

**THE PROBLEMS OF THE LEARNERS OF ENGLISH IN MIZORAM :**

A STUDY IN CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

( A Case Study of Undergraduate Students of Mizoram )

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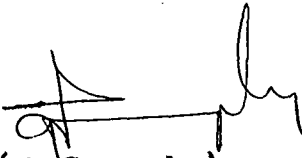
This is to certify that the work embodied in this thesis titled The Problems of the Learners of English in Mizoram : A Study in Contrastive Analysis (A Study of Undergraduate Students of Mizoram) has been carried out under my Supervision by Ms. Ramhmingthanqi Ralte.

I further certify that the subject matter of this thesis is a record of work done by the candidate herself, and that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of award of any previous degree to her.

In habit and character, the candidate is a fit and proper person for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dated Aizawl

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(S. Ganguly)

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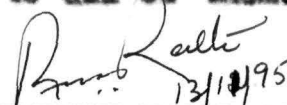
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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 THE PROBLEM
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## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to observe and analyse the problems of Mizo learners of English in the colleges of Mizoram, so that proper remedial measures can be suggested. The level referred to by the 'colleges' is the Pre-University second year. The teachers of English in the colleges often point out that the English of their students is not up to the mark. In spite of 8 years of English teaching-learning in the schools the proficiency level of the students is very low. The students are in many cases not in a position to write a simple sentence correctly or perform even elementary communicative tasks like writing an application for leave. A close look at the results of the public examinations conducted by the Mizoram Board of Secondary Education at the school final stage level and at the Pre-University level by the North-Eastern Hill University show that nearly 30% of the learners fail to secure even pass

marks in English is very surprising as English is a compulsory language in the school and college curriculum and is given much importance in teaching and testing. At the school level about 10 periods are earmarked for the teaching of English per week. At the Pre-University level English is taught for 6 periods of 45 minutes duration every week. It is not surprising to observe that, inspite of 8 to 10 years of English teaching-learning in the schools and colleges, the communicative ability of the students is still very poor.

Though everybody argues that the learners are poor users of the language, they do not agree on the exact nature of the learners' problems and their explanations. The teachers feel that the syllabuses are not properly planned and designed and that the learners do not get adequate exposure to the communicative form of English. On the other hand, the curriculum planners and educational administrators blame the teachers for not implementing the syllabus in the true spirit. The learners' problems in English also seem to be inadequately appreciated. Teachers are not agreed regarding the

areas which need to be taught properly and emphasized upon. Thus there seems to be no general agreement on the nature and intensity of the problems faced by the learners of English. Many of the remedial measures undertaken by the teachers seem to be only adhoc measures which are not based on any systematic study or understanding of the real nature of the learners' problems.

The present study intends to fill this gap and make an attempt to investigate the areas of language use which pose problems for the learners of English at the Pre-University level in Mizoram. We have certain clear objectives here: carrying out a contrastive study of English and Mizo to find out their areas of similarities and differences, identifying the problems which manifest themselves as errors in the learners' use of English, and classifying these errors in terms of frequency of their occurrence. The gravity of these errors in respect of communication is also to be studied. Further, the study makes an attempt to look at the sources of these errors. All these steps will hopefully enable us to design

appropriate remedial measures at an appropriate time.

The researcher was aware of the two approaches to the analysis of errors in practice. One approach takes the view that the key to all problems of learners in the target language can be found by comparing and contrasting the structures in the mother tongue with those in the target language (Fries : 1945 : 9), (Lado : 1957 : 1). According to this approach the source of learners' errors can be traced to the interference of the mother tongue. This approach is popularly known as Contrastive Analysis which is concerned with the effects exerted by the mother tongue on the language being learnt, the foreign language (James : 1980 :9), it is concerned with interference in one direction, from mother tongue to target language (James : 1971 : 60). The other approach known as Error Analysis, looks at errors as manifestations of the process of learning and problems that the learners face in the process of internalizing the system of a new language (Wilkins : 1976). This approach looks at errors as problems faced by the learners and investigates the causes of each problem individually. The analysis of the

learners' errors gives us evidence of their competence in the foreign language and enables us to throw light on the general processes of learning a foreign language (Johansson : 1975 : 10). The two approaches, Contrastive Analysis (CA) and Error Analysis (EA) are both concerned with learners' performance and learners' errors. But, while CA contrast the learners' native language and the target language, EA contrast the learners' performance and the target language (Sridhar: 1981 : 232). The present study has used the principles associated with the Contrastive approach in order to have a detailed and in-depth understanding of the problems faced by learners of English in Mizoram.

It is being increasingly realised that the ability to write a grammatically correct sentence in isolation does not necessarily mean that the learner has proficiency in the language. Proficiency has essentially got to do with the ability to generate appropriate series of sentences in a given context so that communication can take place (Halliday : 1976, and Widdowson : 1978). It was observed that most of the exercises in language opera-

tion (grammar) dealt with isolated sentences. It was, therefore, felt that the study should in particular look at the problems of the learners beyond the level of isolated sentences in order to have a better understanding of the nature of their proficiency in English.

## 1.2 HYPOTHESIS

The low proficiency level of Mizo learners in English may be partly attributed to the influence of the mother tongue, and partly to other factors like methods and strategies of teaching lack of exposure to the language etc. Mizo learners cannot acquire good spoken English and what little English they have acquired is again very often coloured by their mother tongue. A major problem which confronts the Mizo learners of English may be attributed to the differences existing between the two languages, Mizo and English.

The present teaching-learning situation does not take care of the various problems of Mizo learners. A careful study of the Mizo learners' errors will be helpful in the designing of teaching materials and syllabus as well as in understanding the needs and problems of learners. A

cognitive psychologist, D.P. Ausubel, makes the following statement :

It I had to reduce all of educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this : The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows. Ascertain this and teach him accordingly (1968 : vi).

There is little doubt that what a learner already knows is his mother tongue through which he tries to perceive and assimilate the elements of the target language. Therefore, utilizing and controlling this tendency of the learners instead of ignoring or fighting at will go a long way towards facilitating and ensuring success (Marton : 1981 : 172-173).

### 1.3. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

In most of the remote and isolated regions of the country the normal tendency is to adapt the syllabus being used in the neighbouring states with some cosmetic modifications, Quite often the poems,

prose pieces, short stories and dramas remain unchanged. In Mizoram the syllabus in the schools is a crude adaptation of the syllabuses in use in Assam, Meghalaya and Delhi. It may be pointed out that most of the experts in syllabus committees come from Delhi and it is, therefore, quite natural that we often find the influence of syllabus in use in Delhi. The syllabus designed by the North-Eastern Hill University is followed at the Pre-University level. In a state like Mizoram, where the linguistic, socio-cultural and ethnic background of the learners are considerably different from those in the neighbouring areas like Assam and Meghalaya, these adaptations largely do not meet the needs of the learners, and consequently, the syllabus in use does not help much in increasing their proficiency in English.

In the absence of a scientific study into the problems of the learners, the teachers, the framers and the planners do not have any idea regarding the areas in language which need more emphasis and those that do not need so much attention. The syllabus, thus, is mostly a reading list of the poems, prose pieces and grammatical items to be prepared for the examinations.

The present study is a humble attempt to overcome these shortcomings so that both short term and long term remedial measures can be undertaken. The comparison of English and Mizo would help language teachers to know the areas in which the two languages most differ from each other and thus enable them to appreciate learners' problems and devise 'on the spot corrective treatment' (Catford : 1968 : 162). The analysis of the learners' errors would help the teachers to re-teach and emphasize the major areas of difficulty faced by the learners in terms of frequency as a short term measure. As a long term measure the study would generate materials which can form the basis of a properly planned curriculum. A model syllabus has been designed and included in the study (see chapter vii) which has been modelled on the basis of the findings of the study.

The study was conducted on a corpus of 300 students from 5 colleges of Aizawl studying at the Pre-University level. The decision regarding the choice of the level was deliberate, taking into account various factors. The learners at this level had 10 years of English

teaching-learning behind then at the school and college level. It was thus expected that they would be able to write an essay and therefore, offer a good opportunity to evaluate their proficiency in English and, at the same time, bring out the real areas of their difficulty. Moreover, this stage happens to be the terminal stage of English teaching-learning for a majority of the students. Many of them either go for technical education or join some profession after completing this stage. This in fact, is a very important stage in the career of the learners. These reasons make this stage worthy of a proper investigation. The colleges were chosen keeping in mind the composition of students in them. It was ensured that only those colleges be chosen which have a fairly large number of students coming from different parts of the state.

It was felt that mere analysis of learners' errors would not help us to understand the problems of the learners in a proper perspective. The problems faced by the learners should also be viewed in the light of the teaching-learning conditions, methods used by the teachers, perception of the learners regarding the role and status of English and the reactions of the teachers and the learners

to the materials used for teaching-learning. It was felt that a definite pattern might emerge from the errors committed by the learners in English which may be relatable to the influence of the mother tongue. This in turn may help us in having a better understanding of the problems of the learners.

When we consider the circumstances in Mizoram we find that the state is geographically very remote and under developed. The learners in the region hardly get exposure to good models of English. There are not enough good teachers of English in the school and colleges. It was felt that the remedies which work with these students may also work with other students in other remote areas of the country. The nature and frequency of errors collected and categorized during the study may be of special help to educational planners of regions of the same type where Problems of similar nature exist.

The study limits itself to the evaluation of errors at different levels of language operation, viz phonology, morphology and syntax. It is supposed that an

understanding of the problems of learners is a prerequisite to the planning of remedial measures. The attempt is mainly to have a detailed analysis of learners' errors so that their sources can be identified. This will enable us to design suitable remedial measures. The 'gravitational pull of the mother tongue' (Krishnaswami ; 1971 ; 205) has been given due attention because it has been observed that 'interference from the mother tongue is clearly a major source of difficulty in second language learning' (Oller ; Richards ; 1973 ; 108) as learners tend to follow 'their set of internalized rules' (Major ; 1995 ; 111) of the mother tongue.

The instrument used for the evaluation as a descriptive essay on 'The Most Memorable Day of My Life'. The topic, as can be easily guessed, was a descriptive one and well within the experience of all the learners. Besides, it was thought that the topic would provoke the learners to try and communicate in English so that their linguistic problems would become evident. It was hoped that, after the results of the analysis were obtained it would be possible for us to come to meaningful conclusions on the basis of substantial data.

The CA approach which has been adopted in the study has been variously criticized by a number of scholars. For the sake of convenience the major criticisms levelled against CA may be considered under two heads :

(i) criticism of the predictions made by CA and (ii) criticism of the theoretical basis of CA. The critics of CA argued the predictive power of CA (Corder : 1974 : 90). (Lee : 1968 : 189), (Gradman : 1971 : 73-74), (Whitman, Jackson : 1972 : 29-41). They claimed that CA does not account for all errors and many errors that turn up were not predicted by CA. The most obvious way to answer this criticism, according to Carl James, is to point out that CA has never claimed that L<sub>1</sub> interference is the sole source of error' (1971 : 54). He further adds :

The most regrettable feature of such criticism is that it imputes to CA claims that have never been made for it : CA has never claimed to be able to predict all errors, nor has it claimed linguistic omniscience about which 'choices' speakers will make (ibid p.57).

Lado (1968 : 125) is also found to claim no more than ability to predict 'behaviour that is likely to appear with greater than random frequency'.

Regarding the criticism of the theoretical basis of CA, Newmark and Reibel (1968 : 145-164) contend that interference is an otiose idea and that ignorance is the real cause of errors. Newmark and Reibel insist that errors are caused by a learner's inadequate knowledge of the target language. The ignorance theory, according to Cart James, is 'only ostensibly an alternative to interference theory... the argument is otiose, like which came first; chicken or egg ?' (1971 : 65). The ignorance theory is vulnerable because 'no language-learning or language teaching theory has ever envisaged the state of affairs where the learner is asked to perform before he has had some chance to gain knowledge of the L<sub>2</sub> target system' (ibid). Dulay and Burt, among others, too accuse CA of being based on the behaviourist conditioning principle (1972 : 145-164). In spite of the many criticisms levelled against CA, there can be no denying the fact that it has its pedagogical uses. CA is believed to have its practical worth to language teachers (Ellis ; 1985 : 39). Although CA cannot predict all sources of error it can predict areas of potential error and explain actually occurring errors which are caused by interference from the mother tongue of

the learners. This information should help the teacher of English as a second language understand and then perhaps more readily remedy at least some of the errors the learners committed in this way.

#### 1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY.

The study presented in the thesis is divided into 8 chapters. In chapters II and III an attempt has been made to present the developments in linguistics and their applications in English language teaching in India and elsewhere. The approach has been mostly historical. The attempt has been to place the developments and adaptations in their proper perspective so that their respective strengths and weaknesses can be properly assessed.

The second chapter deals with the innovations in ELT and linguistics in the last few years and also makes an attempt to build up a theoretical background to the experiments conducted during the present study.

The third chapter deals with the innovations in ELT in India. In the last section of the chapter an attempt has been made to deal with the history of the region

(Mizoram) briefly and also discuss the major problems associated with the teaching of English there.

The fourth chapter makes an attempt to give a brief linguistic description of Mizo. This has been done to examine and understand where the  $L_1$  of the learners may cause problems and where it facilitates learning.

The fifth chapter makes an attempt to compare and contrast English and Mizo to find out their points of similarities and differences which will enable us to understand the nature of problems faced by Mizo learners of English.

The sixth chapter outlines the nature of the experiments conducted, the composition of the corpus and the method adopted in the categorization of the errors. An attempt is also made to locate the sources of learners' errors and discuss the possible and probable remedies.

The seventh chapter uses the findings to frame a model syllabus for a long term remedy as far as the problems faced by the learners are concerned.

The eighth chapter is the concluding chapter where the findings have been summarized.

CHAPTER II  
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

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THEORETICAL BACKGROUND2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the early twenties there were no institutions in India for research in the field of English language teaching. It was only during the last few decades that facilities for research in the field of language teaching have developed. With this there came a marked awareness of the need for developing methods or modifying existing methods to suit Indian conditions of teaching-learning. Initially concepts and methods about ELT in India were introduced without doing field surveys or collecting data about the problems and needs of the learners. Thus Grammar - Translation Methods and Direct Method were introduced without any modification which naturally did not yield the desired results. In the recent past it has been realised that one method which is applicable in a particular country may not be equally applicable in another situation. The concept of a universal methods has largely been

abandoned at present. The existing situation and its needs are taken into consideration before deciding the approach, methods and materials of language teaching.

The present chapter makes an attempt to survey some of the most important schools of thought in linguistics which have directly or indirectly influenced Indian ELT in the last few decades. An attempt has also been made to present some of the theories and principles associated with ELT which could be helpful in providing a theoretical background to the study. Later in the chapter an attempt has been made to study the basic presumptions associated with Contrastive Analysis and to observe how they can be applied in the process of English Language Teaching in India in general and Mizoram in particular.

## 2.2 DEVELOPMENTS IN ELT

The concepts of teaching English either as a Second or Foreign language have undergone many changes over the last few years. Here is an attempt

to discuss some of the major developments in this field in the last few decades.

### 2.2.1 Structural Linguistics

During the early decades of this century a school of thought developed which claimed that language was nothing but a collection of structures. The proponents made an attempt to analyse the sentences in a language in terms of the structural patterns observed in them. The emphasis was on describing the regularities of an utterance in their "phonological and grammatical patterning without resorting to the nuances of meaning that speakers intend to convey" (Rivers : 1983:3). Bloomfield described semantics as "equivalent to the sum total of human knowledge", and that in principle, "the student of language was concerned only with the actual speech", and thus "the study of language can be conducted without special assumptions so long as we pay no attention to the meaning of what is spoken" (1933: 74-5).

The aim was to establish an abstract system of rules to explain the linguistic manifestations observed in the sentences of a language.

In the 1930s Bloomfield also developed what later came to be known as Immediate Constituent Analysis or IC Analysis. Its aim was to find out the ultimate constituents of a sentence and their relationship with one another. A great deal of new information was accumulated in a systematic order about the way in which small sentences could be expanded to infinite lengths. A sentence was not seen as a sequence or a "string" of elements but as being made up of "layers" of constituents (Crystal : 1971 : 203-4).

The idea was that each human language has certain permissible ways of organising morphemes into sentences and the study of language based on this approach is what we call Structural Linguistics.

### 2.2.2 Word Lists

A great deal of work was carried out in the field of vocabulary selection in the 20s and 30s in America, Asia and Europe. In this period it was believed that a speaker repeatedly uses a limited number of words in normal conversation which could be made more effective if listed and drilled. Many lists were compiled as a consequence. The first such list to be compiled was Thorndike's Teacher's Work Book (1921) and the last, perhaps, was Carnegie's Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection (1936). The main point of difference in the different reports published was in the number of words required and the way they should be introduced.

In this period reading too was considered to be an important means of language learning. It was believed that reading was the most important skill to be developed because it gave the learners a feeling of the idiomatic use of language. In 1926 Michael West published

his Bilingualism, and in 1934 Coleman and Fife published Experiments and Studies in Modern Language Teaching. These two reports emphasized the importance of reading and a secondary place was accorded to speaking and writing. According to West, the vocabulary of a learner learning a foreign language in the preliminary stages should not be large. The words selected at this stage should be frequent as well as useful, and too many new words should not be introduced in a lesson. One new word in every fifty running words was considered to be the highest limit to which a learner should be exposed to. New words should be learnt by practice in actual reading situation. Based on these ideas, he published his famous book New Method Readers (1935). He placed much emphasis on vocabulary selection and the systematic teaching of reading.

An attempt at reforming and unifying language methodology was made in this period which was derived from a study of foreign language methodology and an extensive poll of the FL profession on generally

accepted goals for language study in the U.S. The study was published as the Modern Foreign Language Study and was produced by a committee under the direction of Algemon Coleman and sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation. Coleman's The Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages in the United States (1929) was the most important single volume produced by this study. This report found that among the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, reading was the only acceptable skill as the primary goal of FLT. (Foreign language Teaching). Thus, the report recommended that the amount of reading in foreign language classes should be drastically increased (Krashen, & Ferrell 1983 : 11-12). This method has absolute away for sometime in FLT in the United States.

### 2.2.3 Army Specialized Training Programme (ASTP)

During the second World War the US faced the task of having to teach oral language skills to the soldiers who were to operate in Europe and Asia.

The Army sought the help of linguists to develop intensive language courses within the framework of the Army specialized Training Programme. In the meantime there was a widespread application of Structural Linguistics in the field of Language teaching. The Army adopted this method of teaching (Oirsouw; 1984 : 152). The key to the success of these courses did not entirely depend on the new methods of selection, gradation and presentation, but also partly in the fact that they were intensive courses, taught to small groups of well-motivated learners. The ASTP provided intensive courses in various languages to get speakers in as short a time as possible (Allen, Campbell; 1972 : 24). The method emphasized on the ability to speak the language and understand it when spoken by native speakers, to "speak fluently, accurately, and with an acceptable approximation to a native pronunciation - and a practically auditory comprehension of the language

as spoken by natives" . (Rowe : 1945:136). The method was introduced by 50 colleges in the Universities of America. The best known linguist to work on the Army programme was Bloomfield whose publication of Outline Guide for the Practical Study of Foreign Languages (1942), became the guideline for the organization, lay-out and execution of the ASTP intensive courses, and it also affected the later development of the audiolingual method in important ways (Oirsouw: 1984:152). The method based itself on four broad assumptions:

Firstly, "Foreign-language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation" (Rivers: 1964:12-16). It was believed that the single paramount fact that language learning concerned itself with was the formation and performance of habits. The ASTP students were forced to constantly, repeat what was being said as it was believed that habits are formed by making the right response and not by making mistakes. The philosophy of the ASTP method rests on the assumption

that foreign-languages are learnt only when the learners assimilate grammatical principles and turn them into habits (Edgerton : 1948:210). The aim was to make the students behave in a particular way for effective learning of a foreign language (Rivers : 1964 : 12-16).

Secondly, the method assumed that "Language skills are learned more effectively if the items of foreign-language are presented in spoken form before written form" (Ibid). Consequently, a lot of emphasis was put on presenting the language orally so that, very often, the written form of the language was ignored. In the first stage only the ear and the tongue of the learner was trained with the belief that the learner will first learn to understand what he hears and speak what he hears and thereafter will read what he speaks, and finally he will write what he speaks and reads. Thus, in the initial stages emphasis was placed mainly on listening comprehension and speaking ability.

The third assumption was, "Analogy provides a better foundation for foreign-language learning than Analysis" (Ibid). It was thought that a learner who has been made to see how language works has not learned a language at all. The learner will forget the rules before he can make any progress in that area of language use. According to this method, what the learner really needed was a perception of the analogies involved, the structural differences, and the similarities between sentences of the two language his native language and the foreign-language he is learning.

The fourth assumption was "The meaning which the words of a language has for the native speaker . can be learned only in a matrix of allusions to the culture of the people who speak that language" (Ibid). Unless the learner understands the cultural situation in which an utterance is made, he may miss its full implication or meaning. It is to be remembered that language and civilization are interrelated (Feverlicht : 1948 : 20). The learner has to realize that language is the essential

expression of a nation's behaviour and outlook.

Language is the medium in which and by which people think about and react to life. The protagonists of this approach firmly believed that language learning is not just learning a tongue but also learning and adopting a certain way of life too. The Audiolingual Method therefore, exposed the learners to this aspect because it was believed that a fuller understanding and appreciation of the target language could be made.

"The general aims of the Army Area and language program are to give the soldier some understanding of the geographical, historical and cultural aspects of a region and a basic oral command of the colloquial language of that region or country" (Morris : 1944 : 286). This later in the post-war years came to be popularly known as the Audio-lingual Method.

The method succeeded with the American Army during the Second World War, as it was possible for it to provide the intensive drilling and immersion

into the target language situation. The method received a great deal of publicity as it emphasized a special approach to language teaching and made a start towards developing techniques in applying it. It was believed that certain factors of the ASTP program are transferable to other programs in language teaching. There are noteworthy characteristics of the Army programme which may be mentioned.

(i) It was a very intensive course with 15 or more "contact hours" every week for 9 months. The rest of the students' time was spent in "Area studies" of the nation where the language is spoken.

(ii) Classes for drill in the language were small and normally limited to ten students.

(iii) There was a division of the teaching duties between a "linguist" or "course director" who was a specialist trained in linguistics, and an "informant" or "drill master" who was a native speaker of the language.

(iv) Importance was placed on the speaking aim, the Army was interested only in training the students to speak the language well.

(v) The trainees were selected with care. Only men showing definite aptitude for language study were admitted.

(vi) The situation in which the language was learned provided an unusually strong motivation. The students could see the immediate practical value of what they were doing, they were likely to obtain quick promotion if they succeeded; the programme was carried out in a businesslike way (Reid : 1946 : 530-31).

In normal circumstances it was perhaps difficult to provide a similar situation with similar results. Due to the "focus on a single aim and the pressure that could be applied to attain it the horrors of the line outfit from which the soldier-student had come were still too vivid in his mind to permit him to risk a return by balking at any of the drudgery involved in really learning to speak a foreign-language - there

was an intensity of learning effort hitherto unknown in language work". (Koch : 1947 : 267). Thus, while the method had certain practical values, it was limited in its scope, and a new orientation would seem necessary in order to open up to the student the storehouse of literary treasures of a foreign language. As a result the method slowly and steadily fell into disuse after the Second World War.

#### 2.2.4 Other Developments of 40s and 50s

Charles C. Fries, who founded the University of Michigan's English Language Institute developed his Oral approach. The underlying principles of this approach are clearly given in his book Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language (1945). Apart from its emphasis on oral use of the language, the approach also developed the idea that "a sound ESL program should rest upon a detailed structural contrastive analysis of the first and second languages" (Allen, Campbell : 1972 : 23). That is to say that

the structures of the two languages should be compared to determine the points where they differed. These differences were considered to be the chief source of difficulty in learning a second language.

At around the same time, I.A. Richards and C.M. Gibson developed and popularized the Graded-Direct Method. Richards conceived language teaching as an arrangement of graded-sentence situation units forming an 'organic' sequence in which each step supported and was supported by others. A sentencesituation unit was defined as one in which the elements of a sentence were made clear by the situation in which it was used.

In Britain at the University of London Institute of Education a methodology similar to Richard's Graded-Direct Method was developed in the late 40s. The methodology laid explicit criteria for grading. It favoured oral, situational presentation and copious oral

drilling of the carefully graded structural items within a limited vocabulary.

#### 2.2.6 Contribution of Chomsky

During the 50s a sort of revolution was brought in the field of theoretical linguistics which had profound effect on the methods of foreign language teaching. In 1957 Noam chomsky published his Syntactic Structures , the book that introduced to the world another new approach to linguistics which was to later influence ELT. Chomsky brought out the theory that the "human mind is equipped from birth with a blueprint for language" (Atkinson et al : 1982 :11) which means that it is endowed with a capacity to acquire language and that , with the help of some limited or finite number of structures it is able to generate an infinite or unlimited number of structures. The human mind was likened to a magic black box where unlimited output could be obtained from limited input. Once the

system of rules of the language has been internalized the students will be able to produce an infinite variety of language sequences whether they have previously heard them or not (Rivers : 1983 : 32). Chomsky rejected the notion that children acquire language through a form of conditioning which depended on reinforcement or reward. According to him language is acquired by children by making hypotheses about the form of grammar of the language which they compare with their innate knowledge of possible grammars. He thus came out with the oftquoted and oft-mentioned terms like "competence" and "performance" "rule governed behaviour", etc. (Chomsky : 1965 : 25-26). This theory of Chomsky went directly against the theories of structural linguistics that language learning was habit formation and all that the teacher was expected to do was to make the learners behave in a language situation. Linguists and language teachers in the 50s largely rejected the structural approach and began to rely on the psychologists for evolving methods and materials for language teaching.

#### 2.2.6 Psychology and Language Learning

Developments in psychological theories led to an awareness that the process of learning is a remarkably efficient and powerful process. The complexity of this process of language learning has convinced the language teaching experts that human beings need not be forced through a process of intense pattern practice drills to "behave" in a language situation. On the other hand, inputs can be so arranged that language learning takes place efficiently (Jakobovits: 1970 : 33-36). Aptitude, motivation, and such other extra-curricular but equally important parameters influenced the process of language learning. The insights gained from psychology should be incorporated in the process of training and planning language teaching programmes. The direct influence of this has been psycholinguistics, a branch which deals exclusively with the influence of the mind on teaching-learning.

### 2.2.7 Notional Syllabus

During the late sixties and seventies the emphasis shifted from psychological theories to that of deciding how and what must be given to the learner in order to make him a good user of the target language. The problem became more pronounced as the foreign language learners were no longer young school or college children, but students who were learning a foreign language to communicate or comprehend scientific data. Concepts like English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Technical Purposes (EST) and the like were already gaining prominence. People needed English to get a specific purpose served. Scientists did not want Milton or Keats but wanted English so that they could read and understand scientific journals, scientific data and the like. The challenge before the methodologist was to provide a means for quick and effective learning of English to serve a specific purpose. Besides, the context of teaching had necessarily

to be somewhere near the specific area of interest to the learner. Thus scientists had to be provided with reading materials from science and the like. A number of research and thinking were done in this sphere as a consequence.

Wilkins came out with his principle of Notional Syllabus (1976 : 13) as a kind of solution to the problem of effective teaching of English. According to Wilkins, a notional syllabus implies a careful analysis of particular communicative situations so as to enable students to identify what should be most usefully communicated in such situations. When this is done the most appropriate linguistic forms to be learned by the students can be decided (Rivers : 1983 : 16). The linguistic content is planned according to the needs of the learner. Emphasis is placed on the needs of the language user, on the purposes and social uses of communication, rather than the understanding and requisition of linguistic features. Role playing gains an important place in this type of learning and students

are brought into contact with authentic language in teaching materials. (ibid, p.17). Instead of arranging a language course in terms of grammatical principles like the noun, the article, verb tenses, and the like, Wilkins suggested that basic categories of meaning should constitute the frame-work of a course (Stern : 1983 : 132). This kind of approach forces one to consider the communicative value of what ever that is taught. Its aim is to expend the communicative competence of learners, (Brumfit, Johnson(eds) : 1979 : 90).

#### 2.2.8 Language as Communication

The development of Notional Syllabus inspired a lot of research in the field of second language or foreign language teaching-learning. It became quite evident that teaching grammatical rules or trying to form language habits were no longer enough for teaching-learning language. What the learners needed was to communicate in the language and then only language learning could possibly take place. To quote Saville Troike :

The most far reaching change in the field that is probably coming at the elementary and secondary levels is the recognition that language learning is most efficient when it is highly motivated by communication needs and when it is a medium for meaningful content. In other words it is highly questionable how much learning is inducted by the unmotivated pattern practice exercises which often form the core of ESL instruction. (1976 : 77).

This points to the various kinds of changes that have to be brought about in the field of English language teaching. The main emphasis is on the fact that the aims and objectives of learning another language have to be defined in the current context. Quite obviously this calls for reform. Widdomson discusses this point very lucidly :

The aims of language teaching courses are very often defined with reference to the four 'language skills' : understanding speech, speaking, reading and writing. These aims, therefore, relate to the kind of activity which the learners

are to perform. But how can we characterize this activity? What is it that the learners are expected to understand, speak, read and write? The obvious answer is the language they are learning ... In some respects, however, it is unsatisfactory. We may readily acknowledge that the ability to produce sentences is a crucial one in the learning of a language. It is important to recognize, however, that it is not the only ability that the learners need to acquire. Someone knowing a Language knows more than how to understand, speak, read and write sentences. He also knows how sentences are used to communicate effect (1978 : 1).

The point Widdowson makes is that traditional language teaching methods equipped the learner to generate correct sentences in a given context. He termed these as 'use' and 'usage', one denoting generation of correct sentences and the other the generation of appropriate sentences. He gives an example :

We may conveniently begin by considering an example of a correct English sentence:

The rain destroyed the crops.

Here we have a correct English sentence and we might wish to say that anybody

speaking or writing such a sentence gives evidence of a good knowledge of the language ... But what would we say if someone produced sentence in the following context ?

(A approaches B a stranger in the street)

A: Can you tell me the way to the station please ?

B: The rain destroyed the crops.  
(Ibid)

This may sound like a joke but the exaggeration have a point. This example leads us to the state of affairs where 'usage' is taught at the cost of 'use'. However, learning a language means learning its use also, which takes care of the appropriateness of the context of the usage. The most important aspect of learning a language is the use of the items learnt in real life situations. Widdowson's approach gained much prominence and acceptance all over the world. Specially designed materials suitable to this method were developed by Widdowson, Allwright, Breen, Candlin, and others. In India this method has been adopted effectively for the famous Bangalore Project.

