CHAPTER 1

PURPOSE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY
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The children of India seem not to think of English as being irredeemably tainted by its colonial provenance. They use it as an Indian language, as one of the tools they have to hand.

(Rushdie in Crystal 2002: 136)

1.0 Introduction

This study proposes to make a comparative analysis of learner variables that affect second language acquisition (English) at the undergraduate level in the face-to-face mode and the Open Distance mode. Though there has been many studies analyzing learner variables in the acquisition of English language in the face-to-face mode, there has been no study in the Open Distance mode. The study will throw light on the learner profile of the distance learners in terms of their socio-psychological and linguistic attributes. At the same time, the study will also revisit learner variables in the previous studies which dealt with face-to-face learners. The study is also an attempt to decide if the profile of the face-to-face learner in the Indian context has undergone any drastic change. It would be interesting to study the outcomes of English language teaching-learning in both the pedagogies.

1.1 Face-to-Face and Open and Distance Learning: From Pedagogy to Huetagogy

In India, primary education is imparted through the face-to-face mode. At the tertiary level, education is made available through two modes- the traditional face-to-face (F2F)/classroom mode and the open distance mode of learning (ODL). The pedagogical assumptions of these two paradigms need to be understood at a basic level.
1.1.1 Face-to-Face Learning

The term refers to the traditional classroom situation of teaching-learning where the teacher traditionally has been at the centre of all teaching-learning activities. The World Bank website defines face-to-face learning/sessions in the following manner:

Face-to-face sessions are **synchronous**. While no communications technologies are required for a face-to-face session, often other technologies, such as LCD cameras and overhead projectors, are used. A face-to-face session or event is a live meeting among participants, instructors, and facilitators. Face-to-face interaction can help to break down barriers and provide real cross-cultural experiences and networking opportunities, thereby assisting in sustaining relationships and encouraging the sharing of knowledge. Classes, seminars, workshops, and conferences, in which all participants meet together in same facility, are examples of face-to-face events.

Experts and other resource people can be invited to participate in a face-to-face event to help validate understanding, provide feedback, and introduce practical examples.

Within a face-to-face session, visually diverse media such as PowerPoint slides, handwritten notes or documents, drawings, physical objects, can be used to emphasize points, shift participant focus, help convey a difficult concept, or simplify instructions. Videoconference, video, as well as audio conference or audio can also be used—especially to bring in resource persons who cannot be physically present at the event.

F2F learning is based on the premise that teacher is at the centre of learning and the learners need to be taught. It is based on the idea of pedagogy where learning takes place with the help of a teacher. Educationists (Hase and Kenyon, 2013) show how education is now slowly moving from the first stage of pedagogy where the learner is like a child who needs to be taught, to the second stage of andragogy where teaching is done for the benefit of the adult learner, and finally to the third level of heutagogy which means ‘self-directed learning.’ Both the modes have scope to move
from pedagogy to heutagogy, more so in the case of ODL where learners are expected to take charge of their own learning experience.

Malcolm Knowles’ (1984) theory of adult learning had contributed towards our understanding of the adult learner, the stage of andragogy, already mentioned in the previous paragraph. Face-to-face learning is now in the process of incorporating the learner as the focus of teaching and learning experience. This paradigm shift towards the ‘learner’ as the centre of teaching and learning would mean

- providing flexible choices for learners about where, when and how they learn
- focusing on the process of learning rather than teaching
- encouraging learner autonomy rather than teacher control
- developing learning activities that require students to construct knowledge from their lived experiences
- making constant effort to improvise teaching and learning approaches

However, not all these implied factors can be actively incorporated into the face-to-face learning environment with ease. For instance the provision of flexibility in terms of place and pace of learning cannot be guaranteed in a traditional face-to-face environment which faces the constraints of space and time. Also, the traditional classroom has been teacher-centred where much of the activities are controlled by strict rules and regulations.

1.1.2 Open and Distance Learning

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) defines the concept of Open Distance Learning (ODL) with respect to important characteristics associated with it -- separation of teacher and learner, institutional accreditation, use of mixed-media courseware, two-way communication, possibility of face-to-face meetings for tutorials, and use of industrialised processes.
UNESCO defines ODL in the following manner:

Open learning and distance education refers to approaches to learning that focus on freeing learners from constraints of time and place while offering flexible learning opportunities. For many students, open and distance learning (ODL) is a way of combining work and family responsibilities with educational opportunities.

