CHAPTER II
THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.0 Introduction

Until recently, language pedagogy centred around the question of what is the best method or approach to be followed by the syllabus-designer and/or the language teacher (Ellis, 1984a; Allwright, 1983). Although good language teachers seemed to have always known intuitively what kind of activities promote language learning and some of their teaching practices reveal intuitive insights into the nature of language learning, explicit attempts do not seem to have been made to describe clearly the conditions under which language learning takes place.

In recent years however, the shift of focus in ELT research from the effort to arrive at the best 'method' or 'approach' to the study of learning processes, learner variables and the learning environment has resulted in greater effort being devoted to understanding the characteristics of the language learning environment and creating this in the classroom (Kennedy, 1973:78; Appel, 1984:23). It is now recognized that language learning depends not only on what the teacher does or makes the learner do, but on the language learning opportunities that are made available. Thus in current research literature there are frequent allusions to the conditions
for language learning (see for example, Kennedy, 1973; Krashen, 1981c; Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982:261-269; Ellis, 1984a:128-130; Taylor, 1982:34, 1983:72; Celce-Murcia, 1984; Allwright, 1984a:12; Brumfit, 1985:152). Some of the conditions frequently mentioned are: "opportunities to 'encounter' target language and phenomena"; "opportunities to practise"; an "appropriate socio-emotional atmosphere" (Allwright, 1984a:12; Allwright, 1984b:164); "opportunities for students to be exposed to real communication", "opportunities for students to engage in using real communication", "activities which are meaningful to students and which will motivate them" (Taylor, 1983:72); "exposure to the target language", "opportunities to use the target language for as genuine as possible communication" (Brumfit, 1985:152); "quantity of 'intake'", "a need to communicate", "independent control of the propositional content", "adherence to the 'here-and-now' principle", "the performance of a range of speech acts", "an input rich in directives", "an input rich in 'extending' utterances", "uninhibited 'practice'" (Ellis, 1984a:128-130). Although there seem to be similarities among these various perceptions of the conditions that need to be created for second language learning to take place, little seems to have been done to arrive at a detailed description of the language learning conditions which takes into account these similar perceptions and attempts to relate these to available theory, research, and teaching practices.
Therefore, in this chapter, an attempt has been made to arrive at a description of the conditions under which language learning takes place i.e., a description of those features of the language learner's environment which are thought to facilitate the learning of language. This has been done by examining theories of first and second language acquisition as well as research studies on first and second language acquisition in both natural and formal settings and deriving from this review, a list of these facilitative features. A review of first language acquisition theory and research has been included here because it is now widely accepted that second language learning involves processes similar to those involved in the learning of a first language (see for example, Corder, 1973:115; Felix, 1981:108-110; McLaughlin, 1978:202). There is also sufficient evidence which indicates that the environment in which a successful second language learner acquires his second language is similar to the environment in which a child acquires his first language (see for example, Macnamara, 1973:59-60).

However, before we proceed to examine the features of the environment which appear to promote language learning, we shall attempt to understand what exactly is the role of the environment in language learning by looking at the Nature vs. Nurture controversy.
2.1 The Role of the Environment in Language Learning: Nature vs. Nurture

The discussion between the nativists and the interactionists or the famous nature vs. nurture controversy revolves around the crucial question whether children learn language through systematic exposure to the environment or whether they are born with genetically pre-determined abilities which enable them to acquire language.

The Behaviourist Viewpoint: Environment as a Reinforcing Agent

In the 1950s and early 1960s, theories of language acquisition were influenced by the then prevailing schools of psychology and linguistics. Thus the Behaviourist school of psychology which viewed learning as the formation of habits through a process of conditioning, as well as the structural linguists' view of language as a series of syntactic building blocks or patterns, led to the notion that language learning proceeds through a process of imitation, correction and practice. According to this view, the most important influence on language learning is that of experience or the environment. It was thought that the child is born with a mind which is like a 'tabula rasa' and he learns the appropriate use of each sentence by connecting the situation of its use (the stimulus) with its linguistic form (the response) through a process of
selective reinforcement and practice. The language data or the input to which the child is exposed was thus seen as the stimulating/reinforcing agent which leads to language learning.

The Postulation of the L.A.D.: The Dominance of Nature in Views of the Language Learning Process

Chomsky who was responsible for the dominant theoretical position of the 1960's, in his review (1959) of the behaviourist viewpoint expressed by Skinner (1957), pointed out the inadequacies of the behaviourist theory of language learning. He drew attention to the incredible complexity of human languages, the speed and efficiency with which it is mastered by all children and the creative ability of children to produce sentences they have never heard before. According to Chomsky, the knowledge or "competence" that enables us to produce and understand new sentences is stored in the form of a finite system of highly specific rules and such a complex rule system cannot be arrived at through the simple process of stimulus - response-reinforcement. Therefore Chomsky (1965) postulated a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) to explain the process of language acquisition. The LAD was thought to consist of an innate ability to process language data, to apply innate knowledge of the universal principles of the human language to this data and to abstract from it, the rule system of a language. Language development was thus seen by Chomsky as
a process by which the child creatively constructs the grammar of his language (Slobin, 1971). These theories led to a shift towards the view that it is the in-born characteristics of the child rather than the environment, which enable him to formulate and test hypotheses about the linguistic data to which he is exposed.

According to Chomsky, the linguistic data from which this grammar is internalized is "limited and often degenerate" (Chomsky, 1980:232) and the linguistic input from the environment only serves to trigger off the acquisition process. Thus, in Chomsky's view, it is the child's inherent nature in the form of the LAD, which is regarded as being mainly responsible for the impressive feat of language acquisition (Aitchinson, 1983:112).

Language Learning Processes: An Interactionist Viewpoint

The extreme nativist position expressed by Chomsky has been questioned in recent years. The importance of environmental factors in shaping the language of the child has again been stressed and it has now been suggested that what brings about language acquisition is the interaction between the environment and the child's general cognitive-learning equipment (McLaughlin, 1978:27). This viewpoint has also been influenced by another theory which questions the existence of the LAD and regards the child's innate ability as consisting of certain cognitive
and perceptual learning processes which are basic to all forms of learning, rather than any specifically pre-programmed and genetically determined LAD.

Thus Bever (1982:440) points out that there is no evidence that universal principles of language are transmitted genetically, while Herriot (1970:130) provides evidence from the field of aphasia to show that there is no indication of a specific locus for a LAD in the brain. Bever (1982) also argues that if language learning indeed proceeds through a process of hypothesis-formation and hypothesis-correction as suggested by Chomsky, then the linguistic data to which the child is exposed would not be rarified, but would rather be rich enough to correct false hypotheses (ibid.:444).

As a matter of fact, it has been pointed out that the special way in which adults address infants - the speech style referred to as 'Baby talk', 'Motherese' or 'Caretaker speech' - which Chomsky termed "limited and often degenerate" because it is characterized by false starts, hesitations, slips of the tongue etc., plays an important role in the development of the child's language (McLaughlin, 1979:6).

Thus it is now felt that the Nature vs. Nurture controversy is a misconceived one. For, while there are certain innate abilities - both language specific and general cognitive - which enable the child to process the linguistic information
he receives, and to develop an internal grammar, without exposure to sufficiently rich, varied and meaningful input data, without the right kind of environment or 'nurture', this data-processing operation cannot be triggered off, and 'nature' cannot achieve its full potential.

**First Language Acquisition Studies: The Role of the Interactional Context**

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of observational studies of first language acquisition which focus on the interactional contexts in which the child learner's utterances occur and point to the significant role that the learning environment plays.

As Ede and Williamson (1980) note, learning how to talk, unlike learning how to walk, does not simply happen at maturation, but requires children to be exposed to human speech (Ede and Williamson, 1980:79-80). Thus it is pointed out that children reared in isolation i.e., without exposure to human language, do not acquire language. A classic example often cited, is that of Genie (Curtiss, 1979) who, after 13 years and 7 months of confinement and isolation, was found to be completely without language.

It has also been suggested that the nature and the amount of the input data to which the child is exposed determines the rate of language acquisition. Thus Kegan's
data (1967, cited by Diller, 1981:78) suggests that the reason why middle class children have the most precocious language development of any category of child is that they get more distinctive verbal stimulations and thus get exposure to larger amounts of input from their mothers. On the other hand, it has been observed that children brought up in institutions tend to be slower in learning to talk than their non-institutional counterparts because they get exposed to relatively smaller quantities of language and to language which is relatively impoverished in terms of the variety of functions to which it relates (Aitchinson, 1983:79; Argyle, 1973:67; Gurney, 1973:74). It has been suggested by Bernstein (1972), that working-class children tend to acquire a 'Restricted Code' as compared to middle-class children who acquire an 'Elaborated Code', because middle-class parents make a more explicit use of language and use language for a wider range of communicative functions than working-class parents. While the notion of working-class children being thus "non-verbal" or "linguistically deprived" (Plowden Report, 1967; Bullock Report, 1975), is a questionable one, it is now accepted that the relatively smaller quantity and the limited variety of verbal input in the working-class child's background limits the range of his speech until he encounters a wider range of language in school.

It has been claimed that the speech used by caretakers to young children (this is the chief source of language input
for children) constitutes a series of language lessons by virtue of being finely "tuned" to the child's linguistic development (Snow and Ferguson, 1977, cited by Wexler, 1982:310). According to this view, caretakers specially structure their speech to provide particular kinds of linguistic information to the child and caretaker speech gradually increases in syntactic complexity to correspond in some way (or slightly exceed), the child's linguistic ability at each stage (McLaughlin, 1979:7; Furrow et.al., 1979, cited by Ellis, 1984a:86). However, while it is generally accepted that the caretaker does modify his speech by repeating and paraphrasing in response to the feedback he obtains about the child's comprehension of what he says (Wells, 1981a:76), the fine-tuning hypothesis has been questioned (Newport et.al., 1977; Wexler, 1982). It has been pointed out that at the earliest stages of the child's language development, the caretaker's speech is not the most syntactically simple (the fine-tuning hypothesis implies that it should be so) and there is a preponderance of imperatives and questions. According to the principles of Transformational Grammar, these are not the simplest syntactic structures (Gleitman and Wanner, 1982:39; et.al. Newport, 1977:122-123). In fact, it has been pointed out that the structural and functional variety of caretaker talk is likely to facilitate language acquisition, since this provides a broader data base from which the child can more easily
induct a grammar covering the full range of the language (Wexler, 1982:308). As Aitchinson notes,

Language that is impoverished is harder to learn not simpler. Children appear to be naturally 'set' to extract a grammar for themselves, provided they have sufficient data at their disposal ... those who get on best are those who are exposed to a rich variety of language.