### 2.2.9 New Orientations in Teaching

It was previously felt that there was a need for developing a specific method and using it for effective teaching of English. Thus when the Direct Method and Structural Method were developed and adopted, an attempt was often made to bring all the teachers of English into its fold. It was believed that for effective implementation of any method it was essential to follow all the principles associated with it in full and the needs of the learner were often ignored. The existing situation in different places were often not given due consideration while prescribing methods and materials. Repeatedly the attempt was to implement a certain method universally, However, this is often not a very wise step as the needs and circumstances differ from place to place. Thus, the methods and materials which appear to work at a particular place do not necessarily work at another.

Recent thinking in language teaching, therefore, accepts the fact that a language teaching programme has essentially to be a need-based one. Peter Strevens has discussed this problem in detail :

One can argue then, that the idea of a single 'best' method is intuitively unsatisfactory ... The learning and

teaching of language is an activity requiring to be analysed in its own terms. (1977 : 5).

The goal of language learning and the method and materials to be used to achieve these goals have to be decided in the context of the existing situation in that place. While all agree that the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening have to be developed , the priority to be given to the skills will naturally differ from place to place (Rivers : 1968 : 23). It is not a problem only of the differences of content. That is why it must be conceded, at the same time, that the learners are all working towards different communicative objectives which should be reflected in the teaching. The precise aims and goals of language learning need to be in line with public needs, and they have to be revised as these needs change.

#### 2.2.10.1 E.S.P

English for specific purposes in generally considered to have evolved in the last ten or fifteen years. Initially it was developed as a language teaching methodology to help scientists and Technicians. It is now believed that scientists did not need to learn everything in English but only the register of science and

technology. The attempt, thus, was to teach them just what they needed to the exclusion of everything else. The notion was that adult learners with specific purposes in learning English would benefit from courses which were written specially for such purposes (Howatt : 1984 : 218). The concept of deciding the 'specific needs and teaching only that much' was thus developed. Robinson defines ESP in terms of what might broadly be seen as language situations and functions in various combinations (1980 : 13). However, in spite of such attempts at definition, as Roberts (1982 : 122) says, there has been little progress in this field and little agreement about what constitutes the legitimate areas of concern of ESP. He points out that accurate information about the needs in various fields is difficult to specify which explains why so much importance has been given to a flexible approach based on the 'need-based' principle (Ibid, p.123). Robinson (1980 : 16-20) questions the adequacy of the major registers of English like English for science and feels that they do not satisfy learner expectations. What perhaps holds hope in this area is the development of computer programmes which will enable lexical counts in any area quickly and systematically.

#### 2.2.10.2 Computer - Assisted Learning

Individualisation, computer-assisted learning and distance learning are all areas in which interest has developed very considerably in recent years. What they have in common with each other is that they are all concerned in some way with the problems of the individual learner. They exploit technology either to supplement the assistance a teacher is able to give or stand in for the teacher totally. They are all concerned with the problem of enhancing the capacities and resources of learners to teach themselves, or, to learn for themselves.

#### 2.3 THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The methodologies of language teaching developed in different parts of the world have invariably based themselves on some cognitive theories and principles. Teaching programmes, classroom strategies, curriculum and materials can often be viewed as practical manifestations of the principles or theories used. For example, the propagators of the Audio-Lingual Method believed that language teaching was habit-formation (LarsenFreeman : 1986 : 43). As a result the 'Army specialized Training Programmes' and other language teaching programmes based

on this principle adopted intensive pattern practice drills and such other things for teaching a language. Similarly other methods developed have also based themselves on one theory or the other.

The choice of the principle or the theory adopted has invariably depended on the needs of the learners. For example, where the need is for developing reading skills, no one would use the principles associated with the Audio-Lingual Method. If the needs of the learners are not well understood and the methodologies are not based on sound cognitive principles, the results do not appear to be encouraging. Innovations which appear attractive on paper do not always produce the expected results and a situation arises where these modifications appear to have overlooked the needs of the majority of the teachers and the learners.

In the sphere of English teaching-learning it is often observed that the gap between the language skills the learners acquire in their classes and the proficiency they require for getting along in life is quite big. So much so that it often becomes difficult for learners to see the relevance of the educa-

tional content to life. Somehow or the other the aims and objectives of teaching English in India seem to have been forgotten.

Before going into the problem at hand specifically, an analysis of the aims of teaching English in India may be useful.

#### 2.3.1. Aims of English Language Teaching

The process of Education and the reasons for educating oneself have undergone major changes in the last few decades. It is no longer education for the sake of knowledge only. Education is considered now - a - days more as a means of getting better employment at the personal level and of accelerating the rate of growth at the national level. The Education Commission (1964-66) brought this out very clearly :

The destiny of India is shaped in her classrooms. This, we believe, is no more a rhetoric. In a world based on science and technology, it is education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people. On the quality and number of people coming out of our schools and colleges will

depend our success in the great enterprise of nation building, the principle objective of which is to raise the standard of living of our people. In this context, it has become urgent to re-evaluate the role of education in the total programme of national development.

(1971 : 1)

The aims of English language teaching thus will have to be evaluated in the light of national goals. The primary aim of English language teaching has essentially to be the production of learners who can use English to accelerate the process of national development. As is generally seen most of the scientific and technical information is exchanged through the medium of English and in order to take advantage of this we have to produce students who have the capacity and proficiency to utilize the technical information for national development. What we need really are good communicators in English, who have proficiency in reading, writing and understanding English. The aim of English language teaching should, therefore, be to produce people who can use the language in ordinary daily-life situations.

Wilga Rivers identifies four aims of teaching foreign language skills :

1. Teaching about the nature and functioning of a language
2. Teaching students to communicate in a foreign language.
3. Developing understanding of the people with whom one wishes to communicate.
4. Teaching students to read all kinds of materials fluently in a foreign language . (1968 : 11)

Rivers admits that the sequence of priorities need not be the same everywhere. These are likely to vary from region to region according to the needs of the learners and the demands of the society.

The priorities listed by Rivers appear to be consistent with the needs and demands of the learners in most places, though the sequence of priorities may not be the same. In the Indian context English is a

medium of communication with the outside world and an important link language. It is believed by many that English is a language which can be used for ushering in faster pace of development. The challenge before the curriculum planners and the English teachers is mainly of fulfilling this expectation and producing students equipped to handle the required tasks.

### 2.3.2 Teaching - Learning Conditions

It is essential at this point to analyse the conditions which can fulfil the above mentioned aims. It is often observed in India that there is an inherent tendency to over-centralize everything. Thus, teaching methods, materials and the curriculum are designed outside the actual classrooms. Perhaps the planners believe that experts can gauge the needs and prescribe the remedies without surveying the actual teaching-learning conditions in the different parts of the country. Perhaps it is thought that if something works in one region it would automatically be applicable to other regions as well. The teacher has no voice in the process of curriculum planning and is considered merely as a retail outlet to the strategies developed miles away.

Theoretically it is accepted that a successful language teacher cannot limit himself to any one method used to the exclusion of all others (Richardson : 1983 : 19). The language teacher has essentially to fulfil his objectives and for that the most suitable strategy has to be used. The concern in India today appears to be restricted to defining a methodology and not the needs of the learners. The goals of language teaching should in fact be related to the public needs and be revised as the needs change. In practice, however, the reverse appears to be happening. Besides, the concept of a single 'best' method is not acceptable as a satisfactory solution to the problems of language teaching. Strevens (1977 : 5) feels that any methodology derived from theoretical linguistics or psychology alone can lead to contradictory classroom instructions. Learning and teaching of a language is an activity which requires to be analysed in its own terms rather than in terms of another.

This, however, brings us to another problem, i.e. of what would work for the effective teaching-learning English in a remote place like Mizoram

where the proficiency level of learners is not at all satisfactory. Theoretically it may perhaps be difficult to find a solution to this problem. However, before proceeding with the experiments it is felt that some information is needed about the situation in Mizoram, which could form the basis of the remedial measures to be adopted later.

### 2.3.3 Aptitude and Motivation

There is a saying, 'you can take a horse to water, but cannot make it drink', Perhaps the saying is concerned with motivation towards something. It is possible to make a learner sit in a classroom and offer him all the rewards and punishments, but unless and until the learner is really interested in something it is difficult to make him learn. Perhaps the same could be said with the learning of English. Unless there is a motivation to learn English the learners can hardly make any worthwhile progress in this direction. Motivation, thus is a very significant factor in the learning of a language (Verghese : 1989 : 21).

During 1970-72 Lambert and Gardner undertook studies in the different universities of united states, Philipines and Canada. The studies showed that second language learning was a process which was often affected by motivation. Gardner has made a distinction between an 'instrumental' motive which reflect the practical advantage of learning a language, and 'integrative' motive which reflect an interest in the people and culture (Gardner and Lambert 1972 : 132). They concluded that in the Philipines where English is the major medium of instruction.

students who approach the study of English with an instrumental outlook ... are clearly more successful in developing proficiency in the language than are those who fail to adopt this orientation ... (1972 : 121 - 30).

Motivation is highly influenced by the social value of the language being learnt. Learners are motivated to learn a language when they felt that it would bring them some kine of a benefit.

Secondly, Lambert and Gardner found that classroom conditions also influenced the motivation of learners to learn a language (1972 : 57). Unhealthy relationships between the learner and the teacher would also come in the way of the learning-teaching process. It was observed by them during their study that the learners appeared to be identifying the teachers with the native speaker. That is why, if the teacher was not appropriately enthusiastic and just in his approach the learners felt that the native speakers of the language they were learning were also like him. This often demotivates the students to learn the language.

In these circumstances, therefore, the teacher becomes a very important factor to motivate the learners. The opinions of the learners regarding their teachers, it was felt, would give us a full picture regarding the qualities they expected in their teachers of English.

The studies of Lambert and Gardner have shown that the home background is also an important factor in the process of language learning. Learners who are encouraged at home perform much better than

those who do not get enough encouragement at home. Motivation is undoubtedly one of the important factors in the process of language learning as it tends to accelerate or retard the rate of learning. Motivation is influenced by methods and materials used as well as the teachers who use these materials and methods.

It could thus be safely concluded that motivation for learning a language is an important factor affecting the performance of the learners. It should be noted that motivation depends on a few intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Among intrinsic factors things like personal attitude, social value given to the language and encouragement from home, etc., affect performance. Extrinsic factors like classroom conditions, materials and methods of teaching also affect performance.

#### 2.3.4 Pedagogical Aspects

Admittedly motivation alone is not sufficient for language learning to take place. A learner cannot learn a language though highly motivated unless and until he undergoes a conscious and continuous process of learning, or unless he is immersed

in a language situation from where natural acquisition can take place. For most learners of English in India the opportunity for immersion in a situation where English is used consistently are remote. Hence the way to learn the language is through a conscious process in the classroom. Here the teacher and his methodology and the materials used come to occupy an important place.

It is widely believed till recently that a teacher in a classroom should be the source of all wisdom and knowledge and that he should be a kind of model for the learners to follow. This approach and its practice have not yielded good results as far as English teaching in India is concerned. This puts both the learner and the teacher in a difficult position. After seven to eight years of English learning at various levels, the learner finds that he is unable to perform even simple communicative tasks. This in turn puts a heavy pressure on the teacher who has to look for ways and means so that the learners acquire the basic communicative abilities. In such cases learners have to be made to realize that they are ultimately responsible for their own progress, and that the teacher should not be regarded as the sole

authority of all the learning that takes place in the classroom. A situation must be created where the learners and the teacher co-operate to set up a model where one helps the other for progress (Richmon : 1967 : 137-139). This quite evidently calls for certain changes in the behaviour of both the teacher and the taught.

The student behaviour has to undergo some changes. He cannot expect to be spoon fed by the teachers and he must appreciate the fact that the teacher is dependent on him for the evaluation of difficulties.

#### 2.3.5 Testing and Evaluation

In any language learning process constant evaluation of the progress of learners forms an important part. The evaluation provides us information about the progress made by the learners. This in turn tells us about the acceptability or otherwise of the materials and methods used for the course. In remedial courses the process of testing comes to assume an even more important role as it becomes a criterion for judging the problems of the learners and the effectiveness of the teachers and the classroom strategies. Lado in his classic book on language testing stressed the need for the tester on

language testing stressed the need for the tester to focus on the precise areas of difficulty the learners are facing (1961 : 60).

Somehow or the other the methodology for testing has not been granted the status it deserves nor have any concrete tests been developed to evaluate the demands of language learning under various conditions. Morrow feels that there exists a considerable imbalance between the resources available to the language teacher in terms of teaching materials and those available in terms of testing and evaluation instruments. While the designers of teaching materials have not been slow to incorporate insights into syllabus designing from a view of language as communication, the men concerned with testing skills are still in a kind of dilemma about the nature of language, and how it should be tested. They have failed to take into account the recent developments in a systematic way (1979 : 143).

As for the instruments of testing we have two options available before us : one is the essay type answers where it is possible to test the communicative

proficiency of a learner as one sees him negotiate with the language in order to perform the tasks demanded out of him. These instruments could be writing essays, descriptive answers, etc. However, one of the disadvantages of this kind of testing is that it is error-avoiding. It is possible for a learner to avoid using a particular area of language which he found difficult while attempting the communicative task. This kind of test does not give us a clear picture of the kind of progress made by the learner.

On the other hand, item analysis is generally 'error provoking'. We try to test here the proficiency of the learner in various areas of language use. It is found that the ability to perform well in item analysis has not necessarily meant proficiency in the language.

This puts the researchers in search of models in a very difficult situation as no such things are easily available. Before starting a remedial course it is imperative to know the abilities of the learners and their areas of problems so that attention could be paid to those specific problem areas.

#### 2.4 ERROR ANALYSIS, CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS AND INTERLANGUAGE

Besides the problems of motivation, pedagogy and materials, linguistic problems in a target language also affect the learning process of the learners. A teacher may follow a good methodology and use good materials, but the performance of the learners may not be up to the mark if they have difficulties in any particular area of language operation. It is in this sphere that an analysis of the linguistic difficulties become important. This analysis almost works as a pointer to the problem the learner faces while trying to use the target language. In this process of trying to analyse the difficulties of the learners 'Error Analysis' comes very handy for the classroom teacher. It is possible for the teacher to count the errors committed by the learners and the frequency of the errors could give him an idea about the problem areas in the target language. On the basis of this analysis it is possible for a teacher to undertake more effective remedial measures. As pointed out by Pit Corder, error analysis of the discourse could provide an idea of the learning difficulties of the learners and give an indication of their proficiency in the language. It is an attempt to

understand the problems the learners face when learning a language. Corder mentions three stages in error analysis namely, recognition, description and explanation (1974: 126). Recognition of error is dependent upon correct interpretation of the learner's intentions. Description of error can only begin when recognition of error takes place. Explanation of error can be regarded as a linguistic problem, i.e. a statement of the way in which a learner deviated from the realization rules of the target language in the derivation of his sentence, that is, what rules he has broken, substituted or disregarded (Ibid).

The Contrastive Analysis (CA) approach, originally formulated by Charles Fries (1945) and developed and popularized by Robert Lado (1957), attempts to compare the structures of two languages and map out points of similarities and differences. This approach is founded on the assumption that languages can be compared and that L2 learners will tend to transfer to their L2 utterances the formal features of their L1 (James : 1980 :3,14), and that, as Lado puts it "individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the

foreign language and culture" (1957 : 2). C.A. tries to compare and contrast the mother tongue of the learners with the target language and makes an attempt to predict the difficulties and errors. The basic principle followed by the approach is that contrasts produce errors where as similarities do not. If a structure to be learned in L2 had a counterpart in L1, then 'positive' transfer would take place and learning is facilitated, If on the other hand the structure of L2 did not have a counterpart in L1, or if an L1 structure did not have a counterpart in the L2, or if the equivalent structures in L1 and L2 exhibited a measure of difference, then 'negative' transfer or interference would take place which will hamper learning Jackson: 1981 : 196). C.A. is thus concerned with the notions of 'transfer' and 'interference' in language learning. C.A. has great pedagogical value in day - to-day teaching in the classroom, as a useful technique for presenting language materials to the learner and as one of the characteristic aspects of a method of teaching. In this regard Lado says.

The teacher who has made a comparison of the foreign language of the students will know better what the real learning problems are and can better provide for teaching them. He gains an insight into

the linguistic problems involved that cannot easily be achieved otherwise. (1957 : 2).

Contrastive Analysis also provide the necessary data, although not the only data, for the authors of textbooks and pedagogical grammars in the selection and arrangement of items in the target language, as well as the emphasis and special attention to be given to certain structures that may pose problems for learners (Marton : 1981 : 165). Various other claims have also been made regarding the pedagogical value of C.A. For instance, Hall is of the opinion that the difficulties faced by learners resulting from the differences between his L1 and L2 have to be dealt with by textbook writers, that contrastive grammar has a place "not only in the linguist's contribution to the preparation of material .. but also in explicit presentation of structural differences, the problems they raise, and the best way to overcome them", and says that he is "strongly in favour of the use of contrastive grammar in the construction of language textbooks" (1968 : 175 : 176,180). Wilga Rivers, among many others, also stresses the pedagogical implications of C.A in the construction of textbook

"interlingual". Nemser (1971) referred to it as "Approximate system". Corder (1971 : 151) used the term "Idiosyncratic dialect" to connote the idea that the learner's language is unique to a particular individual. Thus, Interlanguage is neither the system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but falls between the two, Interlanguage studies focus on the 'intermediate space' (James 1980: 4) between L1 and L2.

Thus while RA, CA and 1L are all concerned with a learner's performance, their point of departure is in their respective attitudes towards the errors. While CA is concerned with the learner's performance correlatable with characteristics of his native language, EA is concerned with contrasts between the learner's performance and L2, and 1L treats the deviations from the L2 norms as exponents of the learner's system (Sridhar, 1981 : 111, 112).

To conclude, it could be said that language teaching-learning is a very complex process which involves a number of disciplines. It makes an attempt to derive effective methods and materials, making use

of the principles and concepts developed in the allied fields of linguistics and psychology. The concept have undergone significant and frequent changes over the last few years and experiments continue to be made in order to evolve more effective methods and materials. In this chapter an attempt is made to survey the main trends in this field and highlight some concepts which could be utilized for the experiments carried out during the course of the study. Before reporting the experiments it will be the attempt of the researcher to show the main developments in ELT in India and give a bird's eye view of the developments in English language teaching in India and Mizoram.

CHAPTER III  
ELT IN INDIA : A BRIEF SURVEY

## CHAPTER - III

ELT IN INDIA : A BRIEF SURVEY

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### 3.9 CONCLUSION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The teaching of English in India has been (and, to a large extent continues to be) a 'teacher-textbook-classroom affair'. Applied to actual classroom activities, the whole thing works out as follows : A teacher is supposed to be a demigod and an oracle of all wisdom and knowledge. He/She should paraphrase the lessons of the textbook, dictate model answers and model essays, explain grammar items and put the students through a series of pattern practice drills for reinforcement. The learners most of the time are passive listeners who can do little more than scribble down notes and memorize them for reproduction in the examination.

Such is the influence of this teaching-learning system on our learners at all levels that they have come to regard good learning as a state in which they get a lot of information and materials from the teachers. Wherever this is not done they show signs of worry and frustration. Keshav Rao, while conducting the now famous Bangalore Project

during 1980, reports :

Learning for them (pupils) meant the teacher reading out passages from the textbook and explaining the contents to them ... We had no textbooks to use nor did we use graded structures in situations, with chorus drills, as the pupils expected. Instead we made them perform various tasks which we expected them to do with their own effort. This did not appear to them to be learning but merely impositions or tests because nothing was transferred to them from the teacher. This produced confusion ... they could not use the strategies developed in the previous years under the new conditions ... they were anxious because they did not think they were learning very much. They had always seen learning as a much more passive activity. (1980 : 69).

The assumptions that produced this kind of teaching learning system and maintained it for such a long time were perhaps not altogether unsound. It was believed that one learnt the language through exposure to it. The aim of the curriculum planners and the syllabus makers was to expose the learners to the vast litera-

ture of the language and, at the same time drill the rules of the language operation. It was expected that consequently the ability to use language would come automatically. Thus from the middle of the nineteenth century syllabus came to be loaded with heavy reading lists. Thus 'A collection of Poems', 'A selection of Essays', combined with some Shakespearean plays and an assortment of short stories would make up the syllabus.

The examinations that followed the courses tested language acquisition through the amount of information the learners had gathered from the textbooks. They sought to make the learners use their own language, but actually they succeeded mainly in making them use other people's language, acquired by rote. Questions repeatedly asked in the examinations like, 'Write a character sketch of Julius Caesar' or 'How did Jim raise money for Della's combs?' hardly forced the learners to creatively use the language they had learnt.

No one will challenge the position that one does learn a language through exposure to it. But that makes us ask some questions, firstly, 'What kind of exposure?', secondly, 'What kind of language must we expose our learners to?' and finally, 'Where are the opportunities for exposure to the language?'

For most of the learners in the semi-urban and rural areas of our country English classes in the schools are the only opportunities to use the language. Besides, another problem faced by our learners is that of textbooks dealing with themes which are far beyond the realms of their knowledge and experience. For one who has never seen daffodils, snow-filled valleys, or the rough bays of Dover, appreciating Wordsworth's 'Daffodil's or 'Lucy Gray' or Arnold's 'Dover Beach' becomes a difficult task. Coming from traditional Indian background the Indian learners of English find it difficult to realize why people speak or react in a particular way in the novels or short stories (written by English authors) that they read.

English textbooks, therefore, are read as collections of information, and the fact that these are meant only as a means of achieving language proficiency is often ignored or forgotten. The information part becomes sacrosanct instead of the language part with the result that a learner reads a lesson in the English textbook as he would study the 'Laws of Gravity' or 'The process of Catalysis'. This is what actually happens in the actual functioning of the teaching-learning system mentioned earlier.

The fact of language learning also do not support this kind of approach. Wilga Rivers points out :

When we talk, as some do, of plunging students directly from the outset into macro-language use, in sink or swim style, in the hope that they would somehow discover what they need, we ignore the fact that in the mother tongue children first acquire the mechanism for simple functions and then go for complex functions.

Micro language learning for acquiring the basic mechanism for simple functions of expressing desires, and needs ... it is essential if efforts at macro level are to be rich and effective . (1977 : 104).

understandably, therefore, the students know a lot about language, about authors and about poems and plays but are unable to speak the language or use it in ordinary daily life situations.

In fact, these assumptions and strategies have been in use throughout the last hundred years of English teaching in India. It must, however, be admitted that though the assumptions have remained unchanged, methods of teaching did vary. We plan to present here a brief survey of the different methodologies adopted in India and the developments in this field.

### 3.2 STRATEGIES ADAPTED IN INDIA

#### 3.2.1 Grammar - Translation Method

Grammar - Translation method was used extensively in the country during the nineteenth century

and the early parts of this century. Proceeding on the principles of :

- i) grammar, as an outline of formal grammar,
- ii) beginning teaching with rules of the language and isolated vocabulary items ;
- iii) translation of easy classics ;
- iv) dividing vocabulary into lists of words to be memorized ;
- v) memorizing grammar rules as units, which often include illustrative sentences (Mackey, 1965).

the Grammar-Translation Method sought to ensure that the learners memorize the rules of English language operation and the meanings of a few words that occurred in the passage irrespective of whether they were current or archaic. It sought to ensure that a learner could understand and write with some competence. The method was quite useful as a communicative situation. Besides, it was possible for an ill-equipped and ill-trained teacher to handle large

groups of students with no difficulty and with practically no teaching aids. The greatest advantage that this method afforded was that the model of the language presented in the classroom did not have to resemble normal English speech as stress was laid on developing reading and writing skills only and no stress was put on developing listening and speaking skills.

The method apparently worked because it was an era when grammar and translation predominated and it was generally believed that competence in grammar and translation was akin to language acquisition. The shortage - of well trained teachers in the regional medium schools was another factor which helped in the growth and development of this school on a wide scale. Teachers in regional medium schools possessing poor communicative ability in English found this to be a good choice as it saved them from being exposed.

The extensive use of this method however, led to a thorough neglect of communicative competence. The learners were taught the rules but not the actual use of those rules in normal situations. Wilga Rivers points out :

The Grammar-translation method aims at inculcating an understanding of the grammar of the language, and training the student to write the new language accurately by regular practice in translating from the native language. Students taught by grammartranslation method are frequently confused when addressed in the language they are learning because they have had little practice listening to it. (1968 : 29).

The neglect of the communicative skills in English quite naturally affected the fluency in the language and the learners became poor users of the language.

### 3.2.2 Direct Method

The Direct Method was brought to India by P.C. Wren in 1913. The British teachers in Indian schools were perhaps already familiar with Henry 'Sweet's Practical study of Language and Otto Jespersen's How to Teach a Foreign Language. Subsequently, Wyatt and Thompson's ideas and those of Harold Palmer brought in Direct

Method to the schools in India. At the official level also Direct Method found wide patronage and acceptance as it was felt that this method held the promise of creating a set of people who were well versed in the language. One of the features of this method as it was practiced in India was a complete suppression of the mother tongue as teaching was carried out only through the medium of English. It may be mentioned here that the British teachers and officials, for obvious reasons, welcomed and advocated this method.

The principles associated with this method are :

- i) oral work ;
- ii) suppression of mother tongue ;
- iii) acceptance of sentence as the unit of speech
- iv) inductive teaching of Grammar.

(Palmer : 1917).

However, the only feature that teachers generally seemed to associate with Direct Method was the so called ban imposed by the protagonists of this method on the use of the mother tongue. There is hardly any evidence to suggest that the other features associated

with this method made any impact on actual classroom teaching. Consequently, this method prospered only in the English medium schools where the impact of the English class on the learning of the language was irrelevant and English was being learnt incidentally in the course of learning other subjects as well. What the English class did in the schools was to expose the learners to the literature in the language. The fluency in the language and ability to communicate in it was acquired as a result of exposure to it during the entire school day. Wilga Rivers points out that the students learnt to understand the language by listening to a great deal of it and learnt to speak it by speaking it (1968 : 32). In a large majority of schools this method could not be implemented effectively as teachers, materials and circumstances for its effective implementation did not exist.

The expectation was that it would be possible as Strevens thinks, "to replace the classical literature-based grammar translation method and advocate learning by learning the language spoken" (1977 : 3). But as we know this did not happen. In schools, other than English medium ones, it was practised with ruinous consequences. In this context Richardson points out :

It is important to keep three illusions about Direct Method very much in mind when assessing the contribution to language teaching of the so called 'compromise method'. The Direct Method was not in itself superficial or lacking in thoroughness. The early propagators of Direct Method did not neglect grammar nor did they ban all translation. The difficulty lay in the fact that a successful teacher by Direct Method needed a competence in his language, a stamina, and energy, an imagination and a capacity for working himself and his pupils hard and the ability and time in which to create his own materials and courses. (1983 ; 30).

Unfortunately none of these conditions existed and in the circumstances hardly any progress was made in the process of English teaching-learning, yet, significantly one of the effects of the movement was gradual weakening of the teaching of formal grammar which may be considered in a way as a step in the right direction as it encouraged communication in the language.

### 3.2.3 Structural Approach

The structural approach was propagated in India by Forrester, Pattison and other British Council experts. This approach was accepted at the Nagpur English

Teacher's Conference in 1957. It embodied the following principles :

- i) oral presentation,
- ii) Monolingual presentation,
- iii) teaching of structural items,
- iv) mechanical drilling of structures,
- v) rigid sequencing of structures, and
- vi) vocabulary control.

The changed status of English in India made curriculum planners look for improvements in teaching methods and materials at all levels. They began to rewrite textbooks taking into account the student's knowledge regarding the number of structures and items known by him. Attempts were made to grade the structures on the basis of their level of difficulty. The approach also controlled vocabulary so as not to confuse students. The emphasis was on teaching the language in terms of the graded structures and the passages for reading served as aids of reinforcement to these structures. The text acted as an illustration of the structures. Through rigorous control of vocabulary and structures it led to a systematic organisation of the language materials. The method was found to be widely useful in that it had the advantage of being strong in oral practices.

This method was widely accepted as it showed the promise of developing reading and writing skills even with the help of an ill-equipped teacher. Large groups of students could be handled by a single teacher using group-drill techniques, and no exotic or sophisticated aids were required for the purpose. The method was found to be most suitable for a country like India where the number of students are quite large and resources and resource persons are rather scarce. Thus the method was widely accepted, adopted and practised which brought about many beneficial changes in the field of English language teaching.

However, the excessive emphasis of structural method on teaching with tight grading of structures and careful vocabulary control led to the general discouragement of reading books outside the prescribed texts. There was no scope for expansion of natural vocabulary. The system did not open up the grading of structures. Besides, it resulted in the production of uninteresting reading materials. The course designers attributed excessive importance to vocabulary and structure counts and ignored the contents.

Therefore, the application of this methodology resulted in the learners learning the skills by manipulating given structures and sentence patterns of the language. The application of this methodology could not ensure that learners could use what they learn in the classroom in real life situations. Newmark points out :

How is it that students who have learnt English or whatever language following structural syllabuses don't know the right to say even for example how to ask for light, for cigarette. (1966 : 333).

He contends that students who have learnt a language following the structural syllabus for a number of years may be able to produce sentences which are grammatically correct but not necessarily an appropriate one in the situation they find themselves in. Thus, 'Have you fire ?' is what a German student may say, a direct translation of German, or it could even be in Italian, 'Have you illumination ?' for lighting a cigarette (Ibid).

The limitation of the structural approach lie in the fact that learners are taught how to write grammatically correct sentences, but even after eight or nine years of learning English in schools and colleges, many

of them are unable to perform simple tasks like writing letters or applications for jobs. The structural approach fails due to its inability to impart communicative competence because students fail to acquire the necessary vocabulary and structures which are important in real life situations.

### 3.3 INNOVATIONS IN INDIAN ELT

The changes of far reaching significance in the position of English in the country came about in the postindependence years. The regional languages replaced English as the medium of instruction at the secondary level and so a need for change in the materials and the teaching-learning strategies was felt very seriously. The setting up of Regional Institutes of English in different parts of the country, the establishment of CIEFL and such other institutes increased awareness of the problem and a lot of research was done in the new methodologies for teaching English as a second language (or as a third language) in the new circumstances.

#### 3.3.1 ELT in India in the 60s and 70s

The sixties and seventies posed a new challenge to the ELT methodologists in India. The changed

context demanded a consequent reassessment of the objectives of teaching English and a fresh and realistic thinking on the choice of methods. The relative emphasis to be placed on the various skills depended on the specific objectives to be achieved. One had to decide what one actually wanted from the curriculum. If reading ability was the aim suitable and well designed reading material had to be developed and produced. The problem clearly was one of developing methods to meet adequately the specific needs of the learners in different parts of the country. This could be achieved by incorporating, in a balanced manner, the principles and practices formulated and tested in the last half century. Some interesting innovations basing themselves on these principles have been brought to the forefront.