Distance education (sometimes referred to as ‘distributed learning’ or ‘distance learning’) is any educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone geographically removed from the learner, with all or most of the communication between teachers and learners being conducted through electronic or print mediums.

The ‘open’ nature of distance learning might be formally institutionalized in such policies as open admissions, and freedom of selection of what, when and where to learn. The openness of distance learning is also seen in relatively flexible organizational structures, delivery and communication patterns as well as the use of various technologies to support learning.

Thus ODL is a pedagogy where ‘Openness’ is a philosophy and ‘Distance’ refers to the mode of learning. In this context, the learner is at the centre of all teaching-learning process.

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), established in 1985, is world’s largest distance learning university with headquarters located in New Delhi, India. The university “was founded to impart education by means of distance and open education, provide higher education opportunities particularly to the disadvantaged segments of society, encourage, coordinate and set standards for distance and open education in India and strengthen the human resources of India through education.” IGNOU envisions “an inclusive knowledge society through inclusive education. It has tried to increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) by offering high-quality teaching through the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode” (see the website of IGNOU, www.ignou.ac.in).
Growing population and the dearth of educational institutions to meet the rising demands have made the role of distance education institutions of paramount significance. The ODL pedagogy offers education in a flexible manner and due to this more and more learners are turning towards ODL in their pursuit of learning. It has been predicted that “distance learning will soon become the hottest education fad in decades” (Gonzalez 1997: 8).

1.2 Second Language Acquisition

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) refers to the process of learning another language after the native language has been learned. It can refer to the second, third, fourth, or any number of the language learnt after the native tongue has been acquired (Gass and Selinker 2008:7).

Much research has gone into the acquisition of mother tongue or L1. On the other hand, second language acquisition is comparatively a younger field with a history of around fifty years. Language learning is not a linear process. It is a complex and dynamic process and the different models we will be looking into detail in chapter two try to predict a hypothesis based on different perspectives. Each individual learner is a microcosm of his/her environment, shaped by myriads of intersecting influences. Larsen-Freeman (1997: 141) talks of the “many striking similarities between the science of chaos/complexity and language and SLA.”

Any language learning is a multi-dimensional dynamic mosaic with different social and individual interacting factors at work. These different socio-economic and socio-psychological factors that could predict/influence the learning outcome or proficiency in a language could be termed as a learner variable. Language acquisition is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also one that is deep rooted in social and psychological phenomena.

Second language acquisition is essentially a multidisciplinary field of research which is highly influenced by the development and studies in the related fields of Linguistics, Sociology, Psychology and Education. Our study focuses on the social and psychological variables that affect Second Language Acquisition. Various studies on second language acquisition from the western context and Indian contexts have been discussed in detail in chapter two.
The main purpose of the study is to look into the learner variables that help or impede in SLA among the learners of English. The effort would be to find out if ODL learners are in any way different from the face-to-face learners. The study would help us in identifying important learner factors that contribute to proficiency in English. It is essential and imperative to have a strong body of research which will help to understand the learner orientation in both the pedagogies. “What is still needed, however, is the development of research tools, method and approaches appropriate to the new paradigms for distance language learning” (White 2006: 247). A comparative analysis of learner factors influencing SLA would be quite helpful in gaining a better insight into the learner and the learning process. In the words of White, there is a pressing need to conduct more research “into individual variables in distance language learning, such as motivation, which would further our understanding of distance language learning and of second language acquisition process” (ibid. 264). The creation of a body of theory in the process of SLA would be helpful in understanding the pedagogical practices as well as the outcome in both the modes of learning.

1.3 English as a Second Language

As seen already in the previous section, we can consider any language learnt after the acquisition of mother tongue as a second language. The teaching and learning of English across the world is done under various acronyms, abbreviations and definitions which may be challenged and justified on various grounds. Some of the common terminologies in currency are English Language Teaching (ELT), Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and the like.

