LANGUAGE ACQUISITION : THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 3
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CHAPTER 3

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Language is one of the prized possessions of human beings. It makes us the building blocks essential for any form of communication. It is the main vehicle by which we know about other people’s thoughts. Possessing a language is the quintessentially human trait: All normal humans talk, no non-human animal does. Since everyone can talk, an average person tends to think that there is nothing mysterious about language. ‘We lose the sight of the need for explanation when phenomena are too familiar and obvious.’(Chomsky, 1972). But the mysterious nature of human language becomes more apparent when one realizes that no one has yet managed to simulate the language ability of human being. Nevertheless, every child successfully acquires the mother tongue within a few years without formal lessons. Therefore, language acquisition is inherently interesting for all concerned.

The study of language and language acquisition is as old as humanity itself. With language, so close to the core of what it means to be human, it is not surprising that children’s acquisition of language has received so much attention. Consequently, great many theories have been proposed in the past regarding the language development in human beings. Language acquisition is one of the central topics in cognitive science. Still, new and new theories deriving insights from psychology and linguistics are being proposed. At this point, it is to be borne in mind that researchers differ in the definition of acquisition. For our purpose, we would like to subscribe to Krashen (1981) who has defined acquisition as “the sub-conscious process of picking up a language through exposure.”

The Scientific study of language acquisition began around the same time as the birth of cognitive science, in the late 1950s. The historical catalyst was Noam Chomsky’s review of Skinner’s Verbal Behaviour (Chomsky, 1959). This was a time when Anglo-American
natural science, social science and philosophy had come to a consensus regarding the questions of language and language acquisition. According to them mind consisted of sensori-motor abilities plus a few sample laws of learning governing gradual changes in an organism's behavioural repertoire. Therefore language must be learned, and thinking must be a form of verbal behaviour. Since verbal behaviour is the prime manifestation of "thought" that can be observed externally. Chomsky argued that language acquisition falsified these beliefs in toto. Children learn languages that are governed by highly subtle and abstract principles, and they do so without explicit instruction or any other environmental clues to the nature of such principles. Hence, language acquisition depends on an innate, species-specific module that is distinct from general intelligence.

During the last 50 years a lot of questions have arisen concerning language and language acquisition. Anthropologists, linguists and psychologists have been addressing themselves to a number of questions pertaining to topics such as the evolution of language, the relation between language and thought, the innateness of language. We will look into the details of these in the following sections.

3.1. EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGE

Human language is made possible by special adaptations of human mind and body that occurred in the course of human evolution. It is these that children put to use in acquiring their mother tongue (Pinker, 1994). Obviously, the shape of the human vocal tract seems to have been modified in the course of evolution meeting the demands of speech. Man's larynx is low in his throat and his vocal tract has sharp right angle bend that creates two independently modifiable resonance cavities (the mouth and the pharynx, or throat) that define a large two-dimensional range of vocal sounds. But in other mammals and early primates the larynx is situated in a high position constraining the production of a range of
sounds. Apart from this physiological privilege, man is endowed with a highly specialized brain without which language would not have been possible.

It is interesting to think of finding out some precursor if any in our closest relatives, the chimpanzees. In several controversial experiments, chimpanzees were taught some hand-signs based on American sign language to manipulate coloured switches or lockers and to understand some spoken commands (Gardner & Gardner, 1969; Premack & Premack, 1983; Savage-Rumbaugh, 1991). Though artificial chimp signaling systems have some analogies to human language (e.g. use in communication, combinations of more basic signals), it seems unlikely that they are homologous to human language. Chimpanzees require massive regimented teaching sequences contrived by humans to acquire quite rudimentary abilities. Still, it is mostly limited to a small number of signs, strung together in repetitive, quasi-random sequences, used with the intent of requesting food or tickling (Terrace, Petitto, Sanders & Bever, 1979; Seidenberg & Petitto, 1979, 1987; Seidenberg, 1986; Pinker 1994a). This sharply contrasts with how human children acquire a language. They pick up thousands of words spontaneously, combine them in structured sequences where every word has a determinate role, respect the word order of the adult language and use sentences for a variety of purposes such as commenting on interesting objects.

It is assumed that human beings did not evolve directly from chimpanzees. Probably both derived from a common ancestor some 6-7 million years ago. This leaves about 3,00,000 erations in which language would have developed in the lineage leading to humans after it split off from the lineage leading to chimpanzees. It is presumed that language evolved in human lineage for two reasons. Our ancestors developed technology and knowledge of the local environment in their life times and were involved in extensive reciprocal co-operation. This allowed them to benefit by sharing hand-won knowledge with
their kin and exchanging it with their neighbours (Pinker & Bloom, 1990). So it can be inferred that human physiological condition and neurological system enabled human beings to possess language without which language would not have been originated.

3.2. DISSOCIATION BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE

The left hemisphere of human brain appears to be designed for language, though how exactly its internal complexities account for language acquisition is still unknown. The brain mechanisms underlying language are not just those allowing us to be smart in general. Strokes befall adults with catastrophic losses in language but may not necessarily leave them impaired in other aspects of intelligence (Pinker, 1994a). Similarly, there is an inherited set of syndromes called specific language impairment (Gopnik & Crago, 1993; Tallal, Ross & Curtiss, 1989) which is reflected by delayed onset of language.

At the same time, there are syndromes showing the opposite dissociation where intact language co-exists with severe retardation. These instances show that language development does not depend on fully-functioning general intelligence. Another example is William’s syndrome, an inherited condition involving physical abnormalities, significant retardation (the average IQ is about 50), incompetence at simple everyday tasks (tying shoelaces, finding one’s way, adding two numbers, and retrieving items from a cupboard), social warmth and gregariousness and fluent articulate language abilities (Bellugi et al., 1990). This indicates that the language acquisition mechanism in human being is something neurologically determined. Linguists like Chomsky (1975, 1991), Fodor (1983) have argued that language component of the mind makes use of certain principles that are not relevant for other cognitive systems such as perception, motor control, reasoning; it is with the help of this component, that languages are acquired.
3.3. LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

There are a lot of controversies regarding the relation between language and thought: Is language simply grafted on top of cognition as a way of sticking communicable labels onto thoughts (Fodor, 1975; Piaget, 1926)? Or does learning a language somehow means learning to think in that language?

The relation between language and thought can be looked at from three different perspectives:

i. Language predominates thought.

ii. Thought has primacy

iii. Language and thought are mutually dependent.

Benjamin Whorf (1956) is the chief proponent of the first claim, who hypothesized that language decides thought. On the other hand, Piaget (1926) and his followers subscribe to the second claim. The theorists who hold the third claim is represented by Vygotsky.

3.3.1. The primacy of thought

Whorf argues that every language has a system of patterns, which is different from that of other languages. He asserted that the categories and relations that we use to understand the world come from our particular language, so that speakers of different languages conceptualize the world in different ways. Language acquisition would be learning to think not just learning to talk. Thinking itself is through language. It is by means of language that man analyses nature, observes or ignores various phenomena and objects, channelises his logical thinking and develops his own consciousness. This means that thought cannot exist without language. The language that a person speaks decides what kinds of thoughts are possible for him. According to this conception, people talking different languages perceive the world differently. In order to illustrate this idea Whorf takes an example of the Eskimos.
Unlike people speaking other languages, they have a wide range of vocabulary to talk about ice. This is because their perception of ice is different from that of people living in other geographical areas.

Whorf’s hypothesis has been rejected by cognitivists. Gipper (1992) for example, questions the conclusions drawn by Whorf based on ‘Hopi’, the language of the Eskimos. Gipper points out that Whorf has not taken into consideration many of the properties of Hopi language. Based on a study on the vocabulary used to refer to colours, Venlin points out that though different words are used in different languages to talk about colours, people perceive colours alike. Though Whorf has observed the close relationship between language and thought he does not say anything about how this relationship works. Similarly, Whorf’s hypothesis does not have an account of the social and communicative aspects of language. His hypothesis does not explain how language is acquired. Had languages been supreme to thought the child would have started to think only after he had acquired it. Moreover, the creative participation from the part of the child would not have affected language acquisition. If we go by Whorf’s claims, we will be forced to say that language acquisition is a stimulus response process. At a later point in this chapter, we will show that the stimulus-response account of language acquisition cannot hold water.

3.3.2. Thought predominates Language

Jean Paul Piaget has shown that thought has an upper hand over language. When Whorf focuses on language systems, Piaget emphasizes the role of the individual. He enquires how thought generates in the child’s mind and how it is reflected in his language. The central point of Piaget’s discussion is how children construct knowledge rather than how they perceive reality.
Piaget assumes that the development of intelligence and thought begins even before the child acquires a language. By the end of the sensory motor stage cognitive ability of the child to represent reality develops. This is what eventually leads to the development of language. Language is the product of thought. The child’s speech to a great extent talks about himself. The child makes use of this egocentric speech for playing or as assistance to his activities. The same idea has been put forward by Sugarman (1987). In his book entitled ‘Language and Thought of the Child’ Piaget has tried to distinguish between ego-centric speech and thought that is communicated. In the initial stages, the child does not distinguish between his own thought and the external world. It is the thought of the language which triggers the process of constructing reality. Just as the child constructs his own truth, he constructs his own reality also. One of the significant contributions Piaget has made to cognitive science is the realization that the child has an active role in constructing thought and learning a language. In short, language gives a symbolic form to thought. It is thought which decides on the kind of language the child needs. Just as a child’s growth determines what size and shape of clothes he needs, is a child’s thinking determines the language he needs.

The primacy of thought was forcefully advocated by Hansforth (1966) based on his study on deaf children. He compared the performance of deaf and children who can hear on a wide range of cognitive activities. For example, most deaf children had grasped the conservation of volume. On the whole, deaf children performed as well as the matched group of hearing children on many tests. Further evidence came from Webster and Wood (1989). They found 12-year old deaf children to be just as good at Mathematics as hearing children of the same age, provided no complex language was involved.
3.3.3. Thought and Language Influence Each Other

Though thought predominates language, thought and language influence each other.

