head movement, etc.

The ‘bottom-up’ approach usually followed in traditional reading exercise starts with
the focus on individual words, but faster reading demands ‘top-down’ one (Lucantoni 2002: 39) in reading processing. In that process one notices 3-4 words per line, not all words to follow the line of thought without individual word attention. The teaching of word-chunks or rather collocations would take one long in that direction.

Yet, it cannot be denied that the earlier attitude and habit are left unalterable due to the traditional style of teaching reading. This practice still remains product-based, not process-based in the XI-XII context, whereas the recent research has put the stress on the latter (Alderson 2000/2001: 5; Tickoo 2003: 16). It is true that the teacher has to constantly keep in mind the immediate, external needs of the learners, i.e. their test products. While checking those scripts, the teacher-examiner (Hyland 2002: 7) may not commit any wrong to the learners by ignoring their linguistic errors, if any. Of the text types for reading comprehension earmarked in the H.S. syllabus, the daily news reports from the standard English dailies are meant for the comprehension questions included in the Class XII examination. This may be appropriate for being common and easier in terms of vocabulary and topics. Furthermore, the narrative technique along with other stylistic features characteristic of journalesese, like its repetitive mode, illustrative pictures, popular, colloquial terms, or even sometimes the use of local native terms, slang, language stunts, archaic words, sometimes transliterated, makes it simpler for our learners to follow. In other words, this may briefly be called the ‘comprehensible input’ after Krashen (1985: 2). In relation to this type of skill development, it is to take note of some special issues in the case of our H. S. learners. First of all, the intermediate learners of English as an L2 have some separate needs in the development of their reading skill. It is because the intermediate learners are already set for a particular type of English and consequent reading model in relation to their choice of disciplines. There have been a number of both theoretical and empirical researches in the area of reading skill development. In general, it is a cross-linguistic approach to the immediate needs of the learners for the acquisition of a good reading skill at a quite mature and final stage in their language proficiency development. In the prevalent situation here learners in all streams have to study a general English course, like those at earlier stages. In such a circumstance, the teachers would try to develop general language proficiency.
The conventional attitude and practice in L2 development, particularly reading in it, appears to be simplistic and monolingual in spirit. Whereas the L2 learning contexts would have the presupposition that the L2 learners have already had their own L1 learning experiences at their back. The ‘transfer’ concept from contrastive analysis (CA) has its origin in the 1950s and 1960s. It was found that the earlier means of any qualitative or quantitative competence differences were inadequate to meet the interface between L1 and L2 concerned (Koda 2005: 9). It is the ‘bifocal’ analyses that may deliver the goods in the present L2 case. In dealing with any additional language(s) apart from their first language the learners are bound to fall back upon their native language practices whenever they encounter any new situations in using the other language(s). For instance, when a learner reads a text piece in the target language, she/he has got no other option but to apply her/his own L1 strategies found safest and most reliable by her/himself. The L2 readers have prior print processing experience in their L1 (ibid.: 38). But, usually, both the teachers and their students tend to look upon reading in the target language in a very sacrosanct way, and in that way they feel obliged to pay full attention to each and every word and structure in that pursuit. Whereas in their prior L1 practices they do not care for each and every linguistic detail. But whenever they come on to meet the L2 text pieces for practice, they feel shy to transfer that very skill to the study of the target language. In the next chapter it is to be shown how a teacher can try her/his best to show them some avenues to overcome those hassles, if any.