(Aitchinson, 1983:86)

Most researchers do seem to agree on some of the other common features of caretaker talk. Thus it is generally agreed that caretaker speech is comprised of shorter sentences, is slower and repetitive (Gleitman and Wanner, 1982:15; McLaughlin, 1979a:6; Aitchinson, 1983:87), restricted in vocabulary (Gleitman and Wanner, op.cit.; Wells, 1981a:103; Krashen, 1981c:10); easily comprehensible by virtue of being rooted in the immediate 'here-and-now' context (Burt and Dulay, 1981:183; Krashen, 1981c:102; McLaughlin, 1979:6; Long, 1983b:95; Ellis, 1984a:87; Ede and Williamson, 1980:63), by virtue of the reformulations and paraphrases of the utterances the child has not understood (Wells, 1981a:99), as well as the references to ongoing activity and the use of instructions and action directives (Gleitman and Wanner, op.cit.; Burt and Dulay, op.cit.; Krashen, op.cit.; Asher, 1981:188; Freed, 1980:25; Wells, 1981a:98-112; Wells and Montgomery, 1981:232; Ellis, 1984a:85-86). Such action directives, references to ongoing activity and even the use of gestures are seen as having the additional function of
focussing the child's attention on the incoming input (Shatz, 1982:120). Caretaker talk is also said to provide a model of speech (Wells, 1981a:99; Gurney, 1973:82) and caretakers are said to get children involved in a variety of discourse (Ede and Williamson, 1980:102) which relates to different purposes and effects (ibid:121) and arises out of the child's immediate activities and interests (Wells and Montgomery, 1981:232).

The style of speaking adopted by caretakers appears to have an important function in language acquisition. Shorter sentences, lexical and topical constraints and references to the immediate context and ongoing activity are seen as adjustments to the child's cognitive and processing limitations (Freed, 1980:25) and as attempts to allow the child to relate what he can see to what he can hear so that he can comprehend it (Ellis, 1984a:88). In fact, comprehensibility is regarded as one of the most important features of caretaker talk. Language acquisition is said to be aided when comprehensibility is ensured through the use of contextual and discoursal clues, because it enables communication to proceed even while exposure to unfamiliar linguistic input is being provided (Long, 1983b:101; Wexler, 1982:312). Because of this comprehensibility, the input to which the child is exposed is said to become 'intake' i.e., language utilized as linguistic data (Krashen, 1981c:46), and this 'intake' enables the child's internal grammar to be gradually elaborated.
In fact, it has been suggested that when a meaningful context which helps the child to infer the meaning of linguistic items is not made available, language development is actually retarded (Long, 1983b:97). It has been observed that 'hearing' children of deaf parents have been severely language delayed when their only input has been adult-adult speech on television; yet they have been seen to catch up with other children when normal adult-child conversation (which is context-dependent and thus more comprehensible) has been made available to them (Bard and Sachs, 1977; Jones and Quigley, 1979, cited by Long, 1983b:97). The lack of a meaningful context has been seen to be particularly detrimental to vocabulary learning because without the presence of a situational context, the child cannot build up sound-meaning pairs which are a necessary condition for language learning (Stemmer, 1980:111).

However, whatever modifications and special features there are in caretaker talk are not the result of any deliberate intention to teach language (Gurney, 1973:76), but are the outcome of the attempt to communicate, understand and be understood (Gleitman and Wanner, 1982:15; Wexler, 1982:311; Krashen, 1980:11). In fact, a characteristic feature of caretaker talk is that it is not deliberately manipulated and the focus of caretakers is always on the communication
of 'messages' rather than on the linguistic form in which these utterances are encoded. Thus it has been frequently observed that caretakers correct the actual content of children's utterances but rarely correct their linguistic form (Brown, Cazden and Bellugi, 1968). In fact, Nelson's study (1973) actually demonstrates that the child who received the greatest amount of error correction progressed most slowly (Nelson, 1973:84).

Further, in the family settings in which languages are generally acquired, talk tends to be directed towards individual children. In fact, children acquiring their mother tongue have been shown to attend only when utterances are specifically addressed to them (Messner, 1978, cited by Ellis, 1980:35). Diller (1981) also points out that children do not learn their native language just by overhearing it spoken in their presence. Rather, they need direct communication from parents and peers (Diller, 1981:78).

However, in order to internalize the grammar of his language, the child requires not only exposure to a variety of language during the process of actual communication, but also involvement in reciprocal interaction (Ellis, 1984a:89; Hatch, 1978b:404). During participation in interaction the child also picks up a variety of interactional patterns. Thus Wells (1981b:25) points out that even an interchange between an adult and a linguistically immature child contains many
of the complex features that characterize any successful conversational interaction e.g., turn-taking, nominating or avoiding topics, maintaining mutual understanding and so on. Garvey (1975, cited by Kramsch, 1981:6-7) points out that by the age of five and a half, children have mastered most of these complexities of conversational structure. It seems then that as the child develops these skills of managing conversational structures, he gets more and more opportunities to engage in interaction and thus to form and test hypotheses of the grammar of the language, so that the child's total language competence seems to develop as a result of his participation in interaction.

As Wells (1981a:103) points out and Ede and Williamson (1980:139) demonstrate in their analysis of a child's developing language, language development seems also to be facilitated when children get opportunities to take the initiative, introduce new topics into the conversation, when adults support and extend the topics proposed by children and when the child feels his contribution has some value (Ede and Williamson 1980:102). A comparative study of two mother-child conversations (Ellis, 1984a:87; Wells et.al., 1979, cited by Wells and Montgomery, 1981:229-230) also suggests that a "supportive style" of interaction with the parent as compared to a "leading style of interaction", leads to faster and fuller
linguistic development because the child is encouraged to communicate and opportunities for talk are made available to the child.

MacLure and French (1981) in their comparison of "talk at home" and "talk at school" also demonstrate that the child learning his first language in his home environment not only has the right to initiate new topics and change topics of conversation but also has the latitude to ask questions and to evaluate and correct his adult interlocutors (MacLure and French, 1981:227). That child learners in non-school settings have greater freedom to initiate sequences and this gives rise to a wider display of linguistic competence has also been demonstrated by an investigation by Cole, Dore, Hall & Dowley (1978 cited by McTear, 1981:194). MacLure and French also point out that, as in classroom discourse, adult-child discourse in real-life often contains a 3-part structure. In adult-child discourse however, the third part of the 3-part structure is not a teacher's evaluating move (as is the case in classroom discourse) but takes the form of an acknowledgement or even a mime of the adult's utterance by the child (ibid:213). MacLure and French quote the following example to illustrate this point:

"Mother and child are watching TV"

Samantha: Mummy what's those?
Mother: Clapperboard.
Samantha: Clapperboard.

(MacLure and French, ibid)
Ede and Williamson (1980) also indicate during their analysis of a child's developing grammar, that another important factor which appears to promote language use and thus language acquisition, is the pressure the child feels to communicate. They also make the observation that this 'communication pressure' seems to ensure that, as the child wishes to signal ever more complex relationships and the need grows for more and more delicate nuances in his grammar, he acquires an increased repertoire of language (ibid:110-111).

Thus the child learner appears to be motivated to use his limited linguistic resources to communicate (Slobin, 1982:168), to use language to fulfil a variety of needs such as getting things done, controlling the behaviour of others, maintaining interpersonal relationships, expressing feelings and attitudes, exploring as well as creating his own environment, conveying messages (Halliday, 1973:11-16). As Halliday points out, the child's ability to use language thus arises out of his own experience of meaningful, contextualized, purposive and socially significant language in actual situations of use (ibid:17-20).

2.2 Developments in Research on Second Language Learning

While the Nature vs. Nurture controversy generated a lot of interest among applied linguists and resulted in a number of studies on the various features of the learning
environment which determine first language development, no such parallel developments seemed to have taken place in research on second language learning (Hatch, 1978a:1; Ervin-Tripp, 1978:191; Ellis, 1984a:7; Tucker, 1977:4). There were hardly any attempts to study the nature of the environment that facilitates second language learning in spite of the fact that all along practitioners had been stressing the need to create conditions for natural language learning in the classroom (Sweet, 1899; Palmer, 1926; Reibel, 1971).

The reason for this neglect is perhaps not too difficult to find. Second language pedagogy derived its insights for teaching mainly from the allied disciplines of Linguistics and Psychology. Explanations for the phenomenon of language learning were obtained from theories of learning derived from experiments with animals in laboratory settings. It was believed that second language learning involves a process of forming new habits and abandoning the old ones related to the first language and that this process occurs through imitation, practice and reinforcement - this belief found expression in the 'audio-lingual' method. There was also at this time a great deal of emphasis on the so-called "scientific" applications of linguistic principles to language teaching with a concomitant focus on the teacher and on methodological issues rather than on the learner and the learning process (Tucker, 1977:4;
Ellis, 1984a:6). The linguist's view of language and language learning reigned supreme and a great deal of importance was attached to "what linguistics had to offer as a basis for specifying what teachers should do" (Ellis, 1984a:6). It was felt that once the "best description of the teaching content optimally ordered and optimally taught is obtained", language development will take place automatically. Language development was thus seen as the "product of what is taught" (ibid). There was little attempt to find out about the processes of learning a language in an instructional setting. The focus on methodological issues was hardly disturbed by Chomsky's challenge to behaviourism (Chomsky, 1959) since that challenge quickly found expression in the form of an alternative method - the "cognitive code" method (Allwright, 1983:195).

The issue of which major method to prescribe led to the 'method comparison' studies in the form of large-scale experiments in which the effects of different 'treatments' on the proficiency levels attained by different groups of learners were compared. While the results of most of these studies were ambiguous (Stern, 1983:492; Krashen, 1982:151-154; Allwright, 1983:195), what is significant about these studies is that they made no attempt to investigate the classroom processes of teaching and learning or to describe the nature of the events in the classroom which influence the process of
language learning. The focus of this inquiry was still on the teacher rather than on the learner.