3.3.3.1. Vygotsky

Vygotsky (1986) has given a comprehensive argument on thought and language relating them to the growth of the child through various stages of infancy. In his book entitled 'Thought and Language', he has argued that crying and cooing of the child are sounds that constitute non-cognitive language. These have social and emotional functions to serve. The non-cognitive language strengthens the relationship between parents and the child. Alongside, there is also thought devoid of language. Psychomotor activities, such as the child reaching for a toy with the help of a stake are manifestations of non-linguistic cognition.

With the utterance of the first word, these two independent developmental models converge, and this eventually leads to an explosion of language development (see diagram below). The child is curious to know the meaning of every word that he has learnt. She seeks the name of each experience (e.g. Visiting a zoo), and each object (e.g. Moon). Every fabric acquired then helps the child internalize some other fabric.

Fig: 3.1 Vygotsky’s notion of thought and language
Vygotsky has questioned the notion of egocentric speech as proposed by Piaget. Piaget had argued that egocentric speech does not end up with communication. Vygotsky disagrees with this view pointing out that even the seemingly meaningless sounds produced by the child have a social function. According to Piaget egocentric speech stops as the child grows whereas Vygotsky claims that egocentric speech is a forerunner of inner speech, which represents thought and gives structures to it.

3.3.3.2. R. Schaffer

In Schaffer's opinion more than the quantity of linguistic experience that the child gets, it is the quality of experience, that matters more. While retaining the notion of an innate language component, R. Schaffer focuses on the relationship between mother and child. He argues that language development takes place, not because mother and child have spent a lot of time together, but by virtue of the fact that the child gets more opportunities to take initiative in activities involving both. The mother should be sensitive to what the child is trying to communicate.

3.3.3.3. Bruner

Bruner (1986) tried to identify the real mechanisms involved in non-verbal communication process. One of the ways the child takes recourse to inviting the attention of parents is by "pointing". For instance, suppose that the child points towards TV. The mother might enter a dialogue with the child, and then switch it on. It does not imply that in all communicative situations the child plays a selfish role. Sometimes the mother and the child might be having fun smiling at one another. Thus, the child learns to communicate even before she has acquired the first word. Afterwards, based on taking turns with regard to initiatives verbal communication takes place. The language of the child who has not
experienced the warmth of the interaction, between mother, and child is likely to get affected by serious imperfections.

3.3.3.4. Noam Chomsky

Ever since the Chomskyan model of linguistics came into being in 1957, a number of ideas have emerged during the past few decades based on the notion of Universal Grammar(UG). These are:

a. There is UG in human mind/brain as a genetic endowment.

b. No one knows what his innate knowledge is.

c. UG has a number of subsystems of components. Each component is associated with a cluster of properties of language.

Presently we will elaborate the notion of UG and the role it plays in language acquisition.

3.4. HOW DO WE LEARN LANGUAGE?

Both the East and the West have contributed their own claims and theories about language learning at various points of time. Let us examine the important theories and research findings in this realm.

3.4.1. Behaviourism

It was Behavioural psychologists who first proposed a seemingly sound theory based on their experiments conducted with regard to the behavioural change manifest in animals. The chief proponents of Behaviourism were psychologists such as Pavlov, Thorndike, and Skinner. The behaviourists unconditionally subscribe to the "tabula rasa" account proposed by John Locke, which maintains that the child is born with an empty slate-like mind which gets filled in by experiences from outside.

Behaviourists claim that language development is the result of a set of habit formation. They believed that knowledge is the product of interaction with the environment
through stimulus-response conditioning. All learning, whether verbal (language) or non-verbal (general learning) takes place by means of the same process namely, habit formation.

When it comes to language acquisition the theory proposes that the acquirer receives linguistic input from speakers in their environment and positive reinforcement from their correct repetitions and imitations. If the learner's positive responses are reinforced positively, they acquire language easily.

Behaviourists are of the view that language is manifested through the performance of the four skills. These are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). Naturally learning a language means learning these skills. This is possible only through constant practice. It is also argued that language is the totality of language facts such as structures, vocabulary, usage. Language learning is believed to be materialized by learning grammar and vocabulary.

3.4.2. Structuralism

If behaviourism was dominating the field of psychology, the linguistic field was under the influence of structuralism as conceived by the linguist Bloomfield and his followers. Structuralists showed that any sentence can be analyzed as its constituents called morphemes, which in turn can be split further to get the smallest units called phonemes. Structuralists developed a method of linguistic analysis called "the discovery procedure" using which they claimed the structure of any language can be analysed. With the onset of structuralism linguistics as a discipline was attributed the status of pure sciences. Behaviourism and structuralism joined hands in deciding the methodology for teaching languages.

3.4.3. Limitations of Behaviourist Theory

All the arguments raised by behaviourists and structuralists were severely criticized by cognitive psychologists. It was initiated by the publication of Syntactic Structures (1957).
later, A Critic of Skinner's Verbal Behaviour that came out in 1959 by Chomsky. Even before, there were psychologists who were skeptical about behaviourist claims on learning. But their voices got subdued because of the upper hand that behaviourism and structuralism had enjoyed in those times.

- Behavioural scientists have equated language learning with various kinds of behavioural changes exhibited by animals. It is a fact that animals learn many things through imitation and reinforcement. But with regard to human language learning is a unique process which surpasses all learning processes manifested by the behavioural changes of animals.

- Behaviourists could not account for the productivity of language, which is a unique feature of all languages. A human child can produce and understand an infinite number of novel sentences in novel situations. It is improbable that a child can learn these novel sentences through imitation, and reinforcement.

- Language is species-specific. No other species of animal kingdom is equipped with this. This proves that human brain must have some special device for learning a language.

- A child starts learning language at about the age of two and the process of learning is almost complete before she is five. At the age of five, she is able to communicate with her speech community. Apparently, she has internalized most of the system of her mother tongue in spite of its complexity. This means, the language system is an inherent endowment of the human child. Nobody teaches the honeybee to build its honeycomb; this knowledge inherent for the bee. Similarly, a human child does not have to be taught; how to construct a theory of language that she is exposed to.
Quite often, the child is exposed to fragmentary and disordered utterances. The members of the speech community do not talk to her using full-fledged grammatical sentences. Still, it does not affect the language competence of the child. In an incredibly short period, her knowledge becomes rich and systematic.

Every human child begins to learn language at the age of two. This process is active from 2 to 12 years. The brain of a child also matures between the ages of 2 and 12. Therefore it can be inferred that the functioning of the innate system and the maturing process of the brain are closely related. It is clear that the child learns a language by virtue of a genetic system.

Language learning cannot be treated on par with the learning of a skill, like cycling, which is learnt through practice.

Languages have certain universal properties. They are structurally similar to one another. So the so-called differences between any two languages are restricted to certain peripheral properties. Structuralists do not accept the notion of structural similarities.

It is obvious that Behaviourism falls short of explaining the above mentioned facts.

3.5. THEORIES OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The enquiry naturally leads towards various theories of language acquisition to begin with let us examine Vygotsky's theory.

3.5.1. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

According to Vygotsky, social interaction plays a vital role in the learning process. He emphasizes the role of "shared language" in the development of thought and language which stands for social interaction. Vygotsky (1962) theorised that two levels determine the learning process; ego-centricity and social interaction. The child's actual development level is
determined by independent problem solving. The next level is determined through problem solving under adult guidance in collaboration with more peers that are capable. The difference between these two types of development forms has been called “Zone of Proximal Development” (ZPD). Children are to be exposed to social interaction first and it will eventually enable them build their inner resources. As a limitation of Vygotsky, it is pointed out that it is not clear what Vygotsky meant by inner resource. Also, he over-emphasizes the function of egocentric speech in the development of language. However, Vygotsky’s contention is that language is the key to all development and words play a central role not only in the development of thought but in the growth of cognition as a whole. Therefore, child language acquisition is the result of social interaction.

3.5.2. Piaget’s View of Language Acquisition

Piaget was of the view that language acquisition is a case of general human learning. Ellidokuzoblu (1999) notes that “many scientists, especially the psychologists are hesitant to attribute a domain specific built-in linguistic knowledge to the human infant.” Consequently, they view human brain as a homogeneous computational system that examines different types of data via general information principles. Piaget was one of them. Piaget compartmentalized the course of human intellectual development into four stages:

i. from ages, 0 to 2: the sensory motor stage
   In this stage, the child understands the environment

ii. from ages, 2 to 7: the pre-operation stage
   In this stage, the child is able to understand the symbols.

iii. from ages, 7 to 11: the concrete operational stage
   In this stage, the child is able to carry out mental tasks and language use.

iv. from age, 11: the formal operational stage
From his stage alone the child is able to deal with abstraction.

Unlike Vygotsky, Piaget believed that egocentric speech on its own serves no function in language development. However, Piaget maintains that the child is a “lone scientist”. He disregarded social interaction in language development. Anyhow, Piaget’s viewpoints got much popularity in determining the language acquisition methodology in formal setting.

3.5.3. Cognitive Theory

Piaget’s viewpoint that the learner learns things when she is developmentally ready to do so as learning follows development, is the starting point of cognitive theory. Cognitive psychologists emphasized the importance of meaning in human learning. According to them, ‘learning’ is a meaningful process of ‘relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts’ (Brown, 1987). As regards language acquisition, the procedure is selecting appropriate vocabulary, grammatical rules and pragmatic conventions governing language use. They argued that language acquisition is a holistic process, not analyzable as stimulus-response associations. Language learners pay attention to any aspect of language that they are attempting to understand and produce. Then they become able to use certain parts of their knowledge through experience and practice. There is a consensus among cognitivists on the point that language acquisition can happen automatically.