Yet, this simple equation may not be a cakewalk for several teachers working in diverse circumstances across the state. For instance, those working in remote areas, especially the areas inhabited by the tribal communities are sure to find them quite inappropriate for their contexts. For their students those newspaper articles themselves would prove too difficult for simple ‘skimming’ of the whole texts. So, the general standard of the comprehensive input, that is, the i + 1 model (Krashen 1985/1991: 16; Mitchell and Myles 1998: 38) for a reading text would rather be counter-productive. The so-called i + 1 model is defined as L2 input just above the learners’ current L2 competence (Hedge 2002: 10). The ‘i’ is supposed to be the learner’s current competence level. But for our context where the students are often seen to be lacking in the average range of vocabulary, and are of widely
variable capabilities, the above-mentioned input level may be too much for them. For such learners as ours here it may be suggested that the teacher can test a slightly varied model as either just the ‘i’ model or even the non-standard model of i - 1 for a brief period. There the i - 1, or for Renandya and Jacobs (2003: 297) even further the ‘i - 2’ material may well serve the reading inefficient learners. Renandya and Jacobs have actually offered a little more elaborated range from, say, the ‘i’ through i - 1 to i - 2 level, however. For them, simply, it is better that the learners read easier texts than the more challenging ones. Otherwise, too tough texts may be overwhelming for learners who would be prompted either to take easy means to overcome them or shy off. The conventionalised ‘macro-structures’ associated with stories facilitate comprehension by allowing readers to quickly build a model of the text. In contrast, the literary pieces provide a complex grammar rather than the story grammar; it is more so because of their structures to violate the expectations. Or, to say further, the literary language is deviant in nature (Short 1996: 51).

By the standard of that model the reading materials at the + 2 level at present are mostly far beyond ‘i’. It may not be just in the range of i + 1 to i + 2. That the range even may be far beyond those for many reasons, is not given anywhere in the literature. Thus, the actual range of reading stuff for each individual reader varies widely too. But the scale of variance always travels upward. Among those set in the syllabus the RR happen to be such a foremost matter. Its vocabulary and grammar range is beyond the average learners’ reach. In RR exercises the materials are well above ‘i’, whereas its objective is set at the development of automaticity in reading texts. In that direction the essential skill or rather sub-skill to be promoted includes recognition of sight vocabulary. And the development of this sub-skill can be achieved in our case through textual vocabulary and grammar well within ‘i’ minus 1 (Day and Bamford 1988: 17). Further, though this model is largely abstract without any concrete, objective support, the proposition offers us a good insight for one classroom work. For the teachers the ‘i’ model gives a theoretical conception of learner competence vis-à-vis their reading materials. Therewith, we have judged here the RR as well as other TM as being ‘incomprehensible’ (the present author’s quote) input against Krasher’s ‘comprehensible’ one.
The over-all purpose behind this practice is to develop a good independent reader in the learners. And in that effort to inform the learners of the needs of selecting a few of the suitable reader strategies would be one of the basic targets of the reading teachers (Scharle and Szabó 2000: 15). It is the teacher’s duty to make the readers step into the actual job of reading and struggling for some sense of their own. There are some steps possible for the teachers to suggest as the learners strive to find out a way through the texts. The initial blocks in that effort would likely be new/unfamiliar words, substitutes and missing notes (Glendenning and Holmström 1992: 12). There are other discoursal reading blocks which may turn out to be a reliable guide, like pronouns, shortened phrases, ellipsis, etc. (ibid.: 13; Emmott). In a typical course text unknown words usually range from 80000 to 100,000, and the very first support for the helpless learners should come from their teacher who would tell them that they would not need many of those words for the present. Such a decision must not stop with this only; he/she is to tell the learners that their need for a particular word or phrase may even be restricted in terms of their world of senses. At this stage the first basic skill may be surveying or ‘sampling’, which would insist on not reading a text word by word (Glendenning: 33). In that reading venture the initial step advocates for reading little at a time; first, take a sample, predict what is next to come, test it against the guessed meaning(s) and so on.

The sample ‘clues’ may be of various sorts, like ‘connectives’ or linking words, phrases, their parts of speech as they are used, without any help from the dictionary, their similar sets, ‘vital’ points, etc. In this respect, however, an individual learner can easily apply some other personal styles to be convenient for the purpose. It is of course what actually all the individual learners have got to practise without sanction from any authority. Beyond the initial stage the readers have to negotiate larger chunks of discourse for a fuller comprehension; without which the target to become a ‘real-time’, independent reader would very likely remain an illusion. And in that direction the learner-reader needs to deal with larger chunks with time. As a reader advances in her/his pursuit, she/he would encounter a greater text structure; this texture item would offer another effective instrument in that effort. A good reader must need to know the text structure in which the sections, paragraphs are
cohered; she/he should know how to rapidly distinguish vital points from non-vital ones. Through such practice processing would have to be automatic as the learner progresses. While reading, good reading practice would include taking marginal notes (of course, in pencil), or underscoring a 'vital' word or phrase(s).

