

CHAPTER 3

THE TEACHER AND THE LEARNER

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a discussion on the methods of teaching the English language, moves on to applied linguistic research and dwells on the teaching and learning scenario at the tertiary level, both in the professional colleges and in the arts and science colleges. This is an attempt to understand the teaching and learning process that is currently prevalent in the engineering colleges, before conducting the field study.

The chapter also defines the students with limited English proficiency. The researcher has made an attempt to explain the problems these students face in learning English as a second language.

3.2 ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS

The term ‘methods’ used in the concept of second language learning does not refer to what teachers actually do in the classroom. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006) it refers to the established methods designed by experts in the field. Methods are based on idealized concepts readymade for idealized contexts. Since language learning and teaching needs are unpredictably numerous no idealized methods can offer solution to the challenges faced by the teacher in the classroom.

Richards and Rodgers (1986) lists eleven methods of English Language Teaching. They are the Audio Lingual Method, Communicative Method, Community Language Learning, Direct Method, Grammar Translation Method, Natural Approach, Oral Approach, Silent Way, Situational Language Teaching, Suggestopedia and Total Physical Response. The authors refrained from recommending any of these methods for the language classroom.

Larsen-Freeman (1986) told her readers the reference to any one of the methods in her book does not mean she advocates the method. The language teacher needs to investigate each method (Kumaravadivelu 2006, p28):

Since language learning and teaching needs, wants, and situations are unpredictably numerous, no idealized method can visualize all the variables in advance in order to provide situation-specific suggestions that practicing teachers sorely need to tackle the challenges they confront every day of their professional lives.

However innovative language teaching methods are, the language learner and the teacher spend frustrating hours in the language classroom. After twelve years of learning the language most of them are unable to write even a single sentence on their own. This is because learners are not doing what is appropriate for them to succeed at the method.

Whatever the language teaching method adopted learners' attention to strategies can make a real difference (Kumaravadivelu 2006). The degree of responsibility that the learners take for their own learning will help them succeed in any learning environment.

In the course of development and reform, teachers, researchers and policy makers have drawn upon a wide repertoire of theories and methods. The theories and methods of language teaching were modified and perfected to suit the learner. We have failed to look at the whole concept from the learners' point of view. In parallel to all these methodological developments, applied linguistic research has continued to investigate the processes of Second Language Acquisition. The search is to understand what the successful language learner is doing so that teaching methods might be designed to facilitate rather than hinder the learning process.

3.3 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Every child is born with an innate ability to acquire language. There is no pre-determined time frame for language acquisition. The time taken depends on the ability of the child. Second Language Acquisition for learners who are termed LEP is tempered by many inter-related factors, including a full access to a high quality education. All learners are diverse in many respects and attaining proficiency in all the four language skills requires the long-term and consistent attention of the school, the teacher, the learner and the parent.

Second language learning or any learning requires certain conditions. The challenge is for the teacher to create a positive learning environment. The process the limited English proficiency students go through in developing English language proficiency is similar to the process of young children becoming fluent in a first language. They need to 'listen to' and 'take in' a great deal of speech before they begin to speak themselves. This is referred to as a 'silent period' where they understand English but are not ready to speak. But the time given to a second language learner to become fluent is much less when compared to the time given to a first language learner before they are transferred into a total English language environment.

Language learning does not occur as a result of lecturing or by rote memory. It occurs as a result of meaningful interaction with others in the target language. Teachers should create opportunities for rich interactive language use in the classroom.

There is a wide spread view that in spite of the fact that the process of language learning and teaching has moved from grammar-translation method to the latest version of communicative methodology, learners have not progressed as much as that expected of them. They are not proficient enough in the language skills. They are not adept in independent language use. How modern languages are taught and learnt often depends on the direct experience of teachers and learners.

However with an explosion in recent years in Second Language Acquisition research, a new science of applied language studies has grown up which specifically investigates language learning with the supposed intent of facilitating this process. Applied Linguists have sought to establish the way languages are learnt. They have much to say on what language is and how is it processed.

