CHAPTER II

VIEWS ON LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING/TEACHING - I

2.1 On the relationship between linguistic theory and language teaching practice

I should like to begin by quoting a few of the well-known pronouncements made by Chomsky (1966b) in this regard at the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Chomsky began the presentation of his paper on Linguistic Theory at this conference by declaring that his 'primary concern' was 'with the structure of language, and more generally, the nature of cognitive processes'; on this basis he disclaimed expertise 'on any aspect of the teaching of languages'. He then added that he was 'frankly, rather skeptical about the significance, for the teaching of languages, of such insights and understanding as have been attained in linguistics and psychology'. At the same time he noted that 'surely the teacher of language would do well to keep informed of progress and discussion in these fields, and the efforts of linguists and psychologists to approach the problems of language teaching from a principled point of view are extremely worthwhile, from an intellectual as well as a social point of view'. As practitioners of the art of language teaching we should do well to take Chomsky's advice and 'keep informed' of current 'progress and discussion' in linguistic theory. At the same time we should
do well also to share his skepticism and reluctance to believe that 'either linguistics or psychology has achieved a level of theoretical understanding that might enable it to support a "technology" of language teaching'. Chomsky observed that 'both fields have made significant progress in recent decades, and, furthermore, both draw on centuries of careful thought and study'. But he went on to remark that 'these disciplines are, at present, in a state of flux and agitation' and that 'what seemed to be well-established doctrine a few years ago may now be the subject of extensive debate.' Later discussions in this study will amply support this point of view. Therefore, we begin with the assumption (along with Chomsky) that 'there has been a significant decline, . . . . , in the degree of confidence in the scope and security of foundations in both psychology and linguistics', that 'this decline in confidence is both healthy and realistic', but that 'it should serve as a warning to teachers that suggestions from the "fundamental disciplines" must be viewed with caution and skepticism'.

Chomsky condemned 'the willingness to rely on "experts"' as 'a frightening aspect of contemporary political and social life.' He went on to say that 'teachers, in particular, have a responsibility to make sure that ideas and proposals are evaluated on their merits, and not passively accepted on grounds of authority, real or presumed'. Chomsky
added that the field of language teaching was 'no exception'. He continued: 'It is possible — even likely — that principles of psychology and linguistics, and research in these disciplines, may supply insights useful to the language teacher. But this must be demonstrated, and cannot be presumed. It is the language teacher himself who must validate or refute any specific proposals. There is very little in psychology or linguistics that he can accept on faith.' Yes, we are not here to 'accept' anything 'on faith'. But we should be aware that 'principles of psychology and linguistics, and research in these disciplines, may supply insights useful to the language teacher'. We are here to examine and study them so that we will be in a position to 'validate or refute any specific proposal' made by them. This study proposes to do precisely this in an effort to arrive at an adequate understanding of (second) language learning/teaching, and to go on from there to propose a strategy of remedial (second-language) teaching. This chapter sets out to examine certain significant pre-Chomskyan views on language and language learning/teaching.

2.2 Certain significant 'old time' ideas on language and language learning/teaching

There are 'moderners' as well as 'old timers' among those holding pre-Chomskyan views on language and language
learning/teaching. We will deal with the ideas expressed by some of the 'old timers' first.

2.2.1 Views expressed by F.G. French

F.G. French (1949b) made the following significant remark:

... too much weight can be given to the importance of learning words .... But the foreigner who may, by unremitting toil, acquire many more hundreds of words than an illiterate native speaker of a language, can never equal him in the easy mastery and unhesitating manipulation of the structural characteristics and grammatical complexities of the language. This mastery consists in an ability to use correctly, and without thought or effort, appropriate sentence-patterns and phrase-patterns. This, and not the vocabulary, is the foreigner's most difficult task. (pp. 31-32).

and again:

... a pattern is a standard model which prescribes the way in which, for any particular purpose, words must be grouped in accordance with the conventions of the English language. The general design and the shape of the pattern are fixed, but any suitable words can be used in it. Once the student has learned the pattern, he can make for himself many thousands of sentences, or phrases, on the model, the limit being the size of his vocabulary. (p. 35).

This was French's insight into where the problem really lay in the case of the foreign/second language learner.

According to him it lay in the grouping of words together for communication or in the structural patterns, and not in the individual words.
In his view there was no distinction between the processes of first language learning and second language learning:

A child, in picking up his own vernacular, does not merely reproduce what he hears said by grown-ups. Through a lengthy period of listening and observation, and under the stimulation of his own desires and requirements, he first picks out, from the flow of speech around him all day long, the names of coveted or beloved objects and of pleasurable actions. But he hears these not as isolated units, not as single words held out for his inspection, but always mingled with — almost dissolved in — related word material. He hears, not words, but groups of words, each group acting as a tight unit of fixed shape and aspect. But as the child's first efforts always take the form of single words spoken alone, it is clearly less difficult for him to isolate the word than to master the group in which it occurs. (That is exactly the position of the foreign learner too.) But by degrees he gets the hang of the more important groups, that is to say the sentence-patterns in most frequent use. (pp. 35-36).

French saw how words are picked up for use by learners (of first languages, and suggestively of second languages as well) individually or in isolation first and then in groups; he realized the importance of groups or strings formed by linguistically related words in the language learning process — how these strings represent fixed patterns which underly or form the basis of one's knowledge of the language. He went on to make a further observation in this regard:
...the child does not read or write; he confines himself to listening and speech. Much of what he hears is disregarded; he selects for his speech purposes only what he needs and that in its simplest forms and patterns.

The foreign student, on the other hand, is introduced to reading at a very early stage; and nothing of what he reads can be disregarded, indeed it forces itself upon his attention. He has no choice and no protection — a multiplicity of sentence-patterns and phrase-patterns, often very difficult to distinguish, are forced upon him at a very early stage... (p. 37).

French suggested:

The first preventive measure should prevent the learner from seeing too many varieties of construction patterns at too early a stage. (p. 38).

This was advice from an experienced teacher, a practitioner who knew his job well, a man who was sure of what he was talking about. He went on to emphasize the need for selecting a few basic patterns for the use of the foreign/second language learner:

The child picking up his own vernacular learns a few simple sentence patterns selected for him by his own needs. He hears others, but he disregards them and they are not forced upon his attention because, at first, he does not read or write. The foreign learner needs similar protection. As he must begin to read at an early stage, his reading must be so controlled that he is not confused by the sentence patterns which are strange to him because he has not yet learned to use them in speech... (p. 38).

French also advocated the thorough drilling of a selected few basic patterns:
The division of language into words is often a typographical accident; it is certainly a cause of confusion and a prolific source of error when it is allowed to obscure the vital importance and the commanding permanence of the fixed patterns into which words and word-groups are fitted by the conventions of the language.

A thorough drilling in these patterns will be the most powerful preventive of error. (p. 41).

Advice of this kind, especially when it comes from a veteran of the profession, cannot altogether be ignored and brushed aside; in all fairness, we should at least pause and give it some thought and consideration.

2.2.2 C.C. Fries's views

C.C. Fries (1945) has also expressed similar views about the learning of words and structural patterns:

"Mastery" of a language must mean something other than knowing "all the words" of the language. (p. 2).

In learning a new language, then, the chief problem is not at first that of learning vocabulary items. It is the mastery of the features of arrangement that constitute the structure of the language. A person has "learned" a foreign language when he has thus... within a limited vocabulary,..., made the structural devices (that is, the basic arrangement of utterances) matters of automatic habit... (p. 3).
and again:

In learning a new language then one must not become impatient to expand his vocabulary and attain fluency. Accuracy of structural forms, and of arrangement, within a limited range of expression, must come first and become automatic habit before the student is ready to devote his chief attention to expanding his vocabulary..... (p.3).

Fries, in spite of his preoccupation with the sounds, rhythm and intonation, never lost sight of the importance of the structural patterns in the learning of a language.

2.2:3 H.E. Palmer's views

H.E. Palmer (1917) felt very much the same way about words and structures, too:

Language consists essentially of lexicological units popularly supposed to be 'words', but the term 'word' is vague and impossible of definition. Considered from the point of view of the student, the study of language is synonymous with the study of the elements or units of which it is composed. These units are popularly assumed to be words.

