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Video in the English curriculum of an Indian secondary school

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VIDEO IN THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM
OF AN INDIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

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For Sukanya and Swamy, my parents

and Morag Mackinnon, my mother-in-law

with all my love

CONTENTS

Abstract

This case study explores the potential of video in helping teachers and pupils to break out of entrenched but arguably unfruitful methods of English language teaching in Indian secondary schools, provides evidence that it can have a substantial impact, and analyses the conditions in which this is possible.

The study could be described as action research drawing on ethnographic methods. I introduced a 'package' of video-based English lessons to the Core English Curriculum of an Indian Central School, and observed the consequences. The package was prepared by me, but taught by the students' regular teachers.

First I observed for a month the normal, textbook-based teaching in the English classroom. Then the teacher was trained to use the video package, which was based on the contents of one of the chapters in the text-book they used. Finally, I observed the introduction of this package in the classroom. My data came from audio-recordings of the classes, diaries kept for me by the students, interviews and informal discussions with teachers and students, and my own observations of the classes and the school generally. In addition, I was able to draw on my own experiences of having been a student and a teacher in India.

Chapter 1 outlines the background. It discusses the unique position of English in India — its history and current social status — and describes schooling in India, placing Central Schools and their Core English Curriculum in context. It sets my research agenda as the study of the introduction of video in a 'real life' setting, as opposed to the 'artificial' experimental or quasi-experimental situations of much previous work.

Chapter 2 surveys the literature I draw upon. As there is very little previous research bearing

directly on this topic, I have had to refer to a wider body of partially relevant literature on: (i) use of television for education in India; (ii) second language classroom studies with an emphasis on the development of communicative competence; (iii) classroom studies with special reference to group work; (iv) bilingualism.

Chapter 3 explains the advantages of a case study based on ethnographic methods, and considers some of the potential problems and limitations, notably the risks in generalising from one study.

Chapter 4 deals with theoretical issues and practical methods in developing teaching materials for the project. I discuss research into the use of video in second language teaching, and explain how I drew on it to develop the video material itself, task sheets for students to work on in groups after watching video extracts, and a teacher-training package. Group work is not essential in introducing video, but I argue that it is the best way of using the medium.

The next three chapters deal with the introduction of the video package, and the context in which it was introduced. Chapter 5 describes the school. Chapter 6 is a chronology of the various stages in the introduction of video into the English classroom. Chapter 7 then analyses this introduction in terms of the various participants involved — the problems faced by each, and the conflicts that arose between them.

Chapters 8 and 9 concentrate on the classroom. Chapter 8 examines the traditional English classes, analysing the teacher-fronted, transmission mode of teaching that prevails, and identifying twin roots of this pedagogy. First, there is the indigenous *Harikatha* tradition (in which the written word is treated as a sacred text for reverent, uncritical commentary); and secondly, there is the imperial tradition, arising directly from the introduction of English as the medium of educational instruction in India. The manner in which these traditions affect classroom pedagogy today is critically evaluated.

Chapter 9 analyses the classes after the video package had been introduced. It focuses on talk, now the students' rather than the teacher's language, for with the introduction of video in the classroom, the students had to learn to work in groups on the task-sheets. The television screen did not inspire the same uncritical reverence as the written word. The chapter reveals how the ritualised routine of the transmission mode broke down with the introduction of video; and how it encouraged the students to take more control of their own learning environment.

Chapter 10 discusses what the research can claim to have discovered. Video does seem to have considerable potential in helping teachers and students to break out of the traditional methods of language teaching in Indian schools, moving the students further on the path of developing communicative competence in English. But more research is needed, and I make concrete suggestions for such studies. With due caution because of the dangers of generalising from one case-study, I draw implications for teachers, schools and government if best use is to be made of the potential of video in English teaching.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Notes to the reader

1   The names of all the participants in this study and of the town where it was conducted have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

2   The following conventions have been used in transcription.

    i   Square brackets indicate an English translation from Hindi, for example: [We can only see the outside.]

    ii   Round brackets are used for descriptions of acts or events that occur during a conversation, for example: (writes on blackboard)

    iii A word or phrase followed by a question mark within round brackets indicates uncertainty about what was said, for example: 'It might be (smart?) but it might not be safe.'

    iv Two full stops in round brackets (..) indicate a long pause.

    v   A question mark in round brackets (?) indicates that the preceding word was spoken with rising intonation.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1

The Research

In this research I set out to study the potential of video to teach English in secondary schools in India. The aims were two-fold: first, to explore the problems that teachers and students face when they are introduced to video as an innovation in the classroom; and secondly, to discover whether the use of video, once it has been assimilated into classroom practice, leads to effective language teaching and learning.

The research was conducted in the Central School in a town I shall call Bhojpur, in the state of Bihar. A lesson was chosen from one of the textbooks used in the English Core Curriculum, a set of video materials and supporting exercises were developed around it, the English teacher was trained in its use and its implementation in the class was observed. The fieldwork for the research was conducted in 1987 when I spent three months with the Standard XI Science students and their English teacher. The original intention was to observe the manner in which English is ordinarily taught for one month, then to train the teacher in the use of the video package for another month, and finally to observe its introduction in the language lessons for the third month. In the event, the second and third phases of the research (i.e., the teacher training and the implementation) had to go hand in hand (see Chapter 6 for details) and my time was divided almost equally between observing the traditional lessons and the innovation.

My data collection methods were the standard ones employed by ethnographers studying educational issues. The principal method of collection was the use of audio-recordings in the English lessons. I chose not to use video recordings for several reasons. First, I feared that the presence of a camera might become obtrusive in the class and the students might not

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behave as they normally would. It seemed to me that it was easier for the class to ignore an audio-cassette recorder, especially because the recorder I used was a very small Sony Professional. I was also concerned that use of a video camera might encourage the students to see me as an Indian living in the West with access to Western gadgetry and so, as someone foreign and different in front of whom one had to behave in certain ways. Although I could not avoid some of this impression for it was in the nature of the innovation I was to study, I wanted to keep it to a minimum.

I was also dissuaded from using a video camera because I was faced with the choice of either leaving it in a fixed position or operating it myself. In the first instance, the camera would have captured only part of what was happening the classroom; how large a part would be a matter of luck. In the second instance, I would have to look through the camera viewfinder, thereby restricting my vision of what was happening in the class. But without a video camera I could sit unobtrusively at the back of the class, get a fuller view of what was going on in the classroom, and take notes. In the event, these observations of the classes and of the school in general proved an important source of data.

Finally, although this may look trivial on paper, there were logistical problems. I already had to bring one video recorder from the United Kingdom for the teacher to use in the video-led lessons, plus all the accompanying materials and exercises that were part of the video package I had developed. It would have been very difficult to carry a second video recorder and camera to film the classroom.

Apart from the audio-recordings and my own observations of the classes and the school (I used to spend the entire day in the school), the students kept diaries of their thoughts which they gave me at the end of every week. I also recorded interviews with the teachers and the students regularly and in addition, there were numerous informal discussions of which I wrote down notes at the end of each day.

1.2

The Background

To understand the reasons for my interest in this study, some background knowledge of the conditions surrounding it is necessary. The 1980s in India saw a remarkable development in the approach to education. For the first time since independence, education assumed an important 'public' face with a new education bill being debated in the media for almost a year before it was finally passed in 1986. Added to this has been a general explosion in the use of communication technology in India. At the time, it seemed to me that India was committing itself strongly to using satellite communication in education. Numerous experiments had been carried out from as early as 1960 to investigate the potential of satellite communication for education. In their wake and in the wake of the debate about the education reform bill, six Educational Media Research Centres were set up throughout the country in and around 1985 to make educational films for television. If the government was going to commit itself seriously to satellite broadcasting for educational purposes (and since then, it has done so), it seemed to me to be worthwhile to investigate the potential of audio-visual media in the classroom.

I chose to study video in particular because it has many advantages over television broadcasts — some logistic and others pedagogic. Most obviously, it has start-stop and replay facilities which give a teacher greater control. These facilities also enable the teacher to use the same material several times to explore different aspects of the same television programme. Logistically, even if audio-visual material is broadcast by satellite, it does not have to coincide with what the students are doing at any one particular time. It can be recorded off-air and used at suitable times.

Keeping these factors in mind, I was interested in seeing what happens when video is introduced into the English Core Curriculum in a Central School. To understand what this involves, it seems necessary to know something about the Indian education system, and about the status of English in India and its role in the school curriculum.

1.3

The Education System

Although the education system in India is similar to that in Britain, which is not surprising given its colonial past, there are some differences in the way it is run, probably because of the size of the country and its vast population. There are three types of schools in India — State schools, Central schools and private schools (called 'public schools', much as in England). Until recently, education in India had been mainly the responsibility of state governments, but with the new education act of 1986, it also found its way on to the 'Concurrent List', thereby becoming a national as well as a state responsibility. However, the main bulk of education is still carried on by the state governments.

1.3.1

State Schools

Each state government runs schools which follow the same curriculum throughout the state, although these vary from state to state. The reasoning is that the state employs people who may be transferred from one place to another within the state, and it is hoped that by adhering to the same syllabus throughout the state, disruption caused by transfers will be minimal. The state employs staff to run the schools and bears the cost of the building and maintenance of schools. A school fee is charged but it is only a token gesture and minimal.

1.3.2

Public Schools

Public schools, on the other hand, are privately funded and often run by missionary and other charitable organisations. They form only a small part of the educational system in numbers, but are extremely influential in that they produce the bulk of India's civil servants, and children from these schools often go to the 'best' colleges and obtain the highest paid jobs. The money to run these schools comes from school fees and from private charity.

1.3.3

Central Schools

The third type of school, the Central School, is run by the central government. Even before the addition of education to the Concurrent List, the central government took some responsiblity for education. It seems to me that in practice there has not been much significant change in the role of the Central Government — rather its responsiblity for Central Schools and the national curriculum has been formalised. This responsibility came about mainly because of public sector industries. After independence, the government of India committed itself to a programme of industrialisation and technological progress so that the country could become self-sufficient. This was done through establishing nationalised industries such as the Steel Authority of India Limited, the National Coal Board, national mines, national nuclear power stations and national shipbuilding. These industries are distributed all over the country and the people who work in them come from different states. Just as state government employees can be moved within the state, the central government employees may be moved about the entire country. This means that the education of their children may be disrupted when they move. To cope with this problem, the government started schools called Kendriya Vidyalayas or Central Schools. Again, just as state schools maintain a common curriculum throughout the state, Central Schools share a common curriculum throughout the country, so that children who transfer from one school to another do not suffer. This curriculum is set by the Central Board of Secondary Education and is known colloquially as the CBSE. The staff in Central Schools are appointed by the Central Government under the aegis of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan ('Central Schools Organisation', often referred to as KVS) and the funding for these schools is from the central rather than the state coffers. Although they are primarily meant for the children of central government employees, any other child may also be admitted to a Central School if there are places available, by virtue of the government's non-discrimination policies.

In choosing to study a Central School in Bhojpur, I had in mind precisely the reasons why such schools were set up. Bhojpur is a small, fairly prosperous industrial steel town in

Bihar, an otherwise backward and impoverished state. The nationalised steel industry employs people from all over the country and a number of their children go to Central School. It seemed to me particularly interesting to focus attention on this type of school because I thought the government would probably first set up an infrastructure for the use of television in them because of their pan-Indian character.

In all three types of schools, children generally start attending school when they are five years of age. The first year at school is called the First Standard, the second year the Second Standard and so on and they are generally written using Roman numerals (e.g., Std. I, Std. II and so on). At the end of ten years of schooling, that is, at the end of Std. X, all children take an examination. The children in the state schools take a state examination, generally called the Secondary School Leaving Certificate examination (SSLC); those in public schools take the Indian Certificate of Secondary Examinations (ICSE) in conjunction with the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate and those in Central Schools take the All India Secondary School Examination (AISSE). Up to this point, they study a wide range of subjects — English, Hindi, a state language, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography and Civics. After the Std. X examination, they chose to study either Arts, Science or Commerce. They can either go to a junior college for the next two years of study or they can continue studying at school. At the end of Std. XII, they sit another public examination (again the three types of schools have their own examinations, respectively the Pre-University Course examination (PUC), the Indian School Certificate examination (ISC) and the All India Senior School Certificate Examination (AISSCE)) and on passing, they proceed to study for degrees in colleges. Thus, by the time most students enter college, they are about seventeen years old. This pattern of education, first introduced in 1975, has been termed the 10+2+3 system and is in use throughout the country. The new education act does not alter this basic structure and all innovations have to work within these parameters.

My own research concentrates on the '+2' stage of this system, and particularly its first year, Std. XI. The main reason for this choice was that I myself taught English at this level

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1.4.2

English as Language of Power

Rapidly, English became the language of power and those who learnt it had access to the mechanisms that ran the country. Although it is forty-six years since the British left India, this has not changed. Even today, those who know English and are fluent in it have greater access to power than those who do not. This is especially true in the world of progress and of technology. The moment a developing country wants to advance technologically, it realises the need for a language through which it can gain access to advanced technology. The obvious choice for India has been English. Therefore, the medium of education in most centres of higher education and in colleges of technology is English. This has been recognised by the government and English has been declared a 'library language' in India. This implies that English is to be used for academic purposes. It almost goes without saying that jobs in the fields of technology, medicine and engineering are very highly paid by Indian standards. The skills they require are often accessible only through a knowledge of English and students are therefore encouraged to learn the language. All in all, there is great social pressure on students to do well in English.

1.4.3

English as lingua franca

In India, the policy of self-sufficiency has led to an advancement of technology. With the coming of technology and especially its use by nationalised industries, people have moved from their own states to use their skills in distant parts of the country. The natural language of communication between people from different states, especially between people from the North and the South, tends to be English. Thus, English is a lingua franca and a link language throughout India.

1.4.4

English as an Associate Official Language

Because of the importance of English, it was declared an 'Associate Official Language'

when India became a republic in 1950. It was hoped, however, that English would have this status for a limited period only, until the national language, Hindi, had been learnt by all Indians. Then Hindi would replace English completely. However, this has not happened. In fact, the South resists the notion of Hindi as a national language and very often, there are indications that people of the South would prefer to have English as the national language. In practice, the adminstrative and bureaucratic work of most states is carried on in three languages — English, Hindi and the State language. This is known as the three language formula and it has been carried over into the education sector. All schools, therefore, have to teach three languages to their pupils.Where Hindi is itself the state language, schools often teach Sanskrit as the third language. This was the case in Central School, Bhojpur.

1.5
Role of English in the Indian Classroom

It is obvious, then, that English is an extremely important language in India. This is also reflected in the way schools treat English, although the three types of schools emphasise English differently. While the bulk of teaching in public schools is done in English, in Central Schools, students have a choice (in theory at least) between English and Hindi as the two languages of instruction, and in state schools they can choose between English, Hindi and the regional language. (In practice, as we shall see, this choice may be limited because suitably fluent teachers are not available.) It seems to me that students from public schools often have greater access to white collar jobs than those from central schools and those from state schools come last of all. The emphasis on teaching of English may well have something to do with this. In the words of Varindra Tarzie Vittachi, 'since the language of adminstration and law was English, those educated in the language of the slaves (that is what vernacular meant) were inevitably excluded from white collar jobs. In 1947, the less colonized minds in the new government opened the sanctums of English education to everyone through the gift of free education for all' (Vittachi, 1987). The common perception still is that a knowledge of English and fluency in the language are indicative of intelligence, and more likely to help people get white collar jobs. Because students in public

schools use English almost all the time, these schools are perceived as high prestige schools and the best in the country, the central schools come next and the state schools last of all (see Agnihotri and Sahgal, 1985, for a much wider analysis of English in Indian schools than the paper's somewhat enigmatic title might suggest).

In Central Schools and state schools, there is a core English curriculum that all students have to study, irrespective of which language they choose as the medium of instruction. Thus, a student in a Central School who studies Geography, Science, Mathematics and so on in Hindi still has to study the Core English Curriculum, just as a student who studies these subjects in English does. This ensures that all students study some English at school. The case of science students in Central School, Bhojpur is an interesting illustration of the importance of English (and also of the discrepancy often found between theory and practice). Although a number of students chose to study the science subjects in English, they often had to contend with the bulk of their mathematics and physics lectures in Hindi as the teachers in these subjects were more fluent in Hindi. Conversely, the Chemistry teacher preferred to teach in English, and pupils who had opted to study Chemistry in Hindi had to cope with English. In both cases, the pupils perceived English to be of great importance, either because they knew that they had to write their answers in English in spite of being taught in Hindi, or in the case of the Hindi speaking Chemistry students, because they needed English to follow their lessons. Besides, English would be essential for most of these students if they were to pursue a career in science. Another crucial instrumental factor in the study of core English at this level is that students must pass this examination. They are deemed to have failed the CBSE examinations if they fail the Core English Curriculum, even if they have 100% marks in their science subjects. Given that Core English is so important in Central Schools, it seemed to me to be worthwhile to try the introduction of video in these classes in order to facilitate language learning.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1

Introduction

As background to studying the use of video in English language teaching at the '+2' stage in

an Indian Central School, I shall look at other related studies, although most of them are

only tangentially relevant to my work. I have found five main areas of interest, the first

being video/television in Indian education. Although there is no research specifically on

video in the classroom, some work does exist on the use of video generally. I have

discussed this in Section 2.2 in order to see how the viewing behaviour it reveals can be

exploited in the classroom. I also briefly discuss the research literature on using television

for educational purposes in India. A second area of interest is the use of video/television

specifically in classes where English is taught as a second language. Since this research

literature proved useful in the design of the materials that the students were introduced to, I

discuss it in Chapter 4, alongside an explanation of the video package I developed. A third

area is the research done in TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) classrooms,

both in India and elsewhere. Given the importance of English in India, I concluded that the

aim of English language teaching in India must be to develop students' 'communicative

competence' (as explained by Widdowson, 1978; Canale and Swain, 1980; and Stern,

1983). However, most of the research into TESL classes does not study 'communicative

competence' per se; instead it concentrates on various aspects of the teachers' and learners'

language, and the research literature which deals with this is discussed in section 2.3. Part

of the video package developed and tried in Central School, Bhojpur involved group work

by students after they had viewed the video extract. Hence my fourth area of interest,

research on the learning that occurs in small group interactions, both in ordinary classes and

in second language learning situations; this is reported in section 2.4. Finally, there is a section exploring the research on bilingualism in the classroom. This proved important because one of my main observations in the English lessons reveals the extent to which both students and teachers switch between English and Hindi in their dealings with each other.

To repeat, however, the research reported in all these sections is only broadly related to my own project. I have found it more useful to discuss the details of individual research findings alongside my own data and hence, much of the research literature is discussed throughout the thesis rather than in this chapter alone.

2.2

Use of Video/Television for Education in India

A serious use of video by a large number of people started with its introduction into the domestic market in 1982, the year when the Asian Games were held in New Delhi. Besides being a status symbol, it was a useful means of recording and replaying highlights of the games. Since then it has grown rapidly, both in ownership and in viewing figures. Apart from the viewing of videotapes at home, an urban phenomenon, there has been a boom in 'video parlours' in villages and small towns, where the cinema has become too expensive to run. Alongside this is the rising phenomenon of renting video cassette players (known as VCPs) and videos from video shops, All this has meant a rapid rise in the use of video as a means of entertainment (see Singhal et al (1988) who chart the rise of both video and television in India).

In 1983, Agrawal pointed out that the ratio of television to video cassette recorders was already less than 10: 1 (Agrawal, 1983). In a similar vein, Rao, L (1983) warns of video's runaway success, and exhorts the government to get to grips with the proliferation of communication technologies and make some policy decisions on their role in society. The

government was not unaware of video proliferation and its possible educational uses. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) held a three-day video workshop in September 1985 where the keynote speaker was the Additional Director General of Doordarshan, the national television network. He argued that film makers and educationists had not adequately recognised that 'video may soon come to assume the status of a mass medium along with radio, television, print media and the films... It is time to establish that video is not only a medium of entertainment but can be an effective vehicle of training, education and feedback' (Chowla, 1985).

The research on video in India has largely been audience research, concentrating on the type of viewers and their socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, Patel (1986) looks at the viewership in the Western region and concludes that the majority of Indian viewers are below forty, belong to high income groups (mainly professionals, students and businessmen) and come from nuclear families in urban or semi-urban areas (Patel, 1986, pp. 48 - 51). Rao's analysis of video use in South India also confirms Patel's findings as far as the home viewing situation is concerned (Rao, 1986, p.57). In addition, Rao (1987) has drawn attention to a collective viewing situation, both in urban and rural video parlours. She has found two types of urban viewers — males who are looking for entertainment not commonly found in public places like a cinema (that is violence and pornography); and slum dwellers who have been given community television sets by the State Government, and hire a VCP with five or six films to watch over a weekend.

The viewing situation in rural areas takes the form of public entertainment. As Rao puts it, 'generally starved of any form of media entertainment, the rural communities by and large welcome a parlour into their area. In turn, the parlours make every effort to cater to the entertainment needs of the community'. For example, one parlour owner arranges regular film shows for children at reduced rates of admission.

> Films of Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy are popular and
> periodically shown. The information about the films
> are circulated to the local school ahead of time so the
> children would be free to see the films. One very
> popular film, still in demand is "Jungle Book".

(Rao, 1987)

Thus, video in such circumstances is used as an entertaining and educational tool, enriching

children's experience of the world. What particularly interests me is Rao's finding is that an

immense amount of discussion goes on after such viewing has taken place. This confirms

my own informal experience that such discussions are common in Indian settings. In the

days when films were shown in cinemas (or tents converted into cinemas, as in many

villages), people would often stay back to talk about what they had viewed; in more urban

settings too, fierce discussions about the quality of a film can be heard in buses or in the

market place while buying vegetables. Obviously, in using video in the classroom, one

would build upon such positive experiences.

In spite of such encouraging findings, Agrawal and Kamdar (1987) are more pessimistic

about video proliferation. They argue that although video ownership has increased, it is

restricted to an urban elite. This increases the division between 'the economically and

socially rich and poor, referred to respectively as *amir* and *garib*' (their italics). The amir

have better access to information, making them 'information rich' (as against the garib who

are 'information poor') and this in turn contributes to one section of society becoming more

powerful than the others. They bemoan the fact that the much talked of 'communication

revolution' in India reaches only the top 5% while the rest are left untouched.

It seems to me that dividing Indians into amir and garib is too simplistic. There is a huge

population, both urban and rural, which is neither amir nor garib but lies somewhere in

between. These people have some access to information — they often have a radio and read

newspapers, even if they do not own televisions and videos. They are not rich, but they do

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not live below the poverty line either. Such people are not taken into account in Agrawal and Kamdar's analysis.

The view that there is an uncrossable chasm between the amir and the garib also seems exaggerated. While there is much truth in saying that video owners are amir, ownership does not necessarily correspond with viewership. Although this is most clear in the community viewing situations, it is no less true of the home viewing situation (Rao, 1987). In most television and video owning homes, the doors are thrown open for neighbours, children and servants to watch along with the video owning or VCP hiring family. It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1987, although there were only 9 million television sets and about 2 million video cassette recorders, the number of people who had access to viewing facilities was a staggering 470 million (out of a total population of around 800 million) (Singhal et al, 1988). This means that over half the population watches television and video quite regularly, a feature that could be built upon in using video in English lessons.

Whether the audience is rural or urban, whether it is made up of children or adults, all the findings on the use of video indicate that what people mostly watch are feature films, for entertainment. The fate of Indian television has been similar, though there people watch serials and 'soap operas' along with the films that are shown on television. Indeed, the programme makers for both television and video come from the same source — the film industries of Bombay and of the regions (Mitra, 1988 and 1990). This has meant that television has moved from its original remit of educating the masses to entertaining them. As Mitra says, 'It was no longer the dry, didactic material, but it entered the arena of cultural practices, establishing itself as a part of the "popular culture", and reaching the entire nation' (Mitra, 1990).

Mitra (1988 and 1990) also argues that serials on television (which are very similar to Hindi

feature films), and the films on video owe their immense popularity to the manner in which the audience 'creates the text', that is to say that the serials are a product not just of the programme makers but also of the imagination of the audience. So for example, Ramayana (a serial telling the story of Lord Rama, a Hindu God) caught the popular imagination because of all the religious experiences that people brought to its viewing. In watching and analysing programmes, people draw upon their cultural experiences — experiences of religion, of social behaviour, of ritual, of dance, of cinema and so on, thereby bringing a rich and complex web of intertextuality to their 'reading' of television programmes.

I would argue that educational programme making can benefit from drawing upon such cultural practices. One of the features of Indian life is the amount of time people spend discussing films they have watched. Plots are argued over, characters assassinated, acting criticised and direction appreciated. It is as if the film (whether on television, video or in the cinema) belonged to the people and they could do with it as they pleased. The same is not true of the written word. There is a tradition in India of respecting books, of according them almost a sacred status, which makes it very hard to be critical of written texts.

This has implications for the classroom. While students may be willing to enter into debate about a particular programme they have watched, they (and even more their teachers) are generally hesitant about criticising the written word, or even arguing about it. Written text is accepted as being true or correct simply because it has been written down (although newspapers and government injunctions are exempt from such uncritical behaviour). Besides, the presence of the teacher teaching the book gives it even more authority, thereby making it even more difficult to contend with. It seems to me that English language lessons could effectively use the tradition of free discussion after viewing programmes. If these discussions could take place in English, then students would find an opportunity to practise and improve their language skills, thereby helping to make them efficient language learners.

This was one of the ideas upon which my video materials and classroom activites were based.

Until now I have discussed the research on the general use of video in India. There does not seem to be any work done on using video for educational purposes. The only reference to video use by children confesses to a lack of data in this area:

> Very little quantitative informaton is available anywhere in the country to indicate the extent of use of video by children either in the schools or in the home-viewing situation.... Some of the more prosperous schools have already acquired video cassette recorders and do occasionally show "educational" programmes. However, this being beyond the purview of this report, no quantitative data was collected on the use of video either in homes or in school.
>
> (Agrawal et al, 1986, p.17).

Seven years on, Agrawal's report still holds true.

With television, however, there has been at least one substantial study, the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (commonly known by the acronym SITE), which specifically concentrated on using television for educational purposes. Indeed, the original vision of the early advocates of television in India was to use it as a tool to help with 'education and community development' (Amritavalli, 1986).

Towards the end of 1959, television was introduced in New Delhi as an experimental educational service. Educational programmes were beamed for two hours a day twice a week to New Delhi and to a few 'teleclubs' set up within the 12 - 15 mile radius reach of the transmitters. The project, funded by the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), aimed 'to communicate new information, facts and figures' to the villages where the teleclubs had been set up for community viewing. It also suggested

follow-up activities 'by means of which the viewing individuals and groups might organise their own lives as well as influence friends and neighbours to better the quality of life in the community' (Amritavalli, 1986). The project lasted for a little over a year, until December 1960. It was evaluated by a UNESCO team which found that 'large numbers who viewed the programmes and who took part in the follow-up discussions gained in learning; most of those who gained in knowledge retained their gains for twelve weeks' (ibid., p. 2).

Encouraged by such results the Delhi Schools Project, funded mainly by the Ford Foundation, started broadcasting on 23rd October 1961 to students of Standard IX, X and XI. The programmes started with only two broadcasts a week but by the end of the project, eight 20-minute programmes, directly relevant to their syllabus, were broadcast each week. Since my own project was aimed at Standard XI students, I was immensely interested in the findings of the 1961 study. Unfortunately, though, it has proved impossible, despite much effort, to obtain a copy of the Delhi Schools Project report, and references to it in other texts are extremely sketchy. Even the one reference that deals with it in any detail is more tantalising than informative. It is brief enough to be quoted in full:

> Researchers did make attempts to measure the beneficial effects of educational television, and studies did establish a positive impact on school children (as in Neurath, Paul's study of the Delhi Schools Project). However, the effect and even credibility of these studies was affected by the well-known fact that the school teachers were averse to television and that there were a great many organisational problems at the viewing end. By and large, the research focussed on the impact of programmes on viewers, and did not seriously study the functioning of the whole system such as reasons for non-viewing, the problems of the teachers, the programme content, production aspects, set maintenance, timing and duration of programmes, etc. As academic research, it was invaluable: as an input to policy-makers, its value was, at best, doubtful.

(Karnik, 1981).

Even though I could not obtain the data on which such conclusions were based, it was

worth finding out that there were 'organisational problems at the viewing end'. It helped to confirm my belief that if we are to take the introduction of video as a teaching tool seriously, we must address the issues of teacher training, of organisational support for teachers using video, and of producing appropriate materials for students' use.

The Delhi Schools Project had an interesting repercussion — the setting up of SITE. Although the logistics of SITE were very complicated, the idea was a very simple one. The experiment involved developing television programmes for 2,400 villages in the six 'backward' states of Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. All the programmes were beamed up to a satellite (ATS6) loaned free of cost by NASA in America to the Indian Government. The satellite then beamed them back to the receiving stations in the various states which in their turn distributed the programmes terrestrially to every village. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) based in Ahmedabad was responsible for all the hardware required for the transmission and reception of the programmes. The programmes themselves were made by the then fledgling Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in consultation with various other ministries. For example, the Agricultural Ministry briefed them on agricultural topics, the Education Ministry on primary school broadcasts and so on. The aims of the experiment were to

1. gain experience in the management, development and testing of satellite based instructional television systems particularly in rural areas;
2. stimulate national developments in India;
3. demonstrate the potential of satellite communication in developing countries;
4. contribute to health, hygiene and family planning;
5. improve agricultural practices;
6. contribute to general school and adult education and improve occupational skills;
7. promote national integration;
8. build expertise, technical and organisational, in satellite transmission.

(Amritavalli, 1986, pp.1-2)

It is clear from such large, ambitious aims that the SITE project would only be tangentially useful to my own microstudy of using video to teach English in one secondary school. It is also difficult to assess how successful SITE was as an experiment even on its own terms. It must be pointed out, however, that virtually every article on Indian television, whether it deals with the educational aspect of television or that of providing information and entertainment, almost ritualistically mentions SITE as the most important event in the history of Indian television. Most articles also tend to look upon SITE as an extremely successful experiment — it was meant to herald a golden age of peace and prosperity, especially in rural India. However, it has proved extremely difficult to ascertain how these conclusions were reached, especially since it is not easy to find the data and to see if other interpretations are possible. Interestingly enough, the one article which is ambivalent about the interpretation of the results comes from one of the main researchers on SITE, Bella Mody. Mody (1978) admits that the experiment which was carried out in 1975-1976 was very difficult to assess because of the sudden declaration of a state of emergency under Mrs. Gandhi's premiership:

> The unusual and special publicity in all media for
> development schemes generated under the Emergency
> declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi,
> simultaneously with SITE, made it difficult to assess
> the impact of SITE programmes... (and again later)
> SITE programming produced by the Ministry of
> Information and Broadcasting of the Government of
> India was greatly affected by the sudden declaration
> of the state of emergency which meant total
> censorship of all media, a month before SITE started.
>
> (Mody, 1978)

This does seem to imply that there were political reasons why it was important to portray SITE as a resounding success, implications that later writers have not necessarily taken into account. SITE has had some unexpected benefits for education, though. With the portrayal of the experiment as a huge success has come the necessary money to build an elaborate and complex educational infra-structure for programme making. The Ministry of Human

Resources Development (formerly Ministry of Education) has assumed responsibility for educational broadcasting. It set up a Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET) under the aegis of the National Council for Educational Research and Technology (NCERT) in 1984. CIET has, in its turn, set up six State Institutes of Educational Technology (SIET) all over the country. Together they are meant to make programmes and conduct research into their effects. They are supposed to carry out 'audience profile studies; need assessment studies; formulative evaluation covering testing of the programme in the field, and collection of feedback from the user teachers; monitoring of utilisation of educational television programmes to determine the extent of educational television utilisation and to study the factors affecting the utilisation; and, impact studies' (Singh, 1986). It seems to me, however, that not much research has been conducted by either of these organisations, nor have they made enough programmes to make an impact on students.

One reason for the lack of enthusiasm for educational television programmes may be that they are meant to be 'enrichment programmes', that is, they do not relate to a specific syllabus being taught and examined at school but cover a wide range of issues thought to be informative and educationally valuable. This approach was developed in the seventies and given credence by the SITE experiment as the CIET bulletins explicitly point out:

> The seventies saw the emergence of the concept of
> enrichment programmes designed for children of
> different age groups in place of strictly syllabus based
> programmes for individual classes. SITE in India
> during 1975-1976 proved the validity of the new
> approach at the elementary level.

(Educational Media Newsletter, 1990)

Although no systematic research has been done, I have not found or heard of instances where students regularly watch these programmes. Nobody had heard of the programmes in Bhojpur, even though CIET is run by NCERT, the same organisation which is ultimately responsible for the curriculum in use there. In truth, it would be very surprising if such a

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programming strategy had worked, given the extreme importance of examinations in the Indian education system (see Chapters 7 and 9). Yet there has not been a policy change even by 1993. In my own study, I decided early on that the students would not be interested in working on video materials that did not relate to the syllabus on which they would be examined. They would feel that they were wasting their time. So, contrary to the philosophy of SITE, I have adopted an approach where the video package is closely linked with one of the lessons in the CBSE Core English syllabus. In any case, as Aghi (1987) points out, in spite of SITE, there is very little research, if any, on the televisual needs of urban children. Since my own research was in an urban environment, there was not much literature I could use to design my project. In spite of such an admission, Aghi confidently concludes that what should be made is an 'enrichment type' of television programme. It should 'present to the child the larger world beyond his textbooks and the walls of the school building. The programmes should stimulate him and last of all help him to actualise his potential' (Aghi, 1987). While I would not quarrel with Aghi's intentions, I see no reason why programmes should not deal with issues in the syllabus at the same time as stimulating children, enlarging their views and actualising their potential.

2.3

Research in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) Classes

Reviews of the literature on classroom research in the teaching of English as a second language (e.g., Chaudron, 1988; Ellis, 1990; Larsen-Freeman and Long,1991) are striking for two reasons. First, a sizeable proportion of the research consists of comparing native speaker and non-native speaker speech. The aim of the research seems to be to find differences between these two types of speech and then to see if a particular method or a particular change in the teaching-learning milieu brings the non-native speaker's speech closer to that of the native. Secondly, most of this research is quantitative and tests whether a particular change has brought about a measurable difference in learner behaviour.

Such studies are only of limited value for my purposes. In India, there are very few speakers, teacher or pupil, who have English as their mother tongue. Therefore, comparisons between the speech of native and non-native speakers, or between the manner in which teachers treat native and non-native speakers, are inapplicable. Although my own research is more ethnographic and qualitative (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the issues involved), I have used the results from the quantitative studies wherever they have seemed relevant.

Alongside the quantitative studies based on pre- and post-tests, scores and comparisons, there is now a tradition of classroom observation studies in TESL. The initial studies, probably because of the heavy dependence on psychometric testing in second language acquisition research, tended to continue that trend and used quantitative methods (Ellis, 1990, p.65). The first large and well known study that attempted to document classroom behaviour was the Pennsylvania Project, set up in the nineteen-sixties in order to study whether the audio-lingual method of language teaching (based on behaviourist principles and stressing the primacy of drill in language learning, with an extensive use of language laboratories) was better than more traditional methods. Fifty-eight high schools and over 2,500 pupils in the state of Pennsylvania in the U.S.A. took part in this project. The teachers in these schools were divided into three groups — one group used traditional teaching methods; a second group used the audio-lingual method; and a third group used the audio-lingual method but supplementing the teaching with grammatical explanations. Finally, the students of the three groups were compared by using the MLA Cooperative Classroom Tests. It was believed that a difference in their scores would indicate which teaching style worked best.

Although criticism of the methodology and of the validity of the research design appeared

even before its final project report in 1970, the Pennsylvania Project team remained unashamedly in favour of the audio-lingual method. Grittner (1968) and Clark (1969) criticised the project both in its own terms and more broadly within the framework of educational research (see Allwright, 1988, for a thorough discussion of the issues involved). One of the outcomes of this research and its criticism was that second language researchers began to question 'the whole idea of methodological comparisons as a viable way of investigating classroom language learning' (Allwright, 1972; Allwright,1988, p.9). As Grittner (1968) put it, 'a half century of such 'research' has told us almost nothing about the relative superiority of one educational strategy or system over another'. One reason for this was that although different methods for classroom teaching were put forward on the basis of linguistic theory, what teachers did in the classes rarely adhered purely to one method. So there were no pure audio-lingual classes or pure traditional lessons. The Pennsylvania Project, however, was instrumental in demonstrating, albeit by default, that we know very little about what exactly happens in classrooms. There was then a general call by researchers to focus their attention on classroom behaviour (for example, Allwright, 1972).

Long (1980) points to two main methods of studying classroom discourse in ESL classes — interaction analysis and anthropological observation. In interaction analysis talk is generally classified or coded into certain categories considered important. The first system of interaction analysis to be used in TESL was the Flanders system (Flanders, 1970 presents it in its final form, although Flanders had started writing about it and using it much earlier). Later, the Flanders system was modified by several researchers because it was thought to be too crude to capture the complexity of the proceedings in a second language classroom. Thus, Moscowitz (1971) developed her Foreign Language Interaction System (commonly known as FLint), this time with twenty categories instead of the ten that Flanders had.

Moscowitz's categories were also interesting in that they included three categories for learner behaviour in the classroom, an area that had been of little interest to Flanders. At about the same time, Nearhoof (1969) was developing his categories to study teacher talk and pupil behaviour in second language classes: he came up with equal numbers of categories for teachers and students plus some others for either silence or confusion.

All these studies had been interested primarily in teachers and their behaviour. The argument was that by focussing on the teacher and <u>his</u> activity in the classroom (characteristically, 'his' is used, even though a majority of TESL teachers are women), one could plot the teacher's behaviour and recognise the teaching method involved. Certain types of behaviour and certain methods brought about higher learner achievements than others. Therefore, teachers could study the categories into which their learning had been classified and come to their own conclusions about their performance. This appraisal was meant to provide a non-judgmental study of teacher behaviour and was initially used in teacher-training and later by these teachers in their own classrooms. The use of research methods by teachers to study their own classes was unusual at that time: in spite of exhortations from such writers as Stenhouse (1975), not much research was carried out by teachers. Several researchers (Furst, 1967; Lohman et al; 1967, Moscowitz, 1968) compared the learning behaviour of pupils who had been taught by teachers who had learnt the Interaction Analysis system and those who had been taught by teachers who had not done so. Most of this research indicates that there was no significant difference in the attainment scores of the two sets of pupils. Finally, Bailey (1975) criticised the use of the Flanders and FLint systems so effectively that most researchers abandoned their use. It must be noted in passing that Flanders was criticised not just by researchers in TESL but also by researchers studying classrooms in general.

Bailey did not attack the categories in the two systems in terms of their relationship to language learning achievements. Instead, she attacked the whole notion of using category

systems, arguing that there were severe interpretation problems with them. For example, if a teacher asked a student, 'how long did you study last night', the question could be interpreted as purely informational, perhaps complimentary or highly sarcastic. An observer observing in real time is only allowed three seconds in both the Flanders and FLint systems to decide which category it should fall into. Different observers might categorise the same utterance differently, depending on their perception. So the two systems which prided themselves on their objectivity were shown to be more fallible and their results more questionable.

There is a second problem with such systems that Bailey does not touch upon but which Speier (1973) and Furlong and Edwards (1977) elaborate. The problem is that categorisation does not allow the data to be read in any way other than that which is pre-determined by the categories. It is very important, therefore, that researchers should have good reason to believe, before beginning to observe, that the categories they are to use are suitable for their purposes. I was not in that position, as no previous studies had been made of classroom talk in India. I had no way of knowing what categories would be helpful in identifying any significant differences there might be between the traditional and the video-led lessons.

Finally, the Flanders system has been criticised for its limited conception of talk. Walker and Adelman (1975) argue that it sees teacher-student interaction as merely the transmission of information. It ignores the role of talk as a medium for the negotiation of meaning and the construction of identity. 'In short', they conclude, 'it sees talk as transmission, not as communication' (Walker and Adelman, 1975, pp. 75-76). It was communicative processes that I wished to study.

In TESL, three alternative methods developed in opposition to Flanders and FLint. The first one by Fanselow (Fanselow and Crymes, 1976; Fanselow, 1977) took as its basis the

work done on language use by Bellack et al (1966) and on discourse analysis by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Sinclair and Coulthard have been extremely influential in the analysis of classroom talk but their method has been unsuitable for my purposes. An extended discussion of the problems I would have been likely to encounter had I followed their method is given in relation to my data in Chapter 8.

Fanselow developed FOCUS, an acronym for Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings. This was an elaborate coding system where the utterances could be broadly classified under five characteristics of communication that he identified. These were the source, the medium, the use, the content and the pedagogical purpose. The source could be a teacher, an individual student, a group of students or the whole class. The medium could be linguistic, non-linguistic or para-linguistic. Language could be used to attend, to characterise, to present, to relate or to re-present; the content to be communicated was divided into language, life, procedure, subject matter; and the pedagogical purposes were to structure, to solicit, to respond and to react. Each of the categories under medium, use, content and pedagogical purpose was further sub-divided, thereby producing a very complex set of categories into which all the talk could be slotted. The same utterance could also be classified under several headings, thus subverting the criticism that it was difficult to decide how to assign utterances to categories. Obviously, such an elaborate system as Fanselow's could not be employed in real time; instead, either audio- or video-recordings of classroom lessons were to be used. Fanselow also stated somewhat unexpectedly that only a small part of the system needed to be used at any one time, thereby making it more accessible. But in that case it is difficult to see what advantage there is in using Fanselow rather than one of the more limited systems over which it is supposed to be an improvement.

In the context of my research, a further problem with FOCUS is that in spite of such an elaborate system, the categories are still too broad and open to multiple interpretations. This then defeats the two main purposes of such a system — providing a common language for

all researchers to use and being objective in its study of classroom talk. Besides, in an Indian context, I would need to devise further categories to interpret bilingual talk. Given that I had not even envisaged the extent of bilingual switches, let alone its sophistication, I would have been unlikely to find pre-determined categories into which they happened to fit.

Another alternative to the Flanders system was that developed by Long et al (1976) in their study of small group interactions in a school in Mexico. They attempted to apply all the systems of analysis that had been devised, from Flander's Interaction Analysis to the one employed by Barnes and Todd (1977; Long et al used its slightly earlier incarnation as a 1975 University of Leeds publication) before developing their own Embryonic Category System (ECS). Since my own work concerns the learning that takes place in small groups, I have discussed Long's work in the literature on small group interaction (see 2.4).

Finally, there has been another strand in language-learning/language-teaching research which has abandoned quantitative methods for more qualitative ones. The basic belief in this method, as propounded by Allwright (1980), Ellis (1984), Van Lier (1988), influenced to some extent, as they acknowledge, by such ethnomethodologists as Mehan (1974) is that classroom talk is a co-production and that meaning is produced in the process of negotiation taking place between the teacher and the pupils and between the pupils themselves.

One of the problems identified by Allwright with the quantitative method in TESL is that there is such a proliferation of categories that it has become unmanageable. Allwright (1988) declares that he himself has moved away from any attempt at categorising talk.

> Resorting to a detailed text analysis amounted in itself
> to an admission of the inadequacy of category
> analyses to offer a sufficiently illuminating account of
> the data, but how illuminating the text analysis itself is
> must be left to the individual reader.

(Allwright, 1988, p.193)

In the same vein, Van Lier (1988) wants to redress the balance in second language

The investigation of any classroom processes, whether it be qualitative or quantitative or even a mixture of the two, cannot take place in a vacuum. The researcher generally has a particular view of second language learning which may or may not be explicitly stated. My own inclination is to support theories of communicative competence in second language learning, while at the same time arguing, like Prabhu (1987), for a holistic approach to classroom activity. Prabhu's work on schools in Karnataka is interesting and has some bearing on my own. Before discussing Prabhu, I want to outline in broad terms what communicative competence involves, especially since he argues against adopting a communicative competence methodology; instead, he advocates what he terms a 'communicational teaching project' (Prabhu, 1987, p.1).

Teaching English in second language classrooms had traditionally concentrated on teaching grammar. The idea was that if the grammar of English was mastered, then students would be able to put sentences together to make coherent speech. English language teaching concentrated on various theories of language learning and language teaching, depending on what was happening in linguistics. So for example, in the heyday of behaviourism, the most widely accepted model for language learning was the audio-lingual one. The importance of grammar for second language learning was given further impetus by Chomskyan linguistics, except that now traditional terminology like the various parts of speech were no longer in vogue, nor was the parsing of sentences. Instead, the learner's 'language acquisition device' had to be activated to master the language. So, once a student had grasped the deep structure of a particular language, then the language had been learnt. One cannot help feeling that what happened in the language lessons was really the teaching of grammar, except that teachers had learnt to describe their activity in somewhat different terms.

With the work done in sociolinguistics, it was recognised that simply knowing the rules of grammar was not enough to learn a language. Widdowson (1978), for example, makes the

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distinction between 'use' and 'usage', arguing that most language teaching activity concentrates on grammatical 'usage' without taking the appropriacy of the context into account. However, the realisation of language as 'use' involves two kinds of ability — one is the 'ability to select which form of sentence is appropriate for a particular <u>linguistic context</u>; the second is the ability to recognise which function is fulfilled by a sentence in a particular <u>communicative situation</u>' (Widdowson, 1978, p.6; his emphasis). Taking such arguments further, Canale and Swain (1980) describe the language learnt by a second language learner, not just in terms of linguistic proficiency but in terms of communicative competence in the target language. In their original descriptive model, they suggested that there are three components to communicative competence — grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. Canale (1983) modified the model to include a fourth category — discourse competence.

Very briefly, grammatical competence is the ability to use the rules of grammar correctly to produce meaningful sentences. Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to produce utterances that are appropriate in a particular context. Strategic competence is the ability to use either verbal or non-verbal strategies to compensate for a breakdown in communication or for enhancing the effectiveness of the speech act. Discourse competence, which is very similar to sociolinguistic competence, is the ability to deal with different genres. In speaking a language we bring into play all these various competencies to communicate effectively, and so it is these competencies that we need to concentrate upon. But how does a descriptive model of speech translate into classroom practices?

As already noted, the idea of communicative competence arose as a reaction to the stress laid on grammatical competence in language learning. With it, the emphasis shifted to the situational appropriacy of utterances. In pedagogic terms, this has meant that language is ordered in terms of functional usefulness, with easier functions like greetings being taught before more difficult ones. Obviously, greetings themselves have to be ordered in terms of

what is appropriate in any given situation (see Wilkins,1976 and Johnson, 1982 for a detailed discussion of such functional and notional syllabi, the ordering of functions to be taught, and the problems encountered).

While I agree that to know a language means the acquisition of communicative competence in that language, I do not think that functional and notional syllabi are a useful way of achieving them. There are three problems with such syllabi. The first problem is to do with the notion of situational appropriacy, a mainstay of the communicative approach. There is often disagreement even within a discourse about what is appropriate. For example, let us take the discourse of thesis writing. Advice on it varies from exhortations to use the active voice and personal pronouns to make the work interesting and readable, to firm counsel that the passive voice and impersonal language are necessary to demonstrate objectivity in academic writing. When such large variations are possible within any discourse, it seems difficult to suggest what type of language should be taught.

The second is the assumption that some functions are unequivocally easier to learn than others. While this may be true in extreme cases (greeting is easier to learn than arguing a point of view in an academic discussion), matters are not always so clear. Is academic discussion easier than discussing, say, pastry making in Britain? Not self-evidently for everyone, from every culture. Both these genres employ several 'functions' of language and both of them, in their own ways, are culture-specific. It seems difficult to me to say that any one ordering could or should be followed.

The third problem, one that Prabhu (1987) addresses, is that in ordering language in terms of functions, we are replacing one type of ordering with another. Language used to be ordered in terms of grammatical structures, now it is to be ordered in terms of the functions of language. Prabhu argues that the methodology for language teaching in India has been that of the structural-oral-situational pedagogy, where structures are first practised on their

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own, and then, examples of where they are employed are presented to the students. As Prabhu puts it, 'the replacement of one mode of syllabus organization by another did not entail any major difference, in terms of classroom activity, from structural-oral-situational pedagogy: specific items of language would still be pre-selected for any teaching unit and practised in contexts which suited them' (Prabhu, 1987, p.14).

My own preference and thinking are similar to those of Prabhu, who argues that the development of communicative competence in a second language requires 'not systematization of language inputs or maximization of planned practice, but rather the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication' (Prabhu, 1987, p.1). My assumption, like Prabhu's, is that language learning can be achieved most effectively by encouraging meaning-focused activity rather than form-focused ones. It is in the attempt to negotiate meaning — to understand what is being said and to respond in a meaningful way in order to genuinely communicate one's thoughts — that language is learnt.

In order to make the classroom activity into a meaning-focused one, both Prabhu and I (independently of each other — his book appeared in 1987, by which time I had already devised my task-sheets and conducted my research) have planned task-based activities where the learners make sense of different pieces of information given to them in order to complete a given task. To do so, learners have to deploy their linguistic ability, both in comprehending the task and in producing language appropriate to their needs. In so doing, they begin to learn the language. Language learning is therefore sub-conscious and almost incidental to the main purpose of classroom activity which is to effect communication between the various people involved. As Prabhu puts it:

> Task-based teaching operates with the concept that,
> while the conscious mind is working out some of the
> meaning-content, a subconscious part of the mind
> perceives, abstracts, or acquires (or re-creates as a
> cognitive structure) some of the linguistic structuring
> embodied in those entities as a step in the

development of an internal system of rules. The
intensive exposure caused by an effort to work out
meaning-content is thus a condition which is
favourable to the subconscious abstraction — or
cognitive formation — of language structure.

(Prabhu, 1987, pp. 69 - 70).

This is not to deny that language learning should deal with the formal aspects of language.

Rather, it is to say that attention to form should be subordinate to dealing with meaning and

that it should be initiated by students rather than being planned and presented by the teacher.

Indeed, in both my work (see Chapter 9) and in Prabhu's, there are indications that learners

become pre-occupied with either the meaning of a word, or its pronunciation, or even the

different ways in which the word can be used while they are focusing on some topic other

than language. Prabhu thinks of such instances as 'a temporary withdrawal from the activity

or interaction on hand' while my reading is that such interactions are also a learning act —

they further the negotiation of meaning between learners and make learners feel that they are

in control of their own activity.

Given such a strong commitment to meaning-focused activites in the classroom and to

task-based approaches, it is surprising to note that Prabhu does not encourage the use of

group-work, and indeed positively discourages it. In the next section, I discuss Prabhu's

arguments, and explain why I have taken a different view.

2.4

Group-work and Small Group Interactions in the Classroom

Within research conducted in Indian classrooms, there seems to be no study which focusses

on group work. As I have just mentioned, even in Prabhu's Communicational Teaching

Project, which was 'concerned with creating conditions for coping with meaning in the

classroom', the use of peer group discussion was discounted. In fact, Prabhu specifically

argues against the use of organised peer group interactions in task based teaching (Prabhu,

1987, pp.81-83). He maintains that the danger with peer group interaction in the case of

second language learners is that the language input they get from their peers is of a quality similar to their own. But a higher quality of language input, what Prabhu terms 'superior data', is best provided either by the teacher or by the text (he does not mention audio-visual media which, I would argue, are also a provider of 'superior data' in his sense). By indulging in peer group interaction, students are closing themselves off to the 'superior data' input they need to improve their language. Indeed, 'there is a risk of fossilization — that is to say of learners' internal systems becoming too firm too soon and much less open to revision when superior data are available' (ibid., p.82).

Prabhu does not offer any concrete data to support these assertions, even though he admits elsewhere that fossilization is a little understood phenomenon (Prabhu, 1987, p. 84). Nor is there any reason why students cannot engage in peer group discussions, in general classroom discussions and use texts and videos that will provide them with 'superior data'. This will ensure that the language input is varied; hence, it is reasonable to speculate, the communication skills they will develop may be both varied and appropriate to the situations in which they find themselves. I hope that the data from the lessons I taped in Central School Bhojpur, as well as the diaries that students kept, counter Prabhu's objections to collaborative group work in task based teaching.

Prabhu is aware of a second argument for peer group work — it provides a 'mutually supportive environment for learners' which is less threatening than interaction with the teacher' (Ibid., p.82). But, he contends, 'at least some learners find it more humiliating to lose face in front of their peers than in front of the teacher: they wish to see themselves as being equal to the former, but not to the latter' (ibid., p.82). None of the students in Central School, Bhojpur pointed this out as a problem. They did not seem to think that making a mistake in front of their peers or seeking their help was in any way humiliating. In fact, in my observations I found that students were more willing to accept help from their peers when they worked in groups rather than when they were involved in teacher fronted

teaching. There were instances in the traditional lessons when a student asked the teacher

the meaning of a word and was not satisfied when a neighbour explained it. He continued

asking for the meaning of the word till the teacher explained it. In the video lessons, on the

other hand, students asked each other the meanings of words (though there were fewer

meaning seeking questions) and were satisfied with the answers they got. If an entire group

did not understand something, they tended to ask the group sitting next to them rather than

the teacher (General Notes, 9th September, 1987).

In the context of group discussions, the diary entries reveal that only one student is irritated

by 'some people who have a tendency to speak more and more' and dominate the

discussions (Group 7 diary, 25th August, 1987). Fifteen other entries counter this,

however, and the students actually seem to feel that they benefit from group discussions.

To take the opinions of two other people from the same group as the entry above:

> 1.A.
>
> In my opinion this is a very good way of teaching because
> due to this students become frank. And we are free,
> especially from teachers. Due to this I think that when we
> discuss among each other it will increase our thinking
> power.
>
> (Group 7 diary, 18th August, 1987).
>
> 1.B.
>
> Due to discussion method of teaching our concepts become
> very clear.
>
> (Group 7 diary, 20th August, 1987).

Within the field of English language teaching, most of the research into peer group

interaction has compared group discussions with teacher fronted classrooms, generally to

the advantage of peer group work. Long et al (1976 as summarised concisely in Chaudron,

1988, p.107), for example, reported that there was 'a sigificantly greater number of

students' pedagogical moves, social skills behaviors, and rhetorical acts (the first two of

which include interactional acts) in group work than in a teacher-fronted (lockstep)

classroom'. Similarly, Doughty and Pica (1986) found that students working in groups used more of the target language for comprehension checks, confirmation requests, clarification requests, repetitions both of themselves and of one another, repairing acts and reacting acts. In other words, the groups used the target language for communication purposes more than students in a teacher-fronted class. Rulon and McCreary (1986) in their comparison between teacher-fronted classes and group work found that peer groups produced speech in the target language equal in quantity and complexity to that in the teacher-led classes, with equal frequencies of confirmation and clarification checks.

While these results are encouraging and seem to suggest that peer group interaction has considerable value in the learning of English as a second language, my own interest is not just in the frequency of turns and the number of category types of talk encountered in peer groups, but also in the nature of these group discussions and the manner in which students negotiate meaning with each other. My inclination in this analysis is therefore more towards qualitative methods than to quantitative ones because, as Barnes and Todd explain, peer group talk has a 'fluid and dynamic quality' which, while making the talk 'delightful to listen to... also makes it inappropriate to pin down into a category system' (Barnes and Todd, 1977, p.17).

Barnes and Todd identify two important problems with categorising talk. The first is that any segment of speech may be performing several functions at the same time. It is therefore difficult to put these utterances into categories on a one-to-one basis, because some utterances may belong to several categories. Long et al counter this by pointing out that there is nothing to stop the researcher from putting the same utterance into several categories if it fits. The problem with this approach is that while it may be possible to do what Long et al suggest, it is not possible to retain the quality of the utterance once it is categorised. For example, the use of an interrupting strategy like 'Yes, but...' during the initial stages of an episode may hold entirely different meanings for the group than if it occurred later in the

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discourse. However, both these occurrences will be classified under 'interrupting strategy' if one were to follow Long et al's method. Long et al have also admitted that in the development of their Embryonic Category System, there are so many categories that the study could become unmanageable (Long et al, 1976).

A second problem with categorising talk in small groups arises with the manner in which meanings are negotiated and jointly constructed in the group. Barnes and Todd point out that meanings within the group 'are constructed not from any one utterance on its own, but from cycles of utterances, perhaps over quite lengthy sections of the interaction. Now these cycles are not readily isolable: they adhere to the interaction between utterances, and the speaker-hearer's intention for, and interpretation of, these utterances' (Barnes and Todd, 1977, p.17). My own observations in the video-led classes confirm that students do indeed construct meanings and solve the Task sheets over long cycles of utterances. It would therefore seem appropriate to study the transcripts of the tape recordings in order to explore how they construct meaning and negotiate the tasks collaboratively.

Barnes and Todd argue that when students are working in small groups, when they are problem-solving, for example, they are engaged in a number of speech acts which enable them to 'clarify their own understanding, as well as communicating with others'. In this process of group talk, they begin to create a body of knowledge and understanding that is different from and more than the individual knowledge of any one member of the group. There is no sense of the regurgitation of inert knowledge. . . or of the retracing of a familiar path; the girls and boys are rearranging their knowledge as they talk, and trying out new combinations and implications' (ibid., p.25). The claim here is that the manner in which language is used to communicate ideas helps the group to construct meaning. They then identify a number of features that they see as important for achieving this. I would like to argue that if, in the second language learning situation, one identifies similar features, this is evidence that the group is 'making meaning' by communicating in the second language. To my mind, it is in this process of communicating with each other that the second language

students gingerly explore the language they are using to get their ideas across.

Long et al, however, would argue differently. They explain that while they are interested 'in a setting in which children *talk to learn,* (they) wanted to know what facilities small group interaction provided for students to talk to *learn to speak,* i.e. to learn how to use a foreign language' (their italics, Long et al, 1976). While I agree that this intention is important and useful in studies of second language research, I cannot accept Long's distinction between an interest in the students' language because of what it tells us about <u>language learning</u> and because of what it tells us about <u>other types of learning</u> that may have come about when the students engage in group work. If we consider language learning in terms of the development of communicative competence, such a distinction is hard to sustain. As I have argued (see 2.3), pupils' abilities to use language for various 'other types' of learning and knowledge are themselves aspects of communicative competence. An example may illustrate this argument. According to Long et al, 'the worker in foreign language teaching will want to recognise use of an interrupting strategy when he sees one, but will not be interested in what is being gained by its use in terms of learning, other than language learning'. I would argue that it is imperative that the worker in the foreign language be interested in <u>both</u> the interrupting strategy <u>and</u> the ends which it achieves. The distinction between learners' performance in the target language per se and their performance in the target language to achieve certain communicative ends cannot be separated if we are to truly study the process by which students gain communicative competence in the target language. It is in the tentative and exploratory use of language, whereby the students generate 'new knowledge', that language is used communicatively. I have therefore attempted a more holistic approach than the one adopted by Long et al.

One of the most important characteristics that Barnes and Todd identify about small groups is its 'intimate' and 'exploratory' nature. 'The exploratory characteristics they identify would include: 'hesitations and changes of direction; tentativeness shown in intonation; assertions and questions in the hypothetical modality, inviting modification and surmise;

self-monitoring and reflexivity.' Barnes and Todd are also interested in the collaborative nature of learning. They argue that collaborative learning contributes to learners' handling of ideas, and that these ideas include 'hypothesis-forming and testing, and the ability to go beyond the given information and to generate new questions and tasks' (Barnes and Todd, 1977, p.3). Barnes and Todd explain how they identify collaborative features in the speech of the pupils they study; because of the use I make of this, I shall quote it at some length.

> This collaborativeness might be shown in their talk by
> markers such as these: close links between succeeding
> utterances, including frequent modifications or extension
> of a preceding remark; frequent questions, especially
> those asking for further expansion of a contribution;
> self-awareness in approaching the task, including
> deliberate control of the discussion by recapitulating,
> restatement of the task, and the explicit interrelation of
> viewpoints. We expected collaborativeness also to be
> characterised by attentiveness to the social need of others,
> and by a low level of the competition to the right to speak.
> To sum up, collaboration was thought to depend upon (a)
> invitation to others to participate, (b) extension of
> previous contributions, and (c) acknowledgements of
> others' identities.

(Barnes and Todd, 1977, p.3)

Barnes and Todd use four functional components to describe peer group talk — discourse moves, social skills, logical processes and cognitive strategies. The major work on discourse moves has been done by Sinclair and Coulthard, and as I explain in Chapter 8, I have found it limiting in analysing classroom talk. The trouble with it, I shall argue, is that once the various initiation-response-feedback moves have been identified, discourse analysis has little further to contribute. Such an analysis does not really explain the reasons for certain moves, why they occur at particular times or what significance they have. I have also not devoted much attention to 'logical processes', not because they are unimportant but because they seem obvious to me from the data. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant functions are the 'social skills' involved in group problem solving and the 'cognitive strategies' the groups employ to arrive at a negotiated answer. What Barnes and Todd identify as 'social skills' and 'cognitive strategies' are similar in kind to Halliday's 'interpersonal' and 'ideational' speech acts respectively (Halliday, 1973).

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My analysis of group discussions takes these features as essential to the study of communication and learning in small groups and tries to identify some of them in the second language classroom. I shall also consider any other features of 'communicative competence' that arise during the group discussions. These will include bilingualism, for, as I argue in the next section, this is one of the competencies for students learning English in India.

2.5

Bilingualism in the classroom

Most studies of bilingualism in the classroom situation have arisen because of policy decisions to introduce bilingual programmes into education. Thus, Wong Fillmore and Valadez (1986), in their review of the literature on bilingual education, report that there are two kinds of bilingual education programmes in America — one that aims to keep the teaching and learning of two languages separate (as advocated by Swain, 1983) and another which 'mixes' the two languages (as reported by McLaughlin, 1978 and Ovando and Collier, 1985). Several research efforts have therefore concentrated on finding out which approach is better and why this may be so (e.g., Legaretta-Marcaida, 1977 and 1979; Wong Fillmore, 1980). A second strand of research has dealt with the question of whether the extensive use of the dominant majority language has been detrimental to the learning of the mother tongue in the 'mixed' or 'concurrent' approach (e.g., Milk, 1981 and 1986; Sapiens, 1982). Apart from these types of studies, research has also concentrated on studying bilingual immersion programmes as in Canada where French immersion programmes are popular with some middle class English speaking families (Heller, 1993) or in Finland where Swedish immersion programmes are increasingly gaining in popularity with Finnish families (Bjorklund, 1993).