3.5.4. The Discourse Theory

Language use theory is the basis of discourse theory. This theory emphasizes that the language development of a learner should be viewed based on how the learner discovers the meaning capacity of a language by taking part in communication. Del Hyme’s description of communicative competence (Brown, 1987; Ellis, 1985) reflects the principle of the discourse theory. Communicative competence is meant as the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary,
knowledge of rules of speaking, knowledge of how to use and respond to speech acts and social conventions and also, how to use language appropriately.

The discourse theorists argue that a learner is able to use language at various settings if he cognized ‘various forms of competence such as grammatical competence, speech competence. Then only language acquisition will take place’. Halliday (cited in Ellis, 1985) conducted a study on his own son’s first language acquisition and asserted that basic language functions arise out of inter-personal uses and social interaction.

Discourse theorists say that language is used by using it while taking part in actions. Therefore, children should be encouraged to deal with accomplishing actions so that it will help children acquire language. The communicative language teaching is the best example of discourse theory. In communicative classes, students are expected to learn by doing. They are expected to acquire language through presentation, practice and production.

The discourse theory does not account for innate potential of the learner. It gives over-emphasis to external factors. This theory is similar to the behaviourist view of language attempting to explicate the acquisition process. It fails to notice the UG related principles of language acquisition.

3.5.5. The Speech Act Theory

This theory stands for the view that saying something is a way of doing something. A speech act is an utterance that performs a locutionary (propositional) meaning, and illocutionary meaning in communication. For example, ‘I like your dress’ is a speech act concerning a proposition about a person’s dress with the illocutionary force of a compliment (Ellis, 1995). What one conveys is the literal meaning of the utterance by the words or structures. But the other refers to the effect the utterance creates on the listener. It is obviously normal for everyone to use these utterances in his native language. The speech act
theory does not address itself to the innate system as its focus is on socio-linguistic and communicative aspects of language.

3.5.6. The Universal Grammar Theory

It is argued that Chomsky’s theory on Universal Grammar constitutes the most robust theory of language currently available because ‘it achieves both descriptive and explanatory adequacy’ (Ellis, 1995). The theory of UG is both a description of language and a theory of how knowledge of language is acquired.

Chomsky defines UG as a system of principles, conditions and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages (Chomsky, 1976). In other words, it comprises a set of linguistic universals. Subsequently, Chomsky (1981a) characterizes these universals as consisting of principles and parameters. The term ‘principles’ stands for highly abstract properties of grammar underlying the grammatical rules of all specific languages. Although the far range of principles will not be evident in all languages, there will be no language that contravenes any principle. The term ‘parameter’ refers to principles that vary in certain restricted ways from one language to another. Chomsky (1988) likens parameters to the array of switches found in a switch box. The learner’s task is to use experience to determine which position each switch must be in. The goal of generative grammar is to identify the principles and parameters that comprise UG and to specify which principles and which parameters are operative in specific languages.

3.5.6.1. Universal Grammar and Language Acquisition

Chomsky stresses that language makes use of structure dependent operations. What he means is that the compositional production of utterances is not a question of stringing together sequence of words. Every sentence has an inaudible internal structure which must be understood by the hearer. Amazingly, all children learning language seem to know
automatically that language involves structure dependent operations. Chomsky suggests that humans may have an innate knowledge of this phenomenon.

Creativity is the fundamental aspect of language, which is stressed repeatedly by Chomsky. By this, he means two things: Firstly and primarily he means the fact that humans have the ability to understand and produce novel utterances. Even quite strange sentences which are unlikely to have been uttered before cause no problems for speakers and hearers (Aitchinson, 1989). The utterances are not controlled by external happenings. The creative aspect of language is sometimes referred to as “rule-bound creativity”.

Chomsky has consistently argued that UG principles are inherently impossible to learn and that therefore, they must be innate. They make up the “initial state” and as such provide the basis that enables the child to acquire a language. A child has access to a Language Acquisition Device (LAD) that maps experience into the steady “steady state”.

![Diagram: Experience -> LAD -> Grammar]

He raises two questions to be answered: what is LAD and what is the nature of experience? This enquiry leads to the description of the “poverty of stimulus” and the account of the language faculty.

3.5.6.2. The Poverty of the Stimulus

The language exposure which the young child gets in the target language is seriously impoverished in a number of ways. The input is degenerate (Miller & Chomsky, 1963; Chomsky, 1965; Mac Neill, 1966) in the sense that it contains ungrammaticalities and lack of fluencies which make it an inadequate source of information for language acquisition. The principle argument is that the child would find it impossible to distinguish between what is grammatical and what is ungrammatical on the basis of such input. Wexler and
Culicover (1980) argued that the problem lies not in ungrammaticality but in the fact the input is simplified as this deprives children of the data required to learn the more complex aspects of grammar. This view was later endorsed by White (1989a) and Sharwood Smith (1986) among others. There are a few other reasons for considering input impoverished. The input seriously underdetermines the final grammar. The child is exposed to a subset of total sentences possible in the target language. He has no way to determine whether a given sentence is not heard because of coincidence or not possible in the language. Furthermore, the input does not provide the child with the data needed to determine that certain constructions are not possible. However, as White (1990) puts it plausible theories of language acquisition must assume realistic input. The preceding arguments lead us to the following inferences:

i. Input alone cannot explain language acquisition

ii. The child must be equipped with knowledge that can overcome the deficiencies of the input.

3.5.6.3. The Language Faculty

Chomsky views the language faculty as a mental organ analogous to the liver or the heart. He sees it as ultimately related to the physical aspects of the brain. Thus in certain fundamental respects, we do not really learn language; rather grammar grows in mind (Chomsky, 1980). The language faculty is child's biological inheritance.

This sufficiently substantiates the logical problem that language acquisition would be impossible without language-specific knowledge (Cook, 1991). 'The language input is the evidence out of which the learner constructs knowledge of language what goes into the brain. Such evidence can be positive or negative... the positive evidence of the position of words in a few sentences the learner hears is sufficient to show him the rule of language' (Cook, 1991)
3.5.6.4. The notion of parameters

We have already come across the notion of parameters. This notion can be illustrated with the help of the examples shown below:

1. a. The boy ate a mango
   
   b. Kutti mannu tinnu.

2. a. The book is on the table.
   
   b. Pustakam mesa purath anu.

The construction *ate a mango* is a Verb Phrase with *ate* as the Head and *a mango* as its complement. Similarly, *on the table* is a Prepositional Phrase which contains the preposition *on* as its head and *the table* as its complement. In English-type languages, the head of a structure appears initially and the complement comes afterwards as illustrated in the examples (1a) and (2a). We find a different configuration in Malayalam-type languages where the complement is followed by the head as illustrated in the (b) examples of the above paradigm. The difference in the positioning of head and complement is accounted for in terms of the head parameter. Universal Grammar is the state of mind prior to language acquisition. In the initial state of UG the head parameter is with an open-ended values allowing both options as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head Parameter</th>
<th>Head Complement (1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complement Head (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the linguistic evidence that the child is exposed to the value of the Head parameter is fixed either as shown in option (1) or option (2). Thus, a child in English speech community will fix the parametric value in such a way that the Head will be in the
initial position. On the other hand, a child living in Malayalam speech community will have the Head parameter set with the opposite value yielding the Complement-Head configuration.

Let us examine in some more detail how UG comes into play in language acquisition. As already been mentioned UG is the initial state of mind. It is assumed that UG is of a highly modular nature, each module being a subsystem or component of UG. These components, though mutually independent, interact vigorously with one another yielding various linguistic properties. It is assumed that just like the Head parameter there are certain other parameters as well related to these components and that the difference between any two languages can be accounted for in terms of the values of these parameters. Once the value of each of these parameters is set in one way or the other what is obtained is the core grammar of the language. To put it in other words, language acquisition is nothing other than fixing the values of various parameters of UG. The core grammar of the language takes care of the major chunk of its properties. Every language will have certain properties (for example, idiom chunks) that cannot be accommodated within the core grammar. Such properties comprise the periphery of the core grammar. These properties are acquired by relaxing some of the specifications of UG.

3.6. SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

We have already seen how UG is helping the child to acquire language in an amazingly short period. All that has been said in the previous chapter refers to the acquisition of mother tongue (L1). Researchers have been trying to extend the notion of UG to the context of second language (L2) acquisition as well. In the following sections we will examine how a UG-based second language acquisition model can be materialised.
3.6.1. The notion of "second language"

The term "second" in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is generally used to refer to any language other first language. The distinction between second and foreign language is also relevant. In the case of second language, learning the language plays an institutional and social role in the community. (That is, it functions as a recognized means of communication among members who speak some other language as their mother tongue.) In contrast, foreign language learning takes place in communities where the language plays no major role in the community and is primarily learnt in the classroom. For instance, English is learnt as second language in India, whereas it is learnt as foreign language in Japan. The term 'second language' has different connotations in certain countries. For example, the term "second" in South Africa involving black learners of English is perceived as opprobrious (Ellis, 1994). However, in our country, English is a second language.

Now it is worth to examine whether there is any similarity or difference similarity between the first and second language acquisitions.

3.6.2. How do learners acquire a second language?

Researchers sought to answer this question by formulating two further questions (Ellis, 1994). The first was that what contributions do external factors make to L2 acquisition. This was determined by the social situation in which the learning took place and how was the language input which the learner was exposed to. This is evident in the language the learner produced, that is the language output.

The second question was that what contributions do internal factors make to L2 acquisition. The attempt was to identify the mental process the learner used to convert input into knowledge. Various processes have been identified. One is how the learner does construct an inter-language, making use of the existing knowledge to internalize the
knowledge of L2 such as knowledge of mother tongue, general learning strategies and universal properties of language. The other process accounts for how the learner makes use of existing knowledge to cope with communication difficulties (Ellis, 1994). For instance, the learner does not know the word needed to communicate an idea clearly. He has to resort to paraphrase or word coinage. These processes are known as “communication strategies.”