The 'revised' syllabus (RS) has increased marks allotted for comprehension activities (see Appendix 1). This additional stress on reading component further adds to the existing load for reading comprehension. This component would at the most be appropriate for the intermediate learners who are generally poor readers in their L2. The stress for that purpose would emanate from the selection of 'unseen' passages which happen to occur in newspaper reporting. This is the convention in the educational structure of the course. This mode of selection from authentic texts would naturally lack the use of 'control' in language. This would thereby invite the naturally flowing language with a wide range of words often beyond the reach of our L2 learners. So, the teacher needs to introduce the learner to the practice of getting used to reading journalese regularly. This may most likely help to bring in a wide expanse of day-to-day lexicon for the learner over a stretch of 2 years' time. This could not occur only in the 'pre-reading' activities, but also at the 'while-reading' stage. The vocabulary would initially put up a toughest block in the path of smooth reading through this open, uncontrolled discourse of journalese. The usual word blocks may be some lexical items like slang ('nuke' for nuclear weapons, 'cop' for police, etc.), colloquial terms ('beef up'), quaint words, shortened words and phrases ('varsity', 'medic'), stylistically odd words ('opine'), archaic words or word stunts ('workaholic').

The usual practice with the reading teacher in the classroom is severally restricted to the second and middle stage of teaching reading. The classroom teacher mostly ignores the other two very vital stages of pre- and post-reading knowingly or unknowingly. Their only concern lies with while-reading tasks. Even there, the actual 'while-tasks' are neglected at a high cost of learner engagement. While reading a text in a classroom context, the readers often prove to be inattentive and disturbing. It may largely be due to the lack of some of those essential tasks not being taken into account. Some of those 'while-tasks' alongside students reading the text, would be framed in such a way that they would not only be active,
but also encouraged to engage with the text. Such ‘while-tasks’ may require the students to follow the order of ideas within the text, take marginal or brief notes, predict what is to follow next in the text, completing a chart, etc., (Lucantoni 2002: 34).

In the case of SL learners, sufficient language proficiency is required for text interpretation (Hayes 1996, in Weigle 2002: 36) through reading of source texts along with the task instructions in the examinations. Misunderstanding of source texts or task instructions may adversely affect one’s ability to perform well on a writing task. Another important reading task has as its source text the reader’s own writings; it is mostly intended for the purpose of self-editing or evaluation by teachers and for generating additional contents.

4.6 Writing Skill

Of these two study skills selected as major components in the syllabus for English (Gr B), writing skill is basically looked upon as just product-oriented and the foremost one for the course. Not simply for Bacon, “Writing [maketh] an exact man”. In India it is being exclusively taken care of in our academic setting (Weigle 2002: 6), and more so in the area of testing in the form of end-of-term examinations. For the course is focussed on an approach which is mainly product-based, especially its evaluation system. It assumes a great importance for the learners whose total achievements would be measured against the end-of-the-term test performance which is written (further detail of assessment in Chapter V). The second language learners have got a variety of backgrounds, experiences, needs, and purposes for writing than the L1 writer (Weigle: 2002: 7). Writing is just ‘writing thoughts down’, and in a foreign language it is just giving L1 thoughts an L2 form (Kramsch 1993/2001: 105). Silva (1993: 668, in Weigle 2001: 36) tested the differences between first and second-language writing to find out that writing in a second language tends to be ‘more constrained, more difficult, and less effective’ than writing in a first language. The major processes of writing skill are absent in its practice; for instance, planning, revising, editing, fluency are not taken much care of. The overall general process for study can subsume all the above ways during different phases of its progress. That very basic cognitive process for
writing, as Hayes describes it (1996, in Weigle 2002: 25-6), has got three stages, such as text interpretation, reflection and text production. The first stage that is concerned with reading, receives internal representations from linguistic and graphic input, and is what is termed as text interpretation. Reflection next sets that new representation against the existing one to reset it all. In the final text production that internal representation seeks expression for writing in graphic output. This process is equally operative at each stage of preparing a write-up, like drafting, revising, etc.

