INTRODUCTION

This study began in an ESL classroom - out of a not surprising awareness that a typical school leaver and a college entrant in India after a few years of having studied English cannot still use the language, with any amount of ease. This is a general complaint. Such a deficiency has been variously described as a lack of communicative ability, accuracy but not fluency, lack of an appropriate use of language, lack of academic competence in English and so on.

Grappling with the problem as a second language teacher, none of these explanations appeared really satisfactory to me.

Observing learners, especially at the college level, it seemed that when they could not deal in English comfortably, they were deprived in a more serious way than merely not being able to communicate, or use the language for academic purposes; this deprivation could be characterised as not being able to get out of language use, adequately, the services of an abstract tool of innovative thinking. (The highly important status of English in higher education in India, and the need to operate in English in most areas - academic, non-academic, professional, social etc., is not questioned at this point at all.)
Starting from this hunch I made tentative forages into the idea of the relationship between language use as such and innovative thinking in general. Bringing to bear upon the question of a basic explanation of such a tool-use, the experience outside classrooms with proficient language users, firstly, the world-view one builds and explores seemed to me bound with the capacity to explore with a tool. The ideas that emerge out of a tool-use would remain as those which can be enabled only through such a tool-use and possible only in and through the specific tool that is used. If we take for granted at the moment, the case for such a tool as being the tool of language, language-constituted ideas would remain possible only in and through using this specific tool. This perception about the role of language indicates serious repercussions, if the tool of language then is not used or not used efficiently; it could affect the quality of the world-view one builds up and holds on to, and later comes in the way of an active exploration and expansion of knowledge. This notion of personal efforts at creative constructions and expansions of knowledge formed a constant refrain in my speculations about language use. The new and unique worlds that can be opened up by a tool-use seemed as innumerable as the limitations of perspective that an absence of tool-use could entail.
The idea of creativity I was concerned with, again, seemed to go with exploration, an efficient ability of exploitation of a tool, and associated adventurousness in use and personal involvement in the act; an essential quality of dynamism I did not perceive as being a part of any conceptualisation of language in the field of ELT (which somehow seems to place a large premium on learners conforming either to grammar rules (linguistic competence) or 'appropriacy' rules (communicative competence); or sometimes, admittedly, both. However, even 'fluency' ultimately, is seen to contribute to a 'received' grammar construction. Such concepts of proficiency as appropriate implementation of standardised 'code' runs counter to individual manipulations and extensions of language for originality).

Put simply then, the enterprise of creative augmentation to one's world-view is to explore with a tool. This sets forth the primacy of a tool, the advantages of the possession of a tool on the one hand; and indirectly suggests/hints at certain definite and unique qualities to the tool which makes possible perspectives not hitherto perceived.

At this point, I realised the need for more than mere speculations about the notion of language used as a tool; the need for a rigorous understanding of the relation between knowledge and language, and the nature of language which makes it a fitting tool for ever-progressive creativity in meaning-making.
Since importantly, second language learning, language learning and use in general and the phenomenon of reality - or meaning-making and knowledge acquisition were inextricably bound up in my thinking, about teaching English as a second language, the conceptualisation of language that I was seeking promised to be vastly different from the ones current ELT models seemed to be using; and worth pursuing. The Study, then, is about establishing a language model, which would treat language as a dynamic tool of knowledge constitution, and place the whole (first and second) language teaching endeavour against this background.

In this Introduction to the Study however, I do not even begin to state with clarity the model or in any detail discuss the implications. These are issues my entire thesis grapples with. Instead, I shall briefly make explicit here, certain crucial attitudes and slants within the study, to afford it the perspective I seek for it.

I shall start with a brief re-statement of the path of development of my thesis, to be followed by an observation about it. The study, as already mentioned, started from concerns about English as a second language teaching, which in their turn were inspired by certain 'floating' ideas about language (and second language) use in general. The speculations about a model were continued in the practical engagement with ideas inside a classroom, in teaching English as a second language. It ended as a language model with reality-
making overtones to it, and *became* ultimately a model for not only Language teaching but subjects in the curriculum as a whole. The whole, endeavour, with these implications yet, retained as its main theme, teaching English as a second language.