3.6.3. What is Second Language Acquisition?

As Ellis (1994) puts it, the question how learners acquire a second language does not have a long history. The surge of empirical work that informs current thinking did not begin until the cognitive revolution of the 1960s. In order to study how learners acquire a second language the notion of acquisition should be clearly defined. L2 theorists working within generative grammar framework claim that any explanation of L2 acquisition that is not based on an adequate theory of language will prove inadequate (Gregg, 1989). We have used acquisition as a general term so far. Researchers like Krashen (1981) distinguish between learning and acquisition. According to Krashen, (The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, 1985), we have two independent means of learning ability in second language: Acquisition and Learning.

Acquisition is a sub-conscious process that is identical to the process used in the first language acquisition in all-important ways. While acquisition is taking place the acquirer is not always aware of it and he or she is not usually aware of its results.

Acquisition produces what Chomsky (1965) calls “tacit competence”, a “feel” for language. But learning is a conscious knowledge or knowing about language. When we talk about “grammar” or “rules” we are referring to learning, not acquisition. According to this theory, practice or error correction affects learning, not acquisition. Krashen views that learning is less important than acquisition. Our ability to use second language comes mostly
from what we have acquired, not what we have learnt. Language facts such as vocabulary, structures can be taught and learnt, whereas the language system cannot be learnt consciously. It has to be acquired. It is also important to note that repetition and practice leads to learning, not acquisition. What is relevant for the acquisition of language system is the availability of linguistic experience through recurrence. These notions will be elaborated at a later point.

3.7. PERFORMANCE VS COMPETENCE

It is commonly assumed that if a person is able to perform the four language skills (LSRW), he has learnt the language. This is why conventional methods of language teaching emphasize practising of these skills. Consequently, a lot of importance is given to the performance of the learner. Much care is taken to avoid errors so that correct language input alone gets reinforced. It is necessary to distinguish between linguistic competence and performance while studying a language. According to Chomsky (1965), competence consists of mental representations of linguistic rules that constitute the speaker-hearer’s internal grammar. This grammar is implicit rather than explicit and is evident in the intuitions which the speaker-hearer has about the grammaticality of sentences. Performance consists of the use of this grammar in the comprehension and the production of language.

The distinction between competence and performance has been extended to communicative aspects of language (Hymes, 1971a; Canale & Swain, 1980). Communicative competence includes knowledge of the speaker-hearer of what constitutes appropriate as well as correct language behaviour and also what constitutes effective language behaviour in relation to particular communicative goals. That is, it includes both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. On the other hand, communicative performance consists of the actual use of these two types of knowledge in understanding and producing discourse.
The main goal of SLA research is to characterize learner's underlying knowledge of L2, that is, to describe and explain their competence. However, learner's mental knowledge is not open to direct inspection; it can only be inferred by examining the samples of their performance. SLA researchers have used different kinds of performance to try to investigate competence. Many analyze the actual utterances that learners produce in speech or writing (Larsen-Freeman, 1975). Some try to tap learner's intuitions about what is correct or appropriate by means of judgement tasks (White, 1985), while others rely on the introspective and retrospective reports that learners provide about their own learning (Cohen, 1984).

We have already pointed out that the perspective of language has changed ever since the Chomskyan paradigm came into being. The notions of Internalized I-language and external E-language conceived by Chomsky are closely related to the earlier notions of competence and performance discussed in early versions of Transformational Generative Grammar. Competence refers to the speaker-hearer's innate knowledge of his language whereas, performance refers to how he actually performs the language in concrete situations. When we talk about acquiring a language system we are referring to the I-language since I-language refers to the tacit knowledge of language. Skill-based approaches deal with E-language. Approaches meant for catering to I-language investigate how the speaker-hearer has obtained this tacit knowledge. Language is perceived as the innate property of human mind, and not as something that comes from outside.

Chomsky has categorically stated that the concept of I-language is a misleading one and has denied approaches focusing on E-language. Theories that focus on the physical performance of language and conceive language as a social product, as a class, fall under the E-language approaches. This is because such theories, which look at language as a social phenomenon, analyze language as a collection of some kind of
behaviour or actions of the individuals. Proponents of the E-language approach try to relate the sentence uttered by a speaker to things like the sentence that has been uttered just before it, the relationship between the speaker and the hearer, the context of the speech. They emphasize the social relationship of the individuals at the cost of their mental worlds. Most studies that have taken place in the fields of socio-linguistics and discourse analysis are related to social phenomenon and not to the mental phenomenon. On the other hand, the investigators of I-language aims at representing the state of the human mind. Following Chomsky we assume that grammar describes the speaker-hearer's knowledge of language and not the sentences actually produced by the speaker.

From what has been discussed above it is obvious that skill-based and product-oriented second language programmes focus on E-language and not I-language. Such programmes make use of strategies such as drilling and similar strategies meant for practice and as such can promote learning but not acquisition. Contrary to this an acquisition model for second language is concerned with building up the competence of the learner for which it takes resort to process-oriented strategies.

3.8. MAJOR QUESTIONS RELATED TO SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

SLA Researchers confront a number of questions. The first question is: What do second language learners acquire? Researchers have found that learners often failed to produce correct sentences and instead displayed language that was markedly deviant from target language norms. This observation breeds further questions such as why learners make errors and their language displayed marked irregularities, and why did it change systematically over time.

The answers were sought by formulating two further questions. The first was what contribution do external factors make to L2 acquisition? This involved the social situation in
which the learning took place and the language the learner was exposed to and the output that
was evident from the language produced by the learner. The second question was, what
contribution do internal factors make to L2 acquisition? This is to find out the mental
processes that the learner used to convert input into knowledge. Various processes were
identified. Some account for how the learner makes use of the existing knowledge to
internalize the knowledge of L2. However, it is to be accounted for both external and internal
factors and how the two inter-relate with regard to L2 acquisition. This is another general
question to be inquired into. What differences are there in the way in which individual
learners acquire L2? Much work that has taken place in SLA research is based on the
assumption that learner-language provides evidence of universal learning processes. Also,
learners vary enormously in their rate of learning, their approach to learning and in their
achievements. The study of individual learner differences seeks to document the factors that
cause this kind of variation.

Lastly, the most prominent question arises. What effect does instruction have on
SLA? Much of the early research that investigated naturalistic L2 learners, claims that
classroom learning would proceed most smoothly if teachers stopped interfering in the
learning process and left the learners to learn in the same way as children acquired their
mother tongue (Newmark, 1966). Increasingly, researchers have turned to studying the
effects that instruction of various kinds has on L2 acquisition. This research leads to improve
the efficacy of language pedagogy.

Linguistic theory began to get attracted the serious attention of L2 researchers only
after the publication of Chomsky’s Lectures on Government and Binding (1981). The
following are the key issues:
i. Do L2 learners have continued access to UG?

ii. Do learners experience difficulty with unmarked than with marked features of L2?

iii. Do L2 learners make use of the same learning principles as L1 learners?

Researchers such as White, Bird-Song, Uziel, Sharwood Smith (1985), Berwick Bley-Vroman (1988), Cook, Schachter (1988), have made significant contributions to SLA research. These studies have floated at least three different claims:

i. UG is fully available to L2 learner.

ii. UG is only partially available to L2 learner.

iii. UG is not available to L2 learner.

There is enough evidence substantiating the claim that UG is accessible to L2 learners. For instance, taking cue from the Principles and Parameters Approach suggested in Chomsky (1981, 82, 86), Flynn (1984, 1987) makes the following observations:

The essential faculty for language evidenced in L1 acquisition is also critically involved in L2 acquisition. L1 has a crucial role in cases where the L1 and L2 parameter settings are the same. Learning is facilitated because these L2 learners are able to construct the structural configuration established for L1 in the construction of L2 grammar. The problems of acquisition of complex sentence structures will correspond to the latest stages of L2 acquisition.

Where L1 and L2 parameter settings are different, the learner has to assign new values, the pattern of acquisition will correspond to early stages of L1 acquisition as the learners need to first discover the relevant structural configuration in L2. In case of L2 acquisition parameter-setting is frequently parameter resetting.
Despite the controversy surrounding the idea of a special language faculty, there is a general assumption that several aspects of language learning concern purely formal properties of language. As pointed out in Ellis (1994) it is not always essential to investigate form-meaning relationships for the development of this argument. UG provides a theoretical basis for an examination, the way L2 learners acquire purely formal properties of language. Another advantage of UG based theory of SLA is that UG theory affords very precise hypothesis about specific linguistic properties.

3.9. THE COGNITIVE INTERACTIONIST APPROACH

We have seen that most theories except cognitive theories stand for learning not for acquisition. ELT packages by and large make use of learning models and are built entirely on the behavioural paradigm. If we are to cater to acquisition of the second language we will have to abandon the behavioural paradigm and go for an alternative paradigm that operates on the I-language and not on E-language. This necessitates a pedagogy with its foundation on cognitive theories especially, the theory on Universal Grammar. In our survey on the ELT methodologies prevailing in our country we saw that even the much acclaimed communicative approach cannot facilitate language acquisition for obvious reasons. As Ellis has pointed out communicative approach does not have an account of the innate language device. Practised at its best, the communicative approach might help the learner to communicate in English even though he has not achieved linguistic competence. For instance, an Indian learner might comfortably ask questions such as “You are going to Thiruvananthapuram?” “This is your book?” with a rising intonation thus skipping Auxiliary Inversion. It is true that questions of this kind are naturally used by native speakers also. But they have an equal access to the inverted constructions. On the other hand, since the communicative purpose is served, the Indian learning English may not have the urge to refine
the question form he has used. In addition to this, there is also the unwanted outcome namely, the language learner will have a repertoire of fossilized expressions ("I would like to say something"). As already been pointed out once language gets fossilized it loses its creativity. From what we have said so far about acquisition it is evident that even the eclectic approach will not fetch desired outcome since it too is basically a skill-based approach focusing on E-language.