3.4 APPLIED LINGUISTIC RESEARCH

There is a shift in recent years in Second Language Teaching from the quest for the perfect teaching method to finding out the methods on how successful teachers and learners actually achieve their goals. This has led to the study of how successful learners approach learning, which in turn leads to the kind of strategies and cognitive processing they use in Second Language Acquisition.

In fact Second Language Teaching can benefit greatly by a study of the role of strategies in the learning of a second language. Instruction in

Second Language Learning can be integrated with knowledge from research on learning strategies.

The prevailing view in language learning states Second Language Acquisition occurs automatically, without any effort on the part of the learner. O'Malley and Chamot (1990, ppIX-X) in their "Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition" feel that this is a limited view of the process of language learning.

We would prefer to replace it with a view that language learning involves many conscious decisions at both the cognitive and meta cognitive levels, which parallel cognitive processes in learning other complex cognitive skills.

This study is built on applied linguistic research that active language learning involves many conscious decisions taken by the learner. The research findings on learning strategies in Second Language Acquisition can be applied to English classrooms and help students become more effective and independent learners.

Classroom methodology can be enhanced, to promote learner autonomy, by studying learning strategies and working to develop them with our learners. Learning strategies tell us about the process of Second Language Learning. The idea behind it is that if the teacher discovers how languages are learnt then they might know how best to teach them. Recent developments in attribution theory (Dickenson 1995) suggest that when learners feel their failure is due to their disadvantaged background they are discouraged. When they know that they have control over their learning they tend to persist.

3.5 TEACHING AND THE LEARNING PROCESS

A second language teacher or any teacher by experience in teaching would know that teaching does not have to automatically lead to learning. On the other hand learning can take place even in the absence of teaching. However, the universally accepted view is that teachers have a direct bearing on shaping the learning process and the learner. Teachers are seen as possessing “the ability to look back critically and imaginatively, to do cause-effect thinking, to derive explanatory principles, to do task analysis, also to look forward, and to do anticipatory planning” (Dewey 1933, p13). A teacher needs to constantly maximize the learning potential of their learners through classroom-oriented action research.

3.6 THE KIND OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL

At the tertiary level, in engineering colleges teaching is for eight hours a day, five days a week. The teachers are expected to complete five units for each subject in a semester within the allotted time of one hour a day, five days a week. The methodology followed in the classroom by the teacher is the lecture method. Most of the classroom sessions are without any interaction between the teacher and the learners. This may be because of the time constraint to complete the syllabus or because the students prefer to remain as passive listeners, listening silently to what the teacher says. This attitude of the students is a continuation of the classroom behavior right from their school days.

When students react passively most of the teachers try to employ forced interaction from the students. For this, topics from the syllabus are chosen and assigned to a few students to present it in the class as a discussion. This is done expecting that the students would interact if the discussion is

moderated by one among them. These few students are not chosen by the teacher; they are the few who volunteer to handle these classroom discussions.

Only the highly motivated students understand what is actually happening in the teaching-learning process. This motivation can also be traced back to the school. When students actually leave school and enter college, few choose out of their own interest to study engineering. Engineering is a passion for them to achieve their big dreams in life. Such students have the required marks and grades to seek admission in engineering colleges.

The other group of students is into engineering because of the parental pressure. Though these students are not interested in joining engineering colleges and do not have the minimum marks, they get into engineering colleges through management quota. They buy their engineering seats in the engineering colleges. As they pursue their degree they may or may not become interested in their degree. The teacher can make them get interested in pursuing their degree by creating favorable circumstances for learning.

3.7 UNCONSCIOUS LEARNING PATTERN

Even among the motivated students there are only very few students who are aware of their learning process. They use strategies consciously in their learning process to succeed in their learning attempt. Most of the students use strategies unconsciously in their learning process. They are the few who do well in their lessons but fail to probe into the 'how' and 'why' of their success. When marks are awarded for the written work of the students the teacher does not explain the reason behind awarding the varied marks. The student gets a remark 'good, keep it up' but does not know how his work is different from the others.