One integral basis for my *language* model, already hinted at, is crucial for an understanding of the free movements that I enact from conceptualisations about language use, second language and first language use and teaching; meaning-making; curriculum making in areas other than language and so on. The origins of the model are not from a conceptualisation of language as a quantum (of competence) or a core of any sort at all. I start from the activity (of language use) and the activity again not in the abstract, but as engaged in by an individual. The individual's active investment in the process of creation of meaning in language is crucial for my model. Again, I do not separate language or a core as an abstract entity from the process of language use itself, and the process of language use from the process of meaning-making or reality-construction. The activity of second language use is an extension of the activity of first language use and together they form the process of language use. And language use is an extension of a process of meaning-making which is reality-construction with a tool.
There are strong epistemological overtones to the premise on which I proceed to build my thesis. Language use, or languaging, as I frequently call this activity from now onwards, seems basically reality-construction activity. The world-view one holds for its innovative creativity seems to depend upon the worlds one is capable of 'seeing' with the aid of a symbolic medium or tool.

In spite of these epistemological, language philosophy echoes, and inevitably Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT) ones suggested, I do not intend to pick up ideas from past and/or present thinking in these areas, identify and explicate schools of thought in each discipline, and chart a path for myself within any one school.

The main reason for this is that the ideas I am interested in, spread over numerous disciplines and even then, are only rudimentary postulations of concepts without a development of them in the way I seek for any of them in my model.

I intend to pick up my central thesis of languaging as meaning constitution, as an exploratory process, besides other features that I think language as a tool connotes for me, for explication. And in that effort, I shall seek out the faint 'echoes' of the ideas (in some cases perhaps more than echoes) in writings in several fields connected with
language communication, purely in order to aid me in this explication by suggesting convenient hand-holds for terms and concepts in my model.

Thus, the ideas I pick up from extant literature afford mostly analogical parallels rather than logical supports for a stand.

This is an important aspect of the study. Since, I do not intend to find logical support for my arguments (though quite a number of the developments from several fields that I look at, touch upon issues that I am interested in, but, repeat, only 'touch upon' and not fully develop) sometimes I pick up terms that are already in use and give them a slightly different connotation to suit my scheme. But the terms do remain most of the time rooted in their origins.

Some of the words/phrases I use with these connotational differences, besides being technical terms like for instance, 'structural' are also less technical 'layman' terms, in the field, such as e.g., 'curricula', 'syllabuses', 'creativity', 'communication' etc.

As the thesis progresses, these terms gradually acquire 'special' meanings; and in the process they become clearer. The nature of the thesis is such that it does not allow me to
offer any kind of definition of terms at the outset. There is also an interesting evolution of the necessary basic terminology needed for my model - the evolution more or less reaching its plateau in Chapter III.

There are several instances of connotational accumulation to terms and choosing of the most appropriate ones, at the end of a particular bit of development of the model, and it happens throughout. I could have pointed them out in the body of the thesis itself as they occurred; only it would have proved to be tedious for me as the writer, and more so for the reader. And also, it would have taken away from the main impetus of the argument.

With these few clarifications about the presentation of the thesis, then, I shall move on to the first chapter. There, I postulate the main idea, about language as a meaning-constituting tool, that informs the study, in as direct a manner as possible.

As mentioned already, it is a basic looking-into the knowledge-constituting nature of language use and the ability of the same language to keep this act creative, which my initial speculations about the learning situation in an ESL class demanded. I turn to the initial questions to be answered in this connection, which answers would lead me into a clear postulation of my language model.
NOTES

1. I find an interesting parallel to this idea in Monipally's (1983) stand about second language in his Ph.D. study. To quote from the abstract to his dissertation: "The holistic model does not start from a conceptual entity, language, but from the concrete individual who does the learning. It does not separate language from his total communicative behaviour; neither does it distinguish between his L₁ and L₂. 'Learning a second language' is viewed not as an addition of a new language, but as a descriptive label to refer to an expansion of his total communicative behaviour so as to enlarge the circle of individuals with whom he can communicate relying largely on speech sounds."

***