PART I
1.1 The context of the study defined

The context of this study is taken for granted as being that of the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL). This statement needs to be clarified. I do not mean a situation similar to the one that obtains in a country like, say, Canada, where an ESL programme may be conducted for a group of French-Canadian children — an ESL programme in a country where English is widely used, where children are not altogether unfamiliar with English. I mean the kind of situation that obtains in the typical vernacular medium schools of sub-urban and rural India — the kind that imparts to the bulk of its learners ESL proficiency which is far from satisfactory. That their ESL proficiency at the school-leaving stage is far from satisfactory is a fact testified to by a number of surveys and studies conducted by past researchers at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, India. To quote just a few of them: Sinha, A.K. (1967); Parasher, S.V. (1977); Marwein, M.M. (1977); D'Souza, L. (1978); Vyawahare, G.V. (1980); Sharma, P.L. (1980) have all supported the claim that the average Indian ESL student at the school-leaving stage stands unmistakably in need of remedial help. Therefore, it is
stated at the very outset that the context of this study is the typical Indian ESL programme.

1.2. The term 'Remediation' clarified

Remediation, in the accepted sense, is taken to mean a set of activities planned for a given learner-level, geared to the identification and correction of deviance in ESL learners' use of English. It has to do with rectification and improvement, and therefore, presupposes the existence of a certain quantum of 'unsatisfactory' English in the learners' possession. This study addresses itself to the Intermediate learner-level, for two reasons: (1) the average Indian Intermediate student is one who has left school with 'a certain quantum of unsatisfactory English' as testified to by the studies quoted in section 1.1. above; and (2) the Indian university courses are planned on the assumption that the university-entrants are in possession of 'a certain quantum of satisfactory English'. This is so because the various university courses require the students to read and write English extensively and to handle advanced level subject matter in the medium of English, for which an appreciable degree of facility with English as a medium of understanding and expression is very necessary. Therefore, the average Intermediate students are in need of help to bridge a 'gap' in their ESL proficiency, before they are initiated into university education.
1.3. The nature of the problem discussed

At the Intermediate level one finds learners in need of remedial help with a wide range of ESL proficiency. When one examines their written production in English, one finds that there are a set of students who produce 'sentences' which are no more than strings of content words; this set of students, who may be described as occupying the lowest rung of the ESL proficiency ladder, produce written strings of words which:

(1) barely resemble English sentences or parts of sentences, and

(2) have structural elements missing or wrongly used, e.g., verbs not inflected or wrongly inflected to show tense, aspect, number and person of subject, etc., prepositions and conjunctions missing or used wrongly, words ordered wrongly in the string, etc.

(Evidence for the existence of such defects will be produced in Chapter V of this study as well as in the Appendix attached to it.)

Ranging from here, there are varying degrees of 'unsatisfactoriness' in the ESL proficiency of the Intermediate level students. This again is a factor testified to by the studies quoted in section 1.1. above.
Such a situation brings us face to face with the need for planning remediation at different levels; there are different sets of students requiring different levels of remedial help. But it would be rather unrealistic to attempt to work out strategies of remediation catering to the needs of the different sets of students exhibiting such a wide spectrum of ESL proficiency; the scope of a study such as the present one would be too limited to attempt such an endeavour. This study is therefore forced to restrict itself to deal with the ESL problems of one particular set of Intermediate students who, as a set, are at a certain specified level of ESL proficiency. This study proposes to deal with 'the occupants of the lowest rung of the ESL proficiency ladder' as described above. This set of students have no readiness to take off into free production in English, whereas the collegiate education they undergo places heavy demands upon them to do so, with the result that they keep on producing defective stretches of written English and thus habitualize wrong practices of English usage.

1.4 The purpose of the study specified

The purpose of this study is to make proposals towards the outlining of a strategy of remediation which would enable the particular set of Intermediate students referred to in section 1.3 above to acquire the readiness for free production in English. With this purpose in view, the study
proposes to attempt a 'visualization' of the process of (second) language learning as an initial exercise, so that it would be possible to put forward hypotheses regarding effective second language learning/teaching. The study will fall into two parts, the former being a hypotheses-building part and the latter a hypotheses-testing one.

The first part of the study will bring in views on language and language learning/teaching from as many different sources as possible, so that an adequately clear 'picture' of the (second) language learning process emerges and the 'hypotheses-building' is done on an adequately sound basis; the first part will consist of this and another three chapters. Chapter II will present, mainly, pre-Chomskyan views (pre-Chomskyan not so much in the time of their appearance as in the nature of their purport) on language and language learning/teaching, and Chapter III, subsequently, will discuss, mainly, Chomskyan and related views on the same. (The rationale behind such a division of the discussion into two chapters is that the publication of Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* in 1957 is taken as a landmark in the study of language and language learning.) The 'picture' of the language learning process and the hypotheses regarding second language learning/teaching built up in the course of the discussion in Chapters II and III will be presented in Chapter IV which will conclude the hypotheses-building first part of the study.
The second part of the study will attempt a partial testing of the hypotheses. This testing will be geared towards making proposals for outlining the strategy of remediation referred to at the beginning of this section. But it will only be a partial testing, because the particular set of ESL learners to be dealt with will have a number of different problems in their production of English, and it will not be possible to test the hypotheses in relation to the rectification of each of these problems. Therefore, this study will try to validate the proposed hypotheses in relation to the rectification of a selected few defects in the written production of the chosen set of Intermediate level learners. Chapter V will describe the experiment planned and carried out for this purpose, and Chapter VI, subsequently, will present the conclusions arrived at by way of proposals for the outlining of the intended remedial strategy.