

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In an age of globalization and post-liberalization the students' motivation and attitude towards acquisition of English as Second Language plays a pivotal role in the development of the educational society. The nature of humankind has occupied the minds of philosophers and theologians for centuries and it is not the purpose of this section to encroach upon their deliberations, nor even an attempt to summarize their arguments. It is intended to suggest that human beings are active participants in the learning process throughout the whole life and that the reason for this lies in their nature and relationship with the wider society. Traditionally, every society has produced its own culture, which is carried by human beings and transmitted through social interaction and the educational system. Culture, in this context, refers to the sum total of knowledge, values, beliefs, etc. of a social group. It is in the process of socialization that individuals learn their local culture. There is a sense in which some facets of education may be regarded as part of the process of socialization, although the former is usually viewed as a more formal process than the latter. However, more recently, with the advent of globalization and the networked society it is more difficult to think of any society having a single culture. Every society is affected by innumerable cultures since they are also being transmitted by all forms of information technology, as well as by people with whom we interact. Because of its apparent commonality among members of a society, culture seems to be a phenomenon external and objective to an individual. Actually, this objectivity is more apparent than real since individuals have internalized a great deal of their local culture and shared it through social interaction.

Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in

acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language and natural communication in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages, they are conveying and understanding. Error correction and explicit teaching of rules are not relevant to language acquisition but caretakers and native speakers can modify their utterances addressed to acquirers to help them understand, and these modifications are thought to help the acquisition process. It has been hypothesized that there is a stable order of acquisition of structures in language acquisition, that is, one can see clear similarities across acquirers as to which structures tend to be acquired early and which tend to be acquired late. Acquirers need not have a conscious awareness of the "rules" they possess, and may correct themselves only based on a "feel" for grammatical accuracy. On the other hand, it is thought that error correction and the presentation of explicit rules help conscious language learning a lot. Error correction helps the learner come to the correct mental representation of the linguistic generalization. Whether such feedback has this effect to a significant degree remains an open question. No variant order of learning is claimed, although syllabi implicitly claim that learners proceed from simple to complex, a sequence that may not be identical to the acquisition sequence.

Second language acquisition is the process by which people learn languages in addition to their native tongue(s). Second language acquisition (SLA) is also the name of the scientific discipline devoted to studying that process. Second language refers to any language learned in addition to a person's first language; although the concept is named second language acquisition, it can also incorporate the learning of third, fourth or subsequent

languages. SLA refers to what learners do; it does not refer to practices in language teaching.

The academic discipline of SLA is a sub-discipline of applied linguistics. It is broad-based and relatively new. SLA is also closely related to psychology, cognitive psychology, and education. To separate the academic discipline from the learning process itself, the terms SLA research, second language studies, and SLA studies are also used. SLA research began as an interdisciplinary field, and because of this, it is difficult to identify a precise starting date. However, it does appear to have developed a great deal since the mid-1960s. The term acquisition was originally used to emphasize the subconscious nature of the learning process, but in recent years, learning and acquisition have become largely synonymous.

SLA can incorporate heritage language learning, but it does not usually incorporate bilingualism. Most SLA researchers see bilingualism as being the ultimate result of learning a language, not the process itself, and see the term as referring to native-like fluency. Writers in fields such as education and psychology, however, often use bilingualism loosely to refer to all forms of multilingualism. SLA is also not to be contrasted with the acquisition of a foreign language; rather, the learning of second languages and the learning of foreign languages involve the same fundamental processes in different situations. There has been much debate about exactly how language is learned, and many issues are still unresolved. There have been many theories of SLA that have been proposed, but none has been accepted as an overarching theory by all SLA researchers. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the field of SLA, this is not expected to happen in the predictable future.