While such studies are fascinating, they are of limited value in the context of my research for one very important reason. In most of these studies, the majority language, whether it be English, French or Finnish, is the first language of a sizeable population. In such cases the children learning the dominant language have to learn to speak with other people who are

predominantly monolingual. In these instances, bilingual education is often seen as a preliminary step in the attempt to make speakers of a minority language fluent in the majority language. Thus, both the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 for the whole of the United States and the English Language Act passed in some states aim at making children who do not have English as their mother tongue proficient in it. Similarly, in Britian, the bilingual support teaching in primary schools is seen as a transitional programme with proficiency in English as its goal. Such situations can be recognised and studied in terms of diglossia with English as the high language and the mother tongue as the low one. In all probability the domain distinctions in these situations will be all too apparent with English being used in the wider world and the mother tongue being reserved for the home and for other people who are members of the same minority community. The socio-political ethos in these instances is such that bilingual education has lower status than monolingual education and children undergoing the programme are often ashamed to admit to their bilingual status because it marks them off as being different from and in some ways inferior to their monolingual peers (Parke, 1993; Martin-Jones, in press). The literature on bilingualism reflects this difference not just explicitly as when Martin-Jones discusses the status of bilingual support teachers but also implicitly as when she refers to the work by Cazden et al (1980) among Mexican-Americans. She writes: 'The classes were positively evaluated by parents who opted for bilingual provision for the children even when their children qualified for monolingual provision in English in mainstream classes' (my emphasis).

The situation in India is very different. English is almost nobody's mother tongue and nearly everyone who speaks it uses it as a second language (with either Hindi or one of the other languages as their mother tongue). In groups where several people share a knowledge of English and another Indian language, it is common to find that they switch from one language to the other. There is no stigma attached to such switching. On the contrary, it is thought of as indicative of sharpness of mind and quickness of thought. Indeed, bilingual jokes and puns are often intelligence and prestige markers. There is also official sanction for bilingualism in the sense that breakfast time television, which is wholly state owned and has

owned and has one of the highest viewing figures, prides itself on being bilingual between Hindi and English. I would therefore argue that the ability to move easily and almost imperceptibly from the English language to another and back into English is a distinguishing feature of Indian speakers of English, and that any student who learns English in India must also simultaneously develop this ability. The skill with which people effect 'switches' between two or more languages (English and Hindi in the case of the Central School students) I shall term bilingual competence. In my discussion of bilingualism, I use the term 'bilingualism' as defined by Mackey (1968), as: 'the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual' (p.555). Throughout this discussion, I shall use the term, 'switch' or 'code-switching' in the sense in which Gumperz (1982) has defined it, as 'the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems' (p.59).

Bilingual competence involves not just fluency in two or more languages but also an intimate understanding of how they work. It is not just switching between them but also knowing how and when to make the switch. The research literature has concentrated on two main aspects of bilingual code-switching, the first being that of the grammar or syntax of code-switching and the second being a more pragmatic or discourse related approach.

The grammatical perspective on code-switching concentrates on the linguistic constraints of switches, discussing the points at which switching between two languages is permissible. Poplack (1980) identifies three types of switching — tag-switching, intersentential switching and intrasentential switching. Tag-switching involves the insertion of a tag from one language into a speech act that is conducted mainly in the other language. In the case of Central School students and teachers, the most common tag used was the word, ' हाँ ' meaning 'yes' when said with a falling intonation and 'pardon, I did not quite hear you' when said with a rising intonation. Instances of tag-switching abound in the data and I have identified them whenever I have anything additional to say about the tag.

Intersentential switching, which is more complex than tags, involves a switch occurring at a clausal boundary, with one clause in one language and the next one in the other. To take just one example from my data, this comment occurs in the video-led lessons when the teacher asks the students to stop their group discussions . One of the students says, 'group का मतलब ही है कि we can discuss' (the meaning of a group is that we can discuss). Here, the student has shifted languages at कि and has come into English at a point where the English can stand as a sentence on its own. As a bilingual speaker, I would have found it incorrect if he had said, 'group का मतलब ही है that we can discuss'. This is because of the use of the word, ही in Hindi, where one would expect the word कि later on in the sentence. Similar sentence structures exist in English — for example, if we encounter 'neither' at the beginning of a sentence, we expect to find 'nor' later on in the sentence. It is very hard to move between two languages in 'neither-nor' sentences. Similarly, it was imperative for the student to use कि in Hindi before he switched to English.

Intrasentential switching, according to Poplack, is the most complex kind of switching and as Romaine argues, 'to be avoided by all but the most fluent bilinguals' (Romaine, 1989, p.113). Here the switching occurs within the clause or sentence boundary, and is often accompanied by inflections in the language into which the switch has been made. For example, the teacher when explaining the saying, necessity is the mother of invention, says, 'necessity जी'. Here, he has inflected the word, necessity' with the honorific, ' जी ' from Hindi (for a fuller transcription and analysis of this incident, see chapter 8).

My data reveal that both the students and teachers use all three types of grammatical switches in their communications. When discussing bilingualism as a phenomenon in the classroom, I have not identified the grammatical nature of the switches because it seems fairly obvious just by glancing at the data. It is noteworthy that neither the students nor the teacher ever made a grammatical error in code-switching, indicating perhaps, as Goffman (1974) suggests, that bilinguals master such techniques very early on in their language development.

The other phenomenon in code-switching is the pragmatic one. Much work has been done by Gumperz (e.g., Gumperz, 1982) in identifying the functions of switching. I have preferred to leave the discussion of this aspect of code-switching to the chapters on classroom interaction in the traditional lessons and the video-led ones (Chapters 8 and 9) for the functions of such switches are embedded in the classroom discourse and so fit more appropriately there. Suffice it to say here that switches are often used for moving between different kinds of activities, that is to say, that they help to change footing within a discourse. Thus, discussions in groups on the task at hand often occur in English while the meta-talk on classroom activity is often conducted in Hindi. Thus, language is used to signal a change in frames (Goffman, 1974). As Romaine puts it:

> What distinguishes bilinguals from monolinguals is that bilinguals usually have greater resources. In Goffman's terms, they would have a wider 'frame space' or more means available to them for departing from a fixed footing, at least when they are allowed to develop and draw on the resources of both codes... Thus, code-switching is a mode of bilingual performance which allows the bilingual to display his full communicative competence.

(Romaine, 1989, p. 157)

It is this 'bilingual performance' which I have termed 'bilingual competence', and I would argue strongly that no account of the use of English in India can ignore it.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1

Introduction

In developing a research method to understand the process involved when students use a video component in their language learning, I have relied heavily upon the literature on research methods in the social sciences, especially those employed in the study of classrooms. This reliance has been particularly important, since there is no tradition of research into classroom processes in an Indian setting. The only study of schooling as a process in India has been that of Thapan (1991); and the only study of the introduction of a different method of teaching English to Indian students has been that of Prabhu (1987). While Prabhu's project and mine share several pedagogical assumptions (see Chapter 2 for a discussion), there are crucial differences in what we set out to do. Prabhu planned his project as a special study that lasted five years and was conducted in seven schools. The teachers were part of a 'project team' (p.21); most of them do not seem to have been regular teachers at the schools in which the project was carried out. In my case, however, the plan was to introduce the video element in a regular classroom, and record the various ways in which students and teachers interacted with this new element to discover its potential in language learning and language teaching situations in Central Schools. Therefore I could not draw upon Prabhu's project by way of research method. Thapan (1991) studied a private, non-state run school (The Rishi Valley School) which has a very particular religious ideology. Her method, like mine, is essentially an ethnographic case study. In the Indian context, this seems particularly apt, given the fact that research into classroom processes is in its infancy and we are only beginning to discover what factors influence the teaching-learning process.

In defining the scope of this study, I have been conscious that one important task is simply to

observe, and try to understand and explain current English language teaching practices in Standard XI in Indian Central Schools. It seems to me that unless we, as Indians, understand what happens currently in our schools and in our English lessons, we will be unable to study changes that might occur when video is introduced. In the absence of such in-depth studies of current teaching practices, I have thought it necessary to examine in some detail how teachers ordinarily teach English.

3.2

The Survey Method

One way of studying current teaching practices would be a survey method. I could have devised a questionnaire, based perhaps on my own experiences as a student and later as a teacher in India, to be sent out to Central School teachers all over the country in order to discover the teaching methods adopted. However, I refrained from doing so for both theoretical and practical reasons.

On a theoretical level, the problems that I faced stemmed mainly from the absence of previous research. I feared that any questionnaire I designed would at best be vague and imprecise. If I put in very much specific detail, it might merely confirm my own preconceptions and not lead to a better understanding of classroom processes. It would uncover answers to only those questions asked and any additional interesting teaching practices currently employed would not register in the survey. This would be compounded by the fact that most surveys are constructed as multiple choice questions or as questions which require short, constricted answers. In my situation, apart from not knowing precisely what questions to ask, such a multiple choice survey would probably be of little use in discovering the process of language teaching. Finally, there might also be a discrepancy between the answers in the survey and actual classroom practices. This could be particularly acute in my situation as a researcher living in the West and sending out questions to teachers in India. They might feel threatened by a questionnaire originating from a British university, and might well put in answers that they think I would want to hear rather than what they wish to say.

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On a more practical level, if I had sent out the survey questionnaire from England, the stamps to cover the reply would cost each Indian teacher the price of an evening meal. So, response rates would probably have been considerably lower even than the low response rates frequently achieved by postal questionnaires in the West. Reply paid mailings to India are cumbersome and difficult to arrange. Besides, teachers are also very busy people. I felt it would be presumptuous of me to ask them to complete the survey questionnaire, especially when the questions were necessarily vague and ill-focussed.

I decided, therefore, to observe the English lessons being taught in one school — Central School, Bhojpur — in order to understand in detail the process of language teaching and language learning. It seemed to me preferable to study the workings of one language classroom in depth so that an understanding of the process could act as a basis for further research. This is also in keeping with other proposals for research in classrooms where English is taught as a second language. For example, Allwright (1972) argues for detailed descriptions of the events that occur in an ESL classroom saying, 'we need studies of what actually happens, not just of what recognizable teaching methods, strategies or techniques are employed by the teacher, but of what really happens between teacher and class' (pp. 150-166). Other researchers of ESL classrooms similarly call for detailed descriptive studies of classroom processes (e.g., Long, 1980; Gaies, 1983; Allwright, 1988; Ellis, 1990).

However, unlike most research in ESL classrooms (see Chapter 2), I have chosen to conduct a qualitative study rather than a quantitative one. This is not because I believe that they are two diametrically opposite research methods between which a researcher has to choose on philosophical grounds. I do not believe that any method or research design is inherently superior to any other for all purposes. What is important in research is to use a design that is appropriate for the research question at hand. As Delamont and Hamilton (1984, pp. 3-24) argue, and Hammersley (1985, p. 3) agrees, repeating their conclusions verbatim: 'Instead of looking for one solution to all problems, we suggest that more consideration be given to the nature of the specific problem being faced and, hence, to choosing a particular research

strategy, appropriate for that problem'.

3.3

An Experimental Design

It seems to me that in the case of studying the introduction of video in English classrooms at the '+2' level in Indian Central Schools, I could have designed a quasi-experiment which studied the differences between a class where video was introduced and another where it was not. I could have chosen a 'pretest - posttest control group design' as explained by Campbell and Stanley (1966). In this design, there are two groups to which students are assigned randomly. Both groups are tested before the experiment is conducted (in this case, before video is introduced) and then the experiment is conducted on one group while the other group acts as a control. After the experiment is complete, both the groups are again tested and the difference in their performance noted. One could diagrammatically represent the study as follows:

R   A1————→X————————→A2

R   B1————————————————→B2
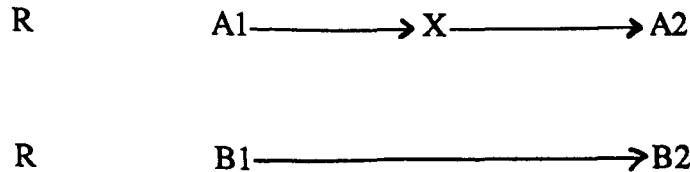
where 'R' stands for randomization; 'A1' is the experimental group before video has been introduced to it and 'A2' is the same group after the introduction of video, which is itself represented by the letter, 'X'. Similarly, 'B1' is the control group which is not exposed to video and 'B2' is the same group tested at the time when A2 is tested. A comparison of A1 with A2 and A2 with B2 will reveal the difference that video makes to the learning of the group of students, A1.

In the absence of a control group, one could not know whether any difference between A2 and A1 is caused, not by X, but simply because of a passage of time between the two points. This problem of maturation is countered by the presence of the control group, B. Those

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differences between A2 and A1 which also occur as differences between B2 and B1 could be discounted as having occurred due to maturation.

A second factor that might affect the result is that of history. Again in the absence of a control group, it could be argued that A2-A1 difference occurs, not because of the treatment X, but because of other incidents taking place at the same time. However, the presence of the control group which, in an ideal world, is also exposed to exactly the same incidents as the experimental group, should be able to counter this threat to validity too.

A third problem is that of testing. Quite often the questions asked in the pretest, or the task that is given to students at the pretest stage, might alert the students to the nature of the study the investigator is carrying out. They might therefore venture answers they think more appropriate at the post-test stage. Thus a difference between A2 and A1 might arise because of the testing procedure employed and the tests that have been devised rather than because of the experimental variable being tested. Again, the presence of the control group would counter this threat to validity.

The next problem is that of 'instrument decay'. This term is used both literally for mechanical defects that might develop in the measurement instruments being used and more metaphorically for any change in the measuring technique itself that might affect the measurement function. For example, in the case of measuring the effectiveness of video in the teaching if English, a difference found between A2 and A1 might not have been caused by X but might have come about because my own methods of observation improved over time. However, because similar methods of observation would be employed in showing the differences between B2 and B1, any differences caused by instrument decay would be accounted for. Similarly, regression, selection and mortality cannot confound the results because the random initial assignment of subjects to groups A and B ensures that the two groups are unbiased.

This design thus seems able to show that differences occurring between A2 and B2, and therefore some differences between A2 and A1, are because of the presence of video in the classroom. In spite of all these advantages, however, I chose not to use this experimental design for several reasons.

The first and most important reason is that in any experimental design, the success of the experiment lies in controlling for all the variables except the one variable that we want to study. It seems to me very difficult, if not impossible, to control for all the variables that might affect the result. Unlike laboratory controlled experiments where it is relatively easy to control, balance or eliminate variables, classrooms by their very nature are much more fluid and difficult to control. The chances of unwanted variables 'cluttering up' the data (Dominowski, 1981, p.61) in a classroom are so great that it would be very difficult to adhere to the experimental model.

Besides, even if one could find ways of controlling these variables, the assumption is that one knows which variables might affect the study. However, this is almost impossible in the Indian context since there is so little previous research to fall back on. In theory, one could use randomisation techniques to overcome the problem of uncontrolled variables, but for that to work, the samples we would have to experiment with would have to be large. This was obviously impossible in practice.

A third and crucial reason for not adopting this method has to do with testing. It seems to me that if the thrust behind introducing video is to develop communicative competence in English, then we would need tests that could reliably inform us about the extent to which such competence is developed. Although Canale and Swain (1980) have suggested that communicative competence could be seen to be composed of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences, they 'do not provide us with anything close to a blue-print of how to set about constructing a comprehensive battery of language tests' (Skehan, 1987, pp. 195-206). Despite several attempts to develop such tests, given the

highly complex activity that language learning is, it is not surprising that as yet there are no standardised tests. Since such tests are unavailable, I did not feel that I could embark on devising such a test, especially since we do not even know with any certainty what factors are involved in the communicative competence of Standard XI students in India.

In using an experimental model, there is yet another problem, this one more specific to the introduction of video. One would need to ask how much of the difference between A2 and A1 is because of video and how much of it is because of associated changes in method that accompany the introduction of video. If we want to make sure that the method does not confound our results about the effectiveness of video, should we try to keep the method of teaching between the control and experimental groups the same? The answer is not self-evident.

This problem of the method versus the medium has been the centre of attention of a large number of studies in the field of media research for educational purposes. Clark (1983) focuses on the issue of whether change is brought about in the teaching-learning situation because a particular medium is used or whether it is the teaching methodology that brings about this change. Most studies of educational media have been concerned with the effects of a particular medium (radio, TV, video and so on) and compared the teaching using that medium with other more traditional ways of teaching. Their findings have not been encouraging. Schramm (1977), for example, examines the results from nearly one thousand laboratory controlled experiments on the effectiveness of educational television and finds he results 'somewhat less illuminating than they might be'. Cohen, Ebling and Kulik (1980) survey a series of meta-analyses of the effectiveness of TV and video in instruction, and do not find a marked improvement over more traditional teaching methods. Clark (1983) reports that 'most current summaries and meta-analyses of media comparison studies clearly suggest that media do not influence learning under any conditions' (p. 445). In Britain, the Annan Committee on the Future of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom (1977) found that while broadcasters and leading educationists were convinced of the effectiveness of educational

broadcasts, 'there was little research material to substantiate this act of faith'.

Clark (1983) argues that even where media research and media comparison studies show any significant differences, they do so because the research methodology has been confounded:

> Even in the few cases where dramatic changes in achievement or ability have followed the introduction of a medium, as was the case with television in El Salvador (Schramm, 1977), it was not the medium that caused the change but rather a curricular reform that accompanied the change.

> (Clark, 1983, p.445).

Bates (1987), however, suggests that such negative conclusions are neither surprising nor illuminating. He argues that Clark's evidence is problematic from the point of view of broadcasters and other users of instructional media; his argument is worth quoting at some length.

> Clark's evidence is drawn primarily from comparative studies where teaching through one medium is compared with teaching (in the same way) through another medium: a classroom lecture for instance being compared with the same lecture delivered via television.

> But a broadcaster might argue that such a use of television is highly inappropriate, since it does not exploit the unique characteristics of television. As soon as television though goes outside the lecture theatre to provide real-world examples, or makes use of animation techniques, then it is teaching in a different way from the lecturer: the instructional method as well as the medium changes.

> (Bates, 1987, pp.8-9).

It seems to me that in wanting to do strict, laboratory type experiments on the effectiveness of media, we are in danger of losing the very qualities that makes one medium different from another. To take an analogy, it is as though we compared a stage-coach and a motor-car, but used horses to draw the car so as to ensure that it was the effects of the vehicles themselves we were comparing.

Like Bates, I would argue that 'changes in instructional method are intrinsic features of particular media — computers for instance lend themselves better to certain kinds of instructional method than others' (p.9). Indeed, it seems to me that one reason why something like video might work better than conventional modes of instruction lies precisely in its ability to change the method and thereby the nature of the classroom interaction, so as to facilitate learning. This is actually not as far away from Clark's argument as one might suppose. One could agree with Clark if he were to restate his argument only slightly to say that the medium alone does not bring about significant differences. Part of what a new medium does is help to change the method, which brings about a concomitant change in the teaching and learning behaviours observed in a classroom. Thus it is really a combination of the medium, the method, the teacher and the specific teaching-learning situation that make the process of learning English more effective and more profitable. It is this hypothesis that I would like to explore.

An additional problem with using experimental designs to study the impact of video within an instructional context is that the same programme can be used, and indeed is used, by different teachers for different purposes. Heidt (1978) points out that no programme is an 'educational communication' on its own. The function and meaning of programmes alters with use, and sometimes they are used in a manner that neither the programme producers nor the course developers have imagined. As Heidt (1978) puts it, 'the distinctive mark of a medium does not consist of an inherent objective quality, but springs from the function which an object performs in instructional communication'. Therefore the same video package changes according to the use it is put to, and this aspect cannot be fully taken into account in an experimental model.

There is also the added need to control for quality across media in a strict experimental design. If we are investigating the use of video in language teaching and comparing it with the use of textual material, then the quality of the video programme and the quality of the text have to match in order to facilitate comparison. 'How do you know,' asks Bates (1981), 'that the

quality of presentation of a television programme — one that exploits the potential of the medium — is equivalent in quality to the presentation in a book or lecture?' This raises a set of issues for which neither academics nor producers working in educational television have answers — what constitutes quality either in text or in television, who determines the standards of quality, and how one can compare the two are all problematic issues. Unless such questions are answered, it would be difficult to obtain exactly equivalent lessons, one text-based and the other video-led, to compare.

Finally, the field of educational media studies suffers from one of the same problems that communicative competence studies face. Given the complex way in which we react to and learn from media, one needs a considerable degree of understanding of the factors that affect the use of video (or indeed of any other medium) before sufficiently fruitful hypotheses can be devised and experiments conducted. As Bates (1981) points out, 'in the field of instructional media, we have not really progressed much farther than observing the consequences of using media for instruction — and we shall see, we have not done even that very systematically. Certainly, there does not exist an adequate (or even inadequate) theory of instructional media'. Bates exhorts media researchers to concentrate on accurate observation of the nature of learning and instruction through the use of different media, and based on that, to develop a set of hypotheses that can be tested empirically. The first task, as Bates sees it, is therefore a detailed description of how various media are taken up and used in real educational settings. The call again is to explore 'what is going on out there in the field', a call very similar to the one made by researchers working on second language classrooms.

3.4

Qualitative Research

In-depth studies of 'a particular instance in action' in its natural environment are more often qualitative than quantitative (Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis, 1977; Walker, 1978). Although there are genuine differences between different types of qualitative research, such as ethnography, participant observation, qualitative observation, case study and field study

(Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, p.193), they are often subtle and for my purposes what they have in common is more significant. Hence, unless I wish to make a specific point, I shall refer to this whole complex of qualitative methods as ethnography. However, there is one type of qualitative study, action research, which I shall not use synonymously with ethnography, but almost in opposition to it, because while ethnography attempts to study a research setting without interfering in its running, action research, as the name suggests, involves the active participation of members in a field. Thus, while the researcher may attempt to be a fly on the wall in pure ethnographic research, it may be that in action research, the researcher becomes a kind of teacher; or the teacher or, less frequently, the students may become researchers themselves.

In my case, the study could be described as action research drawing upon ethnographic methods. I was actively involved in developing the video package and in training the teacher to use it during his English classes. In an ideal world, as Stenhouse (1975) has advocated, the teacher and I would have collaborated even more than we did with the teacher playing a larger part in the planning of the research and the subsequent analysis of the data, as well as in its actual conduct. This would have had the benefits that we would have been able to address together the problems that emerged and develop appropriate materials, and that the study would have included the teacher's insight into the processes of teaching and learning.

However, because of logistical and time constraints (mainly because of my location in England), I had to develop the video package by myself, though I did have the advantage of observing first the language teaching in some classes. It must also be acknowledged that my project might have been novel and difficult for teachers in India to undertake jointly with me, because the Indian system does not encourage any professional autonomy or reflexiveness among teachers and positively discourages initiative (see Chapter 7). Nevertheless, the teacher and I worked very closely during the introduction of the package and had lengthy discussions, not just about the classes to come but also about what had been done in the previous lessons. My involvement as a change agent, thus, was a very active one.

As I have said, the method I used to study the school could be broadly described as ethnographic. Before discussing the advantages of the ethnographic method, I should describe what ethnography aims to do. According to Hargreaves and Woods (1984),

> It aims to bring to life by close observation and/or depth interview the internal workings of an institution or culture, to reveal the perspectives of its members, to highlight the constraints that they work under, the kinds of adaptations they make as a result, and to make explicit the routine and taken-for-granted features of institutional life on which orderly management may depend.
>
> (Hargreaves and Woods, 1984, p.1).

This method of enquiry perceives the members of a culture that is being studied as active, dynamic individuals who are constantly negotiating with each other to make sense of the world they live in. Therefore, say the ethnographers, in order to study a culture we need to explore it in its 'natural' setting — 'we cannot understand the social world by studying artificial simulations of it in experiments and interviews. To restrict the investigation of social behaviour to such settings is to discover only how people behave in experimental and interview situations' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 9). This implies that, as far as possible, one should avoid making assumptions beforehand about the system being studied, and one's hypotheses should be generated in the process of doing research.

When a particular case is described in its entirety (or rather in as entire a manner as the research is capable of) the complexity of social interactions is revealed. People who advocate ethnography believe that its particular strength lies in exploring and revealing the complex nature of the situation under study. Adherence to quantitative methods, they argue, can never achieve this because quantitative methodologists do not approach reality as a complex, constantly changing whole but look upon it as something that can be divided into small units to be studied individually. Thus, the advocates of ethnographic methods pride themselves in having an approach that is naturalistic, holistic, contextual and conducted in depth. Another feature that marks the use of ethnography is the study of process rather than product.

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In evaluation studies, one of the criticisms of the experimental method has been that it produces only summative assessment. It is now perceived that summative assessment alone is not helpful enough; an element of formative evaluation is necessary if we are to understand the effectiveness of any programme. It is no longer enough to say that programme X or innovation Y has or has not worked; what is now being asked is why, what are the conditions that make them effective or ineffective. All this points to a focus on understanding the process of the introduction and sustenance of an innovation in a school or college instead of just concluding that the introduction of innovation is either effective or not. In this context, Rist argues that qualitative methods involve a longitudinal perspective in the research. This means that the 'presence of the observer at the site allows for a continuity and ability to document the processes of change as they occur... It is this continuous relation to the field that gives the qualitative researcher a sense of patterns, of what is predictable, of how change is likely to be received (or rejected), and of what factors precipitate acceptance or resistance.' (Rist, 1984, p.164). In my particular situation, the use of ethnography enables me to examine the process of the introduction of video instead of just the outcome of such an introduction.

All in all, ethnography seemed the most appropriate method for my purposes. In addition, though here I am writing with hindsight rather than reporting considerations that led to my choice, ethnographic methods can expose discrepancies between rhetoric and practice, can allow the observer to understand the same phenomenon from different angles, and can take account of and even benefit from wholly unanticipated events.

3.4.1
Roles of Researcher and Change Agent

Throughout the time I spent at Central School, Bhojpur, I was conscious of having a dual role as researcher and as change agent. In the literature on ethnography, researchers are often exhorted to participate as little as possible in the processes they are observing. The role of the researcher is that of a dispassionate witness: observing and recording in great detail for

analysis at a later date. My role as a change agent might seem to be in direct conflict with this model. Change agents, by their very nature, are involved in bringing about changes by interfering with the system.

I would argue, however, that the conflict betwen the two roles is more apparent than real. The 'interference' in which a change agent must engage is not the 'interference' that damages research; at least an analytical distinction between legitimate and illegitimate interference can be drawn. An analogy with experimental research in the physical sciences may prove helpful here. A research chemist mixing two chemicals to see what temperature changes result could be described as both change agent and researcher. Clearly, nobody would deny the chemist the right to interfere in the sense of mixing the chemicals. Equally clearly, however, there are other sorts of interference that are forbidden, such as allowing the chemist's breath or body heat to affect the temperature readings being taken. The ideal is that all the interference by the experimenter is deliberate, or at least noticed, and its effects explicitly studied. (If the chemist's body heat cannot be excluded completely, then it has to be taken into account.)

The case is similar when one is researching into the introduction of video to teach English at the '+2' level in Central Schools. The only way to study the impact of the video package when it is introduced into the classroom is by introducing it. This implies interference in the existing school system and in the existing language teaching methods. But this interference on the part of the change agent is permissible in exactly the same way as for the chemist to mix the two chemicals. The main danger of illegitimate interference, it seems to me, is that researchers who are also change agents are liable to have some personal investment in the 'success' of the innovation they are studying, which may bias their observations and interpretations. While I recognise the possibility of self-deception in these matters, I do not believe this particular danger applies in my own case. Although I spent a considerable amount of time developing the video materials, I did not and do not feel committed to the idea that video must be an effective tool — let alone the most effective — in English language teaching. I was more interested in observing the processes that occur in the classroom when

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the teacher introduces a video package. I arrived in Central School Bhojpur genuinely not knowing how the innovation would be received, and eager to find out. I did not feel that any particular conclusion would be a personal success or vindication for me, or that any other would count as a failure. Hence I do not feel that my role as a change agent greatly affected the study.

Indeed, being both a researcher and a change agent may have at least one benefit. One well-recognised problem for research is that people who know they are being studied sometimes alter their behaviour — the Hawthorne effect. This may be especially true when the researcher visibly stands back, does not participate in what is happening, and notes it all down carefully. But if the researcher is a change agent at the same time, my experience in Bhojpur suggests, people may not be so fully aware that they are being studied. They are learning to cope with the changes brought about, and they tend to see the outsider in their midst mainly as the author of these changes, rather than in any other role. Thus the Hawthorne effect may be reduced.

On the other side, although an ethnographer may try to be an impartial observer without interfering in the system under study, it seems to me that some such interference in unavoidable. The techniques used by case study workers — observations, interviews, video and audio-taping — all require an active participation by the researcher in the field. Within ethnographic methods the role of the researcher in the study becomes crucial. The researcher, Kemmis (1980) reminds us, 'is not an automaton shorn of human interests and programmed to execute a design devoid of socio-political consequences.' Research, in his words, is 'active and interventive... much as we may prefer to think otherwise, research is not merely the application of sophisticated techniques and procedures which yield up true statements' (Kemmis, 1980, p.119). On the contrary, social science research is reflexive in nature: we are forced to 'recognise that we are part of the social world we study.... This is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, pp.14-15). This means that the researcher and the researched share the same social world.

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same social world. The researcher tries to understand and come to terms with the world that is being studied. Similarly the people who are being researched have to understand and come to terms with the rather strange phenomenon of the researcher being present in their midst. They have to figure out what the researcher stands for, how threatening the researcher is to their well being, how helpful the presence of the researcher may be for them (both individually and as a group) and finally, what the research may mean to their way of life both as the research is being conducted and when the researcher writes up the report. So it seems to me that the difference between researcher and change agent is a difference in degree rather than in kind, and not really that the ethnographer does not interfere in the system while the change agent does.

In my own case, I tried to be an ethnographer observing ordinary, everyday lessons before the introduction of video. But during its introduction, I was in large measure a change agent. All the same, in this period, I also had to observe the lessons where video was being introduced and fit back into the role of the ethnographer. I had to combine these two potentially difficult roles for a large part of my time in Bhojpur. I have, therefore, consciously considered the implications of these two roles throughout the research, discussing them whenever appropriate.

3.5

Research Design

My own research design, then, is a combination of ethnographic methods and action research. The aim was to study the potential of video in English language teaching by introducing it into a real life Central School setting. The project was a study of the introduction of an innovation, namely video in the English classroom. I intended to study the problems that teachers and students face when encountering an innovation, and the difference that video might make to the teaching and learning of English. In many ways, my objectives were similar to those of 'illuminative evaluation' studies which aim to understand how the introduction of an innovatory programme operates; how it is influenced by the context in

which it is introduced; and how the participants in the programme react to it (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984).

My research was conducted in Central School, Bhojpur from 6th July 1987 to 25th September 1987. Central School, Bhojpur was chosen for several reasons. First of all, Bhojpur was the place where I myself had studied as a child, and later taught, though neither of these in Central School. My brothers had studied there, however, and I felt I knew the sort of life the teachers and students lead in a place like Bhojpur. Besides, gaining access to the school would be easier than if I went to a school where I was not known. This aspect was particularly important because of the rigidly hierarchical relationship between Central Schools and the Central Government-appointed 'quango' responsible for them, the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS). To study any Central School, one has to obtain permission from the KVS, and once this has been granted, the school has little choice but to accept the researcher. However, this brings with it obvious dangers: while being co-operative and cordial in manner, teachers and others may be unwilling to be open and honest with the researcher, in case they say or do the wrong thing and it gets reported to KVS. My hope was that by showing that I 'belonged' to the place in some senses, I could counteract this mistrust; then according to Indian custom, I would be well 'looked after' and would gain easier access to information.

A second reason for choosing Bhojpur has to do with its pan-Indian character. I was keen to find a school which was as representative as possible of India in all its social and linguistic variety. Central School Bhojpur fits the description well. Because the town of Bhojpur has grown around a nationalised steel manufacturing industry, the people employed here come from all over India. They speak different languages at home; they belong to the entire range of castes; and the industry employs people at many different social levels. All in all, whatever factors affect the impact of video there are unlikely to be purely local in their application.

July, 1987, in their traditional English lessons; then, from 29th July to 16th August, train the English teacher to use a video package that I had developed based on one of the chapters in their text-book; and finally, from 17th August to 27th September, observe the introduction of the video package. I had visited the school in February, 1987, spoken with both the Principal and the two English teachers who taught Standard XI, and arranged to start the research in July. I had chosen July, August and September to conduct the research (even though they are the hottest months of the year) because this was the mid-term. I knew that the students came into Standard XI in April and I had wanted to give them time to settle in with their new teachers and the new class before I went into the school with a new project. Any later would have brought the students too close to their examinations and I do not think I would-have been very welcome at that time, even if I had obtained KVS's permission to conduct the research.

In spite of these detailed arrangements, events did not turn out quite as I had hoped. To mention just one example, the teacher I had planned to study departed suddenly and unexpectedly on a training course, leaving his classes to be taught for some weeks by one of his colleagues — a possibility that had not even been mentioned to me in February (see Chapter 5 and 6 for details of this and other developments). Though I had not anticipated this particular problem, I had anticipated that there would be problems, and had built in some contingency plans, so that they did not prove too damaging. Indeed they had positive value: I was interested in observing teaching and learning as it actually takes place rather than what curriculum designers and planners hope is taking place. Occurrences in the school which are outside the purview of planning, but nonetheless concern the students and the teacher involved, are worthy of study in their own right for the insight they might provide us. And an ethnographic study, rather than an experimental design, is robust enough to cope with this kind of sudden change in classroom practice. As an ethnographer, I was even able to turn events to my advantage and observe two teachers teaching, first in the traditional method and then with my video package, rather than just one as I had planned. A comparison between their teaching methods strengthens the generalisations one can make, although I am

conscious that such generalisations are necessarily tentative (see 3.5.2).

3.5.1

Techniques of Data Collection

In spite of all the problems, I was able to collect ethnographic data throughout the period as I had planned. For a month, I observed classes as they were traditionally being taught, then I trained the teacher to use the video package I had developed, and finally I watched him introduce them into the English classroom. I not only observed the classes and made detailed field notes but also tape-recorded them so that the interactions could be studied in depth at a later stage. Apart from the field notes made during the lessons every day, I wrote general notes and observations most evenings when I got back home and events were still fresh in my memory. I also interviewed both the teachers and the students. Some of these interviews were formal and recorded on audio-cassette while others were more informal and are recorded in my notes as part of my general observations.

In addition, the students kept confidential diaries, recording their impressions of the teaching and learning occurring in their classes. There were eight groups in the class with five students in each group (except for Groups 1 and 5 which ultimately had four students each, one student from each of them having left the school). Each group in turn kept diaries for a week, so that every student wrote a week's diary once every eight weeks. Thus, I hoped, they would be able to write confidentially about what they really thought, but without feeling over-burdened by the pressures of diary writing. At the beginning of every week I checked that the appropriate students had written their diaries, and at the end of my stay in the school I collected all the diaries as part of my ethnographic evidence.

The students' diaries are only one of many sources of raw data, and in this respect are more in keeping with an ethnographic tradition of research than the type of diary studies usually carried out in second language acquisition studies. Bailey (1983), for example, relied only on the diaries of his informants to conclude that 'competitiveness' and 'anxiety' were

on the diaries of his informants to conclude that 'competitiveness' and 'anxiety' were prominent variables in adult second language learning. While this is an important insight, especially since systematic observation studies had not taken these two variables fully into account, it seems to me limiting in one important respect. It is difficult to see how these studies by themselves can show the extent to which classroom learning may be affected by the factors revealed by diaries, unless one also observes the language in the classroom and makes connections between the diaries and the classroom activities. So, while diaries are very valuable in providing an insight from a particular perspective, they need to be studied in conjunction with other types of evidence.

Case study researchers have used interviews as another standard technique in order to find out more about how participants view their situation. As already explained (3.4), in ethnographic research the fundamental assumption is that the participants in any project are actively trying to understand the world around them. As Filstead (1979) puts it, 'individuals are conceptualised as active agents in constructing and making sense of the realities they encounter rather than responding in a robot-like fashion according to role expectations established by social structures.' (Filstead, 1979, p.36). Therefore it is important to understand a study from the point of view of the participants involved. To respect the different and sometimes even contradictory perspectives of the participants involved in the study, and to try and understand these perspectives, seem to be among the strengths of the qualitative method. The implication is that in the study of social phenomena like the introduction of a video package, one has to take into account the various participants' point of view. How do different people make sense of their surroundings and what are their particular thoughts and perspectives? The concerns of teachers, students and the Principal are important in understanding how they react to the introduction of video. One way of finding out what they think is by asking them, and hence the adoption of interviewing as a technique of data collection.

I conducted several formal interviews which I recorded on cassette with both Dr. Keval and

Mr. Sridhar, the two English teachers involved in the project. I also interviewed the Principal on two occasions. All the interviews were later transcribed and have been used either in their own right as observations that participants have made about what is happening around them; or as means of corroborating or questioning other evidence. I did not interview the teachers in the presence of the Principal, or in each other's company because I did not want the presence of the Principal or the other teacher to influence or curb what either teacher had to say. I had also noticed that whenever I spoke informally to Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar together, it was always Dr. Keval who answered my questions about the school or the teaching practices, with Mr. Sridhar doing little more than nod assent. It was difficult to be sure that Mr. Sridhar was genuinely in agreement with Dr. Keval, rather than concurring out of courtesy or to avoid argument.

With the students, on the other hand, I found it useful to organise group interviews, which again were recorded on audio-cassettes. Group interviews had two distinct advantages — first, they reduced the initial tension that students felt when they were being interviewed. They seemed to make the interview situation 'less strange' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) and helped students to relax and participate more effectively. The other advantage was that comments by one student often spurred other students to add to or qualify them so that more talk was generated and more ideas were expressed. And with the students, there seemed less danger of spurious agreement; unlike Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar, they were quite happy to disagree and to contradict one another. It was important, though, to be aware of group dynamics and arrange interviews tactfully so that people who had interpersonal problems were not interviewed together. This was not particularly difficult because the interviews I conducted were all in the groups to which the students had been assigned. I knew that members of the groups were very friendly with each other; indeed, that was the reason why they sat next to each other and had been allocated to their respective groups. Apart from these formal interviews, I spent several hours talking more informally with the students, both in their classrooms and in the corridors and playgrounds. The data collected in those settings were written down as part of my general notes and have also been used

seating arrangement where students could sit in their groups to discuss the video extracts they viewed. I myself sat with a different group each day, observing how they approached the task sheets they had to solve after they had finished watching the video extracts. In these classes, I put one microphone on the table that I was observing and the other one was hung on the wall so that it could catch the teacher's talk as he walked around the various groups, explaining and solving problems. This ensured that I recorded, on the recorder's two channels, the conversations that took place in the group as well as the general classroom talk. I transcribed the audio recordings on my return to England and they have formed the basis of the analysis of classroom interactions.

Thus, in my study I have used a variety of techniques of data collection — diaries, interviews, audio-recordings and detailed notes — to study the process of classroom interactions in traditional English language classes as well as in the more innovative video-led ones. All these different techniques provide valuable data in their own right. But also, very importantly, they allow the 'triangulation' of observations, providing ways of checking the validity of the conclusions one can draw from them. Of course, triangulation by different techniques does not guarantee that the conclusions drawn are the right ones, even where evidence from one source tallies perfectly with evidence from another. Nevertheless, agreement between data gathered by different techniques provides us with a stronger basis from which to make our claims. On the other hand, there are some discrepancies between the various sources, for example between what a teacher told me in interview about his classroom activities and what I recorded as observations in my field notes. In such cases, it is necessary to decide which of the accounts is more likely to be valid by considering possible sources of misperception or misreporting. Such possible sources of error might not have been noticed without data from different sources for cross-checking.

3.5.2

Advantages and Disadvantages of Method Adopted

There are two main disadvantages with the ethnographic method I have adopted in my study.

The first is the problem of identifying causal connections, and the second related problem is that of generalisability. In my research design, it is very difficult to say categorically that the changes that occur in the classroom practices have happened because of the introduction of video. They may have come about because the students started to work in groups, or because they had 70-minute classes when video was introduced rather than 35-minute classes, or because they were encountering an innovation, or even because I was studying them — the 'Hawthorne effect'. Nevertheless, the detailed classroom observations, the audio-recordings, the diaries, the formal interviews (and the informal chats), and indeed the considerable time that I spent in the school environment, all contribute to drawing some causal connections, although not in the same way as with quantitative methods. In any case, as I argue in Chapter 4, the video package was developed on the basis of the research literature on using video for second language teaching. I believe, therefore, that this study should concentrate on how such a package is received, rather than on which element or elements in the package brought about the change. Another possibility is that it was the sheer novelty of the package that led to changes, and that any innovation would have had a similar effect. This seems easier to rule out. The novelty of the video package and its excitement soon seemed to wear off in the classes, and yet the differences I observed in the beginning between the traditional lessons and the innovative lessons continued. This leads me to believe the students and the teacher were affected by its novelty only in the initial stages (see Chapters 7 and 9 for a detailed discussion). Although it is difficult to be sure, I also feel that the Hawthorne effect did not play a major part. I had the strong impression that the students, the members of staff and the Principal all learnt to accept me as a member of the school community very quickly, and sometimes even forgot my presence. The class, therefore, often seemed to ignore the fact that they were being studied. It also seems to me that certain crucial incidents during the introduction of the video package (e.g., the students' rebellion) could not have happened if the Hawthorne effect was in play. Indeed, I am convinced that the students did not care in the slightest about whether they were being observed or not when they decided to boycott classes; nor did Dr. Keval seem to worry in the least about my presence when he had a show-down with the Principal. I therefore find it hard to believe that

the changes in the teaching-learning situations happened to any important extent because the class was being studied.

Even though I chose Central School, Bhojpur, as a representative sample of Indian Central Schools, I think it is hazardous to generalise to any great degree from the findings in this research. The value of this research lies in its exploratory nature rather than in its ability to generalise to all Central Schools in India. However, the study can be used as a basis for further research. Researchers could use similar ethnograhic methods to study the same innovation in a number of different settings and extrapolate from these studies; or, it could be used as a basis for finding variables that might affect the introduction of video, possibly assisting a quantitative analysis.

Many researchers (for example, Bates, 1981; Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984; Rist, 1984) point out that policy makers want to know what is happening in the field. Qualitative methods inform them of the field situation very well. In addition, Crossley and Vulliamy point out that educational evaluation, especially in developing countries, can all too often be 'a series of brief fact-finding visits to a variety of schools. This... is prone to reproduce the rhetoric of policy, because such visits can rarely delve below the surface of the 'official' version of the process of innovation' (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984, pp.198-99). I hope that my study presents an account of the introduction of video in Central School, Bhojpur which counters this trend and is genuinely helpful in informing policy makers about the local context in which video was introduced in Bhojpur.

The research method I adopted proved robust enough to cope with the difficulties of conducting research in Bhojpur. It allowed me to adapt my research strategies and modify them when events did not turn out as expected. The method is also open-ended in the sense that it tries to understand the same phenomenon from many different perspectives. As Cronbach (1975) puts it, 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our hypotheses, and our observations should be open to them' (p.124).

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CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPMENT OF MATERIALS

4.1

Introduction

The English language teaching community was introduced to the possible uses of video in the mid-seventies, and since then several hundred articles have been written on its use in the second language teaching classroom. My own interest in the literature arose because I wanted to develop a video package for use in the English classrooms at the '+2' level in Central School, Bhojpur.

A review of the literature until 1987 when I developed the video package revealed a lack of rigorous research in this area (and, indeed, not much work has been accomplished since then). There are hardly any studies that report in detail on the interactions in a classroom where a video programme or a series of programmes is introduced. Not even that of Candlin et al (1982) goes into detail about the actual effects of video in the classroom. There do not appear to be either qualitative or quantitative studies of the actual language learning that takes place when video is introduced. Even the thorough survey by MacKnight (1981) into the uses of video in EFL seems not to have found any 'detailed analysis of how video material is exploited at the level of the lesson' (p.69).

What exists in the ELT literature, however, is a combination of two approaches — an anecdotal mode where various practising teachers explain what they have done with their classes; and a speculative mode, in journal articles and books where theoreticians conjecture about the possible uses and benefits of video in the EFL classroom. These are not to be lightly dismissed, however, because they have grown into an impressive body of theory. And it is this literature that I shall discuss in order to explain the way I developed the

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video-led materials for the lesson, 'Taming the Atom', in the Central School textbook, I-The People (see Appendix 4.1 for the text of the lesson).

Obviously, in considering this research, there arises the question of the extent to which theory developed mainly in Britain and America is transferrable to India. Such a question is difficult to answer since there are few serious studies of Indian classrooms, let alone studies which compare Indian classes with Western ones. However, because the introduction of video in ESL classes has not really been studied in detail, and most of the literature is conjectural, it is as likely to apply to Indian Central Schools as to any other.

4.2

Some Characteristics of Video

In the literature on the use of video in English language teaching, much has been written about how video can be utilised as a recording system. The idea is that teachers and students will use the video-recorder to record either their own classroom talk, or, more formally, use a studio to record something that they have worked upon (such as a play). I shall not refer further to such uses of video because they were not practicable in the Central School situation. I shall concentrate solely on the uses of the video-recorder as a play-back machine without taking its recording facility into account.

When video is used for play-back, the software used has to have several copyright clearances. The copyright laws vary in different countries and although much writing in the ELT area concerns itself with this aspect of video use, I shall not be referring to this literature because, at present, it is largely irrelevant to the Indian situation. In my own case, I used existing material from two sources — films produced by the Central Electricity Generating Board and BBC Open University television programmes. I had no difficulty in obtaining copyright from either of these two sources because the materials were to be used only for the research and are not being exploited commercially.

Several authors have discussed the advantages of video over television (see Bates, 1981, for example). The first advantage is that of accessibility. Teachers and broadcasters do not necessarily follow the same time-table. If teachers have video-recorders, then making off-air recordings to use whenever they want rather than when the programme is broadcast is an obvious advantage. Secondly, video allows viewers to stop, rewind and repeat any sequence. This means that teachers can use the same programme to different ends; or, they can repeat programmes until the class has understood the sequence being taught. Thirdly, it is usually possible to 'freeze' frames, allowing for a consideration of details. Fourthly, video can be 'chunked' (Bates, 1981) or broken into sequences in order to aid reflection and analysis. And fifthly, teachers have more control over the materials because they can choose which sequences they want to use, which they want to omit, and if they want to re-order the material to suit their purposes. Thus video, while sharing the general features of broadcast television, has greater flexibility over it.

In my own situation, the only recourse available to me was video. Although permission to work in Central Schools was granted to me by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, I think they would have been more reluctant to grant me permission to broadcast programmes to students. I would also need access to Doordarshan, the national broadcasting organisation in India, or to one of the regional broadcasting centres. This was both logistically and financially impossible. If I had got access to such facilities, the scope of this research project would have changed considerably, and it would not have been possible to carry the research out single-handed, or to finish it within the given period. Also, since I was interested in classroom interaction and in seeing the actual reception of programmes in a language learning situation, video seemed an entirely appropriate choice in my situation.

Besides, television and video can readily offer experiences which other media can provide only laboriously, indirectly or not at all. Bates (1984) lists some uses of television in Open University courses (pp. 245-247). Television (and by extension, video) is able to provide access to places that are normally inaccessible. For example, it can show the experience of

visiting different countries and encountering different cultures, both within India and outside it. It can also provide access to places that are normally difficult to see (e.g., factories, work-shops, museums, art galleries and in the context of my research, nuclear reactors).

Another advantage of video is that it is able to demonstrate experiments or operations which are large and costly. Video has the ability to show events in which students could not have been present. These may either be contemporary occurrences elsewhere in the world; or they may be historical events that have been stored as archive material, or are reconstructed in the studio.

Another useful aspect of video is its ability to reveal how abstract ideas inform real life situations. So, for instance, atomic fission is used practically to produce heat for the generation of electricity. Similarly, abstract ideas about radiation hazards and levels of pollution instigate anti-nuclear protesters to demonstrate against the installation of nuclear plants.

Finally, in the language teaching context, video allows students to hear and see interactions simultaneously, thereby contributing to an understanding of the communicative processes involved in language use. Indeed, a number of writers point out that if we want to engender communicative competence in our students, video would be useful to illustrate real communicative situations visually (McGovern, 1980; Geddes, 1982). As Casler (1980) puts it, 'video materials offer the added advantage of exploring human behaviour in the whole communication process. Emotions and attitudes become visible on the screen, enabling the learner to observe how language is part of behaviour' (p.22).

But there are disadvantages to video too. The first is from the teacher's point of view. Video, especially in countries like India, is a relatively new phenomenon and teachers may not be acquainted with the hardware. Many Indian teachers are not familiar even with audio-cassette recorders; so handling video in the classroom may be very daunting for them.

This problem has been recognised by the second language teaching community and is being addressed very seriously (Lonergan, 1984). Indeed, an entire volume of collected essays (Geddes and Sturtridge, 1982) seems to have been produced in order to combat this fear and to act as a friendly and helpful guide to teachers who want to use video. Candlin et al (1982) point out the necessity and importance of adequate teacher training so that teachers overcome their initial shyness and ineptitude at handling video.

In Central School, Bhojpur, one of the main initial concerns of the English teachers was whether they would be able to handle the equipment or not. Both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar, the two teachers who taught English to Standard XI pupils, expressed their worries over this; and when I was training them to use the video materials, I spent considerable time helping them to familiarise themselves with the video-recorder. The problem can become particularly complicated in India if a school invests in generators and/or stabilisers to control electrical fluctuations so that video can be used even when there is a power cut. The teachers have to know how to connect all the wires properly; and they must also be totally familiar with the panel buttons so they can start, stop, rewind, or fast forward as they wish. This may seem a relatively trivial problem, but it is not negligible, especially given the pressures on teachers in India to appear competent and in control at all times (see Chapters 6 and 7).

The second problem with video can be that teachers and students alike can start to think of it as a surrogate teacher. The danger is that it can be disappointing if it is allowed to usurp completely a teacher's role, and the language class then discovers that video is unable to take on the entire burden of language teaching and language learning. Kennedy (1979) has warned of the dangers of treating video as an independent programme in itself; Cleary (1978) makes it clear that video-recordings are 'aids in teaching, just as a book, or film is, and ... do not obviate the need for the teacher to understand the content which the language expresses and which is included in the recordings' (p. 78; his italics).

Many practising ELT teachers have also warned of the passive nature of viewing video

(Cleary, 1978; Kennedy, 1979; McGovern, 1980; Duke, 1980; Candlin et al, 1982 to name but a few). Both Willis (1983b) and Bates (1985) point out that the problem is aggravated by the fact that teachers and students are conditioned to watch television as entertainment and hence find it difficult to treat it as a teaching device which has to be used selectively. McKnight (1981 and 1983) reports that in her survey of British EFL schools, she found that video programmes are rarely used in 'chunks'; instead, they are shown in their entirety and this may last anywhere between five minutes and an hour. Such long viewing sessions might turn students into mere passive recipients of video; the teaching and learning objectives might be completely obfuscated and forgotten. Cleary warned of this danger as early as 1978, when he wrote that if video was to be used seriously in language classes, the assumption must be that 'the use of the recordings in the classroom is an active affair, where the role of the student is not totally one of absorption of the language or content, but an active response to it' (p. 78). Thus, most practitioners who recommend the use of video in a second language learning context exhort that students should participate actively in the language learning process.

4.3

Exploitation of Video in the English Language Classroom

In order to exploit video materials fully for language learning, we need to ask two basic questions — what should teachers and learners do to make video lessons both stimulating and useful; and, what sorts of materials and activities should be developed?

Given the warnings of passive viewing, it seems obvious to me that teachers have to be actively engaged in finding ways which discourage it. It seems important for teachers to remember that the video is to be used with specific purposes in mind. Teachers therefore have to think of why they are using a particular programme and how they plan to use it. One way of engaging students with the video materials is to 'chunk recorded material in some way so that it is amenable, integrable and powerful' (Candlin et al, 1982, p.7). This has also been recommended by Lonergan (1984) who suggests that 'four or five minutes of video

tape material can easily provide enough stimulating input for one hour's teaching' (p.2), and Duke (1980) who warns, 'never let students spend more than twenty minutes per hour watching'. In the materials I developed for Standard XI students, I have followed the advice of chunking video materials. These are referred to either as video extracts or as video sequences throughout this thesis.

Another recommendation for the successful implementation of video is the need to integrate it with other teaching materials. Macdonald (1979) draws upon his experiences in the Inner London Education Authority to say that one of the main reasons for the failure of video programmes is that they are 'hardly ever integrated with other learning materials'. Bates (1985) too sees the need to combine viewing of video extracts with appropriate books or other printed material. In developing materials for Central School, I have tried to integrate the video extracts with the textbook lesson, 'Taming the Atom'. The sequences I have devised support and reinforce the textual material, and later question some of the assumptions implicit in the text.

In encouraging students to take video lessons seriously, teachers have to develop activities that are closely related to viewing. Candlin et al (1982) argue that there is 'a need to engage the learners in some kind of contract, where the exact specification and design of the activity are made clear and agreed... with a clear setting of learner expectations as to what can be achieved' (p.7). So even before the students view the extracts, it may be necessary for the teacher to engage them in what I have termed pre-viewing activities. These activities are designed to draw students' attention to the kinds of questions the teacher wants them to ask of the extract, and help them to look for the features that they are interested in, thus making the viewing itself an active process. After the viewing, students could participate in discussions about what they have encountered in the video. This would also give them a chance to put their own language to use. Geddes (1976), Starkey (1978) and Kennedy (1979) all suggest a similar integrated method. Students are encouraged to approach the topic they have chosen to study through introductory readings, then they watch a video extract and

make notes. Later they participate in discussions and perhaps even write essays on the issues arising from the video extracts.

One recommendation that emerges very strongly in the writings on exploiting video in the EFL classroom is that students should work in groups. This would provide a forum for students to discuss the video extracts amongst themselves, thereby setting up situations where they genuinely communicate with each other. It would promote fluency based activities, thereby encouraging the development of communicative competence (Willis, 1983a; Brumfit, 1984; Thompson, 1986).

To create the conditions necessary for the development of communicative competence, we need to allow students to use their own language for genuine communication (see Chapter 2). So we must look for situations where our learners will really have something they actually want to say to each other. Appropriate video material can do this in a range of ways. For example,

> its vivid presentation of settings and characters can be used to set the scene for roleplay; it can present a case with such impact that it sparks off fierce debate; we all make our own interpretations of what we see and so video can be a stimulus to genuine communication in the classroom by bringing out different opinions within the group'

> (Allan, 1985, pp. 48-49)

Cleary (1978), Candlin et al (1982) and Brumfit (1984) all advise the use of small groups to enhance discussion of the video extracts watched by the students. Williams (1982) argues that small group discussion generates 'interaction' and 'motivation' (p.72) while Hick et al (1982) suggest that the post-viewing period could consist of both inter-group and intra-group activites (p.78). Bates (1985) points out that one advantage of television over books or computers is that 'a great deal of information of different kinds — pictorial, emotional, factual, subjective — can be packed into one half hour programme, and a lot of ground can be covered in unpacking this information through discussion'. Thus, it seems to me that if video

is to be exploited to develop students' communicative competence in English, it would be extremely valuable to divide them into groups so that they can talk to each other about the ideas that emerge from their viewing activity. People often refine and hone an idea only as they discuss it with others. If students could be persuaded to use the video as a rich stimulus, enabling them to communicate their thoughts to each other in English, then we would be moving towards providing them with conditions for the development of language ability. We would also be providing a genuine communicative context instead of one where language is presented as a set of discrete items, or one where students only hear language but do not speak it.

Using groups to work on video materials thus goes some way towards meeting the concerns mentioned above that, when language learners watch video, they are cast in the role of observers rather than participants; unlike people using language to communicate in real life situations, they are not themselves actively engaged in negotiating the world around them (Willis, 1983). In the case of the Bhojpur students, strenuous attempts were made to use group work to encourage them to be participants rather than mere observers. For example, they had to look at the video with the aim of trying to complete a task sheet in their groups. This involved a series of questions — comprehension questions as well as more open ended discussion ones (all the task sheets are presented in Appendix 4.3). So, they were not looking at the video in a self-conscious bid to further their language capability. Rather, they were looking at it to complete their task sheets by communicating with each other in the group. This was in keeping with Woods' recommendations. Woods (1979) notes that his students, like the ones in Bhojpur, were at an intermediate stage of second language learning. A language course at this level, and probably at most other levels, he argues, must be more than the input of prescribed language. 'Though language itself mustn't, of course, be ignored,' he writes, 'I feel a language course might well try to concentrate on something else, so that language learning doesn't simply become a picking-up of discrete items' (p.27). In devising the materials for the video-led classes, one of my main concerns was to provide students with situations that genuinely interested them enough for them to discuss the issues

raised. Woods also recommends the use of video along with group work activity so that students speak the second language they are learning normally, because the situation requires it.

It is mainly for this reason that several practitioners recommend the use of 'authentic' language, that is, language that was not designed specifically for use in English language teaching classes. This was elaborated by Widdowson (1978) on the basis of a distinction between language 'use' and language 'usage': the former refers to what people ordinarily do with language, that is, communicate; the latter refers to rules of correctness and incorrectness. He claims that if we are to develop the communicative abilities of students, then we must expose them to 'real life' language, to language in 'use'. 'Language teachers', Widdowson argues, 'tend to think of grading in terms of usage control: teachers of other subjects are necessarily involved in the grading of language use, in an increasing elaboration of simple accounts' (p.90; my emphasis). Widdowson recommends that the language teaching community should learn from this, and expose students to instances of language as it is really used in the community rather than to materials specifically designed to teach English usage.

The potential of television for such exposure was pointed out as early as 1960 by Corder. Corder compares the language input when a child learns a language and that of a second language learning situation. He points out that it is only with television and video that we have for the first time been able to put forward instances of 'real' language use in context (pp. 59-60). This has been further corroborated by Kennedy (1979), Hick et al (1982), Kerridge (1982) and Allan (1985). One important argument for this is that video is very good at providing non-verbal cues in conversations, cues that native speakers of a language use to read the entire meaning of the communicative act (Willis, 1983a). In the same vein, Willis (1983) points out that 'turn-taking in English is assisted by eye-contact and body posture, and in an exchange both speaker and listener constantly monitor what is being said with nods of the head, smiles, frowns and so on'. The argument, therefore, is that video should contain several instances of conversations so that students understand not just the grammar of the

language but also the context in which it is produced.

There is, however, a problem with using naturalistic language. In the literature on using television and by extension video in language teaching, it is often argued that we can not only offer students instances of real life communication, but also grade it for levels of difficulty. Thus, Corder (1960) writes that television offers us the opportunity of *'presenting all language material as fully contextualised verbal behaviour and at the same time of controlling these contexts* in a way that cannot occur when a learner goes to a foreign country to learn a language, and of presenting them in a more strictly controlled way than that in which the child learns his mother tongue (p.60; his italics).

Videos for English language teaching have mainly used drama to meet the dual criteria of presenting naturalistic language and of grading it according to levels of difficulty. However, truly natural speech and non-verbal communication are very difficult for actors to emulate convincingly. The differences between naturally occurring conversations and 'realistic' or 'naturalistic' acting are subtle but unmistakable. It is a matter of common experience that when we turn on the radio or television we can tell almost instantly and infallibly whether the people we hear and see are real people or actors playing a part — even if we are often unable to pin down where exactly the differences lie. So, while drama makes it relatively easy to grade language, this language is not really natural. By contrast, naturally occurring conversations are not graded. There might appear to be an essential incompatibility, then, between presenting language as used in real life contexts, in all its ungraded complexity, and presenting it in a graded but only artificially 'naturalistic' manner.

However, there seems to me to be nothing in principle to stop language teachers from achieving both these objectives, as courses like the BBC's 'Buongiorno Italia' and 'Deutsch Direkt' have shown. If a sufficiently large number of real conversations is recorded, passages are likely to be found among them where the talk remains for a useful period of time within a single grade, according to the language teaching principles being followed. Thus by selection

and arrangement of extracts from the recordings, these courses have been able to grade the language while retaining its natural character. In practice, of course, there are many obstacles to this, notably the time and expense required for making and examining the very large numbers of recordings needed. Even the BBC's language courses do not always seem to have budgets that make it possible: 'Hindi Urdu Bol Chaal' and all the BBC English series, for example, employ relatively cheap dramatised scenes.

In developing my own materials, I have not used many conversations and have endeavoured both to use naturalistic language and to grade it (see 4.4). The main reason for not employing conversations is that the communication context in India is very different from that in Britain. Non-verbal cues are culturally specific and Indian students are aware of these cues in their own culture. The purpose is to help students develop their English to use it in India, rather than in a British context (see Chapters 1 and 2). While I was keen to use 'authentic' instances of language I did not want to use many stretches of conversations. I do, however, use the format of people (both British and American) speaking to camera, so that students are aware of how some native speakers of English express themselves.

In looking for authentic uses of language, Lonergan (1984) points prospective video users in the direction of video recordings of specialist films and television programmes produced by industries and individual companies as part of their public relations activities. I found this an extremely useful suggestion for the development of materials on the production of electricity. It was possible for me to find material produced by the Central Electricity Generating Board that explained exactly how nuclear fuels were used in electricity generation, and I found Open University material where several groups challenged the assumptions that nuclear fuels were safe and cheap.

4.4

The Development of Materials For Central School, Bhojpur

In the development of video materials for the '+2' classes in Bhojpur, I tried to take into account many of the features of video that I have discussed in this chapter. But as we have seen, video materials on their own are not enough to further language learning. They have to be accompanied by well thought out and properly structured activities to benefit students learning the second language. This section, therefore, explains not just the basis of materials selection, but also the types of activities devised to promote the conditions for communicative competence in the class. The materials and the activities, along with the Notes for Teacher Training in the form of Lesson Plans (Appendix 4.4) constitute what I have termed, 'the video package'. The video (Appendix 4.5) is divided into 30 extracts and these are accompanied by 25 task sheets. Each extract lasts from about 30 seconds to about 5 minutes, and all of them are connected with the chapter, 'Taming the Atom', in one of the prescribed Central School texts, I-The People. While I am conscious that the number of extracts may be too many for a single chapter, research constraints led me to base them all around the same one. I wanted to observe the teacher introducing the video package for a month in order to compare it with the more traditional methods of teaching. Since this was a new venture, and students have been studying with textual materials for over twelve years, it seemed necessary to introduce the package for a fair length of time in order to see if the classroom interactions were a result of the package or merely because video was new and unusual.

