CHAPTER 2

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON THE TEACHING AND TESTING OF SPOKEN ENGLISH IN THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.2 A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTORY OF LANGUAGE TESTING

The development in the field of language testing is generally studied under three main headings such as,

- The pre-scientific era
- The psychometric – structured era
- The psycholinguistic – sociolinguistic era

The pre-scientific era in language testing as the name signifies was primarily characterized by an unscientific approach to language testing or rather by a lack of theory in language testing practice.

The paragraphs that follow will discuss the two more significant phases in language testing research namely the psychometric-structuralist and the psycholinguistic- sociolinguistic era.
The Psychometric – Structuralist era

The Psychometric – Structuralist approach to language testing was popular during the 1960s. Just as the Structuralist approach to language teaching broke down language into individual items (discrete-points) and graded them from simple to complex structures, the testing of proficiency in English during this era concentrated on discrete-points of language which were objectively scored. The basic assumption behind this particular approach to testing was that students’ performance in individual tasks was a good indicator of their ability to communicate effectively in real situations. Discrete-point testing is basically an indirect assessment of language proficiency as it tests the linguistic competence of students. This type of testing continues to find favour and is extensively used by language testers the world over because,

- The data obtained from these tests can be easily quantified
- Assessment of a wide range of language skills is possible using these tests.
- These tests are very reliable because they are objectively scored.

Discrete-point tests are a very convenient and as easy way of testing language proficiency but they do have certain defects. Language is de-contextualized in this kind of testing and therefore it does not assess natural language behavior. To communicate effectively in terms of appropriate language behavior in real life situations it is not sufficient if learners know the rules of language but they must also know how to synthesize individual items of language into a coherent whole. Discrete-point test fail when it comes to the assessment of communicative competence. A holistic assessment of language proficiency should assess the ability to
function appropriately in a specified socio-linguistic setting. As Oller elaborates,

Discrete-point tests necessarily break the elements of language apart and try to teach them (or test them) separately with little or no attention to the way those elements interact in a larger context of communication. What makes it ineffective as a basis for teaching or testing languages is that crucial properties of language are lost when its elements are separated. The fact is that in any system when the parts interact to produce properties and qualities that do not exist in the parts separately, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts…. (Oller 1979)

- The Psycholinguistic-Sociolinguistic era

In the seventies and in the early eighties research in language testing was dominated by the cognitive approach. The test that was favoured during this period was the integrated or the global. This new type of test, the strong votary of which was Oller, was a reaction against the atomistic assumption of discrete-point tests. Oller distinguishes the main difference between discrete-point and integrative tests thus,

“The concept of an integrative test was born in contrast with the definition of a discrete-point test. If discrete items take language skill apart, integrative tests put it back together. Whereas discrete items attempt to test knowledge of language one bit at a time, integrative tasks attempt to assess a learner’s capacity to use many bits all at the same time, and possibly while exercising several presumed components of a
grammatical system, and perhaps more than one of the traditionally recognized skills or aspect of skills” (Oller 1979)

Through different studies, Oller showed that there was a single global language proficiency factor that underlay all language skills. The theoretical justification for his assumption lay in an internalized grammar, a capacity which he believed underlay all language performance. Oller proved his stand point on the basis that a single language proficiency discredited the need for several tests to assess the language ability of learners. This formed the basis for his pet theory which he termed as Unitary Competence Hypothesis. The importance of the Unitary Competence Hypothesis to the development of language testing and research in the field cannot be disputed. Oller’s theory attracted the attention of several language testing experts though much of it was critical. Later studies questioned the concept of a single general proficiency underlying all language skills.

The cloze and the dictation were the two types of tests that were popular during this period. These two types of tests were chosen by Oller because he assumed that they assessed learners’ ability to perform under real-life constraints and therefore they were good predictors of language proficiency. An added incentive was that these tests were economical to construct, easy to administer and could be objectively scored. Though the cloze and the dictation expected the learner to ‘integrate’ diverse language skills simultaneously they were, like discrete-point tests, an indirect assessment of language ability. Neither the cloze nor the dictation offered opportunities for spontaneous production of language. They measured the knowledge of the language system and not so much the ability to utilize this knowledge or the underlying competence in authentic settings. A major drawback in using these tests was the harmful washback effect that they had on teaching. Learners could be trained specifically to develop their
proficiency in indirect tasks rather than develop their communication skills by completing realistic, problem-solving, language tasks.

Discrete-point and integrative tests however, continue to find favour among language teachers, testers, and administrators because the results obtained on these tests can be easily quantified and more importantly, generalized. The testing of grammar for evaluating the overall language proficiency of students is highly favoured by language teachers and testers because they feel that knowledge of the rules governing the use of the language could be considered as a good sample of the ability to employ the rules appropriately in authentic settings. As Davies points out,

…what remains a continuing argument in favour of linguistic competence tests (both discrete-point and integrative) is that grammar is far more powerful in terms of generalisability than any other language feature. (Davies 1978).

Research in language testing in these two major periods was not sensitive to the multiplicity of learning environments, cultures of specific teaching contexts where English was being taught and learnt and more importantly of the learners themselves. Therefore it would not be an exaggeration to say that research in language testing during these periods was in a sense parochial.
EXAMINING LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT. THE NEED FOR NEW RESEARCH AND PRACTICE PARADIGMS in the TESTING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
(Guillermo Solano Flores & Elise Trumbull 2003)

Research in ELT especially in countries like India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka has to include significant time and funds into the successful integration of English Language Learners in the classroom. When the issue of ELLS is considered then issues of language and culture need to be considered besides the place of testing in the ESL course. The above paper discusses three important issues such as test review, test development and language as a measurement of error. Trumbull and Flores proposed the combined use of Generalizability theory (G Theory is a stabilized framework for reliable observation of any phenomenon under specific condition especially assessment of performance)

This approach they felt would help in understanding the communication skills of these learners and their ability to communicate in the second language, their content knowledge and the language of the items used to test them.

VALIDATING AUTOMATED SPEAKING TESTS
(Jared Bernstein 2010)

The testing of spoken English has to be done with a lot of care because it must have both validity, reliability and give the others a clear and exact picture of a student’s spoken competence. The study by Jared Berstein reviewed the automated spoken language tests in some languages like Spanish, Dutch and Arabic. Three main speaking test modules such as interims, semi-direct tests and automated tests were reviewed.
This particular study is of significance to the present research because it highlights the importance of a test item and its influence on the score that a student obtains in the test. At present in the assessment of spoken language, the test format and the items do not change (either depending on the learners or the need of the institution or the prospective employers). The present speaking test in the language laboratory in the affiliated colleges of Anna University has not been reviewed at all to see if modifications need to be done.

2.5 ASSESSING LANGUAGE FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES
(Dan Douglas 2000)

Assessing language for specific purposes, the study analysed sample characteristics of test tasks in specific purpose tests of listening and speaking. The framework to analyze the existing language specific test for students who access to actual target language is limited as the analysis has to depend on published accounts of the TLU situation. The Occupational English Test (OET) is analysed carefully using the framework. The test consists of four components of specific- writing and speaking sub-tests and reading and listening sub-tests. These are non-profession specific. In the speaking component the test taker is interviewed informally for about a minute on the test taker’s professional background and future plans. The test taker is given two role plays lasting for about five minutes and this is assessed by means of a rating scale. The assessment is made by a trained interlocutor during the role play, incase of untrained interlocutors, the assessment is made after the test from audio-cassette recordings.