### 3.3.2 Kothari Commission

During the sixties the government appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Dr.D.S.Kothari to look into the existing state of education in India and suggest ways and means to improve it. It was felt by the Commission that the existing curriculum of education was no longer meaningful in the changed circumstances, therefore, a change had to be brought forth. The Commission submitted its report in 1966. The report said, "Education is a means

of accelerating national development" (Education Commission :1966:2). According to the Commission education has a definite role to play in the process of national reconstruction. Therefore, the Commission thought that all the components of the curriculum must be so planned that they directly contribute to this end.

English, according to the Commission, should be used "as an important library language which can serve as a vehicle for acquiring a substantial part of the rapidly expanding stock of work knowledge" (Ibid.pp.14-15). It is quite evident that the Commission evidently did not foresee any communicative role for English in India. It was more of a library language to be learnt for accelerating the process of national development by acquiring knowledge from the outside world. Quite naturally the Commission stressed on developing reading and writing skills.

The Commission discusses at length the importance of teacher training. However, these things were referred in a general way and not with specific reference to English. English in fact formed only a small part of the vast report concerning the entire process of education in India.

### 3.3.3. The Role of British Council

In the 50s and 60s one of the greatest problems faced by India was that of inadequate facilities for material production and teacher-training. The changed position of English in India demanded new teaching methods and new materials for teaching. Besides, the need for training teachers for incorporating the new methods into the system of teaching-learning English was felt. For this research in ELT and expansion of facilities for material production and teacher training was necessary. It was found that resource-persons in this field were not available; consequently, the help of British Council was sought. The British Council became an agency to bring ELT experts from British to help the Indians in setting up facilities for research in ELT, material production centres and teacher training institutes (for English).

The British Council experts mainly functioned as advisors and in some cases actively participated in research, teacher training, material production etc. Seminars and workshops were also sometimes organised by them to understand the problems and for exchanging views on English teaching.

in India. The British Council also sponsored scholars from this country for higher studies, research or training in the different branches of English teaching in the universities of Britain.

The Council also helped the schools and colleges of India by providing films and audio-tapes on different aspects of English literature and English teaching-learning. Their libraries in different parts of the country also provided an opportunity to the scholars in India to come across the latest publications in Britain. In other words, British Council in India has been of much help and encouragement in the process of English Language Teaching in India.

#### 3.3.4 Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages

Started in a humble way in Hyderabad with the help of British Council, CIEFL has today become the premier Institute for English language teaching in India. Initially the aim was to start it as a centre for research in ELT in India and for training teachers in the new methods of English language teaching. Short courses were run

(ranging from three to twelve weeks) where teachers from different parts of the country came, studied the new methods and went back to their parent institutions. The Institute did some research in ELT and was responsible for the production of materials suitable for the Indian context.

The real expansion of the activities of the Institute took place in the seventies. It was felt that short term courses were not enough to train the teachers. Besides, for a country like India training of a few teachers was not enough. What was needed, therefore, was to have more resource persons, who could train others into the new methods of English teaching. The recognition of the institute as a "Deemed University" gave a fillip to its bones as it could now award its own diplomas and degree.

The Institute was a basic diploma course in English Language Teaching where teachers or young students with M.A in English learn for nine months the various basic concepts of English Language Teaching, Phonetics, Linguistics, Material production and the like.

After the completion of the diploma the participants can continue research in one or the other specialized field of ELT.

Besides running the regular diploma courses and awarding M.Litt and Ph.D degree the Institute also has calls for producing materials for school curriculum and making radio and television programmes for teaching English. They have an extension unit the personnel of which go out from the main centre to advise different states and institutions regarding proper and suitable teaching methods and curriculum.

The Institute has now began awarding its diploma through correspondence and it has opened two regional centres in Shillong and Lucknow to facilitate in-service training for teachers in these regions, Needless to add, the Institute has functioned in the last thirty years or so as a premier institution for research and training in ELT in India.

### 3.3.5 RIE's, SIE's and summer Institutes in ELT

The concern at the falling standards of English in India forced the central government and the different state governments to establish institutes

for research and teacher training in different parts of the country. The Regional Institutes of English set up in the different state capitals have done a lot of good work in teacher training and research in curriculum planning and other allied areas.

For a vast country like India an inadequate number of teachers and a very large number of students it is often difficult to draw out teachers from their classes for inservice training. It was felt that for this purpose the summer vacations could be utilized effectively. Consequently the summer Institutes were started where the teachers attended reorientation courses during the long summer breaks.

However, the main problem with such courses has been the lack of motivation amongst the participants. Teachers attending the courses often have little desire to learn and appear to be convinced that such training would not help them in any way. Perhaps the course design of these refresher courses is to some extent responsible for this kind of attitude. The courses are often administered like classroom lectures and quite naturally the teachers resent this. The rigid attitude of the teachers against

anything new is also responsible for the lack of response from them. On the whole though much has been envisaged for teacher training programmes the effect has not been as wholesome as expected. Lack of coordination between the Institutes and the governments and the attitude of teachers and the administrations of teacher-training programmes has often hampered the progress. The dream of one trained teacher training others in his vicinity has not proved true.

### 3.4 THE U.G.C. STUDY GROUP REPORTS

#### 3.4.1 The study group Report I

The University Grants Commission (U.G.C) concerned at the falling standards of English at the college and University levels invited a National Workshop on syllabus reforms in English in 1977. It was felt by the U.G.C that traditionally English has been taught as a library and humanistic discipline. The exposure to great literature was considered as we know to be leading to the fulfilment of educational objectives. No language instructions was cared for and consequently no language skills were imparted. Undeniably it created many problems for the

learners. Without adequate language skills, teaching by exposure did not help at all. Besides, the effectiveness of this type of teaching without developing basic language skills was doubtful.

The workshop concluded that in the present context English was to be used as a language for learning other subjects. In other words it was to be used as a 'service language' and was supposed to be a medium for acquiring language only. The expectation of learners and the public from English had changed but the syllabuses had not been able to reflect these changes. Teaching at Degree level remained more or less unaltered. There was also some confusion about the nature and purpose of teaching English at the Degree level. It was considered desirable that the aims of teaching English as a second language should be fixed on the basis of socio-linguistic surveys. This alone could make the curriculum planners conscious of the student requirements and plan accordingly.

The workshop felt that English has to be considered as a window to the world at the national level for rapid development of science and industry. It

has also to be considered as an associate official language and the de-facto link language for banking, trade and commerce. Therefore, the concept of 'service language'. In the field of education it continue to be the medium of instruction for most courses at the post graduate level and in professional colleges. At the individual level, it is the language of opportunity and socio-economic advancement. Hence its functions in communications are to be diverse in nature. The skills of speaking, reading and writing will have to be imparted for meeting the diverse requirements of the learners. The need is for imparting both the expressive and receptive skills in these disciplines.

The study group (1977) highlighted the following :

- i) Reorientation of the present core English courses to a course in language skills.
  - ii) Introduction of two tier courses in English at degree level - the lower level course emphasizing Comprehension and the higher level course emphasizing reading, writing and speaking skills.
-

- iii) Prescription of materials related to the subject of specialization to promote library reading skills.
- iv) Appointment of specialists of English in other departments to introduce subject classics amongst the learners.

It was felt that by the time a learner came to the Intermediate stage he already had 7 years of English learning. That is why it was presumed that extending remedial lessons at the degree level would hardly serve any purpose. Instead, it was suggested that at the degree level teaching should -

- i) equip students with communication skills necessary to cope with the predictable situations he was likely to encounter, and
- ii) provide the kind of 'information content' which is relevant to contemporary culture.

According to the Study Group, while organizing the teaching programmes the following considerations will have to be kept in mind about the needs of the two kinds of learners :

- i) The general category of students at B.A., B.Sc., B.Com. level have needs which are general in nature as they are likely to become businessmen, bank clerks etc. Their needs, though quite unpredictable, will not be for anything which is specific in nature.
- ii) The needs of the students who have opted for specialized courses like medicine, engineering and the like, are predictable and specific. For them we have to devise materials which will be of interest to them.

The courses suggested by this workshop

thus were :

1. Two-year-intensive course for beginners in English aimed at producing skills, competence in reading, note taking and listening.
2. A two-year general English course for students with 5-6 years of English for producing competence in skills with greater emphasis on reading and writing.
3. Advance course (with 10-11 years of English) for high level skills in language for provision of reading, writing and literary skills.
4. Wherever necessary special ESP courses for I.I.Ts and the like.

The workshop was of the view that all the courses must have specific and clearly defined objectives. Language tests should emphasize actual language skills rather than contents of the texts and there should be scope for internal assessment to evaluate the progress made by the students.

#### 3.4.1 Study Group Report - II

Based on these recommendations a study group consisting of ELT experts was set up by the U.G.C. It was felt that the reasons for the falling standards of English could be traced to the following :

- i) shortage of trained teachers,
- ii) frequent changes of government policy,
- iii) grossly inadequate facilities for reform,
- iv) poor English teaching supervision,
- v) existence of a great gulf between the avowed approach and actual practice,
- vi) lack of guidance and materials for the practice of bilingual method where the situation demands.

The success of any reform in English language teaching would depend to a large extent, on the

removal of these shortcomings. The group felt that three related demands will have to be met while designing the future programmes in India, viz :

- (a) the need to answer the problems created by the changing conditions,
- (b) role of English as a source language,
- (c) the place of English as a 'link language' with the outside world.

The study Group felt that success or the failure of any programmes depended on three ingredients, MEN, MATERIALS and METHODS. Good teaching to a large extent depends on the ability of the system to converge on a single channel the minds of the curriculum planner, the teacher and the learners. The curriculum has to inspire the teacher to establish an atmosphere of Learning by creating a dialogue between himself and the learners.

The main problems with the present state of teaching English are :

- (i) methodology is understilized and underplayed,
  - (ii) syllabuses are not challenging enough for modern needs,
  - (iii) methodology is not given any importance.
-

The needs therefore, are :

- (i) ELT training,
- (ii) stress on proper methodology and command over the written and spoken English,
- (iii) at secondary level specialization of teachers in one subject and not many,
- (iv) efforts to tackle specific teaching problems and attempt to have professional teachers rather than theory-based teachers.

### 3.5 BOMBAY UNIVERSITY SYLLABUS

Bombay University has probably taken the most courageous step to bring about a revolutionary change in the English language teaching strategies. They have done away with prescribed textbooks. They do not prescribe any plays, poems or essays to be read, or to be paraphrased or memorized. Instead, they have some recommended books and the teacher is at liberty to choose any book from the list for use in the classroom. This indeed appears to be a bold innovation and the syllabus maker appears to have proceeded in the right direction using books as a means and not the end of teaching language.

In the examinations no questions are asked from the textbooks as there are no prescribed textbooks. Instead, the examination tests the proficiency in the general language. Certain passages are given and the learners are supposed to attempt the required tasks by using the language in real life situations.

The passages set in the examinations are graded according to the level of difficulty. This practice is adopted specifically to differentiate between the good and not-so-good proficiency in the language. Those with higher proficiency in the language skills are able to perform most of the required tasks properly while those with lesser proficiency are not able to do so. The papers are so designed that even those with an average proficiency in the language can score qualifying marks to pass the examinations.

The syllabus, to a large extent, promises to check the tendency to avoid learning language skills by memorizing answers from notes. However, one must wait for some more time to examine how the method is working

at the classroom level as the time is not yet ripe for it. Its effectiveness is yet to be evaluated.

### 3.6 THE BANGALORE PROJECT

The Regional Institute of English at Bangalore could be called the offspring of the structural approach. Set up in the hey-day of the structural approach in India, it has been over the years training teachers in this methodology. But, realizing the ineffectiveness of the structural approach as a means of teaching English they have been now experimenting with a strategy which they call the 'Communicative Approach to Language Teaching'. The results achieved in the two centres i.e. at Bangalore and Madras, appear to be encouraging.

Theoretically, the project bases itself on the well known distinction made by Widdowson (1978 : 14) between 'usage' and 'use' usage meaning grammatical correctness and by 'use' we refer to the context of the usage. The basic premise in this experiment is that following the structural approach one does not get the natural opportunity to learn the language. Besides, the emphasis on graded structures does not encourage the learners to use what they know, nor does it challenge them with a task which they can perform.

In the 'communicational approach' the teacher communicates with the learners and in turn forces the learners to communicate. There are no textbooks, nor are there any set of structures to be taught. It is an entirely situation-based teaching where the learners react to a communicational situation and in the process learn English. According to Prabhu, one of the experimentors associated with the project :

Communicational teaching for us means teaching through a series of activities which bring about pre-occupation with meaning and doing in the learners. It is not used in any of the other senses of communication, in particular that of gearing the language you teach to the ultimate purpose of the learner ... What we are saying is not 'English for Communication', but 'English through Communication'. (1980 :22).

The emphasis was on saying and doing things so that some 'useful' English may be learnt. The approach adopted by RIE, Bangalore, is indeed interesting. Its real merit lies in the fact that it attempts to provoke the learners out of their traditional passivity and challenges them to use the language for communication. It is basically a task-oriented approach which does not depend on a textbook, but on a teacher's ability to develop an atmosphere where the learners use the language.

### 3.6.1 The Loyola Experiments

This is perhaps the latest innovation in ELT, projected and adopted by the twenty-eight member team of Loyola college in Madras. The experiment materialized after ten years of research, which ultimately produced an experimental paradigm which could serve as a framework for second language teaching-learning. No claim, however, has been made by researchers that all questions regarding the intricate and much debated relations between the teacher, learner, method have been resolved.

The team started its experiments with the attempts to identify the skills and sub-skills necessary for acquiring competence in the language. However, it soon realized that this approach based on 'the communicative approach' to language teaching, was not possible nor desirable and it was demotivating the students to a great extent. It was felt that the primary target had to be a meaningful experience for the learner in the process of learning English. Basing itself on 'behaviouristic approach' in psychology, the shift took place from focussing only on skills and sub-skills to tasks promoting the actual involvement and engagement of the learners in the process of learning and performing in the language. The Loyola Experiment,

therefore, emphasises on the experience of learning through involvement of the teacher and the student (Xavier : 1988).

### 3.7 USE OF MEDIA FOR ENGLISH TEACHING

Educational broadcasts in India started in a humble way in 1927. The Madras Corporation started a series of broadcasts for primary schools. In 1932 the Calcutta station of Indian Broadcasting Corporation started broadcasting educational programmes regularly. There was, however, nothing like a serialized broadcast and each programme was independent of the others (Kapoor : 1958 : 32).

In 1936 after the setting up of All India Radio, the Education Department of Calcutta University started half-hour broadcasts twice a week. This was perhaps the first attempt at regular educational broadcasting. Most of the programmes were modelled on the BBC pattern with the triple objectives :

- (i) to inform
- (ii) to educate, and
- (iii) to entertain (Ibid:p.33).

It should be conceded, however, that the scale of utilization of radio for teaching has been quite low except in a few parts of the country like Andhra Pradesh. The teachers have either totally ignored radio as a medium of instruction or have been at best indifferent to it. The broadcasters and the programme makers have also been uncertain about the medium they were using. In many cases lessons from the prescribed textbooks were broadcast, thus wasting resources and time. Quite obviously, both the teachers and the learners considered radio as optional or at best supplementary. No real attempt was made to utilize the language teaching potential of radio, at least to develop listening comprehension.

The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages began producing programmes in English in 1963 (then Central Institute of English). In 1977 a new series called 'English by Air', was started. This is a series of five full year long courses with 30 programmes in each. These courses are not based on any textbooks, but attempt to teach English through dramatized stories, anecdotes, conversations and the like. The aim is to expose the learners to acceptable models of English being used in different situations.

The effectiveness of the programmes is yet to be evaluated though short surveys conducted by the Institute indicate that the programmes are popular and can be effective.

Television is a comparatively new medium on the Indian scene. Its widespread use and expansion is a very recent phenomenon yet the U.G.C and some other agencies like IGNOU have started programmes like 'country-wide classroom' and the like. These programmes are basically meant for college students and the emphasis is more on telecasting science programmes. Some programmes in English teaching have been attempted like presenting dramas and short stories. But the vast potential remains untapped to be utilized for effective use.

The use being made of television seems to be for non-formal teaching unstead of formal teaching under the impression that media can be at best a supplementary teacher. In a country like India, with quite a large population residing in remote and inaccessible areas where men and materials are scarce, the media seems to be the only hope for exposure to quality education. Radio and Television have the potential to fill in the

- gap arising from lack of exposure to a good model of spoken English.

### 3.8 THE SITUATION IN MIZORAM

The history of the spread of education in general and English in particular in the north-eastern parts of the country is quite different from that of other parts of the country. Primarily, there was no established system of education in this area, and various tribes lead a kind of nomadic existence. The attempt of the British was to buy peace with these tribes so that their economic interests in the Brahmaputra valley and Barak Valley were not hampered. To achieve this the Missionaries played a great role during the nineteenth century as they ventured into these remote areas spreading both their religion and education. The spread of education saw a simultaneous spread of English as a language for communication between the tribes and the missionaries.

In order to understand the problems of teaching-learning English in Mizoram it is perhaps essential to have an idea of the history of ELT in Mizoram. It is a remote area with a history of neglect, unplanned

development and years of political turmoil. As a result, the process of the spread of education in general and English in particular went through phases of dormancy and rapid development (Thanga 1979 : 102). These left their marks on the progress and development of teaching methods and curriculum planning. In the hundred years or so, of which recorded history is available, Mizoram has been an independent political unit for only twenty years or so. It became a Union Territory in 1971 and in 1986 became the 26th state of the Indian Union. As the Lushai Hills District of Assam it had no independent policy of language teaching. This affected the process of ELT development as Assam and Mizoram are culturally, linguistically, demographically and geographically totally different. To give an example, where as Assamese is a language belonging to the Indo-Aryan family of language, Mizo belongs to the Kuki-Chin branch of Tibeto-Burman family with an absolutely different phonological and structural system.

### 3.8.1 Mizoram : A Background

Mizoram, situated in the remote north-eastern corner of India, lies between  $22^{\circ}$ N Latitude and between  $92^{\circ}$  and  $93^{\circ}$ E Longitude. It is bounded in the

north by the Cachar district of Assam and the State of Manipur. On its eastern side it has a continuous border with Burma and its southern and western parts are bounded by Bangladesh. The whole surface is covered with hills which run north to south with an average height of 3500 feet in the east. The hills are covered with thick and dense bamboo jungles. The region is inadequately irrigated by some mountain streams like Tlawng, Sairang and Tuivawl in the north and Koladyne and its tributaries in the east. The cultivation usually done in the region is, therefore, inadequate.

The history of the Lushai Hills (as Mizoram was known earlier) as far as it is known is a history of immigration. It is believed that two streams of migrations took place, one from the North-Western China and the other from South-Western Assam. The tribes driven from these areas slowly settled down in the Lushai Hills and later came to be known as the Mizos (mi=man, zo=hill top) or the people living on the hill tops. It was perhaps the need of security in the early times that forced them to settle on the hill tops. Prior to the advent of the British in the late nineteenth century the hill

men were accustomed to make periodic raids on the villages in the adjoining plains in search of food and other necessities.

The Mizos are all said to be members of the same race but are divided into a number of families or clans. The principal sub-divisions are the Sailors (the chiefs), the Pois or the immigrants from the Chin Hills in Burma, the Hmars or the tribes who have migrated from Manipur, and the Ralte, Paihte, Thado and Lakher. The other groups of the population are fast losing their identity and getting assimilated in the larger groups (Allen : 1906).

Mizoram inspite of having become a full fledged state continues to remain a remote and backward area. In the recent past the government has been trying to bring in a faster pace of development through road constructions, development of educational institutions and the like. Except in the field of education, progress has been tardy. However, in the field of education, Mizoram is proud to have the second highest level of literacy in the country.

### 3.8.2 Spread of Education in Mizoram

It is very difficult to accurately trace the origin of formal education in Mizoram, and more difficult to trace the history of English teaching as hardly any accurate records are easily found. Whatever exists is scattered amongst the memoirs of the Missionaries, stray references in the Gazettes of the Government of Assam and some old records available with the Department of Education. The lack of any history or records can be traced to the fact that Mizoram was annexed into the British Raj very late, almost in the late 1880s and that too for the protection of the tea estates of Cachar and Chittagong Hill tracts. Quite obviously, where suppression was the motive nothing much was done for a planned development or the spread of education. Besides, being a part of Assam it was never given due importance and no separate policy for Mizoram was ever worked out.

The first attempt at spreading education amongst the Lushais was carried out by some teachers at Rangamati in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. They had come into contact with some Mizos who used to come to Rangamati for trading purposes and had learnt their language. They transcribed the language in Bengali script and later came

to the southern part of Mizoram to start some informal school. Education started by them mostly dealt with giving information about health, first-aid and the like. This was mostly carried out through the medium of Mizo written in the Bengali script.

### 3.8.3 The Arrival of Missionaries

The first group of Missionaries arrived in the area in 1891 (Lorrain : 1940) through Chittagong and set up a station in Lunglei about 230 kms south of the present capital of Aizawl. The missionaries particularly Lorraine and Savidge had learnt the local language in Chittagong and had decided to use it for the spread of Christianity amongst the Mizos. Opening of schools and spread of education were only parts of this programme.

These people later set up another station in Aizawl and they were chiefly instrumental in the establishment of the earliest formal schools. However, Lorraine is remembered for another contribution which had far reaching impact on the Mizos. He was a man with some training in phonetics and he used it to give an orthographic system to the Mizo language. He followed

the Hunterian system for codifying the language and this was the first attempt at a scientific approach to language study. The system introduced by Lorraine, though not absolutely fool-proof, is still being followed in Mizoram. Secondly, he also compiled the first formal grammar of Mizo language, which is perhaps still the only acceptable study of Mizo language.

#### 3.8.4 The early Schools

The first formal school was started in Aizawl in 1894 by Lorraine and Savidge. They came to an understanding with the local chiefs that they would send their children to the school for learning elementary things like health care and science. Most of the education was imparted through the mother tongue and there is no evidence to suggest that English was taught. This school, an entirely private effort, ran for only four months (Lorraine : 1940 : 3).

This experiment encouraged the government and they opened a school in 1894 and another school was started in the Assam Rifles ground at Aizawl. The school was informal in nature and did not have any fixed curriculum. A rudimentary knowledge of English was imparted

by Savidge (the in-charge of the school) but no records exist to show what was taught and how it was taught. From the Gazette of Lushai Hills (1906) it appears that the attempt was to train some enumerations for the census and hence only that much of English was taught.

The school was expanded in 1903 and a proper examination system was adopted. Instead being a one-class school, the primary section was started. 1905 saw the addition of class III and IV. The first middle school was started in 1911 at the same site. The coming of the second World War put a stop to the spread of education in Mizoram. It remained more or less static. The students passing out of the middle school and desirous of pursuing further education normally went to schools and colleges in Rangpur or Chittagong.

During this period some training schools were also started in Aizawl and Lunglei by the Missionaries, the basic intention behind the opening of these schools was to find recruits to run the churches in Mizoram. The students who passed from these schools were mostly absorbed in the church.

Since the schools were not affiliated to any board, the missionaries had considerable freedom regarding the curriculum to be framed. They mostly used materials from religious books. It should be pointed out here that their objective was perhaps to spread christianity and they were not primarily interested in the spread of education.

English however, began to be taught formally during the early parts of the century and not much is known about the syllabus or the methodology used. The memoirs of Lorraine and the Gazettes of that period mention that English was taught but remain silent regarding the details.

### 3.8.5 Development since the Forties

The first high school in Mizoram was established in 1944 and was affiliated to the Assam Board of Secondary Education. The medium of instruction was English or Assamese, as prescribed by the Board. Most of the students preferred to opt for English medium, as it was comparatively easier for them. English was a compulsory subject and had two papers, one devoted entirely to

the selections from literature and the other to language skills like grammar, essay writing, precis writing and letter writing.

This was a period when some more schools were established in places like Lunglei, Champhai and Aizawl. However, one is not very certain about the response received by these schools. The missionaries mostly acted as teachers in these schools and they were given extra remuneration from the government for their services in the schools.

### 3.8.6 The spread of Higher Education

The first college was started in 1958 at Aizawl. It was a private effort and affiliated to the Guwahati University, the only University in the entire north-east in those days. There was initially no special provision for the teaching of Mizo language. The English syllabus at the undergraduate level was a traditional one with one play of Shakespeare, a selection of poems, prose pieces and essays, a novel and some language items.

In 1962, the pachhunga Memorial Trust decided to adopt this college and this remained as the

premier institution of higher education in Mizoram for quite a long time. In the seventies 3 more colleges were started in Lunglei (1972), Aizawl College (1975) and Champhai (1979).

The establishment of North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) in Shillong in 1973, brought about a great change in the process of development of higher education in Mizoram. It was a University for the remote tribal areas of the north-east and was therefore, more interested in looking into the problems of the area and think of remedies for them. Secondly, as a new Central University it had more freedom to innovate and adopt than the traditional Universities. The University ensured that the local languages are developed and allowed their study as M.I.L. upto the undergraduate level.

To meet the aspirations of the students NEHU started a full fledged Campus in Mizoram in 1979. It is located in Aizawl and it is for all practical purposes the University for the state of Mizoram. Besides the University Campus there is also a B.Ed College, a Law College, a state Council of Educational Research and Training, a district centre of CIEFL and more than

twenty general colleges.

### 3.8.7 The system of Higher Education in Mizoram

The schooling in Mizoram ends after the tenth class and all further education is regulated and controlled by the University, which includes curriculum planning and conduct of examination. The system of higher education at the college level is divided into three parts. The first part is a two year course called the Pre-University, which is taught in the colleges. At this level the student has to choose a stream of specialization i.e. science, arts or commerce. This stage is followed by a two year undergraduate level teaching programme. This is a pass course level teaching programme. The learners have to opt generally for a science, arts or commerce learning programme. They also have the option to take any subject as an elective subject in addition to the compulsory subjects.

The students who are desirous of pursuing higher education have to opt for the honours course and study for an additional year to get their honours degree. Admission to post-graduate classes is not possible without the honours degree.

### 3.8.8 ELT in Mizoram

English is a compulsory subject at the Pre-University and undergraduate level. The curriculum consists of 2 papers in English at the Pre-University and under-graduate levels for 100 marks each. At the under-graduate level the syllabus has three selections of essays, poems and short stories. These have 80 percent weightage in the total marks allotted to English and the language portion has 20 percent weightage. The language part includes essay, letter and precis writings, corrections of sentences, idioms, phrases and some elementary grammar items like prepositions and articles. The questions from the textbooks are mostly essay type like, 'What is the central theme of the poem?' or 'write a character sketch ...' etc.

The emphasis of teaching is naturally on the texts and of the 6 periods allotted to English per week, invariably 5 are spent for completing the texts and 1 is used for the language portion. Interestingly, the students are also more keen to memorize model answers rather than trying to gain proficiency in the language.

There is a SCERT and a District Centre of CIEFL but, unfortunately, their research and training programmes are directed mostly towards school teachers and, therefore, there are not many opportunities for refresher courses for teachers at the college level. It is generally felt that the University should take some initiative in this direction.

### 3.9 CONCLUSION

One of the greatest problems that we face in trying out innovations in ELT is that of trying to change the attitude and ability of the teachers. For example, innovations which have tried to do away with the textbook have met strong teacher resentment and have often not been implemented in the classroom as was expected. The teacher often finds himself helpless with a book and is unable to start discussions or activities which assist language learning. Innovators have, therefore, to keep in mind the essential limitations of the system so that a useful and suitable teaching-learning strategy can be arrived at.

In the recent past the efforts have, therefore, been made in the direction of improving the

textbook. The attempt of SCERTs and NCERTs has been to produce textbooks and workbooks which can meet the requirements of our peculiar situation. Material production has been given the place it deserves. At the same time it is expected that the curriculum planners would do more in this direction.

CHAPTER IV

THE MIZO LANGUAGE :  
A LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION

## CHAPTER - IV

## THE MIZO LANGUAGE : A LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION

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THE MIZO LANGUAGE : A LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION4.1 INTRODUCTION

Mizo is the language spoken by the people of Mizoram. Initially the various tribes of Mizoram spoke different dialects which were often not mutually intelligible. However, with the passage of time, as the tribes established themselves in the area called the Lushai Hills, a common language called the Mizo or Lushai language evolved. This happened sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century and by the time the British occupied Mizoram in 1890 and established their settlement at Aizawl and Lunglei the language had been accepted more or less as the common language by all the tribes of the area.

The language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of language (Grierson : 1904), (Mc Call : 1949 : 34), (Vumson : 1987 : 19) and (Hninga : 1987 : 25). The credit for assimilating the different dialects of the tribe into a mutually acceptable and intelligible language goes to a chief named Lallula. He, in the nineteenth century perceived the necessity of having a common tongue and managed to get the leaders of the Ralte, Paihte, Chhangte, Pawi and Lakher tribes to accept one of the dialects as the common tongue.

According to Shakespear (a British District Collector in the thirties) the Duhlian dialect was adopted as the Lushai language ( 1975 : 112). Today more than half of the people of Mizoram use this Lusei or Duhlian dialect. If there should be a common language for the Mizo people, the Lusei or Duhlian dialect is the ultimate choice (Vumson : 1987 : 21).

Prior to the British advent the Mizo culture was a primitive one and writing had not been developed. According to a popular oral tradition, the Mizos claimed that they were once given a written language by God as other races were given and it was a parchment. But they were not keeping it carefully and a dog ate it up, and thus they were deprived of a written language (Hminga : 1987 : 23). The first attempt to learn the language was made by some Bengali speaking teachers in Rangamati ( a town close to modern Chittagong in Bangladesh). They began codifying the language by using the Bengali script. However, with the arrival of the Welsh Missionaries in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the attempts to codify the language and describe its grammar received a boost. Lorrain and Savidge arrived in Mizoram in 1892 and they did a lot of work to scientifically describe the

language. Their book the Lushai Grammar (1940) is perhaps the only authentic grammar of the language in English. They adopted the Hunterian system of orthography with Roman script. That was perhaps the best available system of orthography during those days. However, Lorrain and Savidge found it necessary to deviate from the Hunterian system in the use of 'aw' /ɔ: / for the long vowel sound as in the English words 'aw' /ɔ: ɪ/, 'fall' /fɔ: ɪ/, 'law' /lɔ: / etc. For the short vowel sound as in the English words 'pot' /pɔt/, 'on' /ɔn/, 'long' /lɔŋ/ etc, they adhered to the Hunterian system and used 'O' which at first seemed to be quite satisfactory. But later on they discovered that it was a mistake to use two different symbols for those two sounds because in Mizo speech the one was constantly changing to the other. The Welsh Missionaries in the North Lushai Hills had already adopted 'aw' to represent the above long and short vowels, placing a circumflex accent on the long one when necessary to distinguish it from the short one. Lorrain and Savidge, therefore, found it necessary to make an alteration in their original Lushai system, and finding no better solution, they finally agreed to use one symbol instead of two (Lorrain : 1983 : Viii).