The only way out is to go for the Cognitive Interactionist Approach which strikes a balance between the linguistic autonomy of the learner on the one hand, which is largely innate, and the social interaction on the other, which takes care of the functional aspects of language. SLAP is an example of this kind. This approach accounts for a paradigm shift from the existing approaches. At this juncture it is worthwhile noticing that the cognitive interactionist model is essentially within the constructivist paradigm. What constitute a constructivist paradigm will be discussed later.

The SLA approach we propose lays its foundation on the following theoretical assumptions:

- The human child is genetically endowed with a language system namely, UG and what we mean by language acquisition is the unfolding of this innate system.
- Language acquisition is a non-conscious process which is to be seen as distinct from conscious process of learning language facts.
- Language is acquired not through imitation, but through insightful theory construction.
- Repetition may be helpful for learning language facts in isolation, but recurrence is relevant for acquisition.
Language is not the totality of the four skills but the inner competence required for the performance of the four skills.

Language acquisition is not a process of linear growth but is that of spiral growth.

Acquisition progresses from Whole to Part. At every stage of learning facts of language that constitute parts are conceived in relation to the language system as a whole.

Static texts have no role in acquisition. What the child requires is a large variety of dynamic texts in the form of discourses.

Acquisition becomes smooth when linguistic experience is real, holistic, relevant, need-based and meaningful to the child.

Overt corrections or expansions cannot facilitate acquisition. What is required is a rich linguistic atmosphere that will provide enough indirect negative evidence.

It is not the quantum of exposure that matters but its quality. Acquisition will take place only if the learner gets comprehensible input through discourses generated in the classroom.

It goes without saying that these assumptions will have implications in all areas related to second language facilitation. This includes material, methodology, environment, teacher-role, atmosphere, and what not.

3.10. CURRICULAR GOALS

The curriculum is a social and political document. It is framed on the aspiration of the society about the future generations. Accordingly, specific areas are given weightage in the curriculum. The place of second language in the curriculum is determined on the basis of the role it plays in the society. English language is an official language and also a means for
national linkage in the linguistically and culturally pluralistic society of ours. In this context, it is worthwhile quoting Krishnaswamy and Sreeraman:

But even after half a century of independence, we have not changed the colonial perception that English language and Western knowledge are enormously superior to Indian languages and oriental learning. We are yet to de-colonize the teaching of English in India. Most of our methodologists are least bothered by the classroom realities. We do not go to our classes to see how English is taught in large classes by some of our good teachers. They need foreign experts to tell us how to teach English in large classes under difficult circumstances. (c.f. N. Krishnaswamy and T. Sreeraman, 1977)

Therefore, a vision for teaching English to our blooming generation is to be evolved. The proficiency of using English language will empower our society so as to encounter life with more vigour and self-confidence. Hence, the curriculum being developed here re-defines the goals of learning English as a second language at the primary level with respect to the formal and functional properties of the language.

3.10.1. English language curriculum: Standard V

A. Comprehension Skills:

1. Listening
   1. Find answers to questions
   2. Respond to requests and directions.
   3. Guess meanings of unknown expressions with the help of contextual clues.
   4. Understand through hearing rhymes, folk songs and simple poems.
   5. Comprehend speech made by others.
II. Reading

1. Understand the substance from notices, newspaper headlines,
2. Understand through reading stories, unfamiliar descriptions, conversations, rhymes, folk songs, and simple poems.
3. Read individually and collectively children’s magazines and various other children’s literature.

B. Expression Skills

I. Reading

1. Read simple stories, narratives and poems with clear articulation and in proper rhythm and intonation.
2. Read various forms of children’s literature.

II. Speech

1. Present rhymes, folk songs and simple poems with action, individually and in groups.
2. Seek and collect information about familiar things.
3. Express requests and wishes and give directions.
4. Ask questions about familiar as well as unfamiliar things.
5. Produce short responses in formal as well as informal contexts.
6. Make comparisons between two objects in terms of height, weight, depth, length, etc.
7. Talk about colour of things.
8. Talk about seasons, weather, etc.
9. Talk about actions done in terms of place, time, manner, means and instrument.
10. Greet people informally as well as informally.
11. Introduce oneself/some one to others.
12. Make apologies.
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13. Express annoyance, regrets and gratitude.
14. Agree or disagree with others.
15. Express one’s attitudes, beliefs and opinions.
16. Express strong feelings and emotions.
17. Invite people.
18. Enquire about others’ health.
19. Make suggestions.
20. Seek and give information, confirmation and assurance.
21. Express various modalities such as willingness, futurity, permission, obligation, possibility, ability, etc.
22. Make conditions.
23. Talk about cause and consequences.
24. Make concessions.
25. Talk about simultaneous as well as consecutive actions.
26. Talk and enquire about time.
27. Talk about numbers and quantity.
28. Participate actively in various communication games.

III. Writing

1. Write legibly giving proper shape to the letters and keeping appropriate distance between letters and words.
2. Use punctuation such as comma, full stop, semi-colon, exclamation, question mark, capital letters, etc. properly.
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C. Creative Expression

1. Talk about interesting incidents from stories previously heard or read. Imagine one thing to be another and enact it out.

2. Build up stories from pictures, orally and then in writing.

3. Tell stories and produce narratives in simple English.

4. Develop stories from outlines.

5. Write conversations based on pictures and incidents.

6. Write diary, letters and simple descriptions, and narratives.

7. Give titles to pictures, stories and poems.

8. Write parodies to familiar proverbs.


10. Perform role plays emerging from stories, poems and narratives.

11. Compose rhymes and simple poems.

3.11. SECOND LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

The shift in focus from E-language to I-language necessitates a corresponding paradigm shift in the methodology as well. This is a natural fall out of the shift from the behaviourist paradigm to the cognitive interactionist or the constructivist paradigm. It is from this perspective that we have mentioned earlier about the shift from a learning model to the acquisition model. The latter will have to accommodate the complementary relationship between individual construction and social interaction. Whether knowledge of language is seen as socially situated or whether it is considered to be an individual construction has implication for the ways in which learning is conceptualised. In stark contrast to the behaviourist model of teaching, activity based, child-centred pedagogy has evolved based on its strong foundations of constructivism which was generated from cognitive psychology. The
central claim of constructivism is that the child constructs her knowledge. Though we have
been using the term constructivism in a taken-for-granted manner, we have not so far
elaborated its salient features. In due course, we will take up the challenge of giving
theoretical and practical profiles of constructivism. But before that we will present a few
more details of the behaviourist paradigm.

It may be recalled that the behaviourist psychology is interested in the study of
changes that is manifest in behaviour as opposed to changes in mental states. Learning is
conceived as a process of changing or conditioning observable behaviour as a result of
selective reinforcement of an individual’s response to events (stimuli) that occur in the
environment. The mind is seen as a mirror reflecting reality. Behaviourism centres on the
learner’s effort to accumulate knowledge and on the teacher’s effort to transmit it. It therefore
relies on a transmission-instructionist approach, which is largely passive, teacher-directed,
and teacher-controlled.

The behaviourist model has resulted in somewhat of a stereo-typed portrayal of
teaching and learning which has been widely criticized. Susan Hanley describes this model as
follows:

Classes are usually driven by “teacher talk” and dependent heavily on textbooks for
the structure of the course. This is the idea that there is a fixed world of knowledge
that the students must come to know. Information is divided into parts and built into a
whole concept. Teacher serves as pipelines and seek to transfer their thoughts and
meanings to the passive students. There is little room for student-initiated questions,
independent thoughts or interaction between students. The goal of the learner is to
regurgitate the accepted explanation of methodology expostulated by the teacher.
Where behaviourism emphasizes observable, external behaviours, and as such, avoids reference to meaning, representation and thought, constructivism takes a cognitive approach. This difference has profound implications for all aspects of pedagogy. The way in which knowledge is conceived and acquired, the types of knowledge, skills and activities emphasize the role of the learner and the teacher, how goals are established; all of these factors are articulated differently in the constructivist perspective. Susan Hanley has enumerated the theoretical underpinnings of constructivism as follows:

1. Knowledge as whole is problematized, not just the learner’s subjective knowledge, including mathematical knowledge and logic.

2. Methodological approaches are required to be much more circumspect and reflexive because there is no “royal road” to truth or near-truth.

3. The focus of concern is on the learner’s cognition, beliefs, and conceptions of knowledge.

4. The focus of concern with the teacher and teacher education is not just with the teacher’s knowledge of subject matter and diagnostic skills, but with the teacher’s beliefs, conceptions and personal theories about subject matter, teaching and learning.

5. Although we can tentatively come to know about the knowledge of others by interpreting their language and actions through our own conceptual constructs, others have realities that are independent of ours. Indeed it is the realities of others along with our own realities that we strive to understand, but we cannot take any of these realities as fixed. An awareness of social construction of knowledge suggests a pedagogical emphasis on discussion, collaboration, negotiation and shared meanings...
The following are the characteristics of constructivist learning and teaching:

1. Multiple perspectives and representations of concepts and content are presented and encouraged.

2. Course and objectives are derived by the student or in negotiation with the teacher or system.

3. Teachers are in the role of guides, monitors, coaches, tutors and facilitators.

4. Activities, opportunities, tool and environments are provided to encourage meta-cognition, self-analysis, self-regulation, self-reflection and self-awareness.

5. The student plays a central role in mediating and controlling learning.

6. Learning situations, environments, skills, content and tasks are relevant, realistic, authentic, and represent the natural complexities of the "real world".

