5 Macro-level reconstruction of the curricular site

5.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts at reconstructing the macro level context by studying sociohistorical issues involved in ESL curriculum. It is posited that such a context will help in problematising the present, local issues by adopting a larger, educational perspective. This approach is guided by the belief that present is the result of certain decisions made in the past, hence the origin of some problems could be traced by identifying the sociohistorical factors.

To begin with, this chapter describes the process of discipline formation of ESL in India by touching upon aspects like landmarks in institutionalisation and continuation of ESL in post-independence India. It attempts to demonstrate the relevance of colonial and post-colonial issues in ESL while understanding the present context, particularly the concept of granting autonomy to colleges at the tertiary level.

5.2 Significance of the macro context

Knowledge like language is not independent of its use, and should be understood in its social and historical context. (Sarup 1978: 61)
Sarup (1978: 61)

The contradictions and pressures of our situation impel us to inquire into the historical processes that constitute the formations of English studies in colonial India and their continuance and expansion in the period after independence. This is not in order to formulate an account of English studies in India. Our need rather is to understand and analyse the role of English in our history and cultural formation, for we believe that it has an importance not only for our academic activity but also for an understanding of the present moment ... there is an increasing feeling among us to re-site the discipline through a historically informed and politically conscious engagement. (Joshi 1991: 27)

The issues raised by Sarup (1978) and Joshi (1991) emphasise the fact that knowledge cannot be delinked from its social and historical context. In order to understand knowledge in its present form one has to relate it to the historical processes which produced and legitimated it. Following this line of thought, Joshi (ibid.) traces the historical formation of English Studies in India and reiterates its significance in understanding the present state of affairs. In this chapter an attempt has been made at evolving a sociohistorical perspective in order to reconstruct the ESL curriculum by tracing its beginnings in India. In
other words, a reconsideration of some of the conflictual moments in evolution of English as a Second language creates the broad context of curriculum, which moves beyond the concerns of the conventional sociolinguistic context.

The concept of macro context is based on critical ethnographic emphasis on studying the historical, social and political forces that play an important role in the creation of knowledge. Thus, the notion of empirical is extended in order to perceive the local empirical context as a continuation of the broad historical context constituted by processes that produce and legitimise knowledge. Thus, the macro context, in the present study, signifies the perspective where historical factors are coalesced with the sociocultural aspects prevailing at a particular point of time. Some of the critical issues that are dealt within the macro context as exemplified in the present study are:

- Educational – the purpose of education, who imparts it, responsibility of the state, maintenance status quo
- Historical – colonial past, role of English language for cultural refinement, administration and business in post-colonial state, governmental patronage, language of opportunity
• Economic – global economic factors, business language, commercial aspects of English
• Cultural – superior status of English language, influence of western culture, influence of media
• Political – government, people in power, decision-making, laws, status of English
• Social – society, people, other influences, social status accorded to English

It is important to note that these macro level concerns are relevant at two levels: firstly, as events occurring at the present and secondly as events that have shaped the historical, political and cultural factors.

Having explicated the issues related to macro context, the main thrust of the next section is to historicize the ESL curriculum by recapitulating the processes that shaped it during the pre- and post-independence times.

5.3 Historicizing the ESL curriculum

The main thrust of this section is to historicize the ESL curriculum in India by reconceptualizing the social, historical and political factors that shaped it during the pre- and post independence times. In order to
understand the imperialistic design (Carnoy 1974) of the curriculum and the colonial agenda that accompanied it let us examine critically some of the objectives of teaching English in the pre-independence days.

5.3.1 The colonial objectives

The origin of systematized English Studies in India can be traced back to the late 18th century when Charles Grant, one of the directors of the East India Company submitted a memorandum exhorting the company to improve the moral condition of Indians by imparting to them knowledge of the English language. The observations he made in 1797 could be cited as a point of reference while tracing the evolutionary significance of English. To quote Grant,

*The true cure of darkness is the introduction of light. The Hindoos err, because they are ignorant, and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them would prove the best remedy for their disorders; and this remedy is proposed from a full conviction that if judiciously and patiently applied, it would have great and happy effects upon them, effects honorable and advantageous for us. There are two ways of making this communication; the one is, by the medium of the language of those countries; the other is by the medium of our own.* (in Sharp 1920: 81).
It may be noted that the *civilizing mission* proposed by Grant to educate Indians through English symbolizes a typical ameliorative concern which served the interests of the colonizers and the colonized by being mutually beneficial to both the groups. Grant prophetically asserts this point when he further builds up his argument while making a case for teaching English

the Hindoos would in time, become teachers of English themselves and the employment of our language in public business for which every political reason remains in full force, would, in the course of another generation make it very general throughout the country. There is nothing wanting to the success of this plan, but the hearty patronage of government. (in GOI 1949)

Thus, English education emerged as the most important means of disseminating the values of the colonial ruling class. As a language, English represented a means through which a large expanding bureaucracy could be rationalized. (McGuire 1983). The values conveyed through English education helped the colonizers in strengthening their hegemony through cultural supremacy. The supposition that their culture is superior to Indian culture and civilization was easily conveyed through
the study of English Literature, which in fact formed the curricular basis of
English Studies in India.