English as a Second Language (ESL) can be defined as the practice and theory of learning and teaching English for use in countries where it is used for academic and/or administrative purposes. In the words of Jay Walker, English has become “world’s second language” (TED 2009).
1.3.1 The History of English in India

India is a multilingual country where English has come to occupy a major position in almost all the fields. It enjoys the status of “an associate official language” (Official Language (Amendment) Act, Government of India, 1967). It is a prerequisite for employment, higher education, and upward social mobility. In a multilingual country like India, English is the link language between speakers of different languages. With a tag of prestige associated with the language, the need for English is felt by all those who aspire to climb the social ladder. English language assumes great significance in the teaching and learning pedagogy and is the medium of instruction or a second/third language in most schools in India. English is taught from primary school level onwards by both private schools and government schools. With so many English learning institutes mushrooming all over the country one can understand the importance given to the English language in the country. “English is in India today a symbol of people’s aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life” (NCERT, 2006: 1).

English in India is considered as the second language in the sense defined by UNESCO—“A language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue” (Cook 1992: 5).

The English language came into the country in the 15th century. The historical and political background of India shows how the language was first imposed upon the natives and then later assimilated by the nation. According to Kachru (1983), English spread in India in three phases- the first was the ‘missionary phase’ in the seventeenth century with the advent of Christian missionary education and teachings.

It was followed by the eighteenth century demand made by the Indians themselves who advocated the learning and propagation of English for the betterment and enhancement of knowledge, especially the sciences. Two of the most important Indian spokespersons of English were Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Rajunath Hari Navalkar. They were of the opinion that the vernaculars and the languages like Sanskrit and Arabic were not equipped to handle the demands of scientific knowledge.

According to Raja Ram Mohan Roy, learning of English would provide the people of India with the “key to all knowledge...all useful knowledge which the world
contains” (quoted in Bailey 1991: 136). In fact he had written a letter addressed to
Lord Amherst, dated December 11, 1883 in which he had suggested educated
Europeans be employed in India to educate the natives in all the western sciences and
available funds be used for the same. The idea was to expose Indians to the western
thoughts and education. Other notable Indians who favoured the inclusion of English
in the academic setting were Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Prince Dwarka Nath Tagore and
many of the Brahmo Samaj followers. They were of the opinion that English could be
a catalyst to the re-birth of a new and prosperous India. The supporters of English
came to be known as Anglicists and Roy’s letter is often cited as a legitimate proof of
the local demand for English. This demand for English led to the establishment of
universities at the three Presidency centres of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1857.
In fact English literature began to be offered as a course in the Indian universities
even before it was offered in the universities of Britain!

In the third phase, the British government policies of the late eighteenth century
consolidated the position of English in India. The East India Company became a
political authority from its earlier ‘trading-only’ stance.

Macaulay’s Minute of February 2, 1835 which laid the foundation of English in the
colonial India is known as the “Manifesto of English Education in India”. In 1837
English was made the official language of education. Thereafter, ‘Wood’s Despatch’
(1854) which is the “Magna Carta of English Education in India” is considered the
“first policy statement of the British government and the Company on education”
(Krishnaswamy & Krishnaswamy, 2006).

It is to be remembered that the slow and steady spread of English did not go
uncontested. There has been resistance to the implementation of English in all ages.
The debate between the Anglicists and the Orientalists during the British era is well
known. The orientalists supported the development of regional culture and languages
and opposed the introduction of English in the field of education in India. Some of the
reasons why the anglicists won the debate were the utilitarian and economical
advantage of imposing English. It helped to reduce the economical burden incurred by
the British government in recruiting English officers. English educated natives could
handle the work and they could also function as mediators with the locals who knew
no English. As mentioned earlier, some of the educated Indian reformers like Raja
Ram Mohan Roy themselves demanded English education for the natives. This demand was also used by the British to leverage their argument for English successfully.

Thus, the language which was brought to the country by the rulers has outlived and survived all stigma and disgrace of colonization to be accepted and entrenched in the collective consciousness of India. The language became a weapon for the people, especially in the pre-independence days when it was used in the freedom movement by political leaders like Nehru, Gandhi, Bose, Gokhale and Tilak to reach the masses (Agnihotri and Khanna, 1997).