A general and vague idea exists that the study of a given language should proceed on a double basis: lexicology, or the study of words and grammar, or the study of their mutations and combinations. A little reflection, however, will convince us that this is far from being a true and logical conception of the problem. It will be found that the two subjects are bound up with each other and interdependent, and that they can only be differentiated by doing violence to each. The words themselves and their attendant phenomena cannot be separated except by invoking the arbitrary. (p.11). What is called a word generally proves to be but an accident of graphic continuity. (p.14).
Let us rather speak of lexicological units.... (p.17).
Palmer's main contribution on this point (as quoted above) was that words and structures cannot be considered as two separate entities: they are inseparable, one from the other. Words have very little value except as elements in the groups into which they gather in order to embody the structures which form the basic units for communication using language. Words cannot be learned in themselves: such an attempt would produce no real learning. It is the structures that have to be learned, or the patterns into which words group themselves, and the words which constitute these will automatically be learned in the process.

2.2.3.1 Passive work should precede active work

Another significant contribution that Palmer made to the general thinking on language learning was that:

.....passive work should precede active work; this was the case in our infantile study of the mother tongue..... (p. 40).

Obviously, Palmer also made no distinction between the two processes of first language and second language learning:

.....foreign languages are to be acquired in much the same way as we have acquired our mother tongue..... (p. 44).
Palmer continued:

The young child only comes to speak his native language after an 'incubation period', during which he has passively received and stored up in his mind a considerable quantity of linguistic material. The same process may profitably be employed by the more adult person in the study of foreign languages.... (p. 46).

and again:

One factor, however, seems to have been overlooked, a factor which in the opinion of the writer is the most essential of all, and the neglect of which constitutes an omission of the most serious kind. It is the undoubted fact that the active use of speech under natural conditions is invariably preceded by a period during which a certain proficiency is attained in its passive aspect. The faculty of recognizing and of understanding the units of speech is probably always developed by the child long before he ever produces them in order to make himself understood...... success in the production on a wholesale scale of linguistic matter (either in its spoken or in its written form) can only be attained as a result of the previous inculcation of such matter by way of passive impressions received repeatedly over a period the length of which has been adequate to ensure its gradual and effective assimilation. (p. 48).

Palmer repeated himself by saying that:

...... One of the essential principles of all methods designed on the 'natural' basis should be never to encourage nor expect the active production of any linguistic material until the pupil has had many opportunities of cognizing it passively. If this principle is valid, then most of the teaching of the present day violates a natural law! (p. 49).
Palmer emphatically concluded that:

Unless a vastly greater number of units are treated by the pure faculty of memory than is generally the case, the student will acquire, not the capacity of forming correct sentences, but the capacity of making unlimited mistakes, and by so doing will form habits which it will require perhaps years to eradicate! (p. 81).

We nowadays equate learning with production, and expect our learners to be able to produce language (In fact we insist on their doing so, for example, in communicative language teaching.) from the day they begin to learn it, and the result is very much the same as Palmer long ago predicted it would be. Palmer's views on the 'incubation period' are far more convincing than our modern views such as: 'We learn through use', etc.; our refusal to accommodate a 'pre-use stage' in our learning scheme has done serious damages to our systems of language pedagogy, as will be substantiated later on (Chapter V) in this study.

2.2.3.2 Production of language

Palmer's (1921) views on the production of language were again significant:

Let us furthermore examine what passes in our mind when we are speaking our own language, and endeavour to ascertain whether we form our sentences in unconscious obedience to some rules unknown to us, or whether we are consciously applying rules we have learnt. (p.5).
After citing 'a few odd examples chosen at random out of the thousands of items the sum of which constitutes the theory of the structure of the English colloquial language', Palmer stated that 'most of them are not contained in any manual of English grammar nor ever taught as a school subject'.

He continued:

We are forced to conclude that we have become proficient in the use of our mother tongue by some process other than that of learning by dint of conscious efforts of reasoning and synthesis. (p. 6).

Palmer went on to write at length about this 'process' by which we 'become proficient in the use of our mother tongue'. He stated at the outset:

Language-learning is essentially a habit-forming process, a process during which we must acquire new habits.... (p. 43).

That Palmer did not mean habit-formation of the kind advocated by the behaviourists or the stimulus-response theoreticians while writing this is quite evident from what follows:

.....we learn without knowing that we are learning. What we therefore have to do is to train ourselves (or our students) consciously to learn unconsciously; we must set out deliberately to inhibit our capacities for focusing or concentrating our attention on the language-material itself. Attention must be given to what we want to say and not the way we say it..... (p. 44).
The most significant pronouncement made by Palmer in this connection was the following; we shall do well to examine the whole passage thoughtfully:

..... in the early stages a certain amount of deliberate and conscious memorizing must be done; we shall insist on the daily repetition of a certain number of useful compounds, but sooner or later we shall come to a stage in which memory work must be carried out on a far larger scale and in a far more spontaneous manner. We must train ourselves to become spontaneous memorizers, and this can only be done in one way: we must acquire the capacity for retaining a chance phrase or compound which has fallen upon our ears in the course of a conversation or speech. It is in this way that we have acquired those thousands of phrases and combinations which make up the bulk of our daily speech in our own language. We have acquired the capacity of noting and retaining any new combinations of English words which we may chance to hear; we do this unconsciously, and are not aware of doing so; we rarely or never invent new types of compounds, but simply reproduce at appropriate moments those types of compounds which we have happened to hear used by those speaking in our presence. This is one of the habits we acquired in our infancy; this is one of the habits we must revive now and use for the foreign language we are studying. So long as we have not acquired this habit our progress will be slow — too slow for the purpose we have in view..... (p. 49).

Palmer was one of those visionaries who artistically combined mentalism with behaviourism in the practice of his profession; he advocated the habitual reproduction of compounds and phrases — not in automatic response to a mental stimulus received, but in wilful recognition of a semantic need — in
other words, the appropriate reproduction of fully borrowed compounds and phrases. According to Palmer we all did that as infants learning our first languages, and could profitably adopt the same strategy and follow the same procedure in learning our second languages as well. Palmer further observed that:

..... the forming of a habit seems a slow process; so many repetitions are required and progress is not at once apparent, whereas the other form of work has all the appearance of rapidity. We know, however, that in reality what we have learnt as the result of a habit is not only immediately available at all times, but is also a permanent acquisition, and that what we have learnt by the aid of theory alone is neither immediately available nor permanent..... (p.54).

and again that:

..... instead of learning and applying theory he (the student) might memorize a hundred or so real living sentences, each exemplifying one of the results of a theory. By doing so he would acquire a hundred or so new habits of automatic actions..... (p.56).

Palmer strongly felt that every student must have a store of ready-made sentence-level utterances at his easy command before he can take off into free production in his target language. He felt also that the student should not be asked to produce any language 'before he has acquired the necessary habits of inflexion, compounding, and sentence-building', or else we will be 'inviting him to do inaccurate work'.
and the result will be (according to Palmer) 'pidginization':

In opposition to the principle of accuracy, we are frequently told that 'It is only by making mistakes that we learn not to make them', and that 'Only by going into the water can we learn to swim'. These are cheap proverbs, and we may as easily coin others such as: 'It is by making mistakes that we form the habit of making them', or, 'He who has not learnt to swim will drown when thrown into deep water'... (p. 65).

Palmer concluded with the final declaration that:

..... whatever the unit may be, long or short, simple or complex, one thing is clear: each unit has either been memorized by the user integrally as it stands or else is composed by the user from smaller and previously memorized units. This is a fundamental fact about speech which stands out clearly and unmistakably; it is not a fanciful supposition or an idle conjecture, it is an axiomatic truth..... (p. 116).

Yes, it is 'an axiomatic truth' which we 'moderners' have refused to realize.

2.2.3.3 Fusing linguistic symbols to the things symbolized

Another significant contribution Palmer made (Palmer and Redman, 1932) to general thinking on the language learning process is found in the following statements:

What is in its essence the process of learning a language? It is this: Fusing linguistic symbols to the things symbolized. (p. 156).
To fuse means, here, to form a perfect mental association or bond between two things, so that either brings the other to consciousness — as when the word 'telephone' brings to the mind of an English-speaking person the thing called a telephone, or as when the sentence 'Just pass me that book, will you?' brings to the mind of the English-speaking learner or reader the notion of an informal request for the passing of a book. I am using the term 'fuse' because it is stronger than 'associate' or 'form a link'. (p. 157).