Douglas discussed the specific purpose language ability assessed in the OET based on the analysis of the test input and scoring scale. The inferences made from the analysis are the rubric of the test is fairly linguistically oriented as OET is a test of speaking ability in English and not a
test of professional knowledge. There is a marked distinction between the role play as the contexts are unrelated and the test taker has to shift contexts rapidly. In analyzing the characteristics, the inputs are fairly explicitly identified in the prompt in terms of setting, participants, purpose, form and content. There is a relatively indirect relationship between input and response as the test taker must employ a fair amount of background knowledge to perform the test task. The language comprehended and assessed must include cultural references, idioms and figures of speech. The listening, speaking task, the rubric, the input, expected response interaction between input and response and the assessment alone in IELTS (International English Language Testing System), UETESOL (University Entrance test in English for speakers of other language) LEACH (Lapped Evaluation of Assistants Classroom Handling) CEIBT (Certificate in English for international business and trade), and Proficiency test for language teachers are analysed in detail.

2.6 TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (Banerjee 2006)

Banerjee feels the most valid speaking test would be the oral interview wherein the students are placed in communication situations and assessed on how they cope. The speaking test assesses the ability to comprehend the spoken language, the ability to frame a response and to express this idea intelligibly in the foreign language. The candidate is also tested for comprehensible pronunciation, stress, intonation. But the assessment proves difficult as two different examiners do not assess the same candidate in the same way. They assess as they seem fit to assess certain aspects of communication and this invariably reflects on the scores in the speaking test.

Setting the candidate at ease and beginning the interview with simple practical tasks enables the candidates to deliver their best in a speaking
test, the interview can begin with a simple reading passage thereby enabling the candidate to get accustomed to the situation and the surrounding. Then the more demanding tasks like role play, current views on current topics, questioning the examiner in reversal of roles and basing the interview on available documents like restaurant menu, road maps etc. can be given. A group oral test can be conducted and some part of the exam can be conducted over the telephone. The real skill in conducting an oral interview is to make the candidate forget they are in a testing situation.

Banerjee concludes his assessment of oral interview by stating that though speaking test is conducted in a fair manner it is difficult to rate it consistently at specified levels in a way which is fair to all candidates.

2.7 TESTING FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS (Arthur Hughes 2003)

Hughes in the section on testing oral ability explains the representative tasks to be included like informational skills, interactional skills and skills in managing interactions. To elicit a valid sample of oral ability appropriate techniques chosen and the formats like interview, interaction with fellow candidates or response to audio- or- video-recorded stimuli can be administered to assess oral ability.

The interview format, requests for elaboration can be made, or, the interviewer can pretend as if s/he did not understand or by asking questions the interviewer can either interrupt or abruptly change topic to elicit information or use single pictures or give role play. The students can be assigned as interpreters or also prepare a monologue or read aloud a passage. These techniques will elicit information and enable the testers to assess information.
Role play along with fellow candidates and discussion can be done. For interaction with fellow candidates, uniformity can be achieved through computer generated audio/video-recorded stimuli.

Planning and structuring an oral test carefully is vital. The test must be feasible, procedures adapted to suit candidates, responses, sufficient response time given, second tester to be employed if tasks are of minimal difficulty, interview carried in a good acoustic room and tester to collect enough relevant information without interrupting or talking too much. The interviewer should be carefully trained and the interviewer need to be sympathetic and flexible with a good command of the language themselves, valid and reliable scoring must be done in terms of accuracy, appropriacy, range, flexibility and size. The accurate measurement of oral ability is difficult as it takes considerable time and effect.

2.8 RESEARCH NOTES ON CAMBRIDGE (Sharon Jordan 2011)

2.8.1 Technology in Assessment

Information technology has aided in computer based testing and the assessment done by Cambridge brings to the fore the ease of administration, speed, reliability in marking, greater security and motivation to few candidates is not comfortable with paper-based tests. Computer-based tests administered worldwide through enhanced connectivity of the internet has made testing easier. These tests can be administered 24/7 and there is no longer the anxiety of waiting for test results.

Cambridge ESOL’s approach uses computer based platforms but they also provide paper based test as an available choice. Though the advantages of computer based tests are many with increased familiarity, computers hand-written response may be better to test language skills.
The use of item banks has led to increase in the use of latent-trait theory of language testing. The features for data analysis has eradicated the possibilities of human error or data manipulation. Further analysis can be extended to detect malpractice too. Further improvements as deemed necessary can be done in computer based tests. Examiner management is done by Cambridge ESOL so as to equip examiners to deliver fair and consistent assessment. Additional features like auto marking enables even acceptable misspelling of a word where appropriate.

2.8.2 Cambridge ESOL Professional Support Network (2011)

Cambridge ESOL trains, people to ensure high standards of testing. In 2008, the Professional Support Network (PSN) was developed as a web-based extranet system intending to enhance and extend the support given to external groups. The first group were the speaking examiners. The training speaking examiner package has a well-established support system that has annual standardization of examiners both in procedures and in marking. This is done through face-to-face meetings. After the development of PSN, the examiner has to take a computer-based assessment allowing access to the material 24/7 and limited flexibility and autonomy. The PSN development processes and stages have gone through feedback and is proven to be best to examine and standardize examiners annually.

2.9 GUIDE TO LANGUAGE LABORATORY MATERIAL WRITING (Higgins 2010)

Higgins begins with elaborating the need for a language laboratory and has a framework for language teaching. He delves deeper for creating a language syllabus and uses contextual and non-contextual examples for context and stimulus. He also enumerates on the checking and evaluating and also the varieties of practice conversation and how a test differs from a drill.
2.10 TECHNOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF 21ST CENTURY LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT (Martin Ripley 2004)

Martin Ripley (2004) in “Technology in the service of 21st century learning and assessment” talks about technology in assessment. Technology can be of immense help in testing language skills in the testing of speaking especially right from recording tests to helping examiners mark candidates accurately technology is of use. This particular study looked at how technology could be of help to organizations that a study that talks about technology in assessment should necessarily compare and contrast paper, pencil tests with e-assessment. The paper concludes with the recent research on e-assessment carried out in Scotland.

If proven, e-assessment can be the key to measure constructs for speaking skills in language classrooms. Proper planning and implementation of the assessment and practical difficulties like embedding of the assessment software in all colleges can also be looked into. The benefits of e-assessment over the regular paper-pencil tests are manifold. Students feel online assessments are easy and this test format has positive motivation and enhances students’ performance. It also gives the teacher more time for feedback. As it is highly reliable and valid and provides rich diagnostic information. It is also highly user-friendly and empowers the learner.

2.11 TESTING SPEAKING (Kathleen Kitao1996)

The difficulties in testing speaking is obvious but the author, Kathleen Kitao (1996) in ‘Testing Speaking’ emphasizes the need for testing speaking skills as they prove to have beneficial wash back effect on the classroom. The author describes the different kinds of testing speaking, like read aloud, conversational exchanges, oral interviews, role plays and group – activities, the author explains in detail how the speaking skills are tested in
each of these speaking activities and how effective they are in providing feedback to the learner. Though testing speaking skills may not be too objective and may include testing listening skills too, if the testing is done according to measurable assessment scales, the wash back effect will be beneficial.