The English type is easily adapted for printing purposes and English type-writers are used to type Mizo which proved to be an enormous advantage (Lloyd : 1991 : 128).

However, the limitations of the Hunterian system in codifying an essentially tonal language are being felt now, as attempts to standardize the spellings and other things are being made. In their dictionary, for example, Lorrain and Savidge spelled three or four words having different meanings in a similar way though they are articulated differently. The tonal differences are not accounted for. The spellings have not been used according to the symbols of the I.P.A chart. These are some of the problems being faced in the Mizo language today.

The structure of Mizo language is remarkably different from that of most Indian languages and hence, it often becomes difficult to learn the language or assimilate its system. The first remarkable difference is that it is a tonal language, where variations in tone and intonation pattern can change the meaning of words and utterances. In most Indian language tone is an

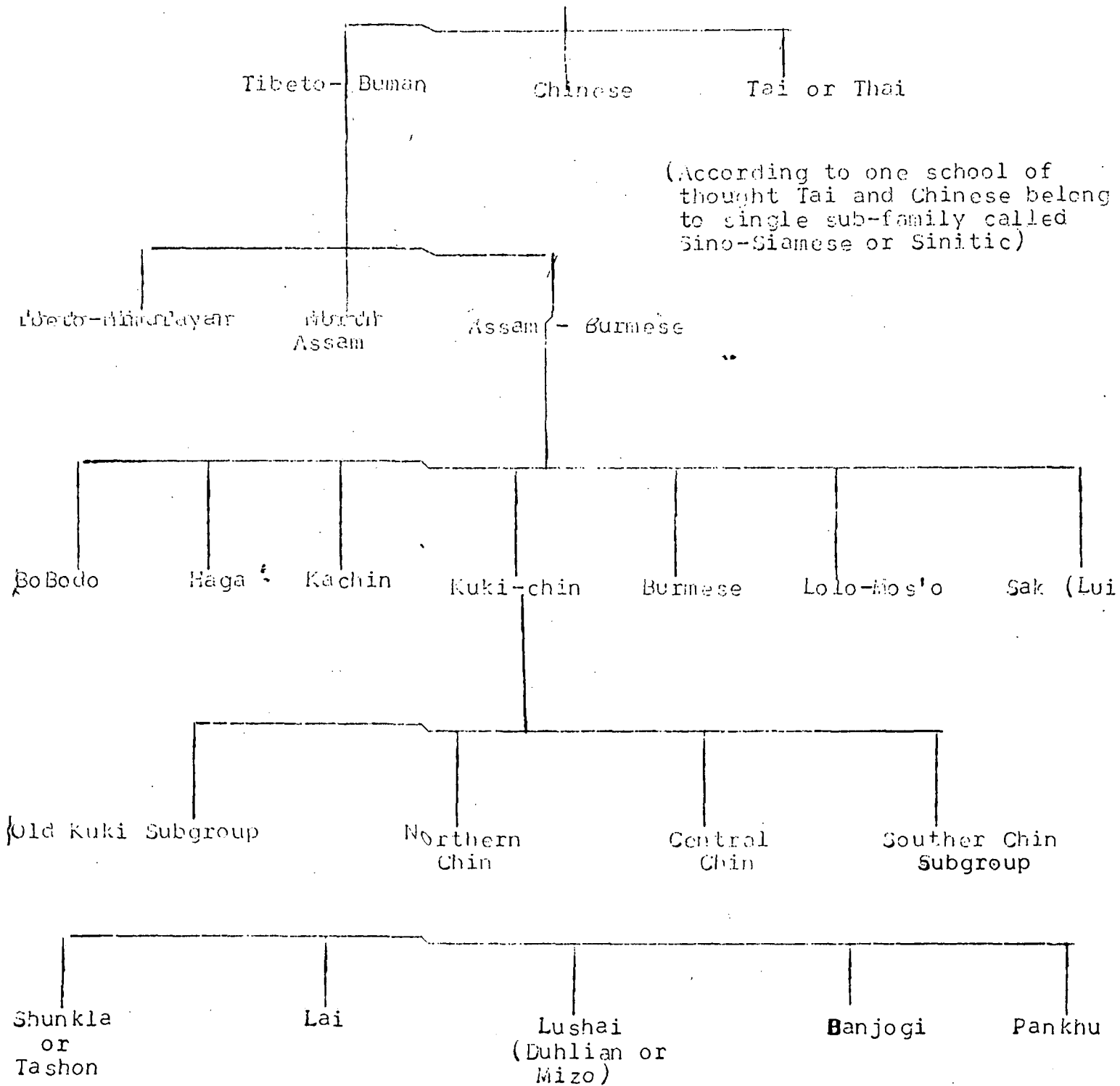
indicator of mood and change of tone rarely alters the meaning of a word or utterance. In Mizo, however, there are four distinct tones namely, rising, falling, mid-low and high. There is hardly any relation between the mood and the tone. The change of tone indicates the change in the meaning of the word. This is perhaps the reason that quite often Mizos appear to be apparently rude when speaking in Hindi or English. They are often unable to use the tonal variations to indicate the mood and choose the falling tone instinctively. The use of a particular tone denotes the context of use and can alter the meaning of a word. For example, the word 'pa' can mean father, male, mushroom, or basket according to the tone that is being used. There are numerous other examples of this type in the Mizo language.

In Mizo system of writing, tonal markers are rarely used and the meaning of a word is made out from the context of use. However, this is creating problems for the lexicographers as the attempts to compile standard dictionaries are being made. It becomes difficult to differentiate the words as the orthographic system does not show the tonal differences.

#### 4.1.1 Family Tree of Mizo Language

The Tibeto-chinese group of people are subdivided into several groups and the Mizos are placed together with Burman, Meitei (Manipuris), Naga, Kachin, Lolo, Tibetan, etc., as the Tibeto - Burmese, who at one time or the other must have shared common cultural or political affiliations or both. This leads one to believe that they might in some way be related to bones found in the caves of Chou K'outien south of Peking - the bones of "Peking Man". Peking Man is earliest known man in China and surrounding areas, and anthropologists believed that Peking Man possessed certain characteristics peculiar to the Mongoloid race (Vumson : 1987 : 26-27). The following table illustrates the relationship of Mizo to other peoples of the Sino-Tibetan family of language.

Sino-Tibetan



(According to one school of thought Tai and Chinese belong to single sub-family called Sino-Siamese or Sinitic)

(Bandhyopadhyay 1985:29)

4.2 THE PHONOLOGY

The four phonological tones of Mizo may be illustrated in the following way :

<u>Tone</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
Mid/low Tone	pa	male
Falling Tone	pa	father
Rising Tone	pa	mushroom
High Tone	pa	basket

These tones occur in all syllable types and on both long and short vowels, e.g.

(i)	<u>Mid/Low Tone</u>	<u>Long</u>	<u>Gloss</u>	<u>Short</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
		ban	dismiss or dis- harge	ban	a post (of a house etc)
		dar	shoulder	tap	cry
(ii)	<u>Falling Tone</u>	khel	the hips	khel	to play.
		kawng	the loins	khawng	stiff
(iii)	<u>Rising Tone</u>	tun	now	ui	dog
		bang	left over, remains	bang	wall
(iv)	<u>High Tone</u>	phar	leper	phar	put or hold up hands
		zawng	monkey	zawng	to search

4.2.1 The Vowels

The sound system of Mizo is quite different from that of the other Indian language and English. It has a very intricate vowel system consisting of the following vowel phonemes : /i/, /i :/, /u/, /u :/, /e/, /e :/, /o/, /a/, /a :/ and /ɔ :/. These are represented by the following alphabets : A, A, AW, AW, E, E, I, I, O and U, U. In orthography the longer vowels are represented by the double use of the same alphabet. The vowel /u :/ is represented with double 'o', the vowel /ɔ / with 'aw' and /a/ is represented as 'a' and /A/ as 'a'. In the case of the other vowels they are represented with the same symbols as in the I.P.A chart.

The length of a vowel is equally important in the spoken form of Mizo. It is possible that two sounds are articulated in the same tone though the difference in length can alter the sense. For example, in the rising tone /beng/ means 'ear' and in the mid-low tone /beng/ means 'to compress', though the orthography does not distinguish the difference between the two words. This is one of the major problems of trying to learn Mizo.

4.2.2 The Diphthongs and Triphthongs

Mizo has ten diphthongs which are given below :

<u>Diphthongs</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/ia/	ria	slender
/ua/	vua	beat
/ei/	lei	It has five meanings depending on the tone used, e.g. buy, tongue, earth, lop-sided, bridge etc.
/ɔi/	sɔi	say
/ai/	sai	elephant
/iu/	kiu	elbow
/ui/	tui	water
/eu/	keu	to open
/ou/	bou	lost
/au/	mau	bamboo

Besides these diphthongs, Mizo has the following four triphthongs which can be used with or without consonants :

<u>Triphthongs</u>	<u>Example</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/iai/	(i) lai	(i) be dissatisfied with *
	(ii) siai	(ii) to wink

/iau/	(i) iau	(i) expresses a note of disbelief, anger, protest, etc.
	(ii) kiau	(ii) clearly, plainly, fixedly
/uai/	(i) uai	(i) hangdown, droop
	(ii) Huai	(ii) brave
/uau/	(i) uau	(i) expresses a note of surprise
	(ii) huau-huau	(ii) gaiety, jollity.

#### 4.2.3 The Consonants

The following consonants are used in Mizo :

/b/, /p/, /d/, /g/, /h/, /dʒ/, /tʃ/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /r/,  
/s/, /f/, /ŋ/, /v/, /z/, /t/, /t̄/, /k/.

The phoneme /g/ occurs in the initial position of a word only in borrowed words. It is always preceded by /n/.

##### 4.2.3.1 Aspirated Consonants

The following consonants are aspirated in Mizo - the /h/ preceding the liquids /l/, /m/, /n/, and /r/, but following /ŋ/ and the others, thus :

<u>Example</u>	<u>Mizo</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/tʃ/	/tʃ u:m/	cloud
/kh/	/khu:p/	knee
/Ih/	/I <sup>h</sup> a :/	far
/m <sup>h</sup> /	/m <sup>h</sup> ai/	face
/n <sup>h</sup> /	/n <sup>h</sup> a/	job
/ŋ <sup>h</sup> /	/ŋ <sup>h</sup> a:k/	wait
/p <sup>h</sup> /	/pha:r/	leper
/r <sup>h</sup> /	/r <sup>h</sup> ia/	know
/t <sup>h</sup> /	/t <sup>h</sup> al/	arrow
/t <sup>h</sup> /	/t <sup>h</sup> a :/	good

#### 4.3 THE SYNTAX

The language follows a system of placing the verb in the final position of a sentence as in most of the Indian languages. However, unlike the other Indian languages the subject and the object change positions with the change of the person. In sentences in the first person the object is placed before the subject, and the sentence structure becomes object-subject verb. In sentences in the second and third person the structure becomes subject-object verb. Thus when the English sentence 'I am going to school'

has to be translated into Mizo it would read 'Sikulah ka kal dawn', where 'ka' stands for 'I' and 'dawn' the 'ing' suffix of the verb. However, 'Ram is going to school' becomes 'Raman sikul a kal dawn' with the subject in the initial position of the sentence and the object following it.

#### 4.3.1 The Nouns

There are four noun cases in the Mizo language, namely,

i) Nominative	Naupangin	- A boy
ii) Vocative	Naupang	- O! boy
iii) Possessive	Naupang-a	- A boy's
iv) Objective	Naupang	- A boy

When the subject of a sentence is followed by a transitive verb in the active voice, the subject generally takes the suffix 'in' to distinguish itself from the object. In other instances, the subject does not take any suffix. For example, in a sentence like 'The woman beat the boy', the word 'woman' takes the suffix 'in' to distinguish it from the object 'boy'. So it becomes 'Hmeicbhia-in naupang a vel'.

The form of the subject in vocative and objective case remains unchanged as in the case of the nominative. Thus a sentence like 'Boy, where did you go?' becomes 'Naupang, khawiah nge i kal ?' where 'khawiahnge' means 'where' and 'i' is the pronoun marker. The noun in the objective case is placed immediately before the transitive verb which governs it.

The noun denoting the possessor is generally placed immediately before the noun denoting the thing possessed, and the inflexion 'a' is added to the noun denoting possession. Thus 'Ram's house is large' would become 'Rama in a lian e', where 'in' means a 'house' and 'lian' means 'large'. The sentence 'My sister's dress is pretty' would thus become 'Ka farnu-a kawr a mawi' where 'farnu' means 'sister', 'kawr' 'dress' and 'mawi' 'pretty'. These suffixes become necessary as the subject and object follow each other unlike English and there is a need to distinguish one from the other.

There are two numbers namely, singular and plural in the language. Number is not indicated in the

noun, when it is clear from the context of use. So in a sentence like 'Give me two cups of tea', the noun 'no' (cup) does not change its form as the context gives an indication of the number, 'Thingpui no hnih min pe rawh'. The suffixes of the plural are 'te', 'ho', 'teho', 'hote', 'zawng', 'zawng zawng', 'zawng zawng te'. Thus in a sentence like 'Men are coming', which has no indicator for the number of the subject in the context, the suffix 'ho' or 'hote' will be added to 'mi' (man), and the sentence written as 'Mi ho (or hote) and lo kal'.

Gender is distinguished in Mizo only in the case of animate things. Names of animals and all inanimate objects are put in the neuter gender. However, in the case of some animals where distinction between the male and female is necessary like cows or goats, the suffix 'chal' or 'pa' is added to denote male and 'pui' or 'nu' denotes female. Thus 'kelchal' denotes a 'male goat' and 'kel pui' a female goat.

The same word often denotes beings of different genders when no ambiguity ensues, thus, 'fa' (child), 'u' (elder brother or sister), 'nau' (younger brother or sister). Gender is distinguished in the following ways :

- i) often, in the case of nouns of relationship, by using different words; thus, 'pa' (father), 'nu' (mother), 'pasal' (husband), 'nupui' (wife); 'pa' (paternal uncle), 'pu' (maternal uncle).
- ii) By suffixing 'pa' for the masculine, and 'nu' for the feminine; thus, 'fa pa' (son), 'fanu' (daughter), 'thian pa' (male friend), 'thian nu' (female friend).
- iii) Proper nouns of the masculine gender end in 'a', those of the feminine gender in 'i', thus 'Rama' (a male name) and 'Rami' (female name).
- iv) In the case of full-grown animals 'chal' or 'pa' is suffixed to denote the male, and 'pui' or 'nu' to denote the female.

#### 4.3.2 The Adjectives

The adjectives are normally placed after the words they qualify. Unlike English and the Indian Languages where the qualifier precedes the qualified it is the other way round in Mizo. Thus 'a good man' becomes 'mi tha' where 'tha' (good) is the qualifier of 'mi' (man). This is true even in the case of numerical adjectives, which also follow the noun. Thus 'Two cups of tea' in Mizo becomes 'Thingpui no hnih'. It is to be noted that the nouns do not take any plural form when followed by a numerical

adjective. Thus in Mizo in a sentence like 'Two cups of tea', 'no' (cup) does not become 'note', the plural marker, but remains as 'no' and in the adjective there is no difference in numbers. When a noun is used as an adjective it precedes the noun that it qualifies. For example 'Stone-house' becomes 'Lung in'.

The comparative degree is formed by adding the adverb 'zawk' (more) to the positive, and the suffix 'ain' (than) is inserted after the object of insertion. Thus a sentence like 'The daughter is taller than the mother' becomes 'Fanu ain nu a sang zawk' which in English would read 'Daughter mother than is tall more'. The superlative degree is formed by adding the adverb 'ber' (most) to the positive and inserting 'ain (than) zingah' (among) or 'a' (of) after the object of comparison. For example, 'That book near you is the best book' becomes 'I bula lehkhabu kha a tha ber' where 'ibula' means 'near you', lehkhabu (book), and 'tha ber' (best). It is to be observed that the degree of comparison is not brought about by changes in the form of the adjective but insertion of other words and suffixes (Grierson : 1904 : 131-32).

There are quite a few demonstrative adjectives in Mizo, for example,

Hei, hei hi - This  
 Saw, saw saw - That (There)  
 kha, kha kha - That, that near you  
 khu, khu khu - That down there  
 khi, khi khi - That up there  
 chu, chu chu - That

The plurals in demonstrative are formed by adding the suffix 'ng' to the singular, thus

'hei' becomes 'heng'  
 'kha' becomes 'khang'  
 'kha kha' becomes 'khang kha'  
 'khu khu' becomes 'khung khu'  
 'chu chu' becomes 'chung chu'.

When any of the above compound words are used, the noun they qualify is placed between the two words forming the adjective. For example in a sentence like 'Did you hear that noise?' 'ri' (noise) is put between 'chu' and 'chu' and the sentence becomes 'chu ri chu i hria em?'.

4.3.3 The Pronouns

In Mizo there are specific pronouns for 'I', 'you', 'she' or 'he'; however, the differences between the possessive nominative and the object form is not very clearly defined. The form of the pronoun is mostly understood from the context of use rather than from the pronoun used. Thus 'keimah' could refer to either 'I', 'my', 'mine' or 'me'. Similarly, 'nangmah' refers to 'you', 'your' or 'yours'. However, for the plural form the suffix 'ni' is added to the pronoun, thus, 'keimahni' refers to 'we', 'our', or 'ours'. It is to be observed that in the pronoun for the third person there is no distinction for 'he', 'she' or 'it', 'mah' and 'anni' are used as pronouns in the third person and the gender is understood from the context. The following are the possessive pronouns in Mizo :

keimah, kei, ka            - I  
keimah, kei a, ka        -- My  
keima ta, keimah ata, keia ta, ka ta - Mine  
keimah min, kei min, min, mi - Me  
Nangmah, nang, i        - You  
Nangmah, nanga, i      - Your  
Nangma ta, nangmah a ta, i ta - Yours  
Amah, ani a            - he, she, it

Ama, ani, a - his, her, its  
 Ama ta, amah a ta, a ta - his, hers, its  
 Amah, ani - him, her, it  
 keimah, keini, kan - we  
 keimahni, keini, kan - our  
 keimahni ta, keini ta, kanta - ours  
 keimahni min, keini min, min, mi - us  
 Nangmah ni, nangni, in - you  
 Anmahni, anni, an - they  
 Anmahni, anni, an - their  
 Anmahni ta, anni ta, an ta - theirs  
 Anmahni, anni - them

The accusative in the second person is formed by frequently omitting the second person pronoun and adding 'che', 'a che', or 'che a', in the singular and 'che u' or 'a che u' in the plural. Thus 'I will beat you' becomes 'Ka vua ang che' where 'vua' refers to 'beat'.

When a reflex action is required to be expressed the pronouns 'keimah', 'nangmah', 'amah' etc, are used and the particle 'in' is prefixed to the verb. For example, 'I hit myself' becomes 'keimah ka in vua'.

Sometimes the second pronoun is also dropped and the sentence is simply expressed as 'ka in vua'. There are quite a large number of interrogative pronouns in Mizo, which almost run parallel with their counterparts in English. Given below is the list of the interrogative pronouns in Mizo.

Tu-nge	-	who
Tu-maw	-	whose (used adjectively)
Tu-ta-nge	-	whose (used substantively)
Tu	-	whom
Eng-maw	-	what
khawi-nge	-	where/which
Enga ti nge	-	why
Engtin nge	-	How

Generally when pronouns have compound words the noun is placed between them. For example, 'which book do you want?' is written as 'khawi lehkhabu nge i duh?'. The interrogative pronoun is placed at the initial position in a sentence.

The relative pronouns like 'who', 'which', 'what' and 'that' generally follow the main verb in the

sentence. However, in interrogative sentences they occupy the initial position in a sentence like in English. Thus in a sentence like 'where are you going?', the pronoun 'where' will occupy the initial position and the sentence will read like 'khawiah nge i kal dawn?' However in a sentence like 'The man who is coming tomorrow is the Chief Minister', the pronoun 'chu' (who) will follow the main verb 'lo-kal' (coming) and the sentence will read, 'Naktuka mi lo-kal tur chu Chief Minister a ni'. Naktuka 'refers to 'tomorrow' in the sentence.

The following are the relative pronouns in Mizo :

kha chu	who, which, what, that
apiang	
apiang-kha	who ever, whatever, whichever
apiang-chu	

'kha' is generally used when the antecedent is known or familiar to the speaker, or has been seen by him. 'chu' is generally used when the antecedents or the incidents have only been heard by the speaker. For example, in the sentence 'where is the man who came yesterday?' the pronoun 'kha' (who) will be used and the

sentence will read 'Nimina mi lo kal kha khawiahnge a awa ?' 'Nimina' refers to 'yesterday'.

When the antecedent is in the plural, the affix 'te' or 'hote', when used immediately precedes the relative pronouns 'kha' and 'chu', instead of being affixed to the noun. The other plural affixes follow the noun in the usual way:-

- i)           Lehkhabu ka hmuh te kha tu ta nge ?  
              Whose are the books which I saw ?
- ii)           Ar zawnng zawnng i lei apiang a tha lo.  
              Whatever fowls you bought were bad.

#### 4.3.4       The Prepositions

Prepositions in Mizo govern the possessive case and are placed after the noun or pronoun they govern. They should perhaps be better and more appropriately called postpositions. Mizo has a number of such prepositions and some of them are listed below :

Hnena	-	to, with, from
Hma-a	-	before
Kiang-a	-	near
Vel-a	-	round

Thu	-	about
Tan	-	for
Chhung-a	-	within
In	-	by, with
Hnu-a	-	after
Piah	-	beyond
A	-	from, to, in, at, on, upon
Lovin	-	without
chin-a	-	as far as.

It is remarkable that though the language has a number of prepositions, important functional prepositions like 'from', 'to', 'in', 'at', and 'on' are not very clearly demarcated. This is perhaps one of the reasons for the large number of errors found in the use of English of Mizo students.

#### 4.3.5 The Verbs :

The conjugation of the verb in Mizo is very simple. It has the same form throughout the tense and it is the pronominal particle which alone determines the person and number.

The pronominal particles are as follows :-

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st person - ka, (I)	1st person - kan, (we)
2nd person - i, (Thou)	2nd person - in, (you)
3rd person - a, (He, She, it)	3rd person - an, (They)

The pronoun proper is generally omitted except when emphasis is required, but the pronominal particle must always be used whether the pronoun proper is present or not. (Lorrain and Savidge, 1898 : 13-18)

Verbs are conjugated in person and number by means of pronominal prefixes. When the subject is a neuter noun 'a' denotes the third person plural. When two singular nominatives are connected by means of 'hna', (with), the verb takes the plural particle. The prefixes are omitted when the verb governs a personal pronoun of the first person as its object, when the subject is an interrogative pronoun or an infinitive, and in the imperative tense.

The root alone is freely used to denote Present and Past Tenses; thus, 'enge an tih?', (what (do) they do?) 'a ti', (he said).

The past tense is also formed by adding the suffix 'ta'; thus, 'a pem ta' (he migrated).

The suffix of the Future is 'ang'; thus, 'Ka kal ang' (I will go). The future is also used to denote what is presumed to be true; thus, 'Ani ang e' (It may be).

Throughout these tenses of the indicative mood an 'e' or 'a' may be suffixed, apparently without altering the meaning; thus, 'Kei mah ka ni e' (I am); 'a ti a', (he said).

The suffix of the imperative is 'rawh', plural 'rawh u', in the third person, 'rawh se'; thus, 'pe rawh' (give thou), 'la rawh u' (bring you); 'ni rawh se' (let him, them, be).

The first person is formed by the particle 'i', prefixed to the future; thus, 'i ei ang' (let us feast).

The suffix of the Negative Imperative is 'suh', 'suh u', 'suh se', 'i suh ang'; thus, 'sawi suh' (do not say), 'isawi suh ang' (let us not say).

A conditional is formed by adding 'chuan' (if) to the verb; thus, 'Kan awm chuan' (If we remain, (lit., we remain, that being). Often also the present participle is used to form conditional tenses.

A Verbal Noun is formed by adding the suffix 'na'; thus, 'A awma khua' (He being village) 'The village in which he was'.

The Infinitive of purpose is formed by adding the suffixes, 'tur', 'turin', 'na tur', 'nan', 'an'; thus, 'eitur', (to eat), 'veng turin' (to watch),

A Noun of Agency is formed by adding the suffix 'tu', thus, 'hmutu' (one who sees); 'ngaitu' (a lover), etc.

The suffix of the Conjunctive participle as 'a' generally with the pronominal prefix; thus, 'A sum a khawma khua lam hla tak ah a kal ta a'- (His property he collecting village far to he migrated). This form is very commonly used in a sentence which is complete in construction, but dependent on a subsequent clause to complete the meaning of the speaker. Another participle is formed by adding 'la' or 'lang', preceded by 'i', 'u' or 'se', according to the person denoted, thus, 'sawi ila' (If I say), 'sawi ta ila' (I having said). If 'mah' is inserted after the root, the meaning becomes 'although'. Thus, 'Nimahsela', (that being although, nevertheless). This participle ending

in 'la' is usually substituted for the first of two connected imperatives, as a conjunctive participle; thus, 'Kal ulang, lei rawh u' (Go and buy).

The passive voice is said to be formed by combining the root or the infinitive of the principal verb with the verb substantive. A long vowel in the root is shortened. Thus, 'Pek aniang e' (It will be given); 'Eitur ani ang e' (It shall be eaten). In reality, however, there is no passive voice, as different from the active. 'In', the suffix of the agent, when added to the subject, shows that the verb must be translated as active. In other cases the context shows how to translate. A clause such as 'Ama fa pa ka vua' (his son's my beating), may be translated : I beat his son, and His son was beaten by me.

Compound verbs are in very common use.

The principal prefixes are 'zuk' (motion downwards); 'han' (motion upwards and towards the speaker); 'lo', 'rawn', (motion towards), and 'va' (motion on level ground).

Causatives are formed by adding the verb 'tir' (to cause); thus, 'Kal tir' (to cause to go to send).

Desideratives are formed by means of the verbs 'duh' (to wish) or some other synonymous verb. Thus, 'A lut duh lova' (He to enter wished not- He did not wish to enter).

Potentiality is indicated by the verb 'thei' (to be able); thus, 'Ka kal thei love' (I go cannot - I cannot go).

The Negative participle is 'loh', suffixed to the root. 'Nem' and 'nang' are sometimes substituted for 'loh ve' and 'loh vang'. Thus, 'Ka ni love', 'Ka ni nem' - (I am not).

Interrogative particles are 'em', 'emni', 'elo', 'maw', 'emaw', 'lovemni', 'nem maw', 'nang'. Thus, 'I kal ang em?' (will you go?), 'i Kal i duh emaw?' (Do you wish to go?).

Other words are freely treated as verbs. Thus, 'Mi a tha e', (the man he is good); 'An mahni ta turin' (for their sake).

#### 4.3.6 THE ADVERBS

Some adverbs of place are :-

<b>chungah</b>	- on top	khawi ah mah	- nowhere
chunglamah	- above	hmasa, hma, in, hma a	- before, in front
hnuaiah	- underneath	hnungah	- behind
chhungah	- inside	pawnah	- outside
chhakah	- above (higher up)	thlangah	- below (lower down)

## Some adverbs of time are :-

tunah	- now	naktipah	- day after tomorrow
anita	- ago	nizanah	- last night
nitin	- daily	zaninah	- tonight
nakinah	- presently	tuktin	- every morning
ngai	- ever	kumtin	- yearly
ngailo	- never	hmanah	- formerly
naktukan	- tomorrow	fo	- often, always

## Some adverbs of manner are :-

Engtinngge ?	- how ?	vak	- with force
Hetiangan	- thus	ve	- also, too
thuai	- quickly	tam	- much
zawi zawi in	- slowly	rual	- together
matheilovin	- certainly	eng zat nge ?	- how much
zawk	- more	palh	- accidentally
em, em em	- very	lui	- purposely

Many adverbs are placed between the root verb and its inflexion. The following are some of them :-

ngai	ever	leh	again	ngailo - never
kual	roundabout	rih, hrih-	for a short time	
tlai	late	hma -	early	hle hle-still (not moving)

Adverbs may be made by affixing 'tak in' to an adjective, and many adjectives without any change may be used as adverbs by placing them between the root verb and its inflexion as :-

<u>Adjective</u>		<u>Adverb</u>	
tha	- good	thatak in	- well
dik	- correct	diktak in	- correctly

#### 4.4 NEED FOR THE CHAPTER

The chapter attempts to present the Mizo language using the principles of Descriptive Linguistics. The need for the attempt is felt so as to understand the degree of mother tongue interference in the process of learning English for Mizo students. It has been felt that the mother tongue is an important factor for the problems faced by Mizo students in learning English. Since the two

languages are very different from each other the need for a linguistic description of Mizo is felt for a general understanding as well as for the carrying out of a contrastive analysis of the two languages. Hence, an idea regarding its origin, structure and system is necessary to find out how far the two languages differ from, or resemble, each other, since in the next chapter an attempt at contrasting the two will be carried out.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

The Mizos had entered very late into the race for literacy, having received their system of orthography five years before the end of the last century (Lloyd : 1991: 64). There has been in the last few years a lot of development in education and there is an obvious craze for learning The English language. English is studied in schools and colleges as a compulsory second language from the Primary level. From the high school level it is the medium of instruction. A person who is able to speak fluent English is held in very high esteem in the society. Due to the remoteness of the State, lack of opportunities of exposure to the communicative use of English, and the shortage of good teachers of English, teaching - learning suffers from

serious shortcomings in Mizoram. The lack of encouragement to learn from the families acts as a serious handicap for the Mizo learner of English. Moreover, the language textbooks in the school seldom teach the required communication skills. Conversations and discussions in the spoken school language (English) which would stimulate students to ask questions and thus result in greater classroom interaction have not been built into the teaching programme (Pattnayak : 1981:85:89). Since Mizo is very different in respect of grammar and syntax from the other Indo-European language (Lloyd : 1991:2), and even more so from the stress-timed English language, the Mizo learner faces many problems in the process of learning English.

The Mizo language, which is basically monosyllabic, with each syllable having its own pitch, tone, length and special emphasis (Lloyd:1991:29) it becomes specially difficult for the average Mizo learner to acquire a good command of English.