The basis on which the video materials were chosen had much to do with the availability of suitable material and its relevance both to Central School students and to the lesson they had to study. The chapter, 'Taming the Atom', concerned itself with the use of nuclear power for the generation of electricity. Through video, it was possible to show the workings of a nuclear reactor, to which access is otherwise unlikely. I felt that this aspect would be particularly useful because the students were specialising in science subjects and they would already be interested in such topics. Bates (1984) stresses the need for programmes to be relevant to the students using them (p.164). Kennedy (1979) and Sheerin (1982) have

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pointed out that such video materials are particularly useful because both language and scientific content could be presented and exploited together.

The materials were divided into six sections, with task sheets accompanying each section. At the beginning of each section, Section Notes (Appendix 4.2) were provided so that students knew what to expect in each set of extracts. Rather than grading the extracts at the level of linguistic difficulty, I have broadly followed Long (1983) and Krashen (1985) who argue that comprehensible input facilitates acquisition. The first section of the video, therefore, is very closely integrated with the written text, enabling students to use both the familiar medium of words on a page and the more unfamiliar medium of video extracts, thereby making doubly sure that the first input is totally comprehensible to them. The aim of Video Extracts 1-4 has been to help students understand the basics of nuclear power for the generation of electricity, by enabling them to gather factual information and order it correctly so that the process of manufacture is clear in their minds. Towards the end of this section, the task sheets slowly move them on towards expressing opinions and feelings about what they have seen.

The second section is very short, consisting of only two video extracts. The aim here is to sensitise the students to our own perceptions of other people and how these perceptions are based, to a certain extent, on stereotypes. It also makes them aware that the visual medium constantly plays with stereotypes in order to convey a general overall impression of the context. In exploring these ideas, the students have to use more complex language dealing with differences in perception between individual viewers and the perceptions and intentions of the director. The match or mismatch between these varying perceptions forms the basis of discussion in this section.

The third section consists of seven video extracts and follows a public inquiry into the allocation of a nuclear plant site in Cumbria. Students are made aware of arguments for and against the use of nuclear power for the generation of electricity. This section, therefore, aims at improving students' ability to engage in argument in English.

The fourth section follows the story of Sam Lovejoy, a nuclear protester in New England, and consists of five extracts. The aim here is to enable students to understand how abstract ideas get made concrete; how people behave in certain ways because of the ideas they hold. It should enable them to analyse how particular situations arise and how different people cope with them. Most of this section is in reported speech, and the students should be sensitised to its use in English.

Section 5, made up of twelve short extracts, is in some senses a continuation of Section 4. Here, students have to combine ideas, arguments and subjective feelings to understand the protest by Clamshell Alliance, an anti-nuclear lobby in New Hampshire in U.S.A. By this stage they should be able to compare all the different types of protests they have been exposed to, as well as make up their own minds about where they stand in the nuclear debate. The aim is that this will ultimately lead to a discussion about the value of nuclear power — whether its ability to be a renewable source of energy outweighs the risks involved. In the last Section, they listen to a song about these issues as well as engage in a class debate on their own opinions about nuclear power.

All the sections are accompanied by activities set out in task sheets. The hope is that in answering these task sheets co-operatively in groups, students will develop the ability to communicate with each other in English. The task sheets contain both simple comprehension type questions in order to make sure that the students understand the video extracts, and more open-ended questions for discussions about the issues in front of them.

The students were allowed to view the video extracts as many times as they wanted, so that they had more control of their own learning. By and large, they viewed most extracts three or four times within a fifty minute lesson. Before the first viewing, the teacher conducted a pre-viewing activity which led them to understand why they were watching the extract. Task sheets were also distributed before the viewing so that students could read through them to

know what was expected of them. After the viewing, they worked together in groups to complete the task sheets and finally, the whole class engaged in a discussion of the answers to them. I hoped that in answering these questions, students would be made aware that for many issues there is no one correct answer. Each group had to negotiate the tasks, working out what it thought and felt about the issues at hand. Thus, I hoped that students would learn the language by actively engaging themselves in real acts of communication (see Appendix 4.2-4.6 for Section Notes, Task Sheets, the Transcripts of the Video Extracts and the Lesson Plans).

In attempting to help students actively produce language both in their groups and in the general class discussion at the end, I am supported by the 'output hypothesis' proposed by Swain (1985) and by the 'discourse hypothesis' expounded by Ellis (1987). According to Swain, learners need opportunities to put into use the language that they have internalised. She attributes three roles for output:

> 1. The need to produce output in the process of negotiating meaning that is precise, coherent and appropriate encourages the learner to develop the necessary grammatical resources.
>
> 2. Output provides the learner with the opportunity to try out hypotheses to see if they work.
>
> 3. Production, as opposed to comprehension, may help to force the learner to move from semantic to syntactic processing. It is possible to comprehend a message without any syntactic analysis of the input it contains. Production is the trigger that forces learners to pay attention to the means of expression.

> (Swain, 1985, pp. 248-249).

Concurrent with the importance attributed to production is the discourse hypothesis (Ellis, 1987) which is that different types of language use encountered by the learners result in different learning outcomes. Thus, informal teaching which provides opportunities for unplanned discourse results in the learner being able to perform in informal settings and more formal teaching results in the learner being more competent in planned discourse. While there has not been much research to substantiate such a claim, I have taken the precaution of the

learners being exposed to both kinds of discourses and have encouraged informal talk in the group and more formal discussion in the teacher elicitations at the end of each lesson.

Ellis draws the two strands of 'output hypothesis' and 'discourse hypothesis' together by pointing out that these are not mutually exclusive, nor do they exclude the notions of input already discussed. He concludes that 'production is seen as valuable not only in itself, but because it contributes to discourse. Interaction is a joint venture and ultimately it is not possible to isolate the separate contributions of the speakers, or, perhaps, of production and comprehension' (Ellis, 1990, p.125). Thus, these theories too provide a sound rationale for the use of group discussions in the video-led lessons.

To help achieve this level of informality and yet to make sure that the subject matter at hand had not been neglected required an enormous effort from the teacher. Mr. Sridhar told me that he found the lesson plans I had developed for each individual lesson extremely helpful in deciding how he was going to approach each extract in the classroom. They were also helpful in defining the short term aims of each lesson. Although the teacher relinquished a large amount of talking time in the classroom — it may have appeared that he did not have much to do once the class started — the amount of teacher preparation for the smooth running of the classes was considerable. We spent almost an hour every morning discussing the activities the class would engage in and looking at the video extracts in order to decide how best to employ them to produce good group discussions. The introduction of video, therefore, has serious implications for both teacher training and for teacher time. Although a discussion of these issues is not the remit of my thesis, it would be wise for educational planners and curriculum designers to take this aspect seriously if they genuinely want to introduce television and video into Indian classrooms.

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CHAPTER 5

A DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

5.1

Introduction

The introduction of video in an English language classroom in a school cannot occur in a vacuum. The manner in which any innovation is approached depends crucially on the environment in which the introduction occurs. It is imperative, therefore, to give as clear an account of the context of the introduction as possible. This is especially true of the introduction of video as an innovation because, as Bates (1981) points out, one of the problems with the study of the effectiveness of audio-visual media like television and video is that they are almost always tested in experimental conditions, but rarely studied in relation to real life contexts, which is where their introduction plays a crucial part (see Chapter 3). The introduction of a video package in Standard XI 'B', therefore, has to be understood within the context of Central School, Bhojpur — what type of school it is; how it is managed; how it is organised; how the staff and students behave in their everyday dealings with each other and so on. This chapter describes the setting in which video was introduced.

The next chapter relates chronologically the incidents that affected the introduction of video, beginning with my first few days in the school and ending with the completion of the project. I have not interwoven analysis of these events into the narrative; instead it is presented as a separate chapter (Chapter 7). By leaving analysis to the last, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, pp. 221-223) suggest, I hope to avoid confusion between what happened, as I perceived it at the time, and what my later analysis and interpretations are.

In separating analysis from both description and narration, I am not claiming that the description and the narrative are presented in a pristine state, totally uncontaminated by

analysis. Even in choosing what to present and what to omit, and in deciding on the order of presentation, the researcher cannot help imposing a certain degree of analysis on the data. In narrating incidents, it is impossible to avoid making causal connections. Even in something as straightforwardly descriptive as identifying utterances as questions and answers, the researcher makes certain interpretations and causal links.

The attempt in using this method, nonetheless, has been to keep analysis to a minimum in the narrative and the description, and in particular to avoid tailoring them to fit the ensuing analysis. Throughout this chapter and the next one, therefore, the endeavour has been to describe and narrate events as they took place, or at least as they appeared at the time. As far as possible, comment or analysis in the light of later knowledge is avoided.

5.2

Access

Within the traditions of qualitative research, much has been written about the difficulties of gaining access to the situation one wants to study. These arise mainly because case study methods imply that the researcher spends a lot of time in the field, and studies closely everything that happens. Understandably, people often feel threatened by such close scrutiny. Even after researchers gain entry into the field, they have constantly to find ways of gaining further information and further entry into the situation. In addition, they have to be conscious of the means used for this because some ways of gaining access may significantly influence the data that are collected. While the constant negotiations over access to different pieces of information are recounted as they occur, here I am confining myself to the inital entry into the field.

To study any Central School one has to get permission from the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) in New Delhi, the parent body under which all the Kendirya Vidyalayas or Central Schools function. Many initial attempts to contact the KVS by correspondence were made, but without reply, as sometimes happens in dealing with large Indian bureaucratic

organisations. The matter was resolved when Professor Bates, one of my supervisors, who was visiting New Delhi made direct contact with the KVS on my behalf. I was immediately granted permission to do research.

The next step was to make contact with the school. In this case too, correspondence proved futile. However, in February 1987, I visited Bhojpur and went to the school. On my first visit, I did not get to see the Principal for he was away at Delhi attending an All India Principals' Conference but I went back after a week and talked to him about my project. In the course of my conversation with him, it emerged that he had taken over the Headship of the school quite recently and was interested in experimenting with new ideas in the school, and therefore seemed keen on my project. In general, he seemed to be interested in the development of his school, in in-service teacher training and in keeping in touch with changes and developments in the educational field.

I also met the teachers, Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar, who taught English at the '+2' level and told them of my plans to put together innovatory materials based on one of the lessons, 'Taming the Atom', in their Standard XI English text book, I — The People. They too seemed interested and said that they looked forward to my coming to their school. We discussed my plans to start work in July in the next academic year. Although an academic year officially begins at the end of April, the real work and regular classes begin only in July. This is because May and June are two months of holiday, it being too hot to do any work then.

We discussed the project in greater detail and I explained that there were two main considerations in introducing video as innovation in the English language classroom. First, I wanted to document the issues that arise when video is introduced as an innovation in a real life Indian setting, especially in the light of the New Educational Policy. Secondly, I want to document what happens within the classroom when video is introduced to teach English. I told them that I was interested in studying the nature of classroom interaction to see if it

changes in a manner which facilitates language learning.

When they heard that I was keen on observing everyday lessons, one of the teachers, Dr. Keval, offered to let me observe one English lesson. He was teaching English to Standard XI Arts students. This was quite opportune, especially because I could make an audio tape-recording of the lesson. The transcript gave me an idea about what the actual teaching in the classes is like; and how best I could develop the video package. Of course, watching many more lessons might have been even more helpful, but this was not feasible. Nevertheless, this first lesson was welcome and wholly unexpected; and gave me an impression of the class as well as the school.

I returned to Central School Bhojpur in July 1987 and was there for three months. Before describing the school and the events that occurred during the introduction of video, I have for convenience included a summary list of the types of evidence I used in my exploration and analysis of the issues involved. (I have already discussed these, in Chapter 3.)

5.3

Types of Evidence

The evidence for the research comes from six main sources:

a. Notes I kept on the events in the school which I have termed 'General Notes'. I wrote these notes either in some free periods in the staffroom, or when I got home in the evenings.

b. Notes I took down while observing the classroom called 'Class notes'.

c. Interviews with students, teachers and the Principal.

d. Students' diaries.

e. Audio tape-recordings of the class.

f. Informal conversations with both students and members of staff, which I wrote down when I got home.

g. General impressions, based on the fact that I spent most of the working day in school.

The Appendix to the chapter gives lengthier transcripts of interviews and quotes my notes or student diaries more fully in instances where to quote extensively in the main text would have hampered the flow of the narrative.

5.4

A Description of Central School, Bhojpur

This section describes the setting in which the audovisual media package was introduced and implemented. It is sub-divided into several categories which, I hope, provide a general sense of the ethos of the school and the classroom.

Central School, Bhojpur has about twelve hundred students and sixty teachers. Forty-five teachers are male and fifteen are female. The maximum number of students in a classroom is limited to thirty-five. A normal school day begins with Assembly at 9 a.m. in the morning and ends at 3.35 p.m. in the afternoon. Each class lasts for thirty-five minutes and there are nine classes or periods in a day. There is a mid-day lunch break after the fifth period. All Saturdays except the second Saturday in a month are working days. On the last day of the month, students have classes for only half a day. As the English lessons were in the afternoon, this meant that there were no English classes on the last day of the month.

The Standard XI class in Bhojpur has two sections — one for the science students designated XI 'B' and one for the Arts and Commerce students, designated XI 'A'; and the present research was conducted in the Core English classes of Standard XI 'B'.

5.4.1

Transport

Bhojpur is a steel town and most people working in the factory have a vehicle of their own for which a conveyance allowance is paid to them by the firm. Bhojpur, therefore, has no buses for internal public transport, nor does the school itself have any buses. So the students either walk or cycle to the school or take a cycle-rickshaw. The male teachers generally come by

scooter, as does the Principal. I myself, like most female teachers, took a cycle-rickshaw to work.

5.4.2

The Assembly

The School Assembly begins at 9 a.m. and precedes all the classes. In fine weather it is held in the school field but when it rains it is held in the auditorium. All the students from Standard I to Standard XII attend the Assembly and line up in the field according to the class to which they belong. The morning Assembly is presided over by the Principal or in his absence, the Vice-Principal. The Principal in Central School, Bhojpur was quite keen on the Assembly and as a mark of his enthusiasm, came on time to address the students. This punctuality, I was told by several teachers, was by no means universal — 'many of the Principals we had earlier were not interested in the school and did not even come to the Assembly on time' (Informal conversation, 21st July, 1987).

In Bhojpur, the students register twice in a day — once in the Assembly, just as the school begins and once in the afternoon, just after the lunch break. The Assembly plays quite a big role in students' lives. The school is divided into four houses and all the students belong to one of these. Four teachers are assigned as Housemasters to the four houses to help students and guide them when necessary. Each house conducts the proceedings of the Assembly for two weeks. The students present the news, the thought for the day, a ten minute comment on a topic they have chosen to focus on for the fortnight (these topics range from Indo-Soviet friendship to the use of nuclear power for the generation of electricity to folk dances of India) and information on any of the events they are organising. The language used for these purposes varies — sometimes it is Hindi and at other times English. It is interesting to note that the comment is almost always in English. Apart from this, the other activities conducted in the Assembly are: a pledge that students take to be good citizens of India (again this was sometimes led in English and at other times in Hindi); important announcements made by the Principal; advice to the students by the Sanskrit teacher on how to be good, moral and

upright; and finally, the singing of the National Anthem.

The Assembly generally takes twenty minutes to half an hour. While standing in the open fields is probably not a problem during the winter months, it can be quite distressing for the rest of the year. The heat that staff and students have to bear as the Assembly progresses is often debilitating. Every day at least one or two children faint during Assembly. They are taken to the Ladies' staffroom and made to lie down on the desks there. The teachers' books are temporarily pushed to one corner. These students are normally accompanied by one of their friends who fans them till they feel better. Then they go back to their own classrooms.

One particular incident in the Assembly was interesting in that it brought forward the issues and the debates that centre around language use in India. One of the houses along with some Hindi teachers organised a Hindi week. During this week, it was urged that the Principal make it a rule that in the school Assembly, the pledge would no longer be conducted in English but the Hindi version would be used. The argument was that Hindi is the national language and that it should be used rather than English, the language of India's former rulers, to pledge loyalty and service to the nation. It is within the Principal's powers to impose such a rule but he did not, and indeed he refrained from commenting on this suggestion. The pledge continued to be conducted in both English and Hindi, even after this incident, depending on the student who was leading it.

5.4.3

The School Timetable

As already mentioned, the secondary school has nine periods each day, with each period lasting for 35 minutes. After the fifth period there is a lunch break for 40 minutes. At the end of every period two bells are rung at an interval of five minutes. The first bell is rung for the teacher in the class to leave it; the second bell is an indication to the next teacher to enter the class. The five minutes in between allow the previous teachers to complete their teaching; it also gives students a small break between two consecutive classes.

The students have classrooms assigned to them and they spend the whole day in the assigned classroom. It is the teachers who move from room to room. Normally, teachers do not have a room of their own — they use the staffroom in their free periods. But there are some instances when students leave their rooms and move about. This happens mainly to the science students who have to go to the laboratory for some of their science lessons. The students have a library period when they leave their classrooms to go to the library. Students also go out of their classes during the Socially Useful and Productive Work (S.U.P.W.) class. When I was in the school, some students planted trees during the S.U.P.W. lessons while others learnt needlework. But by and large, the rooms in the school are assigned to classes and called XI 'A' classroom, XI 'B' classroom and so on.

5.4.4

The Principal

In Central Schools, a Principal has to adminster but teaching is optional. Mr. Ram, the Principal of Central School, Bhojpur, chose to teach. As a trained Mathematics teacher, he taught Mathematics every day to Standard XI students. I noticed that despite being very busy he made a point of taking his classes regularly and punctually. On two days of the week, he had a class with Standard XI immediately after the English lesson and came into the class as soon as we left.

As an adminstrator, Mr. Ram deals with problems that range from the cows on the field during Assembly to getting someone to fix the drainage and rectifying the telephone problems in the school. He also goes on 'rounds' during lessons to see that teachers have actually gone to class and the students are actually 'being engaged' during the classes. He holds meetings with teachers to discuss various aspects of schooling. Mr. Ram has to work with the auditors when they arrive and confer with the printers who set the examination papers. He is in charge of admissions, especially to Standard XI where students chose either Science, Arts or Commerce depending on their examination results and inclination. I watched Mr. Ram

perform all these adminstrative duties.

Apart from these activities, Mr. Ram seemed keen on attending conferences and meetings, especially those conducted by the KVS in Delhi. He also received many educationists and KVS officials as visitors. Some of them gave talks on how Central Schools were affected by the new educational policy and how the school should learn to cope with these new policies. Mr. Ram seemed to be on friendly terms with the Principals of other schools in Bhojpur, who visited the school on two occasions.

The staff's attitude to the Principal seems to be favourable. People feel that he runs the school efficiently and well. 'The general impression about the Principal is that he is a very good strict man and that he is bringing discipline and order in the school where there was none for the past nine years. Nine years ago the school had a good Principal and after a spate of bad ones they now have a good one. He seems enthusiastic about things and wants to do things in the school. This is what I gathered from the women in the staffroom' (General Notes, 8th July, 1987). However, this praise is tempered by some criticism. The Principal is not always as efficient as people think he is. For example, I was told that although the Chemistry laboratory had all the items of equipment it needed, they had not been installed for a long time. This obviously caused concern amongst the Science teachers but the Principal had not done anything about it (Appendix: General Notes, 5.1). In my own dealings with him, I found that sometimes these sorts of complaints were justified and at other times, they were not. I shall refer to my own attitudes and feelings at the time whenever I discuss my dealings with him.

The Principal has two peons to assist him. 'Peon' is a job description in government advertisements and the person appointed is a general messenger and handyman. It does not have any derogatory connotations in India. In Bhojpur, the peons convey messages from the Principal's office to the staff and students. If a circular is to be passed amongst members of the staff, it is taken by one of the peons to the members individually. Once a member has seen the circular he or she signs it, indicating that it has been read. Similarly, if there is an

urgent notice to be issued to the students, a circular from the Principal's office is brought to the classroom by the peon. This is read out loud and then signed by the teacher in the class, indicating that the students have heard the announcement.

5.4.5

The Adminstration

My own research was such that I had very little to do with the adminstrative staff. The school has a Vice-Principal who performs the duties of the Principal in his absence. The Vice-Principal in Bhojpur is an amiable man who often comes to the men's staffroom (called gents' staffroom in India) for a chat. His work includes duties delegated to him by the Principal. These are not fixed, but he seems to have been in charge of the teachers' attendance register (which teachers sign as they enter the building every morning). He also solves adminstrative problems and maintains the day-to-day running of the school. The Vice-Principal also teaches Hindi to the senior students in the school. But in general he does not seem to have very much work. The adminstrators keep students' records, produce examination timetables, deal with teachers' pay slips, leave and so on. Lower down the adminstrative ladder are peons, sweepers and cleaners. Apart from attending to the Principal's Office, they are responsible for locking and unlocking classrooms and cleaning them. I had to deal with some of them when the video package was introduced (See Chapter 6).

5.5

Life in the Staffrooms

Central School, Bhojpur has two inter-connected staffrooms, one for the men and one for the women. There is strict segregation of the sexes in the staffrooms, with the men sitting in the gents' staffroom and the women in the ladies' one. Normally, if a female teacher wants to speak to a male teacher, she calls him to the door and conversely, if a male teacher wants to speak to a female teacher, he calls her to the door. But sometimes, female teachers go into the male staffroom to talk to the male teachers there, although the converse is generally not true. However, my presence brought in exceptions to this rigidity.

Within such strictly demarcated staffrooms, I found myself in an ambivalent position. I am a woman but had to deal with mainly male teachers. So the question of where I should seat myself arose. This was finally resolved in a manner that pleased me very much. I had equal access to both the staffrooms and often wandered in and out of the two staffrooms. So I could sit with the women and chat with them, especially over lunch, and at the same time, I could go into the men's staffroom and take part in the conversations there (access to this arrangement is explained in Chapter 6).

The relationship between the male staff members and the female staff members is generally very formal and cordial. The men address the women as 'madam' and the women address the men as 'sir'. The students too address the female and male teachers as 'madam' and 'sir' respectively. Both the students and the male staff members called me 'madam' while the women in the staffroom called me by name. I found this amusing because when I actually was a teacher, the students called me by name. In this school, it seems to have been indicative of the fact that they treated me like a female member of staff.

The ethos in the two staffrooms is quite different. The women's staffroom seems slightly more academic and inclined to discuss academic matters than the men's staffroom. I often saw women correcting notebooks and preparing lessons. This was especially true of one Chemistry teacher and two other Biology teachers. There was also quite a lot of discussion about student gaffes and sometimes about some of the intelligent questions that students asked.

In the male staffroom, very little academic work seemed to be done. The only teacher I ever saw correcting notebooks was Mr. Sridhar. I rarely saw teachers looking at their books and preparing lessons in the gents' staffroom. This had not escaped the notice of the women teachers. One day, after talking to them, I noted that 'they despised male teachers because the male teachers do not put in any effort to teach well and often, before this Principal came,

would not even bother to go to the classes. Most women teachers do not even talk to the male teachers because they are 'so useless" (General Notes, 8th July, 1987). At the very least, this perception is given some support by the fact that some women teachers actively avoided having anything to do with the male staff members. At the time, I found the general apathy in the male staffroom quite depressing.

The claim that teachers (especially male staff members) avoid taking classes where they can was made to me not only by the women staff members but also by the Principal. Once when we were talking, he suddenly got up to go, saying that he would make his rounds. I asked him why he did that; he laughed and said that if he did not, there would be no teaching in the school. He told me that one of the reasons why teachers go to class is because they know that the Principal might make his rounds and if they are not in class they need to be able to explain their absence. However, even this system did not ensure that all the teachers went to class on time. In my experience Dr. Keval was often very late (15 to 20 minutes out of a 35 minute class), even though he was probably reprimanded for it at least once in the span of the research. One day, the Principal came into the class about ten minutes after the bell had rung only to find that although I was there Dr. Keval had not yet arrived. He asked the students which teacher should be in the class and noticed that I was sitting at the back. Although he did not say anything to me, he told the students to keep quiet and wait for their teacher.

This incident brought out the tension inherent in my role. When the Principal saw me sitting at the back of the class, he did not say anything although the class was fairly noisy. But I could not help wondering whether he thought it would have been more responsible of me if I had gone to the front of the class and taken control. After all he knew that I had been a teacher before, that I was much older than the students and that I could probably have taken on the teacher role quite easily. In fact I have no evidence that any such thoughts crossed his mind but I was extremely concerned about it at the time. I felt that it could be damaging to the research for me to take on the role of teacher. As a researcher I was interested in observing the events that took place in the school without intervening in the system at that stage. I

wanted to observe what happened in the class when the teacher was not there, not to interfere and alter it. So I sat firmly in my place at the back of the class. However, this incident did highlight my ambivalent position — where exactly did I fit into the system in the eyes of the staff and the students: was I part of the teaching community or was I not?

Apart from teaching, the teachers also have other duties to perform. For class teachers, one of these is collecting fees from the pupils every three months. Although these fees are very small, indeed nominal, their collection is time-consuming (generally extending for two or three days) and cannot be neglected. The teachers also participate in 'house programmes', especially if they are Housemasters (the same term is used for both male and female teachers). There are some teachers who have special responsibility delegated to them. For example, there is a teacher in charge of all the furniture in the school, and another responsible for the school's two computers. This obviously has implications for the element of teacher training when the video package is introduced. Often, a teacher may appear to be free but in fact be engaged in one of these extra-curricular committments.

5.6

Life in the classroom

In Bhojpur (as in many parts of India), students studying science subjects are perceived as being cleverer than those studying arts and commerce. This perception seems to arise partly because of the grading system and entrance requirements, whereby only students who have very high marks in the Standard X public examination are allowed (and indeed encouraged) to take science. I was told by teachers that the science students know English better than the arts students because they are more intelligent and more highly motivated. The motivation, it was explained to me, comes from the fact that the science texts are in English and examination questions have to be answered in English. Besides, if students wanted to enter the most prestigious professions, medicine and engineering, they had to answer a compulsory English paper in the fiercely competitive entrance examinations.

5.6.1

Classroom Layout

The XI 'B' class is on the ground floor, very close to the staffrooms and to the school playground. The classroom is like a lecture theatre with steps at intervals to ensure that even people sitting at the back can see the blackboard. There is a central aisle and benches are arranged on either side of it. The boys generally sit on the right hand side (as one faces the door) and the girls on the left. Since the number of boys is greater than the number of girls, there are some boys who sit on the girls' side but at the back of the class. Each row has five to seven students. Sometimes these rows are very crowded and there is very little room to move. The arrangement of the furniture in the class is so formal that it does not encourage group discussions, although it may be possible, even within such a rigorous arrangement, to work in pairs. There is a desk and chair in front of the class for the teacher. It is the 'duty' of the monitor to see that there is a duster and chalk in the classroom. But the teachers often bring their own pieces of chalk.

Most of the classes in the school have unsatisfactory electrical fittings. Either there are no fans in the classroom, or the fans are there but without regulators, or the regulators are there but without fans, or both are there but the electrical connection to the room is faulty. The same is true of lights. Most classrooms seem to have been supplied with light fittings originally but they have disappeared with time. Even where a class has both lights and working fans, there is the perennial problem of power cuts. The net result generally is classrooms where neither lights nor fans operate. The absence of fans is a severe problem when the temperature is regularly well over 100°F. Many are the days when students listlessly fan themselves with textbooks, notebooks and almost anything else they can find, as my class notes testify. Examples from my class notes read: 'It's very hot — one of the boys is fanning himself with a hanky' (9th July); 'it's hot and I am sleepy' (13th July); 'student 4.2.B — feeling hot (picking shirt up and trying to fan himself)' (13th July); 'one of the boys is very hot and is fanning himself ... a number of girls are fanning themselves, as also a number of boys '(21st July); and so on. Not only this, it is sometimes so dark that students

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can barely see the blackboard. This is specially true during the rainy season when the cloud cover is very dense. On one occasion, I pointed this out to the Principal, but he thought the problem trivial because the monsoons last for only two months or so.

Obviously, if one is introducing video materials as innovation in the classroom, a certain preoccupation with electricity and its supply cannot be avoided. Although power failures are quite frequent, it was possible to arrange the timing of the video lessons to minimise the risk of interruption. Power supply in these parts of India is dependent on hydro-electric power plants, which in their turn are dependent on the rains. The monsoons generally arrive in India in July and the power supply then stabilises. This was one of the considerations in my mind in choosing to introduce the video materials during July, August and September. In the event, the monsoons were late and bad. We had a poor supply of electricity right through July but the situation improved remarkably in August. This was providential since the introduction of the innovation started in August. Besides, as the Principal pointed out to me, interruptions to the power supply are much more frequent in the mornings than in the afternoons. He offered to change the time-table to take account of this, but as it happened the class into which the innovation was being introduced already had English lessons in the afternoon.

5.6.2

Teaching

The actual teaching in the classroom is geared towards examinations. Both the teacher and the students seem to feel that the aim of studying English (or indeed, any other subject) in the school is to get good results. So the activities in the classroom were supposed to help students to do well in the final examination. Sometimes, Dr. Keval asked questions that explicitly indicated that the teaching was examination-centred. For example, he said, 'Suppose you are asked to identify a topic sentence in the examination ...' (class notes, 10th July, 1987). At other times, he explained his behaviour by referring to examinations. Thus the reason for grammatical references in a lesson was that the 'students have to identify various clauses in their exam. papers' (Informal Conversation with Dr. Keval, 8th July).

One of the most important aspects of orientating the teaching towards an examination is that of covering the syllabus. In Bhojpur, it seemed very important for the teacher to finish all the lessons in the book. In an interview with Dr. Keval I asked him what would happen if all the portions in the book were not covered. He replied:

> Dr. Keval:
> No, that is objectionable. It is very much
> objectionable because in the examination all the
> lessons are expected and morally I am bound to cover
> all the lessons. When I am not able to cover the
> lessons I request the Principal to arrange some extra
> periods ...
>
> Interviewer (interrupting):
> So that you can cover the lessons?
>
> Dr. Keval (continues):
> ... so it is not only I feel that I should cover the
> lessons, the students of higher classes also say,
> persuade me to finish all the lessons and it is brought
> into the notice of the Principal and he also tells me to
> cover the lessons.
>
> (From an interview with Dr. Keval, 10th July, 1987)

This is an interesting interview because in the first instance Dr. Keval first says that he requests the Principal to arrange for extra classes, but suggests a little later that the Principal tells him to complete the syllabus. It seems to me likely that the Principal's order takes place only after the concerned teacher has not been to ask for 'extra periods' and the students have complained. This extract is indicative of the fact that everyone in the school, the teacher, the Principal and most of all, the students are concerned that the syllabus be completed.

In one of the interviews (see Appendix: Interview 5.1 for an extended transcript), when students were commenting on different teaching styles, they thought that they would be happy with any teaching style, provided it helped them to pass their examination.

> Student 2:
> I have no difference, no different opinions about the
> different teaching styles.
>
> Interviewer:
> You have no opi ...

Student 2 (interrupts):
Yes, madam. Because I think we have to read the
lesson, and learn it and to write it in the exam.

Another student:
Nothing more than that.

(From an interview with students of Group 2)

5.6.3

Homework

In all my time at Bhojpur, I never saw Dr. Keval give any homework. Nevertheless, students

seem to feel that homework is an important but neglected part of school life. In a number of

interviews, they said that they would like more homework given more regularly. They see a

direct relation between a teacher's giving homework and his or her taking an interest in the

class. One of the students said, 'madam, when teacher is interested they give homeworks.

Some, mostly in 90% case he doesn't ...' (extract from an interview with students of Group

3).

In another interview (Appendix: Interview 5.2) some students explained to me the

circumstances in which a teacher gives homework. According to them, 'when any person

from outside our school comes, Inspector of Schools, then teachers give homework and they

maintain homework copies up to date' (extract from an interview with students of group 3).

This is because Commissioners and Inspectors of Schools sometimes look at the notebooks of

students to see if they have done adequate work. However, the manner in which some

teachers 'maintain copies up to date' ('copies' is the Indian English word for 'notebooks') is

very telling. They seem to give students a number of pieces of work a little before the

inspection, but tell them to put false dates on them to give the impression that homework has

been assigned regularly throughout the year. I was explicitly told by students that Dr. Keval

had done this, but no mention of Mr.Sridhar was made in this context.

When I questioned Dr. Keval about homework, he said that he gave homework 'after the end

of every lesson' (meaning every chapter of the textbook, rather than every period). He explained that he had two reasons for giving homework. One was to check that students had understood the lesson and the other was to give them samples of the sorts of questions that may be asked in the final examination. But, as the interview below shows, it does seem that the second reason is the more important :

> Dr. Keval:
> I give homework so that I can understand the understanding of the students. While giving home work I also keep in mind their examination questions, OK, and I point out certain questions which are on the pattern of the board examinations ...
>
> Interviewer:
> Yes.
>
> Dr. Keval (continues):
> ... so not only understanding, their understanding, but also the pattern of questions, the type of questions which are set in the examinations.
>
> (From an interview with Dr. Keval, 10th July 1987)

To repeat, however, I never actually saw Dr. Keval giving homework, even though he completed one chapter in my presence.

5.6.4

Cheating

Cheating seems to be an accepted practice in this school. In fact, I was asked if I would be an accomplice during a quarterly examination that the students had to take:

> Two boys came to me and asked me if I would help them in the test. They said that since I had been attending their classes, I would know the answers to some of the questions asked. They also asked me if I would put up the microphones today and if I would record the way they cheated. I was quite surprised and asked them why they cheated and if they would cheat today. They said that they had not understood 'The Little Black Boy' and hence would have to depend on each other and on guide books.
>
> (Class Notes, 27th July, 1987)

Shortly after this incident I was told that cheating is a normal accepted practice and that I

should not be surprised by it. The women in the Ladies' staffroom blame it on the men. They think that if the male teachers invigilated the examinations properly, then students would not cheat. It seems surprising that the teachers are not worried about the root cause of cheating but see the lack of proper invigilation as a sufficient solution to the problem. Like the women members of staff, the students recognise that cheating is possible only when the invigilation is not strict: 'If the teacher is less careful he will sit there and the boys will go on cheating at the back' (see also Appenidix: Interview 5.3).

However, unlike the women teachers, the students have a more sophisticated analysis of cheating. According to them, they cheat when teachers have not taught a lesson well. In an interview, one of them explained to me that 'if the subject teacher is intelligent or he will teach, teaches nicely, everybody understand them, then they will do independently' (Appendix Interview 5.3). Otherwise they cheat. A second reason is to do with the syllabus for the examination. Sometimes, teachers set examination questions from portions that have not yet been taught. This too leads to cheating (Appendix: Interview 5.3).

Another group of students has other interesting reasons about why people cheat. One is that students want to please the teacher and so they cheat to do well in the examination. Yet another reason is that 'people cheat in first term because the admission is late and they wanted to pass in the examination, because this is the career of the student' (Appendix: Interview 5.4). Students thus see a very close relationship between doing well in examinations and having a good career later on. Cheating is justified as a means to achieving a good career.

5.6.5

Guide Books

In one of the interviews, some students say that they use 'guide books' to cheat. On further questioning, one of them told me that these books are really 'help books' which enable them to understand the lessons taught in class (there is no real British equivalent, although such publications as 'Coles Notes' come close). They clarify points from English lessons by

supplying a translation of the lesson in Hindi. One student says that they are extremely important because 'English meaning English explaining, not understand so Hindi meaning is understand by students' (Appendix: Interview 5.5).

It was also explained to me that guide books have 'some standard questions' (from an interview with students of Group 3) . What the students seem to mean is that the guide books have questions which the teachers generally do not ask in class, nor do these questions and answers appear at the end of the lesson in the text book. However, questions like these can sometimes be found in the examinations and the students want to be prepared for them. These guides, as they are sometimes called, seem to be so helpful that one group of students thinks that buying them is imperative. One of them thinks that '90% students have bought it' and another that they are more reliable than their teachers (Appendix: Interview 5.6).

The manner in which the whole schooling system is directed towards doing well in examinations had its effects on the introduction of video materials as innovation in this school. Detailed explanations of what these effects are and how they came about are in Chapter 6. This preoccupation with examinations is not confined to the school alone. A whole system of private tuition, which is the focus of discussion in the next section, is also geared to help students perform well in examinations.

5.7

The tuition system

Although the tuition system is not part of regular schooling and occurs outside school hours, it seems to affect the teaching and learning in the classroom. In Bhojpur, as in many other parts of India, there is quite a market for private tuition and traditionally it has been men who give private tuition to students. Within the private tuition system, the students go to the teacher's house to study a particular subject and pay the teacher a sum of money per month for having given them extra help. Students often claim that teachers do not teach well in the classroom because they are more interested in earning money by means of private tuition, and

that if they did teach well in the school, there would be no need for private tuition. One student said quite frankly that 'teachers who have tuition do not teach us properly' (Appendix: Interview 5.7). Another student worded it more strongly, saying, 'they harass us in the class and then they want us to go home and do their tuition and they will solve our doubts' (Appendix: Interview 5.7).

These students seem to explain poor teaching by referring to their teachers' taking private tuition. Of course, they have no experience of a system in which teachers do not take tuition, with which to compare their present situation. It may be that if teachers did not take tuition they would teach well in class, but again it may not be so. There really is no way of knowing. The reasons why teachers do not teach well (if indeed they do not do so) are probably complex. Indeed the students own perceptions of their teachers are complex, and they implicitly recognise other factors that affect teaching. For example, the same class agrees in regarding Dr. Keval, who gives private tuition, as a better teacher than Mr. Sridhar, who does not (Appendix: Interview 5.8). I myself think that the fact that Dr. Keval has 'a few students whom I teach at home' while Mr. Sridhar does not is reflected in interesting ways in their respective classroom behaviour (see Chapter 8).

The students' explicit opinions about private tuition, in spite of their experience which suggests a more complex view, are in line with conventional wisdom. People in general accept that until recently, there might have been some justification for private tuition, in that the fees have supplemented teachers' low pay. On the other hand, however, it is often argued that this has led to a deterioration in teaching standards in schools. The situation has become so notorious that even the government has had to take note and in response, it has increased teachers' salaries quite considerably. But this has come too late. The teachers are now committed to their tuition and do not want to give it up. The situation now is that although they have better pay, they still have their private tuition.

Thus, it was within this complex context that video was introduced as innovation. The next

chapter traces the process of introduction and implementation of the innovation in the Standard XI 'B' English classroom.

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CHAPTER 6

A NARRATIVE OF EVENTS

6.1

Introduction to the School

This chapter recounts in detail what happened in Central School, Bhojpur from 6th July 1987 to 25th September 1987 — from my first day in the school until my last. The first few days in retrospect seem to have been very important because I was trying to get a preliminary idea about who was who in the school and how the school functioned, and at the same time, the people in the school were trying to understand why I was there and where I fitted in.

I hope this story is interesting, but I am not telling it for that reason. Ethnographers in recent years have become increasingly inclined to reveal details about themselves: their roles and activities, their feelings and decisions, the problems they faced, the solutions they found, the relationships they developed and the compromises they made in the course of their research. It is now widely recognised that this is not mere anecdote, but gives important information for the serious reader of research, because such personal stories can throw light on the amount and kind of information a researcher has obtained, or failed to obtain, and on how he or she has interpreted it. Indeed, a number of ethnographic researchers who published research reports before such story-telling was usual have returned to the subject of their studies years later to publish a separate research-biography supplement. (See, for example, those collected in Burgess (ed.), 1984.) As Hammersley has pointed out, such 'confessional' writings can sometimes lead the reader to see the original work in a rather different light (Hammersley, 1990, Ch.2).

6.1.1

Initial Reception

When I arrived at the school on the 6th of July, I was greeted very warmly by the Principal and the English teachers. They remembered me from my previous visit in February and enquired after my well being. It is interesting that we got down to work very quickly. This was mainly because of the initiative and enthusiasm of the Principal. He asked one of the peons to call Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar (the two English teachers concerned) to his office and when they came I explained to them approximately what I had in mind. At this meeting I learnt of Dr. Keval's imminent teacher training course at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, and its potential effects on my project. This led us to discuss dates and diaries in general and we came to the conclusion that the project was still feasible. We left the Principal and carried on a more detailed discussion in the staffroom. This first discussion in the Principal's office sounded so efficient that it could almost have taken place in a Western country. What made it particularly so was the use of diaries and the discussion of dates. In India, people have diaries but rarely use them. Generally, we do not make appointments (especially months in advance) but casually call on each other. However, because I had limited time and had to plan my movements carefully, we used a diary to discuss what I would be doing in the school (Appendix: General Notes, 6.1).

In the staffroom, both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar sounded extremely interested. Dr. Keval sounded very energetic and eager whereas Mr. Sridhar was quieter, but they both assured me that they would work enthusiastically on the project.

6.1.2

Formal Introduction

The formal introduction to the school came in the Assembly on the 7th of July. The reason why the Principal could not introduce me on the 6th was because the microphones were not working and he really did not like addressing the students without them. But they had been put right by the next morning, making it possible for him to introduce me formally. He told

them that I was a researcher in The Open University and was interested in seeing what happens when video is introduced into the English classroom. He also told them that I was no stranger either to Bhojpur or to the school because I had grown up in Bhojpur and had two brothers who had studied in their school. The implication seemed to be that I was really one of them and should be warmly welcomed. He explained that I would mainly be involved with Standard XI students but asked the whole school to be helpful and co-operative.

6.1.3

Presence in the Staffrooms

As already mentioned (Chapter 5), the Central School in Bhojpur has two staff rooms — one for male teachers and another for women teachers. On the very first day, I faced at once the dilemma about which staffroom to use. Initally, I put my bag down in the gents' staffroom and spent some time there. I spoke to Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar about their work, got their timetable from them, and exchanged pleasantries. On the second day too, I put my bag down in the gents' staffroom and talked to Dr. Keval before the Assembly. When I was with him, Miss Chitra, one of the Chemistry teachers in the school came up to talk to me. She remembered me from childhood days, although I could not remember who she was. It turned out that she and my brother had been classmates together at this very school for the best part of ten years. We started talking about what the old times were like and how Bhojpur had changed since then. I got led into the women's staffroom while we caught up on the past. Chitra and I went to the Assembly together and there met the Principal and Dr. Keval. I asked her, Dr. Keval and the Principal about where I should sit but nobody seemed very clear about it. They seemed to let me decide for myself — 'I got the impression that I had the freedom to move between the two staffrooms. That is certainly what I did today and the teachers did not seem to mind and nor did they seem to think that anything was amiss' (General Notes, 7th July, 1987; also Appendix: General Notes, 6.2).

My presence did another interesting thing. Dr. Keval came into the women's staffroom and sat down to talk to me. This was something that I am sure he would not have been able to do

in the normal course of things. Similarly, there were one or two days when Chitra came to the men's staffroom for a chat. With increasing freedom of movement between the two staffrooms, and after talking informally to many teachers, I found that the workload of Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar was only about two-thirds of that of the Science teachers in the senior classes. Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar each taught 26 or 27 classes per week, whereas the Chemistry teacher taught about 40 classes in the same time.

6.1.4

Presence in the Classroom

Although the Principal did not introduce me to the school on my first day there, he thought it would be a good idea to introduce me at once to the class with which I would be working. So, after the Assembly, Dr. Keval, the Principal and I went to the Standard XI classroom. As my notes record:

> The Principal addressed the students, telling them that I was doing a Ph.D. in England and that I had chosen to study their school and that too, Standard XI 'B' for my project. He said that he did not know the exact reason but, no doubt, I had some very good reasons. He asked the class to co-operate with me and told them that they should try and help me in every way possible. He left Dr. Keval and me in the class and Dr. Keval began his lesson.
>
> (General Notes, 6th July, 1987)

Before we went into the class, Dr. Keval and I had a conversation about where I should sit. He thought I should sit beside him in the front of the class. I had told him that I wanted to sit at the back as unobtrusively as possible but he said that I was one of them (meaning one of the staff rather than one of the students) and that since I was a guest I should have a place of honour. This meant that I should sit in the front of the class and face the class as he did. I dissuaded him from that, explaining that I was interested in observing the class from a position that drew very little attention to me. At first, he was uneasy about this and did not

seem to understand why I should not accept the respect he was according me as a fellow teacher. But since I was a guest, my wishes had to be honoured and he finally consented to my sitting at the back.

In the class, I hung the microphones up with the help of two boys, neither the girls nor I being tall enough. Even as the Principal was explaining my presence to the class, I had noticed that there were two nails on the walls in the classroom. I had been wondering if we could put the microphones up there. We discovered, much to my relief, that we could. The boys and I put the microphones up in relatively little time and the class began in earnest. At the end of the lesson, Dr. Keval asked me if I wanted to address the class.

> I said that I had very little to say. All I wanted was a little help from the students. I wanted them to keep a diary of their impressions so that we could have a record of what they felt about their lessons. I quickly divided the class into groups of five students each and they will now keep a weekly record of their impressions every week. Two groups will keep a record of their impressions every week. So Group 1 and 2 will keep a record for this week; Group 3 and 4 next week and so on. I shall collect their impressions every Monday and get them photocopied and then return the notebooks to the students. I assured the students that the records would be confidential and would not be revealed to anybody. Dr. Keval, at this point, thought that he should leave the class in case I wanted to say something confidential that he should not hear. I assured him that I had nothing confidential to say to the students but he still insisted on leaving the class. I did not say anything else to the students; packed my bag and left the class.
>
> (General Notes, 6th July, 1987)

I should point out that my division of the class into groups was according to where the students were sitting. Most benches had five students each and I had already found out that the seating in the class was based on personal choice rather than teachers enforcing a seating discipline. So, I assumed (quite correctly, it turned out) that friends would sit with each other. While this did not matter as far as keeping diaries was concerned, it had implications

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for later lessons because throughout the introduction of video, the students kept to their groups. In the event, this worked out well because all the individuals in the group knew each other well and they were all comfortable with each other. But this is one indication of how an early decision could influence events later on.

Dr. Keval had another class with the students later in the day. He had taken the first class out of turn but nobody seemed to mind. The attitude to timetabling in this school was quite relaxed:

> Teachers do have a time table that they by and large follow but if someone else wants to take the class or is already taking the class they do not worry too much about exchanging periods or about losing lesson time. In the morning we had taken up the Chemistry teacher's period and when I apologised to her for what had happened she told me she was only too glad to have a free period. In any case, she was teaching Chemistry in that class only because there was an acute shortage of Chemistry teachers in the school, and so, despite being overburdened and despite the fact that she was not supposed to be teaching the senior classes, she was teaching Std. XI and Std. XII Chemistry'.

(General Notes, 6th July, 1987)

Dr. Keval thus took two classes in Std. XI 'B' on my first day. The second period he took with the class was the time he was supposed to teach them according to his time table.

> Before the class, Dr. Keval said to me that the students were probably quite confused about what I meant by a diary. He pulled out a small pocket diary (like the OU diary) and asked me if I thought the students should write their impressions down in something like that and also what kind of categories they should write things in. I thought about this and came up with a list of headings under which students could put their impressions. The list is as follows:
>
> 1. Date
> 2. Lesson Name
> 3. General Impressions
> 4. Teacher's talk in the class

5. Their own responses
6. Grammar
7. How much did they understand in the class
8. What they did not understand

After Dr. Keval finished taking his class he asked me
if I had anything to say. I gave the students the
format and asked them if they understood what I had
said. They said they had and I left them to it.

(General Notes, 6th July, 1987)

The classes slowly settled down to accepting my presence, without being in any way troubled

by it as far as I could see. In the beginning, Dr. Keval occasionally addressed a remark to

me. For example, during one of his lessons, he forgot the name of a student and called him

something else. It was obvious to all that this had happened. He looked towards me and said

that he sometimes called them other names with love and affection but they did not mind.

However, Dr. Keval's addressing me during lessons soon stopped. The second day I

explained to Dr. Keval that it would probably be a good idea for me to go into the class just

after the first bell, instead of going in with him. This would give me time to set up the

equipment so that I would not be disturbing his teaching in any way. It would also give me

the odd five minutes to talk to the students. I hoped it would serve another function, that of

signalling to the students that although I spent time in the staffroom I was not really a teacher

and did not need to be treated with the same deference.

6.1.5

First Impressions

There were three main categories of people I met in the first few days of my involvement with

the school: the Principal, the teachers (Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar) and the students. My

initial impression about all of them was that they were very friendly and very eager to accept

me in their midst. I also found that by and large the Principal seemed to have a good working

relationship with both students and members of staff, and to be universally liked. My own

dealings with him made me feel that he was very enthusiastic about the project, and quite

methodical in finding out what I needed for it.

I thought at first that Dr. Keval was very eager to teach his classes. But I soon found out from students that his zeal and his 'good teaching' were because of my presence. They thought that his teaching had improved dramatically since I came (Appendix: General Notes, 6.3). Various teachers also told me what the general feeling was about Dr. Keval's teaching. One of the women teachers I was talking to said that

> reports said that he was a very nice man but not a
> good teacher at all. His English was poor and his
> pronunciation appalling. This was corroborated by a
> Biology teacher who teaches these classes. She also
> said the same things. She added that she, of course,
> had not been to see his class but that is what the
> students felt and said about him.

> (General Notes, 7th July, 1987)

Dr. Keval's enthusiasm for teaching did not seem to last more than a day or two. Some of the things he did were quite disappointing. One particularly disheartening habit was of coming very late to classes. On one occasion,

> I went to the class early to fix things up because I had
> realised yesterday that there was a loose connection
> and only one of the microphones had been working.
> The bell rang and the teacher, Dr. Keval, did not
> appear for a very long time. He did not come for
> about ten or fifteen minutes after the class had begun.
> Then he came in and apologised and started to teach.
> After the class we went into the staffroom and I asked
> him what had happened. He said that he had gone to
> the Railway station to book the Principal's trip to
> Delhi and that he had been delayed in the queue there.
> I was surprised he had decided to do it then (book the
> tickets) because he had two continuous free periods
> after the English lesson. Besides, the school has so
> many peons that the Principal could have sent.
> However, I did not say anything.

> (General Notes, 9th July, 1987)

This sort of incident was to become quite familiar later on. However, in the beginning, Dr.

Keval seemed quite interested in his class and the teaching of English. The fact that he was going on a teacher training course also seemed a sign of genuine interest.

Mr. Sridhar seemed a much quieter man. I did not get to see a lot of him in the beginning because he would either be in class or sit quietly correcting notebooks. Besides, I was not involved with him as closely as I was with Dr. Keval. So whenever I saw Mr. Sridhar I felt that I had to be friendly to him and make him feel that he was in no way being discriminated against just because I would not be working with him to the extent that I would be working with Dr. Keval. My relationship with Mr. Sridhar was friendly and cordial in the first few days but there was no more involvement than that. Things would change, however, when Dr. Keval went away on his training course and also much later when, because of various incidents, I began to work quite closely with Mr. Sridhar.

The students I met and worked closely with were very interesting. They seemed quite mature and responsible. It was easy to be friendly with them, although the girls were a lot shyer than the boys. They were curious about the equipment I had, what I was doing in Britain, life in Britain in general and what my study in their class involved. They seemed interested in writing the diaries, although one of them forgot to start it the first day. They were eager to know what I thought of the school and them; they were eager to share with me what they knew about the school and their own feelings about things. At the end of a class I was often swamped by students who wanted to hear their voices which were on tape; they asked me questions about various things like cricket in Britain and Wimbledon and offered to help me carry all my equipment out. They certainly seemed interesting and friendly in the first few days I was there.

6.1.6

My Routine

The routine I settled into in the first month was different from the routine later on in the research programme, with the introduction of the audiovisual media package. The present

description is that of the routine that I adopted before its introduction. I got to the school by a quarter to nine or ten to nine in the morning. I attended Assembly, along with the other teachers and then made my way to the Ladies' staffroom. After talking for some time with the women, I went to see Dr. Keval and when he was away, I saw Mr. Sridhar. I also spent a lot of time talking to students in the corridor, for want of a better place. Obviously, I could not have the tape-recorder on during such times but as soon afterwards as possible, I wrote down the various bits of interesting information I had gleaned from them. In the afternoon, I went into the class immediately after the first bell after lunch break. The teacher came in after the second bell. After recording the class, I stayed on in the class and talked to the students informally if they had a free period. As already mentioned, they came up and wanted to listen to their voices which were on tape. With time, however, they became bolder and stayed on to 'chit-chat' (as one of them put it). Sometimes they were just curious about England and a different life style. At other times, they discussed the classes they had and the activities they were engaged in. I left for home at about three o'clock, having spent most of the day in the school.

6.2

Dr. Keval's Teacher Training Course

Dr. Keval was to go on a teacher training course to the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL), Hyderabad, where he would work on the teaching of English to second-language learners. He had been given three extracts (totalling five pages) to read and think about before he went on the course. He did not read them, 'complaining that the CIEFL had given him a lot of work to do, and that he had no time to do them' (General Notes, 8th July, 1987). Although he was to be away for the best part of a month, Dr. Keval did not leave work for the classes that he was going to miss. He was much busier trying to get 'relieving orders' (part of the bureaucratic system in India whereby teachers have to get 'relieving orders' when they leave their normal place of work to go on an assignment elsewhere and then get 'joining orders' when they come back) and trying to ensure that his pay was protected while he was away. However he did give his class instructions about

completing the registration book in his absence, and told the class monitor to handle it carefully.

Obviously, Dr. Keval's teacher training course affected the way the introduction of the video materials was structured. In fact, I had to make a decision about the structuring the very first day.

> Dr. Keval also told me what the Principal had said to me — that he was going to be away for three weeks but that he would co-operate with me and my project as much as possible when he was around. I thanked him for it. THIS WAS ALREADY A DECISION MAKING POINT FOR ME. WHAT COULD I DO AND WHAT DID I WANT TO DO ABOUT THE FACT THAT THE CLASS WOULD BE TAUGHT BY SOMEONE ELSE IN HIS ABSENCE AND ALSO THAT I WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO START WORK ON THE VIDEO MATERIALS WITH HIM TILL THE BEGINNING OF AUGUST?
>
> (General Notes, 9th July, 1987)

This problem seemed of such overwhelming importance that at the time I wrote it out in capital letters. (As the research progressed, I seem to have become more relaxed, as even the most serious setbacks remain in lower case in my notes.)

Both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar assured me that they would help the project as much as possible. We came to an agreement to overcome the problem. I would observe traditional classes in July, albeit now Mr Sridhar's. On Dr. Keval's return in the first week of August, he and I would start to work on the video package. In the second week of August, he would introduce video in his English lessons, while at the same time we would work in his free periods on further materials. I would observe the video-led classes until the 27th of September, when the school would break for the Puja holidays (Appendix: General Notes, 6.1; for a chronology of events, see Appendix: Chronology)

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Apart from me, the person who was affected most by Dr. Keval's teacher training course was Mr. Sridhar because it increased his teaching load considerably. Standard XI and Standard XII had two sections each — an Arts section and a Science one. Dr. Keval taught English to the Science students of Standard XI and the Arts students of Standard XII, and Mr. Sridhar the Arts section in Standard XI and the Science one in Standard XII. When Dr. Keval went on his teacher training course, Mr. Sridhar also took over the English classes of the Science students in Standard XI. For the English lessons, XI 'A' and XI 'B' met as one class, so that Mr. Sridhar had seventy students in his class instead of the customary 35.

I was interested to note that this arrangement was confined to Standard XI. Standard XII had a more ad hoc arrangement. This generally meant that the science teachers who had not succeeded in finishing their syllabus or who felt that they had a lot to teach took the 'free period' and taught one of the science subjects instead of English. I could not help wondering if it was because of my presence that Mr. Sridhar was given Standard XI 'B' English to teach while Dr. Keval was away. But the students did not seem to think it odd that Mr. Sridhar should take over their classes. Certainly, none of them commented on it.

6.3

Mr.Sridhar's teaching

Mr. Sridhar started teaching English to both the science and arts sections from the 13th of July onwards and continued teaching them together till the 3rd of August. The classes were held in the XI 'B' classroom, with the XI 'A' students moving in from their room. It used to take a long time for the class to settle down, even after Mr. Sridhar's arrival, because of overcrowding of the benches. There were many similarities in the teaching style of Mr. Sridhar and Dr. Keval in that both taught in a predominantly transmission mode (discussed in detail in Chapter 8). But there were some differences too. These differences reflect to some extent the difference in students' regard for the two teachers. The students were unanimously agreed that Dr. Keval was a more interesting and a better teacher than Mr. Sridhar (Appendix: Interview, 6.1). This was reflected in the classroom in interesting ways. While Dr. Keval

could walk in and ask the class which page he had to teach, it was generally Mr. Sridhar who told the class which page they were on. The noise level in the classroom was also indicative of this difference. Mr. Sridhar seemed to be less strict than Dr. Keval in that he did not reprimand students if they talked amongst themselves. But Dr. Keval did not tolerate students discussing and talking amongst themselves when he was in class. This aspect came out in both the formal and informal interviews I had with the students. It is possible that Mr. Sridhar's classes were very noisy because there were two sections being taught together rather than just one, but some students thought that the class would still have been much quieter if Dr. Keval had been teaching. I have no means of verifying this claim. Another interesting difference was that Mr. Sridhar came to the class on time which Dr. Keval rarely did.

6.4

Organising for the Introduction of the Video Package

While Dr. Keval was away and Mr. Sridhar was teaching the students of Standard XI, I was busy not just observing the classes and the school but also arranging for the introduction of the video package. If we wanted to introduce this innovation in the classroom, we required a room with adequate electrical fittings where the students could sit together and discuss what they saw in groups. We also needed a colour television set with a large monitor so that even students at the back could see; a video tape recorder; a voltage stabiliser; a DC/AC Converter with a 12 volt battery which could be switched on when the electricity failed; and many lengths of wire and plugs. I already had with me a portable video tape recorder which had been converted to suit Indian standards. I also succeeded in borrowing a voltage stabiliser from my parents. But the other equipment had to be arranged for. Investigations into hiring this equipment for two months proved that they would be unacceptably expensive. However, because of past connections in Bhojpur (I had taught the sister of the owner of a television shop), I was given free access to a new 28" colour television set for the two months we needed the equipment. I also had access to a Converter, and I managed to get the battery from a family friend who owned a few trucks (though only after the one day when it was needed because of a power failure during our audiovisual lessons). All these arrangements for

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equipment were completed by the end of July and the equipment was installed in the room on the 3rd of August, a day before Dr. Keval returned.

Getting the room and the furniture for it was possible because of the co-operation of the Principal and other members of staff. From the very first day I was there the Principal asked me about our requirements and tried arranging for them (Appendix: General Notes, 6.4). By the second day, he had already learnt that we needed a room with proper electrical fittings by the end of July. We could not use the Standard XI 'B' classroom as it was built like a lecture theatre making group work difficult. Besides, its electrical fittings left much to be desired.

We managed to get the room and all the furniture we needed on time. It was decided that the safest and best room for installing the television monitor and the video equipment was the Home-Science room (also referred to as 'the new classroom' or 'the new room' to distinguish it from the XI 'B' classroom). The Home-Science teacher was obliging and generous. I later learned from her that the Prinicpal had called her aside and asked her for help. She related the incident with amusement. He had said:

वो तो आपके बेटी जैसे है। आप उसे मद्दद कीजिए। उसको आपका कमरा इस्तमाल करने दीजिए। सिर्फ दो ही तो महीने हैं।

['She is like your daughter. You must help her by letting her use your room for the two months she needs it.'] We got some chairs from the Geography room and the rest of the chairs and the tables from Mr. Sridhar who happened to be the teacher in charge of the school's furniture. By the 1st of August, we were ready to install the equipment needed for the video-led lessons (Appendix: General Notes, 6.5).

One other problem that was to plague us throughout the introduction was the fuse box which connected to the Home-Science room. Once the students got to know about the presence of a video recorder and a television in the school, a number of them tried to peep through the windows. Some of them (not the Standard XI students) either took the fuse wire out of the

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fuse box outside or took the ceramic contact away. This was extremely frustrating. I began carrying fuse wire and a box of contacts with me. Each time there was no electricity in the room, the first thing I would do was check the connections to the room and replace any lost fuses and contacts. This was something that had to be done before every class, although the patience of the boys who indulged in stealing the fuse wire did give way and eventually they stopped.

6.5

Dr. Keval's Return

Dr. Keval was to join school on the third of August but he did so only on the fourth. As we had very little time, we set to work on the video package immediately. On the first day, we worked from the second period until well into the lunch break. This may have been the reason why he was late to class. The students sat in their places and waited patiently for him. On coming in, he started to teach 'One Life' by Christiaan Barnard, another lesson in Standard XI text book, I — The People. The classes reverted to normal and some students later told me that they were really happy that Dr. Keval had returned.

6.6

Training Dr. Keval

Training Dr. Keval in the new method was very hard. This was not because he found it difficult to understand the materials. On the contrary, when he and I had discussed the usefulness of group work and how this would be the normal mode of classroom practice for the video led lessons, he introduced group work in his normal teaching methods with great initiative. Thus, when he asked students to work on their text books in groups on the fifth of August, I was pleasantly surprised.

The problem, though, lay in Dr. Keval's 'laziness'. As he himself said very candidly, 'I am a sort of a lazy man. With easeful disposition. I find working very hard'. My own notes also reflect this:

What has been happening ever since the day I gave
him material for the video classes is that he has been
trying to shirk work as much as possible. For
example, today he said that there would not be classes
because of Tulsi Jayanti (which is a festival of song
and prayer celebrating the birth of the poet and saint
Tulsidas). I said to him that I had asked the
Vice-Principal and had been told that there would be
regular classes after the third period and our class was
in the sixth period. This was official information and
had been passed in the staffrooms. He therefore had
to agree that there would be a class in the sixth period.
Very often he half seriously asks me why I do not
take some days off and give him some respite. He
acts as if he is teaching for my sake and because of
me rather than because he is a teacher in the school.

(General Notes, 5th August, 1987)

6.7

The First Few Classes in their Own Classroom

Even before the video materials were introduced, Dr. Keval tried out the idea of getting

students to work in groups using the same group divisions as for the diary writing (see

Chapter 6). In spite of the fact that the rigid arrangement of furniture made group work quite

difficult, the students seemed to work constructively in their groups. First, they were asked to

read a paragraph: 'Now the groups are already divided. Read in your groups, second

paragraph. "The farther I went the worse it became"' (Lesson 23, 5th August, 1987). After

giving the students about five minutes to read, Dr. Keval asked them to discuss what they had

read — 'Now please discuss in the group. Having a little bit of talking, please discuss as

slowly as possible' (Lesson 23, 5th August, 1987). 'As slowly as possible' seems to have

meant 'as softly as possible'; otherwise the class next door might be disturbed. He then

questioned the groups, and elicited answers from them. He used questions and exhortations

like, 'all right, this group. What is exactly the problem before the writer', or 'this group.