To trace the beginnings of English Studies in India (Viswanathan 1987, 1989) it is necessary to examine the role played by the curricular objectives in achieving the twin goals of enlightenment and subjugation. In other words, it implies that the study of English, not simply as a language but more significantly as a culture enabled the British to 'strengthen western cultural hegemony.' (ibid). Thus, education helped the British in subtly masking their colonial agenda of socio-political control in the guise of 'civilizing colonial subjects' (ibid).

5.3.2 Institutionalizing English in pre-independence India

An important landmark in establishing English education in India is the decision made by Macaulay to provide a sum of money for the revival and promotion of literature and for the introduction of the knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of British territories. This decision was implemented in 1835 when the Minute was passed following the prediction made by Macaulay that English was the language spoken by the ruling
class and it was likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the east (Sundar Rajan 1992, Viswanathan 1989, Joshi 1991).

As a follow-up of this decision, the Despatch of 1847 included subjects related to literature and science in the college curriculum. A critical acquaintance with the works of Bacon, Johnson, Milton and Shakespeare, knowledge of ancient and modern history and of the higher branches of mathematical sciences was made essential in the curriculum. Along with it some insights into the elements of natural history and the principles of moral philosophy and political economy, together with a considerable facility of composition and the power of writing in fluent and idiomatic language an impromptu essay on any given subject of history, moral or political economy found a place in courses designed for the colleges (Richey 1965)

This was followed by The Wood’s Despatch in 1854 which provided a detailed account of the mode of operation through which an English educational system was to be constructed. It is a document of immense historical importance that justifies the use of English as a medium of instruction. According to McGuire
• It rationalized the exercise in a point of principle by declaring that the Imperial Government had a 'sacred duty' to serve the ultimate benefit of the people committed to their charge.

• It noted the benefits that would accrue to these people by claiming that education would confer upon the Indians those vast moral and material blessings which would flow from the general diffusion of useful knowledge.

• Such a system would supply the government with 'natives' of intellectual fitness and moral integrity for public offices of all grades; colonial functionaries would operate the state machinery in order that the colonial ruling class would consolidate its position in India.

• It underlined the direct relationship between the development of English education in India and of capitalism in Britain.

  (1983: 44)

However, the Despatch strongly repudiated the suggestion that English was used as a medium of instruction by the company merely to suppress indigenous education or to discourage the study of English language and show how Indian and English language together may help to spread proper education in India. (Nurulla and Naik 1962: 115)
Consequently, it was decided that English should be taught where there was demand for it.

5.3.3 Insights on colonial education

The colonial policies of education have had several far-reaching implications on the Indian society. The imperialistic design of the curriculum together with a hegemonic assertion of cultural supremacy have virtually erased the indigenous system of education that existed prior to the consolidation of colonial power.

As Dharmapal (1983) rightly observes, 'the indigenous system had little option except to stagnate and die'. He further states that the manners, customs and civilization of India were intrinsically barbarous in the eyes of the colonizers. And to each of them India could become civilized

by discarding its Indianness and by adopting 'utility as the object of every pursuit', according to Mill, by embracing his peculiar brand of Christianity for Wilberforce, by becoming anglicized according to Macaulay and for Marx by becoming western. (ibid.)

He also quotes Mahatma Gandhi's observations on education made at the Round Table Conference in 1931. According to Gandhi
today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a 100 years ago. The British administrators instead of looking after education and other matters which had existed began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the root and left the root like that and the beautiful tree perished. 

(p.52)

Although Dharampal reconciles to the fact that India has lost its indigenous educational system and unearths the factors that led to its decay and replacement, he feels that even if the former could be brought back to life, in the context of today or of the immediate future, many aspects of it may no longer be apposite. Yet what exists has little relevance either. An understanding of that which existed and the process which created the irrelevance India has today, in time, could however help devise what best suits India’s requirements and the ethos of its people. (ibid.). 

Carnoy (1974) provides some valuable insights by studying the relationship between education and imperialism. He says that education which was carried out in the context of imperialism and colonialism has close links with ‘the spread of mercantilism and capitalism and hence it cannot in its present form and purpose be separated from the context’ (p.15). Accordingly, in India, education developed in line with British needs. It was designed to fulfil the British bureaucratic structures
necessary to control Indian economy and trade and promotes British culture. Hence Carnoy is of the opinion that the role of western education in third world countries is misinterpreted. He further argues that 'far from acting as a liberator, western formal education came to most countries as part of imperial domination, consistent with the economic goals of imperialism – the economic and political control of the people in one country by the dominant class in another.' (ibid.)