As SLA began as an interdisciplinary field, it is hard to pin down a precise starting date. However, there are two publications in particular that are seen as instrumental to the development of the modern study of SLA - Pitt Corder's (1967) essay "The Significance of Learners' Errors", and Larry Selinker's (1972) article "Inter Language". Corder's essay rejected a behaviorist account of SLA and suggested that learners made use of intrinsic internal linguistic processes. Selinker's article argued that second language learners possess their own individual linguistic systems that are independent from both the first and second languages.

In the 1970s, the general trend in SLA was for research exploring the ideas of Corder and Selinker, and refuting behaviorist theories of language acquisition. Examples include research into error analysis, studies in transitional stages of second-language ability, and the "morpheme studies" investigating the order in which learners acquired linguistic features. The 70s were dominated by naturalistic studies of people learning English as a second language.

By the 1980s, the theories of Stephen Krashen had become the prominent paradigm in SLA. In his theories, often collectively known as the Input Hypothesis, Krashen suggested that language acquisition is driven solely by comprehensible input, language input that learners can understand. Krashen's model was influential in the field of SLA and had a large influence on language teaching, but it left some important processes in SLA unexplained. Research in the 1980s was characterized by the attempt to fill in these gaps. Some approaches included Lydia White's descriptions of learner competence, and Manfred Pienemann's use of speech processing models and

lexical functional grammar to explain learner output. This period also saw the beginning of approaches based in other disciplines, such as the psychological approach of connectionism.

The 1990s saw a host of new theories introduced to the field, such as Michael Long's interaction hypothesis, Merrill Swain's output hypothesis, and Richard Schmidt's noticing hypothesis. However, the two main areas of research interest were linguistic theories of SLA based upon Noam Chomsky's universal grammar, and psychological approaches such as skill acquisition theory and connectionism. The latter category also saw the new theories of Processability and input processing in this period. The 1990s also saw the introduction of socio-cultural theory, an approach to explain SLA in terms of the social environment of the learner.

In the 2000s research was focused on much the same areas as in the 1990s, with research split into two main camps of linguistic and psychological approaches. Van Patten and Benati (2010) states:

While such distinctions are useful from a sociological perspective, they have little linguistic or psychological validity. As has been argued repeatedly in the literature, people and the mechanisms they possess for language learning do not change from context to context.

Learners of a second language differ in a number of ways from those learning their first language. Perhaps the most striking of these is that very few adult second language learners reach the same competence as native speakers of that language. Children learning a second language are more likely to achieve native-like fluency than adults are, but in general, it is very

rare for someone speaking a second language to pass completely for a native speaker.

In addition, some errors that second language learners make in their speech originate in their first language. For example, Spanish speakers who learn ESL may say "Is raining" rather than "It is raining", leaving out the subject of the sentence. On the contrary, French speakers who learn ESL, however, do not usually make the same mistake. This is because subjects of sentences can be left out in Spanish, but not in French. This influence of the first language on the second is known as language transfer.

Moreover, when people learn a second language, the way they speak their first language changes in subtle ways. These changes can be with any aspect of language, from pronunciation and syntax to gestures the learners make and the things they tend to notice. For example, French speakers who spoke ESL pronounced the /t/ sound in French differently from monolingual French speakers. When shown a fish tank, Chinese speakers of English tend to remember more fish and fewer plants than Chinese monolinguals. This effect of the second language on the first led Vivian Cook to propose the idea of multi-competence, which sees the different languages a person speaks not as separate systems, but as related systems in their mind.

Integrative language learning leads to the acquisition of a new set of verbal habits, which are linked with the culture of the target language community. As a result, the learner becomes a member of two cultures. This, in its turn, may result in anomie, the feeling of social uncertainty he experiences when his first group membership begins to loosen in the process of the formation of this second group membership.

West Bengal is known for its ethnicity and the linguistic characteristics of the population, which play an important role in the development of ESL. Settlement and migration are also major factors that have shaped the linguistic landscape of the present West Bengal. Therefore, historical and geographical profiles have an important role to recognize culture, linguistic and social backgrounds of the students in the state.