This is why writing forms an important part of the curriculum in schools from the earliest stage onward (Weigle 2002: 5). This skill would rightfully get the topmost priority in this situation. It has to be explicitly taught. Unlike the foreign contexts where other skills are much in use outside the classroom, and writing is relatively rare (Vähäpääsi 1982, cited in Weigle (2002: 4; Lekhi 1992). It is the educational world which requires a lot of its use in it (Weigle 2002: 1). Though it is equally true in our case, there is very little preference in actuality for the use of writing practice both on the part of the teacher and the learners. It is only the examination hall where the examinees have just one choice to write their responses to the questions given in a written form. Perhaps the setting of question papers gives the teachers a scope for writing, and for the students the blank answer-scripts would offer the scope to write. Items like letter writing, paragraph writing, 'reporting a dialogue, composing reports, short dialogues' or writing notices, preparing newspaper advertisements (termed ESP for English for Specific Purposes, in RS, H. S. English Group B 2005: 7 and 10), are there to train the learners in the development of the practical writing skill. Newspapers and magazines may continue to be a readily available source of texts in the form of articles, advertisements, etc., (Lucantoni 2002: 23).

The syllabus demands progress in learners acquiring the abilities to express themselves through the 'coherent' use of the TL, English. The overall product-based system has emerged due to teacher-dominated approach in teaching. As the social as well as academic demands put emphasis on performance in the examinations, both teachers and students get obsessed with in the classroom activities. This way the methods that the teacher follows there turn out to be product-oriented rather than process-oriented. Teaching
learners the skills in writing needs to be traced in the latter, not in the former as has been usual so far. Further, the principles of communicative teaching do place an additional emphasis on writing. Because, its aim is to teach the functions of a language or its use in our useful activities. Unlike the traditional practices, this new realistic and fundamental approach to teaching does not aim at teaching language as an object of study. Despite all their efforts in that fashion all along, they produce little results (Council result data in Introduction).

Writing is a ‘recursive’, not a linear process (Weigle 2002: 23). For further exploration of this skill Weigle (2002: 10-11) has referred to the Bernhardt model (1991) of three writing types from the least demanding task to the most demanding ones. Type I requires the reproduction of information that has already been linguistically encoded or determined like taking dictation or filling in a form. Type II of cognitive processing subsumes the processes of organizing and arranging information already known to the writer. For instance, it may include the process of reporting a laboratory work. The English teacher can exploit this with their science-stream students. And Type III the most demanding of the cognitive processing refers to that of inventing or generating new ideas or information, as in exploratory writing. This third type of information transferring is of the commonest kind in the most critical academic writing.

Amongst the six purposes of writing listed by Jakobson (1960, Weigle 2002: 10) the relevant ones for our learners are likely to be the ability to learn (‘metalingual mathetic’), to inform (‘referential’), and to convince or persuade (‘conative’). The other purposes such as to convey emotions/feeling (‘emotive’), to entertain or delight (poetic) and to keep in touch are beyond their immediate second language pursuit. Maybe, the last one is to come to the use of the learner at once as well as in later life. And that skill would take the learners to the direction of the ultimate target of learner autonomy. How this writing with reading skill together would aspire after ensuring it, will be taken up in the next Section (4.6). Writing in a second language, especially in English, stresses on the social and cultural aspects, and refers to the process of learning to write in academic contexts. That would help ‘initiating ESL students into the academic discourse community’ (Spack 1988. Swales 1990, in Weigle 2002: 20). In terms of culture, there is a contrast between the English write-up and that of
the Oriental; while the former is marked by subordination and hierarchy in organization, the latter by co-ordination and parallelism (Mitchell and Myles: 51; Ostler 1987; Yorkey 1977; Kaplan 1966, cited in Leki 1992, in turn used in Weigle 2002: 21). And English is called a ‘writer-responsible’ language’ (Hinds 1987, in Weigle 2002: 21). The readers, here the teacher-examiners in the H.S. course, seek for explicit connections between ideas and direct statements and above all a hierarchical organization.