In the independent India, English assumed greater importance after the language riots of the 1960s. The Southern and Eastern States of India opposed the implementation of Hindi as the national language as they feared it would lead to the advancement of Hindi speaking states at the cost of other states. The Official Language Act of 1963 which stated that English may be used as a co-official language did not satisfy the opponents of Hindi. Following the violent language riots in Tamil Nadu opposing the implementation of Hindi, the Government of India was forced to amend the Official Language Act of 1963 and grant English the status of “an associate official language” (Official Language (Amendment) Act, Government of India, 1967). English came to be accepted as an official link language as it did not belong to any community or group in the country. This ‘neutral status’ which did not threaten any group in fact helped in making the language acceptable by the people (Sahgal 1983: 61). This could be attributed to the language’s ability to adapt and ‘decolonize’ and dissociate itself from the colonial guilt (Kachru 1987:222). The language wars of post-independence gave rise to the Three Language Formula in 1961 where it was proposed that people from non-Hindi regions study Hindi and English along with their regional language and the speakers of Hindi had to learn Hindi, English and another regional language. However, the Three Language Formula did not get effectively implemented in most of the states. For instance, Tamil Nadu imposed a total ban on Hindi teaching and the Hindi speaking states have not implemented the teaching of any other regional language.
1.3.2 The Acceptance of English

The Position Paper of the National Focus Group on teaching of English, namely, National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005: 1 ) report by NCERT speaks for the average Indian when it clears its stand on the ‘English language question’ thus: “English in India today is a symbol of people’s aspirations for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life.”

According to the Framework, it should be possible to achieve basic proficiency in English in four years’ time within the constitutionally guaranteed right to education for children between the ages of six and fourteen. The government has initiated a new English Language Teaching (ELT) Policy which proposes to provide twelve years of English teaching in government schools.

National University for Education Planning and Administration (NUEPA) data on school enrolment for 2010-11 under its District Information System for Education (DISE) showed that, for the first time, the number of children enrolled in English-medium schools from Classes I to VIII had crossed the two crore mark indicating a 274% rise since 2003-04. The report says that English has become the second largest medium of instruction (Hindi being the largest) since the past four years and is steadily eating into the Hindi numbers. The analysis of the data by The Times of India (Mukherji, 2012) had carried some interesting insights by eminent academics of the country. According to Prof. Arun C. Mehta of NUEPA, “The collection of information under DISE has improved over the years, and now gives a true picture of enrolments by medium of instruction across the country.” This staggering rise in the number of English medium school students could be attributed to the demand for English on the one hand and the low quality of education given by the government vernacular medium schools on the other hand. The rise in English medium numbers could also be attributed to the rise in the number of government English medium schools in the states of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, according to Vinod Raina (1950-2013) who was one of the architects of the ‘Right to Education Bill’. Prof. Shyam Menon, director of Ambedkar University, echoes the average Indian view in believing that the rise in the number of children at English medium schools as a reflection of the aspirations of India's middle class, which believes that an English education translates into greater upward mobility, irrespective of the quality of
education delivered at many schools. In a related report which analyzed a similar trend in New Delhi, Menon had this to say on the sure and steady advancement of English in Indian education, "English is identified with those who are at the core of the country's economy. The closer one's proximity with the English language, the closer one is perceived to be to the core of the Indian economy. The same analogy can be extended to those who live on the geographic periphery of the country's economic centres, and are deprived of both English and the benefits of the economy" (ibid. n.p).

English is seen as an emancipating power by the dalits and the other down-trodden and out-casts of the country. For instance, the movement for dalit emancipation considers English as an important tool as they believe English to be the tool that can help them get better paying jobs and thereby become part of the ‘accepted’ society. English is seen as the new Dalit Goddess. There is even a temple dedicated by the dalits to ‘Goddess English’ built in Banka village in northern Uttar Pradesh. She is hailed “as a deity of liberation from poverty, ignorance and oppression” (Rahman, 2011). Renowned Dalit activist and writer Kancha Ilaiah considers English as a tool for social emancipation. He stated in an interview, “My way of equality is English education. Even if 10% of our children got English education, the intellectual field would have changed. This country would have changed. My hope is education, not reservation — and I emphasise, English education” (Mathur, 2013). According to him, the poor and the marginalized have a ‘right’ to learn English which is the language of ‘administration’ and ‘global communication’ (Illaiah, 2007).

English enjoys an unparalleled status in almost all the social spheres in India like higher education, media, judiciary, job market especially with the coming of the BPOs, MNCs and in administration. According to a ‘State of the Nation’ survey carried out by CNN-IBN, a national television channel in 2009, it was found out that 87% people in India considered the knowledge of English important to succeed in life and 82% people also agreed upon the importance of the knowledge of one’s mother tongue (CNN-IBN SOTN 2009). In the discussion on the survey, Ramachandra Guha, a leading Indian historian and social commentator had said:

The survey actually shows an overwhelming preference for bilingualism. People want to learn English because it means opportunity, access to more jobs in the organised sector, but people also want to learn their mother tongue and I think
that is what we as Indians should aim for - not a worship of English or a
demonisation of English but an ability to learn it along with other languages…

English has come to be “consolidated” and “accepted” as a language with pan-
Indian identity.