5.4 Institutionalising English in post-independence India

In India, the post-independence continuance of English is driven by forces that have little to do with ideologically imperialistic resolves of the colonial curriculum. It needs to be pointed out that today our desire and motivation to learn English emanates from a larger matrix created by historical circumstances, sociocultural realities, political and economic compulsions. Inextricably tied up here- the idea that knowledge of English helps accrue cultural and capital gains – is also a vital factor in unleashing the commercial success of English (Krishnaswamy and Sriraman 1994, Agnihotri 1997). To a large extent, the emergent status and role of English in the present Indian society can be attributed to the way in which English as a second language got institutionalized in post-independence India.
Looking back the process of institutionalizing English in post-colonial times by adopting a broader global framework, Howatt (1984) says

in the third world, the post-imperial redefinition of English in the Commonwealth, and the expansion of English as a world auxiliary language required, among other things, a more precise definition of those aspects of English language education which impinged on the expression of national cultural identity, and those which linked the individual country to the international English-using community. (p 221)

Thus the post-independence definition of English signifies 'the transformation of English from the language of imperial power and administration to a new role which was simultaneously more localized and more pervasive.'(ibid.). While working out the status that would be accorded to English it was felt that English should be retained as a second language in India keeping in view the practical realities and the emerging importance of English as a language of global communication. The policy decisions made since 1948 bear ample testimony to the fact that the retention of English was not without conflicts and struggles.
5.4.1 ESL: a post-independence reformulation

Glimpses into the history of English, especially the rationale for its inclusion as a compulsory second language and a plausible medium of instruction in the post-independence policies, is often accompanied by an apology for the disparity of importance attached to Indian languages. In fact, some of the policy statements to this effect expressed the hope that eventually the Indian languages would replace English. For instance, according to the 1949 Report on University Education under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

English will have to continue as the medium of federal business till the provinces are ready for change and the provincial educational institutions have spread the federal language adequately. Ultimately however English will disappear from the scene as the language of the state, central or provincial. (GOI: 1949).

This was the first education commission appointed by the government of free India under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan to suggest measures for improving university education in free India. One of the significant recommendations of this commission was the need for university autonomy as it was felt that state control of universities would lead to totalitarian form of education, by promoting political purpose of the
state. With regard to the study of English at the university level, the report suggests that

It is a language which is rich in literature – humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we should give up English we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge. Unable to have access to this knowledge, our standards of scholarship would fast deteriorate and our participation in the world movements of thought would become negligible (ibid.).

Thus, the need to include English in the curriculum was regarded as a means of preventing isolation from the world, and hence it was felt that it would be unwise if the Indians allowed themselves to be ‘enveloped in the folds of dark curtain of ignorance’. Consequently the policy states that

our students who are undergoing training at schools which will admit them either to a university or to a vocation must acquire sufficient mastery of English to give them access to the treasures of knowledge and in the university no student should be allowed to take a degree who does not acquire the ability to read with facility and understand works of English author (ibid.).
5.5 Disciplinary formation of ESL in India

According to Howatt (1984), a distinctive intellectual framework of basic principles is a necessary condition for an autonomous profession but not a sufficient one. He believes that 'there must also be a sense of coherence and stability reinforced by the establishment of institutions with various functions: the regulation of entry for example, the maintenance of standards, the provision of initial and higher level training, career structures, communication through journals, associations, conferences and so on. Finally there must be some commitment to research and development for the future' (p.213).

During the colonial period there was not any perceivable difference between the way English was taught in India and in Britain (Howatt 1984). Perhaps, this was because the basic educational aim in both the cases was the assimilation of British culture through the medium of English literature. Thus commenting on the methods of teaching English during the 19th century Howatt unequivocally ascertains

There was no provision for language work specially designed to help the non-native learner and school grammars like those of the prolific J C Nesfield which were originally written to get British youngsters through the local exams ... were exported in large number of colonies. By the
twenties the notion that English was a second language with a utilitarian function in the communication of knowledge had begun to emerge, though it was not until the fifties that the modern distinction between English as a 'foreign' and a 'second' language (EFL and ESL) becomes widespread. (p.212-13)

In the same context, Howatt makes a very relevant observation when he traces the emergence of ESL and EFL by linking them with the utilitarian function English was expected to perform in the Commonwealth nations. To a considerable extent, the disciplinary formation of ESL in post-independence India could also be attributed to functional (as opposed to the literary) importance of the language. Hence the need to develop proficiency in English was deemed most essential.

The proficiency of students in using languages is reported to have deteriorated over the years...improvement in language skills of students is important considering the significance of language proficiency for cognitive development and further learning (ibid.).

As a follow-up of the foregoing exhortation to teach English for functional purposes, the policy decision to improve the language skills of the students was a major step in the direction of according a disciplinary status to English. The support extended by the government in order to
fulfil this task could be seen in the setting up of ELT institutes for the purpose of looking into various facets of teaching ESL in India.

The Central Institute of English (CIE) -now, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL)- was set up 1958. The CIE played a crucial role in attempting to introduce new methods of teaching English through a fresh training of college and secondary school teachers (Sidhanta 1961).