Yes. Mahendra' (Lesson 23, 5th August, 1987). After the question-answer session, Dr.

Keval asked the students if they had any doubts or problems. He solved these and then

directed them to move on to the next paragraph.

When I asked some students about this new mode of teaching, they replied that they thought it to be quite helpful. One group said:

> Student 2:
> Madam I like this mode of teaching because after
> studying a particular passage we can ask our problems
> with our friends and we can solve it ourselves. Then
> we, if we cannot understand then we ask question to
> sir ...
>
> Student 1 (interrupting):
> ... To teacher.
>
> Student 2:
> And he answers.
>
> (From an interview with students of Group 3)

However the same group was not optimistic that this method of teaching would continue.

They said:

> Student 3:
> Madam, when you will leave the school then the
> method of this teaching will (indicates with his hands).
>
> Interviewer:
> Will finish? Do you think so?
>
> Many students:
> Yes, madam. Yes, madam.
>
> (From an interview with students of Group 3)

Another extended interview with a different group of students revealed that while they liked this new mode of teaching where they worked on textual material in groups, they objected to the way the teacher questioned them in class. It was always the same set of students who answered questions, thereby denying other students a chance. This revealed to me how eager the students were to answer questions in the class and how disappointed they were when they were not given a chance to speak (Appendix: Interview, 6.2).

During one of these initial periods, the class came upon a paragraph that they found rather

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difficult to understand. They asked Dr. Keval to explain it. He asked them to read through the paragraph first so that they could attempt an understanding themselves. But if they did not understand he would explain it to them. He said, 'I am bound to explain, in case of any difficulty' (Lesson 23, 5th August, 1987). However, he did not give the students time to read through the paragraph and launched into an explanation. They reverted into a traditional teaching mode where the teacher explicated the text and the class listened to it.

The explanation that Dr. Keval provided sparked off an incident in the staffroom. At the end of day I met him to discuss the lesson he had taught. I had not agreed with his explanation of the paragraph, so I put forward what I thought it meant. He, however, did not agree with me and this led to an argument in the staffroom. It was particularly embarrassing because all the men in the room 'started staring at us and sat listening to us, showing great interest in our discussion' (General Notes, 5th August, 1987). At the time, Dr. Keval seemed inexplicably aggressive and assertive, but perhaps the explanation had something to do with the fact that he had propositioned me the day before, and I had refused him, saying that our relationship was a professional one. This conversation was not recorded because I had not expected it to develop the way it had. In retrospect, after having listened to the classroom lecture, what seems to have been a difference in emphasis led to a near confrontation. I was relieved to see, however, that Dr. Keval had not looked upon the incident as a confrontation as my notes indicate: 'The next day, however, we did not mention the incident and the relationship was sort of back to normal, except that Dr. Keval decides to pay me compliments when I least expect them, generally when I am explaining something seriously to him' (General Notes, 5th August, 1987).

This incident did not affect the students who were only concerned with the new method of working in groups. The diaries of students of Groups 1 and 2 show that they were a little surprised by the introduction of group work but very quickly understood the pattern of

working under this method. They all seemed to like it. One of them writes, 'Today, Mr. Keval taught us in a new manner. He gave us one paragraph to read and then he asked us to discuss it in our groups. Then he asked questions and our difficulty. Although the passage was already taught to us by Mr. Sridhar this is a superb technique to entertain and engage all the students in the study' (Diary of a Group 2 student, 5th August, 1987). The interest in this 'new mode' of teaching was in evidence even after a week's work. Another student writes, 'The new mode of teaching is good. It enables us to discuss our difficulty among ourselves. Then we ask any difficulty to the teacher. After finishing a para teacher then asks some questions. I like it' (Diary of a Group 3 student, 11th August, 1987).

6.8

Further Training of Dr. Keval

As time went on, training Dr. Keval to use the video materials became increasingly difficult. He professed that he was very interested in the package and often asked me if I would teach him to handle the video equipment. I assured him that he would be handling the video cassette recorder and would be responsible for the play-back in the class. But teaching these practical skills and the classroom strategies involved in the video package proved very difficult indeed. While in the field I had to try and make an analysis of the problems in order to find solutions to them. The first problem was one of arranging meetings with Dr. Keval. Although we had discussed his timetable and fixed meetings so that he could learn to use the video package in his free time, Dr. Keval would either take leave and not come to the school at all or he would come so late that we got very little work done. I had to spend a lot of time just waiting for him.

A second problem was that Dr. Keval felt that I was telling him very simple things that he already knew. At the same time, though, he explained that he did not have a science background and so found teaching lessons like 'Taming the Atom' slightly difficult. In the

meetings, I realised that one of the reasons why he had difficulty with the lesson was that he had not read it recently, although he claimed to have done so. I insisted on our reading it and after an initial opposition to this plan, he agreed. At the time, it seemed to me that

> he feels that he has taught these lessons many many
> times to many many batches. So it is insulting for him
> if he has to read the lesson again. It is as though
> re-reading a lesson casts doubts on his efficacy as a
> teacher. 'He is not bright if he has to prepare his
> lessons after so many years of teaching' seems to be the
> allegation that he is scared of.
>
> (General Notes, 20th August, 1987)

Yet another problem in the training sessions was concerned with the amount of Hindi I used: When I explained something to Dr. Keval, I used a certain amount of Hindi, thinking that it would be easier for him to understand me. But, as I noted, 'he feels insulted and insists that I explain things to him in English. So I have stopped using Hindi expressions here and there and I don't know if this is getting us anywhere' (General Notes, 20th August, 1987).

A more important issue was Dr. Keval's general lack of interest and enthusiasm. This was apparent on many occasions, only one of which is recounted here. My own notes of the period read:

> I must write down an instance of Dr. Keval's utter
> callousness and lack of interest in what we are doing.
> The other day (and this incident has been recorded and
> is on tape) I was explaining something about television
> viewing and working with audiovisual aids to him. I
> used my hands a great deal and he, instead of trying to
> understand what I was saying, was busy trying to get a
> glimpse of the lines on my palm. Finally he could not
> contain his curiosity and asked to see my palm, saying
> that he was very interested in the lines on my palm. I
> was shocked and brushed his request aside saying that I
> did not believe in palmistry and that what we were

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doing at the moment (i.e. discussing the lesson) was more important to me. I wonder if this attitude of Dr. Keval's is to do with the fact that I am a woman, much younger than him, who is trying to explain to him what has to be done with audiovisual aids. That could partly be the reason. The other reason, to which he admits quite plainly, is that he feels very lazy.

(General Notes, 20th August, 1987)

Despite these conflicts, Dr.Keval and I managed to meet and discuss the lessons he would be teaching. The first thing I had to do was to explain to him how the Lesson Plans I had given him worked (See Appendix for Chapter 4 for individual Lesson Plans). The Lesson Plans were arranged under four headings — lesson number which serialised the lessons; type of lesson which stated whether the lesson was video-based or textual; student activity which outlined what students should be doing in the class and teacher activity which suggested how the teacher should direct students to work. It was important for the teacher to familiarise himself with the sort of activities he would be performing because they were so different from the activities that were normally carried out in the classroom. Dr. Keval and I worked on the 'teacher activity' section and discussed in detail what he had to do in the classroom and what the students were to do in response to his instructions.

6.9

Introduction of the Video Materials

On the 17th of August the class moved into the Home-Science room for their English lesson. The lessons with the video package lasted two continuous periods while the ordinary lessons were only one period long. Arranging for two continuous periods was not very difficult because both the class and Dr. Keval were free in the seventh period from Monday to Thursday. This meant that the English class could run on into the next period. On Fridays and Saturdays the students had to do maths immediately after the English lesson. The Principal offered to give up his maths class on Fridays so that Dr. Keval could have another

run-on period. On Saturdays, however, the English lesson was held for one period only.

The first day of teaching the new materials involved the use of two video extracts. The first extract was shown with the picture but without sound. It was about how electricity is generated. Students had to watch the extract and try to fill in the first task sheet. The teacher had to elicit their answers and put them on the board. The video was then replayed, this time with sound, so that the students could confirm their answers. The next two lessons were textual lessons. The students first made lists of what they knew about nuclear power in relation to electricity generation, what they did not know and what they were unsure about. Then they read the lesson, 'Taming the Atom' in their book and worked in groups to confirm their knowledge and to see if the lesson had answers to the questions and doubts they had about nuclear power.

They were very excited about the first few lessons. These were crucial lessons in that the students had to understand not only the content of the video extracts but also how to deal with them. With most groups there seems to have been some difficulty in knowing what to do and how to fill in the task sheet they had been given. One student writes in her diary: 'On seeing the video sequence first time I had understood almost everything but there was some confusion about what and how we had to write in task sheet. But later on I came to know in group discussion about writing in task sheet' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 17th August, 1987). Another student comments on the teacher's talk and says that 'he didn't explained more because we have to complete task sheets which we have been given. At first, I was getting confused but when Sir clarified and other groups answered I understood. There was no need of explanation by Sir' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 17th August, 1987).

However, the students seem to have had little difficulty in understanding the content of the video lesson. The reason was partly due to the fact that they were science students and had

studied the production of electricity in their science lessons. One of the students says that 'the lesson is not so difficult to understand. We have already an idea about the atomic energy. It is just revising our knowledge' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 17th August, 1987). Another student says that the tasks they had to do on the task sheets were easy. She says that 'the questions were general and I think it was known to every student' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 17th August, 1987). She also says that because they had studied similar things in Standard IX and X they had a rough idea about the production of electricity.

About their impressions of the use of video in the study of English, they unanimously agree that it is new and exciting; one of them calls it 'a glamouring experience' (Diary of a Group 5 student, 17th August, 1987). The same student also finds this method of teaching so good that 'I got even more pleasure than science classes'. Another student writes not only about his impressions on this method of teaching but also his reasons for liking it: 'Today we were taught through a new educational system that is by audiovisual system. We fully enjoyed it and it has made the course easy and we understand everything. Our English teacher, Mr. S. Keval gave us a clear idea of the fact about the atom. We were given some task papers and we solved it. We were allowed to discuss in our groups and so our idea about atom became very much clear' (Diary of a Group 5 student, 17th August, 1987). A third student takes up the theme of group discussions and says that one of the advantages in the video-led lessons is that it encourages them to talk amongst themselves. She says: 'In my opinion this is a very good way of teaching because due to this students become frank especially from teachers. Due to this, I think that when we discuss among each other it will increase thinking power of our brain' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 17th August, 1987).

Another student points out that they did not make use of their text book 'and Sir didn't explain. A new experience for us. It can help us to discuss over some facts and put our points before anyone' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 17th August, 1987). Finally, one last

diary entry seems to capture what students generally felt about the audiovisual media package in the first few days: 'I think this type of education was new for us and everyone liked it. It was just wonderful to fill the task sheet and my group loved it. Everyone was excited in the class as they were doing some new things. I liked the class and the way of education. It was new for me. This was some way different from the other classes. I think it was the test of our general knowledge. This type of work should be done to check and develop the mental ability of the students' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 17th August, 1987).

The students' enjoyment of the 'new method' was not uncritical. The gaps in their teacher's knowledge of nuclear power for the generation of electricity became apparent to them. One of them writes: 'Being the teacher of Literature Sir has not enough knowledge about nuclear energy. The total work (discussion) that we had done today was done by the knowledge of ourselves (Diary of a Group 6 student, 18th August, 1987).

There was another problem that some students have pointed out. Dr. Keval had asked the groups to put down things about nuclear power under three headings: things they know about nuclear power (with relation to the production of electricity); things they do not know about nuclear power; and unsure knowledge about nuclear power. The students were to read the lesson in their text-book to confirm their knowledge and to try and find answers to the things they did not know or were unsure of. Dr. Keval discussed how the lesson confirmed the knowledge they already had; but he did not discuss the lesson under the other two headings, namely what the students did not know about nuclear power and what they were unsure of. Several students point this out; one of them says: 'If Sir had cross examined the other two topic (we do not know and unsure knowledge) also by discussion, then we would have much knowledge about it' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 18th August, 1987).

From the teacher's point of view, it is possible that Dr. Keval did not feel as much in control

of the class as he would like to have been and as he normally feels. Although he did not admit to feeling uncomfortable in class, he said that he had found the classes difficult because he did not know as much about nuclear power as the students did. I pointed out to him that we had worked through the task sheets before he took the class. We discussed the reasons why he found his classes difficult and concluded that one of the reasons may have been that he did not make notes as we discussed the lessons and nor did he use his lesson plan in class. In fact, during the training sessions I had to supply Dr. Keval with paper and pen so that he could write down some of the points he considered salient.

It seems to me that one of the problems that Dr. Keval had in using the video materials was that he had to keep to the lesson very closely and did not have many opportunities to digress (this is discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9). This meant that he had to think consciously about what he was doing in the classroom, what instructions he had to give the students and what the students were meant to be doing. He found this quite difficult. In fact, using video to teach English was so stressful to him that, as he told me on his return, he took leave on the 20th of August to 'relax and get over the strain of this new teaching method' (Informal Conversation).

6.10

Dr. Keval's Rebellion

On the 20th of August I went to see the Principal to find out if he knew what had happened to Dr. Keval. For me (somewhat naively, with hindsight) this was a simple request for information, but it had extremely unfortunate consequences. It quickly emerged that the Principal was already unhappy with Dr. Keval's conduct on a number of counts, and my question seemed to become yet another complaint to add to the list. It may even have served as the last straw.

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The next day Dr. Keval and I were supposed to meet in the second period. I waited for a long time and finally went looking for him. I saw him coming towards the new classroom along with the Economics teacher. He said that he had come to tell me that he would not work with me unless the Principal gave it to him in writing that he was to spend his free time working on the project. I was quite taken aback and said that we could go and see the Principal together. I had no doubt that the Principal would not object to giving him formal written permission. 'He refused to come saying that he did not get on well with the Principal and that he would not approach the Principal because the problem was primarily mine and not his. I asked the Economics teacher what the matter was and he said that the Principal had been nasty to Dr. Keval. I was very disappointed and upset and went to the Principal to find out why things had developed in this manner and what we could do about this problem. The Principal told me that he had written a letter to Dr. Keval advising him of various things in the school and that what I was facing was just a repercussion of that letter' (General Notes, 21st August, 1987).

In the afternoon, Dr. Keval was to take the class, although we had not discussed what he was going to teach. The bell rang and the students came but Dr. Keval did not. After some time he sent word asking the class to go back and meet him in their own classroom. I followed them into the classroom and waited for Dr. Keval to begin teaching. But he spent time assigning students to their respective houses instead of teaching. After finishing this, Dr. Keval taught one paragraph from the book in the old, transmission style. All the student diaries mention the fact that they had a very short teaching period. Some also note that 'the teaching style had gone back to the previous original and classical style' (Diary of a Group 5 student, 21st August, 1987). One student thought that 'the teacher seemed uninterested in the chapter. He did not follow the pattern of asking questions from group leaders. He asked questions from only some students from the same group. There were only question and answer sessions, not discussions unlike other days' (Diary of a Group 5 student, 21st

August, 1987). Another student made similar comments and added, 'I think the class was not much interest creating' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 21st August, 1987).

6.11

<u>The Principal Intervenes</u>

At this point, my entire research project seemed in jeopardy, and I decided that, even at the risk of causing further trouble for Dr Keval, I could not avoid involving the Principal again. I explained to him all that Dr. Keval had said and asked him what to do about it. He said that he would talk to Dr. Keval and sent a peon to call him. Dr. Keval came into the room and the Principal asked him to sit down. But he would not do so. He said that he refused to co-operate unless the Principal told him in writing to devote his free periods to the project and work on it. The Principal refused to do so, saying that he could use that as an excuse for not correcting notebooks and not preparing his lessons for the other classes. The Principal thought that it was Dr. Keval's duty to teach Standard XI 'B' with the video package. He pointed out that once Dr. Keval had made a commitment to try the innovation, he should not back out of it. Dr. Keval said that he had not made the commitment in writing and since everything in the school took place in writing he wanted an official written order from the Principal. The confrontation continued and it became apparent that the difference of opinion between the Principal and Dr. Keval concerned various other aspects of school life where Dr. Keval had been lax. For example, he had not yet assigned the students in his class to the various houses; he had not marked the student registers regularly; and he had not collected student fees and deposited them. The Principal had sent a letter to Dr. Keval chiding him for not performing all his duties. Dr. Keval was angry about this, especially since the reprimand had been a written document rather than a spoken one. He bridled at these accusations and appeared to be using the innovation as a focal point for all his resentments regarding the Principal's criticism.

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As the argument continued Dr. Keval raised his voice
and almost appeared to be shouting. By this time the
Principal had become very quiet and self controlled. I
was impressed by the Principal and his handling of the
situation. He kept very calm and invited Dr. Keval to
sit down. Dr. Keval was so angry that he said that he
would not do so, that he was a free citizen and that he
would sit only if the Principal ordered him to do so.
The Principal said that it was an order but Dr. Keval
refused to obey. I was quite shocked and scared. Once
Dr. Keval gave the Principal a chance to speak, the
Principal told him that he need not teach the XI 'B'
class any more. From tomorrow onwards he can teach
the XI 'A' class and other arrangements would be made
for the XI 'B' class. Then Dr. Keval left.

(General Notes, 21st August, 1987)

The Principal reassured me and told me not to worry. He would ask Mr. Sridhar to teach the

XI 'B' class and I should have no problems after that. He asked me to look in again before

the day ended so that he could tell me the outcome of his conversation with Mr. Sridhar.

When I saw him at the end of day, he said that I could start working with Mr. Sridhar from

the next day onwards.

This incident had possible implications for the relative status of Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar.

As has already been mentioned, science students are generally perceived as being of higher

status than arts students. As a consequence teaching science students is also perceived as

being of higher status than teaching arts students. In Central School, Bhojpur, the

distribution of Arts and Science sections between the two English teachers was finely

balanced (whether intentionally or not) so that neither of them need feel that he had lower

status. Both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar taught one science section and one arts section each.

One year Dr. Keval would teach the Standard XI Science and the Standard XII Arts students,

and the next year he would alternate and teach the Standard XI Arts and the Standard XII

Science section. But because of this incident Mr. Sridhar ended up with two science sections

and Dr. Keval with two arts ones. This might have been interpreted by the staff

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and students as a slight to Dr. Keval and he must have been aware of this possible interpretation. Although it is hard to produce definite evidence for this, I had the strong impression that Dr. Keval felt demoted and regarded this incident as an insult.

6.12

Mr. Sridhar Takes Over

On the 22nd of August Mr. Sridhar resumed teaching the Standard XI 'B' class. Thus during my stay Dr. Keval taught only in the first week of July and then from about the 4th of August to the 21st. All my dealings from the 22nd onwards were with Mr. Sridhar and I hardly got to see Dr. Keval. The first thing that Mr. Sridhar and I had to do was to establish the timetable and see if he was free in the seventh period so that he could take run-on classes. We found that he could take double periods from Monday to Thursday but not on Fridays. We asked the Principal if he could change the time-table so that Mr. Sridhar could be free on Fridays in the 7th period. The Principal thought that he had made many adjustments and that it was quite difficult to meet this additional request. We therefore had to be content with four double periods in the week and two single ones.

On the morning of the 22nd, I met Mr. Sridhar and we discussed what he would be doing in the class. He had to continue from where Dr. Keval had left off and finish the textual teaching. He had to ask the students if the lesson answered their doubts and questions on the use of nuclear power for the generation of electricity. I explained about the three columns the students had made and how Dr. Keval had already dealt with the column, 'Things students know about nuclear power'. Mr. Sridhar had to work on the columns, 'Things they do not know' and 'Unsure Knowledge'. We spent some time looking at the doubts the students had expressed and finding out if the lesson had adequate answers to them.

In the afternoon Mr. Sridhar took the class and there were some problems with it, as I noted. First 'he spent a lot of time putting the points on the board. The students were therefore restive and uninterested. Perhaps it would have been a better idea if he had written these

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points on the board before the class started' (Class Notes, 22nd August, 1987). Secondly, the place where Mr. Sridhar stood in the classroom was not quite right. Not all the students could hear him and it looked as though he was addressing himself to one group only. Added to this was the general impression that Mr. Sridhar was not a good teacher. On the whole, the students found the class boring and one of them writes: 'Frankly telling, when Mr. Sridhar is teaching us, I am out of order. I am not even listening to him' (Diary of a Group 5 student, 22nd August, 1987).

Another problem, which probably had little to do with Mr. Sridhar's teaching, concerned attendance. Some students who had come to school had not come to class. I wondered, as I wrote at the time, 'if some of the boys are absent because they have heard something about the Keval-Principal fight and if Keval has asked them to boycott classes' (Class Notes, 22nd August, 1987). That afternoon, before I went home, the Principal called me to his office and asked me how the class had progressed. I said that although Mr. Sridhar and I needed to work a lot more it looked as if the classes would be all right. He then asked me about student attendance and I had to admit that there were some students who were absent. He said that he had expected this and would deal with it. The next day we did not have an attendance problem.

I could not investigate how influential Dr. Keval had been. Obviously, I could not ask the Principal if he thought that Dr. Keval had instigated the students into not attending class. Nor could I ask the students because that would mean revealing the confrontation between Dr. Keval and the Principal. In fact, some of the students wondered why Mr. Sridhar had taken over from Dr. Keval. They asked me these questions but I stoutly maintained that I did not know the reason. I told them that I was the 'outsider' in the school and I did not know why the management made certain decisions. Perhaps they should ask either Mr. Sridhar or Dr. Keval. They might be in a better position to explain. The students soon stopped asking these questions and accepted that they would be taught by Mr. Sridhar.

The first few classes with Mr. Sridhar were quite difficult. Several student diary entries point out that their class is very noisy and they can barely hear each other in the group. Some of them also remark that despite this, Mr. Sridhar does not get angry. One of them writes:

> I was very offended of the students. Some students
> were not in mood of learning and because of them we
> all had to suffer. They should responsible for the
> class. They should realize that we have not to waste
> our precious day in this way. After all this, the
> teacher did not lack composure.

<div align="center">(Diary of a Group 7 student, 24th August, 1987)</div>

Mr. Sridhar's patience lasted for some time. But one day he got extremely annoyed and threatened to throw one of the students out of the window. A couple of days later, on the 8th of September, he asked me to switch the tape recorder off so that he could reprimand the students. When I turned it off, he scolded them in Hindi. He said that even if some students do not want to learn, they should think of the others who might want to learn. He told them that when they were being given a rare opportunity to study with video materials, they should use it instead of disturbing the class. He also said that since I had come from such a great distance with all the video materials and equipment, there must be a purpose and an aim. By making so much noise in the class, they were thwarting this aim and not learning any English at all. The point behind these classes was to teach them better English but they were not benifitting because of all the noise. He also reminded them that these tapes would be played back in England and asked what the people there would think about Central School students. The students kept quiet and the class was less noisy the next day (Class Notes, 8th Septemeber, 1987).

The classes settled down into a pattern. The teacher was always in before the students. After the students settled down, he distributed the task sheet and explained what activities were involved in that day's lessons. He also asked questions that gave them an idea of what to expect. At least one of them found this practice very helpful and commented: 'The questions

were interesting. I liked it that before starting the topic our teacher gave an brief idea about it. It made us easy to solve the questions' (Diary of a Group 3 student, 11th September, 1987).

The next step generally involved the playing of the video tape. Before the class started, Mr. Sridhar adjusted the video cassette player so that the extract he wanted started to play as soon as he switched it on. It was often replayed a second time immediately after the first playback and sometimes a third or even a fourth time if the students wanted to re-view it.

Once they had watched the extracts, students worked out the task sheet in their groups. Sometimes a time limit was imposed on the task and at other times it was not. While they solved the task sheets Mr. Sridhar wrote parts of it on the board so that the gaps could be filled in with their answers. Sometimes, he did this before the class began and sat at the back while the students worked. When he felt that sufficient time had passed and most people had completed their task sheets he asked them questions and wrote the answers on the board, thereby completing the task sheet. These questions were generally addressed to the group leaders.

The students in each group took turns being a group leader. This gave each of them a chance to speak in the class. From the diaries it is apparent that they were very concerned about what they were doing and what they were saying when they were group leaders. Thus one student wrote: 'This day, as I was group leader, I had a very nice experience of answering questions' (Diary of a Group 5 student, 17th September, 1987). But this is not without anxieties and worries. The same student continued: 'On this day, we were also asked some auxilliary and extra questions. On answering to one question, I got very hesitated. I got into two minds whether I should answer this question or not but lastly I answered it and answer gone in my favour. I thanked God who gave me such points at that time which escaped me from getting defamed'.

After the student elicitations had been put on the board Mr. Sridhar replayed the video so that

they could confirm their answers. Then they would move on to the next lesson.

There were some problems with understanding both the British and the American accents on the video tape. Some students explained to me that although they could understand my accent when I spoke English, they could not understand what was being said on the video tape. This meant that Mr. Sridhar had to replay the tape several times before everyone understood what was being said. It took a long time and the students became impatient. One student complained that he 'did not understand the video sequence language' (Diary of a Group 4 student, 9th September, 1987). In one of the interviews some students suggested that because it took them a long time to understand what was being said on the video sequences, it would be helpful if they had the transcripts of the sequences they watched (Appendix: Interviews, 6.3). Mr. Sridhar too felt that if he gave the students the transcript before the lesson, they would find it easier to understand the accents. We decided that he would give the transcripts when he played the video and then take them away before distributing the task sheets. This would ensure that the students did not copy out the answers from the transcript but actually worked on the task sheets together. Once this was introduced several students told me that they now felt more comfortable with the video lessons.

There was only one day in the video-led classes when the electricity failed. The class did not know what to do and was fairly noisy. Mr. Sridhar scolded them and asked them to sit down quietly and wait for the electricity. 'If I can wait for it, so can you', he said (Class Notes). After a few minutes, I went up to him and encouraged him to distribute the transcripts and the task sheets. He could ask the students to answer the task sheets using the transcripts and it would then become a textual lesson. He agreed and this was what he did. The next day, the students watched the video extract which they had worked on.

As Mr. Sridhar continued teaching the students got more used to him and indeed, some of them began to think that he was a better teacher than Dr. Keval. One student wondered about her change of heart: 'I am feeling more interest in Mr. Sridhar's class than Keval Sir's class,

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but I don't know why' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 15th September, 1987). The same feeling was expressed by some of the boys I interviewed (Appendix: Interviews, 6.1).

6.13

Student Reactions to the Video-led Lessons

There was a wide range of reactions to the English classes when video was introduced. Students commented on various aspects ranging from the teacher's efficacy in handling the materials and his confidence to group work and the questions asked in the task sheets. There was also some discussion of how some of them found the video lessons useless because they would not be covered in the examinations (see also 6.15).

Although in the beginning Mr. Sridhar sometimes found it quite difficult to handle the equipment and deal with his classes, he became more proficient and confident as time passed. More than once he told me that I should help him out if he got stuck in the class. I always assured him that I was available but he should try and work things out by himself. The students too noticed his lack of expertise in the beginning. One of them complains about the amount of time it took to switch the video cassette recorder on and off. She says: 'He took a long time in switching on and off the video. This made the class a little boring' (Diary of a Group 2 student, 1st September, 1987). The same student commented on the 3rd saying: 'Today the class was better than yesterday's class. He was quicker in onning and offing the video' (Diary of a Group 2 student, 3rd September, 1987). During the teacher training sessions I learnt that Mr. Sridhar had never handled even an audio cassette recorder, let alone a video one. But he very quickly grasped the way to work a video cassette recorder and was soon proficient, though not always totally confident in his ability to work it.

There were other complaints about the teaching, however. One of the students felt that the method of questioning by the teacher was faulty. She complained: 'A thing which I want to point out here that the teacher asked a question to a group leader of only one group, he never asked the same question to all the group to make sure that all of us agree to that answer or

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not. This must be done' (Diary of a Group 7 student, 25th August, 1987).

Another student felt that 'the teacher should tell the clear meaning of the task sheet' (Diary of a Group 3 student, 8th September, 1987). But a different response from the same group and on the same day reads — 'I was impressed by Mr. Sridhar's way of teaching. Before giving the task sheets he briefs us about the topic. It gives us an idea about the topic' (Diary of a Group 3 student, 8th September, 1987).

There were also comments on group work. Generally students felt that they worked well in groups. Only one of them had a complaint. She thought that some people dominated over others in the group:

> Beside this I marked that some people have tendency
> to speak more and more. In this course he/she
> dominated over the group leader. I think only the
> group leader should have opportunity to answer the
> question. Any conversation with teacher should be
> made only through the group leader.
>
> (Diary of a group 7 student, 25th August, 1987)

Otherwise, comments like, 'today my chance to answer. We all members discuss beautifully and I answered all the questions' (Diary of a Group 2 student, 2nd September, 1987); or 'I did it in group and answered the questions asked by Mr. Sridhar' (Diary of a Group 4 student, 8th September, 1987) were quite common. Another comment written quite early on indicates that they enjoyed working on the task sheets in groups:

> Today we discussed again task sheet 4 and then we
> did task sheet five. Today I found that all the answer
> given by us was correct and that brings a good feeling
> about us as we had done it quite intelegently (sic).
> Thanks to all the four colleagues. Mr. M.K.Sridhar
> was teaching well today. He always work hard to
> teach us but we are who didn't give attention to him.
>
> (Diary of a Group 1 student, 2nd September, 1987)

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Another aspect of group work that draws considerable comment is when they help each other out. A typical example is as follows:

> Each of the group answered to questions asked by
> Mr. Sridhar, our English teacher. When our turn
> came our group-leader got hesitated to answer one
> question, but our one of the groupmates stood and
> answered the question very boldly and nicely.

(Diary of a Group 5 student, 16th September, 1987)

Many students comment on how hard Mr. Sridhar works. They note that 'Mr. Sridhar's hard work made the whole class alive. In short I can say that today's English period was very exciting' (Diary of a Group 2 student, 2nd September, 1987). One student points out that 'although Mr. Sridhar works very hard he has one demerit. He is totally dependant on the answer sheet given by you (M.S. Jayalakshmi). But it is all right' (Diary of a Group 2 student, 2nd September, 1987). In the beginning Mr. Sridhar often looked towards me for ratification of what he said or did in the classroom. Although I did not say anything, I would sometimes nod vigorously to encourage him. Nevertheless, the students noted that he did not feel in complete control of the class: 'Mr. Sridhar beautifully cleared my confusion with an example but still he was not confident at his answers and looking towards you for comment' (Diary of a Group 2 student, 1st September, 1987).

A related observation was made in one of the interviews. The students said that they resented the fact that Mr. Sridhar had written answers in his task sheet and would accept only these answers or similar ones. They felt he was unwilling to listen to points of view different from his own:

> Student 2:
> Madam, Mr. Sridhar is totally dependent on the on the
> answers...
>
> Interviewer:
> is sorry?
>
> Student 2:
> Answer sheets, he is totally built on the answer
> sheets.

Interviewer:
Yes, but I think that I think that it will change ...

Student 3:
Yes madam, tell me if I am right or wrong, no
answer. He is right or not...

Student 4:
He does not accept our answer.

Student 3:
What he has written in the answer sheet is correct, not
our answers.

(An interview with students of Group 4)

This problem did sort itself out. Mr. Sridhar learnt to evaluate student responses and accept them, even if some were different from his own answers. He had several extended discussions with students as the classes progressed. One student excitedly reports this in his diary:

Our English teacher Mr. M.K.Sridhar asked us
questions and we answered. On answer of one
question which I answered instead of group leader, I
had a discussion with him for at least five minutes.
He questioned me in several ways about that very
particular question. This day is a reminiscense in my
life as for the first time in my life, I was interviewed
so strongly by any teacher.

(Diary of a Group 5 student, 19th September, 1987)

Students often commented on the language that Mr. Sridhar used. There were several entries like: 'Mr. Sridhar was also in full flow. He was teaching in very simple and informal manner' (Diary of a Group 2 student, 1st September, 1987); 'our teacher taught us well and cleared our difficulty' (Diary of a Group 3 student, 9th September, 1987); and 'Mr. Sridhar's teaching was good and he was speaking simple language so that we could understand' (Diary of a Group 1 student, 1st September, 1987). The students noticed that in one important respect, Mr. Sridhar's language differed from the language he used before. He did not go in for long explanations. One student comments: 'Since we were doing the sheet by the help of the video sequence therefore sir didn't explain too much. He only heard the answers and

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sometimes asked questions' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 14th September, 1987).

As the classes progressed the students became genuinely interested in what they were doing. This was evinced in the questions they asked me after the class. Some boys asked me whether Bill Rawling won his case on the future of the drove routes he used, and others asked me if the Clamshell Alliance succeeded in stopping the building of a nuclear power plant in Seabrook. The students' diaries too reflect their interest in the video sequences they watched: 'I think the questions were good because it gives us an idea about the effect of nuclear power in day to day life. I liked the actions of Sam Lovejoy. There were questions regarding Sam Lovejoy's gestures. I found it interesting. I liked the question of the tower' (Diary of a Group 3 student, 10th September, 1987); 'This day was a day of great experience as we were asked to draw figures of tents, camp sites, persons, location etc on the board which has not been required so far. I really got pleasure from this lesson' (Diary of a Group 5 student, 15th September, 1987); and finally:

> We have solved Task Sheet 17 'B' and 18 and
> discussed about 17 'A' which we have done
> yesterday. Its all about the protests of the anti-nuclear
> people. Task Sheet 17 'A' was very much interesting
> as we had to pretend as a member of Clamshell
> Alliance. We had to imagine all these things. Several
> times we have to imagine a lot of things during
> solving the task sheets. I think it increases our
> thinking power. I was feeling very much interest in
> comparing the anti-nuclear and pro-nuclear because I
> am anti-nuclear. So I feel interest in the activities of
> anti-nuclear people.

> (Diary of a Group 6 student, 15th September, 1987)

As can be seen from these examples, the diaries also commented on the questions in the task sheets. Some of these comments were short and relatively uninformative like 'It was dull but difficult. Some students were interested' (Diary of a Group 1 student, 1st September, 1987) or 'The task was interesting' (Diary of a Group 1 student, 2nd September, 1987). But other comments were more specific and concentrated on the types of questions asked in the task

sheets. One student wrote, 'The questions of maintaining age, clothing, specialization were good' (Diary of a Group 3 student, 9th September, 1987). The same student, however, criticised some of the questions asked in the previous task sheet. He wrote:

> In the lesson I didn't like the question which told to compare two persons like Ian Glidewell and Denis Komlosy, because there is only a basic difference that the former was a chief lawyer and the latter was an inspector. I don't think that it is very necessary to compare them. But I like the questions of direct speech. But I think that in every task sheet there should be a photographic question.

(Diary of a Group 3 student, 9th September, 1987)

Thus the students had many thoughtful comments about the video package as they settled into using it.

6.14

Training Mr. Sridhar

The introduction of the video package would not have been possible had it not been for Mr. Sridhar's hard work. Because the package was new and involved a teaching method that Mr. Sridhar was not familiar with, it was necessary for us to discuss the lessons and how he would handle them. Mr. Sridhar was generally free fom the second to the fifth period in the morning. After spending the first period in the ladies' staff room, I went up to the new classroom and set the video tape so that we could begin work. Then I checked on the lesson plans and waited for Mr. Sridhar.

Normally, I did not have to wait long because he came in just as I was getting ready to start. We would settle down and watch the video tape, after which Mr. Sridhar would solve the task sheet. He made notes about the things he would have to do in class. This was because he felt more confident in the classroom when he glanced at his own handwriting rather than the lesson plans which were typed out. Also, his own notes were in greater detail than the lesson plans and they had instructions which the lesson plans did not have.

During the course of our discussions, he suggested various changes to the lesson plans. Most of these alterations were to do with the organisation of the groups. There were places where I had suggested that a particular task sheet or a part of the task sheet be solved in pairs and then people could get back into their groups. Mr. Sridhar thought that this manoeuvre would be difficult especially since each group had five students. He suggested that pair work should be disregarded and people should continue to work in groups. The other major suggestion, which has already been mentioned, was to do with giving students the transcripts of the video tape as they watched so that they understood the accents.

Mr. Sridhar was eager to learn to use the video materials. Often, just as soon as the class finished, he asked me what I thought of the teaching. He emphasised that I should not hold back criticism because he wanted to 'learn this new method properly' (General Notes, 2nd September, 1987). I pointed out his over-dependence on his own answers to the task sheets and explained that questions need not have only one correct answer. It took him some time to accept that but one day, he said, 'Madam, what that student said in class today was also correct. But it was different from my answer in the task sheet' (General Notes, 7th September, 1987). Slowly, he began to accept students' answers and their opinions, although he questioned them very closely on their opinions (see 6.13 for an example). The other thing that Mr. Sridhar had to learn was to stand in the middle of the class and move around in the classroom as he talked to the students or questioned them. Otherwise it looked as if he was talking to one group only. Mr. Sridhar accepted these criticisms and consciously tried to correct himself.

We also discussed the progress of the class. In the beginning, he felt that the students did not really understand the clips they watched and the task sheets they did. But with time, he felt that they had improved. Mr. Sridhar thought that 'this experience has made them speak more in English and they come out in the open much more now. It has improved their speaking power' (15th September, 1987).

6.15

Students' Revolt and Another Intervention by the Principal

The classes settled down but there was one section of students who were not happy with the video lessons. Their main opposition to the innovation was that they would not be examined on these materials. They reported this feeling both in their diaries and in the interviews I had with them. Their behaviour in the class also reflected their lack of enthusiasm for the project. As already mentioned, on the eighth of September, they were so noisy that Mr. Sridhar had to scold them (see 6.12). One student reporting this incident, writes: 'Today some students are showing no interest in the class. They were acting as if they feel boaring. So the teacher scolded them' (Diary of a Group 3 student, 8th September, 1987).

Some students decided not to come to class on the ninth of September because they felt that these classes were not aimed at completing their syllabus and preparing them for examinations. One of them gives reasons for his absence: 'Today I did not go in the class. For this the reason was simple. It was my turn today of being the group leader and no one was ready to go in the class of my group. Had I gone then I would have alone in my group and this would have been a trouble for me. So I did not go in the class (Diary of a Group 4 student, 9th September, 1987). Two days before the above entry, the same student wrote that they were shown 'video sequences which were not related to our syllabus'.

Another student laments the fact that English is no longer taught in the traditional method. In fact, he does not think that when audiovisual media is used, English language teaching takes place. He writes:

> I feel boaring all the time in the class because our
> English course was stopped and grammer's lesson
> was not started in the XIth class. The loss of our
> English studying in the school create every student
> unhappy'.

(Diary of a Group 4 student, 9th September, 1987)

An over-riding concern with examinations was revealed in some of the interviews. It is worth quoting at some length from one of these:

Interviewer:
Right. What I want to do is basically have a very frank talk about ...

Student 1:
This type of teaching.

Interviewer:
Yes. Tell me what you think about it.

Student 2:
In my opinion it would not be much helpful to us.

Interviewer:
Uh, huh. Why?

Student 3:
Because Taming the Atom, the chapter, there is, and the video sequence that we see, there is no ...

Student 2:
Connection ...

Student 3:
Connection between them.

Interviewer:
You don't think so?

Student 1:
Very small. Very, there are very few connections.

Student 2:
Madam, eh... first thing we want to say is that madam this is not going to come in test, in examination. CBSE is not giving this.

Interviewer:
No.

Student 2:
So (Unclear because another student speaks)

Student 3:
There is another book.

Student 2:
We have to prepare the text books.

Student 3:
So we have to complete both the text books.

Interviewer:
Yes.

Student 2:
This will not help us.

Student 3:
There are thirty chapters in the other, in that book.

Interviewer:
That is Tales of Adventure.

Students:
Yes madam, yes madam.

Interviewer:
Yes, I know. But they are just little stories, aren't
they?

Student 2:
Plays and stories.

Student 1:
Plays and stories and (Unclear word).

Interviewer:
Plays and stories, yes. But they are just stories. I
mean, they don't ask questions out of that, do they?

Students:
Yes madam, yes madam.

Student 1:
Very tough questions.

Student 4:
Very tough questions and ...

Interviewer:
Uh, huh. Right. So you think, uh ... we are wasting
time.

Student 4:
Not in a sense wasting time because it will help us in
other sense.

Interviewer:
In what sense?

Student 4:
In practical life.

(From an interview with students of Group 2)

On further questioning, the above interview indicated that the students thought that the video

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lessons helped them understand their science lessons on the use of nuclear power for electricity generation as well as in the practical aspect of being able to use English. But as far as examinations were concerned, this new method was 'useless'. Later on in the interview, they said as much:

Interviewer:
Ye, yes, so then, why do you think it is useless?

Student 2:
Madam, useless in the sense of the examinations.

Student 3:
In the sense of teaching English ...

Student 2:
The point of view, the examination point of view.

Interviewer:
That yes. Sorry, what did you say, teaching English?

Student 3:
Teaching English it is an obstacle.

Interviewer:
What is an obstacle?

Student 3:
Not obstacle but it is wasting our time.

Interviewer:
This whole thing?

Students:
Yes madam, yes madam.

Interviewer:
Yes, because you are worried about your exams and
how much you have to do for the exams.

Students:
Yes madam, yes madam.

Interviewer:
OK, but apart from the exams?

Student 3:
Apart from the exams this is much helpful.

(From an interview with students of Group 2)

The practical aspect of having to take examinations on a set, prescribed syllabus was so

important that a number of students complained to the Principal about their English classes. They argued that if the new method of teaching continued, they would not be able to finish the syllabus on time, and so they would do badly in the English examination. I heard about it from the Principal on the morning of the 10th of September, when he sent for me so that we could discuss the matter.

Clearly, we had to find a solution to the problem. But it occurred to me at the time that:

> this complaint by the students is strange in some ways. Many students have told me that they use guide books to pass their examinations and do not really depend on the teaching in the classroom. Besides, they take tuitions to supplement the teaching in the school so that they do well in the examinations. So, if they are not really concerned about the teaching that goes on ordinarily, it is strange that they should show a concern now, especially when most of them agree that this new method is giving them exposure to English in a way that they have never had before.

> (General Notes, 10th September, 1987)

The Principal and I discussed these issues and he thought that there was 'more than an element of truth' in what I was saying; nevertheless, it was his duty to see that the syllabus was taught and covered in the school. He made a radical suggestion: that I myself teach the traditional syllabus to the students for half an hour every day, whenever the students were free. The video-led lessons could then continue as usual. I accepted the suggestion, for want of a better solution, and arranged to meet the students at lunch time to discuss these problems.

During the lunch break, we met and I soon found out that the students had complicated timetables, and we could not find a time during school hours when all of them would be free. So we decided to meet either early in the morning, for half an hour before the school assembly, or after school hours. Most of them voted to meet early in the morning because it

had been promised that they would be taught computing after school hours. The school had acquired two BBC micros which the students were meant to use. But until then, the printer had been locked away in a large steel cupboard and the computers were used only by teachers to read their daily horoscopes. Someone had programmed the computer to predict the future based on people's birthdates and star signs. I found this quite interesting because it was an example of another innovation in the school which had somehow not managed to achieve its purpose. Although we agreed on a morning time because of the computing classes in the afternoon, in all the time that I was there, the computing classes did not begin.

6.16

Teaching the Traditional Syllabus

I found it ironic that I had to teach the English syllabus in the traditional manner while Mr. Sridhar, who had been teaching in the traditional method until then, had to use new modes of teaching devised by me. But this arrangement allowed the research to continue.

Every morning the students and I met at half past eight and we were supposed to work until nine when the Assembly began. I found it very difficult to get the classroom opened in the morning because the peon who had the keys was often late, although he had been instructed by the Principal that the classes should be opened by half past eight. Once I got the peon to open the door (this often required some coaxing) I had to get the cleaners to come. It was interesting but not very surprising to note that they were quite keen to clean the Home-Science room that I was using (they may have expected Bakshish from me at the end of my visit) but not very interested in cleaning the ordinary classrooms. So, we sometimes used the new classroom for the morning classes and at other times the Std. XI 'B' classroom.

The attendance at the morning classes was very good. I had told the students that I expected them to bring a dictionary to the class. The first day many of them forgot, but when I impressed upon them that coming to the English lesson without a dictionary was unacceptable, they learnt to bring one. At the end of each paragraph, I stopped to explain

and ask questions from the students to see if they had understood the paragraph — a pattern similar, as I was aware, to the one I had observed in Dr Keval's and Mr Sridhar's teaching. Although the students did not keep diaries of my morning classes, one wrote about it, commenting on my questions: 'The question were really boaring (sic), they were different from the question which come in board examination' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 19th September, 1987). This is further evidence of the importance of examinations, and of how teaching tends to be valued according to whether it is useful from an examination point of view.

At the end of a lesson, I gave homework and discussed the students' answers in class. Some of the students told me that they found this a helpful practice. In the last few days that I taught them, I concentrated on the common mistakes that Indian students make and on paragraph writing. This too was reported as useful, particularly because they have to write paragraphs in their examinations and they had not been given enough practice in this.

6.17
Absence from Mr. Sridhar's Classes

The morning classes I taught had one interesting repercussion which nobody had expected. The day after I started teaching the morning classes, the attendance in Mr. Sridhar's regular classes dropped dramatically. Sixteen students were absent although most of them had come in the morning. Mr. Sridhar enquired about it and found out that the students were now satisfied with the arrangement and thought it was necessary only to attend the morning classes because that was where the syllabus was being covered. They had no need to attend the afternoon video-led lessons. He was furious and asked a student in class to make a list of the students who were present and those who were absent. I was given the list of students who were absent and told not to let them into the class in the morning until they apologised to Mr. Sridhar and promised to attend the afternoon classes as well. The next day I did as I was told and the attendance in the afternoon increased dramatically.

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There were comments from students on the incident. One girl who had attended wrote that she was pleased that so many students were absent because it meant that there was far less noise: 'The class was interesting. I liked it because groups 1, 3, 4 are absent today. Only one person from group 2 and only 2 persons from group 8 came and there was no noise. We could hear all the things very clearly' (Diary of a Group 6 student, 15th September, 1987). Another student reports feeling 'bewildered' by the absence of so many students but thinks that the task sheets were interesting and the groups that were present worked hard. A report on what happened the next day shows that the absent students were angry at being forced to attend the video lessons:

> This day as students had not come previous day and were not allowed to their morning class of English text. They were in the mood of depression and revenge. For this reason, today's atmosphere of class remained quiet and peaceful as they were watching the video and audio lesson very calmly and carefully. All the students remained attached to their task sheets.

(Diary of a Group 5 student, 16th September, 1987)

Apart from this incident the rest of the teaching was peaceful, and Mr. Sridhar, the students and I settled into the pattern I have described. This continued for the remainder of the research period.

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CHAPTER 7

AN ANALYSIS OF THE INTRODUCTION

OF VIDEO

7.1

Purpose

This analysis of the introduction of video in Central School, Bhojpur is aimed at gaining an understanding of the attitudes and reactions of the participants and at examining those aspects of schooling which seem to me to have directly or indirectly affected the introduction. It also raises general issues and problems related to the introduction of video as an innovation. In such an analysis, there is inevitably an element of speculation in making causal connections between the different incidents, although these speculations are informed by my own experience of spending time in the school and more generally, by my experiences of India. Even if these explanations are not foolproof, they do not invalidate the general issues that arise from such an introduction.

7.2

The Teachers

Two of the most important participants in the introduction of video were, of course, the teachers — Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar. The evidence from interviews and from their diaries suggests that students almost universally preferred Dr. Keval to Mr. Sridhar as an English teacher in the traditional lessons. They found Dr. Keval lively, interesting and entertaining; by contrast, they found Mr. Sridhar slow, dogged and boring. When I first went to the school Dr. Keval seemed, on the face of it, more enthusiastic about the prospect of using video than Mr. Sridhar who seemed quieter and more reticent (6.1.5). However, the actual introduction of video showed that Dr. Keval did not accept the new method even for the

length of my project, while Mr. Sridhar worked hard at implementing it. One has to ask why this was so.

Several reasons could be found for Dr. Keval's refusal to use video in his classes. One of the most striking features of his handling of the English lessons was his flamboyant teaching style. He was able to use the textbook as a spring-board for elaborating his personal views on life, the universe and everything. By contrast, Mr. Sridhar's explanations sounded laboured and literal (see Chapter 8 for a detailed analysis of their teaching styles). The students seemed to enjoy Dr. Keval's mercurial dashes into a general discourse on life — they found them interesting and entertaining.

Given his obvious delight in his own solo performances, Dr. Keval's initial interest in using video could be read as an enthusiasm for acquiring another prop which would further enhance his performance in the classroom. It was as if he was interested in incorporating video into his act; it would become an additional medium to help him extend his repertoire. Added to this, he cannot have been ignorant of the potential of video as a status symbol, especially because by 1987 video ownership in India was beginning to mark the more affluent people off from the less rich (Agrawal and Kamdar, 1987). Also, the fact that this package was brought into the school by a researcher living in the West might have added to his sense of personal status. These factors may well explain his initial enthusaism for the video lessons and his expressions of genuine interest before we began to work together seriously. He would often ask me about the handling of the video equipment and he seemed keen that I should let him operate the video in the class (6.8).

The first teacher-training session worked so well that Dr. Keval, of his own volition, introduced group work as a step towards the introduction of the video package (6.7). But this group work was very heavily controlled and directed by the teacher from the front of the classroom. Students still worked through the text paragraph by paragraph and when they did not understand something, Dr. Keval simply reverted to lecturing without exploring where

the real difficulty lay. It also seems to me that in adopting group work in this fashion, Dr. Keval did not have to work very hard preparing for the lessons because he was always able to switch back into his previous teaching style. The degree of innovation and the degree of commitment at this stage should not be exaggerated because it did not involve much extra effort.

But even with the next training session came the realisation that this new method of working required not only hard work and preparation time but also involved a completely different teaching practice. Dr. Keval's initial enthusiasm soon faded away. It seems to me that the adoption of the video package that I had developed necessarily pushed the teacher away from being the focus of attention to a less spectacular position of becoming an aid to students who were learning English. The central consideration in this new method was the students — their abilities and their language development. The teacher was relegated to the more peripheral position of a guide who is available when students stumble and need help. The use of video in this fashion did not enhance Dr. Keval's style; rather, it undermined it considerably.

In this respect, Mr. Sridhar had little or nothing to lose. His teaching had always kept much closer to the text, without his colleague's colourful but tangential illustrations and reflections. I never saw any evidence to suggest that Mr. Sridhar enjoyed his position as the centre of attention in the class or indeed, saw it as important. If so, the use of video did not essentially threaten his quieter teaching style. He was therefore more able to shift to a position where he did not feel aggrieved at not occupying centre stage all the time.

Dr. Keval's lively and energetic performance in his class as well as his going on a teacher-training course in Hyderabad could easily be mistaken for a commitment to education in general and language teaching in particular. But several incidents during the course of my stay point to a different interpretation. For one thing, he had not even read the five pages he was meant to read for his teacher-training course, grumbling about it as an onerous task

(6.2). For another, he would often come late to his classes or miss them altogether. Several times, he even confessed to being lazy (6.6). During the training sessions, when we worked on the video materials, I had wanted to read the lesson, 'Taming the Atom' with him and discuss it. He opposed this and I had the strong impression that he felt that even appearing to re-read the lesson would cast doubts on his professionalism (6.8). He seemed almost to prefer his ignorance to a real understanding of the lesson. His teaching style too was such that it did not demand a close and careful study of the text. On the other hand, the video-led lessons required considerable careful preparation and he needed to go through the materials several times. Dr. Keval's laziness and his pride combined to entrench his teaching style and reinforce his sense of security.

In the video-led classes, although the teacher appeared to be doing less than in the traditional lessons, he had to work much harder to achieve a state where it looked as if he was taking a back seat. He had to prepare his lessons thoroughly, know exactly what to expect of his students, know what to do next in the classroom and be prepared to solve students' problems as and when they arose. Dr. Keval was unwilling to put in the considerable amount of preparation time involved. Added to this might have been the problem that the training sessions were not simply a transmission of information by me but involved contributions from him. Maybe, he thought that this might expose his lack of knowledge and his status would therefore diminish. Consequently, he may have felt threatened by our training sessions.

That the implementation of an innovation requires teachers to put in an enormous amount of effort has been well recognised in the literature on educational change and innovation (Evans and Groarke,1975; Holt, 1976; Prosser, 1976; Nicholls, 1983 to name but a few), as have some of the other problems mentioned above. For example, Miller (1967, p.10) says that teachers can sometimes assume a superior attitude to innovation based on their considerable teaching experience. This would enable them to hide their laziness in trying out the innovation. Dr. Keval, though, was not worried by his laziness; indeed, he sounded proud

of it. It was almost as if he was proclaiming that what he obviously thought of as his considerable teaching prowess was achieved effortlessly. What seems to have concerned him more was my discovering any lack of expertise in his language teaching.

The incident in the men's staffroom where Dr. Keval and I had an altercation (6.7) about the meaning of a paragraph is further indication of how he felt threatened. His aggressive tone may have come about because he felt that I was questioning his expertise and his knowledge of a lesson that was all too familiar to him. The timing of this exchange may also have contributed to his sense of losing credibility. This was the time when he and I had begun to work on the textbbook lesson, 'Taming the Atom'. He may have felt that I was casting aspersions on his competence even in the ordinary everyday lessons he taught. The exposure of not having entirely understood the content of a lesson, it seems to me, is particularly problematic in a transmission mode of teaching where the basic approach is that the content of lessons is transmittable. Therefore, if the teacher's lack of knowledge is exposed, his credibility in the eyes of his students suffers. This became apparent when later, during the introduction of video, the gaps in his understanding became clear even to the students, as one of the diary entries reveals (6.9, a Group 6 student on 18th August).

The video lessons seem to have had two related consequences. First, Dr. Keval's general lack of knowledge, which had been covered up by his flamboyant style, was revealed. Secondly, the new method structured classroom relationships in such a way that it may have looked as if it were marginalising the teacher (see Chapter 9 for a detailed discussion of classroom interactions with the introduction of video). These two aspects of the innovation may have made him feel that the new system was constructed in ways which would force him to relinquish his position of power and authority. They would also force him to change his teaching style quite dramatically. The new method threatened the status quo to such an extent that he resisted the use of video as a teaching tool.

The show-down between Dr. Keval and the Principal (6.10) seems to me to have afforded

Dr. Keval with an opportunity to retreat from the implementation of the innovation in a dignified manner. There are events in the field which have enormous implications for the research being conducted but which a researcher may not be able to understand fully, in spite of being on site. In this case, I could not fathom why an apparently friendly relationship between the Principal and Dr. Keval turned sour, or whether it was a coincidence that the confrontation came at this particular stage of the research. It is possible that Dr Keval's refusal to co-operate further also reflected some resentment specifically directed at me for having, albeit unwittingly, added to his troubles with the Principal. This was never mentioned, however, either by Dr Keval himself or by the economics teacher in whom he had confided (see Chapter 6). Literature on the introduction of innovation warns that an innovation can sometimes be used in ways that are not anticipated either by the innovators or by the change agents (Dalin, 1973; Fullan,1982; Rogers, 1983; Nicholls, 1983). But even they might not have expected to see the use of video as a bargaining point in a conflict between the Principal and the teacher.

Mr. Sridhar seems to have found it easier to contend with the introduction of video. In the first place, he did not have as tight a hold on his class as Dr. Keval did (6.3). This may have made it easier for him to relinquish centralised control when video was introduced. Mr. Sridhar's attitude to his lack of knowledge was very different from that of his colleague's. Once he had been asked to take over the video lessons, he worked very conscientiously on them, completing every task sheet himself before it was given to the students. Although he too had difficulty adjusting to the new working practices in the beginning and sometimes appeared not to be totally sure of himself, there did not seem to be as much at stake for him as there was for Dr. Keval.

The phenomenon where a change is feared because it could potentially act as a threat to a teacher's position of control and authority has again been well documented. Summarising the arguments, Nicholls (1983) writes:

> An innovation frequently requires teachers to give up practices in which they feel secure and display high levels of competence and to adopt new practices in which, at least temporarily, they feel less secure and in which they might possibly be less competent. There are expectations that teachers should be competent, and some may not be willing or able to tolerate even a temporary incompetence or to tolerate feelings of insecurity.
>
> (Nicholls, 1983, p.4)

I would further argue that such deskilling could cause more than a temporary loss of competence and sense of insecurity. It could give teachers a permanent sense of having lost skills that they had built up over the years, thereby leaving them with a deep feeling of being devalued. This is something that teacher training would have to address seriously if it were to try to help teachers establish new ways of approaching English language teaching.

Literature on the adoption of innovations in third world countries also points to incentives and disincentives on the part of adopters to innovate. It grew out of research into the adoption of family planning innovations (Rogers (1973), pp.159-174; Rogers (1983), p.222) and supports the commonsense view that, generally speaking, incentives increase the rate of adoption of an innovation.

In Central School, Bhojpur, the big incentive for both teachers and students seemed to involve finding ways to 'get on' in life. Any method that might ensure the furthering of career would be adopted; and conversely, if a method did not achieve that, it would be rejected. So for example, one could see Dr. Keval's buying tickets for the Principal at the expense of his teaching English (6.1.5) as a move on his part to 'get on'. Similarly, the back-dating of homework ensured that he created a favourable impression on the inspectors who had the power to write reports on individual teachers as well as the school (5.7.3). On a more general level, it seems to me that giving homework might be regarded as a waste of time when after school hours could be more profitably occupied by private tuition. Besides, giving homework and correcting students' written work may actually provide students with the sort of help that they received in the extra-mural tuitions and therefore would perhaps be

detrimental to the teacher's income. Given such a strong impulse to 'get on', an impulse which is now universally recognised in India as being important, and given how arduous the introduction of an innovation can be, innovators who want to introduce video into the English classroom might well consider what sort of incentives would produce not just a higher adoption rate but also sustain the innovation.

7.3

The Students

'We hardly know anything about what students think about educational change because no one ever asks them,' says Fullan (1982, p. 154) in his discussion on the implementation of educational change at the local level. This seems very surprising especially as the final beneficiaries of change in an educational setting are usually meant to be the students. As Fullan points out, the implementation of a change in educational practice often comprises a change in the roles and relationships not only of teachers but also of students. Therefore, students cannot be regarded as mere passive recipients of an innovation, but must be thought of as members of a school community with their own opinions, interests and purposes.

In my study in Bhojpur, I was very conscious of the importance of students and their views about the introduction of video in the English lessons. They were given several opportunities to comment on what was happening around them, both in the traditional lessons and in the video-Ted ones. There were regular formal interviews, numerous informal conversations and also diaries where the more reticent students could express their opinions and feelings.

Of course it is possible that in all these ways, the students were telling me things that they thought I wanted to hear. I did all I could to minimise this danger, however, by making it clear to them and to the teachers that my interest was in observing what happens with the introduction of video rather than in being unconditionally and uncritically enthusiastic about it. Besides, I doubt if the students could always have said what they thought I wanted to hear because of the sheer length of time I spent in their midst. It is very difficult to put on a

mask day in and day out for a period of three months without letting it slip occasionally. Finally, there were always several diaries and several sets of interviews about any given incident, so that I obtained a range of opinions rather than one uniform student opinion.

The clearest indication, however, that students did not say and do things in order to please me comes from the way they reacted to the video lessons. Although they were excited by the lessons in the beginning (6.9), they did not hesitate to boycott the class when they thought it was unproductive from an examination point of view (6.15). Even after I had started to teach the traditional syllabus, many of them did not consider it important to come to the video lessons in the afternoon, and therefore had to be persuaded to attend (6.16-6.17). So when they wrote in their diaries about how much they enjoyed these lessons or when they came up to me after the lessons to ask about the outcome of Bill Rawling's evidence or the stopping of the nuclear power plant in Seabrook (6.13), this seems to have been out of a genuine interest in the video lessons, an interest that arose in spite of their overwhelming preoccupation with examinations.

When the attendance in Mr. Sridhar's class dropped immediately after Dr. Keval stopped teaching (6.12) and indeed later on, when some students refused to attend the video classes (6.15), it is difficult to know how much these responses were self-initiated and how much, if any, had been encouraged by Dr. Keval. In my dealings with the Principal immediately after Mr. Sridhar took over, I had the distinct impression that he suspected that Dr. Keval might have tried to sabotage the enterprise (6.12). This was strengthened when the next day, after the Principal had asked me about student numbers, attendance returned to normal. However, it is difficult to attribute the students' absence directly to Dr. Keval's intervention, especially when none of them mentioned it to me, either formally or informally.

It may be possible that some students failed to attend classes once Mr. Sridhar took over because they did not think it worth their while. They might have viewed it purely as a waste of time, thinking something along these lines: 'If Mr. Sridhar cannot cope with the ordinary

lessons well and we have seen Dr. Keval stumble in the video-led lessons, then his performance in this new method will be embarrassingly bad.' I had no evidence that suggested that these were indeed their thoughts, though there is indication that some students were pleasantly surprised and genuinely pleased by how well Mr. Sridhar coped with the innovation (6.12, diary of a Group 6 student on 15th September, Appendix: Interviews, 6.1).

The second and more major reason for the student rebellion, however, seems genuinely to have come from their fear that the video-led lessons were taking up so much time that much of the traditional syllabus (which after all was what they were going to be examined on) would not be taught in the class. I am sure that if Dr. Keval had had a hand in this boycott, I would have heard about it, because by this time, I had got to know a number of students very well and they would have confided in me. What would be more difficult to uncover is if Dr. Keval had one or two 'opinion leaders' under his influence and they exerted peer group pressure on others to miss classes. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to know if this was the case. I am inclined to dismiss this interpretation myself because in all the time that I was in Bhojpur, there was not much evidence of any student or any group of students consistently and systematically providing opinion leadership. Some students were more influential in some matters, but the same students could have been less influential in others. Evidence that students did not seek opinion leaders amongst themselves comes from the manner in which they worked in groups. I did not find anything in any of the groups to suggest that students were inclined to allow one of the members to influence their thinking inordinately, nor did any of the groups elect one person de facto as their spokesperson. They argued, agreed and disagreed in their groups and all of them seemed to relish the chance of being group leader.

A changing group leadership where a different student acted as group leader every day gave the students a chance to voice their opinions publicly (6.12). I was told by several people that they found this very heartening; it seems to have instilled in them a sense of personal

to some students who felt that they were not given a fair chance to speak in the traditional lessons (6.7, also Appendix: Interview, 6.2). The fact that one of them complained about the teacher not asking the same question to all the groups in order to obtain a consensus opinion (6.12, Group 7 student on 25th August) is indicative of the seriousness with which students adopted this role.