The language was brought into the country for “material interests of
employment…” Even after one and a half centuries the prime motive of the learners
of English appears the same! In the words of Graddol (2010), “English will be used
by more people, for more purposes than ever before.” According to him there are
‘three main drivers for English’ namely education, employment and social mobility.
The same sentiment is echoed by the National Knowledge Commission (2009) when
it declares “The time has come for us to teach our people, ordinary people, English as
a language in schools.” According to a recent survey by the Times of India, those who
speak fluent English earn up to 34% more than those who don’t speak the language
(Nagarajan, 2014). It is therefore essential to understand why the language is so
important and why attention should be given to the learning of English. A study
conducted by the British Council had shown the rate of improvement in English
language skills in India was below satisfactory level compared to countries like
China. The anxiety to embrace English is so great that “even the Supreme Court
thought it fit to warn the government that China would overtake India as the largest
English speaking country if the government did not pay attention to the education
sector”! (Nagarajan, 2010).

1.4 The Strange Case of English

The English language arrived on the shores of India with British colonialism and
was left behind by its masters when they left. We can look at the phenomenon of
English in India from two very different, extreme yet interesting, perspectives. One is
the imperialistic and hegemonistic one as defined by Phillipson (1992, 2000, 2003,
2009a, b) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2008). According to them English is a ‘lingua
frankensteina’ that has been promoted under various arguments like its functional
utility as a gateway to the world, its financial benefits, its synonymy with modernity
and social status, to name a few. Phillipson (2009 a: 210) says, “Global English does
not refer to the totality of the globe’s population. In popular and neo-imperialistic
discourse, global English is a trope, a project, a representation that creates the impression that the whole of humanity should become proficient in the language.” The imperialist perspective suggests that the ideology of power resides in the language and how the ‘empire’ has used this to further their imperialist design on the world as a whole. Phillipson (2009 b: 97) strongly opposed the growth of English at the cost of other languages and pushes for a multilingual approach where no language enjoys advantage over the rest. We are warned against English as “Education through the medium of English serves the project of elite formation, excluding the mass of the population…” (ibid, 99) and the possibility of being a threat to other languages.

The liberals who do not hold the imperialistic view contend that people learn English out of their choice and free will. Crystal (1997) is of the opinion that ideology of power or imperialism is not innate to any language. The economic clout wielded by the speakers of English is considered to be the main reason for the spread and acceptance of English. However, Crystal has expressed fear about the global status enjoyed by English at the cost of other languages. An estimated half of the world’s 6000 languages could become extinct as a result of the global nature of English (Crystal, 2000). Pennycook (2007: 115) views the question on English in a more pragmatic manner:

English is for global communication, financial gain, and international identity, whereas local languages are for local audiences and identities. The vision of complementarity between English and local languages, whereby the former allows communication across boundaries, with the latter maintaining local identities and traditions, supports both the benefits of English as a global means of communication… and the importance of multilingualism.

Studies have shown how English has been appropriated for regional and local identities (Canagarajah, 1999) and how globalization has in fact helped in language maintenance rather than language shift (Vaish, 2013). The notion of ‘linguistic imperialism’ has been attacked by Bisong (1995). The incorrect projection of the English language as imperialistic and that of non-native speakers as ‘passive victims’ has been challenged on the ground that English may be used and/or changed to suit the purposes of the learner. The learner is free to appropriate English and to use it for
his/her benefit. Thus, according to this view, English language or the supporters of English cannot be accused of linguistic imperialism.

It should be remembered that some South Indians considered Hindi as a symbol of regional and linguistic imperialism during the language riots of the sixties and interestingly preferred English over Hindi due to its ‘neutral’ association with power! In the words of Kachru (1990: 8), English

… has acquired neutrality in a linguistic context … whereas native codes are functionally marked in terms of caste, religion, region, and so forth, English has no such ‘markers’ at least in the non-native context. It was originally the foreign (alien) ruler’s language, but that drawback is often overshadowed by what it can do for its users... English is being used to neutralize identities one is reluctant to express by the use of native languages or dialects ….