The teacher does not explain what has made the students' test performance better than the others. His use of learning strategies has made him achieve success in the learning process. Though he has employed learning strategies, slowly they become a routine because the use of strategies is not acknowledged by the teacher. In this situation the use of good learning strategies may slowly die out because the learner has not used it consciously. When, the teacher does not say 'Good. The strategy you are using is correct. Continue using it.' the student also fails to further introspect on his learning process.

Even teachers cannot recollect their successful learning strategies. Only if the teachers are able to identify their own learning strategies can they explain and instruct the use of these strategies to their students.

The situation is the same in arts and science colleges or for that matter in most of the teaching and learning scenarios in India. Teaching and learning process, in India, is an unconscious activity. Over the years most of the teachers repeat the same idea (unless the syllabus is revised frequently), and do not introspect and analyze their teaching. They lack awareness and innovation in teaching. It is a kind of run-of-the-mill attitude by the teachers when it comes to teaching. If the teaching and learning become a conscious activity then the teacher and the learner can identify the problems and address them successfully.

3.8 VALUATION SYSTEM IN ENGINEERING COLLEGES

When it comes to valuation in the end-semester examinations the affiliated engineering colleges follow the central valuation system. The teachers do not correct the papers of their own students. They do not know the student who has written the paper. When there is an inconsistency in the

question paper, the answer sheet is evaluated to the advantage of the students. Marks are awarded for out of syllabus questions. Measures are taken not to penalize the students for trivial mistakes. When this is the situation the student gets his degree, but is not qualified for employment. He is not able to communicate his ideas in writing. So it becomes a necessary step for the teacher to intervene and help the learner to equip himself. For this the teaching and the learning process needs to be probed further and learners should be taught to know what learning strategies are and how to use them effectively in various learning situations.

The following section defines a Limited English Proficient student, his problems regarding English, his attitude in a language classroom and the possible methods the teacher can use to help him in the situation at hand. As the subjects chosen for the study have a very limited proficiency in English, the researcher feels it is necessary to elaborate on the nature and characteristic features of these students, the problems faced by these students with the English language and the role of the teacher in helping these students.

3.9 LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY – A DEFINITION

As defined by the U.S. House of Representatives (1994, p151) in Title VII of the improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Public Law, a student is Limited English Proficient (LEP) if he

has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English.

The definition makes it clear that the four language skills contribute to proficiency in the language.

3.10 LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL

As discussed earlier, in the Indian system of education, there are two streams of education up to the higher education level. One is getting educated through the mother-tongue medium; the other is getting educated through the English medium. Schools, which offer education through the English medium, demand an exorbitant amount as tuition fees. The government-run schools offer education through the mother-tongue medium. People from not well-to-do background (in terms of money) admit their children to mother-tongue medium schools. Though the state government runs few English medium schools, the first generation learners do not prefer to get admitted in these schools, as they have no one at the home front to offer guidance in learning.

At the tertiary level both these streams are merged into one because the only medium of instruction in colleges is English. (In 2010 only in the state of TamilNadu the mother-tongue has been introduced as a medium of instruction for two branches of engineering.) Students from the mother-tongue medium schools, whether they like it or not, are compelled to pursue their education through English at the tertiary level. These may be the students who have been very successful up to the school level in terms of grades and marks as they find it comfortable learning through their mother-tongue. At school, they come face to face with English only in the language classroom. Even here, most of the time, English is taught through their mother-tongue. They rely heavily on rote-learning, study materials and guides for their success.

But the picture is completely different when they join colleges. They have to listen to lectures through the medium of English. When understanding fails him his mind is blocked. With no language to communicate with his peers he feels he is left alone on an island.

The problem is acute when it comes to a professional course. He is not able to keep himself updated about the growth of science and technical advancements. He becomes inhibited as he is not fluent in English. He does not feel like participating in paper presentations and attending National conferences and seminars, though they form a part of the curriculum of the professional course.