The Mizo language has rather limited vocabulary. With the spread of Christianity, new ideas and concepts had to be expressed in new words and terms which had not existed before. The monosy-

llabic nature of Mizo lends itself easily to the coinage of new words. But words such as Christmas, Cross, Pharisee, the name only a few were taken boldly from English (Lloyd : 1991:80). Regarding the Mizo language, William Williams, a Presbyterian missionary who visited Mizoram in 1891, had recorded thus :-

Their language is most musical and its intonation remarkably beautiful.

It falls with tender melody upon the ear. I believe that it will be like Welsh, a good pulpit language (Ibid.p.21).

CHAPTER - V  
CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE  
STRUCTURES OF ENGLISH AND  
MIZO

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURES OF  
ENGLISH AND MIZO

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## CHAPTER - V

CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURES OF  
ENGLISH AND MIZO3.1 INTRODUCTION

The term Contrastive Analysis may be defined as a systematic comparison of specific linguistic characteristics of two or more languages. As a systematic branch of linguistic science it is of fairly recent date, though it is not really the idea as such which is new, but rather the systematization. The real beginning of contrastive linguistics is marked by the publication of Robert Lado's Linguistics Across Cultures in 1957 though it was Charles C. Fries who gave the impetus to it and established it as an integral component of the methodology of target language teaching in his book Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in 1945; he says

The most effective materials (for foreign language teaching) are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned carefully compared with parallel description of the native language of the learner (1945: 9).

Lado quotes these words in his book and supports this contention with these :

Textbooks should be graded as to grammatical structure, pronunciation, vocabulary, and cultural content. And grading can be done best after the kind of comparison we are presenting here (1957 : 3).

The role of contrastive linguistics has to be seen in connection with overall endeavours to make foreign language teaching more effective and must also be dealt with within the general framework of school-teaching. Since the number of school hours available for teaching-learning languages is limited says Gerhard Nickel, it will be necessary to introduce some forms of rationalization in language-teaching programmes.

He says :

Finally, use will be made of certain findings of modern linguistic science, particularly of that small branch of it known as contrastive linguistics (1971 : 1).

The chapter attempts to give a contrastive analysis (CA) of the structures of English and Mizo in order to point out their similarities and differences and thereby understand the learning problems of Mizo students. The carrying out of a contrastive analysis will be of great

relevance to English language teaching in Mizoram since, as Lado says,

that in the comparison between native and foreign languages lies the key to ease of difficulty in foreign language learning (1957 : 1),

such a task will be useful in (1) providing insights into similarities and differences between languages, (2) explaining and predicting problems in L<sub>2</sub> learning, and (3) Developing course materials for language teaching (Oirsouw : 1984 : 38).

Since the two languages, i.e. Mizo and English, are very different from each other in matters of phonology, morphology, syntax, etc., it is hoped that an adequate description of differences between English and Mizo would be helpful in understanding the problems that Mizo students at the college level are facing when learning English. If a contrastive study of English and Mizo is carried out, the differences between the two languages can be discovered and the prediction of learners' difficulties will be possible.

This will determine what learners have to learn and what teachers have to teach, and thus the results will be of great help to all concerned in the teaching-learning field.

Assuming that the differences between English and Mizo are the main causes of learning problems for Mizo learners, a contrast in the phonology, morphology and syntax of the two languages are given in the sections that follow.

## 5.2 PHONOLOGY

The results obtained in the comparison of two sound systems are of great practical use for preparing textbooks, tests and exercises to supplement inadequate materials and also in diagnosing the problems faced by the learners (Lado : 1957 : 12) Phonological CA has great practical value which is guaranteed by the fact that the worlds' languages tend to employ sounds produced by a limited number of combinations of articulatory features. This is not surprising in view of the fact that man's vocal apparatus is physiologically uniform throughout

the world (James : 1980 : 72-73). Again, it is also a fact that the speaker of any particular languages uses only a part of this total range of variation when speaking (Corder : 1973 : 245). The most interesting fact about pronunciation of language, according to Stockwell and Bowen, is that out of the enormous possibilities in the number and variety of sounds that humans can produce, "only a small fraction of this potential variety is actually put to use in natural languages" (1965 : 3).

#### 5.2.1 Contrasts between the Phoneme

As mentioned earlier, each language of the world has its own unique sound system. Different languages exploit the universal human sound potential in different ways and every language uses a particular set of phonemes (Catford : 1988 : 198) which may be defined as the smallest contrastive unit that may bring about a change of meaning (Bright, Mc Gregor : 1970 : 179). A phoneme is a sound and not a letter. Phonemes exist in all languages of the world. Carl James says,

The important thing to be made in this context is that objectively similar sounds of two languages can have different functional statuses; in  $L_1$  the differences

may be disregarded and the two speech sounds viewed as 'the same', while in  $L_2$  the same objective difference is upheld as constituting a functional difference. This contingency is the cornerstone of contrastive phonetics and phonology. (1980 : 74).

This comparison is a crucial aspect of the study since the two languages are very different from each other.

English has a total of 24 different consonant phonemes and 21 vowel phonemes, including diphthongs. Mizo has altogether 54 phonemes out of which 29 are consonant phonemes, 11 are vowel phonemes, 10 are diphthongs and 4 are triphthongs. A very important feature about the phonemes of the two languages is that, while aspiration or the absence of it do not mark a change of meaning in English (Bright, Mc Gregor : 1970 : 179), the use of aspiration in Mizo consonant phonemes changes the meanings of words, e.g. the unaspirated /p/ in Mizo /pa:r/ means 'bloom' whereas the aspirated /p<sup>h</sup>/ as in /p<sup>h</sup>a:r/ means 'leper'. Aspiration is distinctive in Mizo whereas it is non-distinctive in English. The same phoneme /p/ in the English word /pin/, whether aspirated or not would still mean 'pin' and no other

thing. The English /p/ and /p<sup>h</sup>/ are never in contrast with each other, they are allophones of the same phoneme /p/, whereas in Mizo they are two different phonemes. This means that, where the sounds concerned are physically very similar, an allophone in English is a phoneme in Mizo.

A list of the phonemes of English and Mizo is given in the table below to find out what the two languages have in common and what they do not, what is present in one language and absent in the other.

Table - I

<u>English</u>	<u>Mizo</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
/b/ bin	/b/ 'be'	- 8'bean'
/p/ pin	/p/ 'pe'	- 'give'
	/p <sup>h</sup> / pe	- 'flash'
/t/	/t/ ti	- 'do'
	/t <sup>h</sup> / thi	- 'die'
	/t <sup>1</sup> / tlan	- 'run'
	/t <sup>h1</sup> / thlan	- 'grave'
	/t/ ti:	- timid
	/t <sup>h</sup> / tha	- good
/h/	/h/ ha :	- teeth

- i. An aspirate preceding a vowel, e.g., 'ha' (teeth), 'him' (safe) etc.,
- ii. An aspirate used with a consonant, e.g., 'hria' (know), 'hle' (song) etc.,

- iii. Not an aspirate, but used at the end of a word or syllable to denote that the preceding vowel sound is shortened, e.g., 'hah' (tired) 'huh' (wet), etc.,
- iv. When it comes between /t/ and /I/ as in 'thli' (wind); 'thlang' (choose) etc. it is not an aspirate but represents a hissing sound peculiar to the pronunciation of such words (Lorraine : 1982 : ix).

/d/ dog	/d/ daw	- 'to slip out'
/ð/ the	Mizos equate /d/ and /ð/.	There is
	no /ð/ in Mizo.	
/m/ mice	/m/ mu :	- 'sleep'
	/m <sup>h</sup> / hmu :	- 'see'
/n/ nice	/n/ nu	- 'mother'
/z/ zoo	/n <sup>h</sup> / n <sup>h</sup> a	- 'job'
	/z/ zu	- 'liquor'
/ŋ/ sing	/ŋ/ ŋo	- 'fair'
/I/ late	/h/ h <sub>o</sub>	- 'tusk'
	/I/ lu:	- 'head'
	/I <sup>h</sup> / I <sup>h</sup> u:	- 'precious'

/v/ vine

/s/ see

/ʃ/ she

/g/ gun

/dʒ/ John

/tʃ/ church

/f/ fine

/θ/ thin

/w/ what

/j/ young

/r/ rat

/k/ king

/v/ vun - 'skin'

/s/ sen - 'red'

Mizos equate /s/ and /ʃ/, there is no /ʃ/ in Mizo.

/g/ It is used only in foreign words like 'gum' 'govt'. etc.,

/dʒ/ It is used only in foreign words like 'jubilee', 'Jehovah', 'John', etc.,

/tʃ/ chi: - 'salt'

/f/ fing - 'wise'

There is no | / in Mizo; /f/ or /th/ is used in its place in the pronunciation of English words like 'thin', 'think', etc.,

There is no /w/ in Mizo except when used with /a/ -aw

This again is not found in Mizo; /i/ is used in its place.

/r/ ria - 'slender'

/r<sup>h</sup>/ r<sup>h</sup>ia - 'know'

/k/ kum - 'year'

/k<sup>h</sup>/ k<sup>h</sup>um - 'bed'

/ʒ/ measure

This is not found in Mizo; /s/ or /z/ is used in its place in the pronunciation of such English words like 'measure' 'garage' etc.,

From the above list of English and Mizo phonemes it becomes clear that certain sounds are found in one language which are absent in the other. The problems of Mizo students will not lie on sounds which are present in Mizo and absent in English, but on those sounds which are present in English but absent in Mizo. Such sounds of English for which there are no equivalents in Mizo will pose problems for Mizo learners of English. The differences in the system of phonological distinctions will pose problems and the result may be failure to differentiate between two phonemes of English, or in the identification of any of the two phonemes with a phoneme existing in Mizo but phonetically different from that of English.

For many Mizo learners the consonant phonemes of English like /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/ which are absent in Mizo pose problems in perception and production. The problems in production often give the Mizo learners' pronunciation a kind of foreign accent which is usually due to a wrong phonetic reali-

zation, and also result in a change in the meaning of their speech which Lado (1957 : 11) calls 'production distortions'. Mizo learners are often found to equate /ð/ and /d/, /ʃ/ and /s/, /ʒ/ and /s/ or /z/, /θ/ and /f/ or /t<sup>h</sup>/, /j/ and /i/, and, more often than not, /dʒ/ is replaced by /z/. For example, /ʒə/ becomes /da/, /ʃip/ becomes /sip/, /pleʒə/ becomes /pleca/ or /pleza/, /θ in/ becomes either /fin/ or /t<sup>h</sup>in/, /ju/ becomes /iu/, and dʒet/ becomes /zet/. Such problems like the ones mentioned are found to be caused by 'difference in the system of phonological distinctions, when a correlation in the target language has no equivalent in the native language' (Mach : 1971 : 103). It may be pointed out here that the closer two phenomena are related phonetically in the native language and target language, the more easily second language learners consider them to be equal or equivalent (Flege : 1987 : 47-65) (Major : 1987 : 101-124).

### 5.2.2 Spelling and Pronunciation

The difficulties of Mizo learners begin with the English phonology. The real sound or power of a letter of the English alphabet is not always

the same as the name of the letter would indicate, and the real sound can only be learned from a teacher. Students who come across some strange sounds of English are at first likely to perceive them as variants of the categories of sounds in their native language. Students who are unaware of the existence of certain sound distinctions in the target language are unlikely to pronounce them correctly except by chance. The sounds of English which have no counterparts in the students' native language will be difficult to distinguish. Further, sounds of English for which there are apparently similar sounds in the native language may pose problems as great, or even greater, than those sounds for which there are no corresponding sounds (Rivers, Temperley : 1978 : 162).

The difference between the two languages (Mizo and English) in the representation of phonemes in the written language may result in pronunciation and even spelling errors for students who are learning most of the time through reading. They are likely to pronounce or spell wrongly the phonemes that are represented in some particular way in the native language and indeed sometimes by phonemes that are not pronounced in the target

language, e.g. Mizo aspirated forms of /l,m,n, ,  
r,t/ are not found in English.

There are considerable differences between Mizo and English in matters of spelling and pronunciation. In Mizo, words are spelt exactly as they are written and there are no silent letters unlike in English. In English, one finds many instances of inconsistencies and discrepancies in spelling and pronunciation. There are many silent letters in English words like /b/ in the words 'doubt', 'comb', 'tomb' etc., /h/ in 'chasm', 'honour' etc., /g/ in 'campaign', 'sign', etc., /g/ and /h/ in 'light', 'caught' etc., /o/, /u/ and /t/ in 'bouquet' etc., /u/ and /t/ in 'tourniquet', etc., /u/ and /e/ in 'voque', 'plague', 'tongue', 'queue', 'unique' etc., /r/ in 'heart', 'burn', etc. One also finds missing letters in many English words like /u/ in 'use', 'mood' etc., /n/ in 'comptroller', /f/ in 'phonetics', /i/ in 'aesthetic' etc., /p/ in 'hiccough', etc.,

Again, there are many instances of English words of similar structure having a diversity of sounds

like 'bough' and 'rough', 'though' and 'through', 'heard' and 'beard', 'mother' and 'bother', 'lead' (n) and 'lead' (v), 'but' and 'put', etc., Inconsistencies such as these in English spelling and pronunciation are a source of confusion to Mizo learners because they have never encountered anything like them in their native language. Regarding the spelling and pronunciation of English words Bloomfield says :

In the case of pin, our alphabetic writing represents the 3 phonemes by 3 letters, P, i and n, but our conventions of writing are a poor guide; in the word thick, for instance, our writing represents the first phoneme by the two-letter group th and the third by the two-letter group ck (1980 : 79).

such inconsistencies mentioned above are by no means exhaustive but merely illustrative of the kind of problems which are likely to confront Mizo learners of English.

To quote Bolinger and Sears,

no other spelling system in the world has been the occasion of so much amazement, frustration, irritation, sarcasm and cold fury as that of English (1981 : 196).

### 5.2.3 Intonation Patterns

The first remarkable difference between English and Mizo lies in their respective use of tone or pitch. English is an intonation language while Mizo is a tone language. English uses pitch in a way entirely different from Mizo. Pitch plays an important role in both tone and intonation languages but functions in different ways (Fromkin, Rodman : 1983 : 95).

English uses pitch as part of the sentence and phrase and not as part of the word. In other words, pitch of a word is not part of the word (Lado : 1957 : 36). It is used at the level of the syntax and it is distributed over phrases and sentences and not attached to any particular word. In English it does not matter whether the word 'cat' is said with a high pitch or a low pitch because, high or low, it will still mean 'cat' and no other thing (Fromkin, Rodman : 1983 : 93). This means that pitch in English is non-phonemic, or that pitch is not used to differentiate meanings of words. Thus, on the whole English intonation conveys attitudinal or emotional meaning and is very closely tied to the context of an utterance (Broughton, G. et al 1978 : 55), and words do not change their meanings

regardless of their pitch-scheme (Bloomfield : 1980 : 80).

Mizo, on the other hand, is a tone language where variations in tone and intonation pattern can change the meanings of words and utterances. Mizo uses pitch as part of the word. Pitch is phonemic in Mizo in distinguishing words from each other just as consonants and vowels do. A particular pitch is used for a particular word and the change in pitch either from low to high, high to low, fall to rise or rise to fall, completely changes the meaning of a word. We have mentioned above that in English it does not matter if the word cat is said with any pitch whether high or low. But in Mizo this change of pitch matters a great deal because it brings about a change of meaning. For example, if the Mizo word 'ban' is said with a low pitch it means the English word 'post' (of a house), if it is said with a high pitch it means 'sticky', with falling pitch it means 'to reach out for' etc. This means that pitch in Mizo is used at the level of the lexis. Every word in Mizo has its own pitch-scheme. Thus pitch in Mizo has the status of a consonant or a vowel in bringing about a change in meaning. It is distributed over morphemes and words. The high tone of a

given Mizo word belongs to that particular word and serves to identify the particular word and distinguish it from other words. Thus tonal languages employ variations in pitch to distinguish the meaning of otherwise identical words (Klein : 1986 : 70).

The function of intonation in English is basically very different from its role in a tone language (Broughton, et al. 1978 : 54) so much so that speakers of a tone language have problems in learning that variations of pitch in the former are only used to distinguish different grammatical functions like declarative versus interrogative sentences, defining versus non-defining relative clauses, and so on (Corder : 1973 : 252-3). A high-mid sequence in the middle of a sentence in English is not attached to a particular word as is the case in a tone language like Mizo, but to the position in which that word occurs. A high-low sequence at the end of a sentence is not the feature of the word at the end of a sentence but to that position itself. The same words will have different pitches elsewhere. The speaker of a tone language learning an intonation language like English faces a serious problem and is likely to attribute the pitch variations to the words (Catford : 1988 : 45-47) or even use pitch at regular intervals when speaking.

A tone language has the added complication in that it has an intonation system over and above the tone system of its own, that is, it uses pitch in a way similar to an intonation language (O'Connor : 1983 : 192), (Lado : 1957 : 47). Thus it can be said that unlike an intonation language, a tone language uses pitch at the lexical level as well as the syntactic level. However, the intonation system of a tone language tends to be a simple one limited to two additional pitch phonemes which occur at phrase and sentence final points (Lado : 1957 : 47).

#### 5.2.4 Consonant and Vowel Clusters

The next remarkable difference between English and Mizo is in their systems of combinations of phonemes. Each language has different rules governing the sequences of phonemes which may occur and which may not. These differences depend on the extent to which the two languages permit consonant clusters to occur at the beginnings or ends of syllables.

The type of consonant cluster permitted in English are subject to constraints (Gimson : 1980 : 237). Also the number of consonants that can occur initially and

finally in syllables is subject to a similar constraint (Taylor : 1995 : 5): English permits initial clusters of either two or three consonants.

Play, sky, (CCV), pl - , sk \_\_\_\_\_, splay,  
screw, (CCCV), spl \_\_\_\_\_, skr \_\_\_\_\_,  
and either two, three, or four final consonants.

ask, apt (VCC), \_\_\_\_\_sk, \_\_\_\_\_pt, asked,  
elks, (VCCC), \_\_\_\_\_skt, \_\_\_\_\_lks, glimpsed,  
waltzed (CCVCCCC) \_\_\_\_\_mpst, ltst.

There are only 9 different initial clusters of 3 consonants in English. These are /spl/, /spr/, /spj/, /str/, /stj/, /skl/, /skr/, /skw/ and /skj/ as in splay, spray, spew, stray, stew, sclerosis, screw, square, skua (Catford : 1988 : 208 : 210).

The (CCC) V (CCCC) structure of the English syllable is the most general statement of the possibilities of sequence (O'Connor : 1983 : 229), and both words and syllables may begin with consonant clusters.

The vowels may occur alone, as in - are /a:/ (v), or /ɔ:/ (v), err /ɜ:/ (v), I/ai/ (vv), owe /əu/ (vv) ear /iə/ (vv), air /ɛə/ (vv) hour /aʊə/ (vvv) etc., or they may occur with consonants as in,

fire /faɪə /, fired /faɪəd/ (cvvv, cvvvc)  
 layer /leɪə /, towered /taʊəd/ (cvvv, cvvvc)  
 mower /məʊə /, lowered /lɔːəd / (cvvv,  
 cvvvc) lawyer /lɔːɪə / (cvvv) etc.,

Within the framework of the (ccc) v(cccc) structure of the English Syllable we need to know which of the consonants can occur singly or in clusters both before and after the vowel which is the centre of the syllable. All consonants occur singly before the vowel except /ŋ /; /ʒ / is rare but does appear in recent borrowings like 'gigolo' /ʒɪgəloʊ /; 'jabot' /ʒæbɔː / . Clusters of two consonants before the vowel have one of two forms : /s/ + C in 'stay' /steɪ /, 'swim' /swɪm /, 'sleep' /sli:p /, etc., or C+ /w, j, r, l / as in twin /twɪn /, 'beauty' /bju:ti /, 'cream' /kri:m /, 'plain' /pleɪn /, etc., but all the possibilities suggested by these general formulae do not occur in fact; clusters of /sb, sr, sʃ, tl, hr, fw, ʃj /, etc., are not possible in English. /ʒ / does not occur in initial clusters, /v / occurs only with /j /, as in 'view' /vju: /, /h / only with /j, w / as in 'huge' /hju:dz /, 'which' /hwɪtʃ / and /w, j, r / are not found as the first of two consonants. The three-term initial clusters have a more restricted form which is a combination of the general two-term possibilities : the first consonant must

be /s/ and the last must be one of /w,j,r,l/; the middle consonant is one of /p,t,k/, again not all possible combinations of these occur, e.g. /spw, stl, sfj/etc (Taylor : 1995 : 6).

Consonant clusters after the vowel are much more complex than those before, partly because of the fact that English makes grammatical use of consonantal terminations to express plural, past tense and ordinal numbers, as in 'texts', which gives / - ksts/, 'jinxed' / - ŋkst/ and sixth / - ksθ/ (O'Connor : 1983 : 229-30). Consonant clusters can cause severe difficulties for some learners of English because languages vary widely in their syllable structure and in the number and kind of clusters that they allow. Most languages have a somewhat simpler syllable structure than English and speakers of such languages face a bewildering array of unfamiliar clusters when they learn English. Difficulties with consonant clusters can lead to a lack of fluency which is very disturbing to the listener (Taylor : 1995 :6).

The syllable structure of Mizo is not very complex. It is noteworthy that the language has no consonant

clusters but only vowel clusters. A consonant is always followed by a vowel. Words can either begin or end with a consonant. Similarly they can occur at any position, the only restriction being that there can be a vowel cluster but not a consonant cluster. Syllables like CVVV (huai 'brave') or CVVC (bauh 'bark') or VVV (uai 'droop') are possible, but no syllable has more than 4 components. Generally, most words are made up of one or two syllables. A vowel cluster however, cannot have more than 3 vowels (Lorrain : 1940). The vowel, like in English, can also occur alone, e.g., aw /ɔ:/ 'yes', i /i/ 'you', u/u:/ 'elder' etc., Examples of vowel clusters are :

ui /ui/ (vv)	'dog'
ei /ei/ (vv)	'eat'
iai/iai/ (vvv)	'be dissatisfied (with)'
uai /uai/ (vvv)	'droop', 'wither'.

The following table shows the syllable initial consonants in Mizo. Consonants like /ŋ<sup>h</sup>/, /t<sup>h</sup>/, /l<sup>h</sup>/, /r<sup>h</sup>/, /n<sup>h</sup>/, /ŋ/ etc., are found to occur at initial positions.

Table - 2

	Labials	Dentals	Alveolars	Velars	Back
Stops	p <sup>h</sup> , p, b	t <sup>h</sup> , t, d	t <sup>h</sup> , t	k <sup>h</sup> , k, (g)	
Affricates			ch, c(j)		
Fricatives	f, v	s, z			h
Nasals	m <sup>h</sup> , m	n <sup>h</sup> , n		ŋ <sup>h</sup> , ŋ	
Lateral Affricates	t <sup>l</sup> h, t <sup>l</sup>				
Lateral	l <sup>h</sup> , l,				
Flaps	r <sup>h</sup> , r				

It would be noted that velar /g/ and palato-alveolar /j/ are not found in Mizo except on foreign words (Chhange : 1989 : 20-21)

The following table shows the Mizo consonants which occur at the final position :

Table - 3

	Labials	Dentals	Velars	Back
Stops	p	t	k	h
Nasals	m	n	ŋ	
Laterals		l, l <sup>h</sup>		
Flaps		r, r <sup>h</sup>		

The syllable structure of Mizo, unlike English, is rather simple. While English allows consonant clusters of up to three in initial positions and four in final positions, Mizo does not have any consonant clusters either at the beginning, middle or end of a word or syllable. Moreover, some segments of speech sounds in English like /l/ and /n/ have a dual role in the language. That is, sometimes /l/ and /n/ behave non-syllabically like consonants, and sometimes they behave syllabically like vowels. For example, in words like 'lot' /lɒt/ and 'not' /nɒt/, both /l/ and /n/ are consonants or non-syllabic contoids, whereas in 'bottle' /bɒtl/ and 'button' /bʌtn/ they take on a syllabic role. The syllabic structure of these words is therefore CVCV (Taylor : 1995 : 7). Many Mizo learners may avoid syllabic /l/ and /n/ by inserting a vowel to take on the syllabic function, e.g. /bɒtl/ may become /bɒtɔ/ and /bʌtn/ may become /bʌtɔn/.

#### 5.2.5 Environment of Phoneme Occurrence

All languages have constraints on the permitted sequences of phonemes, though different languages have different constraints and the phonemes of a language cannot be strung together in any random order to form words.

The phonological systems of different languages determine which phonemes can begin a word, end a word, and follow each other (Fromkin; Rodman : 1983 : 83,82). The sounds of a language are referred to as being conditioned by their environment which influences the selection of a particular unit, at a given place in an utterance, and thus restricts its occurrence, or distribution (Crystal : 1985 : 110).

The environment of phoneme occurrence in English is different from Mizo. English may permit certain sequences of sounds at one or another position in the word which may not be permissible in Mizo. English phonology has sounds which are either in (i) free variation or (ii) complementary distribution (O'Connor : 1983 : 177). Two sounds of English may occur in the same environment and never be distinctive. That is, one sound may be substituted for another in a given environment with no consequent change in the word's meaning. An example of two phonemes in free variation will be the initial vowel in the word 'economics', which some people pronounce with an /i/ so that it becomes /i:kənɒmiks/, while others pronounce it with an /e/ so that we have /ekənɒmiks/ (Fromkin, Rodman : 1983 : 81).

A similar example is the /t/ sound at the end of 'Good night' /gudnait/ which may or may not be exploded, but even so the two sounds do not make a difference of meaning though they occur in the same environment (O'Connor : 1983 : 177). There are also sounds in English which never occur in the same environment. For example, the voiceless allophone of the /l/ phoneme occurs after initial /s-/, as in 'sleep' /sli:p/, and the voiced allophone is excluded; conversely, /l/ is used initially when no /s-/ precedes 'leap' /li:p/. The two sounds of clear /l/ and dark /l/ as well as the voiceless aspirated stops like /p<sup>h</sup>/, /t<sup>h</sup>/, /k<sup>h</sup>/ in /p<sup>h</sup>il/, /t<sup>h</sup>il/, and /k<sup>h</sup>il/, and the voiceless unaspirated stops /p/, /t/, /k/, in /spil/, /stil/, /skil/ are all in complementary distribution. The fact about English phonology is that aspirated and nonaspirated stops are in complementary distribution; voiceless stops are always aspirated when they occur at the beginning of a word before stressed vowels, and voiceless stops are always unaspirated after an initial /s/. The phoneme /p/ has two sounds which is also true of the phonemes /t/ and /k/ (Fromkin, Rodman : 1983 : 79).

Mizo, on the other hand, has no phonemes which are in free variation. For example let us take the

Mizo word 'in' which means the English 'house'. If the first sound /i/ in 'in' is replaced by /e/ we will have /en/ which is equivalent to the English 'look' or 'observe'. Here the substitution of one sound /i/ for another /e/ brings a change in the meaning of the word. Mizo, like English, has sounds which are in complementary distribution. The two sounds of clear /I/ and dark /I/ in the word /la/ 'chief' may be said to be in complementary distribution, so are the aspirated and unaspirated sounds of /I<sup>h</sup>/ and /I/ in /I<sup>h</sup>el/ 'not quite enough', 'not very' etc., /p<sup>h</sup>/ and /p/ in /p<sup>h</sup>a:r/ 'leper', /pa:r/ 'bloom', /t<sup>h</sup>/ and /t/ in /t<sup>h</sup>ar/ 'new', /tar/ 'old' /k<sup>h</sup>/ and /k/ in /k<sup>h</sup>ar/ 'close', /kar/ 'week', etc.,

### 5.3 MORPHOLOGY

English has an extremely complex morphology (Bolinger, Sears : 1981 : 47) unlike Mizo which has a rather simple one. Mizo is characterized by a tendency to have monosyllabic morphemes and lack of an elaborate morphology (Chao : 1968 : 89). A comparison of the two morphological systems of English and Mizo is hoped to be of great pedagogical use. The differences between the two languages in the area of morphology is believed to be one of the problems faced by Mizo learners of English.

### 5.3. 1 Morpheme Formation

Morphemes of a language can be established and delimited by comparing word forms with one another taking into account the recurrent pieces or units that compose them. In this way every word is wholly analysable into one or more morphemes which may be either monosyllabic or polysyllabic (Robins : 1980 : 155). That is, a morpheme may have one syllable, or it may have more than one as in 'man' and 'establish'. Examples of these in Mizo are 'ui' (dog) and 'tawtawrawt' (a bugle). A morpheme may be bound or free. In English 'cats', 'cat' is free because it is a word in its own right. In the Mizo 'zawhte-te' (cats) 'zawhte' (cat) is again a free morpheme since it is a word in its own right. The English 's' in 'cats' is a bound morpheme because it is not a word in its own right (Ibid. p.158), whereas the Mizo 'te' in 'zawhte-te' is a free morpheme because it is a word in its own right.

Root morphemes in English may be either bound or free whereas they are all free in Mizo. Affixes, which are all bound morphemes in English are not necessarily bound in Mizo. Roughly speaking, almost all prefixes are free morphemes in Mizo. Some examples of bound morphemes

in Mizo are to be seen in plural affixes like '-n' in 'kan' (we) '-ng' in 'heng' (these) 'khing', 'sawng' (those) etc.,

### 5.3.2 Suffixation and Prefixation Rules in the Two Languages

The suffixation and prefixation rules followed by English and Mizo are different, in terms of singular/plural, masculine/feminine, grammatical category and root words. The rules followed in English is a rather complicated process.

The English plural morpheme is both phonologically and morphologically conditioned (Robins : 1980 : 155-58). For example, /-s/, /-z/ and /-iz/ are all phonologically conditioned allomorphs of the English plural morpheme, and are distributed according to the final vowel or consonant of the word base or singular form. Thus words ending in a voiced consonant other than /z/, /ʒ/, or /dʒ/, or in a vowel, have /-z/, as in dogs, cows, hens, etc., those ending in a voiceless consonant, other than /s/, /ʃ/, or /tʃ/ have /-s/ as in cats, tacks, cups, etc., those ending in /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ have /-iz/ as in horses, prizes, rushes, churches, judges, etc., Examples

of morphologically conditioned allomorphs of the plural morpheme can be seen in pairs such as 'man' and 'men', 'child' and 'children', 'deer' and 'deer', 'ox' and 'oxen', etc. These morphologically conditioned allomorphs of the morpheme are regarded as irregular in contrast with the regular phonologically conditioned allomorphs. In words like 'sheep', 'deer', 'cattle', etc. we have examples of zero suffix where the plural forms retain the same overt shapes. In short, there are three common ways of deriving plurals from singulars in English :

- i. addition of -s, as in cat, cats
- ii. 'zero' ending, as in sheep, sheep
- iii. changing the vowel, as in mouse, mice-(Robins: 1980 : 156-57).