Another reason for the absence of information on second language learning and on the factors that shape the course of its development was that classroom second language learning was viewed as an "issue amenable to a logical rather than an empirical approach" (Ellis, 1984a:5-6) and there was hardly any research effort directed towards the systematic observation and description of the complexity of the second language learner's environment. As a matter of fact, second language learning as an autonomous field of study, worthy of inquiry, had not yet emerged and early studies of second language learning were inspired largely by studies of first language learning. These studies initially focussed on describing the second language learner's language and predicting errors on the basis of a contrastive analysis between the learner's first and second languages. However, researchers soon came to the realization that the second language learner's errors cannot be attributed merely to interference from the mother tongue. It was now claimed that the errors in the second language learner's speech are developmental and are reflections of the provisional grammars, "approximative systems" (Nemser, 1971) or "interlanguages" (Selinker, 1972) that the language learner
is creating. On the basis of these studies, it was also speculated that the learner creatively constructs the rule-system of his second language in much the same way as the child constructs the grammar of his first language.

However, these early studies were still focussed on the "products" of the language learner's developing language (Ellis, 1984a:10) and merely attempted to describe the rule-system of his language. Further, as Hatch (1978a) puts it, these studies were largely "theoretical" and "speculative" in that they did not provide tangible empirical evidence about the process of second language development and the processes by which errors are actually produced (ibid:10).

Nevertheless, these early studies on second language learning did open up an important area of investigation for researchers concerned with the systematic study of the language acquisition process, namely, whether the first and second language acquisition processes are similar. A number of studies have now been conducted to examine this issue and researchers have focussed on three different types of acquisition situations - first language acquisition in children, second language acquisition by children, and second language acquisition by adults. Data has been collected from both natural and instructional settings for the three types of learners. First and second language acquisition processes have been observed to be similar in three basic ways:
i. Natural Order of Acquisition: An area of research which has received a great deal of attention in recent years is the study of the order of acquisition of various grammatical morphemes. That there is a natural order in which children acquire some of the morphemes of their first language was first demonstrated by Brown (1973). The sequence in which adults learning a second language acquire morphemes was first studied by Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1974), who found that second language learning adults also showed a regular order in acquiring the eight morphemes studied. Dulay and Burt (1974) established a similar order for children learning a second language. There is also sufficient evidence now to suggest that first and second language learners, in naturalistic as well as formal settings, reveal similar orders of acquisition (Allwright, 1984c: 210-211). Although there are some problems with these studies regarding the statistical procedures and the elicitation techniques used, it appears that there is indeed some kind of natural order for certain aspects of language development, for both first and second language learners, as well as for child and adult learners in all settings. This research thus supports the hypothesis that the process of learning for first and second language learners, for child and adult learners, in formal and naturalistic settings, is similar.

ii. Linguistic Input: Both first and second language learners receive exposure to language which is modified to aid comprehension. Thus first language learners are exposed to 'caretaker speech' while second language learners are exposed to 'foreigner talk' in naturalistic settings and 'teacher talk' in formal settings. It has been suggested that in spite of certain differences in these modes of speech (Freed, 1980), there are many similarities between caretaker speech, foreigner talk and teacher talk (Krashen, 1980) in that these speech styles are all modified and simplified to ensure comprehensibility and to ensure that communication can proceed. There thus seems to be indication that these modifications of normal adult speech assist both first and second language learners in making useful guesses about the language and in developing an internalized working grammar of it.
iii. Comprehension Precedes Production: It has been noted that children acquiring first languages learn to comprehend before they learn to speak (Winitz and Reeds, 1973). There also seems to be evidence that children acquiring their second language may make little 'creative' use of language (i.e., use anything other than memorized 'formulaes' and 'routines') for several months following their first exposure to the second language (see for example, Huang and Hatch, 1978; Ervin-Tripp, 1978). Recent studies also support the hypothesis that delaying speech at the early stages of second language instruction, while at the same time providing active listening, causes no delay in attaining proficiency in a second language (Gary, 1974; Postovsky, 1977). Research thus seems to suggest that both first and second language learners construct a grammar of the language to which they are exposed by listening to and understanding this language.

All these studies thus indicate that in spite of certain cognitive, affective, neurological and physical differences between first and second language learners and between children and adults, there are important similarities in the three types of acquisition situations: essentially, language acquisition for both children and adults, in formal as well as informal settings, for both first and second language learners, follows a similar route, results from similar types of experiences and proceeds at essentially the same rate when optimal learning conditions are available.

Once it was accepted that first and second language learning in natural and instructional environments proceeds through similar processes, the focus of research shifted from finding the best method to teach languages to identifying
the conditions which could best enable learners to learn a second language. Thus the emphasis is now on the contexts in which second languages are learnt (McLaughlin, 1980:331; Savignon, 1983:vi). Several theories of second language acquisition have now been put forward and these attempt to put together research and speculation about the crucial interacting variables influencing the second language learning process and to describe and account for this process. These theories all have something to say about the conditions under which language learning occurs most effectively. Since it was felt that cases of successful as well as unsuccessful learning in both naturalistic and formal instructional settings, could provide information about the nature of the conditions which need to be created for language learning to occur, data also began to be gathered on the conditions under which second language learning occurs in naturalistic/formal settings.

In the following sections, we therefore first present a review of some current theories of second language acquisition. This is followed by a review of studies of second language learning in naturalistic and formal instructional settings.

2.3 Theories of Second Language Learning

The second language acquisition theories we review in this section, are Burt and Dulay's Model of Creative Construction (Burt and Dulay, 1980, 1981), Schumann's Acculturation Model (Schumann, 1978a, 1978b), Krashen's
Theories of Second Language Acquisition and Learning (Krashen, 1981a, 1981b, 1982) and Bialystok's Model of Second Language Learning (1978). The review we present is mainly from the point of view of the contribution these theories make to our understanding of the role of the language learning conditions in second language learning/acquisition.

2.3.1 Burt and Dulay's Model of Creative Construction

To account for the process by means of which the learner creatively constructs his grammar of the second language and thus acquires the language, Burt and Dulay (1981) postulate an internal data processing mechanism which consists of a 'Filter', an 'Organizer' and a 'Monitor'. The 'Language Environment' is said to provide the "raw language materials which the learner filters, organizes and monitors" (ibid:189).

INTERNAL PROCESSING

Burt and Dulay's Working Model for Creative Construction in L2 Acquisition (1981)
According to Burt and Dulay, an "Optimal Language Learning Environment" (1981) is an essential prerequisite for language learning to take place. The 'Filter,' however, determines the amount of "external linguistic input which the learner takes into account to reconstruct the target language system" (ibid: 100). This filtration of data depends on certain socio-affective factors (Dulay and Burt, 1980:556) such as, the "social referents that give shape to learners' motivations" and the internal states - anxiety, relaxation, anger, or trust, among others - that affect the manner in which one approaches the task of learning and using a second language.

Thus Burt and Dulay's model for Creative Construction in Second Language Acquisition suggests that second language learning takes place when there is adequate exposure to language input data, when the learner is motivated to learn the target language and is in a relaxed and receptive state of mind.

2.3.2 Schumann's Acculturation Model

Schumann's model (1978) focusses not so much on the actual processes by which a second language is learnt but on the socio-psychological conditions under which this process is most likely to take place successfully.

Schumann describes the progression of the learner's second language system towards the model language as a process of
decreolization and according to him, the degree of acculturation - "social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language ... group" (Schumann, 1978a:29) - determines the extent of the learner's linguistic achievement (Schumann, 1978b:378). According to Stauble (1978:51), this suggests that for a learner to adjust his grammar in the direction of the target language, his contact with the target language group must provide him with enough motivation, communicative need, opportunity and corrective reinforcement.

The Acculturation Model thus illuminates the nature of the affective factors and the communicative needs which cause the creative construction process to take place. It seems to suggest that the language learning process may be retarded if the learner does not feel a pressing need to communicate which motivates him to engage in interaction with native speakers and thus to create language learning opportunities for himself (Cook, 1982:102).

2.3.3 Krashen's Theories of Second Language Acquisition and Learning

Krashen's theories of second language acquisition and learning are based on the assumption that the second language acquisition process is similar to the process by which first languages are acquired. Thus his "Natural Order Hypothesis" (Krashen, 1981a:74; 1982:15) states that irrespective of the
age and the first language of the learner, there is a striking similarity in the order of acquisition of certain grammatical structures in a given language. According to Krashen, this uniformity reflects the operation of the natural language acquisition process which is common to both L1 learning and L2 learning (Krashen, 1982:15).

Krashen looked at the operation of this acquisition process and the role of formal instruction vs. the "naturalistic" learning of a second language in terms of a distinction he postulated between acquisition and learning. According to the "Acquisition-learning Hypothesis" (Krashen, 1981a:74; 1982:10; 1981b:35), second language learners have two distinctly independent means for developing language ability — acquisition and learning. Acquisition is the process of 'picking up' a language without being consciously aware of the rules of the language being acquired and is similar to the first language acquisition process. Learning, on the other hand, refers to conscious or explicit knowledge of the rules of a language. Krashen specifies the relationship between acquisition and learning in second language production in terms of the "Monitor Hypothesis". According to this hypothesis (Krashen, 1981a:75-76; 1982:15-16; 1981b:36), acquisition is what plays the central role during spontaneous language production. Conscious learning functions only as a monitor or editor which, under certain conditions, may be used to make corrections in the forms of our utterances.
The process of acquisition of language, is explained by means of the "Input Hypothesis". According to this hypothesis (Krashen, 1981a:77-78; 1982:220-222; 1981b:37-38), language is acquired by understanding messages that contain new structures which are a bit beyond the learner's current level of competence (i + 1). Unfamiliar language is understood with the help of the context, extra-linguistic information and knowledge of the world. Sufficient quantities of input are however, required in order to provide i + 1 for different learners according to their current level of competence and to provide constant review of already acquired structures - hence the best input is not grammatically sequenced. However, Krashen claims that input cannot be taken in or become 'intake' if the affective filter is up. The "Affective Filter Hypothesis" (Krashen, 1981a:78-79; 1982:30-32, 39-40) thus suggests that, if acquirers are in a less than optimal state i.e., if they are not in an anxiety-free, highly motivated state of mind, they will have a filter or mental block which will prevent them from fully utilizing input for further acquisition.

Krashen's theories thus suggest that an "acquisition-rich" learning environment is required for language development and that, in an "acquisition-rich" learning environment, the available input is sufficient in quantity, comprehensible, not sequenced grammatically, relevant and interesting and keeps the learner's filter levels low so that they can take in the input.
2.3.4 Bialystok's Model of Second Language Learning (1978)

Bialystok's model of second language learning makes a distinction between explicit and implicit ways of learning similar to Krashen's distinction between acquisition and learning. However, Bialystok assigns a far more important role to learning or "explicit knowledge" than Krashen does.
Bialystok's model (1978) is organised on three levels - Input, Knowledge and Output. The Input level refers to the language to which the learner is exposed. At the Knowledge level, Bialystok postulates three stores of knowledge in the learner. The first is the "Other Knowledge" which consists of the learner's first language and all the information he has gathered about languages and the world in general and which enables the learner to use the extra-linguistic context to infer the meaning of the input to which he is exposed. The second and third stores contain the target language knowledge in the form of "Explicit Knowledge", which contains conscious knowledge of grammar rules and vocabulary, and "Implicit Knowledge", which contains intuitively known items in the new language. "Implicit Knowledge" is used during actual communication which is immediate and spontaneous ("Type I" Output) while "Explicit Knowledge" is used during formal study and practice which is slower and more deliberate ("Type II" Output).