Commending the efforts made by the CIE Nehru (1963), the then prime minister of India in an address at the institute said that it was essential to get rid of the fixation about the elitism of English so as to make its status objective. In the words of Nehru ‘English has a background in India which should be nourished, it is a great language spoken by a great many people all over the world, it is clear that if we want a foreign language, English in the circumstances, is the most convenient for us. (p.3)’
Moreover, by way of clarifying the need to have a foreign language, Nehru says:

The windows of our mind should be open to them and the best window is that of language – it is important to keep in touch with this new and developing world. If we are going to keep up English, we must try to keep up certain standards in English. The effort made here in this institution to keep them up by teaching teachers is a basic one and an important one and I hope it will succeed (ibid.).

The *raison d'être* for the retention of English and improving its standards has broader socio-economic ramifications than the need for a foreign language as expressed by Nehru. Sidhanta (1961), for instance links up this aspect with the decision to adopt a socialistic pattern of life which was aimed at rooting out poverty, disease and squalor from our country. The socio-economic agenda of ESL is succinctly put forth when he says:

we’ve embarked on Five-year plans to lay a solid foundation for economic progress and material prosperity. It is obvious that there is no alternative but to lean heavily on the English Language by partaking of its vast treasures of scientific and technological knowledge. It is therefore no sentimental love of English language which prompts us to encourage its continued study in this country, it is the *sine qua non* of any large economic activity in our country (p.7).
It may be noted from the foregoing discussion that the knowledge of English is almost equated with the key to develop the country. Therefore English not only claimed highest priority in the curriculum at the school and college levels but it was also recognized that the leisurely way of teaching English had to be replaced with more efficient methods of teaching English in a short span of time. Reiterating the fact that English has several advantages if pursued systematically Gokak (1960) maintains we need this key (English language) to throw open to our youngsters the window that gives them a world perspective of the problems of humanity and their possible solutions. It unlocks for them the treasures of all scientific and humanistic knowledge … they will then be able to open a significant chapter in the story of renaissance (p.3).

In this way the introduction of English in our institutions goes beyond a mere decisive event in the history of modern India and gets regarded as a phenomenon in itself. As Chatterjee (1976) remarks English has struck a root in India: it goes even further than the question of medium of instruction and compulsory second language, it is coterminous with our instructional and social objectives (p.187).

Having delineated the importance of English as a major decisive factor in its disciplinary formation, I shall now consider the pedagogic
aspects ESL that demanded a serious attention. Especially at the college level, the need for a specialized methodology was perceived as a major issue in ESL pedagogy. While a great amount of attention had gone into developing effective methods at the school level, the college level was yet to be recognized as a different pedagogic arena. For instance the amount of control exercised was quite different in the school and college and this factor needed reinterpretation while identifying three important aspects of college methodology. These include: the origin of teaching materials, teacher's presentation, exercise and practice by students. Making a case for a college methodology Das (1974) emphasises the fact that

The methodology of English has hitherto been of concern only to those connected with the school system. College and university departments of English showed no interest in pedagogics until recently (p.23).

For Ghosh (1977) the college methodology involves the analysis of all the systems that operate in making teaching and learning possible.

Chiefly, the factors that need to be considered are:

1. The nature of what has to be taught – the content;
2. The nature of learning – the factors responsible for learning;
3. The nature of circumstances in which learning has to take place: the student, the teacher and the environment – the 'context'.

From the perspective of the present study, the issue of methodology as interpreted by Ghosh could be considered as the first attempt at conceptualizing the pedagogics of ESL as a curricular problem. The factors identified by him place ESL at the college level on a curricular matrix created by the interaction between the content, the context and the roles of the participants. Another important issue raised by Ghosh relates to the student–teacher relationship which plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of a curricular programme. In the words of Ghosh

The teaching of English in India has to be based on at least three sets of consideration: sociological, psychological and linguistic. The teacher of English must learn to view his work in the broader social perspective, to understand national objectives and commitments. He must be able to assess individual needs, aspirations and difficulties and view them with sympathy. It is important for the teacher to be able to identify with the student, not only in the mass but also at the personal, individual level. This is where an understanding of social as well as individual psychology will help. English teaching at the college level has gone wrong most in this disregard of the student. (p.3)
The views expressed by Ghosh are particularly relevant to the study as they indicate the need for a curricular perspective while dealing with issues at the college level. Besides, the necessity to consider the students' expectations also prove to be illuminating, as these are the first pronouncements positing the legitimate need to look beyond matters pertaining to syllabus design, by emphasising on a holistic treatment of issues in teaching ESL in India. It may be noted that he assigns a lot of importance to consider issues emanating from sociological perspective to understand the 'national objectives and commitments'.

5.6 **Emerging issues: a discussion**

The curricular issues discussed in this Section are placed within the larger framework of ELT in India. In this study the field of ELT is considered as providing a theoretical background to the study of ESL in India. Some of the issues that get examined here include the status of English in India, the concern for standard, the division between language and literature and a critique of the concept of method. A critical study of these issues unfolds the conflicts and ambiguities surrounding the concept of ESL in India.
5.6.1 The status of English in India - is it ESL or EFL?