The plural morpheme in Mizo is different from English in that it is not phonologically conditioned. Plural morphemes in Mizo are 'te', 'ho', 'hote', 'te ho', 'zawng zawng', etc., These are not attached to the stem, and number is not indicated in the noun. The noun remains unchanged throughout. Plurality is indicated in the context of use, e.g.

SingularPlural

A. Ui a bauh

B. Ui an bauh/Uite an bauh.

The dog barks/is  
barking

The dogs bark/are barking.

In both the sentences ui (dog) remains unchanged. In sentence B plurality is denoted by 'te', 'an' which follow the noun 'ui' (dog). The addition of -s, -es, -en, etc. to the noun in English to denote plurality does not exist in Mizo. Plurality is derived in an entirely different way in Mizo, e.g.

SingularPlural

Sakei (tiger)

Sakei - te (tigers)

mi (man)

mi - te (men)

arsii (star)

arsii - te (stars)

naupang (child)

naupang - te (children)

Nouns in English may be divided into three main gender subclasses according to whether they require 'himself', 'herself' or 'itself' in sentences like 'The boy hurt himself', 'The girl hurt herself' and 'The snake hurt itself'. Membership of such gender classes governs the lexical relationship of anaphora or back reference

holding across sentence boundaries. For example, in the above sentences 'boy', 'girl', and 'snake' are referred to as 'he', 'she', 'it'. Again, gender distinctions in English only apply with the singular number category; plural noun forms require 'themselves' (Robins : 1980 : 185). If the nouns 'boy', 'girl' and 'snake' are in the plural number the sentences will be, 'The boys hurt themselves', 'The girls hurt themselves', 'The snake hurt themselves', and the 'boys', 'girls' and 'snakes' referred to by 'they'.

Gender in English is again only applicable to the anaphoric pronominal links between nouns and 'he', 'she', 'it', etc., and the reflexive pronouns 'himself', 'herself', 'itself', etc. whereas 'baby' may be referred to as 'it' where the sex is unknown, the word 'cousin' where sex distinction is equally unmarked may never be referred to by 'it'. Names of countries, ships, cars, bicycles and the like are referred to by 'she' (Ibid : pp. 206-7).

There are derivational morphemes in English that change the category or grammatical class of words. When these morphemes are conjoined to other morphemes or words, a new word is derived. Examples are :

Noun to Adjective

boy + ish

affection + ate

health + ful

Verb to Noun

accus + ation

ning + er

free + dom

Adjective to Adverb

exact + ly

quiet + ly

distinct + ly

Noun to verb

moral + ize

vaccin + ate

brand + ish

Verb to Adjective

desire + able

adore + able

accept + able

Other derivational morphemes do not cause a change in the grammatical category of a word, e.g.

a + moral

auto + biography

re + print

There are also suffixes of this type such as vicar + age, longer, short + est, etc. (Fromkin, Rodman; 1983 : 117-8). Thus English has class-maintaining and class-changing derivation (Robins : 1980 : 193) as can be seen from the above examples.

English '-hood' is a class-maintaining derivational suffix as in 'nation + hood', 'man + hood', etc., which are equivalent to simple, underived nouns. '-ly' and '-li-' have at least three derivational functions with different underlying words : class-changing in forming adverbs from adjectives (quick, quickly), class - changing in forming adjectives from nouns (man, manly), and class-maintaining in deriving adjectives from simple adjectives (good, goodly; kind, kindly etc.) 'Manliness' shows two successive class- changing derivations :

man + li + ness  
 noun        adjective        noun

'Modernization' illustrates a different pair of class-changing derivations :

modern + iz + ation  
 adjective        verb        noun

Prefixes in English are all derivational, and examples of their use both as class-maintaining and class- changing derivations are :

form - noun are verb; reform - noun and verb  
 determine - verb; predetermine - verb,  
 new - adjective ; renew - verbs ;  
 prison - noun ; imprison - verb.

In Mizo there are various class-changing and class-maintaining derivations. Examples of some class-changing derivations are :

hria (to know) + t (to know) + na (knowledge)  
 verb        verb        noun

fimkhur (careful) + lo, loh (careless) + na (carelessness)  
 adjective        verb        noun

pe (give) + tu (giver)  
 verb        noun

Examples of some class-maintaining derivations are :

mipa (a man) + t (manly) + na (manhood)  
 noun        verb        noun

rin (faith) + awm (faithful) + lo, loh (unfaithful) + na  
 (unre-liableness)  
 noun        adjective        verb        noun

Root morphemes in English may be bound or free, and are potentially unlimited because new words are often being created and loan-words are being borrowed

from other languages. There are many words in English which are labelled monomorphemic words where affixes are added which serve to differentiate the paradigm forms of variable words containing a common root. There are also polymorphemic words which can occur with or without affixes, and are called compound words (Robins : 1980 : 158). Examples of free root morphemes, bound root morphemes and compound words are given below :

Free Roots

cat (-s, )  
 try (-s, ed, -ing)  
 tiger (-s, -ress)

Bound Roots

- ceive (in receive, perceive )  
 - tain (in chiftain, recur )  
 - cur (in recur, incur )

Compound Words

air - craft (-s)  
 black - board (-s)  
 pick - pocket (-s)

Prefixes, which are bound morphemes, are affixed before the roots (un-, per-, re-, etc as in 'undo',

'perform', recall' etc ) and they cannot occur independently. Suffixes (derivational and inflectional) like the plural formatives (-s, -en, etc.), verb paradigm affixes (-ing, -d, -ed, etc.), the comparative and superlative endings of adjectives (-er, est), and many other final position formatives (-ness, -less, -ment, etc) are affixed after the roots, or after the root-suffix. While inflectional suffixes have a very wide and regular distribution, derivational suffixes are of relatively limited occurrence. Derivational suffixes can be either followed by other derivational suffixes or inflectional suffixes, but inflectional suffixes, can be followed only by another inflexional suffix because they are terminal (Fromkin, Rodman : 1983 : 117, 127).

Root words in Mizo, on the other hand are all free, never bound. Affixes which are added to the roots may be free as well as bound, but root words are always free. Monomorphemic and polymorphemic words are abundant in Mizo. Some examples are :

Monomorphemic

ar (fowl)  
thing (wood, tree)  
ui (dog)

Polymorphemic

ram-ar (wildfowl)  
thing-tuai (young sapling)  
kawlphe-khawnvar (torch-light)

Suffixes like - te, -ho, -hote, -teho, zawn-zawn te, etc. are affixed to these words to denote plurality.

Some major affixes in Mizo are :

Agentive (stem - tu)

pu - tu that - tu veng - tu zawn - tu

Nominalizer (stem 2 - sak )

put - na thah - na ven - na zawn - na

Benefactive (stem 2 - sak)

put - sak that - sak ven - sak, zawn - sak

Causative (stem 1- ti, or stem 2 - tir )

ti - mu/ mut-tir, ti- chhuak / chhuah - tir, ti-chhia/  
chhiat-tir.

Mallofactives (stem 2 - san/khum/hnan) nuih-san/ nuih-khum/

thut- hnan

Associative (stem 2 - pui )

put - pui, that-pui, ven - pui, zawn - pui

Plural Suffixes (on pronominal affixes and demonstratives)

ka / kan, khi / khing.

#### 5.4 SYNTAX

Another notable difference between English and Mizo lies in their respective syntactic structures. The rules governing the way words are combined to form

sentences are not the same in Mizo and English. The fact that English sentences can be of the type 'the men eat', but not of the type 'men the eat' shows that words cannot be put together in just any order though they are collocationally appropriate. In addition to grammatical acceptability and intelligibility, the total meaning of a sentence may depend partly on word order, as these sentences : 'The tigers killed the hunter' and 'The hunter killed the tigers' (Robins : 1980 : 170).

5.4.1 Structures of English and Mizo

The structures of the two languages are very different from each other. Word order in English is Subject - Verb - Object as in

S	V	O
Ram	eats	mangoes
The cat	killed	the rat

Mizo does not follow the same word order. Word order in Mizo is Subject - Object - Verb for the third person, as in,

S	O	V
Raman	theihai	a ei
S	O	V
Zawhte in	Sazu	a that

and O-S-V for first and second person, as in

O	S	V
Theihai	ka	ei
O	S	V
Theihai	an	ei

Mizo is a verb-final language as can be seen from the SOV word order in the above examples. If the same word order is applied in English we will have

Ram mangoes eats  
 The cat the rat killed  
 Mangoes I eat  
 Mangoes they eat

Which are not acceptable.

When a sentence in English is turned into a question form, there is an inversion of word order,

Statement - Ram has eaten mangoes  
 NP, AUX Main Verb NP 2  
 and participle

Question - Has Ram eaten Mangoes ?  
 AUX. NP. M. Verb + NP 2  
 participle

In Mizo the same rule is not followed. There is no inversion of word order.



The basic sentences of English have a noun phrase subject followed by a verb and possibly followed by a noun-phrase object (Fromkin, Rodman: 1983 : 227).

<u>The man</u>	<u>is beating</u>	<u>the child</u>
NP <sub>1</sub>	VP	NP <sub>2</sub>

In English the noun phrase (NP) can be an article followed by a noun (N),

<u>The</u>	<u>man</u>	<u>is beating</u>	<u>the child</u>
Article	Noun	V.phrase	Article Noun

In Mizo the noun phrase NP is a noun followed by an article,

Mipa in naupang a vua

Man the child is beating,

the word order becomes NP NP<sub>2</sub> VP

The noun in English can be preceded by any number of adjectives in a noun phrase,

The big dog chased the rat

The big black dog chased the small rat, etc.

whereas in Mizo 'ui' (dog - noun) is followed by adjectives in a noun phrase,

i. Ui lian in sazu a um

Dog big the rat it/he chased

ii. Ui dum lian in sazu te a um

Dog black big the rate small it/he chased.

In English the verb phrase may consist of a  
verb alone,

The dog slept, (VP V) or it may be followed  
by a noun phrase,

The dog found the puppy

( VP V + NP ).

It can also be followed by a noun phrase followed by a  
prepositional phrase,

The boy put the bread in the cupboard

( VP V + NP + PP ).

The verb can be followed by a prepositional phrase,

The boy laughed at the puppy

(VP V + PP)

The above sentences in Mizo will be,

1. Ui a mu

Dog the slept

ii. Uin uinote a hmu  
The dog puppy the/it found

iii. Mipa naupang in chhuarah chhang adah  
Boy the in the cupboard bread he put

iv. Mipa naupang in uinote a nuih  
Boy the puppy he laughed at

The structures of English and Mizo given above are by no means exhaustive but merely illustrative of the word order differences in the two languages. These structural differences between English and Mizo may be said to constitute some of the major problems faced by Mizo learners.

#### 5.5. CONCLUSION

It has been felt that CA of English and Mizo can be a useful tool in the teaching-learning of English in Mizoram as it helps to pin-point the specific areas of similarities and differences between the two languages. From the comparison of the two languages in the present chapter we come to know that English and Mizo vary to a considerable extent in the areas of phonology, morphology and syntax. It is believed that differences in

these areas are responsible, to a certain extent, for the low proficiency level of Mizo learners in English. The influence of the mother tongue is believed to be felt in these areas of language operation. A diagnostic test is carried out and the results of the test are discussed in the next chapter, i.e. CHAPTER - VI to find out how far these differences between English and Mizo are responsible for many of the learning problems of Mizo students.

**CHAPTER - VI**

**A STUDY OF THE ERROR PATTERNS  
OF THE MIZO LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**

## CHAPTER - VI

## A STUDY OF THE ERROR PATTERNS OF THE MIZO LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

- 6.1 INTRODUCTION
- 6.2 NEED FOR THE TEST
- 6.3 THE CORPUS
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  - 6.6.9 Miscellaneous Errors
- 6.7 CORRELATION OF LEARNERS' ERRORS AND THE CONTRASTS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND MIZO
- 6.8 CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER - VI

A STUDY OF THE ERROR PATTERNS OF THE MIZO LEARNERS OF ENGLISH6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter an attempt has been made to compare and contrast the structures of English and Mizo to find out their points of similarities and differences. The contrastive analysis of the two languages reveals the fact that there are more differences than similarities between English and Mizo. The researcher believes that the analysis holds the key to the problems faced by Mizo learners of English. The insights received from the comparison of the two languages have been applied in this chapter to analyse the problems of Mizo learners in a proper perspective.

6.2 NEED FOR THE TEST

The objective behind the study was to investigate the problems of Mizo learners of English arising from the differences between the two languages. The informal surveys conducted amongst the teachers of English at the college level in Mizoram did not provide any specific solution to the problems usually faced by

the learners in the process of learning English. On the basis of these surveys an idea regarding the available infrastructure for teaching, the methods adopted, number of students and the issues of like nature was formed. However, hardly any idea about the quality and quantity of the learners' errors could be obtained. The curriculum planners, when interviewed, talked in particular about the need for exposure to good models of English. The teachers repeatedly pointed out that the learners were weak in spelling, pronunciation, and other areas of phonology, morphology and syntax especially in the areas of tense, articles and prepositions. However, no one could explain the exact nature of the problems. It was, therefore, difficult to come to any firm decision regarding the major areas of difficulty and their sources. Besides, it was also observed that no scientific study had been conducted earlier to look into the problems faced by learners of English.

Secondly, coming to any definite conclusion regarding the major problem areas on the basis of mere opinions would have been considered to be unscientific. It becomes quite obvious, therefore, that a study of the areas

of difficulty faced by learners is essential in order to draw any definite conclusion regarding the learners' low proficiency level in English. It was essential to know in detail the specific areas of problems and their nature. For example, one should know whether the problems was in the use of adverbials of time or the use of participle and infinitive forms of the verbs or in some other areas. One cannot accept easily that the learners had problems in all the areas of language use. In fact, we need information regarding the specific problems faced by the learners while using English.

At the same time, specific information was also required for tracing the source of the errors committed by the learners. It is to be remembered that linguistic problems in a target language also affect the learning process of the learners. A teacher may follow suitable teaching methods and use good teaching materials yet the ability to perform, on the part of the learners, may be low if he has difficulty in some specific areas of language operation. It is in this context that an analysis of the linguistic difficulties of the learners become useful. This analysis works almost as a pointer

to the problems the learner faces while trying to use the target language. Contrastive analysis comes very handy for the classroom teacher. The language teacher cannot indulge in the luxury of the 'ours not to reason why' attitude since his role as monitor and assessor of learners' performance is to know why certain errors are committed. The language teacher has to see if particular attested errors are explicable in terms of  $L_1$  interference. If no  $L_1$  structure can be found that the structure of the errors seem to be a reflection of, then he has to start the long job of finding some cause other than  $L_1$  transfer. Much of the problem would be solved if the  $L_1$  suggests the obvious source of the errors (James : 1980 : 148-49).

It was felt that a study of the linguistic difficulties of the learners directly through a diagnostic test could be of great help and an effort in the right direction.

### 6.3 THE CORPUS

It is often difficult to come to any decision with regard to the size and level of the corpus especially in a place like Mizoram. It often becomes difficult for a researcher to reach out to colleges situa-

ted in remote areas of the state. The choice of the corpus, therefore, had to be limited to the learners who could be easily available. The test was conducted in 5 colleges of Aizawl area. The table below gives the details regarding these colleges and the number of learners surveyed for the test.

Table - I

Name of College	Location	Urban/Rural	No. of students surveyed
Hrangbana College	Aizawl	Urban	60
Aizawl Govt. College	Aizawl	Urban	60
Govt. Zirtiri Women's College	Aizawl	Urban	60
Aizawl North College	Aizawl	Urban	60
Aizawl West College	Aizawl	Urban	60
TOTAL			300

Table showing description of Colleges visited.

The choice regarding the level of the corpus at Pre-University II Yr. level was deliberate. The

choice was made taking into account various factors. The learners at this level had 10 years of English teaching-learning behind them at the school and college level. From the Pre-University level the medium of instruction is English and examinations are conducted by the University. It was felt that this was a good opportunity to evaluate the proficiency of the learners after having undergone the language teaching programme prescribed by the University for two years. It would give us an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the syllabus as well.

The study was conducted during the period of December - April 1993-94, a period when the teaching work in the colleges is over and the learners were preparing for their final examinations conducted by the University.

For most of the students in Mizoram the Pre-University stage is the terminal point of their educational career. Many of them either go for technical education or seek jobs at the completion of this stage.

No attempt to deliberately select a corpus on the basis of age was done and the age of the

corpus varied to an extent ranging from 16 years to 22 years. Many of these students come from various parts of the state from Mizo medium schools, though they had studied English for at least 3 years in the schools. The corpus consists of a mixture of students with Mizo and English medium school backgrounds. 10 students had their schooling outside Mizoram.

It was quite evident that except for studying in the same class and sharing the same mother tongue, there was little homogeneity amongst the students. In matters of their proficiency in English and background, they perhaps did not have much in common. This, however, was unavoidable as we had to administer the test on an identifiable group of students and having done that there was no scope for selecting some and rejecting others.

### 6.3.1 Common Problems of the Learners

In Mizoram the learners come to the Pre-University classes after studying English for about 8 years in the school. In the vernacular medium schools English is taught for 6 periods a week and other subjects are taught through the medium of Mizo. It has been observed that except for a few convent schools in the state, even in the

so-called English medium schools more than 60 percent of the classroom interaction takes place in Mizo which naturally makes the learners poor communicators in English. In the college, the medium of instruction is English. Often the teachers have to use the mother tongue to explain certain passages. Examinations are conducted in English and students have to give their answers in English which causes problems for the students as their proficiency level in the language is very low. There is a vast difference between the expected proficiency at the stage of learning in the school and the real proficiency observed at the point of entering the college at the Pre-University level. At the school level emphasis is more on the language, and about sixty percent of the emphasis is on grammar and composition items like correction of sentences, essays, letters and prepositions. The comprehension part is limited to some essays, short stories and poems, from which mostly direct comprehension questions are asked. However, at the college level language portion has only 20 percent of the total marks and only a few items are included in it : essay, writing, articles, prepositions and correction of sentences.

It was found that there was hardly any remedial measures carried out for the learners during the normal teaching hours. Activities in the classrooms were mostly confined to dictating notes, paraphrasing lessons and occasional homework. There was little awareness regarding the real problems faced by learners of English.

#### 6.4 DESIGN OF THE TEST

For the analysis of the difficulties of the learners, two approaches were available to us. One was to test the learners in all the major areas of language use individually and the other was to analyse the free hand compositions of the learners and locate the errors in them. The first approach was not adopted as it would have given information regarding the knowledge of the learners about the rules of language operation but would not have provided information regarding the ability of the learners to use the language for communication. The second approach was believed to give an opportunity to evaluate the capacity of the learners in using English to express themselves which was considered to be of importance. The skills of 'expressive' performance, as Pit

Corder observes, offers the only direct source about the learners' 'transitional competence' (1974 : 124). The various states of the learners in the process of learning English could be measured only through an analysis of 'the expressive performance' of the learners. This approach also gave us an opportunity to observe the errors and think in terms of remedial measures.

In order to get a sample of the expressive performance of the learners it was considered advisable to make the learners write on a particular subject in English. It was believed that a free hand composition would serve our purpose in evaluating the errors that learners commit. Pathak observes,

the writing of an essay undertaken with a high degree of personal engagement or an oral conversation carried on in a lively manner is most likely to bring the learners' errors to the fore. Probably no data other than the one found from free hand composition would be better for analysis of errors made by a relatively homogenous group (1988 : 60).

The group that was in our hand could be called a homogenous group as they share a common mother tongue. Pit Corder defines a homogenous group where

the members have the same mother tongue and are educationally, socially and intellectually matched (1974 : 125)

The group we have in hand could be regarded for all practical purposes as a homogenous group, and the choice of free hand composition seemed to be the most appropriate and practical approach towards the evaluation of the learners' errors.

It has often been observed that the performance of the learners in the target language is affected adversely if the subject of their task is very difficult. The topic chosen was a descriptive one and within the experience of all the learners. The intention was to introduce a topic which would generate some amount of personal involvement in them and it was expected that they would come out with a fairly long essay in English so that their areas of difficulty could be observed and analysed. It was expected that the essay would have 300 words on an average, a size long enough to provoke the learners to use the language freely so as to reveal the areas of difficulty faced by them in English.

At the same time, it was not that we were not aware that the method generally adopted for analysing errors from a free hand composition was not absolutely fool-proof. One of the limitations of the free hand essay is that the learner has a tendency of trying to avoid the areas of language where he is not very confident. This approach could thus be called error-avoiding rather than error-provoking. In spite of this limitation this approach was felt to be a useful one because we had hardly any other model to follow to evaluate the students' proficiency. After 10 years of learning English the learners presumably should have enough knowledge regarding the rules of language operation. The only problem lay with the application of those rules in actual language use and for this the free-hand composition appeared to be a suitable one.

We were also aware that there was little scope of bringing about any change in the University syllabus in English immediately. All that could be aimed at was to try and help the learners to become better users of the language and for this an analysis of their writing skills was necessary.

The essay has another advantage. It gives us an opportunity to test their skills in inter-sentence connections in a discourse. It has been observed that learners often failed to write well connected discourse and often one sentence does not lead to another sentence. For the evaluation of this aspect of their competence an essay or connected discourse was thought to be a suitable approach.

It was felt that mistakes in respect of lexis and structures could be collected and examined and contrastive analysis could be applied to them. It is possible for a teacher through the examination of mistakes committed by learners to enter more fully into the environment of teaching and put on as it were his pupils, "linguistic spectacles" (Alam : 1983 : 83). This is what North (1979) calls the linguistics of errors. The attempt is to analyse all forms of deviant language behaviour. As we know, the new branch is concerned with the errors arising from different sources and causes. The diagnostic test was thus an attempt to locate and analyse the problems faced by the learners in the process of communicating in English.

#### 6.4.1 Methodology Adopted

The learners were made to sit in a classroom and asked to complete the essay in about 45 minutes, the duration of a normal period. Each participant was asked to write his or her name on the response sheet and the name of the college. This was necessary for identifying the place and the participant. The participants were generally expected to complete the essay in about 2 fool-scape sheets, i.e. about 350 words in normal handwriting.

It was observed that all the 300 learners who participated in the diagnostic test completed their assignments in the allotted time. The average length of the essays was calculated as 282 words. This was less than our expectation of about 300 words but it was considered to be sufficient as the learners rarely write longer essays even in their university examinations. No instance of copying from each other during the test was observed, nor did they appear to be reproducing essays from bazaar notes learnt by rote. The participants were found to use their own language in the essay.

## 6.5 ANALYSIS OF RESPONSE

Once the data was collected the task at hand was the recognition of errors and their qualitative and linguistic classification. Also, a statement regarding the quantitative frequency of the different types of errors was needed. It was also essential to evaluate the gravity of each type of errors from a communicative and pedagogic point of view. Finally, an attempt at explaining the source of the error was also considered necessary with a view to determine their treatment and eradication. Each of these steps had to be undertaken very carefully.

Probably the most important part of the exercise was the method adopted for evaluating the essays of the learners. A number of procedures have been followed by other researcher. Nickel (1973) has, for example, dealt with the problem of evaluation of seriousness of errors in detail. Carl James (1974 : 3-9) has proposed a method of assesment based on the number and nature of the rules transgressed. He distinguishes the two by referring them as local and global errors respectively. Global errors involve deviation from the overall sentence structure,

whereas local errors affect the structures of the constituents of the sentence. According to Johansson (1975), error gravity should be evaluated in terms of efficiency of communication, frequency, generality and comprehensibility. Some other scholars like Lindell (1973), James (1977), Olsson (1973) have recommended measurement of error gravity on the basis of the degree of tolerance extended to it by the native speakers or language teachers.

The traditional classification of deviations into errors of omission, substitution and word order displacement is too superficial to be of benefit to the learner or the teacher (Pathak : 1988). Hence, in this study we have followed Pit Corder's (1973) suggestion for classification of errors in terms of 'level' and 'type' which we felt was sufficiently systematic. Also, it incorporates systems of identification or specification such as tense, number, aspect etc.

#### 6.3.1 Evaluation of the Essays

The procedure adopted for the analysis was to mark out the errors on the response sheet itself.

Then in the margin the error type was noted like 'Article', Preposition, Tense etc. This procedure was adopted for convenience. In the classification of errors these were tabulated under broad categories like 'Tense', 'Vocabulary', 'Spelling' etc. It was thought that detailed classification of errors would be of special help to us in attempting a Contrastive Analysis of the two languages.

After the scripts had been evaluated it was found that the learners had committed a total of 5820 errors. These errors were classified under different categories. The error per learner average worked out to be 19.4.

#### 6.5.2 The Types of Errors

The errors committed by the learners have been classified into the following error types.

- i. Errors in Verb Form and Pattern
- ii. Errors in Tense
- iii. Errors in Preposition
- iv. Errors in use of Articles

- v. Errors in Syntax
- vi. Errors in Lexis
- vii. Errors in Spelling
- viii. Miscellaneous Errors.

Besides these, some errors were observed in the use of pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, capital letters etc., These errors did not occur very frequently and, therefore, they have been listed under 'miscellaneous'. Some of the errors observed in the essays were perhaps lapses e.g. small letters were used where capital letters should be used, 'sunday' was written with a small 's'. Errors of these type were perhaps committed as a result of haste and carelessness and they cannot be termed as areas of difficulty in the strict sense of the term. In order to conclude that a particular area is causing difficulty the error should occur frequently. Pit Corder (1974 : 125) too has pointed out that to conclude that a learner is having difficulty in a particular area the regular occurrence of an error is necessary. These errors of random nature have, therefore, been classified under 'miscellaneous'. The types of errors and their number can be seen in the table given below.

Table - 2

<u>Area of Error</u>	<u>No. of Error</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
i. Verb form and pattern	1050	18.04 %
ii. Tense	694	11.92 %
iii. Preposition	635	10.92 %
iv. Articles	667	11.47 %
v. Syntax	871	14.97 %
vi. Lexis	786	13.60 %
vii. Spelling®	614	10.55 %
viii. Miscellaneous	503	8.65 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>5820</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Types of Errors and their distribution

Table - 3

<u>Error Types</u>	<u>Total number of errors</u>
Verb form and pattern	225
Tense	143
Preposition	138
Article	152
Syntax	173
Lexis	164
Spelling	110
Miscellaneous Errors	93
<b>Total number of errors</b>	<b>1198</b>

Table showing the list of errors of the students  
of Hrangbana College, Aizawl.

Table - 4

<u>Error Types</u>	<u>Total number of Errors</u>
Verb form and Pattern	202
Tense	145
Preposition	136
Article	149
Syntax	178
Lexis	155
Spelling	118
<hr/>	
Total number of errors	1190
<hr/>	

Table showing the list of errors of the students of  
Government Aizawl College, Aizawl.

Table - 9

<u>Error Types</u>	<u>Total number of errors</u>
Verb form and Pattern	199
Tense	131
Preposition	106
Article	104
Syntax	162
Lexis	147
Spelling	126
Miscellaneous errors	88
<hr/>	
Total number of errors	1063
<hr/>	

Table showing the list of errors of the students of  
Zirtiri Women's College, Aizawl.

Table - 6

<u>ERROR TYPES</u>	<u>Total number of errors</u>
Verb form and Pattern	203
Tense	149
Preposition	136
Article	
Syntax	173
Lexis	160
Spelling	117
Miscellaneous	109
<hr/>	
Total number of errors	1192
<hr/>	

Table showing the list of errors of the students of  
Aizawl North College, Aizawl.

Table - 7

<u>Error Types</u>	<u>Total number of errors</u>
Verb form and Pattern	214
Tense	137
Preposition	121
Article	119
Syntax	177
Lexis	162
Spelling	143
Miscellaneous errors	104
<hr/>	
Total number of errors	1117
<hr/>	

Table showing the list of errors of the students  
of Aizawi West College, Aizawi.

Table - 8

<u>Error Types</u>	<u>No.of Errors</u>	<u>Percentage of Errors</u>
Verb form and Pattern	1050	18.04 %
Tense	694	11.92 %
Preposition	635	10.92 %
Article	667	11.47 %
Syntax	871	14.97 %
Lexis	786	13.60 %
Spelling	614	10.55 %
Miscellaneous	503	8.65 %
<b>Total number of Errors</b>	<b>5820</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table showing the total number of errors per error type and the frequency of errors.

Table - 9

Name of the College	No. of students	No. of errors	Student wise of errors
Hrangbana College	60	1198	19.96 %
Aizawl Govt. College	60	1190	18.83 %
Zirtiri Women's College	60	1063	17.71 %
Aizawl North College	60	1192	19.86 %
Aizawl West College	60	1177	19.61 %
Total	300	5820	100 %

Table showing number of students, number of errors and student-wise percentage of errors

The average number of errors per college was 1164 and the number of errors per student was 19.4. The result showed a very low level of proficiency. The students of Hrangbana College committed the highest number of errors. The students of Zirtiri Women's College committed the lowest

number of errors. The difference between these two colleges is 135. Aizawl North College committed the second highest number of errors followed by Govt. Aizawl College. The second lowest number of errors were committed by the students of Aizawl West College. There was negligible difference between the errors committed by students in these five colleges. It needs to be mentioned here that after school education, quite a good number of good students go out of the state for higher education. Out of the rest better students prefer to join science or Commerce stream while the rest enrolled in Arts. On the basis of the total number of errors made by the corpus the percentage and relative frequency of errors were worked out. Table 10 shows the relative frequency of errors and Table 11 shows the college-wise classification of errors.

Table - 10

Error Type	Hrangbana College	Govt. Al-zawl College	Zirtiri Women's College	Alzawl North College	Alzawl West College	Average Frequency
Verb form & pattern	18.78	16.98	18.71	17.03	19.15	18.81
Tense	11.93	12.18	12.32	12.05	12.26	10.19
Preposition	11.51	11.42	9.97	11.49	10.83	11.44
Article	12.68	12.52	9.78	12.16	10.65	11.55
Syntax	14.35	14.11	15.23	14.51	15.84	14.88
Lexis	13.69	13.02	13.82	13.42	14.05	13.60
Spelling	9.18	9.91	11.85	9.81	12.08	10.56
Miscellaneous error	7.76	8.99	8.27	9.14	9.31	8.69
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table showing relative frequency of error types in all five colleges.

Table - 11

ERROR Type	Hrangbana College		Govt. Aizawl College		Zirtiri Women's College		Aizawl North College		Aizawl West College	
	No. of Errors	No. of %	No. of Errors	No. of %	No. of Errors	No. of %	No. of Errors	No. of %	No. of Errors	No. of %
Verb Fors & Pattern	225	18.78	202	16.98	199	18.71	203	17.93	214	19.15
Tense	143	11.93	145	12.18	131	12.32	149	12.65	137	12.26
Preposition	138	11.51	136	11.42	106	9.97	136	11.49	121	10.83
Article	152	12.60	149	12.52	104	9.78	145	12.16	119	10.65
Syntax	173	14.35	178	14.11	162	15.23	173	14.51	177	15.84
Lexis	164	13.69	155	13.02	147	13.82	160	13.42	162	14.05
Spelling	110	9.18	118	9.91	126	11.85	117	9.81	143	12.08
Miscellaneous error	93	7.76	107	8.99	88	8.27	109	9.14	104	9.31
	1198	100	1190	100	1063	100	1192	100	1117	100

Table showing college-wise error types and their frequency.