Scientific concepts are explained in English in the class room, while most of these students are not familiar with English equivalents for scientific terms. They are not given any study materials for the subjects, to memorize; instead they are expected to devise their own notes and study materials from the lectures they attend.

All this requires extra reading on the part of the students. This means they should be able to read and understand books written in English. This sudden shift in their learning process bewilders them. They either adapt to the situation or take all measures to quit or keep them aloof from what is happening in the classroom. At this point, in the tertiary level, there is a division between the students in terms of proficiency in the language.

The students with limited English proficiency are not able to use the language fluently to express their ideas. They do not share common interests or capabilities with their English proficient peers. As a result they do not participate fully in the classroom setting. They shy away from their counterparts and withdraw themselves into their cocoons and become

inhibited and introverts. They find solace and are happy with those students who share a similar background and features with them.

These students have to compete with their peers who have a minimum of fifteen years exposure to the language. The teachers and their parents expect them to perform academically well. The parents' expectations are more because they believe that their children's education is going to change their plight, transform their lives and give them a social lift. When they are not able to live up to these expectations they feel dejected and rejected. They feel humiliated to speak in the classroom, even when they are asked their name. They speak very softly as they do not want others to hear what they speak.

A lot of counseling and cajoling is required to make them normal. They are not ready to voice out loudly to discuss their parents' occupation. They are anxious and hesitate to participate in classroom discussion. They fear they would be scorned at and laughed at. They take additional time for responding to the teachers' queries and this is not permitted most of the time for practical reasons. Most of the time they are conveniently left out by the teacher from the class room discussions and they are also happy as they feel safe.

Students, who have all along managed to be school toppers, face failure for the first time. Their failure is not due to the lack of their intelligence (they are in fact brilliant students). They are able to score high in all the technical papers but fail miserably in English. This is because when the technical papers are valued they are marked for the figures, graphs, equations, formulae, etc. They are not penalized for the grammatical errors. If they are able to convey the meaning of the technical concepts then they are able to score high. Their failure in the language can be attributed to their limited

proficiency in English or to the deficiencies in the teaching and learning environment.

3.11 RESPONSE OF AN LEP STUDENT TO THE NEW LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Some adult learners have powerful preconceived notions about the form a language learning experience should take. Many learners are used to an educational setting, at the school level, in which teachers take the upper hand and overtly control the activities of the students in a relatively formal manner. They emphasize the memorization of grammatical rules and vocabulary, often via mechanical procedures such as repetition and rote learning. They administer frequent tests to check the students' achievements and generally require their students to maintain a passive and subordinate role. Students from such a background are thrust into a much more informal setting in which the teacher assumes a less authoritarian role, expects interactive group work among students, does not encourage memorization or administer achievement tests. The teacher generally acts as if students should be responsible for their own learning.

In such a case a student feels that the teacher is inefficient and does not know how to do the job properly. Such a reaction may have quite a negative effect on the students' ability to derive any benefit from the learning experience. Teachers' reactions to such learner expectations can take various forms.

They can ignore a single students' initial unwillingness to take part and trust that he will see the benefit of their methods as the course proceeds. If teachers have to face a large hostile group, they may be forced to abandon their planned methods. They give their students what the students think they need. These two reactions are examples of fight 'em or join 'em solutions

(Powell and Taylor 1985) to this aspect of meeting learners' needs. A third response called channel 'em is a compromise position. This is what many teachers aim for in such situations. In this response both teacher and student can fulfill their expectations which would result in an effective learning experience.

3.12 TEACHER AND THE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENT

All English teachers, no matter where they teach, would have at least a few students who have studied in mother-tongue medium schools, for whom English was not the medium of instruction, in their class. They bring a considerable number of challenges to the teacher. The teacher needs to bridge the gap between these two groups of learners through her teaching. Sometimes she herself has to be the bridge between the student and the language.

These students with limited English proficiency are mostly first generation learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They have a strong desire to make it big in their life and for this they need education. The new situation in which they find themselves is not conducive for their learning process. Dazed by the new method of learning they lose self confidence and tend to doubt their capabilities. Attending classes with their peers is a formidable task for these students.