7. Primary source of data are used in order to ensure authenticity and real-world complexity.

8. Knowledge construction and not reproduction is emphasized.

9. The construction takes place in individual contexts and through social negotiation, collaboration and experience.

10. The learner's previous knowledge constructions, beliefs and attitudes are considered in the knowledge construction process.

11. Problem-solving, higher order thinking skills and deep understanding are considered in the knowledge construction process.

12. Errors provide opportunities for insight into student's previous knowledge constructions.

13. Exploration in favoured approach in order to encourage students to seek knowledge independently and to manage the pursuit of their goals.
14. Learners are provided with the opportunity for apprenticeship, learning in which there is an increasing complexity of task, skills and knowledge acquisition.

15. Knowledge complexity is reflected in an emphasis on conceptual inter-relatedness and inter-disciplinary learning.

16. Collaborative learning and co-operative learning are favoured in order to expose the learner to alternative view-points.

17. Scaffolding is facilitated to help students perform just beyond the limits of their ability.

18. Assessment is authentic and inter-woven with teaching.

3.12. TEACHER ROLE

In the case of traditional approaches the teacher acts as a knower/informer and the learner as an information seeker (Corder, 1977b). As a matter of fact the role of the teacher in an interactionist classroom (henceforth we will use the term constructivist classroom) determines the entire linguistic exposure the learners get. Teacher knows the potential of the children in his class. He can plan his activities in such a way that all children get equitable support for L2 acquisition.

Teacher plans his talk so as to get comprehensible input for the children. This is in the context of facilitating suitable learning activities so that he can make the input crucial and relevant to the children. This helps creating an atmosphere of English language through interacting with the learners in English. Teacher is the person who decides what sort of materials are to be used for classroom transaction. His choice of materials is important in the sense that it is child-friendly and suitable to the learning activities designed to enhance acquisition. The teacher continuously evaluates the children to ensure that they achieve curricular goals by giving encouragement and support as and when required.
The role of a teacher in a cognitive interactionist/ constructivist classroom can be identified as follows:

3.12.1. Facilitator

The teacher in the traditional classroom is at the transmitting end of information and the learner is always placed at the receiving end, who are destined to be passive listeners. Such a situation will not ensure acquisition. Instead of giving information the teacher has to facilitate the learning situation in such a way that the learners construct their own knowledge.

3.12.2. Researcher

What a teacher does in a constructivist class is that he plans according to the need of the learners. In order to cope with the needs of his class the teacher has to incorporate various strategies and techniques in his classroom transaction. He observes and evaluates his own activities based on the feedback he gets. In order to achieve scientific precision he documents the developments so that these can be used later on for further improvement. This is a continuous process. The teacher has to bring about mid-course corrections in her classroom practices. He lets slip no opportunities such as discussion with colleagues, incorporation of the findings of innovations in his performance. In fact the teacher working in the constructivist paradigm has to elevate himself to the role of a researcher. Such a professionalism is inevitable to give learning experiences that can take care of all intricacies of SLA.

3.12.3. Co-Learner

The traditional teacher-learner equation has no relevance in a constructivist classroom. The teacher has to identify himself as a co-learner who participates in all the activities carried out by children. He initiates the learning activities to children; the teacher and the learners together try to carry out various tasks. This dissolves the barrier between the
teacher and the learner and makes the classroom atmosphere friendly. Discussions and negotiations between the teacher and the learners take place smoothly and this adds momentum to the ongoing process of acquisition.

3.12.4. Democratic Leader

The teacher will no more be an autocrat in the class who imposes his desires and goals on the learners. On the contrary he acknowledges the learners as individuals who have their own identities. He has to be one among the children and not just the maintainer of discipline in the class. He and his students jointly decide what to take place in the class. The children’s suggestions and opinions will be valued by the teacher. This will pave the way for spontaneous interaction among the children and also between the teacher and the children. It may be noted that such interactions constitute a pre-requisite to language acquisition.

3.13. TEACHER TALK

Since there is no English speech community around the major source of language input comes from the teacher’s talk in the class. We have already mentioned that discourses are to be generated involving children based on what children experience in the class. Teacher has to condition his talk so as to cater to needs of the learners. The nature of talk, its pitch, intonation and rhythm should be suitable to the perceptive sensitivity of the learners. Teacher gives various tasks to the learners. First the learners carry out these tasks individually according to their abilities. After this they are allowed to share what they have done individually in small groups. This is followed by the presentation of the groups in the whole class. At all these levels the teacher will have to intervene in order to negotiate discourses, which technically is known as “scaffolding”. This elevates the learners to a potential level as a result of which the ZPD is always re-fixed. In all these interactions the teacher’s talk plays a most crucial role.
It is also very important how teachers deal with the errors of learners. In the conventional classroom learners' errors were not tolerated lest defective language performances will get reinforced. As against this in the constructivist classroom errors are treated as gateways to learning. In the place of overt correction the teacher should be providing ample indirect negative evidence to enable the learners repair their errors themselves. Presently we will discuss how errors are to be dealt with in a second language classroom.

3.14. ERROR TREATMENT

It is always natural that second language learners commit errors. In a conventional classroom teachers are supposed to "correct" the errors the moment they are made. This often turns out to be disastrous for students because only the errors stand projected in spite of the "rights" in their performance. It has been of considerable interest for researchers to find out to what extent teachers should correct errors. Chauldron (1988) reviews a number of studies which have investigated this (Salica, 1981; Courchene, 1980; Chauldron, 1986; Fanselow, 1977b; Lucas, 1975). The main conclusions of these studies are that errors concerning discourse, content, and lexical errors receive more attention than phonological or grammatical errors certain errors are not treated at all.

There is considerable variation among teachers regarding how frequently error treatment takes place. Krashen (1982) warns that correction is both useless for acquisition and dangerous as it may lead to negative affective response. According to Krashen the acquired competence is the utterance initiator, while the learner competence performance performs the role of the monitor or the editor. He asserts that the role of the monitor is minor being used only to correct deviations from the normal speech. Krashen (1985) theorizes that fluency in second language performance is due to what we have acquired not what we have
learnt. However, it is to be assumed that error treatment should be in such a way that it should not interrupt acquisition. Correcting grammar errors while a student is speaking freely trying to communicate his intentions results in communication breakdown at its best. The consequent resentment may make the student to avoid to speak anymore. Therefore, self-repair is more conducive to acquisition than others' repair (Vanlier, 1988). We will take an illustrative example:

(1) I seed the dog

Obviously, the learner has come out with the wrong form of the word (seed instead of saw). But interestingly, this error indicates that the learner has acquired the past tense morpheme (-ed as in killed). Errors are of various kinds. Some are because of over-generalizations by the learner. Here is an example:

(2) This is a Raju.

Errors of this kind are typical of learners whose mother tongue is an article free language (for example, Malayalam) in contrast with English, which requires articles. The positive point here is that the learner has identified the difference between his mother tongue and English in terms of using articles. Consequently, the learner has used the article a as a result of over-generalization.

When learners come out with errors it is quite natural that teachers tend to repair them for which two strategies are commonly used. One is overt correction and the other is expansion. Overt correction means correction then and there. When the learner comes out with a linguistic fragment in the place of a full-fledged construction as expected by the teacher, the latter expands the fragmentary utterance to the targeted response. This is called expansion. As has been pointed out elsewhere both overt correction and expansion are not helpful for L2 acquisition. Learners commit errors due to the lack of adequate experience.
Sufficient experience will enable them to correct errors themselves. As we have seen above, errors are positive signals of acquisition. Enough space is needed to correct one's own errors. Correcting errors in isolation is not desirable. Whether errors be at the phonological, morphological or syntactic level, they are to be treated in thematically sound discourses negotiated in the classroom. This is because isolated sounds, words, or even sentences are unnatural. At the most these might appear on sign boards not in the speech of people involved in interpersonal communication.

3.15. INPUT

Although all theories of L2 acquisition acknowledge the need for input the theories differ greatly in the importance that is attached to it (Ellis, 1994). Behaviourist models of learning emphasize the possibility of shaping L2 acquisition by manipulating the input to provide appropriate stimuli and by ensuring that adequate feedback is always available. This eventually leads to learning not to acquisition. Let us see what kind of input will lead to L2 acquisition.

3.15.1. Comprehensible Input and SLA

The Input Hypothesis is Krashen's explanation of how second language acquisition takes place. This hypothesis is concerned with L2 acquisition.

"...We acquire in just one way-by understanding messages or by obtaining comprehensible input...More specifically, we acquire a new rule by understanding messages that contain this rule." (Krashen, 1989).

For example, if a learner is at a stage "I" then acquisition takes place when he is exposed to "Comprehensible Input" that belongs to level "I + 1". A number of researchers see comprehensible input as a major causative factor in L2 acquisition. The most influential
among them is Krashen and Long. Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981, 1985, 1989) makes the following claims:

1. **Learners progress along the natural order by understanding input that contains a little bit beyond their current level of competence.** This is also called the “Natural Order Hypothesis”. It suggests that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a natural order which is predictable (Dulay and Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Makino, 1980, cited in Krashen, 1987). The order seems to be independent of the learner’s age, L1 background and conditions of exposure.

2. Comprehensible input is not sufficient as the learners also need to be affectively disposed to let in the input they comprehend. Low motivation, low self esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to raise the affective filter to form a mental block that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition.

3. **Input becomes comprehensible as a result of simplification and with the help of contextual and extra-linguistic clues.**

4. Speaking is the result of acquisition, not its cause; learner talk does not contribute directly to acquisition.

### 3.15.2. Caretaker Talk

We know that a child begins to speak when she is at about 2 years old. She does not have a large speech community to interact with. Most of her language input comes from her caretakers, including mother. It has been observed that mothers all over the world talk to children using a special linguistic discourse, which has been named as “motherese”. Caretaker talk also is akin to the motherese. Mothers and caretakers use simplified language overcharged with love and affection. They slow down their speech and use an affectionate tone. Moreover, the mother’s talk centres around the child. There is perfect understanding
between the mother and the child. In a way, what takes place between the mother and the child is organic communication.