In West Bengal all the students have to learn both English (ESL) and first language and it is an extremely challenging task. There is a fear in the minds of the learners of ESL in West Bengal. Consequently, the learning of ESL is not as successful in this state as it is expected to be. Learning of a language includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the language. Quite obviously, it is noticed that second language learners cannot communicate in spoken or written English fluently. This is, of course, a generalization but not an exaggeration. Many second language learners are proficient in written English but due to some socio-psychological reasons, they are not so adept in spoken English. Since the present work takes into its ambit communication in general, both the spoken word and the written word have equal importance in the study. Practically, it is also seen that a large section of higher secondary (H.S) students are averse to learning ESL and consequently they fail to learn i.e. read, write and communicate in English.

Bengali is the common language for communication in West Bengal (except hill areas). Students of West Bengal are taught ESL from primary school level. Therefore, there are fewer opportunities to write and read English in daily life. Consequently, phonological and semantic errors are found among most of the students of West Bengal.

West Bengal is a multilingual state with the principal language Bengali and subsidiary languages like Nepali, Urdu, and Hindi etc. Noteworthy, Higher Secondary school students in West Bengal are greatly influenced by western culture by means of T.V., film, computer etc.

The influence of the Church in tribal areas in West Bengal is worth mentioning. A group of missionaries came to India at the end of 18th century with the mission of preaching their religion and serving the humanity. On 13 June 1793, the missionaries, Dr. & Mrs. Thomas & daughter Betsy and William Carey and Family, left Dover. They arrived at Calcutta (now Kolkata) on 9 November 1793. In June 1794, William was appointed manager of a small indigo factory at Mudnabatti in Dinajpur District, North Bengal, employed by Mr. Udney, who was the East India Co's Commercial Resident at Malda. William worked there for only three months per year. Naturally, their mixing with the tribal people of the area and communication of thoughts and ideas influenced the local mass greatly. At Habibpur Block in the district of Malda William Carey established a high school namely Rahutara Missionary (Church) High School. Around six hundred seventy three students read there at present and around thirty-eight percent students belong to tribal Christian community. In those days, the poverty-stricken tribal students were helped by the missionaries in different ways and later on most of them were converted to Christianity. Thus, their charity, preaching of religious messages, co-operation, and fellow feeling drew the people of tribal community to European cultures. Church going thus was conducive to learning ESL.

In the second language setting in West Bengal, learning of English language is obligatory. It seems plausible to assume that there are positive attitudes towards English, which reflect a high appreciation and regard for the second language. The problem addressed here is to explore the attitudes towards ESL among Higher Secondary school students in West Bengal. It is likely that the attitude towards and motivation for ESL in the state will be related to whether the students live in a bilingual atmosphere or not. A further aspect that will be dealt with is how the Higher Secondary students' esteem for ESL develops in a setting of their own mother tongue.

One of the attributes of behavior is attitude. A learner's behavior largely depends upon his attitude towards the things, ideas, persons, objects etc., in his environment. The entire personality and development of the learner is influenced by the nature of his attitudes. Learning a subject or language, acquisition of habits and other psychological dispositions are also affected by the learner's attitudes. Therefore it is important for the teachers as well as people involved in the curriculum development and material preparation, to understand the nature of attitude the learner has towards the particular teaching materials, methodology and evaluation scheme. In other words, the present day curriculum development should take into account the nature of attitude of learners towards materials, methodology etc., in order to make the learning experience more effective.

It may also be mentioned that learner's motivation for ESL is actually in a constant state of flux brought about by a concatenation of developmental personality and attitudinal factors. If motivation is present, ESL can be facilitated but without it, ESL becomes difficult. In the state English is learnt

only in the classroom context, and most school teachers of West Bengal do not have training in English Language Teaching (ELT) that could help generate interest among learners. Therefore, it should be pointed out that the teachers' own behavior can influence the learners' desire and willingness to learn and continue the learning of ESL either positively or negatively.

ESL and EFL refer to the use or study of English by speakers of other languages. It is to be noted that when India was under the British rule, English became the principal language in curriculum.