2.12 LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT AND ITS TESTING (Rosselot1949)

Rosselot’s (1949) paper is significant because as early as 1949, he emphasized the role of audio-video techniques in language teaching. The earlier form of audio-aids techniques that formed the testing equipment is discussed. A record cutting machine with the wire recorder with play back were used to teach speaking skills. The machine was used to cut records of the daily pronunciation or conversation assignments and these records supplemented the text. There is an available script to go with the record. These formed a drill and they were usually useful as the elementary lesson. The recorder had short sentences and slowly uttered but in the native accent for the beginners. Each sentence was repeated twice. After these initial classes, the record is cut and the pace is increased to improve the speaking rate of the learners. The record is made easily available to the students in the library to practice the drill continuously. Moreover, the wire is used to transmit the record uniformly throughout all classes. In addition, there are ‘speech clinics’ to help students who require more drill. The equipment may fail if teachers rely too much on this aid and not plan their lessons accordingly to the record.
2.13 TESTING COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY (Moody & Valdman 1979)

Moody & Valdman’s (1979) paper, ‘Testing communicative Ability’ reveals the testing pattern available then for the speaking skills. MLA cooperative and Pimsleur tests are the major tests taken into consideration. The major hindrances for testing speaking skills are lack of time, lack of highly trained staff to test nearly 1500 students, (Testing of speaking in India is an utter failure because of the large numbers to be assessed) the need of a trained personnel to administer and monitor the tests are discussed. A trained teacher should be able to distinguish speaking skills from distracters like general knowledge, intelligence, memory etc... If the tests are too lengthy then it is difficult to obtain a reliable score in the speaking skills trained testers are required. A major drawback was the test of speaking skills when communication is two - way process requiring listening skills too. In this regard, the FSI directed interview was a valid test for communication ability but it was designed according to the level of the final year students. Savignon (1972) had proposed a suitable test but it was only experimental and did not serve its purpose for a larger contest such as this. This led to the (IUFCAT) Indian University French Communicative Ability Test in 1972. The test was valid, simulated genuine conversation, was easy to administer and had reliable scores. The testing had practicality, reliability and validity.

2.14 A NEW LANGUAGE LABORATORY PROGRAM FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS (Wu Yi So 1974)

Wu Yi So (1974) discussed the establishment of a new language laboratory program for advanced students in the 1970’s. The program had tapes that consisted of lectures, speeches and dialogues. Each session was intended for a 50 – minute lab session. The students hear their lessons in a
variety of native speakers’ voices representing different regional background. The tapes were recorded at a normal speed. The exercises were designed to cover all the four skills. (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing). The exercises included guessing from context, listening for comprehension, discriminating sounds & sound segments; recognizing and producing certain grammatical patterns, decoding utterance into written symbols, summarizing, note taking, outlining and finally communicating orally.

The tasks included expansion of vocabulary wherein the words were recorded and the students were drilled in both pronunciation and phrases and idiomatic expressions were also included later. The tapes had a listening task that had receptive and reflective comprehensions. The receptive comprehensions had close ended questions whereas the reflective comprehensions had both close – ended and open-ended questions and those answers have to be inferred from the context or reflected upon. The responses for receptive comprehensions were taped and the teacher discussed the answers whereas the reflective comprehensions showcased their creative answers. The other tasks were discrimination of sound (stress & phoneme), grammatical patterns were taught through substitution, expansion, and transformation etc. the other skill was encoding the utterances into the written language either by a dictation exercise or transcription exercise.

The students are taught note taking, summary writing and outlining. The speaking skills are taught and tested using the repetition, drill, reading fluency drill and oral composition exercise. Though the lab components enhance the learning of the four skills, still the machines cannot replace humans and there is requirement of highly trained lab instructors and teachers to conduct these lab sessions.
The advantages of using the language lab and the practical difficulties in using CALL in the language laboratory are clearly revealed by Hafiz (2013). Though language labs were incorporated to enhance the communicative competence of the learners to prepare them for their prospective jobs, the implementation of CALL has certain hindrances. A survey was conducted in the universities of Bangladesh. The survey revealed the importance of language labs and how students and teachers felt that demonstrations were not needed in the lab. The significance of language labs is that their labs are learner – centric. The activities done in the language labs can be interactive between the learner – teacher, teacher – learner and the learner- learner. The major hiccups in the language lab are that the teaching faculty are hesitant to be upgraded in the technical aspects of the lab, they also find that they are not really competent to solve technical hitches. Moreover, most of the colleges lack the infrastructure required for the language lab and if so then they do not use them due to lack of funds for software and internet facilities. The validity and reliability of the resources are also to be questioned as some of the websites do not have credible materials.

Though students are aware of the search engines, the teacher have to be updated as to which website could be relied for a particular topic or article. The advantage of CALL is that learning occurs either by self- learning or integrated – group learning. Teachers can address all students or a particular student through this. All the four skills can be trained in the language lab provided the teacher prepares for the activities earlier. It promotes self – learning and also refreshes student’s technical skills. The
learning can be smooth only if the necessary components required for the language lab is sufficient.

2.16 COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN A MULTIMEDIA LANGUAGE LAB (Huang & Shih-gen2000)

Huang and Shih-jen (2000) in their paper, “Communicative Language Teaching in a Multi-media Language Lab” says computer simulation in computer-assisted language learning is fun-oriented and instruction-oriented. These help the learners learn through fun. The simulation living Books series (Broderbund) is user-friendly and on the click of the mouse the objects simulate the lesson. It is accompanied by sound effects. Users can click any number of times to simulate the lessons. The methodology and the working for the advanced learner is given. The study was based on the ‘oral practice’ course for students in Taiwan. The students were graduates from junior high school. They were also familiar with the working of the computer as they had taken a required computer introductory course. The multimedia lab features some of the components that a traditional lab does not have. The English learning program has audio, video and also a CD. They can create simulations and work on the assignment given. For example they were asked to create a model town and after creating it they were assigned topics to speak based on the town that they have created. Sim Town software was employed that enables the activity to be fun-and interactive. The study could not present enough evidence to suggest that this teaching method is effective rather than in a traditional classroom. English language teachers must be technically trained to handle such classes.
2.17 ROLE-PLAY IN SCIENCE TEACHING AND LEARNING
(Mc Sharry et al 2000)

In the article “Role play in science teaching and learning” by Mc Sharry et al the authors reveals how role play is the product of the three components like play, games, simulations resulting in learning outcomes when the student is made to perform in his/her classroom. He also emphasizes the fact that role plays could be the best form of experiential learning if they are initiated and designed by the teacher in science education. The general misconception that role plays cannot be used to teach scientific concepts is disputed by the author. He says the desire to play and therefore to learn is a fundamental part of human psychology and is a potentially powerful resource residing in the children themselves. (Mc Sharry et al 2000).

The reasons suggested by the author to use role play in science classes are as…

- It helps students get a feeling of ‘ownership’ of their education.

- He recommends the ideology of Watson (1985) that it helps the teacher the option of linking the work with more feeling, creative side of education and as a method of increasing the manipulation of factual material by children.