According to Bialystok, Explicit Knowledge (or knowledge gained through conscious learning) can, after continued use, become automatic and be transferred to Implicit Linguistic Knowledge (ibid:72). However, while some amount of formal instruction and conscious knowledge of language can contribute to the ability to use language, spontaneous comprehension
and production tasks depend on Implicit Knowledge and a "larger Implicit Linguistic Knowledge source is associated with an ability for greater fluency" (ibid:73) because "language is not generally produced in a manner analogous to checking words in a dictionary and rules in a grammar book as would be the case if Explicit Linguistic Knowledge were the only source of language response" (ibid:75-76). Bialystok also suggests that a larger store of Implicit Knowledge depends on the nature of the language exposure or the input provided. Since "language spoken in an environment rich in referential objects is by far more comprehensible and more interpretable than language spoken without such support", learners need to be provided with opportunities to infer meaning from the physical context so that they may add to their Implicit Knowledge store (Bialystok and Fröhlich, 1979:19-21; Bialystok, 1983:111).

Thus Bialystok's model also seems to suggest that what is required for language learning to take place is exposure to language in a genuinely communicative situation, the presence of extra-linguistic support to render this input comprehensible as well as opportunities for practice.

It is apparent then that, these recent theories seem to express "a bias against the contribution of language teaching and a bias in favour of naturalistic language learning" (Stern, 1983:413). In fact, there seems to be a consensus in
these current theories of second language learning that second language learners need to be provided with a natural language learning environment, that is, an environment in which the following conditions are met:

- there is exposure to a rich variety of meaningful language;
- the language to which learners are exposed is the kind of language used for 'real' communication;
- there are opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful interaction;
- the situations in which the learners are placed bring about motivation and freedom from anxiety.

2.4 Supportive Features of the Learning Environment: Current Research on Second Language Learning

Our discussion of current theories of second language acquisition indicates that language learning proceeds through the interaction between the social environment or the contexts in which communication with the learner takes place and the learner's "mental make-up" (Cook, 1982:94). While there have been many attempts to speculate about and describe the internal mechanisms responsible for language acquisition, at the same time, a great deal of research has been devoted to identifying the learner variables which contribute to or influence the language learning process. These studies have concentrated mainly on the nature of the social, affective and personality factors which are thought to have an effect on language learning.
Thus a number of studies have focussed on the effects of the learner's attitudes and motivation on the learning outcome (for example, the studies by Gardner and others, 1972, 1975, 1976; Burstall et.al., 1974). There have also been many studies on certain personality factors such as extraversion and empathy, which are thought to influence language learning. These are found to be positively correlated to success in language learning (for example, Brown, 1981:118-121; studies reported by Stern, 1983:380-381), as are also lack of inhibition (ref., Guiora's alcohol experiment, 1972, reported by Brown, 1981:117) or risk-taking (Beebe, 1983:40; Rubin, 1975) and self-esteem and self-confidence, which in turn are seen as leading to lack of inhibition (Krashen, 1981a:78; Brown, 1981:115; Heyde, 1979 cited by Littlewood, 1984:64). Low anxiety is also seen as a predictor of success in language learning (Krashen, op.cit.; Gardner, 1975:18; Bailey, 1983:69).

These studies of learner variables seem to lead to the view that it is the learning situation that plays a crucial role in language learning, since situational constraints ultimately determine to a great extent, whether the learner would be sufficiently motivated, confident, uninhibited, free from anxiety and willing to take the risk of communicating with his limited linguistic resources and thus testing his hypotheses about the target language. For, the degree of risk any learner is willing to take, varies not only according
to his personality, but also according to the situation and the social setting in which he is expected to use the language and therefore, depends on the nature of language learning conditions made available (Beebe, 1983:48). As James (1981) points out, "situational constraints which induce a learner to 'focus on form', for instance, may lead the learner to not want to run the risk of error, which hypothesis-testing involves, and therefore to concentrate on those linguistic forms which are familiar to him" but there may also be situations which lead "to the desire to speak spontaneously (and fluently)" and this "might have the effect of the learner testing all the hypotheses he can formulate" (ibid:234).

It is important then to look in some detail, at the situations in which second languages are learnt in order to gain insights into the nature of those features of the learner's environment which support and promote the language acquisition process. We shall therefore, review some studies of second language acquisition in both natural and formal settings in order to obtain information about the nature of successful language learner's environment and thus about the conditions under which language learning takes place.

2.4.1 Second Language Learning in Natural Settings

It is well-known that second language learning in settings which provide no formal instruction, has a very high success
rate as compared to language learning in formal instructional settings. The case study of Paul (reported by Huang and Hatch, 1978), who, in four months, learnt as much language as a child learns in 2-3 years (ibid:131) even suggests that when optimal conditions for language learning are available in a natural situation, second language acquisition can proceed at a much faster rate than the acquisition of a first language.

Research on second language acquisition in natural settings has therefore been focussed on exploring the nature of the linguistic input available to the second language learner, the nature of the interaction in which the learner participates, the nature of the opportunities available to engage in this interaction and the nature of the environmental influence on crucial socio-affective factors.

A great deal of research on second language acquisition has been devoted to the nature and role of "foreigner talk" or the talk addressed to language learners by native or near-native interlocutors. Foreigner talk is said to provide second language learners in natural settings "with a variety of input which is of benefit to language development in different ways" (Ellis, 1984a:92). Since foreigner talk, like caretaker speech, involves a range of input modifications, second language learners, like first language learners, receive large quantities of comprehensible input. Again,
like caretaker talk, foreigner talk has been found to be simplified in terms of its syntactical and discoursal features. This ensures that the native speaker's language is comprehensible to the learner so that communication can take place. In the case of younger second language learners, this input is made even more comprehensible because, apart from syntactic adjustments, native-speakers tend to make functional adjustments depending on the perceived cognitive limitations of the learners and also tend to select topics of conversation appropriate to these learners' level of maturity (Freed, 1980:25). However, as with caretaker talk addressed to first language learners, the adjustments in foreigner talk addressed to second language learners arise out of the need to communicate and not the intention to teach language, and the speaker's focus is on what the learner is saying and not on how he is saying it (Long and Porter, 1984:11).

It has been observed that second language learning children are generally helped to understand the conversation by keeping it restricted to the 'here-and-now' by pointing to and identifying objects, and by repeating and simplifying (MacLaughlin, 1979:9; Ellis, 1984a:91). That successful second language learners in informal settings are exposed to input which is simple, is tied to the 'here-and-now' through descriptions of the learner's ongoing activities and the
objects in his environment, is also borne out by the case study of Paul (the 5-year old successful acquirer of English studied by Huang, 1970, cited by Krashen, 1980:7 and Wagner-Gough and Hatch, 1975:306). Thus Paul was exposed to conversations like the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Paul</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul, are you writing?</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are you doing?</td>
<td>I'm write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the baby crying?</td>
<td>Baby is crying.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(cited by Krashen, 1980:7)

Asher (1981:203) also points out that immigrant children tend to get exposure to the target language through the use of action directives, by caretaking adults ("Wash your hands before you come to the table"), or by playmates ("Throw your ball to me"). The preponderance of directives accompanied by gestures in talk addressed to children by native-speaking adults, is also borne out by a study by Scarcella and Higa (1981:421). As Ellis (1984a:123) points out, there is now considerable evidence available that directives "at the very least" facilitate the rate of language development (for example, a study by Ellis and Wells, 1980; Wells, et.al., in press, cited by Ellis, op. cit). Further, directives are readily decodable input because they tend to occur in familiar, frequently-occurring contexts and usually have reference to the 'here-and-now'. Directives are morphosyntactically simple
and hence suitable for the learner's limited processing capacity in the early stages of language learning and are also more likely to result in 'successful' communication since they generally require a non-verbal response (Ellis, 1984a:123).

On the other hand, it has been found that learners experience great difficulty in identifying topics, comprehending input and therefore, in participating in conversation when the input to which they are exposed is focussed on activities and topics displaced in time and space, lacks a concrete referent and when they are expected to interpret and respond to more difficult concepts and linguistic patterns. That this leads to less successful language learning is borne out by the case study of Ricardo, a 13-year old from Columbia, studied by Butterworth (1972, cited by Krashen, 1980:7 and Wagner-Gough and Hatch, 1975:306; Hatch, 1978b:414). Thus Ricardo participated in exchanges like the following:

NS: Do you wear them everyday?
Ricardo: Huh?
NS: Do you put them on everyday?
NS: Did you have a nice weekend?
Ricardo: Huh?
NS: Friday, Saturday ... did you have fun?

(Hatch, 1978b:415)
However, the addition of gestures by the native speaker led to better comprehension and improved participation:

NS: Do you wear them everyday?
Ricardo: Huh?
NS: Do you put them on everyday?
Ricardo: Wear?
NS: Yeah, do you (gesture) put them on everyday?
Ricardo: Ah! No, Muy XXX

(ibid.:415)

Long (1983b:98) also refers to case studies of second language learners who failed to acquire a second language when provided with exposure to incomprehensible input (for example, language on television) while Ervin-Tripp (1978) in her study provides evidence that second language learning by children occurs first for language which is predictable, and for which the meaning is apparent (ibid:194) and that second language learners, like children learning their first language, "remember best the items they can interpret" (ibid:195).

In fact it has been argued on the basis of data collected for the case study of Ricardo (Butterworth and Hatch, 1978), that it is precisely because of differences in the language learning context that older learners seem to show less language development than younger children in similar settings over the same period of time. For, while the child is satisfied
with communication of his very immediate and concrete wants, adults want to and are expected to communicate far more numerous and abstract ideas (Butterworth and Hatch, 1978:244).