It is natural to expect that something similar to the motherese or caretaker talk should be taking place in the second language classroom so that the learners acquire the target language most naturally just as they acquired mother tongue. It is in this context the caretaker talk gains significance.

A number of studies have shown that caretakers adjust their speech formally so that the input that the children receive is both clearer and linguistically simpler than the speech they address to other adults. Broen (1972) found that speech addressed to 2-year olds has only half the speed used with other adults. Garnica (1975) showed that adults use higher pitch when talking to children. Parents have been found to prefer topics that are familiar to children. Ferrier (1978) has pointed out that much of the communication with young children centres on routine activities. However, three main features of caretaker talk stand out:

i. It is more grammatical than speech addressed to adults.

ii. It is simpler, and

iii. It is more redundant.

However, caretaker talk is conducive for language acquisition. Therefore, the input by way of talk should identify with caretaker talk.

3.16. ENVIRONMENT (THE L2 CLASSROOM)

The environment is conceived as a setting where the target L2 is taught as a subject and is not commonly used as a means of communication. According to Gardner & Clement (1990), two contextual aspects are of potential importance in language classroom settings: One concerns the learning situation to be found in the classroom. The other is the level of support which the parents give. However, the former is most relevant in Indian context.
Therefore, with regard to the environment, the role and relationship between teacher and learners are very crucial.

There should be an informal environment in the classroom. The students should not have any hesitation to approach the teacher. Also, they should get sufficient freedom to interact with the teacher and among themselves. In the cognitive interactionist approach the emphasis is on the use of target language in social behaviour. Depending on the activities in which students participate the teacher can assume different roles. It can be an actor, a producer, a referee, or a player. The real life situation is a concrete, conducive and informal atmosphere for language acquisition where the teacher makes use of it appropriately. In short, the students acquire L2 proficiency only from such a classroom where they have psychological involvement in whatever activities are taking place there.

3.17. MATERIALS

In the traditional classroom textbook is the ultimate learning material available in the hands of learners. It is usually loaded with content as it is prepared with a view that it will be sufficient for language learning. The textbook is prescribed material. The learner does not have the freedom either to add or to delete anything from the textbook. The textbook usually comprises a collection of disjoint texts gathered from various sources. Besides, textbooks are structured on the basis of "brick-laying" principle. That is the textbook conceives learning as a linear process. First alphabets, then words, sentences and so on is the pattern usually followed in the preparation of English textbooks. The notion behind the textbook is that it should follow the linear way of simple to complex. This in fact, curtail the very freedom of the learners to generate language. There is limited scope for learners to interact with the textbook material.
In this context, let us look for the process by which the native speakers acquire language. Obviously, a prescribed text is absent. Instead, the learner gets the opportunity to interact with a large variety of dynamic texts in the form of speech of the people around him. A prescribed textbook, how much well-produced it may be, cannot substitute these dynamic texts.

As against the conventional mode of transmitting the content of the textbook the constructivist model goes for transacting the curricular statements which define what all skills and concepts and processes the learners are expected to achieve at a certain level. For this, a variety of learning experience is provided in the classroom. This necessitates redefining the role of the textbook. The textbook is a material for the learner and not for the teacher to teach from. Therefore, it is to be made from the learner’s perspective. We conceive the textbook as one of the materials made available to the learner as part of an array of learning experience provided to him by the facilitator in the course of transaction of well-defined curricular statements.

The only way out is to equip the learner with textbook which is of interactive nature. It has to be made as open-ended as possible so that it provides ample scope for generating dynamic texts. Instead of placing the learner at the receiving end, he has to be elevated to the status of the creator of the textbook. This implies that we will have to go for a textbook which, can cope with individual needs and differences and is locally specific.

3.18. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND SLA

There are a lot of individual learner variables that influence the learning outcome. The number of factors that distinguish learners can be broadly classified into social and psychological factors. Rod Ellis (1994) lists many factors that affect learner differences in SLA. However, the extent to which learning processes are influenced by individual
differences is a matter of dispute. Surveys of research have investigated learners' beliefs about language acquisition, their affective states and various general factors. We will take a look at some of these:

3.18.1. Learner's beliefs about language learning

There has been relatively little research into the nature of these theories and even less about how learners' beliefs affect language learning. Horwitz (1987A) found that learners' beliefs such that the best way to learn English is to spend most of the time memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules influenced learning. Little and Singleton (1990) found that past experience played a major role in shaping attitudes to language learning. Learner's beliefs are also likely to be influenced by general factors such as personality and cognitive style (Abraham & Vain, 1987).

3.18.2. Learner's affective states

The role of affective states are so individualistic and changeable that the influence is very difficult to study. Some of the best researchers have investigated the affective factor anxiety. Matsumoto (1989) lists the affective states associated with the source of anxiety as emotional regression, panic, anger, self-pity, indecision, sadness, alienation, reduced personality, etc. Covering several measures of proficiency in several different examples it has been shown by Mac Intyre and Gardner (1991) that anxiety negatively affects performance in second language. However, it is to be borne in mind that the performance is not always an indicator of the inner competence. Under certain conditions one's performance might be at a low level despite his competence.

3.18.3. Language Aptitude

Carroll (1981) defines general aptitude as capability of learning a task. Language aptitude involves an underlying language learning capacity. It has been found to be one of the
best predictors of Second language learning. A proper aptitude might serve as a catalyst for learning vocabulary, usage and the like. There may be a few learners who have a special aptitude to learn about language. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether aptitude plays a role in acquisition. This is because that if we establish a direct correspondence between aptitude and acquisition, implicitly we will have to say that only those children with proper aptitude will be acquiring a language. This, obviously, is not true. Given a conducive environment any child will be acquiring any language.

3.18.4. Learning Style

An individual’s learning style reflects the totality of psychological functioning. It is relatively fixed. Ried (1987) distinguishes four perceptual learning modalities:

i. Visual learning
ii. Auditory learning
iii. Kinesthetic learning
iv. Tactile learning

In most of the studies it was inferred that style does not affect much in SLA.

3.18.5. Motivation

SLA research reviews motivation as a key factor in SLA. Gardner points out that motivation and achievement are directly related. Motivation in SLA constitutes one of the most fully researched areas of individual differences. We have already mentioned that extrinsic motivation is not relevant for language acquisition. What matters is intrinsic motivation.
3.18.6. Personality

The relationship between personality variable of Second Language achievement is not yet found. However, there is some evidence to show that extroverted learners are advantaged in the language associated with basic interpersonal communication skills.

3.19. THE NOTION OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Recent researches and studies on brain have led to new concepts about intelligence. The findings related to these studies are quite relevant in developing an acquisition package since the notion of intelligence is inseparably associated with acquisition. It is conventional to conceive intelligence as the ability to think logically and abilities related to mathematics and language. It is important to realize that all people are equal with regard to the expression of their abilities. Neurologists have observed that brain hemorrhage leads to the incapacitation of the individual in terms of certain abilities. This suggests that different modules of the brain are specifically concerned with different abilities. However, the cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner of Harvard university defines intelligence as the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings, Gardner (1983). His pluralistic view of intelligence suggests that all people possess nine different intelligences in operate in varying degrees depending upon each person's individual profile of intelligences. The nine intelligences identified by Gardner (1983, 1999) are:

3.19.1. Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence

Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence is the ability to use with clarity the core operations of language. People with Linguistic Intelligence have a sensitivity to the meaning of words-- the capacity to follow rules of grammar and, on carefully selected occasions to violate them. At somewhat more sensory level-- a sensitivity to the sounds, rhythms, inflections and metres of words-- the ability which can make even poetry in a foreign tongue beautiful to hear. And a
sensitivity to different functions of language—its potential to excite, convince, stimulate, convey information, or simply to please.

3.19.2. Mathematical-Logical Intelligence

This is mathematical and logical ability as well as scientific ability. Abstraction is fundamental, reasoning is complex, and problem-solution is natural. Order and sequence are significant. There is a drive to know causality as well as the explication of existence.

3.19.3. Visual-Spatial Intelligence

Visual-Spatial Intelligence is the capacity to perceive the world accurately, and to be able to recreate one’s visual and spatial experience. It entails a number of loosely related capabilities: the ability to recognize the instances of the same element; the ability to recognize transformations of one element into another; the capacity to conjure up mental imagery and then to transform the imagery; the ability to produce a graphic likeness of spatial information; and the like. A person with a good sense of direction or the ability to move and operate well in the world would indicate spatial intelligence.

3.19.4. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

Each person possesses a certain control of his or her movements, balance, agility, and grace and the ability to handle objects skillfully. For some extraordinary individuals, strength in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence appeared even before they began formal training.

3.19.5. Musical-Rhythmical Intelligence

This is the ability to use the core set of musical elements—pitch, rhythm, the timber (understanding the characteristic qualities of a tone). There may be a hierarchy of difficulty involved in various roles—composition, performance, listening.
3.19.6. Inter-personal Intelligence

This is the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals and in particular, among their moods, temperaments, motivations and intentions. Examined in its most elementary form, the inter-personal intelligence entails the capacity of the young child to detect and discriminate the various moods of those around him. In an advanced form, it permits a skilled adult to read the intentions and desires— even when those desires have been hidden—of many other individuals and, potentially, act upon his knowledge.

3.19.7. Intra-personal Intelligence

Intra-personal intelligence is the ability to form an accurate model of oneself and use that model to operate effectively in life. As a basic level it is the capacity to distinguish feelings of pleasure from emotional pain and, on the basis of such discrimination, to become more involved in, or to withdraw from a situation. At the most advanced level, intra-personal intelligence is the capacity to detect and to symbolize complex and high differentiated sets of feelings.