- It acts as a platform to teach about moral or ethical values or issues arising from the curriculum like conducting debates on for e.g. genetically manipulated food production or the arguments for/against opening up a new quarry in a schools’ playground.
• Giving a chance to experience certain situations of loaded theories comprising complicated scientific ideas in a way which may be more appropriate to their personal learning styles.

• As a technique/analogy used in explaining scientific concepts to children so that they can end up to conceptualize their ideas which is the highest degree/form of learning (Mc Sharry et al 2000).

Unless the teaching methodology embraces a wide variety of techniques any pupil/student whose style does not match this is likely to be a disadvantage. (Lawrence 1997)

2.18 NEW APPROACHES TO ROLE PLAY IN THE COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM (Paul Mason)

In the article “New approaches to role play in the communication classroom” by Paul Mason, the author discusses the benefits of psychological and recreational effects of using role plays in classrooms and further, believes that by immersion or involving the students wholly in their roles results in a heightened sense of concentration thereby creating an environment of greater involvement and motivation in acquiring the comprehensible input for learning a language. He also suggests that a teacher can engage himself/herself in interactive situation when she/he changes her role to a referee and guide them in all the paths to bring good teaching and learning experience to her students.

For real success, the author suggests that if the students are provided with the context where they can be imaginative, more freedom of
play rather than prosaic and involving related topics, every role play would yield a greater reward.

2.19 ROLE PLAY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
(Liu & Ding 2009)

In the paper “Role play in English language Teaching” by Liu et al the author emphasizes the fact that by employing role play in and as an activity in the classroom a great change in the teaching and learning process can be done. He states that if it is one of the effective strategies to animate the task of language learning in the regular English classroom and further the author tries to arrive at a concrete solution to the various issues raised by researchers in the analysis of proving role plays to be the best communicative language teaching methods especially the teaching of the speaking skills. He presents some of the best results he has arrived at in his research while practicing role play. They are as follows

- Vocabulary is best learnt and applied while performing role plays compared to a single practice of recitation

- Grammar is not considered the ultimate result of language production but good language is expected to elicit and bring forth natural dialogues with a pattern of sentences like exclamation, elliptical forms, interrogatives etc.

- More than 80% of the students could fluently talk and enact in the role play with lot of insight into the appropriate language properties combined with their imaginations and intelligence.

As a conclusion, the author suggests four steps to make a successful outcome in any activity based English classroom. They are
• The teacher should take the effort to portray the real life situation in the given activity.

• At the appropriate situation the teacher should step in to guide her pupils while doing the role play.

• Gradually at the right juncture s/he should interrupt and correct mistakes and errors after observation.

• She has to take the role of a facilitator, spectator or sometimes to initiate, to involve, to bring life onto the drama and therefore the students could participate enthusiastically taking up a role and perform.

2.20 COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING AS A PREDICTOR OF SUCCESS IN ACQUIRING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (Carol Chapelle & Joan Jamieson 1986)

The writers list four affective characteristics of CALL i.e. field independence, ambiguity, tolerance, motivational intensity and English class anxiety. The two main aspects measured in the CALL programme were proficiency in the English language and communicative competence. The first was measured by students’ performance in TOEFL and the second by an oral test. Two main aspects assessed this programme. One was the time spent by students using CALL and the second was the attitude of students towards CALL besides these two aspects, the four affective characteristics mentioned above were also examined.

When it comes to CALL, three questions need to be answered to reinforce the effectiveness of CALL. The three most frequently asked questions are
Do students like it (CALL)?
Do students use it?
Does CALL work?

Though these questions address practical concerns, yet a satisfactory and convincing answer is not feasible since the questions are based on two faulty assumptions. They assume students to be stereotypical in their thinking and they are presumed to act uniformly. The reality is that students differ in their learning styles and strategies. The questions also presuppose that CALL is a single method of introduction, whereas it is actually a vehicle for implementing a range of approaches representing a variety of teaching philosophies. So these questions need to be modified in a way to assess the effectiveness of CALL.

A thorough understanding of CALL is a prerequisite to analyse the effectiveness of CALL. A good working knowledge of Computer–Assisted Instruction (CAI) is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness CALL. CAI has evolved around three distinguishable, instructional ideals. They are individualization, record keeping and judging answers. Individualization refers to the paradigm where students work alone with a computer at their own pace. Limited Proficiency Students can have additional practice outside of the classroom hours since it is individualized instruction and so the pace of the regular classroom activity can go on as scheduled without any slowing down or interruption. This method is so widely used in most cases since it helps the teacher to alter and schedule the materials pertaining to the compatibility of the students. There are limitations to this approach since there is a difficulty in designing a diagnostic mechanism that will enable each student to proceed along a tailor–made path. To provide a student with an ideal learning path through a lesson. The lesson author must have a well-defined understanding of how students learn. Moreover, it is difficult for a lesson designer to assess
and know what each student learns from a lesson, especially with limited proficiency learners (Steinberg 1977).

The capability of collecting data and keeping records is a second advantage of CAI. Data pertaining to any interaction that occurs between the student and computer can be collected and subsequently analyzed. Though CAI has limitations yet it remains a popular method of instruction which is typically as effective as regular classroom instruction and consumes less time for the mastery of the target skills (Collins 1978; Freed 1971: Kuliket al 1983).

Some research findings that go in favour of CAI are that CAI provides students with a better learning ambience where they answer questions being passive readers and they also receive knowledge of the correct response. The important advantage of CAI is judging the answering of students and where the students learn why their answers have gone wrong. The computer records their answers and provides students with appropriate remedial activities (Hartley 1974; Marty & Meyers 1975). Attempts to use that ideals in the ESL classroom have resulted in lessons that differ from each other in many aspects like student-controlled lessons and machine-controlled lessons. Where the former lesson system allows much freedom in initiating learning decisions whereas the student has to simply follow the program’s instructions.

The students enrolled in the Intensive English Institute at the university of Illinois during the Fall 1982 were invited to participate in the research with their TOEFL scores ranging from 430 to 510. The ESL Plato course is primarily a drill and practice curriculum of lessons that concentrate on three skill areas: grammar, reading and listening. Grammar is presented in two series of lessons, the first, a series of 20 remedial grammar lessons that focuses on the extensive practice of general grammar with low vocabulary
level and it targets beginners of ESL. The second series which consisted of 16 advanced grammar lessons give a good insight into the basics of grammar besides reinforcing a wide range of grammar points. Each of the lessons in the advanced category consisted of four mechanical exercises such as substitution, transformations, questions and answers and fill ups.

The reading lessons were divided based on their level of difficulty. The elementary level consisted of 12 lessons exposed the students to specific grammar points that were a reinforcement of the grammar lessons included in the remedial lessons. The main purpose of the advanced level series was to increase students’ reading speed and acquaint students particularly EFL students with American culture and history. The lessons have the same design features, however though lessons have an objective that is clearly spelt out, the lessons are in a sense a failure because the lessons are machine-controlled than learner-controlled.