Palmer held that 'thought (or 'meaning') precedes language'; he wrote that this 'is not only the considered opinion of an authority on the subject like Sapir, but must be the natural conclusion of any intelligent layman'. This study uses the term 'meaning' in an extremely comprehensive manner. What it exactly denotes will be clarified later in section 3.0 and Chapter IV. Later on in this chapter (section 2.8) there will also be references to the 'meaning structures' existing in the human mind. The clarification of the denotation(s) of this phrase as well will be given in section 3.0 and Chapter IV. Linguistic units, big or small, represent units of meaning. It is units of language already organized in a particular way in relation to meaning that are presented to an infant learning his first language. In the infant's effort to master these linguistic units, the meaning that already exists in his mind, gets organized in accordance with the meaning-organization in the language that is presented to him. In the case of the second language learner,
the meaning existing in his mind has already been organized in accordance with the units of his first language. But, as different languages are organized in different ways in relation to meaning, the second language learner is faced with the need, not so much to look for units in the second language representing the semantic units already existing in his mind, as to organize the meaning in his mind all over again in accordance with the units of the second language that are presented to him. The need for matching linguistic units with meaning-units and for organizing meaning accordingly exists in the case of both the first language learner and the second language learner alike. The success in learning in both cases, according to Palmer, is in having 'fused' a sufficient number of linguistic units with their corresponding meaning-units.

These linguistic units may be single words or phrases or even complete sentences. Language learners very often do and have to fuse whole sentences with meaning-units. According to Palmer, the first language learning infant does this to a great extent on his way to achieving fluency in his language. According to Palmer, again, a second language learner also can achieve fluency in his second language only through a similar process. Very often we do and have to borrow whole phrases and sentences (One never succeeds in learning a language by learning its words isolatedly.) from
speakers and writers of the second language, memorize them, and store them in our minds perfectly 'fused' with the meaning-units they represent, so that they can be readily recalled and reproduced as they are. Much of a person's fluency in the use of a language, according to Palmer, is dependent on such a mental process undergone by him in the course of his learning that language.

2.3 Views expressed by certain lesser known practitioners of the profession

Many other lesser known practitioners of the profession have also expressed the same kind of views as the ones expressed by celebrities like Palmer. F.L. Billows (1961) wrote:

Few teachers realize how often they may repeat a piece, either dictating it or reading it aloud to their pupils, ....... without their getting tired of it. The sentence patterns will sink into their minds and be added to the general store of language patterns for active use. (p.39).

He saw the need for the repetition of the same pattern till it sank 'into their minds' and was 'added to the general store of language patterns for active use':

An example of a dictation which might be the first given is: "We come to school at ten o'clock; we come here on foot; we stay at school until four o'clock. We read and write and speak English at school. We go home at four o'clock". These are all sentences which will be well-known and will often have been written before, copied or adapted from similar sentences..... (pp. 41-42).
The familiar pattern is repeated over and over again, until it becomes habitual with the learners to use it. J.O. Gauntlett (1961) advocated the same practice, too:

..... in the beginning stages it is best to familiarize the student with a structural pattern by having it appear in succession or very often. Thus:

I am a pupil. That is Mary. She is a pupil, too.
I am tall. She is short. is preferable to:
I am John. I like cricket. That is Mary.
She likes tennis. We are pupils. We go to school.
In the first batch of sentences the pattern in each case is subject, be-verb (only two forms), and complement; while in the second batch there are various patterns..... (p. 58).

Repetition of the same pattern and thus making it a habit were recognized as being necessary activities for language learners. Eugene A. Nida (1957) wrote:

People who mimic easily have a great advantage in learning a foreign language. Language learning usually necessitates conscious mimicry.....(p. 21).

Language must be automatic, or it is practically useless. The person who must stop to figure out the right forms or who must grope constantly for words has not learned a foreign language. Expressions must be on the tip of the tongue.

To acquire an automatic language facility requires three processes: (1) drill and repetition, (2) ..... (p. 23).

Repetition of familiar words in familiar patterns builds up this facility; the oftener words and patterns are repeated,
the more easily available they will be for recall and reproduction: they will stay 'on the tip of the tongue' as it were. Yet, no real learning takes place through the parrot-like repetition of words and structures, each repetition must ensure (as Palmer felt) a more thorough 'fusing' of the linguistic unit with the meaning it represents — so that every time the same unit of meaning has to be expressed, the corresponding linguistic unit readily surfaces in the mind. In our everyday life we deal mainly with fixed meaning-units and language-units; most of the sentences we normally use are 'wholesale' repetitions; it is only very rarely that we make original linguistic combinations to express original thinking. Henry Sweet (1964) (like Palmer) emphasized the need for 'fusing' meaning-units with the corresponding language-units:

.... The whole process of learning a language is one of forming associations. When we learn our own language, we associate words and sentences with thoughts, ideas, actions, events..... (p. 102).

According to Sweet, the best method for language teaching was that which enabled the learner 'to establish an instantaneous association between thought and sound'. What really has to become habitual is not the use of the word or the structure as such, but the association of it with the meaning it represents; in other words, meaningful repetitions
have to make these associations (as many of the ordinarily used ones as possible) a habit; that is the way to build up fluency in the use of a language. Renzo Titone (1969) had the same view when he wrote:

..... from a pedagogic point of view, one can ask whether the formation of such an asset lies within the power of ordinary language instruction. The answer is 'Yes', if grammar teaching is first and foremost formation of verbal habits, pattern drilling, actual communication, as against mere grammatical theory. Incorporating the basic expressive patterns of a language, and then inferring the basic rules by observation and induction, is the ideal road to the acquisition of practical grammar, otherwise called 'linguistic feeling'..... (pp. 60-61).

Facility in the use of 'the basic expressive patterns' is nothing but the habitual association of ordinarily expressed meaning-units with the linguistic units which are most commonly used for representing them; a person to whom such units in a language are readily available for recall and reproduction is able to use that language to communicate with.

2.4 The structuralist position regarding language learning

We are now ready to examine the theoretical stance as well as the practices of the structuralists.

2.4.1 The structuralist theoretical stance

Dacanay and Bowen (Eds.,) (1963) expressed the opinion
that:

However, these drills should not be looked upon as ends in themselves. They are part of the classroom technique to facilitate the student's production of structure. They must lead up to and include the use of the patterns in normal speech situations. The teacher has to test whether the pupils can choose from the forms they have practiced the correct response to the signals they hear. For it is possible that some pupils may be able to say the form during practice, but may not be able to use it to communicate their ideas in free conversation. They may have "parroted" the sentence without getting the meaning of what they were saying. (p. 97).

and again that:

A distinction should be made between the two parts of a lesson referred to as the presentation..... and drill..... Both are important to the learning process and both take a variety of forms, but they perform different functions. During the presentation the pupils learn the meaning of and the occasion for the use of the new material — vocabulary, structure, and pronunciation — in a context in which the structures are normally used. The drills and the exercises that follow are repetitions with understanding to "internalize" these new structures, and to integrate them with the growing body of previously learned material..... New arrangements and new combinations with previously learned structure and vocabulary help the pupils assimilate the new learnings to the old..... (pp. 97-98).

What is given above appears to be very sound advice according to what we have been discussing so far. But there is a snag in the above structuralist position about pattern practice. This becomes evident only when one takes a close
look at the kind of drills recommended by the structuralists. The following is a typical structuralist pattern drill taken from Dacanay and Bowen (Eds.) (1963):

1. Pass me the rice.
2. Hand her the sugar.
3. Give me some apples.
4. Pass me the dessert.
5. Pour him some water.
6. Tell us a story.
7. Give me some beans.
8. Serve them some hot drinks. (p. 103).

This, in my view, is the wrong kind of drill, because what needs to be internalized is not the abstraction underlying the pattern (the verb in the imperative form + the pronoun in the accusative form + the noun phrase), but the concrete realization of the pattern in terms of the linguistic unit 'Pass me the.....' with its meaning-representation. (Here we have to make the crucial distinction between the abstractions underlying patterns and the concrete realizations of patterns in terms of linguistic units. Language learners need to internalize patterns in terms of their concrete linguistic realizations and not as abstractions. The structuralists did not seem to make this distinction.) 'Pass me the.....' is a very commonly used utterance (linguistic unit) embodying a meaning-unit that often needs to be expressed. It is the language-unit in its concrete form and not the abstract structure which underlies it that
the learners need to internalize. By prescribing drills of the above kind the structuralists advocated the teaching or the inculcation of the abstract structure or pattern and not its concrete realization in linguistic forms. If the learner has to internalize the essential language-unit, he must be given another kind of drill in which he repeats the set language-pattern (not structural pattern) 'Pass me the.....', with the non-crucial part of the essential meaning-unit changing each time.