3.19.8. Naturalist Intelligence

Naturalistic intelligence is the ability to understand, relate to, categorize, classify, comprehend, and explain the things encountered in the world of Nature.

3.19.9. Existential Intelligence

It is the sensitivity and capacity to tackle deep questions about human existence such as the meaning of life, why do we die, and how did we get here?

According to Gardner:

- All human beings possess all nine intelligences in varying forms.
- Each person has a different intellectual composition.
- We can improve education by addressing multiple intelligences of our students.
• These intelligences are located in different areas of the brain and can work either independently or together.

• These intelligences may define the human species.

From what has been said above it follows that an effective L2 acquisition model will have to take into consideration whether the learning experiences provided to children are sufficient to cater to their multiple intelligences.

3.20. INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT AND EMOTIONAL QUOTIENT

In discussions on individual differences it is conventional to categorize children in terms of Intelligence Quotient (IQ). IQ stands only for cognitive intelligence of the individual. The real intelligence is the ability of the individual to think logically and adopt oneself to the changing situations in life. We have to conceive education as a means to facilitate experiences that will enable the child learn by himself attitudes, concepts and skills required for a social life. It is in this context the notion of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) becomes relevant. EQ indicates the emotional and social abilities of man. As part of the educational reformation that took place in America, many schools have made necessary changes in their curriculum for developing social and emotional abilities of children. Psychologists such as Daniel Goleman (1995), Howard Gardner (1989), Jack Block (1995) have contributed greatly to this field. The following are conceived as the components of EQ:

• The ability to identify oneself.

• The ability to take decisions.

• Tolerance.

• The ability to create and sustain individual relationships.

• The ability to feel empathy.

• The ability to adopt and interact with Nature in a healthy way.
Variables of the above mentioned kind influence the learning achievement of the children. Students differ in their social and cultural backgrounds. In the light of cognitive revolution that has been taking place in the last few decades let us address ourselves to the question why an individual is so different from others. The developments in neurological sciences help us to look at the innate potential of the child in terms of her neurological system or brain system. Today, we know that genes influence the cognitive, personal and social development of man. Almost all researchers have pointed out that our experiences such as those related to family and education play a crucial role in our development.

3.21. COGNITIVE ECOLOGY

According to Craio Ramey, American researcher in neuro-psychology, a person's familial and educational experiences have a decisive role in developing very complex neuro-network especially, in the early years. This is what influences, his cognitive and individual development. As a part of the attempt to understand his environment with the help of the innate potential, each individual generates mental constructs related to objects, events and phenomena around. This culminates in learning.

When we perceive learning from the perspective of cognitive constructs, it will be clear that learning is not possible only through extraneous teaching processes. These teaching processes take care of only learning external environment of the child and neglects what is known as cognitive ecology. The properties of cognitive system of an individual are decided by his cognitive ecology. The notion of cognitive ecology will help us understand cognitive attributes of a particular individual. Depending on the cognitive ecology of a child, the learning pace and style will differ. What we conceive as individual differences in terms of learning pace and style, ultimately boil down to the differences in the cognitive ecology of individuals.
Since each individual has his or her own cognitive ecology, individual differences are always expected. This leads to a multi-level situation in the classroom. There is another aspect of multi-level situation to be considered. Children differ in their learning achievement as a result of having been deprived of adequate learning experience that will cater to their needs and interests and also the equitable support that is needed (Sureshkumar, 1999). A multi-level situation in the classroom always poses technical and managerial difficulties for teachers and emotional and psychological barriers for learners. As such this is highly relevant in SLA context. Unless the multi-level situation is tackled professionally, the gap between the different levels of achievement of learners in linguistic competence will be widened. The ultimate losers will be the low achievers, who will feel alienated from the classroom practices. Eventually, this befalls them into extreme mental stress.

3.22. WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH AND L2 ACQUISITION

As a result of the convergence of various disciplines such as cognitive psychology, learning theories, linguistics, philosophy and education, a very unique way of facilitating language acquisition has been evolved for the pedagogic purpose. This is known as Whole Language Approach, which is characteristically a constructivist model of language pedagogy. Constance Weaver has summarised the salient features of the Whole Language Philosophy as follows:

1. Whole Language Philosophy is a way of thinking about children and their learning.

2. It is based upon the observation that children grow and learn most readily when they actively pursue their own learning. Many children can memorize factual information and learn to respond correctly to tests that assess "mastery" of relatively minute and isolated skills. However, their learning of concepts, skills, and strategies is best
facilitated by active involvement. Children need to be psychologically engaged in what they are doing.

3. To foster emergent reading and writing in particular, we have to replicate the strategies parents use successfully to stimulate the natural acquisition of language. We do not expect “correct” word identification in reading or “correct” spelling in writing from the very outset. Instead, we reward children’s successive approximation towards adult norms.

4. Whole Language Approach is based on the observation that much of what children learn is learnt with little, if any, direct instruction. Thus we give students the opportunity to engage themselves in the processes of reading and writing, even when their “reading” as yet involves only reconstructing a story from text and pictures, or their “writing” consists only of putting letter-like marks on paper to express their thoughts.

5. Whole Language Practitioners recognize children’s incredible ability to learn complex processes by engaging those processes. They conceptualize direct teaching much differently than traditional teachers. The majority of students spend their time in reading, writing and otherwise exploring concepts and ideas.

6. Whole Language Learning proceeds from ‘Whole to Part’ than from ‘Part to Whole’. With the guidance of the facilitator and the accompaniment of their peers, learners read and re-read familiar songs, rhymes or repetitive stories that contain few new words from stanza to stanza or episode to episode. Gradually, with appropriate instruction help and with concomitant writing experience they learn to distinguish more and more words. In other words, they develop a growing repertoire of sight words, and they learn basic letter-sound relationships and patterns. Thus Whole
Language Learning proceeds from the whole to the parts, in sharp contrast to both a ‘phonics approach’ and a ‘sight-word’ or ‘look-say’ approach.

7. Since language and literacy are best developed through functional use, whole Language Approach proposes to engage students in reading and writing, speaking and listening, for a variety of authentic purposes. For instance, in primary classrooms the children may use writing to “sign in” at the beginning of the day, to label things in the classroom, to write grocery list and so forth. Gradually, they come to use a variety of written materials, textbooks and popular books, biographies, articles, newspapers— to gather information and explore ideas across all aspects of the curriculum.

8. This approach asserts that, in order to grow and learn, teachers and learners must all be learners, risk-takers, and decision makers, taking significant responsibility for learning within the classroom.

9. No pre-packaged programme can become the curriculum. Teachers must be sufficiently informed to select and develop teaching materials and practices that stem from the Whole Language Philosophy and they must have sufficient autonomy to reject materials and practices that conflict with the philosophy. To a significant extent the curriculum is “negotiated” with children: that is, it involves as if teachers and children together explore topics and themes, generating new interests and goals. The approach ensures that children develop needed skills and cover mandated areas of curriculum, but these objectives are realized by integrating language and literacy with other aspects of learning.

10. Learning is often fostered through social interaction. Practitioners of this approach encourage social interaction among students by discussing, sharing ideas, working together to solve problems and undertake projects, etc. All these enhance learning.
Therefore, they facilitate productive interaction among children. They acknowledge that emphasizing co-operation rather than competition helps the child develop his potential.

11. Children are to be treated as capable and developing not as incapable and deficient. This approach does not give children batteries of tests in order to determine in what isolated skills they may be deficient. Nor does it criticize children’s weaknesses. The practitioners will notice and praise children’s strengths and their developing competence as learners and literate individuals. Thus children will be encouraged to take “risks”.

12. There will be few behavioural problems in the classroom since children will be actively involved in learning. Also, children are given the opportunity to develop self-control rather than merely submit to teacher control. Instead of controlling children by the teacher’s demands practitioners of the Whole Language will develop learning communities by mutual respect and trust.

13. Assessment is inter-wined with learning and teaching. Though periodic assessment may be pre-planned and structured, daily learning experiences also provide opportunities for assessment which in turn leads to the modification of teaching.

14. Teachers have a variety of means for assessing and evaluating students’ progress as well as their own teaching. Such measures include not only their performance in the periodic evaluation, the way they read and write, but think-aloud about protocols, recorded observations, conferences and interviews, inventories and questionnaires, dialogue journal and learning logs, and student kept records. Taken together, several such means are far more valid indicators of student-progress than pre-packaged tests.

15. Whole Language Philosophy reflects and encourages a far different concept of literacy than that reflected in traditional classrooms. In traditional classrooms,
becoming literate is operationally defined as practising reading and writing skills that are too often divorced from the context of their use. And literacy is implicitly defined as high scores on tests of reading and writing skills. In Whole Language Classrooms, students do not “practise” skills in order to become literate; rather they use such skills and strategies daily in reading and writing a variety of materials for various purposes—in thinking and discussing and creating.

16. Whole Language Classrooms foster the kinds of attitudes and behaviours needed in the technologically advanced democratic society. From the outset of their schooling, children in Whole Language Classrooms learn to think of themselves as competent as readers and writers rather than mere children who have yet to master the skills of reading and writing.

As we have already noticed the process of L2 acquisition is analogous to that of L1 since in both cases UG is involved. This being the case, the Whole Language Approach can be extended to L2 facilitation.

Several individual and collective attempts have been continuing at home and abroad in the direction of SLA. Even though, plenty of works have been done abroad to develop an acquisition model, no significant and exemplary document is available in the native experiments except SLAP. As we trace back the history of English education, we feel the need for a clarion call for a change in the direction of English language acquisition. SLAP has initiated a response to this call. In the coming chapters we will critically examine the existing English language programmes in our country alongside SLAP. Also, we will propose a second language acquisition model which conforms totally with the constructivist paradigm.