Just two decades after the retreat of the British from India, at least one part of the country was prepared to accept the English language as an independent entity, free from any association with its imperial past. The language has become so deftly woven into the Indian fabric that some even consider it to be part of the Indian languages. It is not a foreign language in the Indian context any more if seen from this perspective. Many of our respondents also were of the opinion that English is no more a ‘foreign’ language. English in India is a mix of both paradoxes and dilemmas which have not been banished altogether (Nair, 2012).

English was the primary language for just 2.3 lakh Indians at the time of the 2011 census, but more than 86 million listed it as their second language and another 39 million as their third language. This puts the number of English speakers in India at the time to more than 125 million. Thus more Indians speak English compared to the individual vernacular languages. It is again a link language between people of India who speak different tongues.

1.5 English and the State of Kerala

Our final sample was drawn from the south Indian State of Kerala where English enjoys more popularity than Hindi. The state of Kerala has a high literacy rate of 94% (Census 2011) and has the greatest ratio of expatriates spread all over the globe.
Under such circumstances, it is logical for the state to have an edge over other states in the proficiency of English. Malayalam is the official language of the state. The Kerala Official Language (Legislation) Amendment Act of 1973 gives equal importance to both English and Malayalam to be used for official purposes in the state. The state follows the three language formula in education as followed in the rest of the states of the country. The Kerala Curriculum Framework (KCF) (2007) follows the vision and mission of National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2005) in accepting and accommodating English as an important part of the curriculum. It is clearly mentioned in the Preface to KCF (2007: 7):

Learners should acquire proficiency in all the three languages by the time they complete their secondary level. They should have the ability to interact with society, using all those three languages. The increasing demand for English and the societal pressure on the learners to achieve proficiency in that language should be considered in designing the curriculum of English language.

With a majority of the households having someone abroad, it is not surprising to see the thriving number of English academies in the state. An estimated number of three million Keralites work abroad. The state government is yet to arrive at the exact figure and efforts are on to put together a sector-wise data bank of non-resident Keralites (see the Kerala government website). The ultimate aim of many from the state happens to be a job abroad as a result of low industrialization of the state. As a result, knowing English is important to the Malayali community.

According to the three language formula, school students in Kerala are taught Malayalam and Hindi. Other less spoken languages spoken in Kerala are Tamil, Tulu, Kannada, Gujarati. A non-government organization based in Baroda, ‘Bhasha Research and Publication Centre’ headed by the noted linguist Prof. Ganesh N.Devy has undertaken ‘The People’s Linguistic Survey of India’ (PLSI), an initiative to map the languages spoken in India. The survey on the languages of Kerala was carried out under the guidance of Prof. M. Sreenathan of Dravidian University, Kuppam, and Prof. Joseph Koyippally of the Central University of Kerala, Kasargod. This is the first comprehensive language survey of Kerala and forms a part of the entire People's Linguistic Survey of India, carried out over the last four years by the Bhasha Research
and Publication Centre, Baroda. According to the survey, Malayalam is spoken by 96.7% of the people in the state. It is followed by Tamil language at a distant 1.8%, and languages like Tulu, Kannada, Telugu, Adivasi languages and other Indo Aryan Languages like Hindi and Gujarati are spoken by 1.5% of the population. The completed volume is to be published soon by Orient Blackswan Private Limited (see the PLSI website for more details).

Malayalam was recently granted ‘classical’ status subject to the outcome of a case in the Madras High Court and now the knowledge of Malayalam has been made mandatory for securing government jobs. From this we can infer that Malayalam is equally promoted in the state. Along with making a strong case for Malayalam, the state also realizes the importance of English.

At a recent conference on “Curricular reforms and classroom practices in English” organized by the State Institute of English and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, at Thrissur, Kerala, it was observed by prominent academics and policy-makers how English has come to occupy a very important position in the socio-economic fabric of the state. The then Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development, Shashi Tharoor, had this to say on English, “If we deny our children the opportunity to learn English, we are denying them their future. Malayalis certainly have to interact with non-Malayalam speaking people, especially because they are forced to go to the rest of the world as their land cannot offer them vast employment opportunities.” He was of the opinion that English should not be treated as an elitist language in Kerala (The Hindu, 2013. March 31).