The structuralists might argue that there will not be enough variety in such a drill and that its monotony will defeat the very purpose behind it. One counter-argument that might be put forward is that the second language learners are all the time in their senses, that they know they are seriously involved in the business of learning a second language and not playing a game, and hence can be expected to tolerate a certain amount of monotony and lack of variety; it may be assumed that they are looking for concrete units in the second language in which units of meaning are conveyed, and not abstract structure patterns which do not make any sense.

Children in the lower primary grades imitate and mimic what the teacher says. They learn the second language in much the same way as they learned the first language, that is, by imitation and practice in meaningful situations.
Whatever variations they make are based on the need of a changed situation and on the analogy with forms they have already learned.

— L-Dacanay and Bowen (Eds.) (1963), p. 100

While the structuralists maintained that children 'imitate and mimic' (which is very true), they failed to see that what the children 'imitate and mimic' are not structures which may be equated to dead skeletons, but chunks of the living language; the former has no meaning, but the latter carries and conveys meaning. Language exists only for meaning, and what the language learners look for is ways of encoding and conveying meaning.

2.4.2 The structuralist practice

Lado and Fries (1943) held the typical structuralist position with regard to pattern practice:

..... It is not sufficient, either, to repeat a sentence over and over again as the end practice in language learning. Little or no learning occurs after a sentence has been repeated three or four times the same way. And repeating a sentence the same way does not teach the pattern; it merely teaches the particular sentence as if it were a single word.

In PATTERN PRACTICE ..... the student is led to practise a pattern, changing some element of that pattern each time, so that normally he never repeats the same sentence twice. Furthermore, his attention is drawn to the changes which are stimulated by pictures, oral substitutions, etc., and thus the PATTERN ITSELF, THE SIGNIFICANT FRAMEWORK OF THE SENTENCE, rather than the particular sentence, is driven intensively into his habit reflexes. (p. XV).
Lado and Fries were perhaps wrong on the most crucial point about the matter. They advocated a position which prevented the learners from repeating the same sentences, whereas the learners were in need of doing so. They took the trouble to drive the 'patterns' intensively into the learners' habit reflexes, whereas they should have taken the trouble to drive in as many of the 'particular sentences' as possible. Learners of languages (first or second) need to have many, many actual sentences stored up in their internalized language-repertoire before they can take off into free production in the language. In real life the very same sentences keep recurring in varying contexts, and they are imbibed as parts of 'blocks of experience' (in which there are meaning-units and language-units at either end and the mental link in the middle). Inside the classroom, perhaps we cannot have the very same sentences repeated; we may need to change parts of them as the structuralists advised. Where the structuralists went wrong (if at all) was perhaps in that they did not know which parts had to be changed. By changing the wrong parts (on account of having a wrong theory at the basis), they drove the wrong things — the abstract patterns — home to the learners, whereas they should have helped their learners to internalize as many actual sentences as possible. It is to be said to the credit of the structuralists that
they knew that *drills are necessary for language learning*, but they prescribed the wrong kind of drills on the basis of a faulty theory.

2.5 *The need for theory as the basis for practice*

We can never ignore theory in talking about classroom practices, because good practices must necessarily be built on good theory. Every classroom practice that we have derives from an underlying theory of some kind; every good practice derives from an adequate or good knowledge of language, psychology, and pedagogical philosophy; every bad practice gives evidence of some or other weakness in our understanding of language, or of psychology, or of pedagogy.

A good teacher is someone who continually examines what he does, continually strives to arrive at new understandings of his discipline, and continually tries to steer a course between doubt and dogma. Good teaching practice is based on good theoretical understanding. **There is indeed nothing so practical as a good theory.** Teachers should focus from time to time not on techniques, not on methods, but on approach, that is, on theory. — Wardhaugh (1969), pp. 105 & 116.

Wardhaugh (1969) went on, to write:

Now it is quite legitimate to ask, as many linguists do, what exactly a child is learning about language when he mimics dialogues, when he expands sentences, when he makes substitutions, when he changes one sentence into another. We are surely not just teaching the child rote habits which are completely unproductive, as sometimes we are accused. We are sometimes also accused of stifling his creativity. However, those who have criticized such practices have not yet demonstrated how a learner can create a second language without stimuli, and they have not been afraid to use language stimuli in their own teaching which look rather like
those so many of us have been using for quite a long time. There is obviously need for good stimuli in language teaching, and the kinds of exercises just mentioned (mimicry, expansion, substitution, and transformation) seem to be necessary in any kind of systematic second language teaching. It would be entirely foolish for us to throw these overboard in order to sail the completely unchartered sea of creativity! (p. 109).

Wardhaugh strongly felt that drill and repetition are very necessary in the ESL classroom, and that we cannot aspire 'to inject' our learners with 'some kind of abstract underlying structure in the hope that they will come out speaking English'. We know so little about the nature of language and of the process by which languages are learned that we will not, in the first place, know what (if at all) 'to inject' our learners with. We can only hope to provide our learners with lots of 'the real stuff' so that while they grapple with these materials, their natural capacities for language acquisition will work inside them to produce the desired results.

Chomsky's skepticism concerning theories prescribed by the "fundamental disciplines" was grounded mainly on his apprehension that these disciplines had not yet reached a position at which they could sustain a "technology" of language teaching; it was a well-grounded, commendable skepticism. It is a matter for speculation whether language teachers should watch out and wait for a day when psychology
and linguistics will have grown enough and attained enough
maturity to prescribe their classroom practices for them.
In the meantime they need to be minding their business
in the classroom. While the behaviourist and mentalist
theoretical positions have thrown these disciplines into
a state of flux, the language teacher is forced to look for
whatever would yield him good results in the classroom.
Teachers who have taken the trouble to look beyond the
fluctuating theories in the "fundamental disciplines" have
invariably found inspiration in the practically sound
theories put forward by people like Palmer and Sweet who
were not theoreticians (of the fundamental disciplines)
in the 'puritanical' sense, but practitioners (of the 'non-
fundamental' discipline) who were sure of what they
advocated and recommended, and who always struck a safe
(not in the sense of 'uncommitted' and safe for themselves
but safe or dependable and reliable for others to follow)
'via media.' Later when the behaviourist and mentalist
extremists declared war against each other and petty
theoreticians scrambled to take their positions behind
the heroes on either side, the practising teachers in the
field inevitably turned to the earlier sources of unshaken
faith. Beacons like Palmer and Sweet who had already laid
down their non-extremist 'eclectic' views before the days
of the extremists, guided practitioners in the field with
sound wisdom and good sense through the continuing turmoil. Though 'eclecticism' is scorned by the extremists as a 'disgustingly uncommitted philosophy' (Bolinger, 1968), the teacher in the classroom often has to resort to it, and invariably finds it a rewarding experience to do so. Bolinger (1968) remarked:

But teaching, like life, has its own criteria by which it integrates for its needs, and it should not bother language teachers whether they are clean enough to draw straight theoretical lines around. (p. 41).

While keeping their eyes fixed on the far away 'beacons' from where a fuller understanding of the art of language teaching comes, the teachers should also glance side-ways every now and then to catch glimpses of the fragmentary insights into language teaching that continue to pass by on either side. Inside the classroom the most successful teacher no doubt is the one who has been open to and receptive of the most practical aspects of whatever has been proposed by way of theory, who is eclectic in the truest sense.

2.6 Further views on language learning/teaching

Chastain (1970) wrote:

..... The search for teaching techniques and procedures with which to achieve native-like ability in second language-learning continues. The fact that the profession is now willing to consider various approaches offers hope for a
combination of theories and techniques which will be superior to the exclusive use of any single approach. Certainly the evidence at present lends little support to a continued search for the one way to teach. Teachers, students, and the many components of language itself are too varied to justify an insistence upon one particular method. The better question would be to ask which approach should be used with which students by which teachers and for which aspects of the language.

The indications are that these questions are now being asked...... (p. 235).

The above understanding came in the wake of the realization that everything advocated by the structuralists was not, after all, as bad as it first appeared to be to the rationalists, and that everything prescribed by the rationalists was not, after all, as sound as they first thought it would be; the practising teacher found himself much wiser whenever he was steering the via media course between the two extremist theoretical positions and making use from both the theories of whatever was practicable in the classroom, and whatever would work and might produce the intended learning outcomes.