Despite the large number of different learning situations, it is possible to separate two main categories: learning ESL and learning EFL and it is crucial here to mention the difference between a Second and a Foreign Language, which are referred to as L2.

People who are living in an English-speaking community/country are learning English as their Second Language. "The learner of the second language is surrounded by stimulation, both visual and auditory, in the target language and thus has many motivational and instructional advantages." (Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

As for those who are not living in an English-speaking community/country, they are learning English as a Foreign Language. Oxford & Shearin state (1994):

"Foreign language learners are surrounded by their own native language and have to go out of their way to find stimulation and input in the target language. These students typically receive input in the new language only in the classroom and by artificial means, no matter how talented the teacher is."

In an ESL situation, the learner is learning English within an English environment and needs to understand and speak English outside of the classroom too. In an EFL situation, the learner learns English inside a classroom, but continues to speak his own language when he leaves the classroom. An example of an ESL situation is a Vietnamese child who immigrates with his family to America; he speaks Vietnamese at home with his parents, but during the rest of the day and at school, he must speak English. Until he learns enough English, he will find it very difficult to keep up with his schoolwork. He might even find it difficult to make friends.

The following table lays out the major differences between teaching and learning situation of ESL and EFL.

BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ESL AND EFL

ESL (English as a Second Language)	EFL (English as a Foreign Language)
Student lives in an immersive English environment (i.e., Australia, England, U.S.A. etc).	Student lives in their native language country (i.e. India, Germany, Spain, Japan etc).
Practice, reinforcement, and confirmation (PRC) take place in environment outside the classroom. Students gain confidence on their own.	Students get a teacher-centered classroom -- the teacher is the whole show (i.e., often there is no other time the student can speak English to someone). Teachers provide practice, reinforcement, and

ESL (English as a Second Language)	EFL (English as a Foreign Language)
	confirmation (PRC) and build student confidence.
Outside the classroom, students confront practical need for English and get ample scope to use English.	Outside the classroom, students have minimum scope to use English.
ESL (English as a second language) takes place in a country where English is the main or dominant language.	EFL (English as a foreign language) takes place in a country where English is not the main or dominant language.
Teachers whose native language is English usually teach ESL.	Teachers whose native language is not English usually teach EFL.
An ESL learner needs to learn English very quickly. Chief emphasis is not laid on the learning of English grammar accurately but on the basic survival skill as early as possible.	An EFL student is not concerned about learning English very quickly because he lives in an English-speaking atmosphere and he is able to take care of the necessities of daily life.

Table- 1.1

In such a research climate, where English-language education in India is crucially important and facing an urgent need for reform and is facing challenges not anticipated by other ESL situations, with apparently unmotivated students, there is an urgent need for upgrading the knowledge regarding the attitude and motivation of the students. The present study aims to focus on some important principles that can help teachers of English. It will show some identifiable ways by which pedagogic plan can take aspects of English learners' motivation into account and highlight the root of some problems faced by Second Language (L2) learners in West Bengal at the Higher Secondary level. The study is likely to explore the reasons behind such failure. In addition to that, it will illustrate motivation is a great contributing factor in L2 acquisition, and attitude plays a significant role in the same process. What's more, this will find out the role of attitude and motivation in SLA at the Higher Secondary level in West Bengal.

Keeping all these in view, the present study has outlined the following specific objectives:

- ❖ To study the socio economic background of the higher secondary level students
- ❖ To assess the attitude and motivation towards SLA at the Higher Secondary level
- ❖ To identify the socio-personal, socio-psychological attributes contributing towards the acquisition of second language at the Higher Secondary level
- ❖ To analyze the relationship between the socio-personal and socio-psychological attributes and the acquisition of second language at the

Higher Secondary level

- ❖ To construct the strategic paradigm for explaining the attitude and motivation for SLA by the higher secondary students
- ❖ To identify the extrapolation domain of the constructed paradigm