The LEP students find that they are lost in the crowd. They think that people around them sympathize with them. (When the researcher spoke to a student in one of the universities in Chennai he said that the people either have a hostile attitude towards them or look at them pathetically). But what they need actually is empathy.

Some students are able to succeed even in such a learning environment, while others are dejected and come to the conclusion that technical literacy is enough for them. Only when it comes to placement do they realize the importance of English. The teacher should resort to need-based education for these students.

A responsible teacher needs to understand her power in the class. This power must be used to build the student's trust in the teacher. A trustworthy teacher can be counted upon to fulfill pedagogical and moral responsibilities. In deciding on the techniques of teaching, the teacher has thus to know what is actually required of the student. The dangers involved in trying to teach a foreign language without being clear about the capacity and the requirements of the student are many.

The student is likely to develop a sense of frustration and may even develop what may be called language phobia. The teacher of a second language has thus a very difficult job. The teacher cannot follow the same method of teaching for all students. The teacher's task may be easier when he can pick and choose his students. But this is not possible. In teaching a course in an institution he meets learners with different needs. He has to solve many tough problems in order to make the course successful.

The language teacher is bewildered with the idea of how to help students from mother-tongue medium schools. These students need to learn all the other subjects through English (a language that they have barely learnt all the years of their life). The proficiency they gain in English will definitely help them master the other subjects. The teacher is daunted with the work load, yet conscious of their responsibility and a desire to help all learners to succeed. From a limited background, they are expected to understand lectures and to participate in academic conversations. They are expected to express clearly in English. These students can achieve this, but the language teacher must plan and teach mindfully to help them accomplish each skill.

The teacher needs to find out what barriers or obstacles the learners might be facing. An introspection will let the teacher know what he/she is not doing to help the learners and assist their learning. The teacher should focus on how individual learners learn and how they could be taught to learn better. The intention is to make them learn how to learn rather than introduce a new and innovative method. As Macaro (2001, p3) rightly puts it “Learning to learn, then, is one of the first major steps towards that elusive concept that everyone talks about but nobody ever really defines: autonomy”.

The controversy about the correct procedure for language teaching is as old as the origin of language itself. The various approaches and methods of ELT that have evolved over the years imply that there is no ‘correct’ method for teaching the second language. This would not be a surprise to most language teachers.

Most of us would have experienced that in spite of exposing all the students to the same instructional program, few are able to achieve a greater proficiency in language learning than the others. We may teach a number of things that are not learnt by the students. They do not learn as we wish them to. There is no best method to teach a second language. Different language teachers may believe in different ways of teaching. The teachers need to experience what language learning entails – what the student goes through while learning a language.

The method that works with one learner may not work with the other. The language teaching methods may be inappropriate for certain learners, depending upon their level of development and individual learning styles. It is evident that teachers need to know more about how their students learn. They need to understand the language learning process of their students. In deciding on the method of teaching, the language teacher needs to know what is actually required by the student. A conception of language

learning is an essential component of language teaching theory. Observation of patterns of language learning will help the language teacher surmise why and how some students progress and others run into difficulties.

If learners do not learn what teachers teach, let teachers learn what and how learners are learning. Many students with learning problems can be taught to acquire and use learning strategies to become successful despite their knowledge and skill deficits. Teachers, who teach learning strategies teach students how to learn, rather than teaching them specific curriculum content or specific skills.

To help the LEP students, it requires a lot of effort from the teacher. The ESL teacher needs to pay special attention to the needs of these students. They need to motivate these students, create an interest in the language learning, and set up a conducive environment for language learning. Most of the language teachers are not able to do this because of many reasons.

a) Lack of training

Most of the teachers are not trained to analyze the issue from the perspective of a student of limited English proficiency. They do not probe into the learning process of a student. They are neither aware of building upon the existing strategies which the students use nor teaching them to use new strategies.

b) Time bound to complete the syllabus

At the tertiary level teachers are preoccupied with the task of completing the syllabus. They have huge amount of paper work to do. They have no or little time for the students with problems in English. This makes

attending classes a formidable task for the LEP student and that too with their English proficient counterparts.

c) Syllabus, materials, methods and assessment

In spite of a mixed ability classroom, a uniform procedure is followed in terms of syllabus, materials, methods and assessment. An outdated syllabus which does not address the needs of an LEP student is followed in the university. The materials used, the teaching methods adopted, the assessment techniques are not supportive and conducive to the needs of an LEP student.