The listening skill focuses on two thrust areas which are of two different types, spelling and dictation. The spelling series comprises of 14 lessons which differ from each other by the level of difficulty of the words. The instructional exercises used in these series elicit both aural recognition and written production from the student. Student first see a list of words. Then they hear the word in isolation in a sentence and repeat in isolation. The dictation series also has 14 lessons with two levels of difficulty.

Field independence / dependence, a cognitive variable, is defined as “The extent to which a person perceives part of a field as discrete from the surrounding field as a whole, rather than embedded, or …. the extent to which a person perceives analytically” (Witkin et al 1977). A field dependent person approaches a problem in an analytical or and in a global way. Whereas, an FD person tends to get lost in the totality of the stimuli, an FI person is at an advantage situation that require problem solving .An FD is more logical in
acquiring a second language and an FI person may have good analytical language skills which is a more required trait in a classroom environment.

Ambiguity Tolerance is defined as an individual’s ability to function rationally and composely in situations where interpretations of all the stimuli are not fully clear. For individuals who do not have Ambiguity Tolerance situations which are ambiguous are perceived as psychological threats (Bunder 1962). This is very true of students from mother-tongue medium schools at the tertiary level specifically when they are confronted with a machine and a foreign language. This prompts students to classify the phenomenon they encounter rather than seen them as points along a continuum (Levitt 1953). On the hand, students with a good level of Ambiguity Tolerance relish situations which are ambiguous because they see them as opportunities for them to prove themselves (MacDonald 1970).

Motivational Intensity (MI) refers to students’ desire to learn in terms of the effort made by students (hours spent in the classroom) to learn a language.

English Class Anxiety is the degree to which the student feels uncomfortable and nervous in the L2 classroom. Research has found anxiety to be both positively and negatively related to performance in various language situations, a distinction has been proposed between “facilitating” and “debilitating” anxiety (Sconel 1978).

The attitude of students towards CALL using Program Logic For Automatic Teaching Operations (PLATO) were assessed through three items on a general student information questionnaire (Chapelle 1983) which focused on students past experiences with foreign languages study and current preferences in L2 study.
Students’ attitude towards CALL was measured by tabulating the number of hours each student spent working on PLATO during the semester. Students were given 4 hours per week without making attendance mandatory. Consequently, students who do not care to work on PLATO typically spend fewer hours than their scheduled hours.

Students, English proficiency was measured at the beginning and end of the semester by the TOEFL and an oral test of communicative competence. After administering all these tests the data were analyzed using SPSS to perform procedures corresponding to the two questions posted in the study. The first part analyzed focuses on what kind of student likes to use CALL. The second part of the analysis focused on whether students who used PLATO frequently got higher scores at the end semester examination. The results showed that Field Independent students (FI) did not prefer to work on CALL. A significant positive correlation was found between Motivational Intensity (MI) and both time and spent the attitude of the students. Students who were positive about learning English, spent a lot time on CALL. The relationship between motivational Intensity and positive attitude to CALL was stronger than between MI and the student’s time spent on PLATO. There was no significant correlations between Ambiguity Tolerance (AT) and English class anxiety with time and attitude.

Since FI and MI were both significantly related to time and attitude, it was necessary to determine if both variables were needed to account for the variance in time and attitude. To answer this question, four multiple regression analyses were performed. Motivational intensity was found to be a significant independence. The second pair of regression addressed the question in the reverse order. It remains a question to be answered if PLATO really motivated the students to do an independent work. These analyses indicate that people without FI prefer using CALL. By summing up all the
result presented in this article it is evident that PLATO cannot be equated with all possible CALL, rather PLATO may be viewed as an approach adapted and taken in many CALL lessons. Moreover, FI students find the lessons in the ESL PLATO to be inconsistent with their learning styles.

This article ruminates on the effectiveness of CALL and the various approaches and nuances of testing systems involved and presents a vivid and well-studied background details pertaining to the effectiveness of Computerized Language testing systems especially CALL. It is very clear from the article that learners prefer to adapt a method or procedures of language learning activity which closely matches their cognitive style. Though this article limits itself with the analyses of CALL and the parameters involved in assessing the effectiveness of CALL in some sense this application of research is premature and CALL is insensitive and does not satisfactorily answer the individual learner differences (Hart 1981). CALL often promises a lot of field language learning but there is a lacuna in the realm of understanding language acquisition which needs more convincing and convenient strategies that can assess both cognitive and affective characteristics that are important in L2 acquisition. An intelligent use of computerized lessons can do a wealth of good to L2 acquisition. Further it will serve as an impetus to bring forth more intelligent lessons.

2.21 MAKING THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY EFFECTIVE
(Norma Garnett 1967)

Language Laboratory rules the roost in the realm of language learning and acquisition in the day to day situation. The expensive language laboratory, the accessories that go into the effective functioning of language laboratory infrastructure, ambience and staff are very much in vogue for the teaching of a foreign language is a constant subject for discussion, disagreement, and questioning. The concept of making a language laboratory
more effective is an area that is subjected to perennial debate which shows the interest of foreign language teachers today. The Keating California report came to a negative conclusion as to the effectiveness of the language laboratory. This report was repudiated by the large report and various qualified and renowned scholars in the field came to the support of the effectiveness of language laboratory which resulted in a evolution of a criteria which are mandatory and fundamental in an effective application of the language laboratory for the teaching of foreign language. The following criteria are highly recommended to maintain the effectiveness of the language laboratory for teaching of foreign language.

This research paper brings forth the experience of a Spanish language teacher in the language lab. The usual methodology followed in the language lab is to compile audio material based on the textbooks prescribed. Each programme/lesson comprises drill lessons, listening comprehension, basic pattern constructions and so forth. If a student has difficulty in understanding some parts of the lessons, textbook can be used as reference, which most students use in the language laboratory.

The language laboratory classes are scheduled for seven periods in a week each period, with time frame of 20-25 minutes. Repetition would always be beneficial since it is important to have a regular schedule than an hour or two haphazardly in a week which sends a clear signal to the students about the importance attached of the language laboratory classes. Grading is important in laboratory courses as it gives status to the laboratory experience indicating to the student that practical aural-oral work is an important part in the learning of a foreign language. Unlike in classroom situation, the language laboratory allows everyone to participate and interact. Grading a student will stress the value of practical communication in a foreign language. If the source material is textbook-based and limited it will have a negative impact
on the students. Needless to say variety gives pleasure as students need a wide range of different language testing programs that will keep them on the track of language learning.

2.22 TESTING LANGUAGE AND TEACHING SKILLS OF INTERNATIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS (Gene B Halleck & Carol Lynn Moder 1995)

To assess the authenticity of a test of communicative competence for International Teaching Assistants (ITA) the specific context in which the communication takes place needs to be established and the necessary skills involved should be defined. Once this is accomplished, we must ensure that the test that measures the oral proficiency of the students.

The different situation in which ITAs interact are classroom presentations, moderating discussion groups, supervising group work and, laboratory instructions. (Axelson & Madden 1994; Davies, Tyler & Koren1989; Rounds 1987; Shaw & Garate 1983). Initially pronunciation was the only skill required of an ITA. Hinofotis & Bailey (1981) found that pronunciation was considered to be an important factor in Native Speakers (NS). Similarly, Tyler et al (1988) found that non native stress and intonation patterns of Chinese and Korean ITAs resulted in the perception that their lectures were disorganized and unfocused. The speaking rate has also been considered as the important skill in evaluating ITAs communicative ability. Anderson–Hsieh & Koehler (1988) addressed the relationship between a foreign accent and speaking rate of ITAs and their effect on NS listening comprehension of lecture material. They found that faster speaking rates significantly lowered comprehension.