The status of language is of foremost importance in determining its pedagogic goals (ends) and in designing appropriate syllabus (means). It is observed that officially English is qualified as a Second Language in India (ESL) but the methodology that accompanies it has been intended for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations. A crucial misconception underlies this assumption. Not only have we failed to distinguish between the concepts of a second and a foreign language while deciding on our curricula but it also indicates a wholesale import and reliance on ELT as developed for EFL pedagogy. This is exemplified in the objectives, content and techniques that are aimed at improving the fluency and functional literacy of learners. Also belonging to this genre is the bulk of teaching materials tailored to meet the day-today communicative demands in a foreign language context. As a result of this confusion, in India too ESL is virtually indistinguishable from functional EFL overtones.

The following distinction throws some light on the conceptual ambiguity: generally a Second language (SL) is a non-native language used within a country and it is needed for total participation in the political and economic life of the nation. It has an official status and recognized functions within a country. Sometimes it is a language needed for
education. It can also be 'picked up' because of its widespread use within the environment. As against this, a Foreign Language (FL) is a non-native language learnt and used by a speech community outside national and territorial boundaries. Purposes for learning a foreign language include travel abroad, communication with native speakers, reading of foreign literature and scientific and technical work. Thus when compared with an official second language more environmental support is required for promoting a foreign language.

For example, when one applies the framework suggested by Stern (1983) the linguistic context in India comes across as a peculiar combination of both ESL and EFL. While the policy defines English as a SL, the pedagogics depends on EFL oriented needs-analysis, teaching methods and materials. This often results in incompatibility of ends and means - for e.g., adaptations of proficiency levels worked out for EFL learners, such as immigrants and other non-native learners (consider the purely FL nature of English in Japan or Russia or the requirements of Hispanics in USA) pose several problems in a multilingual context like India. This is because such need-based courses are systematically planned for smaller classrooms and short courses they cannot be
substituted for long-term courses in school and college with relatively large classrooms.

Thus, in the case of India, which is typically illustrative of the politico-cultural consequences of adopting a non-native language for various functions, ESL problems can never find neutral and objective solutions. In fact, this is true of several Commonwealth nations. Therefore, any adaptation of EFL methodologies requires a careful consideration of the sociohistorical factors that constitute the context at a given point of time.

With this issue as its conceptual backdrop, the exhortation - if English is to be taught, it has to be taught effectively - calls for a reassessment of the efforts made, so far in teaching ESL in India. For example, one finds that the synonymity of ELT in India with technical-scientific approaches has reduced it to a handful of methods, manuals on syllabus designing and exercises in materials production. Having said this, an introspection into some of its primary objectives unravels the processes through which ELT has got repressed to a mere instructional enterprise with an exclusive adherence to the technical paradigm with the issue of standards as its outstanding feature.
5.6.2 A concern for standard

Deterioration of standards of learning has been a ubiquitously disturbing fact for all those who are seriously committed to the profession of ELT. However even more worrying is the manner in which the issue of standards has been tackled. There is no denying the fact that standardization is a necessary prerequisite for preserving universal intelligibility of any language, especially in its written and spoken forms. Keeping this in view, various steps have been taken to ensure a common minimum standard at every stage of certification of English learning. The setting up of various English Language Teaching Institutes (ELTIs) with the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) as an apex body is also legitimized by the need to improve the standards of English by meeting other professional demands such as teacher education, preparation of teaching materials and so on. However, this was way back in the late 1950s. What makes one wonder is the insignificant amount of change things has undergone since then.

The issue of standards as addressed in the earlier paragraph, is better understood by referring to the latest policy decisions. Let us look at the recommendations of the most recent report on education in India - the Rammurthi Commission Report (1990). While reviewing policy issues on
ELT this Report not only reiterates the specifications laid out by earlier Commissions such as the Radhakrishnan Commission Report (1948-49) and the Kothari Commission Report (1964-66) but also repeats the plan of action drafted by earlier Commissions. For example, discussing the subject of language development, the 1990 Report does nothing more than recapitulate what has already been said before. To quote improvement of language competencies in the students in general including English, the program of action formulated under National Policy of Education 1986, called for development of textual materials, teacher training and research in the methodology of language teaching, development of infrastructural facilities, designing of remedial courses for school and university students... however the fact remains that over the years, the standards of ELT have been going down.' (GOI: 1949).

To substantiate the point made about standards, let us analyse the role played by ELTIs in improving the standards of English.

Well into four decades of its existence, these institutions have played a crucial role in providing a sense of direction to second language education in general. To recall, the first such institute, ELTI, Allahabad and subsequently, the Central Institute of English (now CIEFL, Hyderabad)
were set up in 1956 and 1958 respectively. At present there are eleven ELTIs with the CIEFL as a national body. Driven by the concern for uplifting of standards, these institutes cater primarily to the training and research needs of pre- and in-service teachers. This apart, advisory and expertise-based services also come under the purview of these institutes.

The realization that the problem of standards still persists in spite of four decades of our grappling with it should be a pointer to need for a critical appraisal of all our efforts in this direction (Parakrama 1995), particularly, a topical reflection of the perspective within which we have carrying out our institutionalized ELT operations.