When these students do not succeed in the examinations they are punished instead of trying to identify the problems behind their failure. What slow learners need is repetition and a little bit of personal attention from the teacher. Teachers can check the understanding of the content material by these learners without actually asking them to speak before the entire class. Understanding the LEP learners will effectively result in modifying the pedagogic conditions.

A small group made up of fluent speakers and considerate students provide the LEP student an opportunity to listen more carefully and speak less, often without the need to speak when the whole class is listening. This method is referred to as cooperative learning, a group centered approach which can be very effective for involving LEP students in the classroom. In addition to promoting learning, cooperative learning fosters respect and friendship among heterogeneous groups of students. Learners are more comfortable in an environment of shared learning.

3.13 ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS ADOPTED IN THE WEST

To prevent the failure of an LEP, in the west schools were especially started for them. This means that LEP students are targeted and placed in alternative classrooms or groups for special language instruction on the basis of their assessed needs, academic progress and progress made in learning English.

In the alternative classrooms they are monitored with consistency to ensure that they progress in comparison to or along with their English proficient peers. The progress they make in the mainstreamed all English classroom is monitored after they exit their alternative programs. Assistance is provided as long as they need it. Though these programs may not be possible in the Indian context, the students in India can be helped in our own ways.

3.14 WAYS IN WHICH AN LEP STUDENT CAN BE HELPED

The researcher has traced the reasons for an LEP student's failure before exploring the ways to help an LEP student. The difficulties faced by these students may become more serious over time if instruction is not modified to address the students' specific needs. If this is not achieved then the gap between their achievement and that of their peers will widen over time.

Without an understanding of the unique meanings existing for the individual, the problems of helping him effectively are almost insurmountable. The mantra for creating effective instruction is to know one's audience. The teacher needs to find out more about the second language learners.

LEP students bring a whole range of diverse resources the classrooms. The teacher should build on the educational, cultural and personal experiences (native resources) they bring with them. Knowledge of the family background and culture of the student will also definitely help. Connecting academic content to a student's culture and experiences will make the teacher relate to the student. Students whose native culture is valued have a greater sense of self-worth and higher academic achievement.

Prevention of failure among English language learners involves two critical elements.

- a) The creation of educational environments that are conducive to their academic success.
- b) The use of instructional strategies that are known to be effective with these students.

The teachers' role is to design and provide the educational services tailored to the needs of the LEP student. These learners can become successful only when there is an effective and consistent use of educational approaches. Several other factors critical to the success of English Language Learners (ELLs) include the following.

- a) A shared knowledge base among educators about effective ways to work with students learning English.
- b) Effective instruction for the teachers. Teachers need to have the training and experience in language acquisition to assure that they can create, adjust and deliver the educational programs suitable to the different developmental levels for their Limited English Proficient students.

Failure can be prevented by early intervention, for struggling learners, as soon as learning problems are identified. Most learning problems can be prevented if individual differences are accommodated in classroom contexts. This could be possible by providing supplementary instructional services to these students.

3.15 HELPING THE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENT

Much has been discussed already on the research literature of learning strategies. The role of strategies in the process of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was discussed. The theoretical principles on learning strategies justify the need to practically study the learning strategies and work to develop them with our learners. So if the students are instructed on 'how to learn' then the achievement of our students can be raised. Better methodological understanding on the part of the teachers will result in improved teaching which in turn will result in improved learning. This will promote autonomous language learners.