Robin Lakoff (1969) observed:

....they (the rationalists) have substituted one kind of rote learning for another, and the new kind is harder than the old..............

Instead of filling in patterns of sentences — surface structures — students now have to learn patterns of abstractions — the rules themselves........ (p. 128).
The fact is that patterns of deep structures are 'abstractions' no more than patterns of surface structures are. All patterns are abstractions. The structuralists, being empiricists, set out to teach patterns/abstractions underlying surface structures, whereas the rationalists, being cognitivists, set out to teach patterns/abstractions underlying the derivable deep structures; both parties obviously failed to realize that the human mind, more likely, tackles concrete language forms in its effort to internalize and master the use of a living language.

Chomsky was perhaps wrong in having led (almost certainly without the slightest awareness) many of his followers into the faith that they have discovered 'rules' underlying language structure which could be 'injected' into their learners' veins so that they would 'come out speaking the language'. Those who professed to be transformational grammarians, in what they believed to be the Chomskyan tradition, prescribed theories and practices for the classroom which amounted to prescriptions for 'injecting' the learners with certain abstractions which they again believed to underly 'the creative aspect of language use'. This is what Lakoff (1969) and many others after him objected to, and rightly too.

Conscious attention to rules governing structures, whether at the surface level or at the deep underlying level,
can benefit a learner but little, especially in the early stages when he is engaged in familiarizing himself with the rudimentary mechanics of the language. The less advanced the learner is, the greater will be his need for a 'natural' teaching method in which 'language is learned a whole act at a time, in a meaningful social context, with little or no attention to the formal properties of language'. J.P.B. Allen (1974), p.63.

Allen (1974) felt:

A pedagogic grammar is typically eclectic in the sense that the applied linguist must pick and choose among formal statements in the light of his experience as a teacher, and decide what are pedagogically the most appropriate ways of arranging the information that he derives from scientific grammars. (p. 60).

The terms 'grammar' and 'eclectic' are both misleading and ambiguous in the above statement. What Allen obviously meant by pedagogic grammar was only the language data to be presented to the learners; and by this being 'eclectic' he obviously meant that the set of basic structures to be presented and the principles of their gradation should be drawn from different scientific grammars based on differing theories of language; he could not have meant by 'grammar' a statement of linguistic analysis and by 'eclectic' a theoretical position combining different views on such a
linguistic analysis. What Allen was advocating was obviously that we should seek help from different statements of grammar in our choice and arrangement of the language data to be presented to the learners; he had no doubt that what had to be presented in any case was complete basic patterns or chunks of language representing 'whole acts at a time'. Later on in the same paper he emphasized the need for 'establishing strong habitual associations between the elements in a set of basic sentence patterns'. (p. 71).

Newmark and Reibel (1968) had the same view when they claimed that systematic attention to the grammatical form of utterances was neither a necessary condition nor a sufficient one for successful language learning: 'that it is not necessary is demonstrated by the native learner's success without it; that it is not sufficient is demonstrated by the typical classroom student's lack of success with it.... teaching particularly utterances in contexts which provide meaning and usability to learners is both sufficient (witness the native learner) and necessary (witness the classroom learner).

2.7 Performance models and the notion of communicative competence

C.J. Brumfit (1978) wrote:

What is certainly clear is that simply teaching the rules of grammar on their own is inadequate. Under the heading of communicative competence two sorts of knowledge can be included. The first,
the traditional competence, is the knowledge of the structure and formal properties of the language, including referential meaning, while the second includes all types of knowledge necessary for the use of the language effectively in the real world... The rules of appropriacy which constitute the second sort of knowledge pose particular problems for the language teacher, ....... (pp. 35-36).

\[\text{Let the language teacher imagine that he can and should teach 'the rules of appropriacy' (instead of the rules of language structure) in the classroom; rules (of any kind) are not sufficient for a classroom where a language has to be taught; they are meant for a classroom where the teaching is about a language.}\]

The chief preoccupation of (applied) linguists like Hymes, Halliday (to some extent), J.P.B. Allen, Corder, Wilkins, Widdowson, Johnson, Brumfit and Krashen has always been with language performance (rather than with linguistic competence) and the rules of 'use' and 'appropriacy'. For the time being (There will be more of it later in section 2.9 and Chapter V.), I have the following comments about this particular emphasis in applied linguistics/language teaching:

(1) In the case of all these (applied)linguists, the over-emphasized concern for performance, use and appropriacy has crowded out the 'pre-use' or 'internalization'
stage from their language learning scheme; they start with performance or 'use' and 'communication'. Brumfit (1978) pointed out:

It may be that the greatest real change as a result of the communicative approach will rest in the simple reversal of the procedures, as the following diagram illustrates:

Traditional:

I  \[\text{Present}\] \rightarrow II  \[\text{Drill}\] \rightarrow III  \[\text{Practise in context}\]

Communicative:

\[\text{Communicate as far as possible with all available resources.}\]  \[\text{Present language items shown to be necessary to achieve effective communication.}\]  \[\text{Drill if necessary}\]

A number of problems are overcome by this reversal, though many will also argue that a number of others are created. The main benefit is that the system is student-oriented rather than teacher-determined. What needs to be taught is defined by the failures to communicate at the first stage, which thus operates as a motivator for the students, who are aware of their needs as a result of perceived difficulties in communication..... (p. 43).

Communication (in the sense in which the advocates/supporters of the communicative approach use the term) in the typical ESL classroom, to begin with at least, is at the absolute zero level (and never goes up considerably at any time); there will not be
anything for the teacher or the learners to 'diagnose' except that the learners do not know any English, and that the teacher simply has to start from scratch. This brings us back to Square I, and thus, to the need for the teaching of the elements of the language — the elements with which the basic patterns of the language may be built up. There is no room for 'use' and 'appropriacy' in such a situation.

(2) Appropriacy is for the more advanced learner, and not for the beginner. Moreover, much of what goes under 'appropriacy' is language general commonsense and not anything to be 'taught' in the context of the second language. The advanced level learner who is more in need of appropriacy than the beginner, is likely to have figured out much of it by himself by the time he reaches that level, and is not likely to stand in need of being taught any of it. If a need is felt and an attempt is made in this regard, it is highly doubtful whether any of it can really be 'taught', because these are things people usually discover spontaneously by themselves through experience and not deliberately taught by others. The advocates of language-use, communicative competence, attention to interlanguage and analysis of interlanguage-errors, contrastive studies of languages and cultures, study of the affective filter and motivation, all of them have perhaps put their emphases
in the wrong places; all of them have made 'rules' which perhaps cannot and need not be taught in a second language classroom.

(3) The inventory of notions developed by Wilkins and by Van Ek and Alexander for the Council of Europe is a commendable piece of work as an inventory of notions. What is doubtful is its relevance for language teaching. The problem is that an inventory of notions cannot be taken as the basis for a language-syllabus, because notions do not form the basis for language teaching; the basis instead should be an inventory of the structures of the language. Notions belong to an open set, and any inventory of these can only be made arbitrarily, whereas the basic structures of a language constitute a closed system: a systematic teaching of these can very well be attempted by way of laying the firm foundations for a language course. An elementary set of vocabulary items will also get taught along with these. Some of the essential 'blocks of language experience' (basic meaning-units and their elementary linguistic representations at either end with the mental linking process in the middle) will thus be conveyed to the learners. These 'blocks of language experience' will build the foundation for the learners' later language use, mastery, competence, etc. It is this foundation that has to be built in the second language classroom; this will equip the learner to build the rest of
the edifice by himself later on. Applied linguists who talk about language-use and communicative competence take the attention of the practising teachers away from the fundamental issues by artificially highlighting certain other issues which perhaps are not so relevant or important. The language teacher's priorities should rest with the basic linguistic competence which no doubt is the primary focus of attention in a (second) language classroom, especially in those classrooms where this is lacking, and not with communicative competence and appropriacy and such other issues which are only of secondary importance in comparison.