Burling's self-study (1981) of his problems in learning Swedish as a visiting professor in Sweden also suggests that second language learning is less likely to be successful when the input is unsimplified, abstract and less comprehensible. Burling points out that as an adult, he was exposed to complex language containing a wide topical, dialectical and stylistic range and to relatively abstract words which required the support of other words rather than the context of surrounding events and actions to be comprehended (ibid:281). Burling also notes that since he was treated as a conversational peer, there was relatively less attempt by his interlocutors to repeat and simplify language for him or to use language in contexts where the referential field made it comprehensible. As a result, he felt that the language demands made on him were too great (ibid:286). On the other hand, Burling vouches for the fact that he felt a far greater ease and clarity in comprehension and even in retention when he encountered words which were associated with a non-verbal context.

These studies thus seem to suggest that comprehensible input is as much of a major facilitative feature of the learning environment for second language learners as for first language learners.
It has also been frequently pointed out that during real-life communication what one says matters far more than how it is said (Walmsley, 1982:86). When second language learning occurs in natural contexts, since the focus of the interlocutors is on getting a message across rather than on the linguistic form in which the message is encoded, learners do seem to get opportunities to engage in such real-life communication in which language is used as a tool for communication (Seliger, 1983:250). Thus Brown's study (1979) of immigrant children being exposed to English in a play group setting in a nursery school in Britain seems to indicate that when native-speaking peers attempt to communicate with non-native children, they concentrate on getting the message across rather than directly drawing the attention of the non-English child on the language which they are using (see for example, samples of peer group interaction, ibid:75-77). Seliger also points out that in normal naturalistic settings, the linguistic forms of the non-native speaker's utterances are rarely corrected although the interlocutor may convey in some way that the message was not understood (Seliger, 1983:250). A study by Chun et.al. (1982:545) also shows that in conversations between native speakers and non-native speakers in social settings, the native speakers rarely corrected errors made by non-native speakers. When correction was provided, it was usually of a factual nature and grammatical errors were seldom corrected.
A comparative study of the nature of questions addressed to non-native speakers by teachers in classroom settings and questions addressed to non-native speakers by native speakers in informal settings (Long, 1983b:107), also indicates that in informal settings, second language learners get opportunities to participate in real communication. Long found that native-speakers when addressing non-native speakers outside the classroom, used 'referential' questions unlike teachers in classroom settings who used mainly 'display' questions. Since communication also involves bridging of an information gap and a "two-way exchange of information" (ibid:103), the presence of referential questions or questions to which the interlocutor does not know the answer, seems to indicate that genuine communication between the native speaker and the language learner takes place in the informal setting. Such a two-way exchange of information, as Long (ibid:104) points out, ensures that the native speaker interlocutor modifies his speech sufficiently to make input comprehensible. Two-way interaction thus leads to negotiation of meaning which results in optimal input (Ellis, 1984a:93) and ensures that the learner is motivated to get involved in meaningful interaction. As studies by Carroll (1967) and Scott et.al. (1974) indicate, participation in meaningful interaction is crucial for the development of functional ability in a new language.
Engagement in such two-way communication also ensures that the learner himself gets opportunities to make use of language. As Ellis notes, "the learner's own contribution to a conversation provides the native-speaker with information about how effectively he is making himself understood" (Ellis, 1984a:94). In addition, the learner's output serves as input to his language processing mechanisms and through the feedback he obtains from the native speaker about the comprehensibility of his utterances, he is enabled to "modify or supplement the linguistic knowledge he has already used in production" (ibid:95). Further, as Seliger's study (1977) indicates, opportunities to participate in interaction and particularly opportunities to initiate interaction, are likely to lead to more efficient language learning since initiation of interaction leads to generation of more input. Such active participation in interaction also brings about greater learner involvement in the interaction (Seliger, 1983:253) and is likely to ensure that the learner attends to the kind of response he may elicit from the native speaker (Seliger, ibid; Ellis, 1984a:94).

That opportunities for interaction in the target language lead to greater success in language learning is indicated by a study by Burstall et.al. (1974) who found that there are more successful foreign language learners among children of
middle-class families since they are likely to be more oriented than working class families towards contacts outside their own community and hence towards contacts with speakers of the foreign language. A study by Peck (1978) also indicates that participation in 'real' discourse with both adults and peers plays an important role in language learning (Peck, 1978:394). In fact, research suggests that exposure to peer input is important and can influence the language learning process (Johnson, 1983; Saville-Troike, 1984:201). Successful second language learning has been found to occur when learners are given opportunities to participate in conversations with child and adult interlocutors who thus provide a variety of input (Hatch et al., 1979 cited by Ellis, 1984a:92).

Opportunity to participate actively in real interaction is also likely to enhance the motivation to communicate. As Macnamara (1973:59) suggests, the immigrant child in the street who has the opportunity to engage in interaction with his peers, feels an intense need to understand the language they use and to express himself in the language they can understand, so that he is enabled to play with them and relate to them.

Work summarized by researchers such as d'Anglejan (1978) and Schumann (1978a) also leads to the conclusion that very often successful second language acquisition is the result of
finding a job or making friends or of being in some way compelled to interact in a setting where one has no choice but to use the target language.

That communicative need and motivation to communicate effects the rate of second language acquisition is also borne out by Kessler's study (1979) of the acquisition of English as a second language by a Vietnamese mother and child. Kessler found that although the order of acquisition for certain morphemes was the same for the mother and child, the rate of acquisition for the child was significantly faster because unlike the mother, the child needed English for peer group relationships and had a positive attitude towards the language (ibid:74). Conversely, since the mother lacked such an immediate communicative need and did not want to relate to the target language group, her rate of acquisition was slower. Warshawsky's finding (1978:472) that "grammatical structure appears to develop in the learner's speech in response to communicational need" provides further evidence for this claim and as Taylor (1983) notes, her research "supports the hypothesis that when transmission of essential information is at stake and there is a compelling communicative need, learners will be motivated to continue to try to communicate ... these attempts to communicate can, in turn, facilitate acquisition as learners work to meet that need" (Taylor, 1983:71).
It seems then that in natural environments learners are enabled to acquire language when

- there are opportunities for exposure to a rich variety of language which is rendered comprehensible because of the presence of contextual and discoursal clues;

- language is encountered in real-life communicative situations and is directed at learners as individuals so that it becomes meaningful to them and causes them to become actively involved in the interaction;

- there are opportunities for learners to use language to engage in real-life communication, thus using a variety of language in which the focus is on the message to be conveyed rather than on the linguistic form in which it is encoded;

- there are opportunities for learners to engage in interaction which is of interest and relevance to them, answers their immediate communicative needs, creates an urge to communicate and motivates them to exploit their limited linguistic resources and thus to test their hypotheses about the language.
2.4.2 Second Language Learning in Formal Instructional Settings

Recent literature on second language acquisition (particularly, Krashen, 1981c, 1982) suggests that second language instruction of the formal, conventional kind, is hardly of any help to the language learner. A considerable amount of discussion and research effort has therefore been devoted to the question, "Does second language instruction make a difference?". Long (1983c), who attempts to answer this question through a comprehensive review of the literature, concludes that instruction may be beneficial but adds that his answer is "obviously not as clearcut or as 'positive' as most TESOL professionals would like" (Long, 1983c:380). However, there is also a substantial amount of research evidence which indicates that "learners are impervious to instruction" (Allwright, 1984c:217), in that they "do not in fact learn what teachers teach" (Allwright, 1984a:2). The evidence for this comes from studies which suggest that learners follow their own natural order of morpheme acquisition even in formal instructional settings, and classroom instruction seems to have little effect on the natural course of morpheme development (see for example, Allwright's (1984c) comprehensive review of the literature related to the natural order of acquisition in formal vs. natural settings). These studies appear to indicate that whatever language learning occurs in formal
this instructional setting is more likely to be the result of the incidental and unplanned-for opportunities for learning which may arise during the course of classroom interaction than because of what the teacher attempts to teach. Evidence for this comes from a study by Ellis (1984b) who attempts to examine the relationship between classroom practice and language development. Ellis suggests that 'quality of interaction' in terms of "communicatively rich interaction which affords opportunities for the negotiation of meaning may aid development" (ibid:147). Ellis also points out that while there were "relatively few communicatively rich exchanges" in the classes he observed, when occasions for spontaneous conversation did arise, "these always involved a pupil from the group that showed some development" (ibid:148).

It seems then that studying a second language in a formal instructional setting is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for language learning to take place. That systematic attention to the teaching of grammar is not necessary is demonstrated by the success achieved by language learners in settings in which no formal instruction is provided (see section 2.4.1, for a discussion). That it is not sufficient is demonstrated by the fact that few classroom learners in typical language classes in which the focus is on the teaching of language forms, achieve genuine communicative ability in the language. As Macnamara (1973) points out:
... language is a peculiar embarrassment to the teacher because outside school, children seem to learn language without any difficulty, whereas in school, with the aid of teachers, their progress in language is unsatisfactory.

(Macnamara, 1973:57)

In fact, as we shall see in the discussion which follows, research studies indicate that it is the nature of the learning environment and thus the learning opportunities available to the learner in these formal settings, which seem to have a negative effect on language achievement in the classroom.

The most familiar aspect of the traditional, form-based approaches is the explicit, linear and sequential teaching of grammatical items. However, Taylor (1983:70) quotes research findings (d'Anglejan, 1978; Long et al., 1976) to show that most learners are unable to transfer their understanding of grammar rules and their mechanical control of grammatical structures to real communicative situations. This happens because, as Taylor (1983:82) points out, students need all structures simultaneously, to meet 'real', everyday communicative needs. Ingram (1980:15) also points out that second language teaching which focusses on words or discrete sentences seems to produce learners unable to handle texts, obsessed with discrete words and unable to grasp lines of argument.
It has also been suggested that the closely-structured and over-organised input to which learners are exposed in classrooms may interfere with, rather than promote, language learning (Ellis, 1981:73; Lightbrown, 1983:239). As pointed out earlier, there is also now research evidence which suggests that learners follow their own order of acquisition of grammatical structures, that this order of acquisition proceeds according to an individual time-table (Krashen, 1982:25), that simply because an item is next on the syllabus does not mean that the students are ready to receive information on it (Taylor, 1983:82) and further that, there is no direct relationship between the frequency with which certain forms appear in the classroom and the frequency or accuracy of use of these forms in the learner's language at the same point of time (Lightbrown, op. cit.).

A linear, sequenced syllabus which presents grammatical structures one by one also leads to use of unnatural and artificial language which is far removed from the language used in real communication. For during real communication many varying structures occur simultaneously rather than in a linear fashion (Taylor, 1983:82).