This may not be surprising if one takes into account the strong basis that these students have in a culture of competitive individualism. They have to survive in a fiercely competitive environment where each is trying to do better than the next. One could argue that this would encourage in them a tendency to seize every opportunity to prove their worth. The chance to be group leader and answer the teacher's questions and argue their case cogently would therefore be welcome.

What was strange in this context and contrary to all expectations was their obvious pleasure and enjoyment of working collaboratively in groups. They also recognised each other's contributions ungrudgingly and were pleased when they made serious contributions to the class discussions (6.13; see Chapter 9 for a detailed analysis of group work). It may be that the students enjoyed working in groups in the video-led lessons because they knew that they were not going to be evaluated on it. Perhaps if they were expecting to be tested on these video lessons, they might not have been so enthusiastic about collaborative learning. But evidence suggests otherwise. Dr. Keval had introduced an element of group work even before the proper introduction of the video lessons (6.7) and by all accounts, the students not only enjoyed working together but also felt that they benefitted greatly by it. I also found out that in solving problems in Mathematics, Chemistry and Physics, many of them worked collaboratively, admittedly on an informal basis. In the Science classes, they had to work out their problems individually during the lessons, but they conferred with each other in their free time. By legalising a method of work that they had hit upon and found productive, it seems to me that the project succeeded in making students feel that the system had recognised their method of working and by ratifying it, gave them a sense of self-esteem.

If the video package was seen as helpful and beneficial, why did several students rebel against it and refuse to attend these classes? The pattern of adoption of the video lessons on the part of the students seems to have moved from an initial enthusiasm for the video method to a disenchantment with it and finally, an acceptance of the method but on their terms. Their initial enthusiasm could be explained in terms of the novelty of the innovation. Some researchers who have considered the question of learning from different media suggest that media like computers, television and video might be adopted and appear to work simply because of their novelty (Cohen, Ebling and Kulik, 1981; Kulik, Bangert and Williams, 1983; Clark, 1983). The other aspect to have an impact might have been the materials themselves. The first section of the video sequences was more closely related to the textual lesson, 'Taming the Atom' and didactically went over some of the same processes. But later sets of sequences moved away from such didactic teaching in order to consider some of the issues involved in the use of nuclear power for the generation of electricity. Possibly the students were willing to use video so long as it threw light on the text at hand. But any attempt to open up the ideas and discuss them more widely met with opposition, not because these issues were inherently uninteresting but because they would not form part of the syllabus for examination. If so, the student revolt and subsequent refusal to attend the video-led classes (6.15) may have been a direct result of their concern with examinations (7.4 analyses this question further).

Once the students were satisfied that their syllabus would be covered (6.16), they no longer saw any reason to attend the afternoon classes (6.17). The only way to ensure that they would attend the video lessons in the afternoon was by barring them from my traditional lessons in the morning (6.17). It is almost as if these students would engage in school work as long as it made them feel that the lessons were necessary parts of a preparation for the examinations. Anything else that was extra was considered unnecessary and a waste of time. So they would compromise as long as their main objective, the covering of the traditional syllabus was achieved. As already mentioned, once they had made this compromise,

syllabus was achieved. As already mentioned, once they had made this compromise, though, they seemed interested in the new method to the point of discussing the issues with me and with each other even after the classes.

7.4

The Examination System

The major preoccupation of the entire school is with examinations. This has already been alluded to several times, but its overriding importance in Indian schools is really impossible to over-emphasise. This section explores how some of the different aspects of life in and outside the school interact to produce an examination-oriented culture.

Although the importance and ubiquity of examinations in Indian education have escalated in the post-independence era, testing has been a central tenet of Indian education ever since English became the official language of India under the British in 1837. A model of education with examinations at the end to prove one's fitness for government service became the predominant purpose of British educational policy in India. Indeed, Civil Service Examinations were introduced in India earlier than in Britain. The danger of making examinations the 'sole criterion of worth' (Lord Curzon's words) did not go unnoticed. In the Conference he called as Viceroy in 1901 to 'consider the system of education in India', Curzon criticized the government's role in fostering such aims:

> We go on sharpening the memory of our students,
> encouraging them tó the application of purely mnemonic
> tests, stuffing their brains with the abracadabra of
> geometry and physics and algebra and logic, until after
> hundreds, nay thousands, have perished by the way,
> the residuum who have survived these successive tests
> emerge in the Elysian fields of the BA degree.

(as quoted in Edwardes, 1967, p.280)

Over time, qualifications based on examinations have become essential for an increasing range of jobs, in India as elsewhere. As Dore (1976) argues, this has meant, especially in third world countries, that more and more occupations are demanding qualifications far

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actual work. In consequence, there is a tendency for the obtaining of qualifications to

become not only supremely important in schools, but an end in itself. That is to say,

examinations are not perceived as genuine tests of knowledge and understanding; rather, they

become merely the vehicle for earning qualifications. As Dore puts it:

> Now, whether the knowledge one gets from schools is
> useful or exciting, whether the values and attitudes one
> picks up there are appropriate, has become of secondary
> importance. Schools are places where one gets
> certificates; 'O' levels and 'A' levels, passports to such
> and such jobs, hurdles over which one leaps to go on to
> more schools for more certificates as passports to even
> better jobs.
>
> (Dore, 1976, p.31).

Some years later, in an Open University television interview, he outlines the consequences of

this:

> There is a lot of education going on which is not
> functionally required. The education itself is not really
> required by the employer or the professional institution.
> It's not desired by the student himself; it's not zestfully
> and with a desire to read another Shakespeare play that
> people go into it. It's simply because they've got to do
> that to do the job they want to do. And it has only that
> justification for it.
>
> Dore (1989).

In such a qualification-oriented society, it is not surprising that both the teachers and the

students of Standard XI were overwhelmingly preoccupied with examinations. Dr. Keval

insisted that his teaching was examination-oriented and that he perceived one of his prime

duties to be the completion of the syllabus in time for the examinations (5.7.2). He also cited

giving homework as an instance of his helping students to prepare for the final examinations

(5.7.3). Similarly, at least one group of students specifically said that they were not very

concerned by different teaching styles. What mattered to them was simply passing the

examinations (5.7.2).

This aspect of schooling assumes such importance that many students have recourse to any

means in order to do well, even cheating. There seems to be a certain amount of cynicism

towards the examination system on the part of both students and teachers, which enables

them to turn a blind eye to cheating. In an educational set-up where examinations are recognised by everybody as a measure of knowledge and ability, there might be stronger moral pressures against cheating, because then the cheaters would be pretending to knowledge and skills that they do not actually possess. But in a system where the examinations are not taken seriously as a measure of competence but the passes are an end in themselves, then the deception engaged in may be regarded as altogether more trivial because these examinations are not thought of as an indication of a person's worth and ability.

From informal conversations with them, it seems to me that students who cheat typically justify this in two ways. First of all, they believe that their examinations are like a game with arbitrary rules and arbitrary winners. The examinations are arbitrary in at least three ways — first, they do not really test knowledge in the particular subject they are supposed to; secondly, even if they did, such knowledge is not usually relevant to the jobs that can be obtained with the qualifications; and thirdly, Indian examiners are notoriously unreliable in their grading of papers. This view of examinations and examiners is so prevalent that the late Satyajit Ray was able to use it in 1975 as the taken-for-granted basis of the plot for his classic film, Jana Aranya [The Middle Man] (see also Robinson, 1989, pp. 218-220). One recent and typical journalist's account is so despairing that it treats the problem simply as a monstrous sick joke (Pathak, 1992).

A second justification for cheating is the teachers themselves. Werthman (1971) argues convincingly that students' behaviour towards teachers and towards authority in general is governed by their perception of how those in authority behave themselves. If students perceive the teacher as being unfair or discriminatory in any way at all, they feel that the teacher has lost any moral authority over them. This makes it possible for them to reject the legitimacy not only of the teacher but also of the rules he or she attempts to enforce.

It seems to me that something like this is going on in Central School, Bhojpur. In saying that they do not cheat if the subject teacher 'teaches nicely' (5.7.4; also Appendix: Interview,

5.3), they seem to be making the same sort of judgement as the pupils that Werthman observed. Whatever their criteria are for 'teaching nicely', if a teacher fulfils them, the students will not cheat. But if the teacher displays signs of negligence, laziness or other types of improper behaviour, the students seem to care less about the inappropriateness of their own behaviour. Dr. Keval's coming late to class, and even more his back-dating of homework, did not go unnoticed (5.7.3). By behaving in such a manner, students told me, Dr. Keval lost any right to reprimand them when he caught them cheating. They assumed that his reasons for back-dating homework were to do with finding favour in the eyes of his superiors and possible career advancement. Very similar reasons are advanced by the students themselves for cheating — to please the teacher or 'to pass in the examination because this is the career of the student' (5.7.4; also Appendix: Interview, 5.4).

Of course it is possible that there are other reasons why teachers allow students to cheat, the obvious one being the system of tuitions. If teachers give extra-mural help to students for a fee, then it is in their interests to see that students pass. A good pass rate is likely to enhance and a poor one harm a teacher's reputation as a tutor. That this is an important consideration for teachers is indicated by the advertisements for tuitions in daily newspapers. Teachers advertising often claim 'excellent coaching, 100% pass rate' as a reason for students to study under them rather than under someone else. So, a teacher may be tempted to turn a blind eye to cheating if it helps his or her students to pass. Some indirect support is given to this theory by the fact that more male than female teachers give private tuitions (5.8), whereas the women in the staffroom frequently blame their male colleagues for allowing students to cheat (5.7.4). It is possible, therefore, that a relationship exists between giving private tuition and condoning cheating in examinations, although obviously more research is needed before any more confident claims can be made.

I do not know if students under Mr. Sridhar cheat less than those under Dr. Keval, because I did not observe Mr. Sridhar's section taking the same tests as Dr. Keval's students. It would have been revealing to find out, because the perception in the school certainly was that Mr.

Sridhar was fairer. After all, he did not back-date homework, nor did he give private tuition. But then he was not reputed to be a good teacher. If the students used that as one of the criteria for cheating, and coupled it with the most important factor, which is that no matter what happens they must pass these examinations in order to go University, the relative fairness or unfairness of Mr. Sridhar may have been immaterial.

The students' overwhelming concern with examinations had serious implications for the video lessons. The fundamental difference lay in our very different perceptions of the purpose of the English classes. The students in Bhojpur saw the completion of their syllabus as the main aim of the language lessons. I naively thought that the English classes were held in order to help students improve their English, therefore I developed a video package that I hoped would enable them to be more fluent and more accurate in English. What they wanted was the completion of their syllabus, irrespective of whether video was used. It is not as if they did not recognise that video would be useful 'in practical life' and that 'apart from exams. this is helpful', but that they thought it was 'useless in the sense of examinations' and that they were 'wasting time' (6.15, interview with Group 2 students) by attending the video-led lessons. This explains not only their revolt (6.15) but also their unwillingness to attend video lessons once I had started dealing with the syllabus in a traditional teaching style in the mornings (6.16-6.17).

7.5

The Video Package as Innovation

This section concentrates on the introduction of video as an instance of the introduction of an innovation. Most studies of the introduction of innovation are much larger than my research project. They generally entail a study of the diffusion of innovations across several institutions, for example the introduction of micro-computers across several schools in a local authority; or the innovations are diffused to several individuals in a large community, such as the introduction and adoption of family planning methods in Northern India. In the literature on innovations, such projects are studied in conjunction with each other and a macro-level of

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analysis is arrived at, probably the best known being that of E.M. Rogers, whose major

books (Rogers, 1962; Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971; and Rogers, 1983) lie somewhere

between being successive editions of the same book and independent works. (Rogers himself

thinks of the three books as forming a 'three-volume set on the diffusion of innovations'

(Rogers, 1983, p.xv).) The issues and categories thrown up by such large scale surveys are

likely to be important for any study of the introduction of innovations, and so I have drawn

on these categories for my analysis.

One cannot assume, however, that the generalisations reached by such works as Diffusion of

Innovations trilogy are likely to hold in any single institution. The issues that concern such

diffusion studies and even more, the models that are created out of surveys of a number of

diffusion studies, only loosely apply to my own work. The main reason for this is that

analyses on such a large scale are inevitably more concerned with drawing distinctions

between institutions or even between types of institutions rather than looking at differences

within individual institutions. So, for example, Rogers' S-curve of the rate of adoption of an

innovation shows that some categories of individuals and of institutions are early adopters of

an innovation while others may be late adopters or laggards (Rogers, 1962, p.109; also

Rogers, 1983, pp. 242-245). Thus individual variation is smoothed out of the descriptions

and the explanations provided can become highly generalised and almost banal. Such

generalisations — even if true over a large number of cases — may be of limited use in

understanding or predicting what is likely to happen or what problems are likely to be faced

in any single instance. Micro-studies are therefore important in their own right for anyone

interested in understanding, let alone implementing innovations. They do not exist merely to

be subsumed into generalisations at the macro level.

Another problem in diffusion studies is to do with the nature of the definitions provided.

Again, I will be using Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations (1962 and 1983) to explore some of

the problems thrown up by the literature. By 1983, Rogers has systematically shifted from

his 1962 method of defining terms and in my view this is unfortunate. Comparing Rogers'

definitions of 1983 with those of 1962, one soon becomes aware of the frequent addition of the phrase 'perceived as'. So, his 1962 defintion of 'relative advantage' is 'the degree to which an innovation is superior to the ideas it supersedes' (p.146), and his 1983 definition is 'the degree to which an innovation is <u>perceived as</u> better than the ideas it supersedes' (p.15, my emphasis); similarly 'compatibility' is defined in 1962 as 'the degree to which an innovation is consistent with existing values and past experiences of the adopters' (p.146) and in 1983 as 'the degree to which an innovation is <u>perceived as</u> being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters' (p.15, my emphasis); and so on. It seems to me that by 1983, Rogers has moved to a position where his definitions conflate perception with reality. This trend was already incipiently present in 1962 when he defined the term 'innovation' as 'an idea <u>perceived as</u> new by an individual' (p.13, my emphasis). This is very close to his 1983 definition where he declares an 'innovation' to be 'an idea, practice, or object <u>perceived as</u> new by an individual or other unit of adoption' (my underlining, p.35).

There are at least three arguments against defining terms in this manner. The first is that such definitions foreclose debate. Rogers' 1962 type of defintion is often closer to the meaning of words in ordinary parlance, although the term, 'innovation' is not one of them. A typical dictionary definition of 'innovation' is 'the introduction of something new' (Procter, 1982). This permits us to argue first about whether there is a difference between <u>being</u> genuinely new and being <u>perceived as</u> new; secondly, about whether there is something really new or only something perceived as new in any particular case; and thirdly, about which is more important reality or perception. From Rogers' writings, we know that for him, whether an innovation is genuinely new is relatively unimportant. What matters is how it is perceived by 'an individual or other unit of adoption'. That is a perfectly reasonable position to adopt. What is not reasonable is to build that position into one's definition of the word 'innovation'. It is only by leaving out 'perception' from one's definition of 'innovation' that discussion and debate on the issue are made possible. But by making 'perception' part of the definition, Rogers' 1983 definition disallows discussion of the claim; he presents it in terms which leave

no room for argument.

An analogy might serve to explain the problem more fully. One could reasonably claim that in an election, voters vote for one party or another according to their perceptions of factors such as inflation, unemployment and economic growth, and that these perceptions may or may not bear much resemblance to real inflation, real unemployment, or real economic growth. Perceptions of economic factors, then, may be more important to the psephologist than economic reality. The limitation, though, arises if a psephologist goes on to define inflation not as 'a continuing rise in the general level of prices' (Procter, 1982) but as 'a perception of a continuing rise in the general level of prices'. Unemployment figures would become nonsensical if they were defined as 'a perception of the number of job losses over a specific period of time'. And so on. This is not to deny that perceptions are important and crucial, but it is to take issue fundamentally with the manner in which terms are defined. It seems to me that if we accept such definitions, we are foreclosing debate about issues like how important these perceptions are, how they vary between individuals in a community, how they relate to the reality of inflation, job losses, recession and so on. Similarly with the term 'innovation'. By conflating perception with reality in his definition of 'innovation', Rogers makes it difficult for readers to do anything other than accept his point of view.

This is particularly dangerous (and this is the second argument against such definitions) when what purport to be simply definitions of terms sometimes smuggle in empirical claims. These empirical claims moreover tend to be of a rather optimistic sort, seeing the world through rose-tinted glasses. So for example, Rogers (1983) defines 'communication' as 'a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding' (p.35). Rogers here seems to be introducing in his definition the empirical claim that when people are 'communicating' in the normal sense of the word, they are doing so with the intention of reaching 'a shared understanding'. His definition of the 'diffusion of innovation' as the 'process by which an innovation is communicated ...' (p.34) carries the implication that innovations are intended to result in and finally do result in

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'mutual understanding'. But if we consider the role of change agents, especially those employed by innovators who have a special interest in seeing their innovations disseminated, these change agents may not at all be aiming to produce 'mutual understanding' between themselves and their 'clients'. They may want the adopter to understand some of the issues involved in adopting the innovation, but they may want to suppress others. But it is not as though 'communication' in the ordinary sense of the word is not taking place simply because Rogers' definition expects people to reach a 'mutual understanding'. The third and most fundamental argument against definitions like Rogers' is that there is a danger of interference betwen the defined meanings he gives them and the ordinary senses in which these terms are used. Realistically, we are unlikely to stop using the term 'communication' even when someone like Dr. Keval may have had ulterior motives, and some knowledge that he wished to convey only partially, if at all. In the normal sense of the word, Dr. Keval communicated a great deal both to his students and to me.

Similarly, consider the term, 'technology' which Rogers defines as 'a design for instrumental action that reduces the uncertainty in the cause-effect relationships involved in achieving a desired outcome' (p.35). While I would certainly want to say that video is technology in the normal sense of the term, what sort of impact it has on the 'desired outcome' of language teaching is a matter for research and debate. But in thinking of video as technology in terms of Rogers' definition, one would necessarily have to think of it as effective because it 'reduces the uncertainty in the cause-effect relationships involved in achieving a <u>desired</u> outcome' (my emphasis), and hence, by definition it is to be approved of. If we think it is ineffective, we cannot call it 'technology' in Rogers' terms. If we are too much influenced by these definitions, the danger is that we may use the terms in something like their ordinary, everyday sense but carry over from the definition the assumption that the effects will be what we want.

This could be part of the reason for the pro-innovation bias in diffusion research that Downs and Mohr (1976) complain of, stating that 'the act of innovating is still heavily laden with

positive value. Innovativeness, like efficiency, is a characteristic we want social organisms to possess. Unlike the ideas of progress and growth, which have long since been casualties of a new consciousness, innovation, especially when seen as more than purely technological change, is still associated with improvement.' Rogers and Shoemaker (1971, pp. 78-79) also recognise the pro-innovation bias of diffusion research and Rogers (1983) discusses the problem at length (pp. 92-103). The difficulty, though, is that the entire discussion is based on the premise that an innovation, by definition, is desirable. Rogers' reasons for the pro-innovation bias do not take into account the fact that many of the fundamental terms used and the definitions he apportions them are coloured by empirical claims and value judgments that move the entire discussion into an area where it cannot but have a pro-innovation bias.

Rogers' definitions are such that in his reasonings about the pro-innovation bias, he confuses success of the innovation in terms of the number of people who adopt it with the success of the innovation in the sense of whether its effects are good or bad (p.93). In the example of the bottle feeding of babies in the third world (pp. 100-103), the introduction of innovation was successful in the sense that there was widespread adoption. But the question of whether it is a beneficial innovation gets side-tracked. His implicit assumption is that bottle-feeding babies is an innovation and therefore, by definition, must be good. What went wrong was something peripheral and incidental — mothers in third world countries watered down the milk products with polluted water, thereby causing diarrhoea and deaths. But the fundamental question of whether bottle feeding is good (or better than breast feeding) even in ideal conditions is precluded by Rogers' definitions so long as he calls the introduction of bottle feeding an innovation.

It seems to me that Rogers is right in saying that 'it should be acknowledged that rejection, discontinuance, and re-invention frequently occur during the diffusion of an innovation, and that such behaviour may be rational and appropriate from the individual's point of view, if only the diffusion scholar could adequately understand the individual's perceptions of the innovation and of his or her own situation, problems and needs' (p. 96). He adds that 'if

diffusion scholars could more adequately see an innovation through the eyes of their respondents, including a better understanding of why the innovation was adopted, the diffusion researchers would be in a better position to shed their pro-innovation bias of the past' (p. 99). But, as I have argued, diffusion scholars must also become more conscious of their own language and their own terminology, otherwise they are in danger of endorsing innovations without ever raising the question of whether they are beneficial.

In my own research, being both researcher and change-agent might make me more vulnerable to the criticism that I have a pro-innovation bias, so it is very important to recognise that the literature on the diffusion of innovations is inherently biased towards finding the innovation beneficial. Although Rogers' 1983 definitions of many fundamental terms are problematic and his generalisations arising from a macro study of the diffusion of innovations sometimes too general to be of much use in any individual case, nevertheless, he does identify central issues that any researcher in the field can still consider. I myself propose to use these issues as a framework for my own discussion, though I shall use terms in their everyday senses or as Rogers defined them in 1962: the two are usually very similar. To adopt Rogers' 1983 definitions, as I have argued, would ironically prevent me from taking up as seriously as they deserve the issues that he himself has identified.

7.5.1
Attributes of Video as Innovation,

Rogers points out five attributes that govern the adoption of an innovation. These are: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability. I shall take them in turn.

Relative Advantage

In a study of the introduction of video, it is important to consider what sort of advantages the various participants perceived in video, relative to the system as they knew it. Rogers (1983) argues that 'it does not matter so much whether an innovation has a great deal of "objective"

truth. What does matter is whether an individual perceives the innovation as advantageous. The greater the perceived relative advantage of an innovation, the more rapid its rate of adoption is going to be' (p. 15; ironically, his argument here is unintelligible unless we understand the word 'innovation' in its everyday sense). The Bhojpur experience does not straightforwardly bear out Rogers' conclusion that the greater the perceived relative advantage, the more rapid is its adoption, but the issue seems much more complex and needs teasing out.

In the beginning Dr. Keval seemed to perceive some advantages in using video. It may have enabled him to enhance his self-image in front of his students, and perhaps even helped provide him with more students for private tuition. But any such perceptions of the advantages of video were quite different from my perceptions of the possible advantages when I designed the video materials; and they were also different from the students' perception of the advantages and disadvantages of video.

It was very difficult to know what Mr. Sridhar's ultimate perception of the video materials was. Although he said to me that he enjoyed working on them and found them challenging and stimulating and even that they were educationally useful in teaching English, he was not at all sure of the advantage of video in the present examination-oriented climate in India. Unlike Dr. Keval, Mr. Sridhar did not seem to perceive the relative advantage or disadvantage of video in personal terms. That video might enhance his image does not seem to have been an important factor in his adoption of the materials. From my conversations with him, I got the sense that the motivating factor was a sense of loyalty to the school and old-fashioned morality — a sense that once the school gave its word that it would try out the innovation, he would help to fulfil it, even if it meant that he had to work hard at the introduction.

From Dr. Keval's point of view, the relative advantage of video seems to have petered out when he discovered how difficult the process of innovation was, how much work it

involved, and how his own position was fundamentally threatened by the video method. It was not surprising, therefore, that he opted out. But what is difficult to know is whether he had predicted that by having a show-down with the Principal, he would be forced to relinquish his English classes in the more prestigious Science section and be, as it were, demoted to teach the Arts students (6.10-6.11). If he had realised that this might have been a possible consequence, he might have adopted the video method and later turned it to his advantage by claiming that he was now an 'expert' at using video in language teaching. But this is highly speculative, and one does not really know what would have happened had Dr. Keval not rebelled or rebelled in a different way.

From several students' point of view, as has already been pointed out, clearly video lost its relative advantage once it started to deal with issues that were not going to be raised in examinations. As long as the video dealt with topics that they thought were related to their textual lesson, they seemed happy to accept it. But once it departed from their textual materials, they perceived it as a waste of time. But they did think that it would help them in real life. Several of them even suggested to me that it would be a real advantage if it were introduced in the junior classes so that it would help them improve their language ability from quite early on. They felt that it had come too late for them, but the next generation might be able to benefit by the introduction of such an innovation.

Compatibility

Rogers (1962) defines compatibility as 'the degree to which an innovation is consistent with existing values and past experiences of the adopters' (p.146). In connection with this project, two questions arise. How compatible was the introduction of video with the existing ideas and beliefs about language teaching? How does this relate to the experiences of teachers and students who have been exposed to a transmission model of teaching and learning for years? On the face of it, there is very little compatibility between this new system and the older methods. Clearly, the main reason for the student rebellion as well as for Dr. Keval's stubborn refusal to deal with video was that there was a chasm that divided

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their perception of the aim of language teaching from mine. They looked upon the English lessons as aids in passing the examination; I looked upon them as an opportunity for furthering language learning. So there was a fundamental inconsistency in the two approaches.

This was compounded by the fact that there was nothing in the experience of schooling, either for teachers or for students, which prepared them for using any aids in classroom teaching. The only classroom materials the teachers and students were used to were chalk and blackboards. They had never used audio-cassette recordings, overhead projection facilities, slides, music or even cyclostyled textual excerpts to add to their experience of studying text. The introduction of video, therefore, was something totally new and alien to the school culture. It had to combat learning habits that had been developed not just over the years that students had been pupils, but over the generations that such a system had been followed. The question then is, if video was so incompatible with existing teaching methods, how was it adopted at all? After all, the actual teaching and learning using video does seem to have benefitted the students, once they had been cajoled into attending classes (see Chapter 9 for a detailed analysis of the video-led lessons).

I would answer this tentatively by drawing upon the experiences of teachers and students outside the educational system. It seems to me that one of the major influences in modern Indian culture has been that of the cinema and more recently, of television and video (see Chapter 2). Most middle-class people in India watch at least two films a month (and many watch much more). This precipitates a considerable amount of critical discussion on the plot, the acting and the direction. It may be that the students were drawing upon these experiences while participating in the discussions in the video-led classes. So, it is not as if students are not used to discussing visual materials. It is much more that this sort of interaction has largely been conducted in an informal manner, as an activity unrelated to schooling. Video seemed to have the ability to transfer these skills and attitudes into a formal learning context, thereby relating their experiences in life to their experiences in the classroom. This is

obviously a hypothesis generated from my observations, but I think it is an interesting line that future research may follow up.

Complexity

Complexity has been defined by Rogers (1962) as 'the degree to which an innovation is relatively difficult to understand and use' (p.146). The introduction of video threw up interesting problems in this regard. It was ultimately not difficult for Mr. Sridhar to learn to use the video tape machine (6.13) or to learn the different approach to classroom teaching and classroom management that video involved (6.12). What it did require, though, was perseverance and an ability to feel that it was not a discredit to reveal that even teachers can be unsure of themselves. It was these two aspects that marked off Mr. Sridhar's adoption of video from Dr. Keval's rejection of it.

The teacher's lack of self-confidence in the introduction of video becomes very quickly apparent to the students who seem finely tuned into every nuance in the class. In the beginning, when Mr. Sridhar was slow and tentative in handling the video cassette recorder, the student diaries are sharp and ruthless, commenting on the 1st of September that their teacher took 'a long time in switching on and off the video' but recognising by the 3rd of September that there is an improvement in his handling of the equipment (6.13). They also note that although he works hard and clears their doubts, he is not totally confident and either looks towards me or looks at the notes he has worked out with me for confirmation. However, they do learn to be tolerant about it, with one student ending his comment by saying, 'But it is all right' (6.13). By the end of the video-led lessons, they all agree that Mr. Sridhar is a good, hard-working teacher and probably better at handling this new method of teaching and learning than Dr. Keval.

What is also interesting to note is that the students adopted the new method of working more easily than either of the two teachers. Although there was confusion in the beginning on how to fill in their task sheets, this was dealt with very quickly by both group discussions and

consultations with the teacher. The students seem to have genuinely enjoyed working with video, even after the initial novelty of the medium wore off. Even though video stopped being a 'glamouring experience' (6.9), many students recognised the worth of this new tool in genuinely improving their language facility, even if it would not help them in the short-term goal of passing examinations (6.15, an interview with Group 2 students).

Objectively speaking, video was the most complex tool that either the teachers or the students had to use in the English language learning context. But this does not seem to have reduced its usefulness or enjoyability in the eyes of the students. For the teacher, even though it took him longer to come to terms with a more open-ended way of working (he had to learn to acknowledge that students' answers can be valid even if they differ from his own), he found that it really did help in language learning (6.14). Also, it must have enhanced his reputation in the eyes of his students.

An interesting outcome of the video lessons was that they enabled students to be more thoughtful and critical of their learning environment. Students comment on the teacher's practices and on the materials presented to them (6.9, 6.13, also 9.2.2, 9.2.4). They begin to feel valued as individuals who have their own thoughts. So for example, one student comments that when he answered a question, instead of their group leader, he had a discussion with the teacher which ultimately led him to feel that 'this day is a reminiscence in my life as for the first time, I was interviewed so strongly by any teacher' (6.13, Diary of a Group 5 student on 19th September).

It is not just the teacher who comes in for healthy criticism, but also the materials presented to them. Apart from the fact that some of the accents on the video tape were so unintelligible to them that they had to be supplied with transcripts (6.12, also Appendix: Interviews, 6.3), students commented on the types of exercises with which they were presented. There were some types of questions that they enjoyed answering and thought carefully about while there were others that they thought of as trivial and uninteresting (6.13). What interests me about

these reactions is that although they kept diaries even for the traditional lessons, they unquestioningly accepted those lessons and the questions they asked. Here, though, students seem to feel freer to criticise and question the validity of the texts presented to them.

One would expect that something less complex like the ordinary lessons would enable students to question the validity of what they were doing because they would have more time to devote to such thoughts. On the other hand, because video is more complex and they have to engage themselves in so many different kinds of activity in the class, one might expect less critical thinking on the part of the students. Also, one might expect the newness factor to encourage an uncritical, unconditional acceptance of the new working methods. However, these expectations were not met in Central School, Bhojpur and it made me wonder if the use of video in this manner engendered more discussions and more open-ended practices, in spite of its complexity. Again, this is an area which further research may pursue.

Divisibility

Rogers (1983) uses the term 'trialability' for the idea that he had described as 'divisibility' in 1962. 'Divisibility' or 'trialability' is the 'degree to which an innovation may be tried on a limited basis' (Rogers, 1962, p.146). He points out that research indicates that the more easily an innovation can be tried out as an 'installment plan' (Rogers, 1983, p.15), the greater are the chances of its adoption.

This can be approached in two ways in my own research. The first is to say that we have tried to introduce video in the Core English Curriculum of the Standard XI Science classes of one school, namely Bhojpur. It could now be introduced to the Standard XI Arts section in this school, and more widely, to Standard XI classes in the schools belonging to the Calcutta region of KVS, then to schools in the Madras region, then to the Delhi region and so on. It is also possible to devise similar video materials for different levels of language learning and these could be tried out, both in Bhojpur and elsewhere. The concentration in all these instances is on the extent to which video as an innovation can be tried elsewhere on a limited

basis.

The other, slightly different way of approaching the issue is to enquire about the extent to which the Bhojpur experiment _itself_ is a trial of the broader ideas of educational broadcasting and the use of video in language teaching. My entire observations, analysis and discussions are based on this notion, that my empirical work in Bhojpur is _an instance_ of the trialability of video for language teaching at the '+2' stage in Indian Central Schools.

Concentrating on the former approach to the 'divisibility' of the materials produced for Central School, Bhojpur, I see no reason to suppose that it would not be possible to try them in other contexts. What is needed is the will on the part of the KVS to train change agents and/or researchers to help teachers with the introduction of these video materials in selected schools. One could then compile a number of case studies and abstract the issues that arise from such introductions. This is moving the question to a logistical level from the more important educational one. Given the experience in Bhojpur, and given some of the systems used in Indian education, are bodies like the KVS interested in seeing how a wider dissemination of this project (or similar projects) might change the status quo, moving it more towards learning for the sake of understanding rather than learning for examinations? This is an issue that has to be debated more widely and more openly in India and cannot be encompassed by my research.

Communicability

Rogers changes this term to 'observability' in his 1983 edition. 'Communicability' is the 'degree to which the results of an innovation can be communicated to other people' (Rogers, 1962, p.146); 'observability' is 'the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others' (Rogers, 1983, p.16). Both terms refer to the extent to which other people find out about the innovation, whether directly or indirectly. Rogers (1983) thinks that 'the easier it is for individuals to see the results of an innovation, the more likely they are to adopt' (p.16). This, of course, depends crucially on his positive-value laden definition of

innovation and is an instance of the pro-innovation bias that from time to time creeps into his thinking. Rogers assumes that innovations are good, and that if people hear about an innovation from early adopters or see its results for themselves, they may be more inclined to try it. This is not necessarily the case. The consequences of an innovation (in the everyday sense of the word) may be so appalling that dissemination of the results will stop others from adopting it. Or, and I suspect this to be the case with many innovations, the results may be more mixed, in which case late adopters will have to think carefully about whether they want to innovate, and which aspects of the earlier innovation they want to adopt and which they want to reject.

In the case of Bhojpur, it would be possible to disseminate information about the use of video for language teaching in Central Schools by the teachers and the Principal writing about it in the various Government Newsletters on teaching practice (such as KVS Newsletter or NCERT Newsletter) and by talking to their peers and superiors about it; and by the Government of India considering seriously the adoption of video to teach English in Central Schools. My knowledge of the Indian Government and of Indian education (as I have described it in this thesis) does not lead me to think it likely that these issues will be brought to the forefront of public debate in India.

7.5.2

Strategies for Using Video as Innovation

As Nicholls (1983) points out, a large body of the literature on innovations concentrates on abstracting models by analysing the elements of several innovations. Havelock (1969) analyses 4,000 studies of change and by 1973 he had abstracted three principal models of dissemination and utilisation of knowledge. It seems to me that these models are necessarily generalisations across so many variables that they are likely to be only distantly related to what happens in any individual instance, therefore unlikely to be helpful there. Nonetheless, I shall discuss my research in the light of his models and draw out those elements which seem important to the manner in which video was adopted.

Havelock's first model is the problem solving model where the 'orientation rests on the primary assumption that innovation is part of a problem solving process which goes on inside the user' (1973, p. 155). Here the users and their needs are of paramount importance and they are placed in the active role of seeking out solutions to their problems. A change agent in this model should be 'non-directive, rarely, if ever, violating the integrity of the user by placing himself in a directive or expert status' (his emphasis, p.156). The argument is that if users initiate a search for innovations to solve their own problems, then the solutions they find will probably have the best chance for long term survival.

In an educational setting, the implications for the change agent are that he or she works closely with the teachers to find solutions to the problems they face. Although my own research was not a response to any problem found by Central School, Bhojpur, the one aspect in which my work corresponds with the model is in my working closely with the teachers. Collaborative effort to solve a problem, together with the change agent not posing as an 'expert', is the hallmark of this approach. In my research, even though I was the generator of the video package, the emphasis was on collaboration with the teachers in order to see if the introduction of video altered practices in the second language classroom in such a way as to facilitate language learning.

The second strategy that Havelock (1973) discusses is the social-interaction model. It is based primarily on research conducted in rural sociology and emphasises the diffusion of innovations across a system. The model works on a sender-receiver basis, where a sender of the innovation determines the receivers and their needs. Receivers react to the innovation, either accepting it or rejecting it. To help influence the receiver's decisions in favour of the innovations, senders tend to get opinion leaders on their side and use them to influence the decision-making process.

In some senses, I was in the position of the sender and Central School, Bhojpur was in the position of the receiver. I was the developer and carrier of the video package while they

were at the receiving end. Another aspect of my work which is similar to the social-interaction model is that I determined who the receivers ought to be and developed the package based on what I perceived their needs to be. So, there are similarites between my situation and the model, with implications for my position in the school (see 7.6). As Nicholls (1983) points out, the model also emphasises 'the importance of opinion leadership, personal contact and social relations' (p.16). I did find that one of the reasons why the video was tried out at all was because of my making personal contact with the school and the social relations I developed after gaining entry. I also resorted to taking help from opinion leaders like the Principal whose leadership was formally and openly recognised. But I had moral qualms about trying to enlist the aid of any informal opinion leaders, especially amongst the students. While I am willing to influence opinion by some means, such as rational argument, I would be reluctant to endorse other ways of influencing opinion, such as bribing or as was more likely to be the case, peer group pressure which in extremes could amount to bullying. If I had encouraged opinion leaders among the students to influence their fellows, I would have little or no knowledge of, let alone control over the methods of persuasion they adopted. Besides, as Havelock (1973) points out, there may be pitfalls in using opinion leaders — 'they tend to be area-specific' (p.161) and therefore, opinion leaders from different areas may perceive the innovation differently. So, there may not be as much coherent opinion leadership as one may wish to have. Also, 'the enlistment of opinion leaders on behalf of a controversial innovation may undermine their leadership effectiveness' (p.161).

This is not to deny the importance of opinion leadership. Presumably, not all the students who boycotted the classes arrived at their decision independently. There was probably some peer group pressure and some opinion leadership which forced the issue in that direction. But equally, there were other students (who may of course have had their own opinion leaders) who resisted the rebellion and attended classes. It is therefore not at all clear that to have relied on opinion leaders would necessarily have led the entire class to behave in one particular way. There might have been different factions. I therefore did not seek out informal opinion leaders. I myself became an opinion leader to a certain extent simply

spending so much of my time with the students. This could have been a double-edged development. While it undoubtedly helped me as a change agent, it might have hindered me as a researcher if the students thought that I wanted the introduction of video to be successful, and would therefore feed me with ideas they thought I wanted to hear (see 7.6 for a fuller discussion). I often reminded them, therefore, that my interest lay in observing how they adopted the innovation, rather than in making sure that they thought it to be beneficial.

Havelock's third model is the Research, Development and Diffusion model which takes as its basis the idea that change involves 'a rational sequence in the evolution and applications of an innovation' (p.161). This sequence includes research, development and packaging of the innovation before disseminating it. This means that a high degree of planning, especially planning on a large scale is normally involved. The users, though, are supposed to be 'more-or-less passive but rational' adopters, so that they 'will accept and adopt the innovation if it is offered to them in the right place at the right time and in the right form' (p.161).

It might be argued that my entire project is part of the 'research' stage of this model and that more work will have to be done before the development of video as a teaching tool in language classrooms becomes polished enough for mass dissemination to all Central Schools. This would have its advantages and disadvantages. The greatest advantage would be that more research would be carried out which would enable the Central Government and the KVS to make rational plans about the possibility of using broadcast television to disseminate educational programmes which could be recorded on video-cassettes for later use in the English lessons. They would also be more able to weigh up the pros and cons of video as a teaching tool. The greatest disadvantage would be that the model does not recognise individual variations amongst schools. Therefore, the introduction of video could have some of the same problems as the present Central School curriculum, which is pan-Indian and does not make concessions to differences between different schools. In assuming the recipients to be passive, it could not possibly take into account some of the

difficulties I had in introducing innovation, nor could it take into account the different ways in which such a package could be used. My fear is that the whole idea would be developed to fit very diverse situations and therefore might become bland and over-generalised, making it impossible to use fruitfully in language learning in any single instance.

Both the Research, Development and Diffusion model and the Social-Interaction model assume a top-down dissemination with the ultimate consumers, the teachers and students, having passive roles. It is only the problem-solving model which can be thought of as a bottom-up model in that the users are seen as active participants. My own research comes somewhere in between, although it is probably closer to the Research, Development and Diffusion model . My project was top-down in the sense that I had to get permission from KVS to conduct the research and my initial point of contact in the school was its Principal, but it did not assume that the audience would be passive recipients. It was conducted on the basis that teachers and students are not and should not be regarded as passive, but should be thought of as active, intelligent people who, when given a chance, have a great deal to say about the introduction of an innovation. In developing my own strategy, I hoped to combat some of the arrogance of the first two models at the same time as trying to focus the minds of teachers and students on some of the problems they face in teaching and learning English.

7.5.3

Aids in the Introduction of Video as Innovation

The Principal

Apart from the teachers and the students who used the video package in the English classroom, the single most important person to affect the introduction of video was the Principal, Mr. Ram. Gross et al (1971) stress the role of management in the introduction of an innovation (pp. 210-211). In connection with this, White (1988) argues that whether it is top-down innovation or bottom-up innovation, the management and adminstration of the system into which the innovation is being introduced are crucial in order to support the adoption of the innovation and ensure that the conditions for innovation are in place (p.142).

Although this sounds commonsensical, its importance cannot be stressed enough.

In my own experience in Central School, Bhojpur, the key person responsible for overseeing the introduction of video was Mr. Ram. His interest and keenness on the project were in evidence right from the start — even on my initial trip to the school when I first made contact with him and the English teachers, he seemed to welcome my study (5.3). The main reason why he could help to effect the introduction of video was because of the manner in which he ran his school. The Indian education system gives an enormous amount of power to the Principal; and in India, such hierarchical authority is widely accepted without question or resentment. This puts an onus on the Principals to run their schools smoothly and well, and some heads are better than others at assuming this responsibility.

Mr. Ram did not seem to have any problems with his status and power. He showed his dedication to education in various ways. First, he not only held administrative responsibilities, but also taught Mathematics in the senior classes (5.5.4). This was read by members of staff as a mark of enthusiasm, especially because in Central Schools teaching is optional for Principals. Secondly, he was very punctual, not just to his classes but also to the Assembly every morning. This was appreciated by many teachers who took it to be another sign of his interest in the school (5.5.2). Thirdly, Mr. Ram went on 'rounds' during lessons, checking to see whether teachers were actually in the classes they were meant to be teaching (5.5.4; 5.6). While this sort of vigilance may sound offensive to Western teachers, the attitudes of both the staff and the Principal to it were different. Mr. Ram seemed to have perceived it as a part of his job and in doing this he was simply being a conscientious Principal, intent on seeing that his school was running smoothly. The teachers seemed to see it as a commitment on his part to the school, and went to class partly out of a fear of being caught out and partly out of a sense of duty that their Principal inspired in them (5.6). The fact that he attended conferences and invited the heads of other local schools to address his pupils at Assembly were also taken to be indications of his commitment (5.5.4).

Given the nature of the hierarchical system, it was important that Mr. Ram be persuaded of the worth of attempting the use of video in language teaching. In the event, this was quite easily achieved for he was favourably disposed to it. This does not mean that the attempt to introduce video in other Central Schools will necessarily receive the enthusiastic support of the Principal — in some schools, the heads will be interested in innovating; in others, they may grudgingly accept the researcher's presence because an authority higher than them has decreed it so. In Mr. Ram's case, an additional reason for his enthusiasm may have been that he had worked for a number of years in Nigeria, where he may have met different ways of working and become less likely to assume that existing practices in Indian schools are the only possibilities.

Whatever the reasons, Mr. Ram was very supportive throughout the project. He enquired about the practical requirements for the introduction of video and set about organising them in a quiet and unobtrusive way. He spoke to the Home-Science teacher after ascertaining that we needed a classroom where students could work in groups; he requested the Geography teacher to lend us enough tables from the Geography room; and Mr. Sridhar who also happened to be the teacher in charge of furniture was drafted in to find enough chairs (6.4). Mr. Ram also reorganised the time-table so that the video lessons could have two run-on periods. After the video equipment was installed in the Home-Science room and all the furniture was in place, he visited the classroom for a final check before the introduction.

If he had not been a strong minded Principal with pragmatic solutions to problems, it would have been very difficult to cope with Dr. Keval's rebellion (6.11). He was calm and firm with Dr. Keval, finally informing him of his decision that Mr. Sridhar would be responsible for teaching English to Standard XI Science students. He handled the students' rebellion very differently, in that its resolution came about by mutual discussion rather than as an order (6.15). He persuaded me to teach the traditional lessons during students' free time, thereby ensuring that their syllabus too had been covered. This was another instance of his unobtrusive way of solving problems. Once we had decided that I would teach in the

mornings, he instructed the peons to open the doors to the classroom and dust the chairs and tables; during this period, he stopped me twice to ask if I had any problems gaining access to the rooms at this early hour. That the peon was not always available to open the room is a different story (6.16).

If there is one generalisation that I can make from my experiences in Bhojpur, it is that problems in the introduction of innovation can often come from unexpected quarters, and if the Principal, or the management — whoever is in charge and has overall responsibility — is interested in its introduction, the chances are that the project will continue to the end. Of course, an expression of interest on the part of the Principal is not enough; it has to be backed by an appropriate infrastructure and appropriate actions for the implementation to be achieved.

The Change Agent

My role as change agent was a major aid in the implementation of the video project. Had I not been a change agent visiting the school to help them use video in the English classes, but instead had sent them the video package along with a video cassette player, a television monitor and instructions for their use, I doubt if the teachers would have been interested enough to try out the innovation. There was evidence for this in the fate of the two BBC micro-computers that the school had acquired — they languished in a cupboard except when they were taken out to read teachers' horoscopes (6.15). I cannot help thinking that if there had been a change agent to assist in the installation of the computers and encourage their use by students, they might have been put to more serious work, especially because Indians have become very keen on computing and it is a new growth area attracting some of the brightest students.

My role as a change agent began in earnest the very first day I went to school and discovered that Dr. Keval was to go away on a teacher training course. I had to calculate quickly how

long it would take to train the teacher to use the video package and then observe its introduction during the English lessons. I was keen to complete the project by the Puja holidays at the end of September for I was aware that the students had to take half-term examinations in December (6.1.1, also Appendix: General Notes, 6.1).

Ensuring that we had enough time for the introduction of video was only one aspect of my job as change agent. There were other logistical and organisational details that needed attention if video was to be introduced. We needed adequate equipment, proper storage space, a good room where thirty-five students could work in groups and which had proper electrical supply and fittings, and finally, a flexible time-table which allowed the video lessons to have two run-on periods. Although none of the tasks mentioned was particularly Herculean, nevertheless they all had to be done. If no-one had been sufficiently committed to the innovation to be prepared for the routine of organisation as well as the improvisations necessary when unexpected problems arose, the likelihood of its grinding to a halt at some stage would have been great. This has wider implications. If the Government of India were to employ change agents to help in the introduction of video, they would have to be sure of their commitment to carrying out the change. In India, government jobs sometimes engender lethargy and a lack of motivation because they are seen as permanent jobs from which people cannot be terminated. So there is what is universally known in India as a 'चलता है' mentality, a feeling that life can go on as it is, and if something does not happen today it will happen tomorrow; and if not in this life then in the next one ...

As a change agent I had to be a teacher trainer. It was not enough to ensure that equipment was installed; I also had to help the teacher to use the equipment and the materials that went with it. Change agents are rarely associated with the development of materials. They are normally in the position of having to interpret and implement the materials designed by someone else. I was in the position, however, of being both the materials developer and the change agent. Ideally, I would like to have developed the materials in conjunction with the teachers involved so that the materials reflected the particular needs of the class. This would

also ensure that the teacher and I worked together as colleagues instead of the possibility that I could set myself up as and be perceived as an expert. For logistical reasons, especially those of distance and time, we could not collaborate on the development of materials.

I did negotiate a collaborative approach to the teacher training. I made it clear to Mr. Sridhar that although I could operate the equipment and he could not do so in the beginning, and although I had developed the materials and knew them well, I did not consider myself to be an expert who was passing on knowledge and skills to him. I looked upon the project as a collaborative effort and was open to suggestions and adaptations. Mr. Sridhar took these observations seriously and sometimes changed the suggestions I made. The biggest changes were the decisions to give students the scripts when they could not follow the accents on the video tape, and to do in groups those activities which were originally meant to be done in pairs, because this was much easier to organise (see Chapter 6).

Rogers (1962) argues that 'change agents have more communication with higher-status than with lower-status members of a social system' (p.283), because they are trying to influence management, administration, opinion leaders and others who would be directly responsible for change. This was not quite my experience — I was involved both with 'higher-status' and 'lower-status' people. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) point out, 'decisions about the role to adopt in a setting will depend on the purposes of the research and the nature of the setting', and 'fortunately, shifts in role can often be made over the course of fieldwork' (p.97).

My initial contact for permission to do research in a Central School had to be obtained from KVS in New Delhi (5.3). Once I had got to the school level, again my point of contact was the Principal, at the top of the hierarchy. Once the research was set in motion, I had to work closely with the teacher who, in the classroom, is again the person with power. Thus, as a change agent I had at every stage to begin by gaining access to people in positions of power in whatever context I was. However, in moving from being perceived in the school as

someone who had permission and authority from the KVS to being perceived as an honorary member of staff, I had already shifted my role considerably.

It could be argued though, that in being a change agent and fostering close links with members of staff, there was a danger that I would be indentified so strongly with them that the students would begin to perceive me as yet another teacher, albeit with slightly different interests. This perception could be strengthened by the fact that like most women teachers I travelled to school by cycle rickshaw and I had a place in the staffroom (5.5.1, 5.6, 6.1.3). Also, the fact that I had to give instructions to the students about keeping diaries for me could have sounded like a teacher giving home-work (6.1.4). If they identified me too much as a teacher, it might jeopardise my role as researcher. This is the subject of discussion of the next section.

7.6

Role as Researcher

As a researcher I was anxious that the students should not perceive me as a teacher, thereby shutting me off effectively from their conversations about their environment and the changes introduced. There could be a danger in the students perceiving me as a teacher. They might be polite about the introduction of video and say things that they thought were the right things to say. So I might get an anodyne picture rather than their real impressions about both the traditional lessons and the video-led ones. One needs to be particularly on guard for this sort of reaction in India because of our whole ethos of treating the teacher as sacred, of not answering back to our elders and of an expectation that younger people will automatically fall in line with older peoples' thoughts. So the chances of students behaving and replying in a way that they thought of as the official line on the innovation were quite considerable. Therefore I had to take care to assure them that I too was a student and not a teacher.

I did this by spending my free time with them as much as possible. During this time, we talked about all the things that interested them — England, cricket, Wimbledon and also

about my research and the differences between being a student in Britain and in India. I was also open with them about my research, sometimes letting them see my class notes and hear the tapes after the classes. I also told them that like them, I too had home-work — mine was to make notes on the class proceedings every evening. I was gratified to see that they accepted me as another student because on at least two occasions they invited me out — once to a party and once on a picnic.

In the classes themselves, I assiduously sat on the back bench and sometimes other students joined me (6.1.4). In the incident where Dr. Keval was absent from the English lessons even though he had come to school and the Principal came in to find me sitting at the back of the class rather than taking charge at the front (5.6), I had the distinct and uncomfortable impression that perhaps Mr. Ram had expected me to behave like a teacher and control the class. The students, on the other hand, had accepted me as one of them and did not even consider asking me if I was going to take their class. The incident where they asked me if I would help them cheat is further evidence that they did not see me as a teacher (5.7.4; Class Notes, 27th July). The most outstanding evidence that they did not treat me as someone who was always to be told what they thought I wanted to hear, or as someone who was to be obeyed, came from the fact that they rebelled against the video-led lessons (6.15). In my experience of Indian schools, this would not have happened to any teacher, however poor and weak he or she might be considered by the students.

But there was a further complication to come. Just when I had painstakingly built up a relationship where they did not perceive me as a teacher, I was forced almost formally into a teacher's role, ironically because of the students' protest. I was in a dilemma, the most important question in my mind being what would happen to my relationship with the students. I wanted to signal to them that although I would be teaching them I was not to be regarded as a teacher except for the half hour in the morning when I was actually teaching.

During that half hour, however, I wanted to be regarded as a capable teacher going about the

business of completing their syllabus and helping them with their problems seriously. This was quite important to me for three reasons (over and above personal pride). First, I had made a contract with the Principal, promising him to teach the traditional lessons. If I did not fulfil the role of a teacher, I felt that I would be reneging on my obligations to him. Secondly, I was concerned that the students should think of me as a capable person. I was worried that if I did not seem to be a competent teacher, they might think of me as an incapable researcher too, and be less inclined to keep up their diary writing as meticulously as they had done and might not take my questions about their ideas seriously. Thirdly, and most importantly of all, I had agreed to teach the morning lessons so that the students did not feel deprived of the traditional lessons, thus enabling them to attend the video-led ones. If they did not feel that I was doing a good job, they might refuse to attend the video classes. Therefore, I decided that for that half hour in the morning, I would cast myself fully in the role of a teacher.

Again, I decided to adopt a forthright but democratic approach — they had to decide collectively when they wanted to be taught, in the morning or at lunch time. I also told them that I was hoping to spend one day a week discussing common grammatical errors and the other days, I would teach the textbook, I-The People and give them home-work to do. We would discuss their answers in class and then move on to the next section. I tried to give them a sense that the class would be organised more like a tuition, coping with difficulties and simultaneously studying the text rather than the straightforward lectures they had been used to. The danger was that because they did not perceive me as a teacher, they would not take my classes seriously. It was a relief to see that they attended the lessons, but in the beginning, some of them did not do their home-work or bring a dictionary to class as I had instructed them. I then had to be firm and threatened to send them out if they did not do as I wished — a standard punishment in Indian schools. Fortunately, a threat was sufficient and I did not have any more problems.

In spite of teaching in the mornings, I continued to spend time with the students whenever I found them free. During this time, they even criticised my morning classes, indicating to me

where they thought my teaching was weak and where they wanted more help. The very fact that they were willing to criticise my teaching to my face is an indication that they did not define me as 'a teacher' in the fullest sense. Such criticism of a teacher by pupils is almost unthinkable in an Indian context. Thus I think I managed to sustain the ambiguous position of being both teacher and researcher at the same time.

My teaching of the morning lessons had an interesting and curious side-effect in my relationship with Mr. Sridhar who was by then the main teacher with whom I worked. I had been worried that because of my role as a change agent, he might perceive me to be an expert (7.5.3). In becoming a teacher, however, I could ask him about what he wanted me to teach and how he wanted me to handle what were essentially his English classes. In this way, we had moved tacitly to a position of being colleagues, with him as the more senior and experienced of the two. This feeling of solidarity was further strengthened by the fact that when students absented themselves from his video-led classes, they were not allowed into my traditional ones (6.17). This incident coupled with the fact that Mr. Sridhar and I spent considerable time working together on the video-led lessons made us both feel that, all in all, we were equal partners in the whole enterprise.

None of all this is to say either that the students considered me completely as one of them, or that the teachers saw me fully as a colleague. Several minor incidents were constant reminders that I was slightly different from them. For example, the male students never gave up addressing me as 'madam', the formal term used for female teachers, though the girls learnt to call me 'दीदी' or 'elder sister', a more informal though still respectful term (5.6). Similarly, before my arrival, the segregation of the sexes was quite rigid in the staffrooms. If I had been seen as a female teacher in the fullest sense, I would have been expected to sit in the women's staffroom and wait at the door of the male staffroom if I wanted to speak to a male member of staff. But the fact that I could use both rooms (5.6; 6.1.3) was an indication that I was perceived as an honorary staff member rather than a real one.

The main reason why I was thought of as being different from either the teachers or the students concerned my being a Ph.D. student who was living in the West and was interested in using fairly advanced technology for English language teaching. So even though I was a student, I did not engage in the same activities as the other students; even though I sat in the staffroom and stood with members of staff during Assembly, I did not perform the same tasks as they did. I was therefore different, but both the students and the teachers accepted my 'marginal native' status (Frielich, 1970; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.100) with comparative ease. The fact that I was literally a native of Bhojpur (I had been there from its inception as a new city), yet at the same time someone who lived in the West, seemed to hold a sense of fascination about the exotic as well as a sense of security in the knowledge that I really understood the school and its set-up. Two girls on the picnic, in fact, said as much to me. While I went about my daily business normally behaving as an 'insider', familiar with the school and its running, I did not hesitate to draw upon my 'outsider' status if I felt that it would get me out of an awkward situation. Thus, when students asked me why Mr. Sridhar had replaced Dr. Keval for the video-led lessons, I hid behind the reasoning that I was an 'outsider' and could not possibly know why certain decisions had been taken (6.12).

The point of this discussion is that much has been written in ethnography on the ambivalent positions a researcher occupies in the field, and how any position being occupied enables one to gain access to certain types of information and not to others. It seems to me that in the literature, almost too much is made of ambiguous positions in the conduct of research, without adequately recognising that they are a feature of everyday life too. What is important is to be aware of such ambiguities and take them into consideration.

In my own situation, there were some ambiguities that the teachers and students were aware of and others that are unlikely to have even occurred to them. So, they knew that my position as insider-outsider, teacher-student was an ambiguous one, but they were unlikely to have been aware of the ambiguities that concerned me in my dual roles of researcher and change agent. They did not have access to the explicit concepts of 'researcher' and 'change

agent' as these are defined in the literature. This does not mean that they were unable to react appropriately to me in either role, even if they treated me and my activities as an undifferentiated whole. In the classroom, their concern with my role as change agent and having to cope with changes introduced overshadowed their potential discomfort at being observed. In the interviews and diaries, the students reacted to me as a 'researcher' and were prepared to be critical of the video lessons as well as their traditional ones: in this context, they did not treat me as a change agent who might want to hear her innovation described in flattering terms. Their lack of knowledge and indeed, sustained interest in what exactly I was there to do seems to have worked to my advantage.

In the next two chapters, I analyse my observations in the classroom, by studying classroom interaction first in the traditional lessons, and then in the video-led ones.

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CHAPTER 8

TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH:

THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

8.1

Introduction

Before the introduction of video at the '+2' level in the English classroom in Central School, Bhojpur, I observed the way English was ordinarily taught in these classes. I have termed this type of teaching the 'traditional' method to distinguish it from the new, innovative, 'video-led' method. I observed these lessons for two reasons. First, there does not seem to be any documentation or analysis of either teacher or pupil talk in Indian classrooms, in contrast to the intensive study of classroom talk in the West in recent years (see Hammersley, 1982, for a comprehensive survey), such studies do not seem to have been carried out in India. I hope that I can at least begin to fill the gap. Secondly, it was essential to compare the traditional lessons with the video-led lessons to explore the different types of language learning taking place.

I observed traditional English lessons from July 6th until August 14th 1987: these fell into three successive groups. First were Dr. Keval's classes from July 6th to 10th, after which he went away to Hyderabad for a teacher training course. Next, during Dr. Keval's absence, were the classes of Mr. Sridhar, who taught English to his own class (the Standard XI Arts students) and Dr. Keval's class (the Standard XI Science students) combined, and therefore had 76 students in his care in the same room, twice the normal number. Finally, Dr. Keval's traditional classes again on his return, from August 4th to 14th, 1987, when the new video-led method was introduced.

This chapter concentrates on the traditional lessons, exploring the teaching strategies employed by both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar and the learning skills developed by the students. As already explained in Chapters 2 and 3, my approach to classroom studies is an ethnographic one. Stubbs (1986) points out that since classroom researchers are 'inevitably concerned with using teacher-pupil dialogue as a source of data, they should therefore be concerned with how the dialogue works: that is, with teacher-pupil discourse as a linguistic system in its own right' (pp.75-76).

The best known method of analysing discourse in the classrooms is that of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). They have analysed classroom talk in terms of 'opening, answering and follow-up' or, what is also known as the the initiation-response-feedback method of analysis. They describe all teacher talk and pupil response in terms of acts, explaining that acts very nearly correspond to the grammatical unit, clause. But, they claim, when they describe an item as an act, they are doing something very different from when they describe it as a clause: 'Grammar is concerned with the *formal* properties of an item, discourse with the *functional* properties, with what the speaker is using the item for' (their italics) (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975, pp.xix-xx). They identify three major categories that occur in all forms of discourse — 'elicitation, directive and informative', and in the classroom these are normally 'initiating moves' made by the teacher. These moves help the teacher to make statements, ask questions or give instructions. The grammatical forms these utterances take (e.g., declarative forms, interrogative forms and imperative forms) are also described in their analysis.

While the initiation-response-feedback method of analysis is very useful in certain circumstances, there are some drawbacks too. First, it describes talk at too high a level of abstraction, making it difficult to differentiate between differing functions of the same type of initiation-response-feedback categories. For example, consider the following two extracts:

1.
a.
Teacher:
And I would like to know what kind of clause.
Please think and let me know.

b.
Anuj:
Adverbial clause.

c.
Ranjan:
Adverbial clause.

d.
Teacher:
Adverbial clause. You are right.

e.
Saraswati:
Of manner?

f.
Teacher:
Yes, anybody else?

g.
Neeraj (louder than Saraswati):
Sir, of manner.

h.
Teacher:
Manner. You are right. Miss Saraswati is right
and Master Neeraj is right.

(Lesson 2, 6th July, 1987)

2.
a.
Teacher:
Our students do have a good knowledge of
grammar. Which are the different kinds of
adverbial clauses, Master Ramesh?

b.
Ramesh:
Sir, adverbial clause of place

c.
Teacher:
Yes,

d.
Ranjan:
Time, manner, compare, contrast.

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e.
Teacher:
Right, fine. What are the different clauses that
he has left? Adverbial clause of (?)

f.
Students:
Reason, reason.

g.
Teacher:
Right. So there are many different kinds of
clauses.

(Lesson 2, 6th July, 1987)

In the two examples above, 1a and 2a are both 'openings' (in Sinclair and Coulthard terms) — they are both elicitations by the teacher. 1b and 1c are student answers, which come under the category 'answering', and 2b follows exactly the same pattern. 1d mirrors 2c, in that they are both 'follow up' activities on the part of the teacher and they both accept the replies of the students. While 1e is an extra bid in the first example, 1f and 2e are similar patterns in teacher behaviour in that they both re-initiate openings; similarly, 1g and 2f parallel each other for they are student replies and finally, 1h and 2g are follow-up statements of acceptance by the teacher. Then there is a boundary and the teacher moves on to the next topic. As can be seen from the above analysis using the Sinclair and Coulthard method, the two discourses follow a very similar pattern. However, the two exchanges had quite different functions, which this method of analysis overlooks. In the first, the teacher was genuinely asking students questions in grammar to help them understand the grammatical structure of English, while in the second, he asks them questions in grammar to show them off to me, the researcher in the classroom. Thus, a limitation of the Sinclair and Coulthard system is that it does not help us to identify such differing types of behaviour.

A second limitation is that the analysis does not take the educational content of teacher talk into account. Thus, Example 1 above will fall under similar categories of analysis and will be given the same weighting as the following example:

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3.
Teacher:
Generally we take care of our face. Because
face is (?) a looking glass. It is so. Is it so?