Viewed alternatively, the issue of standard may have been over-emphasized to the extent of marginalizing other related factors such as practical curricular constraints. These include a host of attitudinal and motivational factors, disparity in students' achievement levels, teacher competencies, scope of decision making for teachers and students, heterogeneous social backgrounds and linguistic needs of students and above all the pressure of a centralized examination system.
5.6.3 The language-literature divide

The emergence of the language-literature divide could be traced back to Gokak (1960) when he redefines the objectives of ESL in post-independence India. He says,

what students need is drills in structures and exercises in spelling and punctuation and vocabulary, comprehension of the language skills and not lectures on Shakespeare and Romantic poetry, however interesting these may be. Of course, good literature can be used for cultivating these language skills. It should be so used. (p.11)

More recently, the views expressed by Spivak bring out the differences between teaching a second language as an instrument of communication and teaching the same language so that the student can appreciate literature. She says, it is certainly possible to argue that in the most successful cases, the difference is not easy to discern. But there is a certain difference in orientation between the language classroom and the literature classroom. According to her

In the former, the goal is an active and reflexive use of the mechanics of the language. In the latter, the goal is at least to shape the mind of the student so that it can resemble the mind of the so-called implied reader of literature text, even when that is a historically distanced cultural fiction. The figure of an implied reader is constructed
within a consolidated system of cultural representation. The appropriate culture in this context is the one supposedly indigenous to the literature under consideration (in Sunder Rajan 1992:220).

Thus, the teaching of language and literature which are signified by the General English and Optional English in the Indian context indicate two different goals to be followed at the tertiary level.

5.6.4 A critique of method – insights from Pennycook

Pennycook (1989) provides some illuminating insights while examining the concept of method in Second Language Education (SLE). Reflecting on the concept of SLE, he says that SLE 'is not a mere quibble over terminology', in fact, it has far more serious implications as it relates to the role of theory and teaching to production of interested knowledge and the politics of language teaching.

Describing method as a prescriptive concept, he says that the concept of method 'plays an important role in maintaining inequalities', as it engenders 'a positivist, progressivist and patriarchal understanding of teaching.' (p. 591-594). Commenting on the ideological underpinnings of the concept of method, he asserts that, 'there appears to be a strong parallel between attempts to deal with education and language without
acknowledging the political aspects (ibid.). Hence, there is a need to recognize that 'the ahistorical, apolitical stance taken by many linguists is also an ideological position.' Placing the concept of method in a broader global context, he believes that method has received little criticism in the west because ELT is largely perceived as a technical business, unconnected with cultural imperialism, *linguicism* and global power (Phillipson in Pennycook 1989).

Thus, the issues raised by Pennycook bring out the hidden dimensions of the concept of method by throwing light on the political ramifications of the significance of method in the teaching of ESL.

5.7 Curricular decisions in ESL at the tertiary level

In this section the ESL curriculum is discussed in terms of some of the major decisions made at the national level. The emphasis being specifically on the tertiary level, the documents which form the source of following sub-sections include the three major curricular reforms effected in ESL. These are: the Study Group Reports (1967, 1971), The Syllabus Reforms (1977) and the CDC Report (1989). The following Section takes up a discussion of recommendations made by these committees.
5.7.1 The Study Group Reports

It was only by the late 1960's and early 1970's with the constitution of the 'Study Groups' that the English curriculum began to be discussed as a serious issue. The fact was widely acknowledged that English has been accepted by a vast majority of the Indian population as a language of social mobility and for purposes of career advancement. As a result various components of a curriculum such as objectives, methodology, materials and evaluation etc., were given a serious thought and consideration.

The Study Group Report (1967) recommended that English should be taught as a compulsory second language with a significant shift in focus from teaching of literature to teaching of language. The Study Group Report (1971) states that it was not practicable to have a uniform All-India pattern in the teaching of English. The Group decided 'to recommend programmes adaptable under varying circumstances and assistance to each state in accordance with its special requirement.' (p.2) It suggested that every student should have undergone at least a minimum of three years of English teaching by the end of class X and that the transitional stage of Intermediate should focus on remedial teaching in order to prepare students to acquire necessary command over English. The group
also favoured the idea of offering multilevel courses to the students of Intermediate and the first year Degree courses.

The curricular decisions of the group centered on the development of 'men (sic), methods and materials.' In other words this would mean that there was a legitimate need to develop human resources, the most suitable methodology and the preparation of better textbooks. The group recommended that for effective teaching the syllabus, textbooks and other teaching materials should be structurally and lexically graded and that teachers should be familiar with classroom procedures and foreign language teaching techniques.

In order to achieve this objective of effective teaching, English teachers needed to be trained in the 'scientific methods and techniques of ELT.' In this regard the observations made by the Kothari Commission could also be mentioned.