Tourism is another important factor that provides employment to the people of Kerala in both the organized and unorganized sectors. This provides ample opportunities for the locals to interact with both domestic and international tourists in the state. A record 1.07 crore domestic and 7.93 lakh foreign tourists visited Kerala in 2012 and Ernakulam (especially Cochin) topped the list in attracting both domestic and international tourists (Radhakrishnan, 2013). The knowledge of (even little) English is helpful this sector. The Kerala Tourism Development Board (KTDC) has launched some pilot projects wherein the locals are trained in making places tourist friendly. This includes imparting of basic knowledge of English. Recently, Kerala had become the first Indian state to win the prestigious United Nations’ UNWTO Ulysses
Award for tourism. This is the first time that India has won this award (CNN-IBN, 2014. January 24).

The ‘official’ language of the country, Hindi, however has not become part of the mainstream in Kerala. Hindi is taught in state schools from the fifth grade and is not a compulsory subject in the higher classes. Hindi in Kerala is spoken mainly by the north Indian labour force that has migrated to the state. There is acute shortage of labour force in the state due to the large scale migration of Kerala’s labour force especially to the gulf regions. An estimated 25 million labourers are there in Kerala- 75 per cent of them come from West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa (The Hindu, 2013. February 16).

The district of Ernakulam has the most diverse linguistic profile in the state. As the economic powerhouse, the city of Cochin attracts people from all over the country. The city is the base for Southern Naval Command and other central government offices so it has a floating population of Hindi speakers from other states. There are Hindi Pracharak Missions run by the central government to spread Hindi in the state but only a minuscule percentage of people in Kerala really know Hindi. As a result there is a limited market for Hindi films and music in the state.

We can conclude that along with Malayalam, the state language, English also assumes great significance for the state of Kerala especially in terms of opportunities and growth prospects.

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

The study has taken into consideration a sample population from one particular region of the country, namely Cochin, in Kerala. It may or may not reflect the true nature of the nation’s learner population. We have made use of questionnaire and cloze test as tools of data elicitation. Given the nature of the open and distance learners, we could not use other additional tests of language such as listening and writing. It was very difficult to follow the open and distance learners over a sustained period of time for these other methods of data elicitation.
1.7 Method of the Study

The study was conducted in three phases. A simple pre-pilot was administered to ten first year undergraduate students of IGNOU study centre from various disciplines at Ram Lal Anand College, University of Delhi with the purpose of deciding on learner variables relevant to the process of English language acquisition. Thereafter a Pilot was conducted on sets of both open and distance learners and the face-to-face learners from Cochin. 15 students each from both the modes were approached for the purpose of data elicitation. A close-ended questionnaire and cloze test were employed for data elicitation. The final research generated two types of data - linguistic data and social and socio-psychological data. Linguistic data was elicited by the administration of both global and specific language skill based tests like the cloze test and personal interview respectively. Questions were designed to elicit personal, socio-economic and sociolinguistic data.

1.8 Research Questions

The study will try to probe some social and social psychological aspects related to SLA. The objectives of our study have been identified and enumerated in this section.

1. To identify the difference between the traditional face-to-face learners and the open and distance learners.

2. To profile the second language learner of English in both the modes of learning, i.e., the F2F and the ODL.

3. To examine if the ODL learners are in any way different from their F2F counterparts and identify the variables that distinguishes the ODL learner from the F2F learner.

4. To identify the learner attitudes and motivation to learn English in both the modes of learning.

5. To study the difference between the proficiency levels in English in both the contexts, i.e., the F2F and the ODL.
6. To identify both favourable and limiting variables with respect to social and social psychological factors in the achievement of English as a second language in both the modes of learning.

7. To record the views of the learners, especially that of the ODL learners, about the importance of learning English and the objectives they wish to fulfil by means of learning English.

8. To understand the ODL experience of learning a skill-based subject like English through the open and distance mode of learning and the difficulties experienced by them.

9. To understand learner interest and expectation, especially in the ODL mode with respect to second language acquisition of English.

The study will thus consider some of the social and social psychological variables in both the F2F and the ODL contexts and thereby provide us with a better understanding of the process of second language acquisition/learning of English. A fresh insight into these learner variables could point towards a shift in focus as far as pedagogy is concerned. It could also have far reaching implications in policy making and curriculum designing especially in the ODL system.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter gives the outline of the present study and establishes the need for analysis of learner variables in second language acquisition. The research questions have been identified. The following chapter discusses in detail literature review in the field of SLA and will justify the need for our study.