Discourse markers is another language skill which affects the performance of ITAs. This area of linguistic competence has received
increased attention in recent studies. Researchers have noted that the use of overt organizational markers and cohesive ties improves the comprehensibility of ITAs (Douglas & Myers 1989; Hoekje & Williams 1992; Rounds 1987; Shaw 1994; Tyler 1992; Jefferies & Davies 1988; Williams 1992). Some students suggest that the use of explicit discourse markers compensate for problems in pronunciation.

The effectiveness of communication strategies may depend on the level of the learner’s language knowledge. Seliger (1985) suggests that in cases where the linguistic system is deficient, pragmatic factors that contribute to successful communication play a more significant role. On the other hand, Seliger hypothesizes that reliance on pragmatic information and strategies are useful and can serve as compensation for problems of pronunciation or grammar, a minimal level of these skills is mandatory for successful communication. The above claims contradict each other. The discrepancy may be explained properly when we take into account that these two researchers are discussing students at different proficiency levels. i.e. Seliger discusses ESL learners and ITAs respectively. However, since neither studies provide authentic data on the proficiency of the students, the question remains open at which level of proficiency and in which situations compensation strategies are effective. The main objective of this research was to explore this relationship between level of proficiency and effectiveness of strategy training for ITAs in teaching situations. The research cited identifies the situations in which ITAs must use English and specifies the organizational, textual, and strategic knowledge they require. An authentic test would sample all of these skills in an appropriate situational context (Bachman 1991; Hoekje & Williams 1992; Shohamy & Reves 1985; Smith 1994). Initially testing ITAs were done through widely used tests like TOEFL.
and Test of Spoken English (TSE). Both TOEFL and TSE do not use authentic situational contexts and usually TOEFL is used to screen ITAs because it is often the only test international students take before they arrive on campus. These attempts have been unsuccessful because of two correlation between TOEFL scores and ITAs ability to function as instructors (Yule & Hoffman 1990).

The TSE and its institutional counterpart, the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) test, are much more widely used than the TOEFL in ITA certification. Considering authenticity of the Oral Proficiency Test some programs have employed Foreign Service Institute (FSI) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or the American council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Oral Proficiency Interview (ACTFL) which is the version adapted for academic purposes. All these three tests have obvious deficiencies in authenticity. None of them is complete in testing the range of skills necessary for the functioning of ITAs in an appropriate setting. This has paved way to the ITA test which is also called the Smith, Meyers and Burkhalter’s (1992) test. The advantage of this test is that, unlike other tests that are used only in a specific institution, and for which little published information is available the ITA test is fully described in Smith, Meyers and Burkhalter test and a complete rating sheet with descriptions. The rating sheet has separate sections for evaluating language skills, teaching skills, and interactive language skills, each of which is further divided into subskills. The scoring sheet also provides categories for rating both language and testing skills. The data from the ITA test is used to investigate the relative importance of language skills and teaching skills to the overall test results. There were studies conducted to assess this aspect.
This study has focused on the Pre-and-Post course test performance of a limited number of ITAs with widely varying language backgrounds. Paradoxically, the types of strategies which can be most effective in this respect are also those which require a higher level of linguistic competence. This explains why ITAs with higher linguistic competence benefited significantly from their course in compensatory teaching strategies. Another limitation in generalizing the results of this study is that this test employed by ITA is teacher-centric in which the flow of information is unidirectional. The results of these studies show a strong discrepancy in the gains made by students depending on their language skills. Research in testing has noted the reciprocal relationship between language testing and language teaching. This relationship is exemplified by the way in which trends in communicative language teaching have led to an increasing demand for more communicative and authentic language tests. The results also showed that the extent to which language abilities are critical to the testing task varies with the proficiency of the learner. This study examines the relative contribution of linguistic and strategies competence to the performance of international teaching assistants. It describes the strategies in detail and also highlights the limitations of compensatory strategies.

2.23 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORY AND COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING CHAPELLE (Carol1993)

This research paper opens with a question raised by Garrett (1991) “What is the relationship between a theoretically and empirically based understanding of the language learning process and the design and implementation of technology – based materials? “This question is pertinent in today’s situation of language learning and teaching. Garrett referred to language acquisition theory that views language as “a dynamic interactive
system for conveying meaning” (p:74-101), and language learning as “The acquisition of the ability to construct communicative meaning in a new system”. It is complex and difficult to teach an “ability” so the job of the instructor is to create an environment in the class or in the materials that suits and facilitates the acquisition of that ability. These ideas referred by Garrett is a reflection of Krashen’s influential ideas that were based on generative linguistics. Garrett did not want to select a theory but argued that theoretical perspectives were needed to help make sense of the intensively interactive and linguistically rich environments afforded by technology.

Since the early 1990’s, much has been written about constructing and evaluating theory in SLA and the essential preliminaries can be established on the basis of a recent edited volume that introduces nine current theoretical approaches to SLA. Van Pattern and Williams (2007) defined theory a “Set of Statements about natural phenomena that explains why these phenomena occur the way they do”. They also distinguished between a theory and a model but this was not a central concern in CALL since it sought ideas. In other words the emphasis in CALL is more on pragmatic goal of marshalling professional knowledge in a manner that is useful for creating learning opportunities and demonstrating successful learning.

When Garrett (1991) wrote her paper most of the intellectual energy in SLA theory known to researchers in second language (L2) pedagogy in the United States had been devoted to an agenda influenced by generative linguistics. Underwood’s book Linguistics Computers and the Language Teacher (1984) elucidated the implication of Krashen’s monitor theory for CALL, suggesting premises for communicative CALL. Premises were expressed as statements that help the developers of CALL to make pedagogical decisions and it advocated acquisition practice rather than learning practice. The thrust of these premises is that the computer is to
provide comprehensive input to learners rather than what most instructional
designers would consider instruction.

Natural SLA was supported by Generative Linguistics, Universal
Grammar (White1989) and Autonomous Induction Theory (Carroll 2006).
These theories focus on explaining how innate mental structures are
responsible for learners’ development of language. According to them a
learner infers linguistic structure from the environment but the focus is mere
on the prewired linguistic capacities of the learners than the input, implication
of materials and tasks. Garrett (1991:93) questions how instruction could be
tailored to meet the needs of individual students, stating that

“Recent research on specific differences in the way learners
approach learning tasks shows that true individualization of
CALL should provide enough room for students to choose a
variety of approaches and it also should provide alternative
approaches or presentations for the students”.

Generative linguistics has no answer for the above claim or query.
It is inevitable that CALL researchers, designers and users should modify the
process to help students learn faster and better than merely grounding their
theory on natural process of acquisition.