The fact that English will be for the overwhelming majority of pupils only a second and third language makes it all the more necessary to ensure the adoption of effective modern methods of teaching the language by teachers who have been specially trained for this purpose. (p.197)
The Syllabus Reform in English (1977) remarked that the teaching of English at Indian university and colleges still follows the traditional approach where English was taught as a literary-humanistic discipline, the objective being the introduction of some classics to the students of English. Teaching of English at the college level 'scarcely ever intended to provide language instruction.' Although the exposure to literature can and frequently does, result in the consolidation and sharpening of the language skills, it is doubtful whether college teaching ever had the imparting of language skills as a conscious aim. The following are some of the observations made by this report:

- Reasons for teaching of English in its traditional form is no longer relevant mainly because students do not possess the preliminary language ability to benefit from this form of teaching by exposure. However, even it does, traditional literary-humanistic approach is not the most effective form of language education.

- The socio-political attitudes to English have altered, and a more balanced and objective view of its role, functions has become more possible. This suggests a clear appreciation of its
value in education and this has helped to stimulate innovation and reform in teaching.

- Some of the reasons to believe that the situation with regard to the teaching of English may not be quite as satisfactory as could be expected are: one, most reforms seem to have stopped at the earlier levels of college education, the teaching of English at the Degree level remains substantially unaltered. Two, some confusion about the nature and purpose of teaching at the Degree level. This stems from the inability to identify clearly objectives and the entry level. There is a need of research into problems of student requirements for English at these levels, based on sociolinguistic investigation.

In the late 1980's the CDC took up the task of systematic review of the existing curriculum and offered guidelines for a 'new curriculum' at the Undergraduate and Post-graduate levels. Unlike the Study Group Reports that advocated the teaching of language as structures, the CDC advocated the teaching of language as communicative skills. As against the traditional General English curriculum characterized by literary-humanistic, heavily content-based syllabuses, which did not equip the learners with the necessary language skills, the Report states that the new
curriculum aims at enabling the learners to acquire the communicative use of English and for this purpose it proposed a curriculum in terms of communicative skills of LSRW.

By way of methodology and materials, the Report proposed that the conventional lecture method should be replaced by interactive techniques in the classroom and that textbooks should contain challenging tasks and exercises in order to promote greater learner involvement and greater communicative use of language in the classroom. The Report also recommends that as a first step in implementing the curriculum, students should be 'streamed' according to the levels of proficiency tests in English, in accordance with their performance in the proposed national test.

What emerges significantly from the reports is a consistent preoccupation with technical issues such as what method should be used, what should constitute the prescribed lessons and plans for evaluation. To me this suggests an influence of the universal concerns of ELT as identified by its proponents in EFL situations. In the absence of a conceptualisation from the Indian perspective, it could be gathered that the recommendations made the governmental agencies perpetuated ELT as a discipline that realised the neo-colonial agenda. Such an agenda is
apparently indicated in the insistence of proliferating the ELT 'market' with several books on methods and teaching materials. In my opinion, this could be considered as an instance of 'linguicism' suggested by Pennycook (1994).

5.8 The curricular decisions - a summary

In the context of ESL at the tertiary level in India, the processes involved in curricular decision making generally follow a hierarchical framework. Occupying the topmost rung, the policy makers formulate the objectives of teaching English as desired by the governmental agencies. Next, the universities prepare a common-core syllabus for the colleges that come under its purview. This is followed by an adoption of the syllabus designed by the university in various colleges. Thus, the classroom which signifies the actual activation of the curriculum, emerges as the most powerless of all the agencies.

This can be encapsulated in the form of a five-step process involving an interaction between the various stages. The following table describes the inherently hierarchical roles assigned to the participants:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-making Stages</th>
<th>The Agency</th>
<th>The participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. policy making</td>
<td>The Ministry of HRD</td>
<td>Ministers, bureaucrats, public representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. designing the syllabus</td>
<td>The Universities</td>
<td>The Board of Studies constituting the professors and other members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. adapting the syllabus</td>
<td>The colleges</td>
<td>Teachers, principals and other authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. activating the syllabus</td>
<td>The classroom</td>
<td>Teachers and students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the above framework describes the common processes of decision making, the autonomous colleges are relatively free to make their own decisions and implement them without the constraints imposed by the university (Appendix 7). These colleges are also empowered to conduct their own exams and offer courses that have high professional value.

5.9 Micro-macro analysis

The issues in the macro context could be better appreciated by recalling some of the concerns discussed at the micro level in the previous
chapter. The following section attempts to place some of the critical micro level issues in the macro context bring out their significance for the study.

5.9.1 Objectives of General English

In Section 4.11 it was observed that General English, (ESL) in the context of the college aimed to attain a set of objectives as mentioned in the syllabus document (Section 4.10.3). In the light of this fact it may be recalled that the college was keen on attaching equal importance to language and textual components for providing a holistic educational experience. When placed in the scheme of macro level issues, this decision clearly indicates that the college authorities would still want to retain certain aspects of English as emergent form the colonial legacy (i.e., literature for aesthetic experience, cultural refinement as discussed in Section 5.5.3). The viability of attaining this objective seems to be highly debatable as the students expressed their perceptions in Sections (4.14, 4.15, and 4.16). The students are more in favour of learning English for functional requirements, a need created by the new role for English in global economy (Section 5.3.1).