Several students:
No, no.

Teacher:
But your face is a looking glass. In science,
you have the word, reflection. From your face,
I can find, what is inside your mind. That is
why it is said, face is the (?)

Teacher and some students:
Index of mind.

(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

It follows a similar pattern as in Example 1 — there is teacher elicitation, followed by

student answering which forms an act of reply, and there is then a follow-up by the teacher.

This is followed by an explanation, a re-initiated opening, a student answer as a reply and

finally, the teacher's follow-up which accepts the students' reply. However, by way of

educational content, while the first example is a particular type of language teaching, the

second, I would argue, is distinctly bizarre, and no real teaching has taken place. The

teacher may have other reasons for using examples like 3 (as I consider later), but by not

taking into account educational content, or indeed any possible hidden agenda, (for the latter

point, see Hammersley, 1986a) the system of analysis proposed by Sinclair and Coulthard

omits too much of interest and importance.

In my own study, I resort to a more ethnographic analysis of discourse in the classroom,

although I do use the Sinclair and Coulthard system wherever appropriate. In addition, I try

to extend Stubbs' view that only by studying the organisation of classroom language as a

'system of communication' can we hope to understand educational processes. I believe that

a study of the language used in classrooms is only one of the elements necessary to an

understanding of educational processes. I am inclined to agree with Hammersley (1986a)

who argues that one must assess the nature and function of any particular action 'on the

basis of some investigation of the patterns of intention and motivation which produced it'.

This implies that the analysis of classroom language must happen, not only at a linguistic level, at the level of discourse, but it must broaden to take into account the understandings shared between the teacher and the pupils in that culture; and their possibly differing intentions and purposes. I have analysed classroom discourse in linguistic terms but I have also used other types of available knowledge (e.g., interviews with the students and with the two teachers involved; student diaries; my classroom observation notes as well as my own knowledge of Indian culture) to bear upon what happened in the classroom. As mentioned, the analysis also takes into account the fact that the intentions of teachers and pupils are sometimes different.

8.2

The Traditional Lessons

The most striking aspect of the traditional lessons is the fundamental similarity despite superficial differences in the teaching styles of Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar. This was probably the main reason why Mr. Sridhar did not find it difficult to take over from Dr. Keval when he went away. I recognised the teaching style from my own school days: it had not changed noticeaby over the previous ten years, and probably much longer. In this chapter, I argue that it is a hybrid of the traditional Indian Gurukula teaching style, the Harikatha tradition of oral story-telling and a 19th century Victorian style transported into India when English education was introduced with the publication of Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835, reprinted in Edwardes, 1967).

8.2.1

The Classroom Arrangement

In the traditional lessons, the teacher stood in front of the classroom with the students sitting in rows in front of him. The girls (who were fewer in number) sat in rows in the front on the teacher's right, and the boys were on the left as well as behind the girls. A central aisle separated the two sides. Adams and Biddle (1970) argue that such a rigid and conventional

class arrangement points to the 'centrality' of the teacher — the communication channels set up between the teacher and the students form what they term a 'central communication system'. As Edwards and Furlong (1978) explain:

> The teacher was normally central to the interaction, both physically and communicatively. Indeed, such importance seems to be attached to his front-of-stage location that any straying from it, except to show the disciplinary flag, was associated with a sudden upsurge of private conversation.
> (Edwards and Furlong, 1978, p.12)

'Private conversations' are not really allowed by the teacher in a 'central communication system', where there is basically a single speaker (the teacher most of the time) and everybody else listens; and 'any small enclaves of private interaction ... are typically transitory' (Adams and Biddle, 1970, p.3).

To an Indian, the roots of such an arrangement lie at least as strongly in the Gurukula system and the Harikatha tradition as they do in Western systems of education. In a Harikatha (literally meaning, the tale of the Gods), the story-teller either stands or sits in front of an audience which is seated on either side with a central aisle separating the men from the women, much as in Central School, Bhojpur. This arrangement is eminently suitable for the transmission of legends and stories — the story-teller's central position ensures that the audience can see clearly and its attention is unwaveringly held by the performance of the story-telling.

Such an arrangement and indeed, an attitude of reverence towards the story-teller or teacher because they are seen as knowledgeable can also be traced back to the Indian Gurukula system. Drawings and etchings which have survived from the period (about 5000 B.C.) show the 'guru' or teacher sitting on a raised platform under a tree with his students sitting in rows in front of him, acknowledging his authority and learning under his tutelage. The Gurukula system, too, depended on an oral transmission mode where the teacher explicated texts to his students and these were then learnt by rote. Although the students in Central

School, Bhojpur, did not have to memorise their lessons, the education system seems to be similar — it implicitly recognises the teacher's superior knowledge and points to his importance, centrality and authority. He is seen as a repository of knowledge and his task is to transmit this to his less knowledgeable students. Even the arrangement of the class facilitates this type of transmission.

The two teachers and the students in Bhojpur were aware of the Gurukula tradition because, as it happens, they were all Hindus; but even non-Hindus living in India cannot help knowing about it too.

8.2.2

The Structure of the Lessons

All the traditional lessons in Bhojpur followed the same pattern, whether they were explications of poems, short stories or more informative pieces of writing. Most of the data in the analysis that follows come from the lessons on the essay, 'Paul Julius Reuter' by Harry McNicol, since this was the one Dr. Keval started and Mr. Sridhar completed; it is reprinted as Appendix 8.1. I also consider Mr. Sridhar's lessons on the story, 'Father had a Bad Night' by Clarence Day, and there is an extract from it in Appendix 8.2.

The lesson seemed to consist of the teacher introducing an idea, reading a paragraph, explaining it and then moving on to the next paragraph until the whole text had been covered. Sometimes the teacher asked questions at the end of his explanations before he went on to read the next paragraph. This seems to have been in order to check students' understanding of his teaching. For the same reason, there was almost always a question-answer session when the entire chapter had been completed, before the teacher moved on to the next chapter.

It seems to me that the story-teller in the Harikatha tradition follows an almost exactly similar

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pattern, lacking only those genuine questions that require an answer from the listeners. During Harikathas, the story-teller recites a passage from a holy text, explicates it, and then moves on to the next passage until the entire tale is told. The teacher's talk in the classroom was similar to this ritualised form of story-telling, not only in having a similar pattern but also because this pattern was rigid and highly predicatable. As in any ritual, it exists irrespective of the individual presiding priest: all players in the ritual know what is expected of them and perform accordingly. So, when Mr. Sridhar took over from Dr. Keval, there was no ambiguity in the situation. The students and Mr. Sridhar knew exactly how to behave and the class was undisturbed by a change of teacher. This is in contrast to Western schools, where if one teacher takes over from another, for however short a time, the class has to make some adjustments to the different ways of working brought in by the new teacher.

How do people know whether the Harikatha story-teller is good or not? Similarly, how do students rate the performance of the teacher? It seems to me that the criteria for both these 'performances' are similar. In Harikathas, after the basic text is recited, the story-teller draws upon his own experiences to embellish his tale, often departing completely from the text in order to recount other tales and to make it more relevant to modern times. Finally, the story-teller returns to the text to recite the next few lines. A good story-teller is one who shows off his knowledge and wisdom as he explicates the text. It is the ability to move from the specific to the general and return to the specific that is much admired.

Similarly, in Bhojpur, my interviews with students suggest that a teacher is considered admirable depending on his performance when he explains a paragraph. If he can use the paragraph as a spring-board to elaborate his thoughts (even if there is only a tenuous link with what he has just read), then he is considered a good teacher. Within this framework, the task of the teacher is to bring his own personal understanding and wisdom to his explanations. This is what gives the class an individuality and flavour and makes one

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teacher's classes better than another's. This impression is supported by the students I

interviewed, who greatly admired Dr. Keval and universally preferred him to Mr. Sridhar:

> 4.
> Anuj:
> Madam, Mr. Keval teaches well.
>
> Sudhir:
> In traditional way, Mr. Keval's explanation is
> more sound than Mr. Sridhar. ...
>
> Anuj:
> Madam, Mr. Keval teaches by himself. He has
> more knowledge. Here the point is also that
> learning is better than eh... knowledge is better
> than learning.
>
> Sudhir:
> Knowledge is better than learning.
>
> Jaya:
> What do you mean by that?
>
> Sudhir:
> The thing is already given in the book. So we
> can read it but with Mr. Keval, he taught us
> something extra. It will be useful to us.
>
> (Interview with Group 2)

In the next section, I shall analyse the teachers' talk after they read a paragraph. The

analysis reveals the mechanics of the explication of text and the types of classroom

interactions that occur. Most of the examples are taken from Dr. Keval's classes, although I

will point out differences between Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar whenever they seem

illuminating.

8.2.3

Teaching Style

Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar take a considerable time to explain the paragraphs they read. The

major difference in their individual styles, though, seems to be a matter of degree. Dr.

Keval is more flamboyant than Mr. Sridhar and chooses more, and perhaps more fanciful,

examples. This is particularly obvious in their respective treatments of the chapter on Paul

Julius Reuter, which Dr. Keval had left unfinished when he went for the teacher training course, and Mr. Sridhar completed.

The following extract shows one complete flight of fancy by Dr. Keval, from the point of take-off from the chapter to the point of landing again. Here, he is elaborating on the thesis that Reuter found book-selling a boring profession and sought excitement by turning to the idea of developing a news-service:

> 5.
> Dr. Keval:
> A bookseller is here and, a circus lady is there.
> A girl or a boy working in circus. Who is having excitement in his profession?
>
> Dr. Keval and students:
> A circus girl.
>
> Dr. Keval (continues):
> Or a circus boy. Once I was watching, just a, circus. And I simultaneously started making a poem. Because I was seeing (?) an exciting profession. In book-selling there is no excitement, OK? Just reading and taking books. There is no excitement. There is no excitement in taking a food which is without salt. But there is excitement in taking what (?) chicken. Well spiced, nicely spiced. Understand? So, people should have excitement in their profession. There are people who wish, who desire, who crave for excitement in their profession. And this very excitement is what (?) a life force, force of life, that, and that is an energy, a wonderful energy that scientists may well research about. So, Reuter didn't find excitement in book-selling. (reads) And he sold off his book-selling....
>
> (Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

This type of explaining is not unlike Harikathas where the story-teller has to explain past events and legends in terms of modern, present-day living. Like the Harikatha story-teller, Dr. Keval takes examples of everyday life — watching a circus, eating chicken — to convey a sense of what excitement might mean. In this process, he has also told the students that he writes poetry. This may have been accidental, or he may feel that it will enhance his

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reputation and the students will look upon him as an erudite and scholarly person. That the students may doubt such claims does not seem important in the context of such a 'fabulous' elaboration.

Dr. Keval's use of synonyms when he says, 'there are people who wish, who desire, who crave for excitement ...', also serves to build his image as a knowledgeable person. The ability to use several slightly different terms to convey the same sense has always been considered a mark of wisdom in India. Typically, the story-teller narrates several attributes of the same God to convey his erudition. So, the story-teller might say something like, 'the Gopi-lover, the cow-herd, the butter-stealer, the delightful young Lord Sri Krishna ...'

A sense of ritualistic teaching is even more strongly conveyed by Mr. Sridhar. In the following example, although Mr. Sridhar does not actually have anything to add by way of explanation or elaboration, he seems to feel the need to say something, simply in order to keep to the same ritualistic pattern.

> 6.
> Mr. Sridhar (reads):
> If there is a colliery disaster in Wales, or a typhoon in the China sea, or an important speech by the Prime Minister of New Zealand, almost everyone in the civilized world hears about it, in a matter of (?) hours. (Stops reading.) These are the events mentioned here, and civilized people, hear about this news within (?) hours. (Continues reading.) So, unless it was the business ...
>
> (Lesson 7, 13th July, 1987)

Mr. Sridhar did not really need to explain what he had just read. He also does not display the same fertility of imagination as Dr. Keval and there seemed to be no evidence of any desire to show off to the students. So, it is even more remarkable that Mr. Sridhar has such a compulsion to conform to the rigid pattern of reading, explaining and then going on to read some more. I got the distinct feeling both at the time and later when I looked at my notes

and student diaries that the students did not approve of such brevity in explanations. They probably thought of it as a lack of knowledge on Mr. Sridhar's part, and so they judged him to be an inferior teacher, as a comparison of the following two student diaries indicates:

> 7.
> On Dr. Keval:
> All of the students were listening carefully and attentively. Especially I was very zealous in my self because I know that no one can teach better than Keval Sir in this school the English subject. This is my firm belief and this is also the truth.
>
> (A Group 3 diary)

> 8.
> On Mr. Sridhar:
> I think Mr. M.K.Sridhar has no technique of explaining the text. He speaks the lines from the book while explaining. When we ask him meanings of some words, he tells the meanings which are already in the dictionary. He has already written it in his book. He does not speak from his own mind but always by the help of a dictionary.
>
> (A Group 2 diary)

Dr. Keval's free-ranging talk is designed to keep the students attentive. To retain their interest, he often takes examples from their own experiences or from topics that he thinks they might be interested in. To take only one instance, here Dr. Keval is supposedly explaining about the types of news carried by newspapers, but he refers instead to examples from the matrimonial advertisement columns:

> 9.
> Dr. Keval:
> Today, news service and newspaper has become very important if you want to marry. You will find one full page for the invitation of he (?) and she. There is no need of going here and there, taking leave and spending money. Now you just give an advertisement in the paper and you will be getting (?) a good wife and Jalaja will be getting a good husband of her choice. This is because of the revolution in news service.
>
> (Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

This is an entirely acceptable way of finding a husband or wife in India, with none of the stigma it might have in the West. The students could happily see it as applying to themselves, especially as Dr. Keval uses Jalaja, one of their number, as an example.

Yet another important respect in which Dr. Keval impresses his erudition upon his students is in his use of Sanskrit proverbs, which few, if any, of the students will understand. Sanskrit is a classical language and is no longer spoken; nevertheless, it is used to express 'great truths'. This is because it is the language of religion (Hinduism) and the language in which wisdom has been passed down the ages. Demonstrating a knowledge of Sanskrit signals that the person using it is both learned and devout, and that one must be deferential towards him or her for their wisdom. There is no very close parallel in Britain today, but some idea can perhaps be gained by imagining a combination of the intellectual prestige of Latin and classical Greek with the religious aura of biblical scholarship. As we shall see, Dr. Keval uses Sanskrit in his lessons for two reasons — first, to impress pupils with his wisdom; and secondly, because he believes that his function is to instruct students not just in language but also, more generally, in life. For example, when he explains the way in which John Griffiths helped Reuter secure his first client, he explains that Griffiths is clever because of the company he keeps.

> 10.
> Dr. Keval:
>
> सत्संगे गुणा दोषा: |
>
> [Good company produces bad qualities.] (sic)
> You might have come across this very saying in Sanskrit.
>
> सत्संगे गुणा दोषा: |
>
> [Good company produces bad qualities.] (sic)
> There I mean, we cultivate qualities by virtue of what (?) company. If we are in good company, we'll cultivate good things, good habits. If we are in bad company we'll be cultivating bad habits. So this will be our attempt to be in good company. Always have control over yourself. Try your best always for keeping good · company.
>
> (Lesson 1, 6th July , 1987)

This is a particularly illuminating example because Dr. Keval's quote in Sanskrit is actually wrong. He undoubtedly meant to say सत्संगो गुणा निर्दोषाः | [Good company never produces bad qualities]. However, neither he nor the students really understands Sanskrit. He has probably learnt the adage by rote and does not even realise that he has made a mistake. Nevertheless, he uses the misquotation to advantage, as the students appear impressed by his erudition. The use of Sanskrit also helps Dr. Keval to encourage his students to be morally good and upright.

Later, he returns to this theme, exhorting them again to keep good company. He has just read aloud the episode where Reuter's boy, Griffiths, locked the 'foreign-looking gentleman' in the office while he ran to fetch Reuter (Appendix 8.1). Dr. Keval's explanation of this paragraph seems, on any straightforward interpretation of it, to have little to do with its actual content. Rather, he praises the intelligence of Reuter in selecting the boy and of the boy for 'keeping the good company of Mr. Reuter'. He then reflects more generally on great people:

> 11.
> Try your best always for keeping (?) good
> company. If you make an attempt, if you are
> careful of it, you are sure to get success. You
> are also reminded of the lines of Longfellow,
> that, the footprints of great people, the lives of
> great people are the footprints on the sands of
> (?) time. Great people have gone. They have
> left the world. But they have also left their
> footprints on the sands of time. Gandhiji is no
> more among us, but his footprints are here on
> time ....

(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

As he explained in a subsequent interview, Dr. Keval explicitly sees his job in the English classroom not just as teaching the language, but also as inculcating moral and ethical values in his students:

12.
This is not only an academic eh, just academic
business, this very training of characters,
judging the characters, judging the events,
judging the persons enables them to judge the
persons in the society and that also gives them
an impetus to bring development into their own
personalities and to recognise the right ... There
is a moral aspect because every writing has got a
moral boost, say a moral working behind a
particular character. So indirectly, it also brings
about improvement in their character. So to my
mind only discussion and appreciation is not the
purpose. The purpose behind is also to bring
maturity and sophistication and development in
their own personalities.

(Interview with Dr. Keval)

Here, he seems to me to be heir to two of the traditions I mentioned earlier. First, there is

the Harikatha tradition, with declamation in an ethical vein, exhorting listeners to be morally

and spiritually upright, much like Dr. Keval's lectures. Secondly, and working

concurrently with the first tradition, is the British tradition of teaching English. Dr. Keval

would have had no difficulty in transferring these Harikatha ideas and values to the English

lessons because the inculcation of morality has been a central part of English teaching in

India since it first began in the nineteenth century. Even as early as 1815, Lord Moira

thought that the best method of educational improvement amongst the Indian masses was 'to

furnish the village schoolmasters with little manuals of religious sentiments and ethic

maxims conveyed in such a shape as may be attractive to the scholars' (quoted in Edwardes,

1967, p.135). One of the major arguments that Lord Macaulay employed twenty years later

to convince the British that Indians needed to be educated in the English language followed a

similar vein. He proclaimed the advantages of teaching English to the natives, asserting that

English was pre-eminent even amongst Western languages:

13.
It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the
noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models
of every species of eloquence; with historical
compositions, which, considered merely as narratives,
have seldom been surpassed, and which, considered as
vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never
been equalled; with just and lively representations of
human life and human nature; with the most profound

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speculations on metaphysics, morals,
government, jurisprudence, and trade; with full
and correct information respecting every
experimental science which tends to preserve the
health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the
intellect of man. Whoever knows that language,
has ready access to all the vast intellectual
wealth, which all the wisest nations of the earth
have created and hoarded in the course of ninety
generations.

(Macaulay, 1835)

The teaching of English, thus, was meant not only to create a class of administrators to deal

with the demands of Empire but, as Tharu and I have argued, to be part of a general,

humanising, civilising influence, spoken of as having the force of secular Christianity

(Jayalakshmi and Tharu, 1990). It is therefore not surprising that the teaching of English

carries some of that burden even today.

Though Mr. Sridhar's style is much more restrained and less exuberant than that of Dr.

Keval, it is fundamentally similar, as the following example illustrates. The class is

studying the story, 'Father has a bad night', and has reached the point where the storyteller

has had to have an operation on his leg. Mr Sridhar is commenting on the sentence, 'But

Mother was troubled and unhappy about it, and when Father came in and she ran to him to

pour out her feelings she disturbed him.'

14.
Mr. Sridhar:
... And the mother was sorry. She was not
feeling well, she was in grief, she was the
victim of sorrow because her son had been
operated for (?) adhesion. So (,) she was
deeply troubled and unhappy. In the meantime
father arrived and she informed him of this (?)
operation. She went there and told Father how
her son had been operated and how she was
unhappy. She was feeling unhappy. She was
completely in the grip of grief and sorrow
because her son had been (?) operated. So just
to pour out that feeling of woe she went to (?)
the father.

(Lesson 19, 30th July, 1987)

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Unlike Dr. Keval, Mr. Sridhar does not indulge in elaborations obviously unrelated to the passage being explained. Nevertheless, a comparison of his comments with the context of the sentence on which he is commenting (see Appendix 8.2) shows the similarities of the two teachers' techniques. The story is actually about the narrator's rather strange <u>father</u>, his extreme reluctance to hear or say anything about other people's illnesses or accidents (his own were a different matter), and the bizarre behaviour to which that sometimes led. It is not about the author's mother at all; she has only a walk-on part. There is no attempt to portray her character or describe her feelings. All that is said about these feelings is the one sentence on which Mr Sridhar is commenting here. In the story, this sentence is no more than a piece of dramatic business to get Father back on stage, and all attention immediately shifts to him and his reactions. None of this is commented on by Mr. Sridhar. He makes generalised remarks about a mother's grief, in a succession of almost synonymous phrases just as with Dr. Keval, without ever addressing the function of the passage in the story.

At least, he does not mislead students, as Dr. Keval does from time to time, when his explanations are liable to give students the impression that his sometimes idiosyncratic use of words represents common use. For example, he explains to the class that the title of a chapter is its face:

15.
Dr. Keval:
Generally we take care of our face. Because
face is (?) a looking glass. It is so. Is it so?

Several students:
No, no.

Dr. Keval:
But your face is a looking glass. In science,
you have the word, reflection. From your face,
I can find, what is inside your mind. That is
why it is said, face is the (?)

Dr. Keval and some students:
Index of mind.

Dr. Keval:
Similarly, any lesson, any lesson has got its

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what (?) face. That is (?) the title, caption,
label, heading, head. The face of this lesson is
Paul Julius Reuter.

<p style="text-align: center">(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)</p>

Similarly, he explains that the first sentence in a paragraph is called the 'topic sentence' and

the last sentence is called the 'last sentence'. While the explanation that the last sentence in a

paragraph is called the last sentence is merely redundant, it is obviously misleading to say

without qualification that the first sentence is the 'topic sentence'; although in many

instances, the first sentence does introduce the main ideas in a paragraph, it need not and

often does not.

Given the almost absolute authority of the teacher in the class, he cannot be seen to be either

wrong or ignorant. Here, for example, he has been asked by a student what is meant by

'Napoleon had designs on England', and in particular why the plural 'designs' has been

used, instead of the singular 'design'.

> 16.
> Dr. Keval:
> Designs means several intentions, OK? Designs
> (unclear word), several designs, several
> intentions to conquer, to invade, to encroach, to
> capture. Don't worry for singular and plural,
> you worry for the meaning of designs. Here the
> meaning of designs is (?) the intention to capture
> England. OK?

<p style="text-align: center">(Lesson 3, 7th July, 1987)</p>

While I would not quarrel with Dr. Keval's ultimate explanation, his treatment of the

student's query about why 'designs' is in the plural is less convincing. 'Designs' in such a

context does not necessarily imply 'several intentions', and Dr. Keval's list of near

synonyms here comes close to bluster, as indeed he seems to realise when he rapidly

abandons the attempt to explain. In such situations, he seems unable to admit that he does

not know the reason; nor will he advise his students to look it up in a dictionary. Indeed,

when I asked students informally why they did not bring a dictionary to class, they looked

appalled and told me that it would be an affront to the authority and knowledge of the

teacher.

Another possible explanation of Dr. Keval's elaborate and flamboyant teaching style is that he is using his classes as a showcase of his talents, so as to attract students to his private 'tuitions' (see Chapter 5). This at least is something often said about teachers in India, both by students and by their colleagues. I have no evidence of it in Dr. Keval's case, or even that any of his students thought as much. It is worth noting, though, that Mr. Sridhar does not give private tuition, and that this may be one reason why he does not seem to feel the same need to impress the students. Alternatively, of course, it could be because the students are not impressed by him and would be unlikely to attend his tuitions that he does not give any.

How do the two teachers in Bhojpur actually convey the sense of authority to the students, and maintain their control over the class? How do they organize the pacing of their lessons? How do they know that they have explained one paragraph for long enough and now must move on to the next one? What linguistic devices do they adopt to convey the diversity of activities that they are engaged in? Detailed studies in Western classrooms (Hammersley, 1974; Stubbs, 1975; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975; Edwards and Furlong, 1978; Mehan, 1979; Edwards, 1980; Edwards and Mercer, 1987) have mapped out the manner in which teachers control the pacing and dissemination of knowledge in their classes, deciding when and how much knowledge can be released to their students. In India, however, no such studies seem to have been carried out. In Central School, Bhojpur, apart from the questions directed at individual students (which I shall discuss later), the teachers seem to use rhetorical questions as part of their front-of-class teaching style. An extensive use of such rhetorical questions no longer seems to be a major part of the teaching style in Western classrooms, though in Bhojpur they are frequently used to help the teacher either to further his explanations or to convey information. Often the teachers set up questions and in answering them, they provide explanations, as the following example indicates:

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17.
Dr. Keval:
As a cup of tea is essential, more than that is (?)
a newspaper. Why? That is hot enough. Your
father is very much curious, very serious, very
serious for reading the newspaper. What for?
Have you asked your father? Your father will
tell you the importance of news service. This
news service is very important for persons who
are interested in political events. The news
service is very important for business people
who are interested in business news.

(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

In the above example, Dr. Keval asks rhetorical questions like, 'Why? What for? Have you

asked your father?', to explain that newspapers carry the latest news from several different

fields and would be of interest to a very diverse audience. He also uses the rhetorical mode

to supply information, as the following examples demonstrate:

18.
Dr. Keval:
Only a pure magnet can magnetise a rod of
what (?) iron.

(Lesson 3, 7th July, 1987)

19.
Dr. Keval:
The first sentence of a paragraph is known to
be (?) is known to be (?) a topic sentence.

(Lesson 2, 6th July, 1987)

The above examples are curious in that they use either the question, 'what' in the middle of a

sentence (Example 18) or a rising intonation with a slight pause (Example 19) to convey the

sense of a rhetorical question. This might seem an idiosyncracy of Dr. Keval's style, but on

examining the transcripts of Mr. Sridhar's classes, an exactly similar pattern emerges:

20.
Mr. Sridhar:
So there must be some agencies whose business
is to what (?) whose business is to distribute
news to the people so that we could get it hot.

(Lesson 7, 13th July, 1987)

21.
Mr. Sridhar:
These are the events mentioned here, and

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civilised people hear about this news within (?) hours.

<div align="center">(Lesson 7, 13th July, 1987)</div>

A problem with such rhetorical questions, especially in Dr. Keval's classes (because he tends to use them more than Mr. Sridhar) is that he uses the same form when he is checking to see that students understand what he is telling them. Mr. Sridhar also seems to use the question, 'understand?' much more than Dr. Keval to check that students are following his explanations. The examples below show the same format as the rhetorical questions, but this time, the students appear to be answering them.

22.
Dr. Keval:
Things were so very costly because production was less. All the capital was invested in (?)

Dr. Keval and Students together:
War.

<div align="center">(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)</div>

23.
Dr. Keval:
Your father, and after a few years, you yourself, would like two cups hot. One cup of newspaper and one cup of (?)

Dr. Keval and Students together:
Tea.

<div align="center">(Lesson 2, 6th July, 1987)</div>

24.
Dr. Keval:
We find here that Harry McNicol is writing a history of what (?) development of (?)

Dr. Keval and Students together:
News service.

<div align="center">(Lesson 3, 7th July, 1987)</div>

Clearly, Dr. Keval is checking students' understanding here. The problem with using the same form for rhetorical questions and for eliciting student responses, though, is that students may sometimes confuse the two, and fail to give a response when the teacher is expecting one, or give a response where he is not. From these transcripts, it appears that

when the teacher finds that students do not respond to the rising intonation and pause pattern, he continues as if the question were a rhetorical one. Thus, there are some questions that are ambiguous. They may have been rhetorical questions from the beginning; or they may be questions where the teacher originally intended to elicit a response but, having got none, proceeded to answer the question himself as though it had been rhetorical. To take some examples from the common rhetorical styles he uses:

25.
Dr. Keval:
There is no excitement in taking food which is without salt. But there is excitement in taking what (?) chicken. Well spiced, nicely spiced. Understand? So, people should have excitement in their profession.

(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

26.
Dr. Keval:
Now the title of this lesson is (?) Paul Julius Reuter. The title of this lesson is not news service (.) What is the face of this very lesson? The face of this lesson is (?) Reuter. Face — I mean (?) title.

(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

In Examples 25 and 26, Dr. Keval left pauses after his questions, but the students did not reply in these pauses, despite the question format or rising intonation, and Dr. Keval answered them himself. From the content of his answers, it seems likely that Dr. Keval did intend the first question in Example 25 as rhetorical (he could hardly have expected the students to supply the word 'chicken' there), but that he did expect them in the first question of Example 26 to be able to give the title of the chapter they were studying. Nevertheless, he went on to answer both these questions himself, as though they had been rhetorical ones.

What makes students respond to some questions, thereby indicating that they had understood what the teacher was saying, and at other times keep quiet allowing the teacher to carry on his explanation? On looking at the transcript as a whole, one's first impression is that students do not answer or interrupt the teacher when he is in the middle of an

explanation, but as his explanations draw to a close the students respond to the teacher's questions, indicating to him that they have understood what he has to say. For example:

27.
Dr. Keval:
So, in this way we find that Reuter wanted to
choose an exciting (?) career. He wanted to
what (?) choose a career which was exciting.
Intellectually exciting, thoughtful, provocative.
And in this way we also feel excited. Only a
pure magnet can magnetize a rod of what (?)
iron. A piece of metal, a piece of magnet only
can magnetize another piece of iron. We find
that Reuter has had an exciting career.
Understand me? Reuter had an exciting (?)

Dr. Keval and Students together:
Career.

(Lesson 3, 7th July, 1987)

In the above example, the first time that the teacher asks, 'So, in this way Reuter wanted to choose an exciting (?) ...', the students do not answer. But by the end of his explanation, no matter how bizarre it is, the students do respond to his implied question, when he says, 'Reuter had an exciting (?)' by answering, ' career.'

This kind of analysis, however, might seem possible only in retrospect. When we have a transcript in front of us, we can see when the teacher was in the middle of an explanation and when he had reached the end. But how do students in the classroom know when to keep quiet and when to respond when the discourse is still in progress? How do they know that the teacher is in the midst of an explanation rather than coming to the end of it? It seems to me that they do not know that the explanation is complete or incomplete; they help to make it complete or incomplete. What seems to happen is that, by keeping quiet, they force the teacher to go on and continue explaining till they feel satisfied. Thus, in Example 19, when the teacher says, 'The first sentence of a paragraph is known to be (?) is known to be (?) a topic sentence' (Lesson 2, 6th July, 1987), he tries to get the students to respond. By not answering his question, they force him to continue his explanation. They show their understanding and satisfaction finally by responding positively to the question that the

teacher puts them or by completing a sentence along with him. The status of an explanation as complete or incomplete, then, is not something that exists independently of the students' perceptions of it; it is created by negotiation and shared understanding between the teacher and the pupils about what sort of explanation is satisfactiory and what is not.

There is further evidence of such shared understanding when we look at the instances where common expectations break down. For example, the students may keep quiet waiting for more explanation, but the teacher may feel that he has explained the point enough. Then he has to re-negotiate their shared understanding, and press for another set of exchanges to get a response from the students:

> 28.
> Dr. Keval:
> This very feeling of adventure might be used in different ways. Heat is an energy. Electricity is an energy. It can be used for both (?) both (?) constructive and (?)
>
> Dr. Keval and Students together:
> Destructive purposes.
>
> (Lesson 2, 6th July, 1987)

Clearly, in this instance, Dr. Keval feels that the students can answer his question whereas the students are awaiting more information. His first 'both (?)' gets no response. He conveys to the students that he feels that they can answer his question simply by repeating 'both (?)' in a more emphatically rising intonation. But there is still no response, and now he adds more information, 'constructive and (?)', and this time the students give the rest of the answer he wanted.

On the other hand, if either Dr. Keval or Mr. Sridhar feels that he is still in the midst of an explanation, then he does not want an interruption, even if he has used a rising intonation. In such instances, when the teacher gets a student response, he often simply ignores it:

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29.
Dr. Keval:
Great people have gone. They have left the
world. But they have also left the (?) footprints
on the (?) sands of time (..). Gandhiji is no
more among us, but his footprints are here on
time. Here footprints means (?)

Prem:
memories

Dr. Keval:
His teachings. His words. His advice.

(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

Although the use of questions and how they are answered is negotiated between the teacher

and students, more power lies with the teacher. The students do have some power,

however, in that if they do not reply to the questions the teacher puts to them, he is forced to

continue explaining till they have understood what he has to say.

8.2.4

Student Participation

One could argue that by answering the teacher's questions simultaneously with him,

students are demonstrating that they have entered the same frame of reference as the teacher.

In so doing, they are providing him with verbal clues that indicate they have been paying

attention and have understood his explanations. It also seems to signal that the teacher can

now move on to the next section of the explanation.

Such choral responses from the students are again not unlike the responses of the Harikatha

listeners. In Harikathas too, the audience participates either by repeating the last words of

the story-teller before the story-teller moves on to the next section, or more formally, by

chanting God's name (Hare Rama or Hare Krishna) at the end of an explanation. It seems

to me that what is happening in the Standard XI classroom is a mixture of the Harikatha

tradition and a choral chant coming from a tradition of catechism and Sunday School but

extensively used in primary schools all over India. This chanting itself has its roots in the

introduction of Western education where typically, children in schools were made to chant, 'Our Father which art in Heaven' and 'God Save the King' in Assembly every morning. In their own classrooms, young children are still taught to chant the English alphabet — A for Apple, B for Bat, etc. It seems to me that the choral response in Bhojpur is a vestige of this strong acculturation which takes place when the students are very young.

At the end of the chapter, or at the end of a substantial part of the explanation, both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar asked questions that were directed at individual students rather than the entire class. I was to learn later from various students that both teachers directed their questions at their own 'favourite' set of students. Mr. Sridhar seems to have asked questions only of those sitting in the first two rows, thereby effectively alienating the rest of the class. My own transcripts also corroborate student complaints that Dr. Keval tended to direct his questions at the same people every time. I wondered why he chose these particular students so often. For example, were they more fluent in English? I found that although these students were quite fluent in the language, there were others who were equally fluent but who were not chosen. One student also told me informally that one of these 'favourites' was the son of a member of staff who was given preferential treatment in other ways too. My own observations supported this view, but it still does not explain the reasons for choosing the others. I simply do not know why he chose them.

This is not a trivial matter. The students' observations both in their diaries and in my informal interviews highlighted the value they placed on the teacher's questions. Somehow, the teacher asking a particular student was interpreted as the teacher caring for that student more than he cared for the others. This had repercussions later when video was introduced and students who had never been questioned were given a chance to speak out in the open by being made to represent their groups. This elicited quite excited responses from the students with one of them declaring that this was the 'most thrilling experience of my life' (Diary, 7th September, 1987).

Classroom ethnographers in the West have documented and studied in detail the types of questions asked by teachers. Despite a plethora of such studies, Scarth and Hammersley (1986) warn that it is far from easy to assess whether these questions open up tasks requiring students to think critically, or whether they simply expect them to perform low level cognitive operations like recall from memory. Almost all researchers in the area, such as Hammersley (1974), Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), Edwards and Furlong (1978) and Mehan (1979a), irrespective of their research methodology, seem to agree that a teacher's questioning in the classroom differs from other 'real life' questioning in that it is based upon an unequal relationship betwen the teacher and the students, with the teacher asking questions to which he or she already knows the answers. Teachers also provide an evaluation of the answers they receive, agreeing with some, modifying others, or seeking further elaborations until the students arrive at the answer the teachers requires. This pattern fits the questions asked in Bhojpur:

> 30.
> Dr. Keval:
> Do you kow this word, excitement.
>
> Pankaj:
> Yes sir.
>
> Dr. Keval:
> What is the meaning of excitement? (.)
>
> Manohar:
> Joy, joy.
>
> Dr. Keval (looking around):
> Right.
>
> Ajay:
> Feeling of adventure.
>
> Dr. Keval (did not quite hear):
> Feeling of (?)
>
> Ajay:
> Adventure.
>
> Dr. Keval:
> Adventure. Right. You are right. To a great
> extent you are right.   Anybody else?
> Excitement?

Prakash:
Pleasure, pleasure.

Dr. Keval:
Yes, pleasure.

Janak:
Amusement.

Teacher:
Yes, you are not wrong (.)
You may say, have you taken thrill?

Students:
Yes sir.

Dr. Keval:
Have you taken?

Students:
Yes sir, yes sir.

Dr. Keval:
So excitement means a kind of thrill.

(Lesson 1, 6th July , 1987)

(To explain one reference that may be puzzling to a Western reader: 'Thrill' is the brand name of a popular soft drink in India; Dr. Keval is punning here.) It is clear from the above example that the discourse, by and large, follows the Sinclair and Coulthard pattern quite closely. There is an initiation by the teacher, a student response and a teacher feedback where the answer is accepted. Nevertheless, Dr. Keval casts around for other answers until finally he gives up and supplies the word he has in mind. Mehan too describes this phenomenon, explaining that students often produce what he terms 'trial responses' which are 'in search of validation as the correct answer' (Mehan, 1979a). Of course there are instances when the teacher accepts an answer the first time because he judges it correct.

In Bhojpur, the answers that students often give to the teacher's questions are remarkably close to his explanations. Here, for example, Dr. Keval asks a question on Reuter's life:

31.
Dr. Keval:
Right, sit down. Anjan, Master Anjan, please
tell few words about Reuter's life.

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Anjan:
Before he became a news agent, his life was very miserable. He take foods in very ordinary hotel and ordinary foods. Now but when he became a news agent, at the first time, he faced many difficulties. But later, he, he, the success was in his hands.

(Lesson 2, 6th July, 1987)

This is remarkably close to the explanation that Dr. Keval had himself provided:

32.
Dr. Keval:
In short, and coming to the point, well, he had very poor days. Miserable days. One day he was taking very ordinary food, in an ordinary hotel. And that time, at his centre, at his business centre, there was only a boy. Small boy, he had kept as an assistant. ...

(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

Students also seem to have learnt that answers can be found within the questions that are asked. For example, Dr. Keval's question, 'Just how and why do you feel that Reuter left bookselling and just chose an exciting career. How? Why did he choose an exciting career like this news service?' merits the reply: 'Because he was not excited by the business of selling books' (Lesson 2, 6th July, 1987). All the elements in the answer are in the question and what the student seems to have done is simply rephrased the words in the question to make a statement. And this answer was obviously what the teacher expected because he and the rest of the class come in simultaneously with the words 'book selling' at the end of that exchange, confirming the student's reply. This is not unlike what Dr. Keval himself does. For example, when one of the students had asked him, 'Sir, what is news service', his reply had been, 'News service is the service regarding news.' (Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987).

It seems to me that questions and answers are often treated ritualistically, with no real exchange of information taking place. There cannot be much gain even from the examination point of view because the questions are generally not the type set in

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examinations. I, for one, cannot see what the teacher achieves through such a ritual. For the students, though, these interactions are very important, probably because they provide pupils with the few opportunities they have to speak and be heard.

Within such a formal context, the students do not seem to have freedom to initiate talk that may lead to interesting discussions. Almost all the student-initiated talk was requests for the meaning of words and generally followed the pattern, 'Sir, what is the meaning of...', asked either in English or in Hindi. Perhaps this is all the students can get in, in between the highly stylised speech of the teacher. Maybe the students know this is the only sort of question that will get a response from the teacher. Besides, while operating in a transmission mode, the tendency will be to ask questions which have answers that can be imparted easily. Questions on the meaning of words are ideal and sit comfortably in this style. It seems to me that given the highly-structured and controlled nature of classroom discourse in the traditional lessons, there is almost no opportunity for students to speak. The only way they can talk is by whispering asides to each other. This, however, is not part of the official discourse and is much frowned upon. It may be that both the students and teachers in Bhojpur realise that there is not much sense in the classroom practices as they stand, but compulsively abide by institutional norms for their own sake, thereby turning classroom procedures into what Merton calls 'a bureaucratised ritual' (Merton, 1957).

As I have explained above (Chapter 5), Dr. Keval gave homework only when the school inspectors were due, but asked the students to falsify the dates as though it had been set regularly throughout the year. It seems ironic to me that while he was stressing the importance of inculcating ethics and values in his students, he should be making them collude in such dubious practices. The students (who were my source of information about this; see Appendices for Chapter 5: Interview 5.2) seemed to accept it cynically. They were extremely scornful, but they did not complain to the Principal, nor did they refuse to comply with Dr. Keval's instructions.

My interviews with students also reveal that <u>all</u> of them felt that one reason why such teachers did not give them homework was, as one put it, 'because they do not really care'. They would like to be given homework in moderation — 'not many tasks but regularly' — because it would help them prepare for examinations.

I do not fully understand how students, on the one hand, seem to think of Dr. Keval as a good teacher, but on the other, believe that he does not care. Perhaps they feel that this is just one shortcoming in an otherwise good teacher. I never asked Dr. Keval why he did not give homework, but did wonder if he was unwilling to spend extra time correcting students' notebooks. Part of the explanation may simply be that Dr. Keval was lazy. A further complication was that once at home, he had to teach students who came for tuition (see below). Therefore, he would have less time to correct notebooks. As we shall see in Chapter 9, this unwillingness to spend time on the students' work outside class hours had repercussions when video was introduced into the classroom.

8.3

<u>Language Teaching</u>

Since the professed aim of the CBSE syllabus is the teaching of English, one has to ask what <u>kind</u> of English is being learnt in Bhojpur. This can be discussed within traditional parameters like pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax. I would also like to address the question of language variation given the debates amongst Indian intellectuals on the status of English and the diversity of Indian English.

Prabhu (1987) sketches a brief history of language teaching methodology in India, concluding that the present pedagogy could best be termed, 'Structural-Oral-Situational', a label coined by the Regional Institute of English, Bangalore. This method consists of a structurally and lexically graded syllabus with situational presentation of each new teaching item. These are to be rehearsed in class with substitution tables and in the junior classes, with choral repetition. No grammar in the form of sentence analysis or parsing is to be

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explicitly taught. Instead, grammatical items are presented and rehearsed and the situations in which they occur explained. The approach stresses the need to pay balanced attention to all four skills — listening, speaking, reading and writing — with listening and speaking preceding reading and writing.

What is striking about the above analysis of teaching pedagogy is that it makes the language classroom sound extremely coherent and all the activities well structured. In Bhojpur, such a sustained and high level of planning was patently absent. Although it is difficult to generalise from one study, I cannot help wondering if there is a widespread discrepancy between the aims of the structural-oral-situational pedagogy and its actual realisation in the classroom. In Bhojpur, students got plenty of practice in listening but very little practice in the other skills. They were given very few opportunities to speak; they did not read the lessons themselves because the teacher read them out loud for them; and, in all the time I spent in the traditional lessons, they did not write anything.

The Foreword to the Standard XI Core English textbook, I — The People, is much more modest about the language pedagogy of the lessons, merely stating that 'this book shows an awareness of recent developments in linguistics and pedagogy and of the pressing need to make reading an exciting adventure' (Tickoo, Ram et al, 1984, p.iii).

8.3.1

Pronunciation

On none of the days that I was there did Mr. Sridhar teach any pronunciation. The only word that Dr. Keval formally taught students to pronounce was 'Reuter'. The students did not ask how words were pronounced. Neither teacher corrected students' pronunciation on the few occasions when they spoke. Both the students' speech and the teachers' could be broadly classified as 'Indian English': most characteristics of the phonology of Indian English could be found in their speech, such as a lack of distinction between /v/ and /w/; the non-aspiration of the bilabial, voiceless /p/ and the production of /r/ in all instances. I did

not find any occurrences where the students' speech did not conform to Indian English. I do not know whether Dr. Keval or Mr. Sridhar would have corrected their pronunciation if it had deviated.

8.3.2
Vocabulary

One of the most important aspects of teaching English at the '+2' level has been the development of vocabulary. The Introduction to I — The People defines entry level to Std. XI English in terms of number of words that students know: 'This book is designed for intensive study for students who are familiar with about 2,000 to 2,500 lexical items and the 200 basic structures of English' (Tickoo, Ram et al, 1984, p.v). Later they say, 'the main purpose throughout this book is, however, to help the learner add substantially to his word hoard. The expansion of vocabulary passive, and in a small way, active is a major commitment of this book' (ibid., p.vii).

In the classroom too, great emphasis was placed on the meaning of words, and both teachers spent considerable time explaining them. For example, Dr. Keval explained the word 'excitement' in the first lesson and returned to it in the second one, this time to check understanding. The second time, Dr. Keval was not content when students explained excitement as 'thrill', as he had done in the previous class. He wanted to make absolutely sure they understood and asked them for its equivalent in Hindi. He was finally satisfied when one of the students said रोमांच ।

One could say with little exaggeration that in practice language teaching in Bhojpur (and in my experience, in many Indian schools) is the explanation of words. If pupils understand every word in a sentence, the assumption seems to be, they could put all the meanings together, thereby making sense. Of course, as I have already-pointed out, the meaning of words is eminently transmittable, which suits this teaching style.

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8.3.3

Syntax

The teaching of syntax took a traditional form, and whenever Dr. Keval taught 'grammar' it was a traditional variety. Tenses and clauses like the adverbial clause of reason were taught; students were asked to identify types of clauses within sentences. I never observed Mr. Sridhar teaching formal grammar. Neither teacher corrected students' sentences if they were grammatically incorrect, for example when Anjan said, 'He take foods in very ordinary hotel and ordinary foods' (Example 31). This, it should be stressed, is not a matter of Indian English versus British or International 'Standard English'. There are, of course, some expressions inadmissible in most varieties of International English but allowed in Indian English. For example, the definite and indefinite articles are often omitted by Indian speakers. Thus when Dr. Keval says 'a girl or a boy working in circus' (Example 5) or 'Your father will tell you the importance of news service' (Example 17), these are entirely acceptable in Indian English. But what Anjan said is not permissible in either International or Indian English. Using 'foods' as the plural of 'food' is not permissible in Indian English, nor is the construction 'he take'. However, these go uncorrected.

It could be argued, as most communicative competence theorists argue (see Chapter 2), that grammatical correctness must be subservient to sense when teaching and learning a second language. It is important for students to speak the laguage so that they can be understood even if there are grammatical errors in their speech. Teachers can encourage their students to express ideas in the language by not interrupting the stream of thought and by not putting the students' words into correct grammatical form at the end. Constant correction may make students wary and too shy to respond. This certainly seems to be how the Bhojpur teachers perceive the situation as an interview with Dr. Keval illustrates:

> 34.
> Dr. Keval:
> These days we are not emphasising formal
> grammar, informal grammar or functional
> grammar. Today we stress, we emphasise
> expression and we aren't too much about
> formal grammar, theoretical grammar, because

that brings an impediment in their understanding
and expression. So today the teachers of
English prefer understanding and we don't want
to discourage the students because of
grammatical mistakes, but we do hope that they
should have understanding of the common
grammatical errors.

(Interview, 10th July)

Of course there are actually very few opportunities for the students to make grammatical

mistakes in traditional English classes, and thus for their teachers to correct them, since the

students' utterances rarely amount to more than a single word or a short phrase. This is

another instance where there is some disparity between rhetoric and practice. Dr. Keval has

picked up current thinking concerning second language teaching: he can talk about 'informal

grammar' and 'functional grammar'. But he does not attempt to encourage students to speak

in his class, nor does he engage with them in meaningful discussions.

Although Prabhu (1987) believes that the structural-oral-situational syllabus with its explicit

opposition to teaching traditional grammar is currently practised in Indian schools, and

although the above interview with Dr. Keval may give a similar impression, nonetheless a

certain amount of traditional grammar was taught. For example, Dr. Keval spent time in the

second lesson on adverbial clauses, and in his third lesson on past tense. He explained his

behaviour later in an interview saying that in the examination students are 'supposed to give

single sentence definitions, tape recorder, transistor, television, like this... So this requires

good command over language, especially clause because they have got limited space of one

sentence and they have to define. So this practice is done in the class' (Interview, 10th

July). I have since discovered that the examinations do not ask such questions any more. A

more likely explanation of the practice seems to be that this method of learning English,

established in India since Victorian times, is difficult to change, irrespective of the latest

rhetoric or research on language. I do not think that the lessons actually observed in this

school bear much resemblance to the structural-oral-situational pedagogy that teacher

training institutions like the Regional Institute of English say is the current language teaching

methodology in India.

8.3.4

Language Variation

The existence of Indian English, however, presents another problem for English teachers in India. It is a recognised variety of English, easily identified as such by linguists, but because it is non-standard, it will not necessarily be accepted by examiners when written down. To take a British analogy, Indian English in Bhojpur is like Geordie or Glaswegian. While spoken Geordie would be perfectly acceptable amongst Geordies, it is not widely accepted in the written form, particularly not in examinations. Besides, even in the spoken form, Geordie has traditionally been accorded lower prestige than standard southern English. There has been a long battle in linguistic circles to get people to admit that Geordie, Glaswegian, Liverpudlian and so on are legitimate varieties of English and that there is no reason to accord them lower prestige (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann, 1987). Such a battle has not yet been fought systematically in India: there are several Indian linguists who would declare that 'working in circus' is simply wrong and should not be used, although most would probably recognise it as 'a common Indian error'. I do not know how aware Dr. Keval is of such linguistic debates. I myself am ambivalent about the treatment of Indian English in the classroom. On the one hand, I do believe that certain expressions disallowed by Standard English are part of Indian English and should be accepted. On the other, I acknowledge that a teacher cannot avoid pointing out to students that certain Indian English usages are likely to lose them marks in examinations, and tell them the Standard English alternatives.

8.4

Bilingualism

Goffman (1974) has argued that children in bilingual communities learn the importance of switches and develop the means to achieve them quite early on in life (see Chapter 2). This was evident in Central School, Bhojpur where, even though the students spoke only occasionally, there was widespread understanding of how to use English and Hindi and which language was appropriate at any given moment. The class had a very high level of

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linguistic sophistication which teachers recognised and used to great effect. In this section I will discuss a few representative samples of bilingual competence at work. The first example is that of a bilingual pun while the second one involves using only one word from another language. Nevertheless, both examples imply a complex understanding between the teacher and his class.

35.
Dr. Keval:
What is the full form of Tass (?). I also don't know. But students interested in just education, please try to find out. And students living in Russian colony must be having some association with some Russian brethren. Please have contact and try to know the full form of (?)

Students and Dr. Keval:
Tass.

Dr. Keval:
My daughter asked, 'What is Tass?'. I said, [indicates shuffling of cards].

Students:
[Laugh]

Dr. Keval:
Then she laughed. Anyway, so people living in Russian colony, please collect this news service. Do this news service. What is the meaning of Tass, full form of Tass.

(Lesson 1, 6th July, 1987)

My notes indicate how I interpreted this exchange at the time. Dr. Keval pronounced /tæs/ as /taːs/. The Hindi word, ताश pronounced in a similar way means playing cards. This is what Dr. Keval was referring to when he indicated the shuffling of cards. In playing with two languages and punning bilingually, he achieved several ends. It was immediately obvious to everyone in the class that he had been quite clever in the pun and that he was pleased with himself. When he asked the question, 'What is Tass?', I had the impression that he expected some students to know the answer: they had been successfully deciphering a wide range of acronyms connected with news services. He seemed embarrassed to discover that they did not do so, as he then had to admit that he did not know the full form either. Admitting a lack of knowledge, especially transmittable knowledge like that, is

generally frowned upon in an Indian teacher. So he had to do something to retrieve the situation and put him in control again. Using a bilingual pun in an anecdote, probably made up on the spot, was a very clever way of handling the situation.

Several researchers in bilingualism (Goffman, 1974; Brazil, 1975; Elimovich, 1981) show that shifting into another language often signals 'a change in footing'. 'A change in footing', explains Romaine, 'implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and others present, as expressed in the way the production or reception of an utterance is managed' (Romaine, 1986, p.156). Dr. Keval's pun, it seems to me, achieved a change of footing in his teaching. In telling this story, Dr. Keval shifted from a discursive style to an anecdotal one. By personalising the event, he moved from being a teacher to being a father relating an incident from his life. It seemed to me that this made it easy for students to relate to him at a personal level, possibly because he was now perceived as accessible and as 'one of us'. Gumperz (1976) argues that bilingual switches often mark 'personalisation versus objectivisation' of speech. He says that personalised statements using the 'we' code are generally in the minority language while statements where one wants to maintain a distance, i.e., objectivised statements using the 'they' code are in the majority language. While Hindi and English are not in a straightforward minority-majority relationship, they are certainly in a 'we-they' association. In Bhojpur, Hindi is definitely the language for personal statements whereas English is used for more general ones. In using Hindi and in making the anecdote personal, Dr. Keval was signalling to the students that they could identify with him, thereby making him more affable and humane. That the incident probably never occurred in reality was immaterial. What was more important was that Dr. Keval achieved several ends by using this example — he lent an air of authenticity to his example; he indicated his personal involvement; he demonstrated that he was a kind father with a sense of humour and most importantly, he regained his status in his students' eyes. Incidents like this probably play a part in prompting students to value him as a good teacher.

In my second example, Dr. Keval is explaining that in life, 'the survival is of the fittest'

(Lesson 3, 7th July, 1987). He elaborates: Reuter was the fittest in his society, and by

'fittest', he does not mean physical fitness but 'intellectual' fitness. To explain it, he tells

the story of two students, Miss Kutti and Master Dare.

> 36.
> Dr. Keval:
> For example, in your class, Miss Kutti, here is
> Miss Kutti. And Master Dare, here, Master
> Dare. They are struggling. They are trying to
> control their personality, they are trying to
> evolve their personality, they are trying to prove
> their mettle, they are trying to prove their
> seniority, their superiority. And they are
> fighting as intellectual people. Miss Kutti
> secures 90 per cent marks and Master Dare
> secures 85 per cent marks. Master Dare has
> struggled, Miss Kutti has struggled, and
> intellectually, Miss Kutti has survived over him.
> She has secured higher marks. If only one is to
> be selected Miss Kutti will be selected. Because
> she has fought not with the arms, that lethal
> arms, we have arms, bullets, arrows, no. She
> has fought, she has struggled. So, this way,
> survival has, shifted from physical level to
> intellectual level because we are living in a
> civilised world.

<p align="center">(Lesson 3, 7th July, 1987)</p>

There is considerably more to this passage than might appear. As well as its surface

meaning it carries messages which depend on a shared bilingual understanding between Dr.

Keval and his students. Much is conveyed by the very names Dr. Keval gives the

characters. Kutti is not just an Indian but a South Indian name, meaning petite and gentle.

South Indian states are popularly considered to be economically weaker than the north, and

the south is often thought of as having a gentler culture. South Indians are also thought to

be physically weaker than the people in the north but are supposed to be able to make up for

it by being intelligent, especially in subjects like Mathematics. Also, Kutti is the name of a

girl: girls are often thought of as being weaker than boys. Master Dare, on the other hand,

is male and the name implies daring and enterprising qualitites. The name is not Indian,

drawn from the English language, the language of competition, progress and power. Thus,

Miss Kutti is the antithesis of Master Dare. If two names have to be chosen for people who

<p align="center">265</p>

will compete against each other, Miss Kutti and Master Dare are very appropriate.

One does not know whether Dr. Keval has consciously considered all the implications in using these two names. Nevertheless, it is unlikely to be by chance that he uses them. Mehrotra (1985) argues that the names that people use in India are very carefully considered before they are chosen. There is an acute awarenes of what names mean, what qualities they signify and the cultural context in which someone is named. Dr. Keval's choice of names might appear casual at first, but it cleverly illustrates the points he wants to make. His students would undoubtedly be able to pick up the connotations of the names he uses; he is drawing upon a world view that he shares with them. By setting up an antithesis between Miss Kutti and Master Dare, he sets up expectations that Master Dare would do better than Miss Kutti, but by subverting these expectations, he illustrates very dramatically how intelligence wins over brute 'dare', even if it looks weak and frail. This episode again serves to increase his standing amongst students.

A third reason for shifting from English to Hindi and then back again to English occurs when the teacher wants to reprimand students. Mr. Sridhar asked me to switch my tape-recorder off on 7th September to scold the students in Hindi, telling them to behave themselves. This was the only time he lost his temper, even though his classes were characterised by much more incidental talk than that of Dr. Keval.

From the transcripts, it looks as though Dr. Keval is more able to be sarcastic in Hindi than in English. In any case, scolding in Hindi seems more effective than scolding in English, for the teacher does not have to worry about his students' linguistic competence. Thus, when several students answer at the same time, Dr. Keval said:

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36.

एक साथ आवाज़ देने पर,
चोर और साधू पता नहीं चलते ।

[By speaking at the same time, one cannot make
out who is the thief and who the saint.]

(Lesson 3, 7th July, 1987)

This immediately quietened students and Dr. Keval was able to ask individuals for answers

to the questions he was posing at that time.

Although Mr. Sridhar rarely used Hindi in his classes, Dr. Keval was not averse to the

possibilities of explaining meanings of words in Hindi when students did not understand

them in English, and conversely he elicited responses from students in Hindi for word

meanings. Thus:

37.
Dr. Keval:
And you're also studying Hindi language,
Hindi literature, can you give an exact word
of this thrill or excitement?

Mahendra:

उत्तेजना ।

Dr. Keval:
              is a word but it doesn't carry that very thrill.

Several Girls:

रोमांच , रोमांच ।

Neeraj:

रोमांच ।

Dr. Keval:
Right, रोमांच . Right, and another word?

Sreenivas:

उत्सा है ,   Excitement.

Dr. Keval:
Right, her word will help us. The word, रोमांच
will, will carry the meaning, carry the sense
of thrill and excitement, OK?

(Lesson 2, 6th July 1987)

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Several researchers (for example, De Mejia, 1993; Rubagumya, 1993; Ndayipfukamiye, 1993; Martin-Jones and Saxena, 1993) have pointed out that one of the standard reasons for a switch in a bilingual classroom is for translation purposes. In my own study, the students' use of Hindi is permitted in such instances, when the teacher has explicitly asked them to translate. Similarly, asking a question in Hindi is allowed. What seems to be disallowed is the use of the language to offer an alternative explanation to the teacher's. Then, Dr. Keval replies sarcastically back in Hindi or brow-beats them into keeping quiet. In this next example, he explains the meaning of 'necessity is the mother of invention':

38.
Dr. Keval:
No, he's right. Necessity is the mother of (?)
Necessity is the mother of invention. Good.
Right. Good. (Writes on blackboard.)
Necessity is the mother of invention. What is the meaning of this? Now you simplify it.

Umesh:

आवश्यकता आविष्कारीय है।

[Necessity causes inventions.]

Dr. Keval:

हाँजी, मैं जानता हूँ।
धन्य है ऐसी माता।
[Yes, sir, I know it. Blessed is such a mother.]
Right, you are right.
मैं जाऊँ, और मैं अपनी माताजी से कहूँ
कि Necessity जी, माताजी नहीं कहूँ,
Necessity जी कहूँ। तो मेरी माताजी
क्या कहेंगी - लड़का पागल
अगर है।
[If I go to my mother and call her necessityji and not mother, then my mother would say that her son has gone mad.] (Class laughs.)
In what way, how do you feel that necessity is the mother of invention? Here is the word (Dr. Keval draws a box around the word, 'mother' on the blackboard.) Root, source of birth, (emergence ?), cause, OK? You can simplify here, one word here, mother as cause. OK?

If you remove this word and put cause it will do
(Writes cause above the word, 'mother'.)
Necessity is the cause of invention.]

Arvind:

Sir, युक्त word, key भी तो हो सकता है ।

[Sir, we could also use the word, 'key'.]

Dr. Keval:
Pardon.

Other students:
Key, key.

Dr. Keval:
Necessity is the (?)

Many students:
Key, key, key.

Dr. Keval:
Key. Do you like it?

Some students:
Yes sir.

Other students:
No sir.

Mahesh:
[Key/clue] कुंजी ।

Dr. Keval:
Of course.

Arvind:
Sir, why not?

Dr. Keval:
How. OK. कैसे कहोगे ?
[You may use it?] How? Necessity मुझे
बहुत ज़रूरत है । क्या कहोगे ठीक है ?
तो क्या यही key हो जाय? कहूँ ? नहीं ।
[I have great need of necessity. Would you say
that it is correct? OK. So does this become key?
Shall I say that?]
Sit down. You prove it, you prove it to the
point. What is the meaning of key? I want to
simplify it, not make it difficult. I want to make
the sense of mother simplified. Reason, cause,
root, basis, OK? These are the words that we
can put, that we can substitute, OK? Let us not
worry for that.

(Lesson 3, 7th July, 1987)

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In this example, when Umesh first translates into Hindi he produces an appropriate proverb. Dr. Keval recognises its appropriateness but reprimands him in a laughing but sarcastic manner in Hindi. Thus, although Umesh does not feel offended, he is effectively told off. It seems to me that Umesh's translation was not solicited. 'Now you simplify this' seems to have been just a marker that indicated to the students that this was what Dr. Keval was going to do. Umesh's translation was so correct and so neatly pre-empted what Dr. Keval was going to say that he was momentarily surprised. But he recovered his poise and then had to go on to recover his control over the class. Hence his reaction, which was also in Hindi.

In the next exchange, Arvind initiated the talk and offered an alternative word, 'key'. Arvind used the Hindi sentence structure but put two English words, 'word' and 'key' in his speech. It seems to me that if students are unsure of their own reactions and if they feel they ought to be deferential to the teacher but their words could be interpreted as challenging the teacher, they use Hindi. Arvind chooses to speak in Hindi, although I know that his English is quite good, and offers a reasonable alternative. When Dr. Keval asks the rest of the class what they think of it, some say they like it and others say they do not. At the time, it seemed to me that the students were unsure of the response that Dr. Keval expected of them. Some obviously expected him to like it and so chorused that they liked it too while others read Dr. Keval's intentions correctly and said that they did not agree with it. Nevertheless, Dr. Keval interprets the former reaction as a challenge and the language he chooses for his reply is English. It seems to me that this is because the students acknowledge that his English is better than theirs: he is more 'knowledgeable', and English is the language of power. Dr. Keval thus reasserts his authority by replying in English and cutting short the alternative that Arvind had spontaneously provided.

8.5

<u>Conclusions</u>

To conclude, I perceive the traditional teaching and learning of English in Central School, Bhojpur, as based on a 'transmission' style characterised by an enormous volume of teacher talk with relatively little contribution from the students. The structure of a lesson entails the teacher reading a paragraph, pausing to explain it expansively and then returning to the text to read the next paragraph. He asks questions at appropriate moments, especially at the end of a lesson, to check pupils' understanding. In this method, students are generally silent until a question is asked, or they have a doubt about the meaning of a word.