As is shown in Table - 8, the maximum number of errors were made by our corpus in the realm of verb form and pattern, i.e. 18.04 % . This was followed by syntax and lexis respectively being 14.97 % and 13.60 %.

## 6.6 ANALYSIS OF ERROR PATTERNS

### 6.6.1 Errors in Verb Form and Pattern

The learners committed a total of 1050 or 18.04 % errors in this area. This happened to be the largest single area posing problem for the learners. These errors in verb form and pattern were important as they affected the meaning of sentences, i.e. the thought expressed in the sentences, thus, changing the time and aspect of a particular happening. These errors have been further sub-categorized into the following areas :

- i. ignorance about the proper form of a verb
- ii. confusion regarding the use of appropriate form of a verb in appropriate tense and aspect.
- iii. problems regarding subject-verb coordination
- iv. use of two different tenses or tense forms in the same sentence.

The errors in the first category were related to the use of improper form of a verb in its tense and aspect. For examples, 'go' became 'good', 'went' 'wented'. In the second category there are errors like using the present tense form of a verb in place of its past tense form, e.g. 'go' instead of 'went'. The third category of errors arose out of the problem of subject-verb coordination. Here there was no proper matching between subject, verb and object in terms of person and number, e.g. 'They does it', 'I has done it', etc. The use of the verb form under the fourth category was inappropriate in the sense that two verb forms were used in the same sentence, e.g. 'We went to church and were singing'. Many of the error like 'We had celebrate Christmas during December', 'I was ill and could not went to Delhi', 'I had ate my dinner', 'We at last reach December', etc. were committed which may be attributed to the learners' ignorance of the proper forms of verbs and their application, in different tenses in relation to person and number. The learners also had limited idea regarding the use of infinitives, participles and gerund. Many sentences like 'After

walking 2 kilometres it was very nice to relaxing and sitting', 'My uncle is very age' 'I run and I catch him smoke' etc have been written by the learners.

The learners also used wrong verb forms because of their confusion about the appropriateness, e.g. the use of present tense forms for past tense or past participle forms of verbs or past tense form for the present tense form, such as, 'We start singing at eight and last till ten', 'We all had drink coke and danced happily', 'When morning came I get up and drink tea' etc.

In many of the sentences there was no co-ordination between subject and verb. For example, there are many sentences like 'They does not go to college', 'some students goes to the field', 'I go to market and come back very late', 'Nobody want to spent vacation in home' etc. It has been observed that learners often lose track of subject-verb coordination when writing complex sentences.

It was felt that the learners had been exposed to too many verb forms in quick succession without understanding the system or the rules of their operation. When an attempt at contrastive analysis was made to evaluate whether the influence of the mother-tongue of the learners causes this type of errors, it was found that the verb forms in English and Mizo are very different. The Mizo verbs do not change their form with the change of person or number of the subject whereas the English verbs change their forms. Besides, in Mizo, the number and person of the subject is indicated by a pronoun which is always present before the verb. This may account for the many errors that learners commit in the area of verb form and pattern. The need of the hour, therefore, is acquainting the learners in proper sentence structures and use of the appropriate verb forms in them.

#### 6.6.2 Errors in Tense

The learners committed a total of 694 or 11.92 % errors. The errors in this area related to the use of improper tense. Since the topic of the essay was

'The Most Memorable Day of my Life ', it was expected that most of the sentences would be written in the past tense. Errors in different aspects of the past tense were expected but not substitution between past and present . Sentences like the following were observed. 'Last year I have a most memorable day. I went to spent weekend in the countrys' 'We make plan for holiday and when it is come we are happy', ' I was excite when I pass matric', 'My father buy me new shoes when I pass matric' 'I get up early morning and took tea', etc. It was evident from the above examples that the learners were confused between the tense to be used for habitual action and action done in the past. There were no instances of using future tense for the present or past tenses. Perhaps the subject matter of the essay gave little opportunity for the use of future tense.

The basic problem seemed to be that the learners lost track of the tense while writing longer sentences. The learners knew that the tense of a verb depended on the time or period being referred to, but they failed to grasp the fact that over and above that there was also a necessity of making all the verbs in the sentence agree with each other. They failed to grasp the important principle that in a single sentence, two

different tenses should not be used.

When contrasted with English the rules governing the use of tenses in Mizo language are comparatively easy. The language permits the use of two different tenses in the same sentence. The verb form in Mizo does not undergo any change with the change of tense. The tense of the verb is understood in terms of the context of use. Sometimes suffixes like 'thin' or 'tawh' are used with the verb in Mizo to put a kind of emphasis on the past tense. However, a sentence indicating past tense is not incorrect even if these suffixes are not added to the verb. Mizo learners, therefore, often show a tendency of not being able to use the English tense forms correctly. The rules of the learners' mother tongue seemed to interfere with their use of tense in English. They often forget that the verb in English changes its form with the change of tense and aspect.

As far as the present study is concerned one could safely conclude that mother tongue interference was one of the ~~important~~ important factors for errors in substitution of one tense for another and use of two different tenses in a single sentence.

The problem of improper internalization was also responsible for the occurrence of errors in this area, but we may safely conclude that about 50% of the errors were due to mother tongue interference.

### 6.6.3 Errors in Preposition

One of the major areas of errors was in the preposition numbering a total of 635 or 10.92 % Learners often get confused about the correct use of the preposition. An analysis of the errors in this area showed that the errors could be classified in the following three categories :

- i. substitution of suitable preposition
- ii. Addition of preposition where not required
- iii. Omission of preposition where required.

In the first category of errors in prepositions these deviations were placed which occurred as a result of confusion in the minds of the learners regarding the most appropriate preposition to be used. That is, where the learners had used 'in' for 'at' or 'for' for 'of' and the like. The following sentences demonstrate some of the wrong use of the prepositions :

'Our exams finish on December'

'He live at a village'

'He put the present at the table'

'The movie continued until two O'clock'

'They lived inside a good house'

'I had gone since two days'

'We share it among myself and Liana'

'We went in our house'

It appeared that the learners were not very clear about the functions of the prepositions in a sentence. As they did not understand the difference between the use of 'in' and 'into', they substituted one for the other. The same pattern was also followed in the case of 'to', 'of' 'on'. To a Mizo learners, 'to' is usually a directional preposition. When used in this sense, there were few errors. However, errors were committed when 'to' was used in other situations. Similarly, they had used 'of' correctly when it denoted possession, but in other cases it was used incorrectly.

Similarly, the prepositions 'with', 'between', 'among' etc. are also used incorrectly. The learners were also found to have problems with prepositions like 'through', 'across', 'into', 'upto', 'on' etc.

The use of prepositions where they are not required were also observed in the compositions of the learners. The errors in this area, however, were comparatively few in number. There were two broad sub-categories of errors under this head. Firstly, addition of prepositions and secondly, misplaced prepositions. Examples of these types are :

'He came for to see me'

'They sat at between us'

'We went to the hall for to see them'

'I visited to my friends' place'

Omissions of prepositions occurred in the following sentences :

'They went church on sunday'

'We all went train'

'I saw it behind'

'I waited Liana to tell him'

The omission of prepositions in such cases, though not serious, substantially affected communication.

One major source of errors in prepositions may be attributed to the influence of the learners' mother

tongue. The system of prepositions in Mizo is very expansive and there are quite a large number of prepositions. Most of these have singular types of functions and mainly one shade of meaning. These are found to affect the learners' use of English prepositions having multiple functions. This perhaps explains the learners' use of 'to', 'for' and 'of' in different environments. However, the interference of the mother tongue cannot be the only factor in the errors of substitution because no uniform substitution emerged from the essays of the learners.

The system of prepositions in Mizo functions almost like that of English, with very strict rules regarding their use and placement. Hence the errors of omission can hardly be traced to the interference of the mother tongue. The prepositions in Mizo are generally placed after the verb, noun, adjective or the adverb.

The mother tongue, though a major source of errors, cannot be said to be the only cause of problems for learners in this area. It is an easy guess that the teaching of the prepositions had been done with the help of only limited number of sentences with similar shades of meaning. When the sentences carried familiar statements there were few errors.

For remedying the errors of preposition, the learners require intensive pattern practice drills in the use of prepositions.

#### 6.6.4 Errors in the use of Articles

The number of errors committed by the learners in the area of articles amounted to 667 or 11.47% of the total errors. Articles were often omitted where required and inserted where they were not required. The main problem with the learners was regarding the place where an article was necessary and where it was not. Learners were found to commit three error types in this area, namely,

- i. errors of Omission
- ii. errors of Addition
- iii. errors of substitution

A number of instances where the articles have been omitted were found in the learners' compositions. Quite obviously, the learners had not been able to understand the necessity of an article, definite or indefinite, before an adjective or a noun. To most of them an article

was to be used only for the purpose of specifying something of importance. Some examples of this type of error are :

'We went to bank'

'He bought new dress'

'I have most memorable day'

'I went to picnic spot'.

The omissions of 'a' and 'the' were very much pronounced in the composition of the learners. The necessity of using these articles in their proper places seemed to be ignored because of the fact that either their use or lack of them did not change the meaning of the sentences for the learners.

The learners also inserted the definite and indefinite articles in their sentences where they were not required. They had a tendency to insert the article 'the' before proper nouns like, 'The Mizoram is a small place', before abstract nouns like 'God had the wisdom', and before common nouns like, 'The paradise is where good people go', etc. The learners also had a tendency to insert the articles 'a' and 'an' where they were not required, such

as, 'I spent a christmas with them', 'It was an precious gift', 'The vacation is a very useful to us', etc.

It was found that the indefinite articles 'a' and 'an' were substituted for each other like 'He is a honest man', 'I waited for a hour', 'There is an University', etc. Where the article 'the' should be used, learners were also found to use 'a' as in 'Winter vacation is a best time in a year', 'He was a best player', etc.

It was evident from the study that mother tongue interference was the major source of errors in the area of the article. In this context Owen Thomas has observed that 'some speakers for whom English is a second language have considerable difficulty with the English determiner system particularly when their own language lacks article' (1970 : 87). This is true in case of Mizo learners because like most other Indian languages, Mizo does not have any article. This may account for the errors in articles committed by the learners. Learners go in for a translation of their thoughts largely in a literal style and commit errors. Had the articles carried some meaning, the students would not have committed such large number of errors. However, articles are devoid of any meaning and this meaning-

lessness also may be responsible for many errors (Alam : 1983 : 57).

However, if closely examined, it could not be said that articles do not have their grammatical importance. In order to remedy the errors careful attention should be paid to the teaching of articles both at school and college level. Learners should be properly made to understand the significance of the articles and the distinction be pointed out that the correct use of articles in English is the mark of proficiency in the language. Thus it may be safely concluded that mother tongue interference is responsible for the Mizo learners' errors in the use of articles in English.

#### 6.6.5 Errors in syntax

The number of errors committed by the learners in this area amounted to 871 or 14.97 % . Most of the errors in this area were related to inappropriate placement of words in a sentence and wrong construction of sentences. Inability to generate proper form of a word like the use of singular and plural, omissions in the form of conjunc-

tions and verbs, errors of concord between subject and object along with wrong uses of nouns and pronouns and direct and indirect forms of sentences etc. were the causes of incorrect syntactic forms. The errors as a whole in this area are serious in the sense that they often affect the process of communication and alter the meaning of a sentence. Therefore, they need serious attention. Some examples of errors in syntax may be given below :

' I never forget the first day of entered the college. I never dream that day before all. At first, I mean all the students are very gentle, the life of students also more standard then the school day '.

' My first day in college seems to be a memorable day. My friends I like them as they are my type who takes their studies seriously'.

' This day is very important because Jesus saved from the death all human being and all things'.

' The day is excitement because  
most memorable day as my birthday'.

' I myself regarded as a men who live over  
ordinary people that thinking make me to  
live for standard'.

' I was so happied for the worldly thing  
but actual happy was not there in this time'.

From these examples it was clear that the learners were ignorant of the rules of syntax. Several important constituents of a sentence were omitted by many learners so that it was difficult to understand the meaning conveyed. The omissions of major constituents in such sentences affected the meaning of the sentences. This could be attributed to the learners' carelessness and haste and mostly due to their ignorance of the English sentence structure.

Lack of concord between nouns and their pronouns in terms of person, number and direct and indirect objects was another area of the learners' errors. Interrogative sentences were also written like affirmative sentences,

e.g. 'who like not college life?'. 'It was my memorable day?' etc.

The influence of the mother tongue, it appeared, had provoked errors in the area of syntax. The sentence structure in Mizo is totally different from English. The sentence structure in English follows the pattern of S-V-O, whereas in Mizo, it is O-S-V for first and second person and S-O-V for the third person. These differences in the language structure led to the formation of sentences like,

'When the night coming I had no sleep',

'Badminton I played in the morning',

'In this time I am 19 years old',

'My friend birthday present send to me',

'Snapshots we take there', etc. It must

be mentioned in this context that errors of this type were not many. However, the learners had problems while writing long and complex sentences having multiple objects.

The confusion arising out of incorrect tense forms in the learners' writings to some extent would be attributed to the influence of the mother tongue. This aspect has already been discussed in 6.6.2. The learners

did not understand how the semantic categories of past and present operate in English. Thus, language transfer took place because of the inadequate understanding of the learners of the English language.

#### 6.6.6 Errors in Lexis

Errors in lexis can also be called errors of vocabulary because inappropriate words were used while expressing ideas. Words have semantic and syntactic properties. It is possible to use a word which may be correct syntactically but semantically wrong or inappropriate. A word may also be incorrect both syntactically and semantically. If it is syntactically correct but inappropriate in the context, then it is a lexical error. One has to make a plausible interpretation to ascertain if it is exactly a lexical error (Corder : 1975 : 133).

The lexical errors committed by the learners amounted to 786 or 13.60% of the total errors. It was felt that the learners had limited vocabulary at their command, so that, when it came to use an exact word in a given context, it was difficult for them to find the appropriate word. In place of noun, the learners used adjectives or adverbs as

substitutes, Examples of some lexical errors committed by the learners are :

'I used to habit singing'

'I was told I saw the highest mark in History'

'I remember the holy birthday of Jesus Christ'

'So the time and year was long long ago, we reached the year of 1993.

'Everymen was developed in bad habit'

'But our Lord did not want to envy nobody'

It was evident that, apart from the interference of the mother tongue, such errors occur due to the ignorance of the learners as well as due to their limited vocabulary. An instance of mother tongue interference may be seen in the sentence 'I was told I saw the highest mark in History'. The equivalent of the verb 'saw' in Mizo is 'hmu' which also means the English 'obtain', 'acquire', 'meet', 'agree' etc. This means that learners often make mistakes in using the verb 'see'/'saw' when referring to things they obtain, acquire, or meet etc. The learners appeared to be confused regarding the different shades of meanings of words in different contexts. Many of the lexical errors committed by the learners may be attributed to the fact that the Mizo language has a rather limited vocabulary while English

has unlimited vocabulary and learners failed to grasp the different shades of meaning attached to words in different contexts. The learners, therefore, needed to be drilled in the use of common words and their appropriate use in different contexts along with their different derivatives.

#### 6.6.7 Errors in spelling

The learners committed frequent errors in spelling. The number of errors committed in this area amounted to 614 or 10.55% of the total errors. The errors in spelling could be attributed to two main reasons :

- i. influence of pronunciation and
- ii. conventions of English spelling  
(Corder : 1975 : 138).

The first was due to mother tongue influence. The Mizo language may be said to have a phonetic spelling system and words are pronounced exactly as they are written. Many of the spelling errors committed by the learners may be attributed to the difference in the spelling systems of the two languages. As a result they wrote 'christmas', 'sigret' for 'cigarette', 'wald' for 'world', etc.

In the latter case, the learners, perhaps could not follow the conventions of English spelling system which 'has many peculiarities' (Wardhaugh : 1977 : 196). For example, they wrote the plural form of a noun ending with 'f' or 'ef' only adding 's' instead of 'ves' as in 'ourselves' written as 'ourselfs', 'knives' as 'knifes' etc, similarly, when '-ing' was added to a verb ending with 'e', they wrote 'rideing', 'guideing' etc. instead of 'riding' and 'guiding'. The learners also had problems while using words with double consonants or double vowels and they wrote 'swiming' instead of 'swimming', 'slipy' instead of 'sleepy' etc.

The study revealed that vowels formed a major source of problems for the learners. As Alam has observed, 'Indian speakers of English do not place accent correctly and accent is the distinctive character of a vowel' (1983 : 38). Another source of confusion to learners may also be attributed to silent letters of English words (ibid. p. 36,46).

Spelling errors have been a major problem with second language learners of English, especially for

Indian learners. In English, every word, according to Vallins, is a law unto itself (1954 : 304). English words are spelt in a large number of different ways which cause infinite difficulty for the learners. Therefore, the influence of the mother tongue cannot be said to constitute the major source of problem for learners in this area because the major source comes from the conventions of English spelling system.

Sufficient spelling drills in the classroom of the difficult words can be of great help to the learners. Habits of correct pronunciation should also be imbibed in the learners. They should be properly drilled in the plural and past form of words which do not follow the normal conventions or are exceptions.

#### 6.6.8 Impact of Pronunciation on spelling

It has been mentioned earlier that the learners have inadequate opportunities for exposure to good models of English. As a result, they often pick up unacceptable pronunciations of words. Moreover, due to exposure to not so good models of English they are often unable to distinguish between many minimal pairs like /k/ and /g/, /dz/

and /ʒ/, /ʒ/ and /d/, /d/ and /f/ and the like.

These confusions manifest themselves in the form of errors in spelling. The wrong pronunciations produced errors in spelling like 'join' being spelled as 'zoin', 'beg' as 'bek' etc. It was observed that quite often Mizo learners could not differentiate /dʒ/ and /ʒ/ and most of the time both were pronounced as /z/.

It was also observed that most of the time learners pronounced both /s/ and /ʃ/ as /s/. It is a common thing to hear /ʃip/ being pronounced as /sip/. This reflected itself in the spellings also. So 'shower' was spelled as 'sower', 'national' as 'nasional', and so on.

It was also observed that learners were often unable to distinguish the vowels /æ/ and /ə/ and sometimes /æ/ and /e/. The two vowels /æ/ and /ə/ are absent in Mizo and learners were often observed to pronounce (bad' as 'bed', 'girl' as 'gal'. They were also found to have problems with diphthongs. Though vowel clusters are very much a part of the Mizo language, learners often face problems in pronouncing diphthongs in English. In most cases they are either substituted by another vowel, a cluster of vowels, or another diphthong. For example,

/ei/ is often pronounced as /e/, /eə/ as /e/ or /ea/, and /uə/ is often pronounced as /ua/. It was apparent that most of the learners had been exposed to poor models of English and this in turn had influenced their ability to spell and pronounce words in English properly.

It was also observed that most of the learners associated a particular alphabet with a particular type of pronunciation. In English, however, the 26 alphabets represent 44 phonemes of the language. Quite obviously the same alphabets are used for a variety of sounds. For example, 'c' represents /k/ and /s/, 'a' is used for sounds like /ə/, /æ/, /e/. This produced confusions in the minds of the learners. They usually came to associate a particular alphabet with a particular type of pronunciation. When the alphabet to be used in a word coincided with their concept of spelling and pronunciation there were no errors. The errors started showing up when the alphabet did not coincide with their conception of the sound represented by it.

The use of the alphabet 'e' at the end of some words like 'bake' 'bite', 'stove' etc. which is not

very clearly reflected in the pronunciation of the words also produced errors. Alphabets which were not pronounced were often omitted.

#### 6.6.9 Miscellaneous Errors

Errors in this area amounted to 503 or 8.65% of the total number of errors committed by the learners. Many of the learners wrote proper names with small initial letters, started their sentences with small letters and used capital letters where they were not required. For example, they wrote : 'I am lucky because i have my Parents', 'when i go to visit them', etc. It was also noticed that the learners had a tendency to split single words into two like 'in to' for 'into', 'can not' for 'cannot', 'in stead' for 'instead', 'there fore' for 'therefore', etc. However, these errors did not have a consistent occurrence and no pattern could emerge from these errors. Errors of these kind could not be attributed to mother tongue interference and they may be caused by either haste or carelessness or failure to connect sentences properly.

## 6.7 CORRELATION OF LEARNERS' ERRORS AND THE CONTRASTS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND MIZO

Many of the errors committed by the learners may be explained as interference from the mother tongue caused by a contrast between the mother tongue and target language systems. The contrast between the two systems could be seen in three broad areas of phonology, morphology and syntax. This has been discussed in chapter V of the present study. The learners were found to commit many errors in these areas where the two languages are in contrast. For example, many of the learners' errors in spelling committed in the essay were relatable to the contrast between the phonological systems of the two languages. As has been mentioned in section 6.6.7, the learners' errors in spelling could not be attributed solely due to the contrast. The conventions of English spelling also gave rise to many errors in spelling. As far as the spelling errors in the test was concerned it may be safely concluded that the influence of the mother tongue and the English spelling system were both responsible.

The test also revealed that the contrast between the morphological systems of English and Mizo was

also responsible for many of the errors committed by the learners in the area. The contrast in this area manifests itself in many of the errors that learners committed in formation of past tense, formation of singular and plural, change of grammatical category etc. There were many instances where the learners were found to write 'comed' instead of 'came', 'have' instead of 'had', 'make' instead of 'made' 'happied' instead 'happy' 'girl' instead of 'girls', 'cities' instead of 'city', 'boyish', 'happy' instead of 'happiness', 'savely' instead of 'safely', 'born' instead of 'birth' etc.

The contrast in the area of syntax was another source of errors committed by the learners. The sentence structure in Mizo is totally unlike English which caused learners to write ill-formed sentences like the following :

'When the night coming I had no sleep'

'But now-a-day we cannot know the exact day of his born'

'In this day after morning, I was going to the church to praised the Lord'

'There are making different from cooking a dinner'.

Instances such as these revealed that, apart from the Mizo learners' ignorance of the rules of syntax in English, the contrast between the two syntactical systems were obviously responsible for the errors in syntax. Wilga Rivers points out :

Where there is contrast, native language interference will be a constant problem; the students' native language habits will tempt him to follow the pattern of his own language at that point... structures will contrast to varying degrees - degree of difficulty for the student being determined theoretically by the number of elements in contrast (1968 : 153-4).

#### 6.8 CONCLUSION

The major finding of the present study was that a uniform pattern of errors was found in the essays of the learners. As the learners belong to one homogenous group the pattern of errors did not register any difference. Instead they were uniform in almost all the colleges. The distribution of errors into different categories revealed that the learners had maximum difficulty in verb forms accounting for 18.04%, tense accounting for 11.92% , preposition accounting for 10.92%, articles accounting for 11.47% , syntax 14.97%

lexis 13.60%, spelling 10.55%. The remaining area covered by miscellaneous errors accounted for 8.65% and this was the area in which the minimum number of errors were recorded.

The sources of these errors, besides mother tongue interference, were overgeneralization and inadequate exposure and teaching. When learners committed errors like 'goed' for 'goes', it was obviously because of overgeneralization. In this case the learners obviously felt that addition of 'ed' changed the verb into its past form and therefore, they ignored the variations in other verb forms. Errors of substitution in prepositions were the indication of the learners' ignorance. To them all prepositions were having singular functions. The use of 'to' to mean movement in some direction caused few errors while in case of its other functions errors occur at random.

The inability of the learners to match subject, verb and object in a sentence could be attributed partly to mother tongue interference and partly to inadequate teaching and lack of practice in appropriate contexts.

Also, the learners did not have enough idea about the various forms of verb-present, past and future with their different tense aspects. The learners had resorted to their own rules of the  $L_2$  following the  $L_1$  rules.

The influence of the mother tongue had caused a large number of errors. The absence of prepositions in Mizo had affected the learners' use of proper prepositions in English. Mother tongue influence was also responsible for the learners' inability to match subject and object. In fact, the learners were influenced by their mother tongue to such an extent that they literally translated their thoughts into English with no regard to whether their sentences were correct or not. The need, therefore, is to expose the learners to the possible sources of their errors which will certainly help them to remedy many of their errors. Proper teaching has to be emphasised and awareness of other related factors influencing errors have to be taken care of if the desired goal has to be achieved.

CHAPTER - VII

MODEL SYLLABUS

**CHAPTER - VII****MODEL SYLLABUS**

- 7.1 INTRODUCTION**
- 7.2 EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS**
  - 7.2.1 Theoretical Assumptions**
  - 7.2.2 Students' Needs**
- 7.3 NEED FOR A MODEL SYLLABUS**
- 7.4 STRUCTURE OF THE SYLLABUS**

**CHAPTER - VII****MODEL SYLLABUS****7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The syllabus is important not only as a document for helping the teachers and material producers but also as a document of the general objectives of the educational programme. It is in the syllabus that external considerations like administrative guidelines, theoretical assumptions about language teaching and student needs are negotiated and transferred into specific 'programme objectives' and 'classroom activities'. Equally important is the fact that the syllabus becomes the place where feedback from the programme can be measured against the aims of the designers engaged in developing that particular teaching programme. A syllabus operates in the real educational world and its existence can be justified only as a document which leads to more effective teaching and learning. The syllabus thus could be described as a focal point which interacts and balances the external consideration and the considerations of the classroom. It can be presented in the form of the following :

External considerations,  
Administrative guidelines,  
Theoretical Assumptions  
and student Needs.

Syllabus

Classroom Activities,  
student Performance

It should be noted here that these parameters when combined together can make a syllabus successful.

In order to be successful a syllabus should be related to schools, teachers and students. A syllabus based on language has the dual responsibility of adhering to the general objectives of an educational programme and the role of that particular language in respect of these general objectives. In the Indian context, a syllabus cannot thus be a mere list of textbooks and grammatical items to be taught. It has to be necessarily a statement of the learners' proficiency at the point of entry and the improvement that one expects in them after completing the course of study. It has to specify the approach to be adopted by the teachers and the students in order to get maximum benefit. The syllabus has also to adjust itself in the frame work of the general educational policy and then mould itself according to the demands of its objectives.

## 7.2 EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS

The overall objective of education in India is to accelerate the pace of national development and the aim of English language teaching has to accommodate itself into this frame work. The aim of English should, therefore, not be restricted to producing readers of Milton, Chaucer or Dante, but should be so planned that the learners get the basic reading and writing skills so that they can comprehend and interpret information and express themselves clearly through the medium of writing. The basic or primary expectation is that they should have some listening and speaking abilities also.

In a remote area like Mizoram the syllabus comes to assume a much greater importance than other parts of the country. On the one hand, Mizoram is going through a process of rapid development which necessitates interaction through the medium of English. On the other, most of the learners do not get any opportunity to be exposed to the communicative form of English. For most of the learners the English classroom is the only opportunity for exposure to the language. The syllabus, therefore, has to be planned

in such a way that the learners are able to gain proficiency in the language without adequate exposure to the use of English in daily life situations.

As has been pointed out, the Pre-University level is the terminal stage of education for about 50% of the students. Most of the students begin their professional careers after passing the examination. Consequently, the syllabus comes to assume great importance. The syllabus has to equip the students to perform the tasks expected from them. On the basis of survey, observations and performance in the diagnostic test the following general objectives may be fixed for the learners at the Pre-University level.

1. Reading

- A. Comprehension of Essays (of medium difficulty)
- B. Comprehension of Original Texts (of medium difficulty)
- C. Reading Articles with about 70-80% comprehension at the rate of 30 words per minute.

2. Writing

- A. Writing a summary of written material in correct English.

- B. Writing an essay of 300-400 words length
- C. Writing a letter (business and personal)
- D. Writing a report of a process observed by them.

3. Listening

- A. Ability to follow English spoken by Indians at normal speed.
- B. Ability to take down dictations from known materials

4. Speaking

- A. Conduct conversations in very ordinary daily life situations.

These general objectives of the syllabus of English for the Pre-University students are in fact the terminal behaviour expected of them. It has been observed that most of the learners seeking admission to the P.U. classes are very poor in English. The learners have little reading and listening, very little writing and practically no speaking ability. They have about 8 years of English learning behind them in schools. They have some idea about the rules of language operation but do not have adequate ability to use

the rules in a written discourse and express themselves correctly.

The present syllabus takes into consideration the abilities of the learners and aims at making them better users of the language. The syllabus makes an attempt to use the reading ability of the learners to develop their communicational proficiency in other allied fields of speaking, writing and listening. Proficiency in the language is always measured in terms of what the learners is able to do after going through the course. In the present syllabus the general objectives have been specified with reference to the needs and expectations of the Mizo society.

In the Indian context reading and writing abilities form an important aspect of English teaching and learning. Therefore, these areas have been given more emphasis in the syllabus. It is generally assumed that a major part of the communicative process would be carried out through these skills.

#### 7.2.9 Theoretical Assumptions

The design of a good syllabus always reflects the theoretical assumptions about language teaching-

learning behind it. The first set of assumptions consisted of the following on the works of Krashen (1981), Macnamara (1975), Richards (1974) and Selinker (1972).

- i) The learner requires a great deal of highly contextualized linguistic input in order to develop hypothesis about the underlying structure of language.
- ii) The learner needs to be provided with the opportunity to test his/her hypothesis about language system by using language in spontaneous and sustained ways.
- iii) The errors be regarded as natural and acceptable in the process of learning a language.
- iv) The learners require some linguistic input which is authentic but not beyond their level of comprehension.

The first set of assumptions provide a theoretical outline to the syllabus of English. They give an idea about the attitude to be adopted towards the learners in the process of teaching-learning English and the opportunities to be provided to facilitate the process of learning a

language. However, these assumptions do not say anything about the methods to be adopted for the implementation of these ideas, nor do they say anything on the classroom activities which can create an atmosphere of teaching-learning. To overcome these shortcomings a second set of assumptions based on the works of Munby (1978), Brumfit (1980), Widdowson (1978), Wilkins (1976) were incorporated. These are :

- i) Language teaching should focus on the functions expressed in a language and not on forms.
- ii) Learners need to develop communicative competence i.e. knowledge of grammar along with rules of language use.
- iii) Language should be analysed and taught in context and not in isolation.
- iv) Language teaching should attempt an integration of all four skills as authentic language use often demands the use of more than one skill.
- v) The language teaching programme should give sufficient opportunities to the learner to use language in communicative interaction.