(4) If at all notions are taken as the basis for syllabus construction, the less hazardous procedure for constructing a syllabus and producing language teaching materials out of them would be by choosing just one elementary linguistic representation for each one of them as the teaching unit. Wilkins's notional syllabus provides dozens of linguistic representations for the same notion; obviously the effort is to teach different ways of expressing the same notion. In such a scheme no 'blocks of language experience' will be built for the learners, because it is not possible to build them unless the meaning-unit and its linguistic representation remain the same. There is no point in
introducing different ways of expressing the same notion to a beginner, because in that case he will fail to make the mental link between the notion and its linguistic expression a habit, and the way to express that notion in language will not register in his mind. This is the most crucial part of the language learning process which the proponents of notional syllabuses perhaps did not see at all. In the same way as the structuralists prescribed the wrong kind of drills on the basis of a faulty theory, the notional syllabus theoreticians also missed the most crucial point in their theorizing, and consequently produced the wrong kind of syllabus and materials for the teaching of second languages. (cf. Wilkins, 1976.)

(5) Krashen's (1981a) monitor model is only a performance model, and hence probably has nothing significant to offer to the language teacher whose major concern rests with providing a basis for linguistic competence and performance through conscious learning. Since Krashen has relegated conscious learning to the position of just a monitor in performance, it automatically becomes evident that there is probably nothing of Krashen's theory that the pains-taking teacher of language can incorporate into his classroom practices. (The typical second language teacher, because of the very nature of his profession, is a model of
painstaking effort.) In the typical ESL classroom everything is always consciously and painfully rubbed in, and neither the teacher nor the learner is willing to make any room for unconscious association; the typical ESL teacher and classroom would find it rather disconcerting if they are required to accommodate Krashen's theory into their scheme of things.

The applied linguists whom we are currently discussing are not part of the mainstream structuralist or rationalist thinking and theorizing, and have not drawn significantly from either of these. There is a great deal of truth about language learning/teaching to be extracted from the mainstream thinking developed under the two major theoretical positions. The theoreticians who do not belong to either of the two major schools of thinking appear to be eclectic in their theoretical stance, but are not really so. The truly eclectic position incorporates profitable insights from everywhere, and is in fact a dangerous stance demanding great caution and understanding.

2.8 **Still further views on language learning/teaching**

Harald Gutschow (1978) wrote that it is our task to provide our pupils with

opportunities to acquire 'chunks of language' (and discover their conditions of use) that can easily be reassembled and rearranged according to context, communicative need, etc.... (p. 56).
Instead of teaching our pupils 'rules' about contexts and needs of communication, we have to help them acquire 'chunks of language' which they will, it is presumed, automatically learn to use in the appropriate contexts and for the right needs of communication. Newmark (1966) remarked:

In natural foreign language learning — the kind used, for example, by children to become native speakers in a foreign country within a length of time that amazes their parents — acquisition cannot be simply additive; complex bits of language are learned a whole chunk at a time..... (p. 78).

It was the idea of the 'chunks of language' that can easily be 'reassembled and rearranged according to context, communicative need, etc. that A. Chandrasekhar (1965) also had in mind when he wrote about the 'recurrent partials' which are taken note of by the language learner and later used in 'reassembled and rearranged' forms for the expression of particular units of meaning:

..... the structure of language is learned by observing the recurrent partials at all levels of linguistic structure..... (p. 37).

Gutschow (1978) continued, to make the following observation:

Adherents of both the cognitive code and the imitation/simulation variety of learning theory will have to concede that learners have got to master the basic patterns. The dispute does
not affect the essential facts but only the problem of how the course should be organized. Nor is there any reason whatsoever to believe the representatives of the transformational theory in their claim that language as a rule-governed phenomenon would not allow for a pattern-oriented approach. Apart from the fact that their rules have so far not been established convincingly there remains the objection that rules are theoretical constructs, and that again means they do not work in real time. But the teacher is left with the task of organizing his course in a way that facilitates sentence production and enables the learner to take part in an acceptable form of communication. Unless immense progress is just around the corner, the pattern-oriented approach would still seem to offer the optimal strategy for reaching this aim. (p. 60). (The emphases are mine.)

Gutschow's remarks, when read with special attention paid to the emphasized parts, make his stance and his theoretical position very clear; it needs a good deal of understanding of the real issues involved to take such a firm and clearly articulated theoretical position. Theoreticians with such decision and conviction offer guidance to practitioners who look for it and are in need of it. Such views do not generally form part of any mainstream philosophy, and they steer clear of the extremist positions on either side; but there is nothing vague and undecided about them.

W.F. Mackey (1978) wrote with conviction and clarity of thinking:

...... In sum, structural linguistics tried to describe the structures of language; transformational grammar attempted to explain how
some of these structures could generate specific sentences. Structural linguistics reached a dead end when its exponents tried to explain more than was possible without benefit of meaning; transformational grammar attained its impasse when its practitioners tried to explain meaning by ignoring context. Neither could explain the phenomenon of language within their limited conceptual framework. Practising language teachers were among the first to notice that such theories could not solve their problems in the classroom; hence, their disillusionment with linguistics — pure or applied..... (p. 86).

This is the danger of looking up to extremist theoretical positions for guidance in practice. Practical guidance invariably at all times comes from elsewhere. Mackey (1978) continued:

..... Experienced language teachers, however, had known all along that the application of structural linguistics and transformational grammar reduced language teaching to a formalism which was even more removed than the old methods, since it had little to offer on the facts of the language being taught. Some of the older grammars and language courses were far more complete, contextual, informative, and usable than...... (p. 87).

'Experienced language teachers' often knew where to turn for inspiration and guidance. The older theories, from the 'non-fundamental' discipline of language teaching itself, sustained them (and they still continue to do so) when the 'fundamental disciplines' embarked on a phase of flux, agitation, turmoil, and indecision.
D.P. Ausubel (1964) made the following significant and noteworthy suggestion:

The remedy, of course, is not to eliminate pattern drills but to make them more meaningful. Second-language learning obviously requires overlearning of the basic and characteristic structural patterns of the language. But unless the learner appreciates the precise relationship between the verbal manipulations he practices and the changes in meaning that he induces by such manipulation, the practice is not very transferable..... (p. 103).

Here, indeed, lies the crux of the matter. In all probability the most crucial factor in (second) language learning/acquisition is the association between linguistic units and the meaning-units they represent — how habitual at least the most essential ones among them have become. For such habit-formation, drills are necessary — not the kind of drills which produce only rote learning, but meaningful ones which act upon the cognitive processes of the mind. What Ausubel recommended, therefore, is meaningful drilling.

In any case, it is certain that one does not and cannot communicate by applying rules; it would be impossible to communicate if one had to stop and consider the 'rules' governing the use of each word or phrase. What the first-language acquiring child learns inductively or internalizes is not the set of (abstract) 'rules' governing the structure
of his language, but generalizable modes of linking units of meaning with the corresponding units of language. One could perhaps call these 'rules'. But this label is extremely vague and misleading; every time the linguist talks about 'rules', the language teacher takes him to mean certain abstract principles. Language is for the expression of meaning, and the act of communication is the expression and retrieval of meaning. Unless language is internalized as units (the bulk of it in the readily usable form) for conveying units of meaning, it may never become a readily or effectively usable tool for communication; there is perhaps no other re-usable form in which language can be stored in the mind.

Hunter Diack (1956b) complained, with great insight into the way a language learner's mind works in relation to the language, i.e., the nature of the language learning process:

Many of the grammar books still in common use in the schools treat English as a dead language. The compilers of these books saw grammar not as the study of minds in action, but as the application of a set of rules to language already dead and on the dissecting table..... (p. 8).

Pedagogic grammars of languages should rightly be designed in such a way that they act directly upon the meaning-structures existing in the mind, because those are the
mechanisms to be (re)-activated in the internalization/acquisition of a language. This is the truth underlying the dictum: 'Language, being a medium and not a subject of study, is best learnt when it is used as a medium to express other thoughts'. It is on the basis of this dictum that all the bilingual educational programmes the world over are planned; in each of these programmes a certain portion of the school curriculum is taught through the medium of the target language, and the target language in most cases has been found to have been successfully imbibed. (cf. David, 1978.) Krashen (1981b) made the following remark, which is significant in this context:

According to current theory, language acquisition occurs when we are not focused on language, but when we are using language — more specifically, it occurs when we are focused on understanding spoken and written messages..... (p. 108).

The first language learning infant tries to understand whatever is spoken to him; the meaning-structures in his mind are activated, and in the process of the interaction between these and the (language) forms presented to him, the language gets imbibed through some means which we still perhaps have not learnt to describe. This process will have to be simulated for the second language learner if he has to acquire the second language as a tool to be
used for communicating with. A language learner's best way of tackling the language is as a tool carrying/conveying meaning, and not as a set of rules or abstract structures. Wilga Rivers (1983) observed:

The present consensus appears to be that it is the logical structures basic to various intellectual processes that are innate and that distinguish man as a species, not language-specific structures and that these logical structures make it possible for man to acquire and use language as well as to perform other cognitive operations..... (pp.91-92).