Further, in form-based approaches, because of the linear, sequential teaching of grammar, learners are generally exposed to words and structures which are used in isolation from their
contexts of use. Such decontextualization of language makes it difficult for the learner to decode the language to which he is exposed and as Bialystok points out, this plays an important causal role in the difficulty experienced in second language learning in artificial environments (Bialystok, 1983:109). Newmark (1981) also suggests that without contextual clues to the meaning of the language the learner is exposed to, the learner cannot learn because he will fail to attend to the input (ibid:36-37).

Learners in these approaches are expected to repeat and perform mechanical manipulations on the structures to which they are exposed. However, these seem to have little effect on pupil achievement. Thus, a study by Ramirez and Stromquist suggests that teacher modelling and pupil repetition as used in such teaching, is largely ineffective for language learning and does not necessarily lead to greater communicative ability (Ramirez and Stromquist, 1979:156). Ellis (1980) also argues that language drills deprive the learner of his right to negotiate meaning with his interlocutor - an essential part of learning how to communicate in a second language - because they fail to appeal to the learner's understanding of the functional nature of language and force him to participate in a highly constrained discourse structure in which no information is shared and no illocutionary meanings performed (Ellis, 1980:33).
Research on attention has demonstrated that cognitive activities which are sufficiently well-practised and automatic (for example, language drills) require less attentional capacity and may therefore, be given a lower priority by our limited information-processing resources (Cohen, 1982:140). Cohen's study (ibid) demonstrates that in ESL classes, when students are required to provide automatic responses which do not require much thought, they may not pay much attention to the instructional content. Thus any input to which the learner is exposed during such mechanical drill activities may not be fully attended to, and may not be processed as intake (ibid:144-145). A study by Lee, McCune and Patton (1970) also provides evidence that strongly suggests that students do not pay much attention to repetitive drills after the first few repetitions.

The emphasis on accuracy of production in traditional language classes is also said to create in students, "a need to provide the short, polished, 'finished article' in the form of a grammatically correct sentence" which inevitably causes inhibition and anxiety as the student is called upon to perform publically in front of a large group of students and the authoritarian figure of the teacher" (Long et.al., 1976:138). Such an approach therefore, causes fear of failure, tension and anxiety. However, it is being increasingly recognized that a relaxed atmosphere which induces a state
receptivity is required for language input to be taken in (for example, Allwright, 1984b:164). Such tension and anxiety causes learners to pay even less attention to any incoming input than they would have otherwise. As Newmark (1981:43) observes, the learner who is concerned with his own impending public performance may spend the time during the presentation of potential linguistic input, mentally rehearsing what he has to say (which is what he already knows), in preparation for his performance, instead of attending to new input.

Although in traditional language classrooms, accuracy of production is emphasized, Lightbrown's study indicates that there is hardly any improvement over time in the accuracy of learners' use of six grammatical morphemes in obligatory contexts (Lightbrown, 1983:240). The overt correction of formal errors by teachers has also been shown to have little or no effect on the production of errors by learners (Hendrickson, 1978:393) and has been known to lead to stilted and laboured oral production and stifling of natural communication. On the other hand, Nystorm's study of teacher responses to student errors, indicates that teachers who ignore language mistakes and attend to the meaning of what the students say, manage to encourage classroom language production and promote conversational competence about non-language topics (Nystorm, 1983:185). Holley and King (1975, cited by Ellis, 1980:30)
also suggest that "student communication in the foreign language may be actively discouraged by the instructor who insists upon grammatical accuracy."

The stress on the production of grammatically correct and complete sentences in such language classes also leads to artificial use of language for the basic unit of spoken discourse is not the sentence but the clause. The emphasis in language classrooms on correct use of language forms thus leads to what Dakin (1973, cited by McDonough, 1981:20) refers to as a strange language-like performance or "structure speech" which is correct drill performance but not real communication. For, as Stern (1983) observes, it is almost impossible for an individual to pay attention to linguistic forms and the language as a code and to simultaneously communicate in that code. This is the "code-communication dilemma" (Stern, 1983:402). The emphasis on correct use of language forms also leads to a distortion of real-world values in which truth and meaningfulness, communicative value and reasonableness matters more than surface structure, correct use of language and conformity to the particular pattern which the teacher desires to elicit (Walmsley, 1982:80).

In traditional language classrooms, the teacher's emphasis is on eliciting language structures conforming to a pre-determined pattern. As a study by Long and Sato (1983) demonstrates, this results in teachers asking 'display' questions to which
they already know the answer rather than 'referential' questions. Since the answers to such artificial questions are "of no interest to either the one who asks them or the one who has to answer them, either because the answers are already known, or no one really cares" (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982:264), they fail to involve the learner. Again, since real communication involves a two-way exchange of information (Long and Porter, 1984:26), no real communication takes place in classes in which 'display' questions predominate. Thus such questions fail to provide a "realistic learning situation" (Ede and Williamson, 1980:237).

Even the question-answer drills of traditional language classes only lead to the learning of stock, stilted replies which may be functionally inappropriate (Richards, 1980:421). Further, the learning of model dialogues which is also a common feature of such language classes, does not lead to control of conversational strategies (for example, turn-taking mechanisms, repair strategies etc.), or to the ability to create coherent spoken discourse which can only be learnt during actual participation in conversation (ibid:431). Again, with such dialogues, a polite formal style of language is used and no real information, ideas and feelings are conveyed, no true communication takes place, and students are not helped to make the transition to communication outside the classroom (Eckard and Kearny, 1981:4-5).
In fact, a study by Hutchinson and Kelpac (1982) has even demonstrated that when simulated communication games and information gap exercises are introduced in the language classroom, on the assumption that transfer of information is one of the prime motivators of communication, the amount of communication generated by such tasks is minimal (Hutchinson and Kelpac, 1982:135) because students have no direct reason for giving and getting information other than that they have been directed to do so by the teacher and they see such exercises only as academic tasks which have to be assessed by the teacher (ibid:141). Hutchinson and Kelpac further note that "only if the transfer of information was satisfying some need in students would they have the natural motivation to participate actively in the communication process" (ibid).

Since classroom activities are so "contrived and un-compelling" (Taylor, 1983:71), learners are likely to feel none of the deep involvement in the interaction which is so important for language learning (Allwright, 1984b:187) and no intense need to attempt communication with whatever limited linguistic resources they have at their disposal, as they do when language learning occurs in naturalistic settings. As d'Anglejan points out:

... rarely do the language teacher and the student have any genuinely important or exciting things to say to each other and the teacher's preoccupation with the form of the student's utterances rather than with their content is hardly conducive to the
stimulation of spontaneous verbal interchange.

(d'Anglejan, 1978:225)

On the other hand, Taylor (1983) quotes research findings and observations to suggest that the acquisition process seems to depend on a pressing need to communicate (ibid:7). Lack of communicative need, it is also argued (Ellis, 1984a:129), results in learners not getting opportunities to use language for a wide variety of speech acts.

In fact, the entire orientation of such classes seems to be towards the presentation of facts about language by the teacher (Belasco, 1981:61-62), and the practice of language for its own sake. The practice of language for its own sake results in very few opportunities becoming available to learners to express their own views (Beebe, 1983:61-62), to use language as a social tool (Seliger, 1983:251) or for mutual information exchange (Bowers, 1980:70). In fact, in traditional language classes, learners seem to get few opportunities to use language at all. As Long (1983b:114) argues, the use of 'display' questions in these classes is not likely to lead to sustained discourse during which learners would get opportunities to respond at length, or to initiate new topics. Further, as Kramsch (1981:14) notes, in traditional language classes, the learner's conversational options and participation rights are limited and controlled by the
teacher so that it is always the teacher who manages the interaction, initiates topics, introduces new topics, allots turns, selects the next speaker, self-selects as next speaker and so on. In 'real' communication, there is a sharing of discourse rights by all the interlocutors (Ellis, 1984a:119) but in the language class situation, it is the teacher who "orchestrates the exchange" to produce a single tune. As a result, normal social relationships and verbal interaction is distorted (Ede and Williamson, 1980:203-204) and even the basic patterns of language classroom discourse differ considerably from the discourse patterns of normal conversation (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Long et.al., 1976; Fanselow, 1977). Systematic observation has also provided consistent evidence that in formal, teacher-centred classes "not only does teacher talk dominate quantitatively, but it dictates the communicative and cognitive patterns of classroom discourse" (Bowers, 1980:70). Further, teacher dominance "places severe limitations on the negotiations of classroom discourse by learners" (Gaies, 1981:96), results in learners using language mainly for the function of responding (Politzer, Ramirez and Lewis, 1981:192), prevents them from expressing personal experiences and feelings and inhibits "linguistic exploration" which involves risk-taking (Taylor, 1982:40; Eckard and Kearny, 1981:5). In such classes, it is the teacher who seems to get practice in using language rather than the learner. Belasco (1981:16) points out that
in drill sessions, the teacher gets at least 25 minutes of practice but learners get only one or two minutes. Not only do learners in such classes get fewer turns to speak but, as Ellis observes (1980:35), the single-word responses which characterize pupil responses in teacher-class interaction, are the result of the constraints of teacher-dominated discourse and are likely to be of limited value for the enhancement of syntactical development. Evidence that learners working in lock-step conditions (which is the way most traditional language classes are organised), make significantly less use of language is provided by Long's study (Long et.al., 1976:148) of language use in lockstep conditions versus language use in small groups. Long et.al., also demonstrate that the variety of language used by learners in lock-step conditions is significantly smaller than that used in small group conditions and that the traditional interactional pattern seems to deny learners certain options as to what roles they may take up and the variety of uses to which they may put language" (Long et.al., 1976:138). Long and Porter (1984) also suggest that while in small group interaction a natural setting for conversation and more opportunity for peer interaction is provided (Long and Porter, 1984:4), in lock-step conditions there is little opportunity for peer group interaction.

It is argued that learner talk is an additional source of language input (Seliger, 1983:247), that "learning may be
enhanced by peer discussion" (Allwright, 1984b:157) and that "the 'co-operative' style of pupil-pupil interactions may be better suited to SLD (Second Language Development) than the 'hierarchical' style of teacher-dominated interactions in so far as it gives learners the opportunity to perform different interactive roles and a range of speech acts" (Ellis, 1984a:115).