It was observed that the college intended to cater to the current demands of learning English by preparing the students for competitive
exams, signifying an interpretation of the present needs for learning English. This translates into acquisition of proficiency in English for taking entrance exams for higher educational courses in Indian and foreign universities.

5.9.2 Language – Literature

In the context of the college, it was observed that the department of English was apparently biased towards teaching of Literature. Perhaps, it was a coincidence to find that two of the teachers were actively involved in dramatics and their primary interest lay in teaching literature. Apart from this, it was noted that senior teachers preferred to take up more of literature classes, by assigning the language classes to junior teachers.

Observations such as these suggest that Literature enjoyed a privileged status in the department and language was thus pushed aside as being subordinate to literature in terms of its potential for interpretation and critical appreciation. This made me wonder how such a dichotomy had prevailed in spite of adopting a language-through-literature kind of approach in syllabus design (Section 5.4). According to this approach, genres from literature such as prose, poetry and novel serve as a basis for teaching language and grammar. It was even more paradoxical to observe
that the syllabus claimed to consider the present trends in teaching ESL (Section 5.3.1) but in reality the teachers were not adequately equipped to handle language classes.

5.9.3 Method and methodology

It was discussed in section (5.5) that one of the key post independence concerns was identified as evolving a suitable methodology for teaching English at college level (Section 5.6.1). Several efforts had gone into exploring the right method of teaching in the Indian content. The lecture method (reading, explaining, summarising and eliciting) has come to stay as the standard method followed across colleges. Perhaps due to large numbers of students in each class, practical exercises aimed at developing language skills were relegated to the periphery. Teaching was mostly monologic, interspersed with some questions to the students (Section 4.12).

Due to academic and administrative constraints certain methods that aimed to impart communication skills were not feasible (Section 4.18). Another related issue pertain to training of teachers is not generally deemed to be a prerequisite for entering into college teaching. Hence lack of awareness about professional issues, knowledge of new methods of
teaching and other aspects of teacher education did not find a place in the context of the college.

5.9.4 Syllabus restructuring

The data analysed in chapter 4 clearly indicates that the department of English adopted a very cautious approach in restructuring the General English syllabus. The reasons for being vary about the risks involved in making radical changes are evident in the perceptions of the teachers as expressed in Sections 4.15 and 4.18.

By way of probing this sense of lack of confidence in teachers, it may be argued that if the teachers had undertaken a formal study of students' needs, the classes could have been more meaningful to the students in terms of addressing their learning needs. For the teachers too, there would have been less number of problems with regard to maintaining discipline. I feel that the lack of discipline, as indicated by making noise and creating other distractions the class, is the students' way of protesting against the present set of textbooks. Their resentment is further compounded by the fact that they were not involved in any decision-making processes. Perhaps, if the students had a chance to express their preferences they would have benefited from a better
textbook that would have had different set of lessons and language exercises. It may be recalled that the students had already envisaged what their General English textbooks should contain, as exemplified in their reactions towards to the present set of books (Sections 4.14 and 4.17).

5.9.5 Autonomy

The National Policy of Education emphasizes autonomy of colleges (p.41) The system of affiliated colleges does not provide autonomy to deserving colleges to frame curricula, course of studies or their own system of evaluation (Appendix 9). Although the UGC has been supporting this programme only 21 colleges have been conferred autonomous status so far.

It is envisaged that about 500 colleges should be developed as autonomous colleges in the seventh plan; the existing affiliating system might be replaced in the long run. Due care will be taken to evolve a suitable framework for autonomous colleges. In order to achieve this objective, it is proposed:
- To make provision in the university Acts where necessary to enable colleges to become autonomous
- To frame guidelines and patterns of assistance including the extent of academic, administrative and financial freedom and the corresponding responsibilities devolving on the autonomous colleges.
- To formulate a scheme of incentives such as special assistance to selected colleges, creation of posts of readers and professors, provision of a higher level of grant for development etc, to colleges which become autonomous
- To provide special assistance to colleges in tribal backward areas to enable them to develop into autonomous colleges
- To make statutory provisions, if necessary to enable autonomous colleges to award their own degrees or to confer deemed university status on them to develop other appropriate mechanism to accelerate the process of curricular reform, design of courses, reform in teaching and evaluation procedures.
- To develop appropriate instruments for review/appraisal of the scheme of autonomous colleges at regular intervals and to develop interaction among colleges to promote the scheme of autonomy.
5.10 Drawing together

The main thrust of this chapter was to reconstruct the curricular context by studying the macro level issues. This chapter described various sociohistorical factors that played a crucial role in the formative processes of the ESL curriculum in India. This was achieved by examining some of the major policy decisions in India. The issues emerging from the discussion were analysed critically in order to highlight the conflictual processes of decision-making. This was followed by a description of sample macro level interpretation of micro level curricular themes identified in the previous chapter.

The next chapter attempts a critical reconstruction of the curricular site by undertaking a critical interpretation of micro and macro level themes.