There is always a need to expand the theoretical landscape as
Doughty (1987) explained the interconnectedness between SLA theory and
CALL through a discussion of Krashen’s Monitor (Mclaughlin et al 1983)
and Interaction Theory (Gass & Madden 1985). She argues that theory should
play a central role in designing CALL which will render precision and control
in data collection. By expanding the theoretical discussion Doughty tries to
establish links between theory and two major strands of computer assisted
second language research: assessing effects of instructional conditions and
gathering evidence of learners knowledge and strategies (Chapelle 2001). A number of theoretical approaches to SLA have been explored, each focusing on a particular area of language learning. The aspects of instruction such as individualization of curriculum and materials can be more realistically accomplished through technology.

Cognitive linguistic perspectives such as Universal Grammar, Autonomous Induction Theory and Concept Oriented Approach, believe in the idea of individuals internal mechanisms for linguistic development. Universal grammar and autonomous induction theory attempt to discover a natural development of structural grammatical knowledge whereas concept oriented approach advocate that learners form-meaning mappings based on the input they receive. Their view is that effects of instruction is dictated by natural sequence of development in an individual. These cognitively based theories suggest some orders of acquisition of grammatical form, providing concrete suggestions about sequencing that could be exploited in a grammatically based curriculum.

Processibility theory also aims to explain natural language acquisition in the absence of instruction, but it does so by describing the “Architectures of the language processor” responsible for processing L2 input. The language processor provides a means of understanding to process a language structure, thus constraining the order of acquisition (Pienemann 2007). Because the hypothesized order of acquisition is based on processing principles, application of those principles for sequencing materials gives room for the material users to extrapolate from the data that form the bans of the theory to other grammatical structures they wish to include. Therefore the potential scope of implications from this theory is broader.

Input Processing Theory (IPT) includes a psycholinguistic processing perspective that can be applied to a sense of issues in selection of
material with a primary focus on the nature of input and activities that prompt mapping of meanings. The central idea is that learners are to primarily attend to meaning in the input they receive; in addition, input needs to be accompanied by exercises that help learners to notice specific aspects of the input. This theory provides a rich source of ideas for the design of CALL tasks. Professional literature indicates that such theory-based principles have been used in both commercial and academic development of multimedia materials over the past 10 years, reflecting a link between SLA theory and CALL practice that barely existed a year ago. These links are not evident since these are created by developers who just create rather than write about their developing materials.

The learner-computer interaction may not be on obvious domain for extrapolating Interactionist Theory, but many studies of computer mediated communication have drawn on this theory to conceptualize the results. Pellettieri (2007) found that communication tasks using text chat provided an environment in which learners engaged in negotiation of both form and meaning. As learners they corrected themselves and each other. Payne and Whitney (2002) extended this line of research by investigating the comparative in intermediate Spanish classes. It was found that students who participated in the writer-plus-oral condition outperformed those in all-oral conversation class. Jepson (2005) compared. Voice chat with online written communication, and found that the former generated more response than the letter. Input processing and Interactionist theories are rich in generating specific ideas that can be used in designing and investigating CALL, with particular focus on how input is presented and used for interaction. These theories fail to refer or address factors associated with learning.
2.24 THE ASSOCIATIVE – COGNITIVE CREED THEORY (Ellis 2007) AND SKILL ACQUISITION THEORY

The CREED theory suggests that learning occurs through repeated exposure, a perspective related to connectionism. This idea is obviously a kernel that could be useful for the development of CALL materials and tasks. Skill acquisition theory applies principles from cognitive psychology to the specific challenges of language. Language is viewed as skills that are learned through practice, which provides opportunities for developing declarative into procedural knowledge. This series of studies illustrates how theory based ideas about SLA were extrapolated into principles, principles that paved way to materials and the materials evaluated through the same theory – based perspectives.

The use of technology to produce learning materials and technology to help learners improve their interactional communication in English is more pronounced today than ever before. Technology has radically transformed the way ESL learners have exposure with the target language and varied activities which give them opportunities to see the language. Technology based language teaching and learning has become one of the most exciting areas in ELT today and is a growing field of interest amongst ELT professionals worldwide.

2.25 TESTING IN THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY
(Giulio Di Eleanor 1967)

Any discussion on the resources for learning is seldom fruitful without determining the impact of the resources upon the listening students. The author had taught pattern drills from tapes in the laboratory in accordance with demonstrations conducted at the National Defence Education Act
(NDEA) institutes; but each year the results were not satisfactory so the laboratory usage was limited and emphasis on classroom drills was adapted.

In most cases of language learning, imitation becomes the core faith. The child thinks he must imitate and does not understand what learning is expected of him. The idea that language is only imitation is so fixed in his mind that the child is oblivious of other components of language learning like memory work, spelling work, writing work and hard work. Any attempt without this understanding results in failure. The idea that one can learn easily by parroting phrases is being supplemented by the idea that one must be able to recall the rules quickly in order to speak a passable sentence. It sounds monotonous and dull to be always expressing oneself in sentences or single words or speaking the same words for many ideas. Though knowing words and their pronunciation is important, it is more fruitful when these words can be employed in successful and effective sentence formation.

In America, a lot of emphasis is given for spelling. It is believed that today poor scholarship is often traceable to the lack of such training. Any training that gives or stresses on the important aspects of a work like every accent, every unpronounced ending is good otherwise the whole word is wrong. This approach teaches the possible rule of spelling effectively.

Some students in a laboratory parrot phrases and substitute words in pattern drills, but, they are inaccurate and do not substitute words correctly. If they must write while repeating words, they concentrate better.

The schedule of a class is planned in a way that four days of reading, listening and memorizing is followed by “test” in the laboratory. This hour is a teaching hour as well as a testing time because when a pupil hears a sentence or a story, over twenty times, he is going to learn it even if he has not already learned it perfectly before the test.
Teaching-testing in this manner is very beneficial because the flow of speech is not unnaturally slow or labored. All words are uttered at normal speed, retaining normal word grouping, elisions, liaisons, intonation and natural rhythm, thereby eliminating distortion. This is a method of over-learning, or rather over-teaching, so that the student is imitating to himself correctly without worrying that the other students will laugh at his mistakes.

This paper portrays the nuances of laboratory test and the planning that goes into effective usage of laboratory hours in teaching testing methodology. Though there is a possibility that students can cheat during the test yet the merits has an edge over the limitation.

2.26 “WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY? (Cioffiari 1961)

Cioffiari (1961) in “What Can We Expect from the Language Laboratory?” emphasizes the role of the language laboratory in the learning of a second language which is a skill accomplished by orientation of certain physical and mental processes.

The language laboratory allows the learner to repeat each expression of the native speaker at normal speed of delivery until all parts of a sentence have been grasped by the learner. The framework of the laboratory exercises should permit the learner to practice the four main phases of a language, namely hearing, speaking, reading, and writing. The shortcoming of the laboratory during the hearing phase is the loss of facial expression which becomes a vital factor in understanding. The magnetic tape used in the laboratory facilitates hearing as well as to record and compare objectively. This enables moving closer to a foreign expression. Correct linguistic reflexes can be well established with constant supervision, or else the learner is driven off the desired path. Cioffiari cautions that the results are based on careful
control of the laboratory and the course materials. By listening to passages read at normal speed, the laboratory prepares the learners to move from imitation of set phrases to content and ideas. Once the other three phases are thoroughly mastered in a unit of work, writing can be focused upon.