Any teacher would have found in his/her class a few students among the LEP students who can communicate well in English. The methods adopted by these students could be taught to the less successful learners. We need to discover how languages are learnt so that we might know how best to teach them. The 'good language learner' research tradition tells us that which successful language learners do is not done by unsuccessful learners. If we can find out what good language learners do then we may tell the other learners to use the same methodology in order to improve their chances of success. Training the others in these skills may seem easy but it is not actually so. It is not easy to know or find out what the good language learner is doing. He may not know it himself or even if he knows may not be able to express it to others. As in much applied linguistic research and investigations into the

process of SLA, the researcher is mostly left to surmise the underlying process from surface products.

3.16 SELF-DIRECTION FOR LEARNERS

Most of the language learners are complacent to remain as passive listeners and prefer to be spoon-fed by the teacher. They expect the teacher to tell them what to do to get good grades. In the process they fail to develop useful skills for a language task. These students can be helped by self-directing their learning. Learner self-direction means learners understanding how to learn and taking more responsibility for their learning. When students take more responsibility, more learning occurs and both teachers and learners feel more successful. Learners' self-direction keeps growing as learners become more comfortable with the idea of their own responsibility. Oxford (1990, p10) remarks "Self-directed students gradually gain greater confidence, involvement and proficiency."

Language learning strategies promote greater over all self-direction for learners. Learners need to be self-directed for they will not have the teachers always with them to guide them. Autonomy is so fundamental to the nature of language learning that successful learning cannot occur without it being present in some degree. This is what a good language learner does and good language learning is about increasing autonomy.

3.17 LEARNING THE SECOND LANGUAGE

Cohen (1990) in his 'Strategies in Second Language Learning: Insights from Research' expresses the belief that we need to make students aware of successful learning strategies so that they become better learners. The consciousness of the students needs to be raised for effective language learning.

For this it is important to look at how students go about the process of learning a second language. Cohen claims that by observing good language learners at work and making use of the insights they provide us via introspection (reporting as soon as the language task gets over), retrospection, (reporting after the language task get over) and making them think aloud while they do a language task a better understanding of the processes involved in successful learning is reached.

If we view that conscious learning has a significant role to play in the learning process (McLaughlin 1978) as opposed to Krashen's Monitor and Acquisition/Learning Hypotheses (Krashen 1976), which state that language cannot be consciously learnt but only acquired through natural communication, then these insights are of a great value in helping less successful language learners. With this process of consciousness-raising there is a shift in attitude about the role of language learner. The learner needs to assume a more active role and take more responsibility in the learning process. Success in learning is a product of careful planning and conscious/unconscious use of strategies. Conscious learning on the part of the student has a significant role to play in the mastery that a learner in a second language gains.

3.18 LEARNER AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The learners after learning English for twelve years are not able to write a sentence in English. They are not able to express their ideas in writing. Success in any task (learning to drive, learning to swim, learning to ride a two wheeler etc.) can be accomplished only after formal training in how to do it. Yet when it comes to learning learners are not taught how to learn. It is taken for granted that learners know how to learn effectively.

The research study breaks this misconception and tries to take teachers and learners a step forward in their process of learning. The research

is carried out in the field of Applied Linguistics, with an emphasis on learning strategies. What the learner brings in with him is explored and enriched to enhance learning.

Very often the teacher never asks his/her students how they perform a language task. This is because description of how an action is performed is easy rather than describing how a language task is performed. HosenFeld (1976, p118) remarks “Teachers focus upon the results (the products) but rarely upon the learning strategies (the process) that the students use to arrive at the results.”

However if this aspect of language learning is considered the teachers may take the first step towards successful language learning. The consideration of what second language learners are doing to facilitate learning of the second language, irrespective of the above said factors, is largely neglected.

3.19 SUMMARY

This chapter attempts to describe the LEP student in India. The chapter, in detail, describes the characteristics of the LEP learners. The problems these students face in learning English are discussed. The chapter explores the need for a research study in helping such students become active learners of the language.

The discussion so far need not be viewed as a new methodology in Second Language Teaching because it is based on both theoretical thinking and practical exploration of both the learner and the teacher. In the next chapter the researcher discusses the field study conducted to test the hypothesis.