The 'logical structures' that Rivers talked about, in laymen's terms, are the meaning-structures which exist in the mind of man and enable him to acquire and use language. Rivers (1983) continued:

.....This processing of input and processing of output is what we need to understand if we are to teach a second language..... (p. 96).

It is doubtful whether we will ever be able to understand this process that goes on inside the mind, and therefore, is not available for empirical observation and study. But we should, in all probability, be able to arrive at (through vigorous study and research) the right kind of stimuli by which we may ensure that the desired process (whatever it may be) takes place inside the learner's mind. This study, in fact, is an effort to arrive at a set of such stimuli.
Rivers (1983) further remarked:

"The more associations and interconnections we have developed, the more efficiently we can recall and retrieve." (p. 129).

This statement tries to throw some light on what Rivers thought could be going on in the language learner/user's mind: associating/linking units of meaning with corresponding units in the language. Many linguists have made similar statements about the process, but all of them are mere conjectures, guesses and speculations about what the unobservable process is supposed or imagined to be; nobody can say anything axiomatically about such a process. But there may come a time when we can talk axiomatically about the stimuli which will cause the process to occur.

Emmon Bach (1974) commented:

"The hardest thing to teach is how to think, and in a sense it is the only thing worth teaching." (p. V).

In language teaching we try to provide our learners with the moulds with which to shape their thinking or meaning: they will have to be induced to think or mean in accordance with the moulds provided. Shouldn't we stop and consider whether the language courses we produce contain the right forms/units for the purpose? Leonard Bloomfield (1942)
expressed the following view:

Language is not a process of logical reference to a conscious set of rules; the process of understanding, speaking and writing is everywhere an associative one. Real language teaching consists, therefore, of building up in the pupil those associative habits which constitute the language to be learned..... (p. 294).

Bloomfield was perhaps right in having felt that the language learning process is an 'associative' one. Even though we may never know how the associations are formed, we should be able to find out the factors/elements being associated. We will be able to arrive at the right elements for building the associations and the right stimuli for ensuring their building only through trial and error, because these again are not available for empirical observation while they are engaged in the association-making process; the whole process is hidden from empirical observation. But the results produced (in terms of language learning accomplished) are available for study and understanding. Through trial and error we ought to strike upon some combination that produces the intended outcomes. Then we will know what elements went into the association-making process and what stimuli caused the relevant associations to be made. We may still not know how exactly the mind made the associations; the nature of the process may for ever remain hidden from us.
But it should be sufficient for us as language teachers to know what elements are associated and what stimuli cause the associations to be formed. This information should serve the purposes we have in view, because all our search ultimately boils down to an effort for finding the language forms to be put into our ESL courses and the right mode of presenting them, i.e., the elements (for the association) and the stimuli for its occurrence.

2.9 Views on syllabuses and materials for (second) language teaching

S.P. Corder (1978) felt that we do not have 'an adequate description of language in use' to base our syllabuses upon; according to him this is one of the major problems 'in the design of a functional syllabus'. We do not any more believe in constructing syllabuses on the basis of theoretical descriptions of language, because we feel we are convinced that the teaching of grammatical theories and rules will not teach any language; we feel that a learner will learn to function in a language only by being taught functionally. In other words, we are trying to construct functional syllabuses for the teaching of (second) languages. But, in order to do this, we do not need 'an adequate description of language in use' as Corder felt. 'Language in use' embodies or reflects the 'notions'
available to human thinking; in the same way as it would be impossible to make a satisfactory inventory of 'notions' (because they belong to an open set), it would be impossible to produce 'an adequate description of language in use'. But the fact is that we do not really need such a description for our purposes, apart from that we can't make one: the structural description of language ought to suffice — in fact such a description is just what we need for our purposes (because it is structures that are finite, and therefore can form the basis for a syllabus). We have it ready with us, though we now have to figure out how to make use of it. So far we have had the right sort of description of language with us, but we have probably been making the wrong use of it. We have so far been using our structural syllabuses to teach the abstract patterns. Now we are faced with the need to take a fresh look at the structural descriptions of language available with us to see if we can use them to construct a different sort of syllabus/teaching materials — in order to teach, not the abstract patterns, but the concrete, living forms of the language.

In a typical structural pattern/substitution drill of the kind we are familiar with, the language-forms 'I could have done it', 'I should have done it', 'I may have done it', 'I must have done it', may all be found mixed up.
Such a drill will only teach the abstract pattern modal auxiliary + have + 'en' verb, because it keeps the wrong parts constant, and changes the wrong parts, too. The right sort of drill should elicit language-units such as 'I could have said it', 'John could have done the job', 'Mary could have written the letter', 'She could have given it to me', 'He could have sent her home', etc.; the structural meaning-conveying part is kept constant in these. 'Could have', 'should have', 'may have', 'must have' all convey different notions or meaning-units. By mixing them all up in the same drill we defeat the very purpose of having a drill. The drill, to repeat, is not to be used for driving abstract patterns home to the learners. Abstract patterns do not do any good to the learners, because nobody can communicate using these; instead, one needs concrete language-units to communicate with. For an intended meaning-unit one should have the usable language-unit readily available; that is perhaps the only way to learn to communicate.

The knowledge of abstract patterns would be useful for describing how the language functions, and not for functioning in the language. Ability to function in the language should be accomplished prior to the ability to describe the way it functions. Conscious observation of
how language-forms function (while one is unconsciously or spontaneously functioning using them), can help one to figure out how they function. But conscious attention to rules appearing in a description of the language will not help one to learn to function in that language. Training is required to learn to function in a language, while one can figure out by oneself the nature of the accomplishment after having acquired it. Our syllabuses obviously teach the wrong things.

The notion conveyed by the 'could have' structure, if we start with notions the way Wilkins did, may be expressed in a number of different language-forms. If we put those down as our corpus for teaching, then again we do not keep constant what should be kept constant. This is probably where Wilkins used his notional syllabuses in the wrong way. We will perhaps have to have a new scheme in which we make use of the inventories made by both the structuralists and the notionalists; but we will have to make sure that each teaching unit drills the linking of the same notion or meaning-unit with the same language-form. Those are the crucial links to be made, and our teaching scheme will have to ensure the formation of those links so that we really teach our learners a bit of the language itself and not all about the language. In other words,
we should try to impart to our learners as many of the *generalizable meaning-language associations* as possible. The structural patterns can form the *matrix* of the language corpus that we want to teach; we will have to fill up this matrix with *meaning-conveying language-forms* when we write out the actual teaching units to be used in the classroom. This is the strategy of highlighting the 'recurrent partials' that Chandrasekhar (1965) wrote about.

Wilga Rivers (1972) wrote with a teacher's insight into the profession and the practical-mindedness needed in the classroom:

How, then, can the foreign language teacher establish "rule-governed behaviour" that will enable his students to produce novel utterances at will? ..... "rule-governed behaviour" in the sense in which it is used by linguists or psychologists does not mean behaviour that results from the conscious application of rules.

According to Chomsky, "A person is not generally aware of the rules that govern sentence-interpretation in the language that he knows; nor, in fact, is there any reason to suppose that the rules can be brought to consciousness". Neither can we "expect him to be fully aware even of the empirical consequences of these internalized rules" — that is, of the way in which abstract rules acquire semantic interpretations. The behaviour is "rule-governed" in the sense that it conforms to the internalized system of rules. These rules are not the pedagogic "grammar rules" (often of doubtful linguistic validity) of the traditional deductive, expository type of language teaching, according to which students docilely constructed language sequences. They
are rules, as Chomsky puts it, of "great abstractness and intricacy" inherent in the structure of a language, which through the operation of various processes find expression in the overt forms that people produce...... (pp.10-11).

The two significant observations Rivers has made in the passage quoted above are:

(1) "Rule-governed behaviour" does not mean behaviour that results from the conscious application of rules.

(2) The behaviour is "rule-governed" in the sense that it conforms to the internalized system of rules.