Cioffari states that the language laboratory can enhance the mechanical phase at all stages, but the mental phase requires a live teacher. Not the machine but the teacher provides the guidance of thought. And hence, the laboratory cannot train a learner to become a near-native speaker of a second language. Yet, it enables to focus training on language as a language. The author concludes that the laboratory lays a foundation of linguistic conventions for higher training. The study could not indicate at which stage the teacher has to reduce intervention or provide guidance during the learning process. The other shortcoming is that the sophisticated electronic products used in language laboratory demand the teachers to be highly skilled and trained.

Another facet of the language laboratory i.e the role of laboratory in helping the individual student with his individual problems. There is perennial struggle faced by teachers between the needs of the class as a group and those of the individuals who make up the group. Every individual’s learning strategy and compatibility differs which poses a great challenge to a teacher of a class with students of different comprehending ability and mind set. A teacher finds ways to arrive at a balance that would keep the whole class engaged and enriched, but truth be told, in most classrooms these conflicting interests are compromised and a balance in approach which is good to all is being practiced. This crisis can be solved with the help of a laboratory which caters to the individual needs of students. If the laboratory is to perform to its full capacity, it must be kept open at hours when students are free to use it and
the students must be encouraged to gain access to the laboratory. There should be more remedial lessons which supplement the main course material.

2.27 THE FUNCTIONS OF THE LANGUAGE LABORATORY
(Paul Pimsleur Jan 1959)

The objectives of the language laboratory is manifold and the work of language laboratory can be divided into parts according to its objectives. The most important, is the aural oral objective, as a substantial part of the work in the laboratory as it aims to improve the student’s ability to understand and to produce the spoken tongue. The other components of the language laboratory is the grammar component and the remedial functions which are becoming increasingly significant in making the language laboratory more effective.

One of the most important objectives of a language laboratory is the aural – oral objective, in which a passage is read to the student, with pauses after each phrase during which h/she reports. The model pronunciation is recorded and the student compares his pronunciation with the model pronunciation and rectifies his/her pronunciation. By comparison a student will became aware of his/her deficiencies and correct them. A student working alone can be expected to rectify certain gross errors when comparing with the model which mostly correspond to phone stress and intonation parameters. For example, a student may learn by oneself that the combination ‘O-i’ in French is pronounced as ‘wa’ that in Spanish one says telefono, and that a change of intonation suffices to change an Italian statement into a question. The laboratory plays an important role in bridging the gap between the way things look and the way they sound; between the written and the spoken language. Regular usage of laboratory will instill in the students certain habits of minimum accuracy in pronunciation. Thus, by this practice in the laboratory their pronunciation will be rectified automatically without
being taught explicitly to do so. The laboratory plays an important role in the early phase of language learning, by creating good habits without waiting for the teacher to prompt or correct each and every of the individual students. To use the laboratory effectively one must be aware of its limitations and of what can be done to overcome them. Linguists are in agreement that an untrained person like an average student soon reaches a limit of their power to criticize their own pronunciations.

In linguistic terms, a student will gain an ability to distinguish and differentiate speech sounds, pitch, intonation and their impact on the meaning of the utterances. But if a student is allowed to learn by himself in the laboratory, then is a limitation since he has no guide posts to indicate when his pronunciation is faulty. So it is important to supervise his work and train him to hear the necessary distinctions. The work of supervising students in the laboratory usually devolves upon the regular teacher, though some institution are able to provide someone for this purpose alone. On the one hand a regular teacher knows his students best and can monitor their progress. On the other hand, a laboratory supervisor should not only have the ability to handle the students but more importantly should have adequate knowledge about the effective use of the equipments. So in any case the person in charge of the laboratory should circulate among the students, listening to each for a few moments, and pointing out areas of difficulty of which & the students may be unaware. This supervisory work should be alone in some systematic fashion. One should understand that laboratory is in no way, a substitute for the teacher, but simply intended to make a teacher’s work efficient. The machine are the docile servants of the creative teacher considering the time constraint, since everyone is at the mercy of time especially in academics where a certain work needs to be completed in a stipulated period of time, a teacher cannot devote time to every individual so a student must be taught the rudiments of
phonetic observation since this will enable them to make distinctions which are strange and difficult for them.

Besides aural-oral objective, a laboratory is very useful in teaching grammar as it copes with two of the major problems of grammar instruction: the need for more exercise material then the instructor usually has available, and the need for a transition from a theoretical mastery of a grammar point to an ability to apply the point orally with ease. A student can have as much oral drill in ten minutes in the laboratory as he can have written drill in several hours at home or in the classroom. Written drill is more time consuming then oral drills which can be more effective, Never the less, the written drill plays an important role in effecting proper spelling in the students.

2.28 ESTABLISHING SELF ACCESS: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE (Gardner & Miller 1999)

Gardner & Miller (1999) in their book ”Establishing Self Access: from Theory to Practice” present us with practical ideas in making SALL transform from theory to practice with authentic research and survey of different case studies. Starting from the issues regarding the acceptance of self access language learning either by the students or the faculty, discussion on the typology of self access facilities, managing self access centers, selection of materials, development of activities, step by step guidelines on evaluation and assessment etc, the book encompasses all the instruction to implement and manage a self access centers successfully and also orient the readers towards independent learning skills and assist the learner assume greater responsibility for their learning.

It is applicable to all the language learners from different backgrounds and educational context. Several new concepts are tried out in this research like creating a learner's profile in the course period so that
students could be able to observe their own abilities and thereby triggering them towards relevant goals and to take up responsibilities for their own learning. Not only the students are made aware of this fact, it also gives a clear picture about learners and their behaviours to the teachers and administrators. It helps the teacher work towards their student's need, wants and objectives and also directs him or her to assist in achieving those objectives.

Learners are encouraged to make use of innovative materials and the source materials for their study were suggested from published, authentic to in-house prepared or students contributed materials. The author talks about introducing activities which can really stimulate language learning. They are categorized into three levels as beginners, intermediate and advanced learners and eventually activities are organized such a way that it helps learners identify their language abilities and difficulties to take up responsibility for their learning and finally encourage them in preparing a study plan for themselves. All these steps motivates any learners to prioritize their language learning activities and help them with the skill to observe, analyse and self-monitor their progress in the process of language acquisition.

2.29 CHANGING LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH LANGUAGE TESTING (Liying Cheng 2005)

The research undertaken by the author Liying Cheng (2005) in his book "Changing language teaching through language testing" highlights the significance of wash back effect. Though there were many studies and research conducted on the effects of educational assessments on teaching and learning, the research topic handled by the author is almost a pioneer step in the field of language testing. In this book Cheng brings out the solid facts about Honk kong Certificated of Education Examination in 1996, a high stakes exam propounds a great impact on classroom teaching and learning in
secondary schools. It was actually conducted for micro and macro level students, the former comprising students from stakeholder groups and latter from secondary school students and thus the wash back effects with regard to teachers' attitude, teaching content and interaction of students with their peers and with the teacher are closely observed and analyzed.

2.30 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the significant research studies on the teaching and testing of language skills in the language laboratory. The review shows that though the understanding is elaborate it is by no means comprehensive. The use of the language laboratory is no doubt significant but there are no conclusive decisions on its success but the studies show that language laboratory is a very useful, value addition to the teaching and testing of speaking the fifth and sixth semester engineering students at Anna University and its affiliated colleges.