That lack of opportunity to initiate utterances can impede language learning is borne out by Seliger's study (1983) which indicates that when learners initiate utterances, they not only generate more input (and the quantity of input generated has a definite effect on language acquisition (ibid:247)), but the input they generate is more likely to be attended to closely. Thus Seliger argues that when a learner uses language, language interaction is directed at him as an individual (ibid:251). Such directed input i.e., input in which a teacher nominates a particular learner to respond, is more likely to be attended to with a high level of attentiveness (since it personalizes the exchange and requires a response of some kind), than non-directed input which is addressed to the whole class and may thus not necessarily be listened to carefully (ibid:252-253).

that Ellis (1980:35) also points out when teacher's questions are addressed to the whole class, the individual learner can easily opt out and will rarely pay a penalty. Thus there is likely to be less individual and personal involvement in talk
which is always initiated by teachers and which occurs in lock-step rather than small group settings (Long and Porter, 1984:9).

Such lack of involvement and limited opportunities to use language for a variety of purposes is likely then, to result in limited opportunities to test and reformulate hypotheses about the language. As Seliger (1983:259) points out, "language that is not personalized, or that the learner does not perceive as directed at him or her as an individual, is probably of little use for construction or repair of learners' hypotheses". On the other hand, it is argued that when learners are allowed to "participate actively in classroom interaction and thus guide their own learning, they have a stake in the outcome of their endeavours, their interest and motivation is likely to be higher making them more receptive to instruction", and that therefore, initiative plays an important role in promoting real communication and thus in language learning (ibid:85).

The research literature thus seems to indicate that there is generally less language achievement in the traditional classroom because

- language input data tends to be artificial, unnatural, repetitive, of little communicative value, and further, tends to be rendered less comprehensible because it is isolated from its contexts of use;
few opportunities exist for learners to use language, to communicate real information which is of relevance to them, resulting in lack of communicative need and little motivation to exploit limited linguistic resources and thus test hypotheses about the language;

- the stress on production of grammatically correct and complete sentences by learners leads to artificial use of language and at the same time, causes anxiety and tension;

- teacher dominance limits participation by learners, prevents them from using language for a variety of purposes and causes them to adopt a passive role in the classroom.

These conclusions hold good not merely for language classes in which a Structural Approach is followed but also for many of the so-called Communicative Approaches in which too, it is now widely accepted, the focus remains on giving information about the elements of language-forms and structures (see for example, Brumfit, 1980:102). It seems that these form-based approaches to language teaching have failed to result in much language achievement because language learning in these approaches is regarded not so much as a process which is activated when a particular kind of learning environment is available but as the "the product of what is taught" (Ellis,
and in none of these approaches does there seem to be any real consideration of what brings about language development and how best to create in the classroom, the conditions necessary for language learning to take place. The result, as we have seen in this section, is that the learning environment which becomes available when language is taught by such approaches, is quite different from the natural environment in which second language learners successfully manage to learn a second language.

2.5 Emergence of New Pedagogies for Second Language Instruction

As we have seen in the preceding section, the results of the empirical investigations on Second Language Learning in the last 10-15 years strongly suggest that, the processes of first and second language acquisition are essentially analogous and that, the incredibly complex task of learning a second language is successfully and often rapidly accomplished by learners without any formal instruction in natural settings in which the conditions available for language learning are similar to the conditions available during first language acquisition, i.e., opportunities for exposure to 'real', comprehensible, meaningful language, opportunities to make creative and communicative use of language, opportunities to engage in real meaningful, motivating interaction etc. On the other hand, we have seen that the traditional language teaching approaches fail to exploit the similarities between
first and second language acquisition, ignore the fact that successful second language learning occurs in natural settings and apparently fail as a result, to provide most of the conditions available during natural language acquisition - conditions that are probably necessary for language learning to take place.

A number of innovative approaches for second language instruction have however, emerged recently and these do attempt to provide some or all of the conditions thought to be conducive to natural language acquisition and thus try to expose learners to and engage them in, contextually rich, meaningful communication in the target language and also try to make an effort to make the task of learning a language incidental to the task of communicating with someone about some topic which is of inherent interest to the learner. The best known of these approaches are: Asher's "Total Physical Response" (TPR), Terrell's "Natural Approach", Curran's "Community Language Learning" (CLL), Gattegno's "Silent Way", Lozanov's "Suggestopedia", Prabhu's "Communicational Teaching Project" (CTP), and Bilingual Education.

While these approaches do not seem to be based on any explicitly-stated description of the conditions for language learning, there are indications that they do succeed in providing most of the conditions considered necessary for language learning.
Unfortunately, detailed research evidence does not seem to be available for all these approaches. This is possibly because some of these innovations are too recent (e.g., CTP and Natural Approach) and conclusive results on their success are not yet available, while some of the other approaches which have been in existence for some years, have also come into the limelight only recently and therefore, so far, little systematic research seems to have been conducted on them. However, some research evidence is available for some of these approaches and this does indicate their superiority over traditional approaches to second language instruction. The high success rate of Bilingual Education in second language learning/teaching has already been mentioned earlier (see Chapter I, section 1.0). Krashen (1982) also reports research on TPR (ibid:155-156) and Suggestopedia (ibid:158-160) which suggests that language achievement through the use of these approaches is superior to the language achievement through the use of traditional methods. Initial results from CTP have also been "encouraging" (Howatt, 1984:288). Informal observations of CTP classes by this researcher also indicate that in these classes, learners achieve fluency in both comprehension and use of language.

In this section, we present a brief review of these approaches to see the extent to which they do seem to provide the conditions for "natural language learning" and the manner in which they do so. Our review is based on descriptions of

The Nature of the Input

In most of the approaches mentioned above, attempt is made to provide adequate quantities of input and to ensure that this input is attended to and taken in as 'intake'. In the Natural Approach, particularly in the pre-speaking phase, attempt is made by the instructors, to provide rich quantities of input. Further, efforts are made to ensure that learners attend to this input by giving them opportunities to infer meaning from the context and making use of directives and instructions to which they have to make a physical response. In the TPR, learners are generally exposed to action directives but a number of increasingly complex utterances are introduced even through imperative sentences. Thus, while there is not much functional variety, in the input, there is a great deal of structural variety. Since learners always have to make a physical response to the input, their attention is ensured. In Suggestopedia, learners are exposed to enormous quantities
of input data (in the form of long dialogues and narratives read out by the instructors) from the first day. Since this is done in an environment which is totally relaxing and pleasant, the learners are likely to 'take in' the input. In CLL, since the learner himself controls the input by deciding what he wants to say and the teacher simply supplies him with target language equivalents (this is the chief source of input), the learner's total attention would be on 'taking in' the input. As the learner's communicative needs grow and he requires more of the target language to communicate, the quantity of input automatically increases. The Silent way provides relatively smaller quantities of input, but because the learner is expected to repeat the target language utterance immediately after the teacher and the teacher rarely repeats his utterances, the learner's attention to whatever input there is, is ensured. In the CTP, most of the input comes from discussions of the problem-solving tasks that the learners are engaged in. Since there is almost continuous discussion in the class, adequate quantities of input are ensured. Further, learners attend to this input because of the nature of the problem-solving tasks themselves. Bilingual Education programmes provide large quantities of varied target language input since the subject of study is taught in the target language and the target language is used for all talk related to routine classroom management.
In most of these approaches, attempt is also made to render the input provided in the class, comprehensible through extra-linguistic support. Thus in the Natural Approach, in the early phases of learning, when extra-linguistic support is most required, extensive use is made of pictures and objects as well as of action directives, accompanied by gestures. The TPR also begins with a phase in which the instructor gives commands and learners are enabled to comprehend these commands through use of gestures, body movements, mime and concrete objects. In Suggestopædia, the input, which consists mainly of the dialogues and narratives that the instructor reads out, is made comprehensible by being integrated with appropriate intonation, gestures, facial expressions and body movements. In the CLL, it is the learner himself who comes out with an L1 utterance which he wants to convey to another member of the group and the teacher provides him with the target language equivalent. The learner's previous use of the L1 ensures comprehensibility of the target language utterances provided by the teacher (the Knower or Counsellor). In the Silent Way, comprehensibility of input is ensured through the use of coloured rods of different lengths and also through use of pictures, objects, mime and gestures. Comprehensibility in the CTP is ensured through use of diagrams, maps, tables as well as 'rephrasing' by the teacher. In Bilingual Education
programmes, the language used by the teacher becomes comprehensible when use is made of concrete referents to explain the subject matter content or the second language is related to an ongoing activity rather than to abstract and distant facts and events.

In none of these approaches is there any explicit attempt to teach language structures and grammar and therefore, there is no pre-selection and deliberate sequencing of the language input. The focus of the instructors is thus on using language to communicate something which may be of interest to the learners, rather than on merely teaching language. While the Natural Approach makes some provision for language work, this is done on a purely voluntary basis and is assigned as homework so that those learners who wish to make use of explicit grammar teaching may do so. Similarly, in Suggestopaedia, the input data is analyzed in a post-session to ensure assimilation but not before it has been presented with emphasis on its total communicative effect.

Similarly, none of these approaches advocate overt correction of errors and learners are allowed to communicate as their linguistic resources permit.
The Nature of Learner Participation

In all these approaches except the CTP and the traditionally-organised Bilingual Education classes, small groups are used to maximize learner participation and to provide opportunities for them to use language. In the CTP, teaching is done with regular classes but teachers generally try to seek the participation of all the learners in the tasks and activities. Most of these approaches also seem to provide opportunities for learners to make use of language for 'real' communication. The Natural Approach allows for learners to use the target language for games and also for exploration of personal opinions and experiences. Such meaningful tasks seem to provide opportunities for learners to use language for a variety of purposes and also to become actively and fully involved in the activities. The TPR allows learners to use language for issuing directives to other learners often using, at slightly advanced stages of learning, highly complicated structures to give instructions. Learners are thus given opportunities to use language with their peers and to develop the motivation to communicate. In Suggestopedia, the focus is always on the total communicative effect of the target language used and learners get opportunities to communicate with their peers. In CLL, learners are
encouraged and helped to participate in free conversation of their own choosing from the first day. Right from the beginning they start using language for a variety of speech functions and learn how to carry on an extended conversation. In fact, it is the learners who direct and control whatever conversation takes place in the class.