Reading apart, writing thus demands a prominent place in an academic setting. For Grabowski (1996: 75, cited in Weigle 2002: 4) mastery of this standard system is an important prerequisite of cultural and educational participation and maintenance of one’s rights and duties. The so-far recognised stages (shown above) involved in writing point to the mental, cognitive process. The special advantage of ‘production time’ (Brown 1994, mentioned in Weigle 2002: 15) available to the writer has an edge over the learners of other skills. And so this skill practice in writing in public as well as in private is to supply the necessary impetus to the progress of constructional cogitation. Scholars like Purves et al. (1984), Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) think of writing at the higher level not simply for the communication of information, but rather for the expansion of one’s own knowledge through reflection. Thus, writing and critical thinking are looked upon as closely linked. Weigle (2002: 5) too states that expertise in writing is seen as a preparation for the learners’ cognitive skills to be developed for higher studies. In writing practice, however, the subjects can get much time and energy to take to cognitive activities like planning and brainstorming for information retrieval and organization. There is less communicative pressure to produce utterances continuously (Grabowski 1996, in Weigle 2002: 18). But at the same time of practice the learners have to be taught how to be quick in jotting down responses so as to meet the time limit, an essential part of an examination.

In earlier methods and approaches writing practices are directed towards the development of grammatical skills. Its main instructional method of ‘guided composition’ exclusively focuses on the classroom contexts and some associated skills including the ability to recall the grammatical forms taught (Hyland 2002: 7). Teacher responses to learner writing are confined to the detection of errors along with their corrections in order for
identifying students limitations in their control of language structure (ibid.: 8). But its problem lies with the uniform use of indirect assessments, multiple choice, error recognition tasks. They are reliable in skill check, while they do hardly take care of communication. In the latter case, absolute accuracy is neither desirable, nor possible or practicable in writing tasks (DeMauro 1992, in Hyland 2002: 8).

In spite of several theoretical propositions about the approach and method of teaching writing, the usual pedagogical practice is restricted to the activities of the while-reading stage alone with some other limitations there itself. Let alone the needs of applying the pre- and post-writing tasks, some of the tasks of the while-writing itself are blatantly ignored. For instance, the very primary task of note-taking in classroom is utterly neglected by teachers and students alike.

While dealing with writing tasks, teachers have to check if students can write correctly the first 200 most frequent words of English, or other words they mostly get wrong, mainly compound forms (eg. house + full = ‘housefull’/‘houseful’, hand + full = ‘handfull’/‘handful’, ‘skillfull’/‘skillful’/‘skilful’, ‘house-wife’/‘housewife’, ‘obscene’/ ‘obscene’, ‘diary’ vs. ‘dairy’, etc.), (Cook 2001:77). It is hardly ever systematically covered in language teaching (Cook:78). At this level however teachers do not teach them as separate items, but on necessity basis, with some generalizations (unlike those given in Cook:79), but only need-based. For the sake of reading skill as well as writing skill the approach of teaching individual vocabulary, though a frequent necessity in educational settings, cannot be an overall policy in that project. Vocabulary for itself rather invites an opposition from the researchers criticising stylistic approach to literature study as being indifferent to the historicity of a literary work (Carter 1996: 7). In such a circumstance, Lewis’s lexical approach (1997) would be a very scientific policy in teaching literary texts as well as language together. At least, it provides a common ground for it all to come together, a meeting place between grammar and lexis, literature and language.