- vi) Language teaching should emphasize the development of strategies for the negotiation of expression and interpretation of meaning through the use of materials relevant to the students' needs.
- vii) Language teaching classroom should be student centred when the teacher acts only as a facilitator of the learning process.

#### 7.2.2 Students' Needs

The next consideration in designing the syllabus is the identification of the students' specific needs in English. The communicative approach seems to be a much-needed thing because it puts the learners to use English outside the language teaching context, and helps them to use English as a medium of interaction between two individuals.

An analysis of the existing situation in Mizoram helped us to arrive at the following conclusions about the needs of the learners. It is gathered that there is little scope or opportunity for using English in social interaction, as the mother tongue is the predominant medium of expression. English is essentially

considered as a means for getting better jobs and pursuing higher education. In other words English is required for 'on-the-job' situations. It was therefore decided that the students should be taught the specific skills of communication and should not be exposed to literature alone. We aimed at making them proficient users of the language which could be helpful to carry them along in the institutions of higher education or in jobs. Thus the teaching of only grammatical usage was inadequate. The syllabus should be so designed in order to make students use the rule of a language in a real situation and consequently to enable them to deal with any kind of communicative situation in future.

### 7.3 STRUCTURE OF THE SYLLABUS

We have tried to define the general aims and objectives as well as the needs of the learners. The task now is to decide the strategies to be adopted for achieving the objectives. The syllabus writer, as Wendy Allen thinks, have the choice of different types of organizations like situational, notional-functional, thematic and skill-based (1983 : 132-135). All these approaches and the results reported in the study were considered before coming

to a decision regarding the strategies. We feel that only one kind of approach will not cater to the needs of the learners. A syllabus has to be framed on the basis of some 'composite skills' (ibid), which were needed by the students in Mizoram. The basic composite skills formulated are :

- i) Seeking and getting specific information and seeking/getting general idea.
- ii) Ability to use language correctly
- iii) Reading critically
- iv) Interacting
- v) Making a presentation
- vi) Interpreting and translating.

As is the general observation, the traditional syllabus followed at schools did not teach the students to communicate and hence, the emphasis was on learning the rules of language operation and the use. Therefore, this syllabus was designed keeping in mind that the learners should be able to improve their proficiency in English through the development of communicative abilities. As the learners at the entry level often do not write English

correctly, some remedial exercises on the areas particularly felt difficult by the students have been incorporated in the syllabus. The teaching of grammar is necessary but it is not an end in itself. It has to be introduced along with other items in the syllabus integrated with them and also contextualized.

Another important aspect borne in mind while designing the syllabus is to grade the language items to be learned in such a way that they build up into larger communicative units. For example, we take the paragraphs as units defining the scope of each section of the syllabus. Within each section there must be stages which introduce new 'coherence relationships' and these can be labelled by overt clues which are used to mark them: 'for example', marking exemplification, 'that is to say', making restatement, and 'on the other hand' marking contrast, and 'thus' marking conclusion and so on. We have devised a syllabus which is not a collection of structures or situations or notions but a sequence of relationships which build up into a structured paragraph, and subsequently into a series of paragraphs which approximate to the kind of reading material which the learners can ultimately handle themselves. What in fact we do

here is to make the learner participate in developing a paragraph which has roughly the following structure :

Main statement	Support
	Exemplification (for example)
	Clarification (that is to say)
	Conclusion (thus)

A syllabus of this type has not been tried out in Mizoram. It can, however, in all probability work very effectively, because this syllabus has been designed bearing in mind the problems faced by the learners and on the basis of their demands and needs. If this syllabus is introduced it is possible for the learners to participate very successfully in the classroom activities. The main aim of the syllabus is to provoke the learners to communicate. For example, in the classroom they are encouraged to write a paragraph and in doing so they can themselves realize their rate of progress. If applied properly, it is hoped that the present syllabus can help in a better learning of English.

The syllabus is presented in the form of a table below. It is essentially a skill based syllabus and the teacher has to constantly ensure that the appropriate skills are acquired through constant interaction with the

students. The teacher should constantly go on assessing the progress of the learners in case it is not up to the mark.

The syllabus is designed to be covered in about 7 months, the normal span of an academic year. It is expected that during this period there will be at least 5 classes per week of 45 minutes duration. The tests have essentially to be skill-based and not content-based as happens usually.

1. <u>Skill</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>Medium</u>	<u>Task</u>
Seeking and getting specific information and general information	Reading	Expository, descriptive, narrative or descriptive prose  a) Non-specialized reference materials like encyclopaedias, dictionaries, etc. b) Weather reports c) Newspaper articles d) Circulars and Notice e) Letters f) Reports of experiments g) Instruction manuals h) Book reviews	Extract specific information from written discourse through the following means :  a) choosing the appropriate answer from given answers (multiple choice T/F matching, etc.) b) Transformation of information from prose to graphic and vice versa. c) Writing summary of the information content. d) Giving written answers to open-ended questions e) Arranging information in specific order.
	Speaking	Conversation	a) asking for specific information
	Writing	Letters, essays, precis writing, reports	a) Ask and write specific information in the appropriate writing form
2. Ability to use language correctly	Writing	Some pattern practice drills and their use in language operation	a) Ability to insert articles, prepositions and modal auxiliaries b) Provide the correct tense form of the verb c) Correct sentences

**3. Reading cri-**

**Reading**

**Articles from-**

- i) Newspaper and journals
- ii) Short stories and poems
- iii) Essays

- a) Writing a summary of the contents
- b) Writing character sketches from stories
- c) Comment on certain aspects of the materials

**Writing**

- iv) Business Reports etc. Short essays and letters

- a) Communicate views through the essays and letters

**4. Interacting**

**Listening**

- i) Conversation with the teacher
- ii) Radio/Video tape programme
- iii) Mini lecture
- iv) News etc.

- a) Answering questions orally and in the written form on the information content

**5. Making a presentation**

**writing and speaking**

Some communicative situation to be created by the teacher, e.g. visiting a place, camp fire, vacations etc.

- a) Give a short speech
- b) Describe these in the form of an essay
- c) Write the transcript of the speech

**6. Translation and Interpretation**

**Reading and Writing**

- i) Narrative or descriptive prose
- ii) Dialogue
- iii) One act Plays
- iv) Short stories

- a) Translation of the passage into the mother tongue
- b) Interpret the meaning
- c) Trying to write what can happen after the piece ends.

There should be no prescribed textbook and the teacher would be free to choose materials from any source. During the examinations the attempt would be to evaluate the proficiency of the learners in specified tasks. For example, a few passages will be given and the learners would be asked to perform certain tasks on their basis. It would be ensured that the passages do not go beyond the comprehension level of the learners. It is hoped that this will result in better learning of English by the students. Another advantage of this approach would be that the problems of cheating and taking recourse to bazar notes can be totally avoided in the examinations.

CHAPTER - VIII

CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER - VIII

## CONCLUSION

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## CHAPTER - VIII

CONCLUSION8.1 INTRODUCTION

As we review the main points developed in the foregoing chapters and arguments put forward in the study we come to a number of interesting and meaningful conclusions.

The teaching of English in India continues to be more or less a teacher-textbook-classroom affair where all that the teacher usually does is to explain the lessons of the textbook and the rules of language operation. Thus English is taught mostly as one would teach Physics or History where generally speaking, the information is all that matters. The learners are often passive listeners and rarely take part in the classroom teaching. Further, opportunities are limited for the learners to have exposure to English outside the classroom. Achieving proficiency in a language on the other hand is a process where the skills of operation are acquired with a view to successfully communicate in the target language. Unfortunately, in spite of all the developments in Linguistics and their application to English Language-Teaching, the situation at the classroom level has remained

by and large unchanged. As long as the medium of instruction was English the learners managed to acquire some proficiency as a result of exposure. As a result, the learners' communicative abilities in English are not satisfactory. Learners coming out of our schools and colleges after 8 to 10 years of English teaching-learning are not in a position to use it effectively for communication or even for performing simple tasks like writing an application for leave or for a job.

The situation in a remote area like Mizoram is indeed not satisfactory at all. The geographical remoteness of the area, lack of good teachers of English and lack of exposure to the use of English in day to day life, make it difficult for the learners to be proficient in the language. Moreover, the facilities like libraries and audio-visual aids are almost totally not available. At the level of curriculum planning also there exists deficiencies. A detailed, scientific and systematic study has not yet been conducted on the specific needs of the learners and their major problems in the process of learning English. In the absence of this type of specific information, the syllabuses are mostly adaptations from those in use in the neighbouring

states. The syllabus at the Pre-University level is merely a list of poems, plays, prose pieces and language items to be taught. The teaching strategies adopted by the teachers and remedial measures undertaken by them are generally adhoc measures. The learner is always the worst sufferer. Thus, inspite of the best intentions of the curriculum planners, teachers and educational administrators, there is a gap between the expectations and actual achievements of the learners.

It may be pointed out that the Mizo phonology, syntax and morphology are quite different from those of English and other Indian Languages . An understanding of the way rules of Mizo operate is necessary to appreciate some of the specific problems of the learners of English. Remedial measures undertaken without an understanding of the differences between English and Mizo run the risk of being unsuccessful.

## 8.2 MAJOR PROBLEMS OF THE LEARNERS

An analysis of the essays written by the Mizo learners of English on a descriptive topic brought some major aspects of the linguistic problems of the learners and consequently, we arrived at some significant and useful conclusions.

It was observed that though the length of the essay varied from learner to learner none had submitted an incomplete essay. The length of the essay was by all standards sufficient enough to provoke them to show the various problems that they face in English. It was found that the learners had committed a total number of 5820 errors, each learner committing about 19 to 20 errors in an essay of about 280 words. The errors were classified into 8 error types.

#### 8.2.1 Errors in Verb Form and Pattern

The learners had committed the highest number of errors in the area of verb forms and pattern amounting to 1233 or 21.18%. This was followed by errors in syntax amounting to 903 or 15.51%. The errors committed by the learners in the fields of lexis and tense accounted for 780 or 13.42% and 676 or 11.61%. Errors in preposition, articles and spelling amounted to 571 or 9.81%, 591 or 10.15%, 574 or 9.86% respectively. In fact, the errors committed by the learners in all these areas were quite significant.

As has already been stated, the learners had maximum problem in the area of verb forms and pattern.

There was a lot of confusion, in particular, in the use of verbs in their indefinite and participle forms of both present and past tenses. They also had problems in the use of infinitives and imperfect forms of verbs. There were substitutions also in violation of the appropriate forms of verbs. There were not proper subject-verb co-ordination in many cases and the auxiliaries were not properly used. The learners often used long and complicated sentences with several subjects and verbs. In the process they lost track of the verb that should agree with a particular subject. In many cases, they could not identify the subject in a sentence. This inability was responsible for quite a large number of errors in the area. Errors of incorrect use of verb form mostly emanated from what Pit Corder (1973) calls 'overgeneralization' of rules. Thus we observed errors like 'goed', 'comed', 'Happied' etc. When they commit errors of this nature it appears that the principles regarding the form of the verb in the past tense have not been properly understood and used.

Errors of improper use of tense and aspect were more serious errors because these affect communication. the improper use of aspect or tense can interfere in the process of getting a clear idea regarding the time or period of an incident. For example, they wrote,

'we had picnic at Bung Bungalow every year'  
when they meant that they have it habitually at Bung Bungalow every year. It was felt that most of these errors occurred due to inadequate understanding of the functions and shades of meaning conveyed by the different tenses and their various aspects.

It appeared that the learners had been exposed to too many verb forms in quick succession without properly understanding their use in the language system. They had not remembered or were confused which rules were applicable to which set of verbs for forming their past tense forms and past participle forms, or gerund. It seemed that they had not been taught the different verb forms in proper contexts.

The errors in the area of verb forms can be remedied by teaching the learners the use of specific verb forms in accordance with various tenses and tense forms in an orderly and systematic manner. They should be taught how a particular verb form is used in a particular context and tense form. They need to be taught how a verb is used in different contexts in present tense itself, then in different past tense aspects and future tense aspects. As the Mizo learners do not have many different tense forms in their language, they find it difficult to understand the tense forms in

English if not taught in a systematic way. The learners should be taught specifically different rules governing different sets of verbs in their past and past participle forms. If this is not done, they will find themselves in confusion and will use one form of the verb in place of the other and thus will continue to commit errors.

Along with the proper use of the verb forms, the learners also need to be careful in the use of auxiliaries. The learners were confused in the use of 'shall', 'will', 'can' and their past tense forms. Thus, they randomly used 'shall' for 'will', 'will' for 'shall', 'can' for 'could', 'would' for 'may'. They also had confusion regarding the use of primary auxiliaries, i.e. 'be' and its forms 'do' 'have' etc. The learners had generalized that if the auxiliary was in the past tense the main verb must also be in the same tense, or if the main verb was in the present tense the auxiliary must also follow suit. It was understood that the students did not have a clear idea regarding the auxiliaries and their use in the language. The sources of these errors could be mostly due to unsystematic teaching, the learners' carelessness and their ignorance about the use of auxiliaries. As the learners did not have much idea about the correct use of different tense

forms, they also failed to use the auxiliaries appropriately in their sentences. In addition to expressing simple futurity, modal auxiliaries also express probabilities, wishes, expectations etc. But such uses were perhaps not taught to the learners. Once the learners overcome their difficulties in the area of tense, most of their errors in the use of auxiliaries will be automatically avoided. It is evident, therefore, that the learners should be made aware of the proper tense forms to enable them to use the verb and auxiliaries correctly.

### 8.2.2 Errors in Tense

Tense was one of the most difficult areas for the learners. They had great difficulty in the use of different tenses and their aspects. There were instances where they used both the present and past tenses in a single sentence. Many of them were also confused about the continuous forms of verb and they too had no idea about recent past and distant past. In fact, the tense system in Mizo is not ~~so~~ various as it is in English and the learners are not familiar with the concept of the different tense forms like indefinite, imperfect, perfect etc. in their mother tongue. As a result, they do not know how to write a sentence putting together different tenses and tense aspects in a sequence. This becomes a

great problem for Mizo learners. The errors in tense may be remedied by teaching the learners the correct use of individual tense forms in proper context and how they can be combined in sentences to express ideas in different time sequences. Once the learners overcome their difficulties in tense, many of their errors in syntax will also be avoided.

### 8.2.3 Errors in Syntax

The learners' errors in syntax included erroneous sentence structures like long and complex sentences without proper conjunctions, connectives or correlatives, omission of major constituents in a sentence and lack of sequence of tenses among various clauses. They wrote a large number of sentences in which proper connectives were not used and often important parts of the sentences were missing resulting in global errors.

It was observed from the study that the errors in syntax were largely due to mother tongue interference and also due to improper teaching. The structure of the Mizo language is quite different from the structure of English. When the learners tried to translate their thoughts directly into English without following the rules of syntax in the latter, it resulted in deviant sentences. Since the learners were poor in the use of tense forms, syntactical errors were the obvious outcome. The learners had difficulty in expressing their experiences in time sequences.

The learners' errors in syntax can be remedied by teaching them different patterns of sentence structures systematically. They should be taught the correct use of connectives and correlatives in the proper contexts. The concept of proper tenses is very important for correct sentence construction. The teacher should help the learners to have a clear concept of tenses in all their aspects and forms in complex and compound sentences along with active and passive forms of the sentences.

#### 8.2.4 Errors in Spelling

Another important area of difficulty for the learners was spelling. The errors in this area could be considered as those of mother tongue interference and the inability of the learners to cope with the peculiarities of the English spelling system. In Mizo there are no consonant clusters and spellings are mostly exact transcriptions of the pronunciations. That is, Mizo words are spelled exactly as they are pronounced. In written English the learners try to use the same system in spellings and as a result, the pronunciation-spelling errors occur. There were confusions in words having consonant clusters. Further, faulty pronunciation of teachers and learners alike appeared to be one of the major

sources of spelling errors. Silent letters of many English words proved to be another source of many of the spelling errors committed by the learners. Vowels also formed another source of difficulty for the learners and many of the spelling errors were connected with vowel graphemes. While uttering a word, the learners did not generally place accent correctly which is the distinctive character of a vowel. The learners were thus found to transfer incorrect speech habits to writing. Haste and ignorance of the learners on many occasions also contributed to certain spelling errors. However, these errors were irregular because at certain places they wrote a word correctly and the same word incorrectly at another place. The learners also had a tendency to split certain words into two like 'mid night' for 'midnight', 'in stead' for 'instead' etc. which were also counted as errors.

One of the remedies for spelling errors is to teach the learners the correct pronunciation of words placing stress where it is necessary. The learners should also be advised to consult a dictionary both for meaning and correct pronunciation purposes. Teachers should also make a list of difficult words and put them into practice drills in order to help students to master them.

### 8.2.5 Errors in Articles

It was found from the study that the learners were also rather weak in the use of articles. The errors in the use of articles were mostly related to wrong use of articles and missing articles. The learners appeared to be confused in the use of definite and indefinite articles.

It may be pointed out that like most other Indian languages, Mizo does not have articles. Thus, the learners were not very sure of their uses and were confused regarding their proper placement. While translating a sentence from Mizo to English the omission of the article does not appear to alter the meaning of the sentence. It was observed that most of the time the learners resorted to guessing to decide whether to use an article or not. Quite often articles were not used where they were required. The necessity of an article before a noun or an adjective was not properly internalized by them. They were also apparently not conscious of the fact that a proper noun does not require an article and this resulted in errors of addition. There were also errors of substitution. It was felt that remedial measures emphasizing upon the principles behind the use of articles should be undertaken.

### 8.2.6 Errors in Preposition

The errors in the area of prepositions were mostly related to the problems of substitution of one preposition for another. The major cause of errors in this area was omission. It was observed that the learners had come to associate a particular preposition with a single function. For example, 'to' for them was a directional preposition and whenever that function came up there were very few errors. However, errors started showing whenever 'to' had to be used in a different environment. This may be attributed to the fact that Mizo has a very elaborate system of prepositions and most of them have singular functions unlike English.

The errors of omission cannot be traced to mother tongue interference as the system of preposition in Mizo is quite similar to that of English. Most of the errors of omission were found in complex sentences requiring a number of prepositions to be used. Perhaps the learners did not know the appropriate place where a preposition is required. The learners were also found to use two directional prepositions together. Most probably sentences indicating two movements i.e. of 'coming' and 'going' confused them. The difficulties of the learners in the area of prepositions can be remedied through intensive practice drills. The learners should also be made aware of the importance of the prepositions as :

the teaching of common prepositions of, to, from, on, at, in, into, for, with, by, will provide plenty of brightness in our lessons, for these words are easy to teach in their common concrete meanings (Pittman : 1967 : 98).

### 8.2.7 Errors in Lexis

The learners were also found to commit lexical errors. Many of them often used some words in their essays which were inappropriate in the context. These errors were mostly due to their limited vocabulary command and partly because of their ignorance about the meanings of words in different contexts. In Mizo, a word does not change its meaning in different contexts unless a change in tone accompanies it. A change in tone brings a change in the meaning of many Mizo words which is not the case in English. The Mizo language also has a rather limited vocabulary unlike English. For example, one student wrote

' I was told I saw fifty marks in History'

The students may not realise that he had committed a lexical error because the Mizo equivalent of the English 'see' or 'saw' is 'hmu' and Mizos use this word in different contexts where a native speaker of English would variously use 'meet',

'obtain', 'agree', 'secure' etc.

It was felt that the learners should be initiated to use the dictionary to increase their word power and also to see their proper use in the right context. They should be made aware of the fact that many English words carry different meanings when used in different contexts. Remedial exercises can be prepared keeping in mind the level of difficulty the learners face.

#### 8.2.8 Miscellaneous Errors

The errors which were not classified were put under 'miscellaneous errors' which included errors of number, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, use of capital and small letters, unnecessary extra words, ambiguous expressions etc. These errors, it was felt, could be remedied if the other error types were corrected.

It is evident from our analysis of the learners' errors that they were not competent to express themselves coherently. They were essentially weak in the rules of language operation and this reflected itself in their attempts to write and express themselves coherently. The confusion in their minds regarding the way the language operates made them write sentences

which hampered communication. The division of the essay into paragraphs had also been done haphazardly with no relation between the theme and the paragraph. They wrote the given essay in a most disorganized manner. The learners have to be taught the rules of language operation in the context of actual use. One of the effective devices to have the desired proficiency in English is pattern practice drills. Once a language item is explained, pattern practice should follow so that using that particular item will become a matter of habit.

### 8.3 INFLUENCE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

The system of Mizo and English are quite different from each other. Apart from phonological, morphological and syntactic differences, there are other notable differences as well. Mizo is essentially a tonal language where differences of tone can alter the meaning of a word. The way words are arranged in Mizo is also very different from English. The adjectives always follow the noun. The prepositions are mostly postpositions and the main verbs do not change their forms with the change of tense and aspect. The sentence structure in English follows the pattern of S-V-O, whereas in Mizo, it is O-S-V for first and second person and S.O.V for the third person.

The influence of the mother tongue in the area of spelling has already been discussed. Errors in verb like those relating to incorrect use of verb form and errors in the use of aspect can be traced to the influence of the mother tongue. Errors of omission of articles also reflect the interference of the mother tongue. There are no articles in Mizo and, therefore, they do not make any difference for the learner, as far as meaning is concerned. Therefore, one saw sentences like 'He gave me purse () for Birthday present'. Errors of substitution in prepositions could also be traced to the interference of the mother tongue. Mizo has a very elaborate system of prepositions and they are usually used to denote a single function. The multiple shades of meaning associated with the prepositions in English are absent in Mizo. All these cause much confusion in the minds of the learners resulting in errors of substitution.

However, the researcher would like to state clearly that all areas of contrasts did not produce errors. For example, one could not detect any errors of the placing of words in a sentence as done in Mizo. In Mizo, for instance, one gets sentences like 'Thingpui no hnih min pe rawh' or 'Tea cup two me give'. We observed no instances of errors of this type in the learners' essays. Therefore, mother tongue is a factor in respect of some of the errors but the fact remains

that it is not the only source of errors. Although the two languages, English and Mizo are very different from one another, L<sub>1</sub> interference is not the sole source of error for Mizo learners. As Lado (1964) puts it. 'These differences are the chief source of difficulty in learning a second language (p.21), and, 'The most important factor determining ease and difficulty in learning the patterns of a foreign language is their similarity to or difference from the patterns of the native language ' (p.91). Here 'chief source' and 'most important' imply that mother tongue interference is not conceived to be the only source of error.

#### 8.4 MODIFICATIONS SUGGESTED

On the basis of the experience gained from the analysis of the learners' errors, it can be concluded that most of the problems were caused by interference of the mother tongue, faulty methods of teaching and inappropriate internalization of the rules of language operation. The habits of the mother tongue often get in the way when Mizo learners try to express themselves in English. As a result learners commit many errors in the areas of verb forms, tense, articles, prepositions, lexis, syntax, spelling and the like. Faulty methods of teaching also caused

the learners to commit errors in these areas. They were taught the rules of grammar but they often do not show the ability to apply those rules correctly in real life communicative situations. For example, they know that the subject in a sentence must agree with the verb but they often cannot identify the subject. They know that a pronoun substitutes a noun but often cannot use this device while writing sentences or paragraphs. Moreover, the models of English presented by the teacher deprive the students from getting an opportunity of exposure to good English. The learners pick up pronunciations which are unacceptable and as a result they commit spelling errors. The exposure to too many items of grammar simultaneously affects the process of internalization of the logic of grammar. Inappropriate or inadequate internalization results in over-generalization of rules which can be seen through errors like 'goed', 'comed' etc. Another result of the difficulty is that the learners are unable to understand the function of the different parts of speech.

It was, therefore, felt that grammar exercises should be practised in the context of an utterance or discourse as a short term measure. If this is done the learners would get adequate exposure to the communicative form of the language and might acquire the required proficiency in it.

It is hoped that the syllabus should ensure that the language items are properly graded and introduced in a phased manner. The teaching methodology should see to it that the items are periodically repeated for reinforcement. This would ensure proper internalization and could help the learners to be constantly in touch with the important aspects of language use. The teachers, it goes without saying, play a very important role. They should ensure that proper learning takes place.

The curriculum planners and syllabus designers have to take into account the real situations that exist in the classrooms. In a remote place like Mizoram where exposure to the use of English is extremely limited, the syllabus becomes an important instrument for teaching communicative skills or increasing the learners' proficiency in the language. Taking this into account, the choice of lessons in textbooks and gradation of materials in them need to be selected more carefully. The lessons in the textbooks need to be more language oriented than information oriented. Textbooks should also contain some conversational lessons to give the learners some idea about how language is used for communication in real life situations.

It has been observed that the teachers were mostly interested in completing the syllabus and rarely felt the need to increase the learners' proficiency in English.

The need, therefore, besides a properly planned curriculum, is to have the teachers adequately trained in ELT. This is necessary because the objectives specified in the curriculum cannot become a reality, until and unless there are teachers to translate them into actual practice. According to Julian Edge, teachers must learn

how to focus learners' attention on to specific features of English form and function, how to model the language, motivate and organize its practice and its use, and explain its working. In other words, they must become teachers of the language, with a full range of TEFL procedures at their command and the theoretical knowledge necessary to make decisions about the (1986 : 9-10).

It has been the experience of many curriculum planners that their plans have failed at the level of the classroom. One obvious reason was that the teachers were not equipped to handle the syllabus prescribed. For any long term strategy to work properly and effectively the participation and cooperation of the teacher is a necessity. That is why appropriate teacher training programmes have to be conducted. The teacher has to be made aware of the exact problems of the learners and their sources. This alone can ensure that proper remedial measures are undertaken.

## 8.5 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The syllabus of English, for undergraduate classes prescribed by NEHU, is largely silent about classroom strategies. This leads to a situation where the strategies and methods of teaching English depend on individual styles and methods of the teachers. When teaching styles and classroom strategies vary, the learning that takes place also varies. While the curriculum stresses the need for teacher training, it does not specify the kind of training that is required. The teacher has three important roles to play in the classroom: that of language user, language analyst and language manager. Without proper training the teacher is usually ignorant of how language can be broken down into small teachable items and is also unaware of how language items can be presented effectively so that they can be understood by the learners. Although lots of research has been done on techniques for teaching such items, many teachers are not familiar with them. Teacher training institutes and in-service teacher training programmes must make the teachers aware of the new teaching techniques and developments in ELT.

### 8.5.1 Management of Learning

The management of learning is an essential skill which language teachers need to develop. The teachers know that students are of varied linguistic ability and that no two students can learn the same thing in the same manner at a given period. There will always be individual differences in the learning ability of students (Schmitt : 1995 : 137). It becomes an important aspect of the teacher's management skill to assess judiciously from time to time the progress of each individual learner and manage the classroom activity in such a way so that proper learning takes place. The teacher needs to 'be sensitive to students' limitations and not overwhelm them with more than they can handle' (Freeman : 1986 : 96).

### 8.5.2 Learner - Centred Strategies

The learner, among other things, is the most important constituent of the teaching-learning process. Any teaching method or strategy cannot be effective without seriously taking into account the needs and requirements of the learners (Harmer : 1995 : 337-338). In most cases the learners are simply passive listeners and the teachers tend

to be indifferent to their specific needs. Teachers are also reluctant to modify or change their assumptions and beliefs about the teaching of English. If effective teaching is the goal, the teachers have to change their traditional ways and take care of the needs of the learners. The spoken and written works in the classroom should be functional and directed towards the needs of the learners. Learners acquire their language skills more rapidly and language learning becomes a joy if there is relaxed and tension free atmosphere in the classroom. Rivers points out :

If students do not appear to be interested in practising language use in the ways we have designed, it is the ways we should try to change, not the students ( 1983 : 152).

The teacher should be creative or innovative in his teaching strategies in order to create enthusiasm and interest among the learners. He should be flexible in his instructions and should have the ability to vary the instructional procedure according to the needs of the moment because :

The area of language teaching and learning is not static, set in some mold that represents an unchanging model of how things ought to be ... From time to time we need to ... change course if we find our present direction is not leading us where we need to go (Ibid. p. 133).

Thus, the teacher occupies a central place in a students' life. Students need teachers in the classroom 'both to give them the kind of feedback they crave and to acknowledge their progress (Harmer : 1995 : 340).

It has been reported by the teachers that it becomes difficult for them to implement suitable strategies to benefit the students if the classes are too large. Besides, the present examination system does not allow them to be innovative because their teaching is mostly examination oriented. In such situations the teachers can plan their teaching properly and tutorial classes of small groups of students can be arranged. Remedial measures and other helpful methods can be adopted to help the weaker students in particular to come up to the level of the better ones.

#### 8.6 CONCLUSION

The present study reveals that pedagogical and linguistic factors are responsible for poor proficiency in English of the students at the undergraduate level in Mizoram. The comparison of English and Mizo and the analysis of the learners' errors show that Mizo learners face various problems in many areas of language operation. The comparison of the two languages shows the differences between them in

the areas of phonology, morphology and syntax which are believed to be the sources of many of the errors committed by the learners. It has been observed that mother tongue interference plays a significant role regarding learners' errors. Apart from mother tongue interference, other factors are related mostly to teaching. The teaching methods and strategies did not help to solve the learners' problems and did not meet their needs. In order to improve the teaching-learning situation a model syllabus has been designed in chapter VII keeping in mind the needs and interests of the learners as well as their socio-cultural background. While it is proposed that the teachers should be trained in ELT, they should also be provided with proper facilities. The examination needs to change and its objective should be, among other things, to test the communicative ability of the learners. Carl James says :

Ability to sustain a conversation in the foreign language is one of the main goals of  $L_2$  teaching. Therefore, it would seem sensible to enquire what is involved in holding a conversation in any language, and then to consider the question of what differences there are between conversations in the  $L_1$  and in the  $L_2$ : this is the contrastive dimension, of course (1980 : 128).

To achieve communicative ability of Mizo learners the teachers may be advised to carry out a contrastive analysis of Mizo and English to find out in which areas the two languages differ from each other. This comparison will enable the teachers to know in which areas of language operation the learners most need help, and they will be able to predict 'points of difficulty and some of the errors that learners will make' (Oller : 1971 : 79). However, the researcher is aware that C.A. cannot predict all errors that learners make. The predictive power of CA is subject to limitations:

There are, of course, purely quantitative limitations on the numbers of learners' errors that CAs can predict, limitations stemming from the fact that not all errors are the result of  $L_1$  interference, i.e. interlingual errors (James : 1980 : 146).

It may be pointed out that there are other major sources of errors which are of a non-contrastive origin like the effects of target-language asymmetries (intralingual errors), transfer of training, strategies of  $L_2$  learning and  $L_2$  communication strategies (Ibid).

Therefore, it may be safely concluded that CA has a significant role to play in pre-identifying learning problems and also in specifying the controlled steps where by the learners can most efficiently solve their learning problems.

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