In the Silent Way class, there are not many opportunities for learners to get involved in a conversation but since they are required to develop their own inner resources and the teacher is mostly silent, they do take chances and learn how to communicate. In the CTP class, the teacher, who is in control of the class and decides on the tasks and activities to be carried out, tries to involve learners in problem-solving and mind-engaging tasks and activities. Opportunities for learners to use language also arise when the problems or tasks are discussed by learners. In the Bilingual Education programmes however, opportunities for learners to make use of language would depend on the way the subject of study is taught i.e., on whether the teacher focusses on the transmission of knowledge or engages students in discussion etc. Again, apart from the motivation to study the subject as a part of their school curriculum, learner involvement too would depend on the extent to which the subject interests them and is of immediate relevance to them.
The Nature of the Learning Environment

In most of these approaches, attempt seems also to be made to provide a tension-free, relaxed atmosphere. In the Natural Approach, learners are not forced to produce language in the initial stages. When they do start using language, they are encouraged to explore personal feelings and experiences thus ensuring not only a non-restrictive learning environment, but also their active involvement in communication tasks. In Suggestopedia, the dialogue reading sessions are followed by varied communicative activities in the post-sessions such as songs, games and role-playing activities. In addition, an environment conducive to total relaxation and pleasure is created by the use of easy chairs and soft classical music. In CLL, the role of the teacher as a supportive Counsellor, as one who is ready to help with all his language requirements as well as the creation of a totally unthreatening group atmosphere is aimed at making the learners feel a sense of security and relaxation. In the CTP, an "incubation period" is allowed for, and only those learners who feel ready to respond, do so. In all these approaches, because the focus stays mostly on the 'message' and not the 'form', and because there is no overt correction of language errors, the learners feel free and motivated and participate actively in the classroom interaction.
2.6 Summary: The Language Learning Conditions

Our review of empirical studies of language acquisition in different settings as well as the discussion of current theoretical models of second language learning, indicates that success or failure in language learning depends on the availability of the following conditions:

1. Opportunities for exposure to suitable target language data.
2. Opportunities for sufficient and appropriate practice in using the target language for real-life communication.
3. Availability of a suitable non-restrictive, anxiety-free and motivating atmosphere.

Details regarding the nature of each of these conditions are summarized below:

2.6.1 Input: Opportunities for exposure to suitable target language data

Language input is considered suitable when it is available in large quantities, is varied, is comprehensible and is of real communicative value. The role played by such input in language learning as evident from the research literature related to it, is presented below.
Presence of adequate quantities of varied language input data

Language acquisition occurs when there is adequate exposure to language input data. For the process of hypothesis-testing and grammar construction to take place, it is also necessary that this input data has sufficient structural and functional variety. Observational studies of first and second language acquisition in natural settings indicate that language development is actually retarded when adequate quantities of varied input data are not available. Current theories of second language learning also indicate that language learning takes place when rich and varied input data is available. The traditional grammar-based approaches however, fail to lead to communicative ability in the second language, apparently because of the restriction on language input caused by the closely-structured, linear language syllabus.

Comprehensibility of input data

When language input data is in some way rendered comprehensible and meaningful to the learner, it is likely to become, 'intake' or be taken in by the learner. There is evidence from first language acquisition studies as well as studies of second language acquisition in natural settings that the learner's language development is retarded when language input is not comprehensible to the child. It has also been
established that during both 'caretaker talk' and 'foreigner talk' (the chief sources of input during first and second language acquisition respectively), interlocutors unconsciously ensure that the language they use is comprehensible and communication with the learner can proceed. Comprehensibility is ensured through the use of shorter sentences, repetitions, paraphrases, and also through use of concrete referents, familiar 'here-and-now' contexts, action directives etc. That language learning may be facilitated when unfamiliar messages can be inferred from a meaningful context is also suggested by current theories of language acquisition. However, the use of decontextualized and meaningless language in the form-based approaches to language teaching, seems to make the task of language acquisition more difficult.

Communicative value of input data

Learners are motivated to attend to input data and to respond to it when this data consists of utterances which have value as real communication and which fulfil real communicative purposes. Both first language acquisition and second language acquisition in naturalistic settings take place during situations of actual communication during which caretakers and native speaker interlocutors attempt to communicate messages which are not known to the learners and are therefore, of relevance to them. These 'messages' are
generally personalized and directed at learners as individuals rather than learners in large group settings, and are thus likely to be heeded. Further, during these communicative situations, caretakers and interlocutors seldom correct linguistic errors made by the learners and make no attempt to deliberately manipulate their own speech in order to teach language as such. Whatever modifications in the talk of caretakers and native speaker interlocutors do occur, are natural and unconscious and the result of the attempt to ensure that they are understood. Theories of second language acquisition also seem to suggest that for language acquisition to take place, exposure to language in situations of actual use is necessary. Focus on form rather than message and overt error correction may cause tension and anxiety and prevent input from being attended to. In fact, it has been observed that in the traditional approaches to language teaching, the use of isolated and decontextualized words and sentences, the lack of a two-way flow of information, the lack of personalized and directed input results in learners paying less attention to the language to which they are exposed. Further, the excessive error-correction in traditional classrooms inhibits spontaneous speech, prevents learners from attending to the communicative value of the language input and thus retards the process of hypothesis-testing and reformulation.
2.6.2 Learner Participation: Opportunities for sufficient and appropriate practice in using the target language for real-life communication

Appropriate practice in using the target language occurs when sufficient opportunities are available for learners to use language for a variety of communicative functions in situations of real-life communication. We summarize below the importance of such practice opportunities in the language learning process as suggested by the relevant literature.

Adequate and varied opportunities for learner participation

Since language learning involves the creative construction of an internal grammar of a language through a process of hypothesis-formation, hypothesis-testing and hypothesis-reformulation, the language learner needs adequate opportunities to use a variety of language in a variety of situations in order to be able to obtain feedback on his success or failure in communicating messages using a particular linguistic form, and to thus test and reformulate his hypotheses about the language. Observational studies of first and second language acquisition in natural settings reveal that language learners get opportunities to make use of language in a variety of situations. In fact, it has been observed that the language development of both first and second language learners is facilitated when they get opportunities to use language for
a variety of communicative functions, e.g., initiating, asking questions, reacting etc. Some current models of language learning also suggest that the second language learner's motivation to learn the target language and therefore, his level of achievement in it, depends on the extent of opportunities available for him not only to hear the target language, but also to use it in actual communication. It has been pointed out that in the grammar-based approaches, the large classes and the lock-step pattern results in teachers doing most of the talking and in learners getting hardly any opportunities to use language. Further, if at all learners do use language, it seems that they do so only for a very limited set of communicative functions e.g., responding to the teacher's questions, repeating linguistic structures, performing mechanical substitutions or using stock question-and-answer routines in model dialogues.

**Opportunities for participation in real communication**

For the process of hypothesis-testing to take place, the learner needs to be motivated and uninhibited enough to use his limited linguistic resources to communicate. This can happen only when the learner gets opportunities to use language for 'real' communication - to get things done, to build relationships, to convey something of significance to him - and when the learner is in a situation in which he has the
right to make spontaneous use of language, to use language to initiate, to introduce new topics etc., and further, when his spontaneity is not inhibited by the need to focus on the linguistic forms he uses to encode his messages. First and second language acquisition in natural settings has been found to take place in such situations. Thus during natural language acquisition, there is a two-way flow of information, learners as much as their interlocutors have the right to initiate discourse, to introduce new topics etc., and since neither caretakers nor native speaker interlocutors correct linguistic errors, learners have less fear of making use of their limited knowledge of language. Further, learners in natural language acquisition situations often have something to say which is of interest and relevance to them and which they feel a pressing need to communicate. That lack of inhibition and motivation are related to success in language learning is also suggested by the research on learner variables. However, in traditional language classes, since learners are generally required to respond to questions to which the teacher already knows the answers, little exchange of information takes place. Again, because teachers control and direct the learners' participation and are constantly evaluating and assessing the learner's linguistic performance, not only are learners unlikely to get opportunities to say what they want to say, to convey anything which
is of interest to them but, because of the fear of making errors, are likely to be too inhibited and at the same time, not sufficiently motivated to make the efforts to create such opportunities for themselves.

2.6.3 Learning Environment: Availability of a supportive, non-restrictive, anxiety-free, and motivating atmosphere

A supportive language learning environment is one which is non-restrictive, anxiety-free, motivates learners and ensures their active involvement. The importance of such an atmosphere as indicated by the literature related to it, is summarized below.

Non-restrictive, anxiety-free atmosphere

Freedom from anxiety and freedom to communicate spontaneously are necessary for the learner to feel uninhibited enough to make spontaneous use of language. Therefore, a non-restrictive, anxiety-free atmosphere is necessary for learners to make use of whatever opportunities may be available to participate in interaction, as well as to create such opportunities for themselves. During first and second language acquisition, the supportive atmosphere provided by caretakers and interlocutors and the lack of emphasis on 'correct' use of language seems to play an important role in allowing spontaneous use of language. On the other hand, adult learners in natural acquisition settings, who sometimes
lack such support from native speaker interlocutors and are inhibited by the need to understand and use the target language at a higher level of abstraction than their knowledge of the language permits, have been found to experience greater difficulty in language learning. That lack of inhibition and low anxiety are predictors of success in language learning is also indicated by research on learner variables. Some current theories of language acquisition also suggest that for language learning to take place, a low-anxiety atmosphere is necessary. In the traditional approaches however, spontaneous language use (and hence opportunities for learning) is inhibited by the anxiety caused by the emphasis on accurate use of language, the formal teacher-dominated atmosphere, the lock-step pattern and the lack of freedom to initiate talk and use language with peers.

**Opportunities for active learner involvement**

Active involvement in interaction is necessary for the learner to feel an urgent need to communicate and to be sufficiently motivated to make use of his limited linguistic resources to convey information, to express his needs, feelings, opinions etc. First and second language acquisition studies in naturalistic settings reveal that learners become actively involved in the interaction in which they engage because
they feel a strong communication pressure to convey information, to get things done, to build and maintain personal relationships. Thus they usually have something to communicate which is of significance and relevance. On the other hand, it has been observed that less successful second language learners lack such a strong communication need. That motivation is a crucial factor in language learning is indicated by research on learner variables. However, in the traditional language classroom, few opportunities exist for learners to become actively involved in interaction, to express themselves, to convey anything which is of particular relevance or interest to them so that there is little chance of learners becoming motivated to make the effort to use language and thus to learn it.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we examined the language learning environment prevailing during first language acquisition, during second language acquisition in naturalistic settings, during second language acquisition in those approaches to language teaching which are believed to bring about successful language learning, as well as the traditional approaches which have been known not to lead to much success in language learning. On the basis of this review, we arrived at a description of the conditions necessary for language learning
to take place. This description of the language learning conditions is used to develop a framework for the observation and comparison of different subject classes. In the next chapter, we report the preliminary investigation that was undertaken to gain insights into the nature of interaction in different subject classes in the school curriculum, and to evolve a suitable research procedure. Following this, we present the system of analysis developed for the analysis of classroom interaction in the main study.