4.7 Teaching Grammar

In the area of grammar teaching, one has to have a reference to the latest model of Chomsky’s grammar known as the Universal Grammar (1981), which proposes two
aspects of language to address its two contrary states. All natural languages share some common linguistic features called ‘principles’. At the same time they are mutually different or dissimilar, and it is due to parameters of that particular language. The principles include items like subject, object, verb or noun, pronoun etc., and the awareness of these elements for an individual is within her/his innate linguistic mechanism. When a person attempts to study a second language after or along with her/his first language, with the already set native linguistic parameters most likely to be unique, s/he sets out to reset a new parameter system (Mitchell & Myles 1998) for the target language. The new language data before the learner in the surrounding social environment is to guide her/him to set or reset the UG parameters (Ibid.: 121). This positive evidence of the structural possibilities in that particular natural language system may work as a source of ‘input’ on which internal learning mechanisms can get to work. Of course, all our second language learners get this ‘input’ in much the same way. And the differences lie in its usability conditioned by the progress of the learners at that stage.

Chomsky’s ‘competence’ theory in its application to language pedagogy receives criticism and subsequent modifications, one of which was already stated as ‘communicative competence’ (Hymes 1978). Yet, further, it is questioned as being too abstract for explicit study, whereas language learning is performance-based and concrete (Lewis 2000: 176). More realistically, Jimmie Hill (2000: 177) has called it ‘collocational competence’. Because language is acquired and used not through word-meanings, nor through syntax. According to people like Michael and Morgan Lewis, Conzett, Woolard or Jimmie Hill, language consists in the mental lexicon of its users in terms of word-chunks. This outlook of language considers it as a grammaticalized lexis, not lexicalized grammar (Lewis: 137). So, the latter’s process of reduction of a language to its discrete items or words, hardly regards language as a usage-based living entity. The way of the ‘reductionist’ (Larsen-Freeman 1977) gives way to philosophising language; lexicologists turn the tide in favour of language as a living entity.

Grammar over-generalises rules to make them fool-proof as in science, e.g. grammar does not permit ‘who’ as to be an object to a preposition. But in ‘used’ language (Michael Lewis 2000: 148; Morgan Lewis 2000: 18) sentences like ‘Who are you speaking
to?’ occur aplenty. The same thing happens with the use of a preposition at the end of a sentence, like the above one, though the grammar of English generalises against such sentence making. The recent studies of ‘used’ language through the enormous data study in corpus linguistics by Sinclair (1991, cited in Lewis 2000: 147) have exposed the overgeneralizations of grammar rules. He stresses on the sense-building faculty of language being primary, and in that job lexis is being held as the key to the meaning in a text. Grammar has got a secondary role to play, and it emerges through lexis. Chomsky’s theory of grammar is presumed to produce ‘all and only’ the correct sentences of a language. This bold assertion faces a challenge from the current postulation that all grammatically well-formed sentences may not be acceptable as being natural in the language. At least, the lexical approach of Lewis and others can prove that lexis can be more grammatical than grammar itself. For them, grammar is realised in terms of lexical units. Actually, they have changed the orientation of grammar emerging from its lower units, i.e. lexis.