The teacher's talk is characterised by colourful language; the use of several near synonyms; the deployment of Sanskrit to display erudition, scholarship and wisdom; and a resort to contemporary examples to relate the text to students' experiences. I have argued that this teaching style which allows the teacher to range freely on several topics before returning to the text has its roots in the Gurukula system and the Harikatha tradition of story-telling in India and in Victorian ideas of schooling and English education handed down from colonial times. An important aspect of classroom culture, especially in the current educational context with its emphasis on examinations, may be that teachers can display their command of the English language in order to gain students for private tuition. When such practices are so deeply entrenched in the school culture, it is particularly difficult to introduce an innovation such as a different teaching strategy, as Chapter 9 reveals.

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CHAPTER 9

TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH:

THE VIDEO METHOD

9.1

Introduction

Maley in his 1986 article, 'A Rose is a Rose or is it: Can Communicative Competence be

Taught?', assigns roles for teachers and pupils in classrooms where the aim is to foster

communicative competence. The role of teachers will change dramatically from other more

traditional teaching methods:

> They can no longer be regarded as possessing sacrosanct
> knowledge, which they dispense in daily doses to their
> docile flock. Instead they will need to set up tasks and
> activities in which the learners play the major overt role.
> It is then their jobs to monitor these activities and to
> modify and adjust them as time goes by. This implies a
> much less spectacular, and at the same time, a much less
> secure position.
>
> (Maley, 1986, p. 89)

Similarly, pupils in such an environment will behave very differently from the way they

behaved in traditional classrooms:

> The learners... will no longer find it is enough to follow
> the lessons passively, but will need to involve themselves
> as real people in the activities they are asked to undertake
> both inside and outside the classroom. This gives them at
> one and the same time more freedom — and more
> responsibility.
>
> (Maley, 1986, p.89)

This chapter explores the manner and extent to which the roles that Maley assigns to teachers

and students in the development of communicative competence were actually achieved in the

video-led English lessons in Central School, Bhojpur. It also highlights some of the issues

and problems that arose.

The video-led lessons were so radically different from the traditional lessons that it is difficult to compare them event by event, or category by category, but it is possible to discuss in general how the two types of lessons were different. I will also analyse the characteristics of the video lessons in greater detail and draw tentative conclusions about the implications of my study for the development of communicative competence in English for students at the '+2' level.

Dr. Keval and I started to work on the video lessons after his return from training in Hyderabad. The package was introduced into the class on 17 August, 1987, but Dr. Keval did not teach the video lessons for long. He taught only three classes, after which he had his altercation with the Principal (Chapter 6; also Appendix 6.1) and stopped teaching English to the Science students of Standard XI. Mr. Sridhar was asked to take over and from the 22 August to 22 September 1987, he taught English using the video materials I had developed.

As I point out in Chapters 1 and 4, the video-led lessons cannot be taken as just the use of video in the classroom. They are part of a wider strategy: students sit in groups, watch the video extracts, discuss the task sheets for each video extract, come to conclusions about the questions in the task sheets, mutually agree their answers, and finally, respond to teacher elicitations of their answers. Thus, group work and discussions form an integral part of the video package. My interest lies in comparing this package with the traditional lessons.

As I have argued, following Bates (1983) (see Chapter 3), one of the problems with existing research comparing video and traditional lessons is that video lessons often simply reproduce traditional ones, in an attempt to make rigorous comparisons — for example, comparing teacher-fronted classes in both. It is not surprising, Bates suggests, that these studies show no significant difference between the two methods of teaching. If instead lessons make use of the unique features and possibilities that video offers, a comparison between traditional lessons and video-led ones may be more difficult (because we are not

comparing like with like) but at the same time more illuminating. Since I wish to explore the idea that video is a medium which Indians do not treat reverentially, allowing them to argue and discuss what they see (Chapter 2), it seems essential to me that the students be given a forum for such discussion and argument. Group work is therefore a vital part of the video-led lessons, and I am reluctant even to try to separate specific effects of the video element from others that may have arisen from the fact that the students are working in groups. Such a separation would be difficult and inappropriate in the strategy I adopted because the video was very closely integrated with the text, the task sheets and group work. The video component and the talk produced in groups are elements that interact with one another to produce their effects.

As in Chapter 8, I shall discuss the differences in the approach to teaching between Mr. Sridhar and Dr. Keval, wherever appropriate.

9.2
Similarities and Differences Between the Traditional and the Video Methods

Although the traditional and the video methods were radically different, there was one important similarity that I built into the video package — the use of a set pattern. In devising the video lessons, I realised early on that it would be useful to construct a set pattern of activity that both the students and the teacher would understand. I knew that I would be observing the introduction of video for only one month, and if I varied the pattern too much, it might take the teacher and students too much time and effort to learn what they had to do in each class. Besides, both the teacher and the students were used to their English classes having a rigid structure. A strong element of structuring in the video lessons would build on this experience. The lessons were carefully structured, but what happened within that structure was by no means ritualistic, as was the case with lessons taught in the traditional mode.

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9.2.1

The Classes

For purposes of this research, I instituted two major differences between the traditional and video methods. First, the video lessons lasted for 70 minutes each, as against 35 minutes for the traditional lessons. In informal discussions with Dr. Keval, Mr. Sridhar, and the Principal, we decided that it would take longer than thirty minutes to complete each task sheet. The Principal suggested (based on strong recommendations from me) that we use two 35-minute periods instead of one for video.

The second major difference was in students' seating arrangements. They were divided into groups and each group sat around a table (see Chapter 6 for details), in keeping with Maley's recommendation that for the development of communicative competence, classroom procedures must favour interaction among students: 'This will have implications for the layout of the classroom (straight rows of chairs and desks are good for order but bad for communication). There will be an emphasis on works in pairs and small groups' (Maley, 1986). The classroom layout thus differed from traditional classes where students sat in rows and the teacher stood at the front. The teacher using video went to different groups, helping them with their problems as they worked on the task sheets.

In traditional lessons, the teacher stood in front of the classroom, claiming the students' undivided attention. The main focus of attention was the teacher — students related individually to him and to the text. All communication, even with other students, had to be channelled through the teacher. Candlin points out that in such classes the teacher is the locus of authority and discipline. He or she controls both the content and speed of learning. One result of such 'traditional methods of control' has been a general perception of the teacher's inherent superiority and knowledge. Candlin argues that if a class has to work in a genuinely communicative environment, the teacher has to learn to give up these traditional methods of control (Candlin, 1982). By changing the arrangement of the class to allow students to communicate more with each other, without seeking the teacher's permission

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every time they speak, students are forced to control their learning much more than in the traditional method. Maley (1986) too points out that the changed arrangement of the class has implications for power relations between teacher and students. Although the research literature had led me to expect changes of this nature, I was surprised by the extent to which the new arrangement could undermine the authority of the teacher. The students seemed to stop regarding the teacher as more knowledgable than themselves. They were more able to control their own learning, without necessarily paying much attention to what the teacher was saying. Often, the teacher would start giving general instructions to the class, and a group, as soon as it had understood the gist of what he was saying, disregarded his talk and continued to work amongst themselves. This was unthinkable in the traditional lessons where the authority of the teacher demanded that students pay undivided attention to his words.

Mr. Sridhar and Dr. Keval reacted differently to these new arrangements. I was impressed by the way Mr. Sridhar worked quietly with the groups — seeing where they needed help and sorting out their problems (Class Notes, 14th September, 1987). However, this practice seemed very stressful for Dr. Keval. His authoritative voice would no longer ring out continuously during the period, as in the traditional lessons. In addition, the practice of going from group to group, finding out what their problems were and trying to solve them, also proved difficult for Dr. Keval. The situation became so intolerable for him that he had to take leave on three consecutive days to get over the stress. When he came back, he confessed to me: 'I am a lazy sort of fellow, madam, and I find this work too difficult' (Field Notes, 19th August, 1987).

9.2.2

The Teacher

In the traditional method, both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar had developed a set pattern: they read a part of the text, explained it, then read the next section and so on. As I argue in Chapter 8, this type of talk is very similar to that of the Harikathas in India in that the teacher

needs the same qualities as the story-teller — an ability to move from the specific text to the general, where he shows off his knowledge and wisdom as he teaches, and then a return to the specific text at hand. A good teacher was shown to be one who had mastered the art of embellishing his talk and, in the process, of exhibiting wisdom. The same criteria do not seem to apply to teacher talk in the video lessons. In these lessons, the teacher could not digress and return to the topic at hand, partly because he did not stand in front of the class and lecture to the students any more, and partly because the nature of the tasks was such that his role in the classroom changed to that of a guide and helper. Besides, the idea that a teacher was a sacred repository of knowledge and wisdom was now questioned tacitly by the students. Even Dr. Keval, whose knowledge and expertise had previously been unquestioningly accepted, was not in 'safe' realms, as the example below indicates.

Dr. Keval and the students are discussing how heat is produced (Task Sheet 1). The comments in brackets beside the speakers are from my field notes; the classroom discussion which involved the teacher and all the groups is set out on the left and the group discussion/ comment within a group is on the right hand side. As usual, an English translation of things said in Hindi is also suppled.

1.
Teacher:
Now heat is produced by ... Group Number 1.

Janardhan:
By burning coal, oil, electricity.

Vishu (adding to the list):
Gas.

Teacher:
And? (starts writing on blackboard) Heat is produced by coal,

Many voices:
By burning coal, sir, by burning coal.

Teacher (continues writing on blackboard):
Heat is produced by coal, oil,

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Prashant (taking the mickey):
Water,

Teacher:
Water.   Asutosh:
                                                By burning water?
                                                (Group starts laughing)

Many students (obviously enjoying themselves):
Burning water, burning water.

Teacher:
Heat is produced by coal, oil, water.

Jayant (taking pity on him):
No sir, no water.

Teacher (a bit sheepish?):
No water. (Rubs it out from board) OK, I keep it in doubt.

(Lesson 30, 19th August, 1987)

The students here obviously feel more confident in their own answers and abilities and so can challenge the teacher as well as tease him. This was quite unthinkable in the traditional lessons.

Later, there was a revealing conversation in my group which ran as follows:

2.
Asutosh:

कहाँ Keval sir को कहाँ समझ में आयेगा ?

[Where, how will Keval sir understand?]

Anjan:
Don't comment on your teacher.

Anuj:
Yes, don't.

(Lesson 30, 19th August, 1987)

Asutosh here is quite candid in his opinion that Keval Sir will not understand complicated processes like the production of electricity using nuclear power. Anjan and Anuj's reactions seem more complex — the words spoken could be respectful, but their tone and the shift in language suggests that they are actually mocking Dr. Keval as well as being ironic about their particular classroom situation where the teacher is supposed to know more than the students but clearly does not (for a discussion of the switches involved, see 9.6.4).

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Most students thought that Mr. Sridhar was a better teacher in this method than in the traditional method, where Dr. Keval was perceived as being better (Interview with Group 2 students). It seems to me that the very quality which was considered bad in Mr. Sridhar when he taught in the traditional method made him a good teacher in the video lessons. Mr. Sridhar was not as good as Dr. Keval in explaining the text by drawing upon anecdotes or by using experiences that may have been familiar to the students. He spent most of his time explaining the text book, but without many references to the world outside it (see Chapter 8). In the video method, such explanations were not required of him. Instead, a substantial amount of time was spent either on classroom management (as in 'I will give you eight minutes to complete this section', Task Sheet 5) or in relaying loudly what one student had said so that the rest of the class could respond to it. Mr. Sridhar also moved the class discussion from one question to the next one on the task sheet. He talked and argued with the students about the points <u>they</u> were making, rather than producing explanations of his own account. In doing so, one could say that he fulfilled the two main roles Breen and Candlin (1980) envisage for the teacher in a communicative teaching method — 'the first role is to facilitate the communicative process between all the participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an interdependent participant within the learning-teaching group' (p.104).

It is possible that the video-led lessons greatly hampered Dr. Keval's style which did not want to be constrained by the tasks. There was not much opportunity for him to range freely as he spoke and then return to the text. All the tasks were more tightly designed, thus enabling both teacher and students to engage with the task sheets. It is remarkable to see how much of the classroom talk, both in groups and when the tasks are being discussed by the whole class, is related directly to the tasks. Indeed, there is very little off-task talk amongst the groups. Even when the students did indulge in it, a group member would bring them back to the task sheet.

In the traditional method of teaching, both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar asked questions for which they had set answers in mind. The students' task was, in effect, to try and guess what words the teachers had in mind, then deliver the expected reply (Chapter 8). Although sometimes this was the case in the video lessons also, more often than not the teacher tried to explore students' ideas and opinions. The transcripts show that at first this did not come easily to Mr. Sridhar but that he became more willing to explore their ideas as the classes went on. In the very first lesson that Mr. Sridhar taught, the class was discussing the various circuits they had seen in the video extract. They had discussed how the first circuit was called the primary circuit, the second one was the secondary circuit, and the question was about the name of the third circuit. When Mr. Sridhar and I had discussed the lesson before he taught it, we had come to the conclusion that the third circuit was simply known as the 'third circuit'. At first, the students did not seem to know the answer. When Mr. Sridhar played the extract again, the following exchanges occurred:

> 3.
> Teacher:
> So, the first circuit is primary circuit, the second circuit is secondary circuit and the third circuit is the third circuit.
>
> (Uproar in class because they do not agree with teacher).
>
> Teacher:
> Now, circuit number three is third circuit.
>
> Anuj:
> No sir, final circuit.
>
> Abhiman:
> Last circuit.
>
> Teacher:
> Third circuit. Now you come to the second part of the task sheet.
>
> Jayant (from group 1 to Ashok from Group 2):
> When everybody is saying 'final circuit', Sir has to agree with us. We have also seen it in the video.
>
> (Lesson 33, 24th August, 1987)

But the teacher did not accept the students' answer, although on watching it again with the class, I agreed that the third circuit was also referred to as the final circuit. Indeed, in one of my early interviews with the students, they complained that what they found frustrating

about Mr. Sridhar's teaching was that he had a set of answers that he had worked out and would not accept their answers where they were different. They said, 'what he has written in the answer sheet is correct, not our answer' and 'he does not accept our answer' (Interview with Group 3 students). This is an interesting response in itself because the students had never made any such complaints about the traditional lessons. The implicit assumption there had been that the teacher's answer was the only answer. To me, this new 'complaint' is indicative of how students realised that the teacher's role had changed and they were demanding that he, too, should accept this new role.

With time, Mr. Sridhar began to see that the students too had valid answers and that there need not be only one correct answer to a question. In one of my informal chats with him, he said: 'But, madam, what the students also say is correct. I find that this sometimes does not agree with the answers I have, but I can see their point'. Indeed, Mr. Sridhar did try to take into account students' answers and explore them for whether they were right or wrong. This was most strikingly illustrated, when he decided to write one of the student contributions on the board. Here, the class is discussing whether Sam Lovejoy is pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear or neutral:

> 4.
> Teacher:
> ... Whether he is pro-nuclear anti-nuclear or neutral.
>
> Murali:
> Anti-nuclear.
>
> Teacher:
> Anti-nuclear. Why?
>
> Murali:
> Because he is not research minded and he is not well-dressed.
>
> Teacher (repeating):
> Because he is not research minded and he is not well-dressed?
>
> Mukund:
> No sir, he is well dressed but he is not research minded.
> (lots of noise and what sounds like disagreement)
>
> Teacher:
> Others will not talk. When I ask someone a question, only he will answer.
> Anti-nuclear is what you say. What is the cause, I mean, what is your reason?

Murali (altered answer because of Mukund's contribution ?):
Sir, because he is not research minded.

Teacher:
Research minded. Because he is not research minded.

Anuj:
अच्छा, तो तुम mind के अन्दर भी घुस सकते हो? हम तो सिर्फ़ बाहर देख सकते हैं ।
[Oh, so you can go into his mind too, can you? We can only see the outside.]
(class laughs).

Teacher (writes the answer on board).

Anuj (indignant):
Sir, are you really writing because he was not research minded?

Teacher:
Whatever he has told, I am writing. What he has to say, I will put down. All your answers I'll put up and then we'll see.

<div align="center">(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)</div>

In the above example, clearly Anuj is indignant and cannot believe that the teacher is writing an answer that he considers so obviously wrong. It is now the teacher's turn to explain that he will accept answers so that they can be verified later. This would have been unthinkable in the traditional lessons, where only one answer was the correct answer; here it is a student who finds difficulty in adjusting to the new method. In the traditional method, there was no discussion of why a particular answer was wrong. Here, the class discussed the problem with Murali's answer towards the end of the lesson, when they had seen the video again to verify the answers on the board.

In a similar vein, it might be argued that in Example 1, Dr. Keval did not really fall into a trap the students had laid for him. In accepting 'water' as an answer for the question about sources of heat, was he too quite properly accepting a student response which he could pick up later and discuss? This possibility does not seem very likely because he rubbed the answer out, and did not return to discuss this response later. Dr. Keval's comment, 'OK I keep it in doubt' seems to have been something he said to save face.

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9.2.3

The Students

Students participated far less in class activities in the traditional method of teaching than in the video method. They were very much aware of this and commented on it, saying, 'we speak far more than before' (Interview, Group 2). This was my own impression from lessons I observed. A quantitative analysis of a sample (though small) provides confirmation of the students' views. I examined the recordings from two classes in the traditional mode and one in the video mode (amounting to 70 minutes of time in each case) — chosen at random — to compare the number of examples of student-initiated talk in each case. Although it is risky to generalise from so small a sample, it is striking to see how radically different the two methods of teaching were. The results are tabulated below. Clarification-seeking moves, moves where students sought the meaning of words, single word contributions and longer contributions were the main kinds of student-initiated moves.

Table 9.1

Number and Types of Student-intiated Moves

Type of class	Number of student-intiated moves	Clarification seeking	Meaning of words	Single word contributions	Longer contributions
Traditional	11	3	2	5	0
Video Led	38	2	3	0	33

The figures for the video-led classrooms omit students' talk in their own groups, which was all self-initiated. Even when students asked for clarification, the nature of their questions differed considerably in the two instances. In the traditional lessons, students asked for clarifications of the meaning of sentences. In the video lessons, requests for clarification were for genuinely communicative purposes (e.g., 'shall I collect all the transcripts?').

In the traditional lessons, the students' task was to go through the motions of hearing the

teacher talk in class, and then respond to his questions. In the video led lessons, the nature of students' involvement with the subject matter changed. They had to watch the video extracts, understand what was demanded by the task sheets, negotiate ways of answering questions, and come to their own conclusions about the answers. Students worked in their own groups, and also participated in general discussion of the task sheets towards the second half of the lesson. They were so actively involved in classroom activity that I analyse their behaviour in detail throughout this chapter.

9.2.4

The Materials

Another dramatic difference emerged in the way that students regarded the video recordings and the task sheets that went with them. Although the task sheets were written on paper (therefore could be thought of as texts which had comprehension-type questions), the students did not regard either the video or the task sheet as sacred. They felt much freer to question and comment on what they had seen as Example 5 below indicates. They felt able to challenge the task sheet, as well as the teacher and each other, if they did not agree. This was evident right from the start. Here, the students are discussing Item 6 on Task Sheet 3 (see Appendix 4.3). Mr. Sridhar has asked them what the visual elements were when they might have had the impression that 'green surroundings signify health and cleanliness...' :

> 5.
> Teacher:
> Group number 3. What other thing did you see?
>
> Akhil:
> Nuclear power plant in green surroundings. Nuclear power plant in green surroundings.
>
> Teacher:
> Green surroundings.
>
> Nishant:
> Green surroundings कहाँ था ? पानी था, तो blue होगा, है ना?
> [Where were the green surroundings? There was water, so it will be blue, won't it?]
>
> Pankaj:
> No sir, blue surroundings.

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Teacher:
I thought it was green surroundings. Let's play the video again and check.
(They replay video and come to the conclusion that it has green fields and a blue sea.)

(Lesson 35, 26th August, 1987)

It seems to me that in the above exchanges, Nishant and Pankaj are questioning the authority of the task sheet as well as that of the teacher. In saying that the surroundings are not green, they do not agree with what is written on the task sheet, nor do they agree with their teacher, who also thought that the surrounding area was green. The whole class then resorted to checking their answer, and they found that there was blue water as well as green fields. So both the teacher and the students (as well as the task sheet) were partly right.

As far as the programme content is concerned, the students seem to have genuinely engaged with the issues presented to them in the video materials and the task sheets. They had differing opinions which they expressed freely and openly in the class. They even carried these discussions into the diaries they kept. This was evident particularly in the later diaries, less so in earlier ones. Here, for example, a student is reflecting on the altercation between Clamshell Alliance, an anti-nuclear protest group and the Governor (Task Sheet 25). She writes:

6.
In my opinion, Clamshell Alliance is correct in its point and the Governor is correct in his point.

The Clams went to Seabrook in order to protest against the construction of nuclear power plant. But because the Governor himself is pro-nuclear, he removed the Clams from site. He shouldn't have been so rude to remove them like dogs and cats, but as a Governor, he had done right because his duty is to check the entrance of so many people in the nuclear power site so that there is no disturbance and damage to the fuels in the nuclear power site.

(Group 7 Diary, 21st September, 1987)

Here is another comment on the discussion of the video materials in the classroom :

7.
When one of the groups said that the people who were taking photographs and films were reporters, Sir didn't accept it. He said that there was no surety that there were

pressmen. But I think they were really reporters because
they had also notebooks and pens in their hands. Also,
presence of reporters was a 'must' in such type of
occasion.

(Group 6 Diary, 16th September, 1987)

Obviously, the students interpreted the images they saw in one way and Mr. Sridhar in

another. But the students do challenge Mr. Sridhar and disagree with him. This pupil was

not satisfied with the way Mr. Sridhar had handled the contribution and had resorted to the

diary to express herself and her disagreements with Mr. Sridhar. This was strikingly

different from the traditional lessons where it was generally unthinkable for students to

challenge a teacher in any way.

It seems to me that video recordings escape being treated as sacred in a manner that textual

materials do not do. Nobody has greater authority than anybody else insofar as they are all

viewing the same extract. The reasons may be twofold: first, as I have argued in Chapter 2,

we have a long tradition of film in India. It is a major form of entertainment and Indians

endlessly discuss films. Video has a similar format and so, immediately, is held up for

discussion in a way that text is not. A second reason may be that the students feel that with

video they can use their own eyes to check their answers. With text too, the students could

check their answers by reading the relevant passage. But it seems to me that with text, they

do not feel able to question it seriously because the teacher, as authority, is explicating it and

the text itself in any case is sacred (see Chapter 8). The authority, therefore, lies outside

them, either in the teacher or in the author of the text. By contrast, the authority of a

producer or director (the video equivalent of author) is never sacred in India. It is always

open to question, and hence, open to more discussion.

9.3

The Structure of the Video Lessons

Unlike the traditional lessons, the video-led classes were not locked into a pattern of ritual

responses. When students worked in groups, their discussions varied from group to group,

as did the manner in which each group organised its tasks. Within each group, there were

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no set pieces that had to be diligently rehearsed and different students took part in their group's activity in different ways.

Before considering the structure of the video lessons, I would like to explain my role in the new method. As a researcher, my job was to note and record the activities in the classroom. Since students sat and worked in groups, it was more difficult to record these lessons. I spent every class with a different group, recording their talk and reactions to the task sheets. The data presented are from these recordings, as well as from the student diaries, the interviews and my own class notes. Most of the quotations come from two of Mr. Sridhar's lessons (based on Task Sheets 4 and 5) and the one lesson that Dr. Keval taught (Task Sheet 1), although I refer to other lessons whenever appropriate. The lessons on Task Sheets 4 and 5 were chosen because their structure was typical of the video-led lessons.

The class settled into a familiar pattern after a few video lessons. The structure of most of these lessons could be divided into five parts: an introduction by the teacher about the task sheet and the work he expects the students to do that day; viewing of the video extract by the class; group discussion of the task sheets; teacher elicitation of answers from various groups; and, a final replay of the video extract to confirm the class's answers. The teacher's introduction included activities like the distribution of task sheets. The video extracts were replayed several times during the lesson. Sometimes, this was requested by the groups, when they wanted to check something they had discussed or when they felt that a further viewing of the extracts would help them answer the task sheets. At other times, the teacher used his judgement and replayed the extracts if he felt that students needed to watch the video again to familiarise themselves with the material. The transcripts were given to students only during the first viewing or sometimes for two viewings (which were often contiguous). Mr. Sridhar felt that this was enough to help students follow the accents on tape.

Group discussions took up most of the lesson time, and once Mr. Sridhar had made sure

that all the groups were ready, he elicited answers from each group and put them on the board. Every day, each group had a different leader to answer the questions in the hope that everyone would get a chance to speak and defend their group's arguments in public. I hoped that this would avoid criticisms like the ones that the students levied against Dr. Keval's questions at the end of a traditional lesson (Chapter 8). Of course, students who were not group leaders, could also contribute to the discussion. Finally, the class watched the extract one last time, to confirm students' answers. (For the pattern of any one individual lesson, see Appendix: 4.3)

9.4

Introduction

9.4.1

Teacher's Introduction

Every day, Mr. Sridhar would start his lessons by introducing the students to the topic they would be working on. This was so that the students understood what was expected of them — what they were to look for in the video sequences and how it might relate to their task sheets. Here, for example, the class had to view the video extracts to decide whether the people they saw were pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear or neutral. These decisions had to be based on notions of stereotypes and what one expects people to look like. This is how Mr. Sridhar explained it to the class:

> 8.
> Teacher:
> When you see a man with a जगेर [towel over shoulder]
> and some cans, you can guess that he must be a milkman.
> Understood? A doctor has a particular dress. Having a
> stethoscope and gown. So you know that person must be a
> doctor. Understood? ...

(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)

Although Mr. Sridhar takes examples from the students' own culture, the mode of teaching is explanatory rather than eliciting a response from students. He could have asked the students how they would interpret the meaning of a man on a bicycle with several cans

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hanging from his handlebars; or what would cross their minds if they saw a woman in a white overcoat and a stethoscope. But instead, he chose to supply the information himself. This is not unlike the traditional lessons where the meanings of words were explained.

However, once Mr. Sridhar explained the meaning of stereotypes, he went on to ask students what their stereotypes of pro-nuclear people, anti-nuclear people and neutral people were like. He was genuinely seeking out their responses, and he hinted to them that they had already seen some pro-nuclear people in the previous extract. The exchanges between Mr. Sridhar and the students are revealing:

9.
Teacher:
What do pro-nuclear people look like? You find a
pro-nuclear person, what will be his dress, what will be his
clothes? (Pointing to a group) You.

Umesh:
Safari suit.

Teacher:
क्या
[What?]

Umesh:
Suit and tie.

Teacher:
OK....

(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)

A 'safari suit' (where the trousers and the jacket are made of the same cloth but the jacket doubles as a shirt) is typically worn by richer Indian bureaucrats. In the above exchanges, what is interesting is not just what Umesh thinks of as a pro-nuclear stereotype, but that he has already cast him in an Indian bureaucrat's clothes. When the teacher says, ' क्या ' [What?], it seems to me that he has genuinely not heard the answer. But the student misreads it and comes up with another answer which conforms to a Western stereotype. This was a more expected answer than 'safari suit' because the students had already seen a Western board of directors setting up plans for a nuclear power plant, and they were all

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wearing suits.

In the above example, the student changes his answer because he thinks that he has to match teacher expectations, even though, from the point of view of the teacher, this was a genuine request for information. Such behaviour is recognised as typical in classrooms throughout the world. As Mehan (1979) puts it:

> Because there is often only a single correct response to known information questions, and this answer is known in advance of the questioning, teachers often find themselves 'searching' for that answer, while students provide various 'trial' responses which are in search of validation as the correct answer.
>
> (Mehan, 1979, p.292)

This phenomenon is one that we are familiar with in the traditional teaching method (see chapter 8), and Umesh here is still operating in that mode. It is hard for both students and the teacher to break out of those habits, but in the course of the video lessons, they learn to do so.

9.4.2

Distribution

In the video lessons, the teacher had to distribute task sheets, Section Notes and transcripts. The task sheets were grouped in six sections, depending on the topic they dealt with. At the beginning of each section, the teacher distributed the Notes and got the students to read them so that they knew the areas that the task sheets would cover. One task sheet was distributed each day by the teacher. He also distributed the transcripts of the video extracts and collected them back after the first viewing (or sometimes after two successive viewings).

It may seem to the Western reader that this is not so momentous a happening in the class that it needs reporting. But the traditional lessons did not require the teacher to apply himself to 'housekeeping' activities such as the distribution of task sheets. Mr. Sridhar and Dr. Keval

had to learn the most efficient way of handling the distribution, so that everyone got the papers quickly and without fuss. The very first video lesson, which Dr. Keval took, was hampered by his inability to deal with the distribution of task sheets. There were long and protracted negotiations with the students, determining that they all had the Notes for Section 1 as well as Task Sheet 1. Not only did this take up time, but it may have contributed to Dr. Keval's feeling that he was not quite in control of the class. Similarly, in the first few lessons that Mr. Sridhar taught, he took up time as he went round the class distributing the task sheets. But he soon soon learnt to divide the task sheets and transcripts into eight groups, and ask the group leaders to collect them. Similarly, group leaders returned the transcripts from their group at the end of the first viewing. As the transcripts came back to him, he counted them so as to be sure that no student had purposely kept a transcript to assist in answering the task sheet. On the first two occasions, he did find some students had tried to keep their transcripts, but his counting made it clear which group might not have returned the transcripts. A corollary of these actions seems to have been that the students began to feel that he had control over the class, and hence began to respect him. This is shown in one of the student diaries: 'Sir is very clever in collecting all the transcripts back and so, we have no opportunity to cheat' (Group 3 Diary, 10th September, 1987).

9.4.3

Instructions

In the initial classes, Mr. Sridhar spent time explaining the method of working and giving detailed instructions about what students were to do. As they got used to the task sheets and the new method of working, Mr. Sridhar no longer gave these instructions, assuming that they would know what to do. In the first few lessons, however, instructions like the examples given below were quite common:

> 10.a.
> Teacher:
> Today, you have to do task sheet four. Before doing
> that, you, first of all, you have to know what stereotype
> is.

> (Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)

And a little later, after the class had had an initial discussion on stereotypes:

> 10.b.
> Teacher:
> Now you will see the people. They will not speak. You
> will simply see their face, their manner, their way of
> speaking etcetera. And you come to the conclusion what
> these people look like. OK? This you will do in your
> groups, and I will ask you questions afterwards.

<div align="center">(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)</div>

9.4.4

Perusal

The students studied their task sheets and their Section Notes before the teacher played them

the video extracts, so that they would understand what they were to look for when they

viewed the video materials. The manner in which different groups handled this phase of the

lesson varied enormously. In the beginning, some groups read their task sheets in silence

and did not discuss what they had to view with each other. All the discussion in such

groups came as they were viewing the material or afterwards, in the time allotted to group

discussion. However, with time, and as the groups understood what they had to do, they

often looked at the task sheets and consulted each other about the areas they needed to

observe carefully in the video extracts. In the following example, the group is looking at the

task sheet and deciding what is required. Its members are beginning to realise that they have

to view the extracts and decide who they think is pro-nuclear, who is anti-nuclear and who

is neutral, and base their guesses on their understanding of stereotypes:

> 11.
> Anuj:
> तो मै सब चेहरे पर लिखा है ?
> [So, is all this written on the face?]

> Pankaj:
> हाँ [Yes]. We have to see and guess.

<div align="center">(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)</div>

As for the Section Notes, all the groups discussed them, but the manner in which they did

so seemed again to vary from group to group. Some groups read the Notes in silence, then discussed the issues arising from them (e.g. the group reading Notes for Section 4), while in others one of the students read the notes aloud and the rest followed his or her reading (e.g. the group reading Notes for Section 3). I do not know how the group decided who was to read the passage out aloud. One of them started the reading and the others listened. I do not know whether she was known by the others to be a good reader, or whether she just started to read it loud for no particular reason and the others fell in with it.

The type of discussion that followed from the reading was not very different from the discussions the groups had when they viewed the video extracts. Group members asked each other questions, found out different opinions, modified their own understanding and so on. This aspect is explored in detail in 9.6.

9.5

Viewing Activity

After the Introduction, the students viewed the video extracts, which were played several times for them during the course of the lesson. Before each viewing, there were often exhortations from group members to one another to watch carefully; for example: 'Ishu, we will discuss. So see carefully' (Lesson 37, 2nd September, 1987).

The first time the extract was played, the students normally watched in silence without making very many comments. When they subsequently watched the same extracts, often replayed at their request, they watched for particular aspects of the extracts that they were interested in and commented to each other about them. Here, for example, the students are watching the extracts for a second time to determine whether the characters they see are pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear or neutral. They comment on the characters as they go along:

> 12.
> Anuj:
> Anti. Anti. Tony Roisman is anti. He looks like he is
> going to fight.

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Pankaj:
(Unclear).
(Video extract has moved on to the next person)

Mohan:
Neutral?

Anuj:
No, pro, pro.

(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)

As the pictures were passing quickly by, there was little opportunity at this point for discussion, even though there was disagreement. Later, however, the students did discuss whether this character was neutral or pro-nuclear.

As already mentioned, because of the students' inability to understand the accents on video, they were given transcripts of the extracts they viewed from 3rd September onwards. However, soon after the first viewing (sometimes the second one), the transcripts were collected back from the students because, while Mr. Sridhar was anxious that the students understand what the characters on the tape were saying, he did not want them to use the transcripts as texts.

I had not anticipated the need for a transcript when I developed the video materials. I had hoped that providing 'authentic' material and 'authentic voices' would help the students gain communicative competence. In this, I was influenced by many of the writings on communicative competence as well as writings on using video for language teaching, which recommend that students should be provided not with materials specifically designed for language teaching but with materials that are genuinely used for other purposes. It is argued that this helps students to develop 'genuine' competence in the second language (Widdowson, 1972; Wilkins, 1972; Allwright, 1976; Phillips and Shettlesworth, 1976. See also Chapter 4). It now seems to me that while this may still be a generally sound piece of advice for language teachers, they must take their particular situation into account and provide for it. In India, for example, students are learning English to communicate not so much with Americans or British people as with other Indians. It is therefore not essential

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that they understand 'foreign' accents, though it would be an added bonus if they could. The use of transcripts in this manner by Mr. Sridhar seemed to me to be wholly appropriate, and was also an indication of how teachers can use materials supplied to them in ways the original designers had not anticipated.

The fact that the students could not understand the accents on the video did puzzle me, especially since I had seen a number of them watching English (and American) films in the Bhojpur Club (a club for people who worked in the steel factory) and in the local cinema. They did not seem to have any problems in understanding the story-line in these films, and were happy to chat about them afterwards. In one of my informal discussions with the students, one group explained that even in 'English films' they did not understand all the dialogue, but this was not necessary to follow the story. In the class, however, they had to understand all the words, and relate them to the pictures, in order to complete their task sheets successfully. In this process, they exhibited remarkable confidence in their ability to understand and interpret what they viewed, as Example 3 indicates.

From the teacher's point of view, there was much to learn about handling video materials. Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar were anxious about the equipment, feeling that they did not know how to use it — even switching on the video cassette recorder (hereafter VCR) , stopping, starting and rewinding were all new skills. Finding particular passages to replay was especially difficult. Dr. Keval's anxiety was very obvious, even before we worked together on the video materials. On two occasions in the staffroom, he told me that he hoped I would be able to explain how to work the VCR. I assured him that it would not be difficult but he was obviously not convinced. On the one occasion when he used video in the classroom, he did not succeed in rewinding the tape and finally asked me to help. Although I helped him as discreetly as possible, he may still have felt that he was appearing incompetent in front of his students. These problems may have accounted, at least in part, for his feeling of loss of control in the classroom, and his subsequent refusal to teach the class (see Chapter 7).

Mr. Sridhar too was slow in using the VCR, taking time to find the beginning of extracts he wanted to replay. The students were often restive about this, especially since a number of them use video at home. Both the transcripts and the diaries show their impatience with him — 'Sir, please start fast' (Lesson 41, 9th September, 1987) and 'Sir is very slow in operating VCR' (Group 3 Diary, 11th September, 1987). As time went by, the students stopped making these comments because Mr. Sridhar got better at using the equipment, as my own field notes corroborate. Even in the early stages, though, Mr Sridhar did not seem as perturbed by his apparent lack of skill as Dr. Keval had been. This may have been because, as far as I could judge, he was not so concerned about his image in the eyes of his students, nor was he worried about maintaining strict control in the classroom. Classroom chatter while he worked the VCR was therefore acceptable.

9.6

Group Discussion

One of the most striking aspects of peer group work in Central School, Bhojpur was how quickly the students adapted to working in groups. From the very first day, the groups launched into the questions in the task sheets, discussing them and working collaboratively to arrive at a consensus before they participated in the teacher elicitations towards the end of the lesson. To my mind, this cast doubt on objections that I have often heard expressed informally by teachers in India. Many teachers, including Dr. Keval, argue that allowing pupils to work together in groups is problematic. They fear that students will waste time, never really learn anything and that the level of noise they will make when indulging in 'chit-chat' far outweighs the advantages of group work. My own experience in observing Standard XI students does not corroborate this view. Like other researchers in the area of collaborative learning in small groups (Barnes and Todd, 1977; Phillips, 1985), and more specifically, like researchers studying small group interaction in relation to learning English as a foreign/second language (Long et al, 1976; Gaies, 1983; Doughty and Pica, 1986; Rulon and McCreary, 1986), I found that group work was useful and productive.

Barnes and Todd (1977) argue that when students are working in small groups, when they are problem-solving for example, they are engaged in a number of speech acts which enable them to 'clarify their own understanding, as well as communicating with others'. In this process of group talk, they begin to create a body of knowledge and understanding that is different from and more than the individual knowledge of any one member of the group. 'There is no sense of the regurgitation of inert knowledge. . . or of the retracing of a familiar path; the girls and boys are rearranging their knowledge as they talk, and trying out new combinations and implications' (p.25). The manner in which language is used to communicate ideas helps the group to construct meaning. I suggest that if, in the second language learning situation, one identifies similar features, this is evidence that the group is 'making meaning' by communicating in the second language. To my mind, it is in this process of communicating with each other that the second language students gingerly explore the language they are using to get their ideas across. Of the four functional components that Barnes and Todd use to describe peer group talk (see Chapter 2), I have chosen to focus in this research on the categories of cognitive strategies and social skills. It seems to me that they are most relevant to an understanding of how students communicate with one another, negotiating meanings in order to solve the problem at hand.

Within language teaching, communicative competence is said to be made up of four strands — grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Canale and Swain, 1980; Swain, 1983; see Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion). I have suggested (see Chapter 2) that there is a fifth strand that is relevant in the Indian situation — bilingual competence. I also use these categories to understand and interpret the group discussions taking place. If one were to study talk and identify the characteristics mentioned above, and also show the complex interactions that occur when students communicate with each other in their groups, then one could move towards an understanding of how students develop their abilities in the second language. Obviously, these distinctions and categorisations are for analysis only. The same speech acts and the

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same turns carry in them several of the competencies identified, as also the cognitive and social skills involved in furthering talk to achieve a certain end. The divisions into these various categoriess are therefore to analyse the talk rather than to classify it in fixed terms.

One feature of group discussions which Barnes and Todd mention, and which has struck me forcibly in my own data, is the 'fluid' and 'dynamic quality' of the talk (p.17). Although this makes the talk very exciting and engaging to listen to, it makes the job of analysing it very difficult. Several different things seem to be happening at any one time, and the meanings that are produced, shared, extended and changed all seem ephemeral and elusive. Not only this, the groups seem to construct meaning, not through any one utterance, but from 'cycles of utterances over quite lengthy sections of interaction' (Barnes and Todd, 1977, p.17). One such 'lengthy section' will serve as an initial example. I discuss it in detail below in order to show the complexity of talk. In this example, the group has to fill in blanks about the process of electricity generation using nuclear power (Task Sheet 1, Part 1, Section 3) and then re-order their completed sentences sequentially (Task Sheet 1, Part 2). The students in the group I was watching realised quite soon that the two activities were intimately connected and that it was very difficult to complete one and then move on to do the other. Instead, they chose to move frequently between the two sections in order to understand the production of electricity using nuclear power.

To illustrate this, I shall first analyse the extract line by line, then make some general comments on the exchanges taking place. (It might be useful to refer to Task Sheet 1, which is reproduced in Appendix 4.3.)

14.
1.
Prakash:
Heat is produced by burning coal. Heat is used

2.
Ramesh (interrupting):
Steam is produced by heating water.

3.
Prakash:
हाँ [yes] heat, eh..., steam is produced

4.
Neeraj (interrupting):
Serially.

5.
Prakash:
The turbine is turned by the steam.

6.
Ramesh (simultaneous):
हाँ [yes]

7.
Prakash (continues):
Electricity is produced by the generator.

8.
Ramesh:
Steam is produced by this, eh, by heating water. Generator
is driven by (?) steam (?) elec , eh..., (retracts and goes
back to beginning) Heat is produced by burning coal.

9.
Prakash:
Heat is produced by burning coal. ये, उसमें [This, in
that], Steam is produced by heating water. The generator
is driven by a wheel.

10.
Neeraj and Ramesh (together):
Steam, steam.

11.
Prakash:
Wheel, wheel.

12.
Neeraj:
The generator is driven by a turbine.

13.
Ramesh:
The generator is driven by a circular structure made of
wrought iron.

14.
Prakash:
The generator is driven by a wheel.

15.
Ramesh:
Madam, madam.

16.
Prakash:
Wheel, wheel.

17.
Neeraj:
I think it will be steam. Steam will come here.

18.
Prakash:
No, wheel, wheel. Steam will not come. Steam can't happen.

19.
Ramesh:
I think turbine.

20.
Prakash (answering Neeraj's contribution)
No.

21.
Neeraj (picking up Ramesh's contribution):
Yes, generator is driven by turbine. Yes, it is moved by turbine.

22.
Prakash:
Turbine is, eh...

23.
Ramesh:
Turbine is turned by steam. See, electricity is produced by generator, OK?

24.
Prakash:
OK. First here, the heat is produced by burning coal.

25.
Ramesh:
Look here.

26.
Prakash:
Serially.

27.
Neeraj (simultaneous):
हाँ [yes]

28.
Prakash (continues):
First, heat is produced by burning coal.

29.
Neeraj:
Yes, right.

30.
Ramesh:
Generator is driven by (?)

31.
Prem (who has been quiet all along):
Heat.

32.
Ramesh (ignoring Prem's contribution):
Generator is driven, Generator is driven by

33.
Neeraj (interrupting):
Steam, steam.

34.
Prem (pointing at Task sheet):
Uh, huh, The generator is driven by a steam, a steam
[How is 'a steam' possible?]

(Silence while others consider it)

35.
Ramesh:
Generator is driven by a turbine.

36.
Neeraj:
Ok. Let's write, write it. Next question.

(Lesson 30, 19th August, 1987)

Though the transcript of this episode looks lengthy, the time taken was actually very short and, as is evident, there were several brief turns in quick succession. The group consisted of five students. One, named Ram, made some contributions towards the end of the lesson. He seems to have taken a longer time to get used to group work. Prem made contributions throughout the lesson but he appeared to be naturally quieter than Neeraj, Ramesh and Prakash.

The exchanges start with Prakash filling in a blank, 'heat is produced by burning coal'. He then seems to want to move logically to the next point that coal is used to heat water, but he is interrrupted by Ramesh, who seems to take that step for granted and moves further on to say that steam is produced when water is heated. Prakash then takes the next turn, agreeing with him. In beginning with 'heat is produced by burning coal', and going on to explore the

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next step, both Prakash and Ramesh seem to have accepted tacitly that they will combine the activities of two separate parts of the task sheet (Section 3, Part 1, which lists processes for the production of electricity, but not in the right order, and Part 2, which requires students to write out these processes sequentially). Neeraj is not happy with this strategy and would prefer that the two parts be kept separate. He therefore interjects, 'serially' into the conversation, meaning to say something like, 'let's do the processes first and then go on to put them in order'. The rest of the group seem to accept this as a valid way of working on the task, so Prakash starts off with the beginning of Section 3 Part 1 by reading, 'The turbine is turned by steam' (14.5).

The devising of the strategy whereby the group will first solve Section 3 of Part 1 of the Task sheet and then move on to Part 2 seems to happen almost unconsciously, even as they fill in the blanks. In the course of this conversation, they revise this strategy several times as they work out how to answer the questions. But here (14.4), already they are beginning to control their progress as they work through the task sheet. Neeraj seems to have decided that performing two functions at once is too complicated. He wants to do one first and then the other. The rest of the group, especially Prakash and Ramesh, take this on board and, without conflict, go back and start all over again.

Prakash and Ramesh get through the first three sentences they have to fill when Ramesh gets stuck with the fourth one (14.8). He comes to 'generator is driven by' and wonders aloud if the answer is 'steam'. Before anyone else can say anything, he is about to say 'electricity' meaning that a generator is driven by electricity when he stops short. Maybe he realises that the end result is the production of electricity, so it cannot be the right answer. At any rate, he does not complete his sentence but starts all over again, perhaps so that he can understand the process.

Prakash takes the next turn (14.9) by repeating Ramesh's last sentence, 'heat is produced by burning coal'. The repetition seems to provide the impetus for his own contribution, 'steam

is produced by heating water'. This is the logical next step. Then, it seems to me that he is thinking of what they had seen on the video monitor and he says, 'the generator is driven by a wheel'. Neeraj and Ramesh disagree with him (14.10) but he insists on his own answer (14.11).

What has happened in these turns is that although the group had agreed to work out Section 3, Part 1 first and then do Part 2, they realise that the two are inseparable. They must work on the blanks, not in the order they are presented but in the order in which the process of electricity generation actually happens. The group has therefore changed its strategy and its way of handling the task.

Neeraj and Ramesh both seem to re-think their own answers, and each of them individually arrives at an answer that seems to have been sparked off by Prakash's insistence on 'wheel'. Neeraj thinks that the generator is driven by a turbine (14.12) — he seems to be supplying an alternative and more appropriate word for the wheel that Prakash talks of. Ramesh, on the other hand, seems to try to explain what they had seen on the video screen when he says, 'the generator is driven by a circular structure made of wrought iron' (14.13). However, Prakash is reluctant to give up his answer, that the generator is driven by a wheel.

It seems to me that Ramesh, in trying to attract my attention (14.15) could be doing one or both of two things — appealing to what he might have seen as authority, or at any rate to someone who knew the answer; and/or trying to defuse a difficult situation where it looked as if Prakash would not budge from his answer, 'wheel', an answer that neither Ramesh nor Neeraj was willing to accept. I had my headphones on and pretended not to have heard what was going on. They were therefore thrown back on their resources and had to negotiate the answers for themselves. Such appeals for help happened only in the first week of the use of video — perhaps the students, becoming used to the new ways of working, no longer thought automatically of appealing to authority; or perhaps they simply stopped appealing to me when they realised that I would be unco-operative.

What happens in the next five exchanges is very interesting. Neeraj goes back to an older idea that he and Ramesh had, that a generator is driven by steam (14.17) but Ramesh has had time to consider an answer that Neeraj had supplied — that the generator is driven by a turbine. Neeraj confirms this answer and agrees with Ramesh.

Prakash still seems reluctant to accept any of these exchanges and goes back to the Task sheet to start all over again from the top of Section 3, Part 1 (14.22). Ramesh interrupts Prakash and takes charge of the situation. It is almost as if everything has fallen into place in Ramesh's mind. Markers like, 'see', and 'OK?' make Ramesh sound as if he knows what he is talking about.

Although Prakash agrees with him, he has started off on a different path of enquiry. He has gone back to trying to work out the process sequentially. Hence, the words, 'First, here, the heat is produced by burning coal' (14.24). The 'first, here', seems to indicate a change in direction. But Ramesh does not want to do what Prakash is suggesting. Instead he seems to want to work through Section 3, Part 1 and then re-arrange the sentences in order. Although he is momentarily over-ruled by Prakash and Neeraj (14.26-14.29), he comes back with the sentence that is bothering him — the generator is driven by? (14.30). Then Prem makes his first contribution (14.31) which Ramesh totally ignores as he pursues his own thought (14.32). Neeraj, who seems to have veered throughout the discussion between whether a generator is driven by steam or by a turbine tries 'steam' again (14.33). Then Prem, who has been studying the task sheet carefully makes his second and more valuable contribution. He shifts the focus of discussion to the structure of the language in the task sheet, pointing out the presence of the indefinite article in the sentence, 'The generator is driven by a _____ ' (14.34).

The rest of the conversation is an affirmation that the group concludes that the generator is driven by a turbine. Ramesh and Neeraj at various points of the conversation had thought

that the generator was driven by a turbine and this was not very far from Prakash's answer, 'wheel'. So, when Prem points out that it has to be 'a something', it seems to clinch the issue and the group comes to the conclusion that the generator is indeed turned by a turbine.

From the above discussion it is clear that the manner in which students negotiate their task sheet and make sense of the questions asked is not at all simple. Barnes and Todd point out that even 'constructing the question' is one of the cognitive strategies that groups evolve. They warn that:

> it would be a mistake to think that when the set task, typed
> on cards, has been put into the hands of the boys and the
> girls in a group that they yet know 'what the question is'.
> To turn the typed words into something which can be
> answered it is necessary for members of the group to
> 'construct the question', by using what they already know
> to make sense of it .

<div align="right">(Barnes and Todd, 1977, p.50)</div>

In the above interaction, the students seem to be 'constructing the question' in a way that will help them answer it. In constantly moving between Part 1, Section 3 and Part 2 of the task sheet, the students are re-ordering the sequence in which they answer the questions because it enables them to make sense of the task at hand. The very fact that they have taken control of the manner in which they answer the task sheet implies that they have taken control of their learning in a way that was not possible in the traditional lessons.

Barnes and Todd suggest that, 'in lessons, pupils turn to the teacher for authoritative help; by withdrawing, the teacher throws responsibility back upon the pupils, who therefore tend to make use of any available resources, both those in their own memories and those on the desk before them' (1977, p.81). This is borne out by my experience in Bhojpur. In working on the task sheet, the group members seem to bring to the task knowledge from many different directions. They fall back on their own scientific knowledge of the production of electricity (they are all Science students and a number of them have pointed out in their diaries that they had studied the generation of electricity in broad terms); they use

the video extracts they have seen (Prakash's answer 'wheel' as well Ramesh's 'a circular structure made of wrought iron' are based very closely on the visual representation of a turbine); and finally bring in their knowledge of English grammar (Prem's contribution, 'how is a steam possible?') to answer the questions at hand.

Example 14 could be considered not just in terms of how students negotiate meaning cognitively but also in terms of the social skills they employ in dealing with each other. For example, in 14.4 when Neeraj interrupts to say, 'serially', his interruption is tacitly accepted. Prakash and Ramesh try to follow his suggestion even though they find it difficult to do so and abandon it later. Even where the students openly disagree with each other (as in 14.9-14.14), they try to come to an agreement without any major ructions. In this context, Ramesh's use of 'madam, madam' (as I have already suggested) could be seen partly as an appeal to his group mates to come to an amicable decision. The fact that I did not answer forced them to negotiate with each other and resolve their differences. It is remarkable how the students skirted around each other's contributions, avoiding too direct a conflict but disagreeing amicably with each other till they arrived at an answer.

Thus it is obvious even at this early stage that group work provides students with the opportunity to use a variety of cognitive strategies and social skills to solve problems. What was particularly remarkable was the sophistication with which they negotiated the task sheets. This first example (14) relates to a task sheet which was factual, and the students could look for one correct answer. With time, the tasks became more and more open ended, and the discussions were often quite lengthy before the students in a group agreed on what to write down.

In the next sections I shall consider some of the cognitive strategies students employ while working through their task sheets; the social skills they need to work in groups; and the manner in which they seem to develop communicative competence in English. Finally, I shall discuss bilingualism, a crucial feature of using English language in India.

9.6.1

Cognitive Strategies

Barnes and Todd point out that cognitive strategies and social skills are very closely knitted in actual utterances, for 'cognitive strategies are carried out by means of social skills and social skills are identified by their contribution to cognitive strategies' (1977, p.22). They have been separated here for analysis only. The cognitive strategies that Barnes and Todd identify include 'constructing a meaning for a set question, inventing a problem where none was set, setting up hypotheses, using evidence, and recreating experience' (ibid., pp.22-23). These are all strategies that I observed in the group work in Bhojpur. Example 14 is a clear instance of 'constructing the meaning for a set question'. The students have to understand the task sheet, create their own paths of negotiation through it, adjust to each other's views about it, and tentatively construct meanings for the questions they are asked.

The students in Central School, Bhojpur were genuinely interested in the tasks they had to perform. In the process, they often asked questions of each other that had been neither set in the task sheets nor asked by the teacher. For example, while discussing the Lake District, the students in the group I was watching decided to recollect the names of two of Wordsworth's poems and some lines from 'The Solitary Reaper'.

A more extended instance shows the students discussing the arguments that pro-nuclear and anti-nuclear people might advance about the retention of nuclear power plants. As they talked about it, they decided to discuss what would happen if a terrorist attacked a nuclear power plant:

> 15.
> Arvind:
> No, they seem safe in the beginning. Only later, there may
> be some problems.
>
> Subodh:
> अच्छा , चलो ।
> [OK let's carry on].

Arvind:
अगर गुण्डा लोग attack करे तो ?
[What if it is attacked by thugs?]

Janak:
When you have terrorist attack.

Mahendra (playing with his wrist and the word):
Terror-wrist.

Arvind:
Risk, risk.

Janak:
No, terror-rist.

Mahendra:
Risk नहीं, rist.
[Not 'risk' but 'rist']

Janak (saying the word all together):
Terrorist

Arvind:
Terror and rist.

Janak (repeating himself):
Terrorist.

Arvind:
Rist, rist.

Janak:
No, terror and ist. Terrorist.

Mahendra (repeats Janak):
Terrorist.

Arvind (reverting to his previous thought):
Terror risk.

Janak:
Risk नहीं rist.
[Not 'risk', 'rist']

Mahendra:
Risk not. Terror and rist.

Janak:
No, not terror and rist but terror and ist. So terrorist.

Mahendra:
So the word is terrorist then.

Janak:
Yes

Mahendra:

अगर PWR में Terrorist attack हो जाय तो, मार ?

[What if a PWR is attacked by a terrorist, mate?]

Janak:

That will be very bad. They must protect it well.

Arvind:

OK, what we'll write on the next one?

(Lesson 35, 26th August, 1987)

In this instance, the students set up a different question and decided to explore the word 'terrorist' and its roots. These were questions the group asked of itself without being prompted by either the teacher or the task sheets. It seems to me that group discussions are a very valuable way for students to explore their own thoughts and set up their own questions without being restricted by either the teacher or the text (see 9.6.3 for further analysis of the 'terrorist' episode).

In dealing with the task sheets collaboratively, groups often formulate their answers, not because of a single person's contributions but collectively. Sometimes, in fact, even a single sentence is not authored by one person alone but it is arrived at through discussion and negotiation as the following example indicates:

16.
1.
Manjula:
A large amount of heat is produced in reactor core, and to
... eh ...

2.
Prema:
and water is

3.
Prema and Manjula (together):
needed to

4.
Manjula:
cool the discharged heat?

5.
Yashoda:
No, cool eh ...

6.
Prema:
Cool what?

7.
Manjula:
cool the discharged heat.

8.
Prema:
No, cool the reactor core. We have seen in, in second
video, the second one, the second part.

9.
Yashoda:
To cool the reactor core. (Reads as she writes) A large
amount of heat is produced in reactor core, and water is
needed to cool it.

10.
Prema:
Yes, and it's also used to produce steam.

(Lesson 35, 26th August, 1987)

In Example 16, it takes these girls nine turns to make one sentence together. They extend

each other's contributions (16.3-16,4), help each other to find the right words (16.2-16.3),

check that the group agrees with their answers (16.4), offer alternative suggestions and

reasons for these suggestions (16.8), and finally, agree on an answer (16.9) before moving

on (16.10).

Prema's question, 'cool what?' in the above example (16.6) may sound like the sort of

question that Dr. Keval asked in the traditional classes (see Chapter 8). However, although

the questions have the same form, they are very different in meaning and intention. Dr.

Keval would use the 'cool what?' type of question as a filler, knowing the words he was

going to use to complete his sentence, and not really expecting students to answer. Here, though, neither Prema herself nor any of her group mates genuinely knows the answer with any certainty at this point. Manjula tries her own previous answer again but this is rejected by Prema (16.7-16.8), who draws upon the video sequence as evidence to support her own answer. This is accepted by the group and Yashoda checks the answer with the rest of the group as she writes it down, reformulating their answer by substituting the pronoun, 'it' for the reactor core (16.9). They then move on to find yet another use for water in nuclear reactors.

In answering the task sheets the students often set up specific hypotheses which they test, and then either accept their hypotheses or modify them in some way. In yet another 'cycle of utterances', the students in this group start off with the hypothesis that pro-nuclear poeple are smartly dressed, anti-nuclear people sloppy and neutral people dressed 'simply'. But as they talk more about it and after viewing the video a second time, they seem to modify their ideas slightly:

17.
Anuj:
सब बूढ़े anti हैं ।
[All the oldies are anti.]

Anjan:
और smart लोग convince करने में लगा हैं ,
so pro होगा ।
[And all the smart people look like they are trying to
convince you of something. So they must be pro.]

Asutosh:
ठीक है यार Look at him.अरे पूरा Pro. लगता हैं ।
[OK, look at him. He looks absolutely pro, mate.]

Anjan:
OK write pro.
                    (Lesson 35, 26th August, 1987)

To me it seems that when Anjan makes his contribution about pro-nuclear people, he is almost trying to say that they appear to be doing a smart selling job. Later in their discussion, this gets picked up again and the students refine their ideas still further:

18.
Anjan:
ऐ Pro बाला कहानी लिख रहा है,
anti बाला गाली दे रहा है,
neutral कुछ भी नहीं बोल रहा है ।

[Eh, the pro people are telling tales, the anti people are cursing and the neutral people aren't saying anything.]

(Laughter)

Asutosh:
हाँ [Yes] This is the condition of life.

(Lesson 35, 26th August, 1987)

It seems clear to me that the students develop their hypotheses, about what pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear and neutral people look like, as they view the video and as they talk to each other about what they are seeing. They often build on each other's ideas and use them to determine whether they think someone is pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear or neutral. The manner in which these students decided why they thought of someone as pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear or neutral was far more complicated than I, as the materials designer, had envisaged.

Despite the fact that the students thought that smart people looked pro-nuclear, they did not automatically assign all those who looked smart in their eyes to being pro-nuclear. Here is an example:

19.
Anjan:
But they are very smart reporters. Very smart English dress. Indian reporters don't look so smart, है ना ?
[isn't that so?]

Mahesh:
हाँ ।
(Yes)

Asutosh (Looking into what Anuj has written):
क्या लिखा है, हमको बोलो ।
What have you written, tell me.

Anuj:
Pro-nuclear.

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Anjan:
नहीं, अभय, ये-Neutral हैं ।
[No, mate, they are neutral.]

Asutosh:
हाँ [Yes], They collect news impartially. Therefore
neutral.

<div align="center">(Lesson 35, 26th August, 1987)</div>

In the above exchanges, it seems to me that in the eyes of the other members of the group, Anuj is being simplistic in thinking that since they have decided that the reporters are smartly dressed, they must be pro-nuclear. Possibly he has slightly misunderstood the nature of the conversation where they discuss how foreign reporters look smart while Indian ones do not do so. Anjan, Mahesh and Asutosh seem to be discussing their clothes out of intellectual curiosity about another culture, rather than anything else. But Anuj infers differently. He is stopped by Asutosh who clarifies that seeing these people as reporters and, hence, impartial is more important than classifying them as smart and therefore pro-nuclear. The short-hand manner in which Asutosh's contribution comes at the end ('Therefore neutral') is very reminiscent of scientific discourse where the students do experiments, make observations and deduce inferences from them. It is almost as if they have made the observation that the people they have seen are reporters whose job is to collect news impartially, therefore they must be neutral. No argument is possible after this and the group passes on to look at the next person.

The same group's talk could be further explored to see how they use evidence and extrapolate from it. The following conversation takes place near the beginning of the lesson, when the class as a whole has discussed how to stereotype pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear and neutral people. The students have just started to discuss the issues in their own groups:

20.
Anjan (Pointing to Anuj and then to Mahesh):
वो Pronuclear है, ये antinuclear.
[He is pro-nuclear and he is anti-nuclear.]

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Asutosh:

क्या चेहरे में लिखा है ?

[So is all this written on the face?]

Mahesh (looking at Anuj):

चेहरे में लिखा है smartness.

[On his face, smartness is written.]
Smartness is written on his face.

Asutosh (Challenging Anjan):

तो हमको देखकर बोलो ना ।

[So look at me and say what you think I am.]

Anjan:

तुमको देखकर? [Look at you?] तुम तो Neutral आदमी है ।

[You look neutral to me.]

(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)

Here, they use the ideas that the class has discussed and apply them to each other. Mahesh does not seem to mind that he is considered un-smart (by way of dress) and that Anuj is thought of as smartly dressed. When Asutosh challenges Anjan to stereotype him, the underlying implication seems to be, 'tell me whether you think I am smartly dressed or not'. However, Anjan backs off from the discussion and says that he thinks Asutosh looks neutral. Thus, a possible challenge and conflict gets diverted and the students return to the tasks at hand.

9.6.2

Social Skills

When the students worked together in their groups, they necessarily had to employ several social skills in order to complete the task sheets. 'Amongst the requirements for coherent and productive problem-solving', argue Barnes and Todd (1977), ' are the ability to control the group's progress through the task, the management of competition and conflict, and the giving of mutual support'.

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In the classes I observed, the groups often took time off the task sheet by discussing things

arising out of the task sheets but not directly relevant to the actual tasks at hand. In such

instances, time and time again, one or the other member brought the group back to the task

sheets, either by reading aloud the next question or, more frequently, by asking what was to

be written down. Here, for example, the group is discussing whether nuclear power plants

are viable because, on the one hand, they promise an immense supply of energy from a very

small amount of mineral, but on the other hand, they are inherently unsafe. The group has

already written down the pro-nuclear arguments which deal with the hazards of radiation and

they are to write the anti-nuclear argument about them:

21.
1.
Umesh:
It might be smart but it may not be safe.

2.
Udhas:
It may have accidents.

3.
Manohar:
हाँ, [Yes], so thermal power plant is better.

4.
Neeraj:
That is also designed like this. But a nuclear power plant is
more exciting. I am going to make a nuclear power plant.