Rivers is in agreement with Chomsky that no language-user can be using certain abstract rules consciously to arrive at the overt forms he produces, though what he overtly produces conforms to the internalized system of rules. Harold Palmer (1921) felt the same way about "rules":

Nearly all the time spent by the teacher in explaining why such and such a form is used and why a certain sentence is constructed in a certain way is time lost, for such explanations merely appease curiosity; they do not help us to form new habits, they do not develop automatism. Those who have learnt to use the foreign language and who do use it successfully have long since forgotten the why and the wherefore; they can no longer quote to you the theory which was supposed to have procured them their command of the language. (p. 57).
It was on the basis of this view that Palmer defined language learning as 'a habit forming process' (p. 54), and advocated the use of repetitive drills in the foreign language classroom; Palmer believed that the repetitive drills would help foreign language learners to behave in conformity with the abstract system of rules underlying language-structure. Obviously, it was a similar belief that was later expressed by Chomsky and Rivers: Chomsky did not go on to prescribe language drills (though he had no faith in the conscious application of rules in using a language), but Rivers did, and quite emphatically too.

Rivers (1972) went on to remark:

> With his continual emphasis on creative and innovative use of language, Chomsky is likely to lead us astray in the teaching of foreign languages by fixing our attention on a distant rather than an immediate goal. (p. 12).

The 'creative and innovative use of language' may be the final goal for our learners to arrive at, but it is certainly not the 'immediate goal', and our learners are not going to arrive at it very easily either; there are many other 'interim goals' which we have got to take seriously into consideration, and haven't been doing so. Rivers continued:
Basically, the question of how to inculcate the grammar of a language will depend on the type of activity we believe communication in a foreign language to be: is it a skill or an intellectual process, or is it a blend of the two? If foreign language learning is the acquiring of a skill or a group of interrelated skills, then our students need intensive practice until they are able to associate without hesitation or reflection the many linguistic elements that are interrelated in a linear sequence. If, on the other hand, foreign language use is an intellectual process, then training is necessary to ensure that students can make correct choices of rules and modification of rules in order to construct utterances that express their intentions. (pp. 12-13).

Rivers believed communication in a foreign language to be a blend of a skill and an intellectual process; she obviously accepted whatever she felt was sound in behaviourism and in mentalism in relation to language learning, and combined parts from both the theories in order to form a new eclectic theory with greater explanatory power than either of the sources she was drawing freely from. She visualized 'two levels of language behaviour':

If we can identify two levels of foreign language behaviour for which our students must be trained, then it is clear that one type of teaching will not be sufficient for the task. These two levels may be designated: (i) the level of manipulation of language elements that occur in fixed relationships in clearly defined closed systems (that is, relationships that will vary within very narrow limits), and (ii) a level of expression of personal meaning at which possible variations are infinite, ....... (p. 13).
Rivers conceived of the acquisition of the first level of behaviour as a skill and of the second level as an intellectual process; she conceived of the acquisition of the whole phenomenon of language behaviour as a process of acquiring a skill which formed the basis for going on to the acquisition of capability in an intellectual activity. This was her conception of the language learning process, and she visualized the entire process with remarkable clarity and understanding as is evident from the extracts quoted above. If we are prepared to grant the existence of the two levels that Rivers visualized, then it naturally emerges that 'one type of teaching will not be sufficient for the task'; we will have to have two different modes of teaching — one to achieve the level of manipulation, and the other to achieve satisfactory expression of personal meaning.

Rivers was clear that the first level of achievement was necessary as a basis for going on to the second. She recommended repetitive drills as a means to the attainment of the first level of language proficiency, and if this level is visualized as being necessary, then of course it becomes evident that in Rivers's conception, drills have an irreplaceable position in a language teaching scheme.
There is no suggestion that drills take language learners to the end in view; but there is no gainsaying the fact that drills are a necessary part of all language teaching programmes, and that there is a particular stage in the programme at which we cannot afford to do without them. In a situation where learners do not command basic patterns with facility (that they may go on to the learning of effective expression of personal meaning), when they fumble and falter with the basic forms for lack of confidence — in a situation where REMEDIATION is undoubtedly called for — we can fall back upon drills with the backing of a sound theory of language learning, and feel confident that we are doing just what is necessary for the attainment of just what is to be attained in such a situation; without the attainment of that easy facility with the basic language-forms which is so highly desired and coveted by all language learners, our learners will not ever acquire the readiness to go on to the next stage. Many theoreticians and practitioners in the field of language teaching have failed to see this crucial factor about language learning, and have, on account of this failure, recommended the use of exercises in the classroom for the teaching of the expression of personal meaning at a time when the learners were in no way ready for such exercises. This is just what the advocates of communicative/communicational language teaching do in
the classroom, by encouraging learners to 'use' language from the very beginning; and the outcome they inevitably produce is pidginization. Rivers (1972) complained:

Too often in the past, foreign language teaching concentrated on an understanding of the language system as a whole without providing sufficient practice in rapid production of the lower-level elements. This led to hesitancy in language use. On the other hand, more recent methods have worked out techniques for developing the lower-level manipulative skill while leaving the student unpracticed in the making of decisions at the higher level. The language course must provide for training at both levels. (pp. 15-16).

One who must stop at every point to consider what forms to use in order to be grammatically right and acceptable will never be able to communicate his meaning effectively; automaticity in the correct use of the basic language-forms is a pre-requisite for learning to communicate. This view was emphatically expressed by Palmer (1921), Sweet (1964), Rivers (passim) and many others, as we have already seen. A scheme of language teaching which goes to the second level without having established the first, it is argued, can hope to produce no learning, the case in point being communicative/communicational language teaching. On the other hand, a scheme which provides only for the teaching of manipulation does not teach everything, but does teach something, something which is very
valuable, because it forms the **basic** part of the complete language learning process. More language learning may later be built on this basis, but no language learning will ever be built without a basis. Either strategy provides only for partial language learning but, as the second level of learning cannot happen without the first having taken place, a strategy which attempts the teaching of this, by itself, teaches nothing, whereas the other strategy, even by itself, teaches something, and a valuable something at that. In a situation where no language learning (or practically none) has taken place, it is the teaching of this 'something' that has to be attempted; the higher-order teaching is not called for at all in such a situation.

C.H. Prator (1965) and C.B. Paulston (1970) had basically the same views as Rivers (1972) when they wrote about 'manipulation' exercises preceding 'communication' exercises in language teaching. A scheme of (second) language teaching which is based on a sound theory of language learning should necessarily provide for initial exercises to ensure habit-formation in the production of basic language-forms (which are often used as set blocks or chunks allowing only for **minimal** variations within themselves), before going on to the teaching of strategies for communicating or conveying personal meaning. But the
basic forms themselves should be taught, as was noted earlier, as the linguistic representations of basic units of meaning; the habit-formation is not so much in the automatic production of the language-forms as in the production of these automatically linked with the units of meaning they stand for.

Two factors are involved in the expression of meaning or in communication using language: an inventory of language-units on the one hand, and an inventory of meaning-units on the other. In advanced-level communication, or the expression of personal meaning (of high intricacy), breaking down and reassembling of basic units will have to happen on either side; then the newly assembled units on either side will have to be linked together for expression. The degree of the facility with which this reassembling and relinking process is done, it may be conjectured, is directly proportional to the automaticity with which the basic units on either side are normally linked. (cf. Palmer's idea of 'fusing'.) When a person advances in his experience of using a language, he establishes more and more meaning-language-links with greater and greater degrees of automaticity; the greater the number of such links at his command, it may again be conjectured, the less 'basic' the units on either side of these links will
tend to be: at the really advanced stage the person has expressions 'at the tip of his tongue' for almost anything he wants to say. Here lies the secret of one's fluency in the use of a language. Fluency is actually the other end of a continuous scale. Prator (1965) expressed this view. The best way of looking at the language learning process is to look at it as a continuum of which manipulated production of set language-forms and spontaneous production of original language-combinations (communication) form the two ends. There need not be any visualization of a number of different stages each of them being a separate phase; language learning can be visualized as one continuous process. But in the beginning there is, and there ought to be, a stage in which the focus is purely on the production of set language-forms (linked with basic units of meaning of course); the focus has to stay on this activity for quite some time, before it can begin to shift and move on to other areas of activity involving the more purposeful expression of meaning. In a language teaching programme geared towards the rectification of the basics, the focus must necessarily dwell on the initial link-formations and the drills for the same.

2.10 Winding up

We have examined a number of differing but significant
views on language and language learning/teaching; and we have arrived at the conclusions which have been laid down in the last section. But so far we have not had any discussion of the mainstream rationalist thinking on these matters. Chapter III will take up a discussion of certain significant rationalist views on these matters.