However, the teachers who are mostly familiar with the sentential grammar, may make do considerably before going into the experimental models of pedagogy. At the same time, they should also try to move forward to accost on their own the new approaches in handling their changed context. For instance, they would do better to introduce to their learners some of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies in order to generate coherent texts for their specific readers, that is, the examiners, and maybe their peers also. What is strange is that the non-native speakers possess a greater knowledge of rules of their TL than the native speakers. This overuse and over-dependence on grammar has both its advantages and disadvantages in learning a second language. On the one hand, the rules offer a very reliable support to the otherwise shaky L2 learners, and on the other hand, the over-dependence on rules to the disregard of linguistic usage would make their English too formal and unnatural. Using rules can give them a handle to survive against the unknown conventions of a distant tongue. In other words, too, the non-native speakers of English like the Indians here mistakenly use words with their different senses, forms, mainly phonetic, and their use from the native originals. For instance, words like ‘sanguine’ for ‘confirmed’, ‘environs’ for ‘milieu’, are very common even amongst the educated Indians. In terms of
utterances, words are mostly different from their native originals; one need not worry about it all, however. Only those causing a serious communication gap may need corrections. The distinction between /ʃ/ and /s/ needs to be maintained in English in order that the confusion between pairs like ‘sell’ and ‘shell’, ‘she’ and ‘see’/‘sea’ can be avoided. Another such casualty is the distinction between long and short vowels. Teachers can ignore the wrong pronunciation of words like ‘dais’, ‘guardian’, ‘tier’, etc. At the ‘lexical’ level too (Lewis 1997), the Indians get a ride with certain phrases like ‘get off’ with ‘get down’, ‘in the brackets’ with ‘within the brackets’, ‘to one’s foot’ with ‘on one’s foot’. Though they are frequent in use, teachers may set them right sometimes to show the learner users a way to look at these aberrations. This can also be attributed to the L2 learners’ over-dependence on grammatical rules and common senses, not on usage. For instance, ‘get down’ is probably due to the conception of the activity the phrase refers to.

To arrive at such a common meeting place between traditional teaching-learning style at two extremes of words and grammar. Initially, in the reforms as well as in theories it is the lexical approach of Michael Lewis (1993/1997), which offers a teaching unit of lexis larger than a word, but smaller than a sentence. And in that way Lewis (2000) arrives at another higher unit of collocation. The H. S. RS, however, tries to keep a balance between these two or many more else for a realistic approach in teaching. Yet, in dealing with the subject in the classes teachers must be informed of most knowledgeable approach like lexical ones for a sound handling of all aspects, even words.

In the current tension between the cognitive approach and the socio-cultural one in the second language acquisition (SLA), the general trend has long since been in favour of the former one. The teachers too mostly follow the method of introducing the learners to the development of their mental faculty through formal study to the neglect of language skill development. Even language learning was looked upon as a purely mental process, not anything else. Thorne (2001: 220, in Lantolf ed.) has swerved towards the view of people like Long (1993) and Block (1996), and favoured Block’s advocacy for ‘theoretical pluralism’ in SLA studies and practice. Yet, in the following chapter, it is not going to be a case of ‘theory culling’ after Long (Thorne 2001: 220), but rather after Block or Vygotsky
(1986: 11, in Thorne 2001: 222) a case of studying the actual teaching-learning situations prevailing in our context. The existing situations are to be studied in the light of some theories taking into consideration a large number of facts like socio-linguistic and communicative aspects of language teaching. For Firth and Wagner (1997, ibid.), the popular SLA literature is obsessed with a focus on individual cognition and its neglect of context and those above-mentioned features.

Our teachers nurtured in a long tradition of teaching and learning a foreign language have had to mould its presentation to suit their students in the classroom situations. This very attitude to their pedagogical condition has amply reflected their deep concern with the local perspectives. Many practising teachers in that cult have tried their best to recast their topics in the colour of the imagination of the native Indian boys. This may toe the line of Social Practice Theory (SPT) of Hall (1995a) and van Lier (1996), (in Lantolf 2001: 224), who have shown the interplay of macro-social structures with constant classroom practices. For Halliday (1978) or Halliday and Hasan (1989), Lantolf (2001: 225), this sociocultural theory looks upon language as a socio-semiotic system. In the following chapter, one can notice how our practising teachers in the classroom can operate depending on the local and individual needs in the light of new knowledge.

NOTES

1. Of 126 categories of function listed by Richards (2001: 153, 155) the basic few touched upon here include the dissemination of knowledge, structuring discourse (essay/paragraph writing, letter writing), grammatical items (such as, wh-questions, voice change, rewrite sentences, etc.), focus on sentence patterns, discourse in narration, reporting, or even a stress on skills like reading with guessing words, inferencing (ibid.160), etc.

2. Sight vocabulary for a particular reader denotes those words the form and sense of which the reader can automatically recognize at a first glance.