5.
Umesh:
यहाँ क्या लिखें ?
[What shall we write here?]

6.
Neeraj (Accepting to go back to Task sheet):
OK, let's write It may not be safe because it can have
accidents.

(Lesson 37, 2nd September 1987)

In the above example a number of social skills are employed to keep the conversation going

in order to arrive at one of the anti-nuclear arguments. Umesh starts by summarising a

lengthy discussion the group has had by saying, 'It might be smart but it may not be safe'

(21.1). Udhas acknowledges this and extends Umesh's statement further by mentioning the

possibility of accidents (21.2) and Manohar (21.3) tacitly concurs with them. He adds his own extension by thinking of other ways of producing electricity that are perhaps safer than nuclear power. In doing so, he has slightly shifted the focus of discussion to take into account alternatives to nuclear power. Neeraj joins in and seems to be arguing for nuclear power because it is 'more exciting'. Umesh seems to sense that the conversation is moving away from the task sheet (especially as Neeraj has brought in a personal and perhaps flippant note). He therefore brings the conversation back by asking, 'What shall we write here?' (21.5). It is then Neeraj's turn to acknowledge that the discussion had moved away from the task sheet. In supplying an answer to the question on the task sheet, he is recognising the anti-nuclear argument, even though he himself feels pro-nuclear despite arguments about safety.

The students thus contribute to the discussion by summarising, extending and qualifying each other's remarks. The groups also have the task of determining the boundaries of talk that may arise out of their task sheets but which may not be directly relevant to completing the tasks on hand. They decide how far they will allow such talk to continue before returning to the set tasks, thereby controlling their own learning in a way that was not possible in the traditional lessons. The only person who was allowed (and indeed expected) to divert from the given text in the traditional lessons was the teacher and the students were expected to fall in line with his teaching style. Here, however, the students seem to have more control over their learning situation.

The students also decide how much time they want to spend on any one question in the task sheet. In the following example, this group is discussing the importance of the Lake District for siting nuclear power plants:

> 22.
> Manjula (reading question from section notes):
> Why would the Lake District be particularly useful?
>
> Prema:
> Because water is available?

Yashoda:
Yes, OK.

Saraswati:
Then next question, how far from the Lake District are
major metropolitan areas?

Manjula:
Here's the scale.

(Lesson 38, 3rd September 1987)

These girls find the question about the usefulness of the Lake District as a site for nuclear power plants unproblematic. Despite that, Prema offers her answer tentatively and it is immediately accepted by the group. The group then moves on to the next question on which they proceeded to spend a considerable amount of time. The students measured the distance between places using a ruler and then converted the measurement into kilometres using the scale given on the map. They then cross-checked their answers with each other and found a discrepancy of twenty kilometres in their answers. They then used a pair of dividers to measure the distance more exactly; then they converted it again into kilometres.

As the person who designed the materials, I had expected the students to pass over this question quickly saying that the Lake District was remote from the populous metropolitan areas. (The previous 'why' question had seemed to me to offer more opportunity for discussion and argument.) But all the groups seem to have taken time to measure the distance. This interest in accuracy of measurement and in corroborating their answers may well have something to do with the experimental rigour that these science students are taught to follow in the labs. It was also interesting to see a cultural difference arising in the class discussions later. The students had measured a distance of one hundred and seventy kilometres between the Lake District and major metropolitan areas like London. They did not think that this would make the Lake District remote. In India, of course, this is not a great distance at all. I was challenged about this, both by the students and the teacher, and, as the materials designer, I felt I owed them an explanation. I explained sheepishly that although we, in India, do not consider one hundred and seventy kilometres to be a great distance, the Lake District is certainly considered to be quite far away from the South in

England. This incident, though, caused a great deal of discussion and collaboration, not only within the group, but also across groups and in the class discussions later.

In Central School, Bhojpur there did not seem to be much conflict that the groups had to cope with. Even where there were disagreements (as in Examples 14 and 16), the students reasoned together about the tasks and ironed out their differences. There were often conciliatory moves (Example 21) when one student's contributions may have sounded like a gentle reprimand. Even in areas of potential conflict (Example 20) the students either humour each other or make conciliatory remarks, thus warding it off.

One reason why there was not much conflict in the groups may be because the members of each group knew each other very well. They were good friends, often solving physics and mathematical problems together, as well as doing science experiments together. It may therefore be that they knew each other well enough to not tread on each other's toes.

A second reason may have been the presence of the tape recorder or indeed my presence as I watched them working in their groups. I would be inclined to discount the latter explanations because the students slowly got used to both the tape recorder and to me (and indeed, they even seem to have stopped noticing my presence).

It seems more likely that students avoided conflict by often supplying reasons for their disagreements (Example 16). The fact that they considered what each of them had to say and took it seriously and the fact that they were all engaged in solving the task sheets together may have contributed to the lack of conflict. One other factor that may have contributed quite strongly was that these task sheets and this method of working were not examination oriented and would in no way pit one student against another. Once they were assured of a non-competitive environment, they may have felt more confident about working collaboratively.

One aspect of students' group discussions that surprised me greatly was the manner in which they took turns. In British society, when two people bid for a turn simultaneously, one of them gives way to the other person so that people, by and large, speak one at a time. It is considered fairly rude to carry on talking while someone else is speaking. In many Indian societies, however, when several people may bid for a turn, it is quite acceptable for all of them to proceed to complete their sentences, without relinquishing their turn to speak. So one can often find several people speaking at the same time. In the data I gathered I had expected to hear a substantial number of simultaneous turns taken by several members of a group and for all of them to complete what they were saying. In the event, the example below turned out to be more the exception than the rule:

> 23.
> Saraswati:
> Why is she concerned about nuclear power? Because she
> has got a child.
>
> Yashoda (answering simultaneously):
> Because she is an objector of nuclear power.
>
> Shweta (joining in, without waiting for either Saraswati or
> Yashoda to complete their turns):
> She has a, she has eh..., joined or come to the public
> enquiry office as an objector.
> उभी लिय ना, कशा होगा?
> [For that reason, isn't it? What will it be?]

> (Lesson 37, 2nd September 1987)

There might be several reasons for this. One may be that the students are conscious that they are working in <u>English</u> and that the rules for turn-taking in English are slightly different from those in other Indian languages. I find this explanation unlikely because, while it is true that Western varieties of English do conform to the rules of turn-taking where a person relinquishes a turn because someone else has bid for it, Indian varieties of English often do not follow these rules. There are many occasions when an Indian speaking in English (especially to other Indians) will complete his or her speech act even if there are other people speaking, who, in their turns, will also complete their own speech acts (much as in Example 23).

A second possible explanation is that these students are using the English language, a language that they do not find as familiar as their own mother tongue or Hindi (which may or may not be their mother tongue) for long lengths of time. They are not used to operating in this second language and are therefore, hesitant. This hesitation may stop them from taking simultaneous turns.

A third reason may, of course, be that they are being observed, but again I find this hard to believe because this has emerged as a pattern even in the informal interviews I recorded with the students.

9.6.3
Communicative competence

As has already been pointed out in Chapter 2, most studies of the development of communicative competence in classrooms have been quantitative. They have tended to compare classes where the aim was to teach English using theories of communicative competence with control groups where more 'traditional' methods of teaching have been employed (for example Savignon, 1972; Harley and Swain, 1978). Typically, the two groups are tested for their language ability at the end of the programmes and the results compared. My own interest is more in the process of acquiring communicative competence, especially in an Indian second language situation. Hence, what seems more appropriate is a study of the language that students use as they use it rather than quantitative studies that compare two sets of results. It also seems inappropriate at this early stage of studying classroom interactions in India to quantify talk in terms of the various competencies developed, as researchers like Long et al (1976), Doughty and Pica (1986) and Allwright (1976) have done. My interest lies in studying the manner in which students employ the English language and use it communicatively, thereby learning it.

Just as pupils' talk in groups can be understood in terms of cognitive strategies that they use in problem solving or social skills they employ when working together in groups, one can

study <u>the same talk</u> in terms of the communicative competence developed. This will be discussed under five headings — grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and (particularly important for India, as I have argued) bilingual competence.

Grammatical competence can be analysed in terms of the phonological, morphological and syntactical abilities the students develop in their communication with each other. At the level of phonology, there were a few instances in this study when students did not know how to pronounce a word. For example, some students mispronounced 'Cumbria'. The teacher corrected this and gave the standard pronunciation. (Lesson 37, Task Sheet 5). Within the groups, students helped each other with the pronunciation of words and their meaning:

> 24.
> Yashoda (reading):
> Me-tro -
>
> Manjula (helps Yashoda along):
> Po -li-tan.
>
> Prema (pronounces it for them and then explains it):
> Metropolitan महानगर [means] big cities.

(Lesson 37, 2nd September 1987)

I also saw students using a dictionary to look up such words as 'reassurance'. This would have been unthinkable in the traditional lessons because they felt that using a dictionary would be an affront to the knowledge of the teacher (see Chapter 6). They may have felt less shy to use the dictionary in Mr. Sridhar's classes as a result of the new teaching method: they learnt to consider the teacher more as a facilitator than as a repository of all knowledge. Besides, I had begun to insist on their using a dictionary in the classes I took in the morning (see Chapters 6 and 7), and this may have encouraged the students to use it in Mr. Sridhar's classes too.

One of the more delightful observations in studying group discussions was the number of times students played with words, their roots and their functions. The 'terror-ist' example is

just one of several (Example 15). What is particularly striking about this is that the manner in which students approached words and used them changed dramatically from the transmission mode. In the earlier teaching practice, words played an important part in that asking the teacher the meaning of certain words was a permissible turn that students could take (Chapter 8). Perhaps in asking the meaning of a word, the students were in part indicating to the teacher their keenness as learners.

In the video-led lesson, however, the way the groups used words had an entirely different quality. In playing with the word 'terrorist' and in trying to understand how it is put together, the students are engaged in a language learning activity reminiscent of young children playing with words attempting to learn their mother tongue, in ways extensively researched and documented in first language acquisition/ child language acquisition studies (Brown, 1973).

At the level of syntax the students corrected each other's sentences and even re-formulated them to make them grammatically correct. Typically, they commented on and corrected mistakes in subject-verb agreement, the use of prepositions and tenses. Here, for example, the students are discussing Sam Lovejoy, after they have discovered that he was anti-nuclear:

> 25.
> Neeraj:
> I will have said even earlier that he is anti-nuclear.
>
> Ramesh:
> But that's right. I would have said, I would have.
> Understand?
>
> Prakash:
> Silly technical language, what a twisting language.
>
> Neeraj:
> OK, I would have.

> (Lesson 36, 1st September 1987)

Although the students corrected each other's language, Prakash seems impatient with the

group and wants to carry on the discussion at the level of ideas. It is difficult to know whether he really thinks that English has silly rules, or whether he is more interested in the ideas than in the language used to convey them.

Often, groups failed to take into account the use of definite and indefinite articles (although there are exceptions to this, as in Example 14). So sentences like, 'He is giving speech in meeting' (Task Sheet 4) were not uncommon. While this is not accepted as Standard English even in India, it is recognisable as a dialectal variety. This variety has probably arisen because of language interference from other Indian languages which do not make use of articles. These 'mistakes' were generally not picked up in the groups, nor did the teacher correct them in general class discussions.

When the students had decided on an answer it generally fell to the group leader to formulate the answer and write it on the task sheet. In some groups, the others copied the words written by the group leader. Elsewhere, all the students wrote their own answers even though they collaborated on the task. In Example 16, Yashoda summarises and re-formulates her group's answer by saying, 'A large amount of water is needed to cool it' (16.9). Here, she has substituted the second 'reactor core' with the pronoun, 'it'. This is accepted by everybody in the group and the discussion then continues.

Strategic competence is the ability to use either verbal or non-verbal strategies to compensate for a breakdown in communication or for enhancing the effectiveness of the speech act. Hesitation fillers, repair strategies where one re-starts a sentence that is not moving in quite the direction one wants it to, 'catch-all words' like 'thingummy' and 'whatsitsname' are strategies that most effective users of a language employ (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). While the students did use hesitation fillers like 'um...' and 'eh...' and did re-start their sentences midway, they hardly ever used 'catch-all' phrases. (Many of the examples quoted in this chapter have instances of hesitation fillers and repair strategies.) Maybe the students think of English as a more formal language than either Hindi or their mother-tongue, and so

consider the use of such words slangy and inappropriate. Alternatively, they may not have such words in their repertoire, being unaware of them.

Discourse competence is the ability to use language in different genres. The students in this class had to operate mainly in two genres — an informal one when they discussed issues amongst themselves and a more formal one when they wrote their answers down. They were also more formal with the teacher, generally answering in complete sentences rather than using more colloquial forms. For example, it was quite common for groups to say, 'he's anti-nuclear' or 'he's pro-nuclear' but to write it down as 'he is'. When they conveyed their ideas to the teacher in front of the whole class, the language tended to be even more formal, sometimes almost pompous as when one student says, 'In the esteemed opinion of our group, this man is pro-nuclear. He is pro-nuclear' (Task sheet 4).

There were several occasions when pupils seemed to transfer a scientific discourse into non-scientific areas. For example, when Anjan asked Mahesh what he had written under news reporters, the reply was: 'Collect news impartially, therefore neutral' (Task sheet 4). This is almost like the short-hand used in Chemistry — 'flame extinguishes, therefore carbon-dioxide'. They did not seem aware of this type of discourse transfer. Though it sounds odd to me listening to it, the students did not seem perturbed by this type of discourse transfer; nor did they seem particularly aware of it.

It was not that they were unaware of other types of discourse. Indeed, they seemed to be more aware of different genres and different types of discourse than was apparent in the traditional lessons. At times, they were also aware that they were playing with different genres and transferring items from one to the other. In the group I observed on 22nd August 1987, the students were conscious of being taped. One of them made use of this by pretending to be a cricket commentator in front of a microphone. This particular group had been cricket crazy and they had nick-named one of their members Kapil Dev, after the famous Indian all-rounder. So Devan took advantage of their situation and said:

26.
Devan (in a cricket commentator's voice):
Yes, Kapil Dev, what do you say about your bowling
analysis? Kapil Dev, when an atom is bombarded in a
nuclear reactor, how many runs does it make? And how do
you control chain reaction?

'Kapil Dev' (replies in a similar posh accent):
I don't know. But you want to waste tape.

(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)

'Kapil Dev' seemed more shy of the tape recorder than the expansive Devan, or perhaps he

was not so spontaneously imaginative. Nonetheless, he too played along with Devan in his

little game, at least to the extent of modifying his accent. In a later exercise when students

were asked to write a newspaper report, most of them managed to write in that genre,

although some had to be prompted and helped by the teacher.

Sociolinguistic competence is quite close to discourse competence. Often, one cannot have

the ability to conduct conversations in a particular genre without being aware of the

appropriateness of context. In the last example, for instance, it would have been difficult for

Devan and 'Kapil Dev' to have had that conversation had the teacher been present.

In the students' own conversations with each other, social niceties like 'please' and 'thank

you' were non-existent. While this may be thought of as a lack of sociolinguistic

competence in English (many studies from Widdowson (1978) onwards on communicative

competence stress the need to teach non-native speakers to use the second language in such a

way that they do not appear rude), in the Indian context this is perfectly acceptable. 'Give

me the pencil' said with a smile has the same impact in India as saying, 'Pass me the pencil,

please'. This is because in most Indian languages, words like 'please' and 'thank you' do

not exist. Instead, either a polite form or an affectionate term is used. The use of 'please' or

'thank you' in English to people one knows well could even be considered hostile or

insulting. It could be understood as implying that the person addressed is not a close friend,

but stands in a more distant relationship. I was not surprised, therefore, by the absence of

such politeness markers in the students' talk.

The students were acutely aware of such factors as status, role and social convention. I was conscious of this from my very first day among them. When the teachers were using the traditional method, most conversations among the students were in Hindi: it functioned as a peer language. At the time, this led me to wonder whether students would use the English language at all when they were put in groups. Would there be peer group pressure to speak in Hindi most of the time? In the event, they used both English and Hindi in group work, moving from one to the other with great skill and sophistication (see 9.6.4).

When students spoke to the teacher in the video lessons, they used mainly English. Only occasionally did they speak a sentence of Hindi to the teacher. But in the traditional method, the use of Hindi especially to the teacher was widespread and seemed to mark deference to him (see Chapter 8).

9.6.4

Bilingual Competence

As I explained in Chapter 2, bilingualism involves not just fluency in two languages but also an intimate understanding of how both languages work. It is not just switching between them but also knowing <u>when</u> and <u>how</u> to make the switch. On a simple level one could borrow a word from one language and use it in the other language, as when Arvind says,
' अगर उसको लोग attack करे तो ?'[what if thugs attack it] and later on when
Mahendra returns to the same question, saying, ' अबे, अगर PWR में terrorist attack
होता जाए तो ?' [what if a PWR is attacked by a terrorist, mate?] (Example 15).

In the two instances quoted above, Arvind's borrowing is slightly different in kind from that of Mahendra. Often, there are no words for scientific terms in Indian languages (or the words are very obscure). Instead, people just borrow the word from English. Mahendra's use of the word, 'PWR' falls into this category. His other borrowing, 'terrorist attack', is closer to Arvind's borrowing of the word, 'terrorist'. Arvind could have used the word,
' हमला ' for attack and similarly Mahendra could have used ' आतंकवादी ' or

the more colloquial ' ⟨जबरदस्ती⟩ 'for 'terrorist attack'. Nevertheless, they did not do so. What is it in people's language repertory that makes them choose one word in preference to another? Gumperz (1982) and Romaine (1989) suggest that a bilingual speaker's language repertory cannot easily be compartmentalised rigidly into English speech, Hindi speech and so on. To take this argument further, I suggest that bilingual speakers have one wide-ranging repertory and, in certain circumstances, when they are looking for a word, they find it without necessarily thinking of the language in which it is spoken. After all, their audience understands both languages and it is more important to communicate meaning rather than worry about the language used to express it. It is only when a bilingual person has a specific reason to use only one language (as in writing the English examination, say, or in speaking to a monolingual English speaker) that a conscious effort is made to use only one language.

When the students used a Hindi word within a predominantly English speech act, the most common ones were ' हाँ' for 'yes' (said with a falling intonation) and ' हाँ ?' (the same sound but said with a rising intonation) for 'what?' By and large, when students used ' हाँ' [yes], they were agreeing with the previous speaker's point of view. They then went on to make their own contribution to the conversation in English (for instance, Examples 18, 19, 21.3). The ' हाँ ' (yes) therefore seems to function almost as phatic communication, and in Poplack's terms is a tag (Poplack, 1980).

Why do people who know two languages switch from one to another? Is it arbitrary or are there reasons for switching between them? Might there even be definite rules governing when and where switching is permitted or forbidden? It seems to me that at least some of the switching does seem quite arbitrary, as the following examples suggest:

24. (repeated here for ease of reference):

Yashoda (reading):
Me-tro -

Manjula (helps Yashoda along):
Po-li-tan.

Prema:
Metropolitan मेट्रोपेलिटन [means] big cities.

27.

Prema (reading aloud):
It is distant and remote from the populous

Manjula (interrupting):
Populous means?

Prema:
Populous का meaning है बहुत लोग ।
([Populous means lots of people]) (then continues reading)
Remote from the populous, prosperous South of England.

In the two instances above, Prema chooses in Example 24 to use the Hindi word for 'means', although the explanation for 'metropolitan' is in English, but the reverse is true for 27 — she uses the English word 'meaning' and explains the word 'populous' in Hindi. It is difficult to know why in apparently exactly similar circumstances, she chose to use English and Hindi in exactly opposite ways. This type of switching supports my thesis that bilinguals have a single repertory from which they use whichever words first come to mind, regardless of language, so long as they know that their hearers understand both languages and that it is an appropriate situation to use the two languages.

However, not all switching from one language to another is arbitrary. In some situations there seem to be definite reasons for the switches. One reason may be that the students do not know how to express themselves in English, as in the following example:

28.
Saraswati:
अगर कोई country, अगर हम लोग Britain से चावल ले लेते हैं और उसको बेचते हैं तो और exchange होता है, तो countries में
[If any country, if we buy rice from Britain and sell wheat in exchange, then the exchange between the two countries]

Shweta (encouraging Saraswati to go on):
हाँ [yes]

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Saraswati:

तो इसको क्या बोलते हैं ?

[what is it it called? (supplies Hindi word for it)]

Shweta:

उसीको बोलते हैं foreign exchange.

[That is called 'foreign exchange'.]

(Lesson 37, 2nd September, 1987)

Saraswati, in this instance, did not know the term, 'foreign exchange', so described it to her companions in Hindi and asked them for the English. The rest of the conversation on pro-nuclear and anti-nuclear arguments with respect to foreign exchange earnings is in English. Saraswati at first does not take part in the discussion and later very tentatively uses the words, 'foreign exchange' when she is not convinced by the arguments around her. It seems to me that Shweta, in explaining the term to Saraswati and then involving the rest of the group in the debate about foreign exchange, gives Saraswati time to get used to the new term. Later, when Saraswati expresses her disquiet about the arguments, she is heard with respect and her ideas taken into account. The group's role here is rather like that of a teacher in that it provides 'scaffolding' (in the sense employed by Vygotsky (1934, reprinted 1962)) for Saraswati till such a time as she feels confident to use the terms and the ideas unaided.

The students also use Hindi sometimes as part of their strategic competence as in example 14. Prakash (14.9) is trying to marshall his thoughts after saying, 'Heat is produced by burning coal'. He then reverts to Hindi: 'ये उसमें' [this, in that] and finally returns to English with his next sentence, 'Steam is produced by heating water'. Here Hindi seems to be used mainly as a stalling strategy while he collects himself to carry the discussion forward logically.

There are other more complicated reasons for switching between English and Hindi. These often have much to do with the perceived status of the two languages involved. English, for example, is the language of power and authority and Hindi is often perceived as being less prestigious. So, when people want to speak with authority, they often resort to English to

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express themselves. Conversely, if someone wants to appear humble and ask questions in a manner that does not challenge the authority of the teacher, the preferred language might be Hindi. Thus, in the traditional lessons the students use Hindi when asking the teacher the meaning of words, or when they offer an explanation which could be construed as challenging the teacher's authority (see Chapter 8). If one argues that students in traditional lessons speak to the teacher mainly in Hindi because it indicates to him that they are asking questions out of genuine interest (rather than as a challenge to his authority), then in the video-led lessons, one might expect them to speak more to the teacher in English since they no longer perceive him as someone who might take offence if challenged. This was the case. In the two lessons that I am analysing in detail, there are no self-initiated student contributions in Hindi. The students always use English when talking to the teacher, whether they accept his point of view or not.

Even when the students work in groups, they switch into English to assert their beliefs firmly, or even to challenge each other. This often takes the form of saying something in Hindi and then repeating the same sentence in English to give it firmness of purpose and meaning, as the following example illustrates:

> 29.
> Saraswati:
> कैसे [How] how?
>
> Manjula:
> Two centimetres, and so , eh... eh...
>
> Saraswati (interrupting):
> It's a bit more than two.
>
> (Pause as Manjula continues measuring)
>
> Manjula:
> हाँ [Yes] a hundred and seventy.
>
> (Lesson 37, 2nd September, 1987)

In the above example, Saraswati first says, 'how' in Hindi and then repeats it in English as though to give her question more authority, and also turning it into a challenge. This is very reminiscent of Dr. Keval when he said the same words, ' कैसे [how] how ...' (see Chapter

8, Example 38). They were said when he perceived a student contribution as a challenge and in turn he challenged the student. He started off by using the same language as the student but moved very quickly into English to give an air of authority to his challenge.

The converse of moving into English to express confidence is moving into Hindi to express uncertainty. The following example is indicative of such a switch. Here, the conversation has been in English and the group is discussing the reasons why Juliet Margaret Henderson is concerned about nuclear power.

> 30.
> Saraswati:
> Because she has a child.
>
> Prema:
> Because she is an objector of nuclear power.
>
> Shweta:
> She has a, she has eh..., joined or come to the public
> इसी लिय ना ? क्या होडा ?
> [Isn't that the reason? What will it be?]

> (Lesson 37, 2nd September, 1987)

Shweta moves into Hindi to express uncertainty and to seek the opinion of the others in the group. Similarly, Anjan's turn in Example 19 seems indicative of a switch into Hindi to seek the group's opinion. He was talking about the reporters they had seen on the screen and had commented: 'But they are very smart reporters. Very smart English dress. Indian reporters don't look so smart, है ना?[isn't that so?]'. It is almost as if Anjan's statement in English, just by virtue of being in English sounded more final than he intended it to be, and therefore he switched languages to seek confirmation from the group.

Although most bilingual speakers are not conscious of using two languages (Swann and Jayalakshmi, 1987), and the students in Central School were no exception (in informal interviews, many of them said that they spoke only in English in their groups), this is not to say that they are not subconsciously aware of the potential of using two languages. In example 2, for instance, Asutosh comments in Hindi saying, 'Where, how will Keval sir

understand?' The ironic reprimand from Anjan is in English: 'Don't comment on your teacher', and Anuj ratifies this comment ('Yes, don't') also in English. It seems to me that it is in large measure the shift in language that makes their comments sound ironic and mocking. After all, English is the language that Dr. Keval has mastery over and Anjan, by using an English reprimand uses the teacher's language for reprimands and thus undermines his authority.

As I have already pointed out, students repeat in English what they have already said in Hindi to make themselves 'heard' and to be noticed. For example, Anuj tries to persuade his group to pay attention to the clothes of the person they were watching on the television screen by saying, 'अबे, उसका कपड़ा देख; [look at his clothes, mate] look at his suit' (Task sheet 5). In Example 20, however, a repetition in English is used for a slightly different effect. Mahesh comments on Anuj saying first in Hindi and then repeating in English, ' चेहरे में लिखा है smart; [on his face, smartness is written]; smartness is written on his face'. It is as if asserting the same thing in English makes it firmer and therefore, no opposition can be brooked. Support is lent to this analysis by the otherwise surprising fact that I never came across a single switch where something was said in English and then repeated in Hindi. If my analysis is correct, this is probably because the switch into English to repeat something is often performed to lend more weight to what has been said.

A similar reason for a language switch, though not one where the English is a repetition of the Hindi, occurs in Example 18. Anjan has finished putting forward yet another hypothesis about the characteristics of pro-nuclear people, anti-nuclear people and neutral people in Hindi when Asutosh agrees with his analysis. It seems to me that this agreement is given more authority because the reply is in English.

When a person switches from English to Hindi or vice-versa, my observations, like those of several researchers in bilingualism (de Meija, 1993, to take just one example), indicate that

the person taking the next turn will by and large, use the language of the previous turn, even if it is for a very short utterance like ' हाँ ' [yes] (as in Example 18). Even Dr. Keval, before he replied to a student in English, often started off by using the same language as the student (see Chapter 8, Example 35).

In group discussions, the students seem to have demarcated what one might term 'meta-talk' about the logistics of working on the task sheets from talk that directly discussed the questions in the task sheets. The meta-talk, for example, 'pencil दे, pencil दे' [give me a pencil, give me a pencil]; or, ' मैं हाँ क्या लिखूँ ' [what shall I write here?]; or, ' किस question का answer है ये' [to which question does this answer correspond?] is often conducted in Hindi while the talk about the issues they have to discuss is in English. This is not unlike the situation generally in India where people switch into English to have an academic discussion (a scientific argument, for example) and then move back into another language for more informal talk.

9.7

Teacher Elicitation and Class Discussion

After most of the students had finished working in their own groups, the teacher started a general class discussion based on the task sheets. He would go through the task sheet, asking questions and seeking answers from the groups. Generally, the group leader for each day answered the teacher's questions, although other students also took part in the discussions. Once these answers were elicited, they were written on the blackboard so they could be verified when the video was replayed.

At first, Mr. Sridhar was fairly naive about asking questions and seeking opinions from each group. He would ask questions first from group 1, then group 2, then group 3 and so on. The students got wise to this and started to prepare the questions their group would be asked more carefully and more thoroughly than the other questions. Mr. Sridhar soon

realised this, however (I mentioned it to him in one of our preparation sessions), and altered his strategy, asking groups at random but seeing that all of them got fairly equal numbers of turns. Thus, the teacher had to learn even the manner of questioning in this new teaching method.

The role of the teacher during these elicitations and general class discussions changed considerably from the traditional classes. While he did most of the talking and asked questions for which he already knew the answers in the traditional lessons, in the video-led classes he found himelf in the role of a facilitator of discussions. This was noticed approvingly by the students, as one of the diary entries indicates: 'It is good that since we were doing the sheet with the help of video, Sir didn't explain much. He only heard the answers and sometimes asked questions' (Group 6 diary, 14th September 1987).

One way in which Mr. Sridhar carried the discussion forward was by repeating a student contribution out loud, to make sure that everyone had heard the contribution. This was quite important because, even though the students were supposed to have finished their group discussions and were meant to take part in the class discussion, often the talk in the class prompted them to make comments and further the discussion in their own groups. Mr. Sridhar's repetition of a student contribution served to draw their attention back to what the class was discussing. This also had another beneficial side effect. In the repetition, Mr. Sridhar was able to re-phrase students' contributions or re-formulate them, making them grammatically correct, without seeming to be correcting students' grammar. This was noticed by some students as this diary comment illustrates: 'When any student spoke an answer, Sir modified that and made the sentence simple. This habit is helpful for us' (Group 6 diary, 17th September 1987).

As a facilitator of general class discussions, Mr. Sridhar controlled the progress through the questions, deciding how much time should be spent in discussing each question before writing a group's answer on the board and then moving on to the next question. When Mr.

Sridhar thought that the class had come up with an answer, he wrote it on the board and this seems to have been a signal that he would not accept further discussion on that particular issue. It also allowed him to progress to the next question, even though it sometimes meant that he ignored a valuable student contribution which could have led to further discussion. For example, the class discussed the impact of nuclear power on foreign exchange earnings:

> 31.
> Teacher:
> OK, you sit down. Group number 7.
>
> Bhushan:
> Sir, I think it helps the economic development of the
> country.
>
> Teacher:
> Yes, OK. (says aloud as he writes on blackboard) It helps
> the economic development of the country.
>
>
> Dheeraj (as teacher is writing on the board):
> It will be helpful by selling nuclear power to other
> countries.
>
> Teacher (finishes writing, ignoring Dheeraj's comment):
> OK. Group 7, what is the anti-nuclear argument?
>
> (Lesson 37, 2nd September, 1987)

Bhushan's statement that nuclear power would help the economic development of the country, like all the preceding discussion, was somewhat vague and general. Dheeraj, in specifying selling nuclear power to other countries, might seem to have been extending the discussion usefully by giving a concrete example and starting to fill out Bhushan's more general claim. Mr. Sridhar could have built on this contribution, finding out what others thought of it. Who would buy nuclear power from a country like India? How far could it be transmitted? Would neighbouring countries have enough money to pay for the power generated in India? Is it a good idea to sell power to another country when there is a shortage of power in your own? There were many issues that could have been fruitfully discussed by the class before they moved on to the arguments of the anti-nuclear lobby, but such opportunities were sometimes passed over by Mr. Sridhar in his (often legitimate) anxiety to complete the task sheets.

In comparison with the traditional lessons, though, Mr. Sridhar did accept many student contributions (whether solicited or not) and often incorporated them in his discussions. For example:

> 32.
> Teacher:
> What is there in Sizewell?
>
> Pankaj:
> Nuclear power plant.
>
> Teacher:
> Yes, nuclear power plant.
>
> Anjana:
> Magnox station.
>
> Teacher:
> Yes, that's a nuclear power plant. You find a nuclear
> power plant in Sizewell. Now, ...
>
> (Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)

In the above example, it is conceivable that in the traditional lessons, Anjana's contribution would have been totally ignored since the teacher had obtained the information that he was seeking. However, here Mr. Sridhar acknowledged her contribution and agreed with her before moving on.

Sometimes, Mr. Sridhar even used the students' contributions to encourage discussion and debate. In the following example, he seems almost to stand back from the class, if only for a few moments, allowing them to discuss the issues and work out their own answers undirected. His only role seems to be to see that the discussion is orderly when it becomes more raucous.

> 33.
> Teacher:
> OK. Group number 3. What will be the pro-nuclear
> argument?
>
> Anuj:
> Sir, due to foreign exchange, more sophisticated machinery
> can be bought.

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Teacher:
Due to foreign exchange?

Anuj:
Yes, more sophisticated machines can be bought.

Pankaj:
Sir, nuclear

Teacher (interrupting, still trying to understand what Anuj means):
More sophisticated machines can be bought. क्या? [Is that so?]

Anuj:
Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Teacher:
For what purpose?

Anuj:
Sir, for nuclear power plant.

Teacher:
For nuclear power plant? So, more sophisticated machines can be bought for nuclear power plant. Eh...

Anjana (interrupting teacher):
But sir, we are talking about foreign exchange with regard to nuclear power plant. So we need to find out what will the pronuclear people say about foreign exchange. And I think (unclear)

(Lots of noise as everyone tries to speak at the same time.)

Pankaj:
(unclear) economic recovery of the country.

(More noise)

Teacher:
OK, sit down. Don't create confusion. I will ask all the groups. Group number 4, what will be the argument of the pro-nuclear people?

(Lesson 37, 2nd September, 1987)

The example above seems to me an indication of how far the class has moved away from the

traditional lessons. First of all, Mr. Sridhar is genuinely taking time to understand what

Anuj has been trying to say, instead of brushing him aside for not supplying a 'correct'

answer. In fact, he does not let Pankaj interrupt because he is trying to understand Anuj.

Then, when he thinks he has understood Anuj, he is about to say something when he is

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interrupted by Anjana. That a student would interrupt a teacher and put her own opinions forward in such a forthright manner, let alone that a teacher would tolerate this, was unthinkable in the traditional lessons. This, of course, encourages the others also to try and have their say about the topic. Mr. Sridhar, therefore, has to stop too many people talking at once and try and give each group a turn.

The nature of Mr. Sridhar's questions to the class changed in the new video-led lessons. There was one set of questions, though, that remained similar. This was in simply repeating the question that the class had to answer. Just as in the traditional lessons the teacher repeated a question that he thought of as important, in the video-led lessons he read out loud the questions on the task sheets, to initiate classroom discussion.

The greatest difference in the questions that the teacher asked in the new method seems to have been in his own assumptions about and expectations of the answers the students gave. While in the traditional lessons, he knew the answer that he was looking for, in the new video-led lessons, he seems to be asking questions for genuine communicative reasons, seeking out information from students to understand their point of view. For example, when the students answered that the distance between the Lake District and the major metropolitan areas was about one hundred and seventy kilometres, he wanted to know how they had arrived at this conclusion.

> 34.
> Teacher:
> Is this given in the notes?
>
> Shreekant:
> Sir, scale is given.
>
> Teacher:
> Or this is simply a guess.
>
> Shreekant:
> No sir, the scale is given and we measured it.
>
> Teacher:
> Scale is given there, yes. So, on the basis of the scale you
> have got, you can say that the major metropolitan places are

about one hundred and seventy kilometres from nuclear
power plants like Sellafield.

(Lesson 37, 2nd September, 1987)

As has been noted above, Mr. Sridhar found accepting students' answers quite difficult at

first. He had his own answers to the questions in the task sheets worked out, and

sometimes he sought and insisted on obtaining these answers. But this picture must be

qualified a little, as the following example illustrates. Here he is asking the students whether

the policemen they have seen on the screen are pro-nuclear, anti-nuclear or neutral. One set

of students think that they are neutral. To show how the discussion develops, it is necessary

to quote from the transcript at some length.

35.
Teacher:
Neutral?

Manohar:
Yes sir.

Teacher:
Why?

Manohar:
Because they are just government servants. They are, they
have no power to express their own mind.

Teacher:
If the government is pro-nuclear, in that case also the
policemen will be neutral? है ना? [Is that so?]

Manohar:
Yes sir, no sir, I mean, no sir. But he is normally just a
government servant.

Teacher:
So what is your opinion?

Manohar: (still finds his own answer unproblematic):
Sir, they are neutral.

Teacher:
How can they be neutral if the government is pro-nuclear?

Sudhir:
Sir, according to government, according to government
they change sides.

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Teacher:
According to gover, according to the, according to the,

Reena (supplying words):
According to the policy of the government,

Teacher (picks it up):
According to the policy of the government, if the government is neutral, they are neutral, and if the government is pro-nuclear,

Reena, Sudhir, some more students and the teacher (together):
Then they are pro-nuclear.

Teacher (to Madhu):
So what do you think in this instance?

Madhu:
Anti-nuclear.

Teacher:
Do you know any country which is anti-nuclear?
Some students:
India, sir, India.

Teacher:
No, India is very pro-nuclear. We have so many nuclear power plants.

Anjana:
New Zealand.

Manohar (picking up Anjana's contribution):
New Zealand.

Teacher:
New Zealand. Do you think that these policemen belong to New Zealand?

Madhu:
No sir, may be American.

Teacher:
And it is pro-nuclear. So most of the countries are pro-nuclear. It is supposed that these policemen will also be pro-nuclear.

(Lesson 36, 1st September, 1987)

Even though Mr. Sridhar's answer is different from that of the students, and he insists on his own answer, he does allow some genuine discussion, and does attempt to convince the students by rational argument that his answer is the correct one. This is already a

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development from his style in the traditional classes.

One interesting exchange in this long conversation is Madhu's answer, 'Anti-nuclear' to the teacher's question, 'So what do you think in this instance?' It seems to me that Madhu has reverted to the question-answer routines of the traditional lessons and is trying to match his answer to the one in the teacher's mind, by simply guessing. Mr. Sridhar, however, takes it up and uses it to probe his own reasons for thinking that the policemen are pro-nuclear. It is interesting that he does not simply dismiss Madhu's answer as wrong.

The students found that their own role in classroom activity too had changed. They had to stop being passive recipients of knowledge and start to participate actively in the activites in the classroom. They found that their opinions were taken seriously, not just by the teacher but also by other pupils. They had additional responsibilities as group leaders who were spokespeople for their groups, and so had to represent their group's views fairly. The students seemed to have coped with this new role admirably.

Right from the start, I found that they were often supportive of each other, agreeing with answers, though not uncritical of each other's views. In the very first video-led lesson, although the students agreed that elements like uranium and thorium were important for the production of electricity because of their radioactive nature, they had a long and protracted argument about whether radioactivity was a tendency or a process. I found out later that the teacher was taken aback by this, not only because he did not know the solution, but also because he was genuinely surprised at the level of debate the students were capable of. At the same time, they could be laughingly critical of each other, as when Ranjan found Sizewell on the map and Shweta exclaimed, 'Thank goodness he's got it; he 's so slow' (Task Sheet 5); or when Maninder said in an irritated voice to Seenu, 'There's a scale given. Why can't you measure it correctly?' (Task Sheet 4).

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Being a group leader, and helping a group leader when he or she got stuck with an answer, were seen by the students as being of great importance, as the following dairy entries reveal:

> 36.
> When our turn came, our group leader got hesitated in answering one question, but one of our groupmates stood and answered the question very boldly and nicely.
>
> (Group 5 diary, 16th September, 1987)

> 37.
> Today I found that all the answers given by us was correct and that brings a good feeling about us as we had done it quite intelligently. Thanks to all the other four colleagues.
>
> (Group 1 diary, 2nd September, 1987)

> 38.
> Our group leader answered well. All of us have contributed some points. I liked some points spoken by group VII and VIII. Group VIII asked about nuclear programme of Pakistan and we discussed it.
>
> (Group 6 diary, 18th August, 1987)

> 39.
> This day, as I was group leader, I had a very nice experience of answering questions. I watched the video with very presence of mind and we solved the task sheets. As this day, we were also asked some auxilliary and extra questions. On answering to one question, I got very hesitated. I was in two minds whether I should answer this question or not but lastly I answered it and answer gone in my favour. I thanked God who gave me such points at that time which escaped me from getting defamed.
>
> (Group 5 diary, 17th September, 1987).

This last diary entry was very revealing to me. Many of the students wrote about the importance and excitement of being a group leader and talked about it in my informal conversations with them, but I had not realised how anxious many felt about their responses. The need to do well is clearly socially motivated — they do not want to appear foolish in the eyes of the other students. I also realised that it is very difficult for both students and teachers to break out of the habit of seeking 'correct' answers, and Ranjan,

here, is happy that his answers were 'correct', even though an examination of the classroom conversation reveals that his points on the contrast between the police activity in Seabrook and the protesters' activity contributed to several others made by other groups.

Thus the students took part in the activities and conversations in the classroom, working together towards understanding the video extracts and solving the tasksheets. They do genuinely seem to have enjoyed the new method of learning English, as this last diary entry indicates: 'The tasksheet looks more and more interesting everyday. But today, it was the last tasksheet. I am feeling so sorry about that' (Group 7 diary, 21st September 1987).

9.8
Confirmation

This was the last stage in the classroom activity, and often the teacher did not spend very much time on it. After all the class's answers had been put on the board, the teacher replayed the video extract so that the class could confirm its answers. At first this was quite important because there were several activities where the students had to watch the extracts carefully and notice what was being shown or said. In later activities, while the students still had some questions that directly related in a factual way to what they saw, many of the questions and discussions arose from what they had seen. Their ideas, which had been sparked off by the video extracts they viewed, became as important as the extracts themselves.

9.9
Conclusions

Although both the teacher and the students sometimes reverted to the traditional method of teaching and learning, it seems to me that by and large the teaching in the new video-led method was less ritualistic and more meaningful. This is not to say that what happened in

the video lessons was by any means perfect. For one thing, the students were never completely convinced that the new method was relevant to their needs, as they would not be tested in the examinations on this package. For another, the teacher sometimes missed opportunities for extended discussion, sacrificing it for getting on with the task sheets. Nevertheless, there was general agreement between the teacher and the students that this new video-led method gave the students control over their own learning and enabled them to use language in a more meaningful way. As one student remarked, 'I am very much impressed by this type of teaching which encourages us to know and improve our English, especially our speaking power' (Group 4 diary, 7th September 1987).

In the new method, Mr. Sridhar did indeed succeed in providing an impetus for the students to learn English without being afraid to relinquish total control of all classroom activity. He did have 'a much less spectacular, and at the same time, much less secure position' (Maley, 1986). To achieve this type of class work, however, Mr. Sridhar spent a considerable amount of preparation time. Every day, he and I spent about an hour discussing what he would teach the next day. He also watched the tapes several times so that he could help the students if it became necessary. The video method, therefore, has implications for teacher training. Teachers have to be trained to be confident enough to allow their students to dictate the pace of learning and find their individual methods of working through the task sheets. The teacher has to learn to play a supportive, facilitating role, allowing students to control their own learning but taking over and helping when they encounter problems. Even after being trained in this new method of working, the teacher has to spend considerable time and effort to prepare the lessons and organise the classroom activity so that everything runs smoothly. The use of video materials at the '+2' level has implications for policy makers who need to think carefully about providing teacher training. They also need to consider the number of hours teachers teach and the number of hours they would need to spend on preparing for the classes.

The students in this new method too seemed to have changed their attitude to the learning of

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English. They seemed to take more responsibility for their own learning — they participated actively in group discussions and in the general class discussions. They were interested and involved in the video sequences and the task sheets. They had to learn to work in a non-competitive, collaborative manner and, by all accounts, they seem to have thoroughly enjoyed this new way of working. As one of the students pointed out towards the end of the project, 'Only two task sheets are left. I wonder what will happen. I am feeling very sad about it. I have enjoyed the English classes so much' (Group 6 student, 18th September 1987).

I have documented some of the exciting changes that occurred when the video package was introduced. Why did these changes occur? For instance, did the very fact that I was observing the changes influence the classes? Would the same changes have occurred without my presence in the classroom? I do not doubt that my presence influenced the teacher greatly because he and I spent time discussing the package and working out how best he could teach it. In that sense, I do not think the package would have been as effective had there not been an element of teacher training accompanying it. But I do not think that the changes that accompanied the video-led method are to be explained by my presence. After all, I was an observer of both the traditional lessons and the video-led ones: whatever effect my presence had on the one, it would surely have had a similar effect on the other. Besides, the students soon accepted my presence both in the classroom and outside it. They moved quickly from regarding me as an 'honorary teacher' to treating me as an 'honorary student', calling me 'दीदी' [elder sister] instead of 'madam', and inviting me out to picnics with them.

Again, did the differences between the two methods come about specifically because of the video package or might any other method, by virtue of its being new and different have caused similar changes? In other words, was it the video package as such or its sheer novelty that caused the difference between the two methods? I would argue that the content of the video package <u>was</u> important in bringing about the changes. Although the students

were enamoured at the start by the novelty of the video method, the romance soon passed. As soon as the newness wore off, some students rebelled because they were concerned that the lessons were unrelated to their syllabus and would not help them get through the examinations. Although, as they politely explained, they had 'learnt a lot and we wish it was introduced to us in the lower classes', they added this: 'But it is not so helpful now. It won't help us in examination' (Interview with Group 3 students). Besides, once I was able to remove their worries about examinations by offering extra classes, they did their most committed and constructive work with the video method after its initial novelty had worn off.

The importance of examinations may have influenced the success of the group work in a different way. Although some of the students initially did not want to be taught in the new method because it did not have a direct bearing on their examinations, I cannot help wondering if the absence of examinations may have influenced events in two distinct ways. First, it may have removed an element of competitiveness, and therefore secrecy, from the students' relations with one another, and thus enhanced collaborativeness in groups. Secondly, it may have helped free students and teacher alike from the desire for instruction and the overriding importance of correct answers. It is difficult to tell whether this was the case without doing more research into the classrooms and setting some portions of such work in examinations.

Yet another question about the changes concerns the video strategy itself. Did the changes in classroom practices come about because of the video element or the discussion element of the package? As I have explained earlier (see Chapter 4), there were definite reasons for developing such a package, and I am therefore reluctant to separate these elements. The class used the package as a whole, without compartmentalising it into video sequence and group discussion. Both the teacher and the students saw the video lessons as an integrated whole, providing a new and different learning environment. To give a student the last word on this:

40.
This type of class is very interesting and pupils get a chance
to discuss and express their opinion by seeing the tapes.

(Group 1 diary, 1st September 1987)

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CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS

10.1

Introduction

Throughout the thesis, I have attempted to assess my findings as I presented them, acknowledging possible problems and weaknesses as well as strengths in the evidence I have used, and considering alternative interpretations to my own. I have tried to distinguish carefully between claims that I make on the basis of general knowledge of Indian education, and those that arise from analysis of my data. There is no reason to be apologetic about the former. As Hammersley argues (Hammersley, 1990, pp.61-2), general knowledge-based claims are an unavoidable and valid part of any research, though of course they are no more infallible than claims based on research data. I hope that this approach has enabled me to take a reasonable and realistic view of what I can claim to have discovered.

In the body of the thesis, while not neglecting questions of generalisability, I have concentrated on Central School, Bhojpur, considering with what confidence I can offer various descriptions, explanations and proposals specifically about that case. Such an ethnographic case study seems to me the most useful, and indeed perhaps the only possible approach in the present circumstances, since there is as yet no tradition of research into Indian schools and classrooms to compare with those of Britain and the United States. In this final chapter, however, I wish to change the emphasis, and consider how far it is possible to generalise from this study to Indian secondary education as a whole. Inevitably any generalisation of this kind will be speculative and hypothetical to some extent, and it would be appropriate to add after each the cliché that more research is needed. However, I think it is worth discussing which general conclusions look most promising, if only to suggest what might be fruitful lines of inquiry for this 'more research'. Those I discuss can

be grouped under three headings — those that are based on scrutinizing traditional lessons; those based on an observation of the <u>introduction</u> of innovation; and those based on an inspection of classroom teaching in the video lessons. Finally, I shall consider some of the policy implications of these conclusions for implementing the use of video to teach English in Indian secondary schools.

10.2
Traditional Lessons

I have attempted to show that traditional English language teaching methods in Central School, Bhojpur, are highly stylised and ritualistic. Both Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar follow a similar teaching pattern — they read a paragraph from the text, explicate it and then return to the text to read the next segment and so on until the entire lesson is complete. They ask questions whenever they deem fit, sometimes to check students' understanding, but sometimes apparently as a purely rhetorical device. In Bhojpur, the manner in which a teacher handles the explication seems to determine how good a teacher the students judge him to be. Dr. Keval was thought of as a better teacher than Mr. Sridhar. Typically, his explanations consisted of some of the following features — use of several synonyms to explain the meaning of a word; employment of examples from students' experiences; an anecdotal style that made him appear close to students; deployment of Sanskrit to exhibit erudition; a recourse to adages exhorting his pupils to be moral and upright; and a facility with bilingual switches demonstrating his agility of mind and cleverness. Mr. Sridhar displayed a less exuberant and perhaps less imaginative version of the same basic style. This style probably has roots both in the Indian systems of Harikatha and Gurukula teaching, and in the Western tradition of catechism and Victorian ideas of schooling. The emphasis in this traditional method of teaching is on transmission of knowledge. Dr. Keval, and to a lesser extent, Mr. Sridhar are perceived as repositories of knowledge and wisdom. Authority is vested in them, simply by virtue of their being teachers. The students in this system are passive recipients, mostly silent except where a specific one-word or short-phrase response is called for by the teachers, soaking up the insights their teachers provide.

How far can one generalise about such a traditional, ritualised transmission mode? One argument against generalising is the great variation even between Dr. Keval and Mr. Sridhar. If two teachers teaching the same syllabus in the same school to the same students vary so much, then how can one draw conclusions that might be applicable to language teaching in secondary education in Central Schools across the country? I have argued, though, that the basic style and method underlying these differences is the same for both teachers. When Dr. Keval went on his teacher-training course, for example, Mr. Sridhar could step into his place without much difficulty. The pattern of teaching, the habit of reading a text, explicating it and then moving on to the next section is identical. The difference lies only in the explanations of text they provide, and even there it is a difference only in degree.

This system is one that I myself recognise from my own schooldays. Informal conversations more recently with teachers and students in India has revealed that they too recognise this pattern. (Indeed, one university lecturer I spoke to described in similar terms his own teaching of postgraduate paramedical students.) One could therefore generalise to say that the style of teaching English in Central School Bhojpur, even if it is not the only style, and although there is individual teacher variation within it, is familiar to many Indians.

If one were to draw conclusions only from classroom observations, one would say that the teacher is seen to be the locus of authority, wisdom and knowledge and the students are apparently grateful beneficiaries. However, other sources of data, notably formal and informal interviews with students and with Dr. Keval, diaries, field notes —not to mention my own experience of the Indian education system — point to a certain amount of cynicism with regard to such teaching methods. In Central School, Bhojpur, there is an intense preoccupation with examinations and the pressure to get good marks. Students go to considerable lengths to succeed — they buy 'guide books', take private tuition and sometimes even cheat to pass examinations. On the basis of general knowledge, I think, one can say quite confidenly that in these respects Bhojpur is not unusual, but that at least in

general outlines these features characterise secondary education all over India.

While the use of 'guides' and tuitions are almost universally accepted as necessary, and while cheating certainly happens, it is difficult to gauge the <u>extent</u> of cheating. But certainly in Central School, Bhojpur, some amount of cheating was widely thought of as normal and acceptable. Many Indians would consider this typical, and explain it along the following lines. The importance of examinations and the low levels historically of teachers' pay have led many teachers to offer private tuition. It is especially in such teachers' interest to see that their students do well in examinations: this ensures a continuing supply of students. There is therefore a strong temptation for these teachers to turn a blind eye to cheating in examinations.

In Bhojpur, Dr. Keval gave private tuition but Mr. Sridhar did not. I do not know if either teacher condoned cheating (neither of them invigilated the only test I observed). But, as I have argued in Chapter 8, the importance of examinations and the tuition system has important repercussions in classroom teaching. I perceived Dr. Keval's display of language and erudition as important (whether consciously used or not) in providing him with a reputation for being a good teacher, thereby ensuring him private students. We can say that Dr. Keval, who gave private tuition, had an exuberant and expansive style which it is easy to interpret as showing off his talents; whereas Mr. Sridhar, who did not take private students, was much more restrained and pedestrian. But of course we cannot conclude from this one comparison that such differences in style are a general characteristic of teachers who do and do not give private tuition. I do think, though, that the relationship between classroom teaching and official textbooks on the one hand, and private tuition and unofficial 'guide books' on the other, is an interesting and promising line of research. A realistic appreciation of the sheer extent of the private, unofficial system, of its importance as perceived by students for examination success; and of its possible ramifications within the official school system, seems essential for anyone attempting to intrduce video (or indeed any innovation) into Indian schools.

10.3

The Introduction of Innovation

The introduction of video was sometimes frought with problems, and at other times seemed fairly smooth. In this section, I discuss first some problems with infrastructure. Secondly, I shall consider problems that arose because of teacher's and pupils' attitudes. Finally, I elaborate on how video could be introduced despite these problems, mainly becuase of the work done by various supporters of it.

10.3.1

Difficulties with Infrastructure

The introduction of video into English lessons implies the presence of an infrastructure that will support such use. Not everything that can be taken for granted in British schools can be taken for granted in all those in India. As I discuss in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, in Bhojpur I experienced practical and logistical problems with regard to rooms and equipment. Although they sound trivial, they were very important, in that if any one of them had proved insoluble, it could have brought the project to a halt. And they could not be solved once and for all. An unending daily commitment of time and energy was needed to make sure that the necessary equipment was in working order for the teacher to use in the video-led lessons. To generalise from this experience, as I think I reasonably may, the presence of such an infrastructure and of someone committed to maintaining it, is vital for the introduction of video. This must be particularly noted by Western advisors and experts, who may not even think of such issues, let alone regard them as of vital importance.

Another area of potential problems is timetabling. In Bhojpur, we decided that for the teacher to work with video materials, he would need two run-on periods. In the event, this was not difficult to achieve. If, however, video were to be tried elsewhere, a similar time-tabling would need to be negotiated. A second factor to affect time-tabling would be the availability of free periods for teachers to prepare video lessons. This was not a problem

in Bhojpur where the Principal was willing to alter the timetables and Mr. Sridhar put aside some of his other commitments to work on the video materials. Such co-operation cannot be taken for granted, even from people who are at another level of awareness committed to the introduction of video. Besides, there might be instances where teachers, however committed and co-operative, may simply not have enough time to prepare for them. This would have happened at Central School, Bhojpur, for example, if I had decided to introduce video into the science instead of the English curriculum. The Bhojpur science teachers, with a much heavier teaching load that the English teachers, would have been quite unable to work with me as Mr. Sridhar did.

Also, in the case of Bhojpur, I had developed the materials and had specific suggestions for their use. One of the advantages of video, though, is that the same extracts could be used in several ways. But if teachers wanted to innovate, they would need not only the time to think about the use of video but also resources like cyclostyling facilities to prepare materials.

Thus the use of video in the language classroom has implications for the running of a school and these must be taken into account if such a method is to be adopted.

10.3.2
Questions of attitude

The two most serious obstacles to the introduction and use of video in the classroom were Dr. Keval's attitude and the rebellion by some students against the video lessons. My discussion of the incidents in Bhojpur shows that while Dr. Keval was initially enthusiastic about using video, he soon tired of it. He found it stressful and difficult, and finally bowed out of teaching English to Std. XI Science students altogether.

In generalising from this, it seems to me relatively unimportant to consider what exactly in Dr. Keval's individual psychology, or in my individual approach, may have led to his disenchantment with the project. In Chapter 6, I considered a range of possible reasons,

and, regardless of which if any actually apply in Dr. Keval's case, these constitute a range of possible obstacles to introducing video generally. The most important one seems to me that teachers could feel de-skilled and threatened by the video lessons. This new method assigns roles to teachers and students which are very different from the traditional roles they have been used to: teachers are no longer the centre of attention and the locus of knowledge and wisdom; instead they become facilitators in the process of language learning. Similarly, students can no longer be passive recipients of their teacher's insights and information; instead, they become actively engaged in negotiating meaning by using the target language. This implies a change in the teacher-student relationship because of which some teachers (perhaps including Dr. Keval) may feel a sense of insecurity and a loss of status.

If video is to be used in English language classrooms, the government would have to set up training schemes where teachers learnt how to use it effectively. This would have to go well beyond instruction in methods and techniques. Teacher-trainers would need to consider teachers' possible fears of being de-skilled and losing status, and find ways of dealing with them.

One other attitudinal problem of great concern lies in the reasons for teaching and learning English; this is perhaps especially acute at the '+2' level. There seems to me (as to many other observers of Indian education) to be a huge gap between policy and practice. The policy of the CBSE syllabus is the teaching of English to improve students' facility with the language, but in practice students study English to pass examinations. For entirely understandable reasons, many students seem to be instrumental in their approach to language learning, and unwilling to participate in events which will not lead directly to their gaining better marks. How strong this attitude can be is shown by my experience in Bhojpur, where, for all the students' deference to school authority, it led to open rebellion. In drawing general conclusions, however, this problem should not be exaggerated (after all, even in Bhojpur half the class did not rebel against the new method). But it cannot be ignored either. Video materials might have to be related to assessment in some significant

way, otherwise many students may resist them.

10.3.3

Support for Video

In spite of all the difficulties I faced during the research project, video was introduced into the Core English Curriculum classes. This would have been much more difficult, and might indeed have proved impossible, without the support of the Principal. He checked periodically to see that the research was running on course, and whenever obstacles arose, did all that could reasonably have been asked of him to remove or find ways round them.

I myself was another strong supporter of the project. In saying that, I do not mean that I was committed to the belief that video-led teaching must be successful . Rather, I was committed to introducing the video method and allowing it to operate as smoothly as possible, so as to find out whether, and to what extent, it was successful. Without my constant presence, though, or that of someone else as committed to them as I was, I find it hard to imagine the implementation of the video-led lessons. For one thing, it would be difficult for the teacher to try out these materials without being trained in their use. For another, the mere presence in the school of a researcher/change agent went far to ensure that the project was carried out. I am supported in this claim by reflecting on an innovation that patently failed — that of introducing computers to the same school. Although Central School, Bhojpur, actually possessed the computers, there were no researchers, change agents or interested teachers to implement their introduction.

By far the most important supporter of the video method, however, was the teacher, Mr. Sridhar. Without his generosity, enthusiasm and quiet determination, the video-led lessons would not have been made possible.

One could generalise from this to say that the introduction of video needs commitment — from management; from the teacher trying out the new method; and from students who have

to work through the materials. None of these can be taken for granted, as the Bhojpur experience reveals.

10.4

Language Learning with video

In deciding to try out the use of video in English lessons, and in developing the materials for such use, I had two hypotheses in mind. The first was that meaning-focussed activity where students concentrate on genuinely communicating their thoughts encourages language learning. When students work in groups, they have to collaborate with each other and negotiate their way through the various task sheets. To achieve this, they need language. If they use English, then this method will have provided some of the conditions for English language development. My second hypothesis was that Indian students often regard texts as sacred and therefore do not evaluate it critically in the way they would question visual material like film and video. By using video as text, one would free them from this inhibition. If the ensuing discussions took place in the English language, then some of the conditions for the development of communicative competence in English would be achieved.

Clearly the video method succeeded in Bhojpur, at least to the extent that the students worked collaboratively. They employed a variety of cognitive strategies and social skills to complete their task sheets. What was particularly striking about their group work was the sophistication with which they deployed both English and Hindi to complete their task sheets. Such a use of the two languages in the classroom mirrors their use in society at large. I would argue, therefore, that they were not merely working but <u>learning</u> collaboratively; that they were learning together to be proficient in an Indian variety of English, which has codeswitching as one of its most important features.

How confident can one be that the introduction of video using a similar method but in a different setting would be just as successful? It seems to me difficult to generalise from just one empirical study. One would need more research to assert confidently that video

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unequivocally helps language development. There were several factors that contributed to the apparent success of video here — the groups in the class worked well together; the teacher conscientiously tried to follow the pattern we had established in the training sessions; and the class found the materials interesting, even though they could not follow the accents on tape. It is difficult to know what would happen if any of these elements were changed. For example, what would happen if the group dynamics were different — for example, if the peer group pressure to use the 'we' code was so strong that students always spoke in the local language except when they were writing their answers down; or, if members of a group quarreled and refused to speak to each other? Similarly, what would happen if teachers slipped into their old habits and reverted to a lecturing style when dealing with questions?

There is also the thorny problem of assessment. My project did not have to deal with the question of how one could examine students if they used video. But if it were to be introduced seriously, the CBSE Board would have to think of its implications for examinations. If there is to be an element of on-going assessment, would this put too much power into the hands of teachers who might use it unscrupulously? On the other hand, if video were introduced because it was felt that it genuinely improved language learning, but the examinations remained as they are, might this simply lead to an increase in private, extra-mural tuition? These are some of the issues that are beyond the remit of this thesis, but which would have to be considered if video were to be introduced as a teaching tool on a large scale.

10.5

Implications for Policy Makers

Finally, it would be useful to examine some of the implications for policy makers if they want to consider the use of video to teach English in India.

First, they would have to think about teacher training, which is essential to the use of video.

This would involve two levels of training — training teacher-trainers to train teachers in the use of video as well as training teachers in its use. Obviously, the cost of such training schemes would be high, even though the infrastructure for some of this training exists in institutions like the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad, the Regional Institute of English in Bangalore and so on.

There would have to be a commitment, too, to the production of materials suitable for students at this level. Again, the infrastructure for such production exists, with institutions like CIET and SIETs having people qualified and competent to make such programmes. However, the funding for the programmes themselves is paltry, and would have to be reconsidered.

A third consideration would have to be the supply of hardware to schools. Most schools do not have television sets and video recorders, and those that do often do not have the means to maintain them properly. This would involve setting up an infrastructure to supply the equipment to schools, and possibly employing support staff capable of maintaining it. In all these considerations concerning funds, it is easy to forget but important to remember that India is not a wealthy country.

A fourth consideration and one that I have stressed throughout the thesis is that of assessment. The whole policy of assessment — why we have examinations, what sort of examinations are appropriate and how we incorporate the video element will have to be carefully considered.

Finally, taking all these factors into account, the most fundamental question is, does India want everyone to be proficient in English and learn it as well as public school students do? Or are we happy with a multi-tiered society where some people have better access to the English language, and therefore more doors open to them? If we really want more people

from more strata of society to learn English well, then perhaps the first need is to fund more research projects to assess whether video is really as beneficial as my initial study promises.

REFERENCES

Hammersley, M (1990), <u>Reading Ethnographic Research: A Critical Guide</u>, London: Longman.

APPENDIX 1
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