Language is just not the medium of communication rather it is the very basis of social interaction, the *ab initio* point of the social relationship that forms the essence of any society. Basil Bernstein has shown that different forms of social relation generate different forms of linguistic code (*Bernstein, 1971*). Language is the crucial signifying practice in and through which the human subject is constructed and becomes a social being. To further emphasize this it would not be out of place to mention the famous quote of Martin Heidegger:

> ‘How do we attain such a relationship with the world? How do we attain an attitude that is not technical? By recognizing ourselves as Dasein and not the thinking thing, we are in a position to realize that a certain social practice we have, allow us to recognize our relationship to Being and, in turn, show us how to live in response to that relationship. This practice, the central preoccupation of the latter part of Heidegger’s life, is... language’ (*Lemay & Pitts, 2005*).

Language forms the substratum of any social science research, as all communication in social research is dependant on language. In fact, while language facilitates communication in social research, it also contributes in carrying forward the prejudices and biases of the researcher into the research write-ups. This point has been highlighted time and again by many scholars. Francis Bacon wrote in his famous essay titled ‘*Novum Organum*’ about ‘Idols of Market Place’ focusing on the biases caused by language in scientific research. Language is not a perfect medium of communication.

> ‘No language can communicate all the expressions of human beings in their diverse manifestations. Thus, all languages have conceptual limitations and these limitations of languages distort, obstruct any scientific, social research. Language is one of the potent means of communication. Thinking itself is shaped and bound by language. Not all ideas, feelings and wishes can be communicated through the language. The spontaneity and facticity of one’s inner-world experiences are only incompletely communicated through language’ (*Agrawal, 2000*).

There are many instances where biases have been caused or accentuated by the choice of words, constructs or concepts in social research. One prominent example can be seen in the choice of terms exercised by Robert Redfield (*Redfield, 1930*) in his study of folk life in Tepozlan village in Mexico. In his study he tried to use value neutral terms such as *cuisine* for dishes/food items; *costumes* for apparels/outfits to cover their body parts; and *adornments* for jewellery or embellishing artifacts for increasing the aesthetic look of the personality by the tribal population. However, this emphasis on use of value neutral terms did not produce the desired results rather portrayed the tribal population as very affluent segment of society, specifically, when students in their libraries read this research piece across the world. This confusion was removed later on when Oscar Lewis visited this village for undertaking his research. He wrote a famous book (*Lewis, 1951*) – ‘Life in a Mexican Village: Tepozlan Restudied’.

Malinowski (*Malinowski, 1923*), too, had emphasized on the role of language in social research in his research on Trobriand islanders. Herbert Blumer (*Blumer, 1954*) has also emphasized on the role of language in social research while dealing with concepts in social
research. He has classified concepts into two kinds: definite and sensitizing. Similarly, Abraham Kaplan (Kaplan, 1964) has elaborated the role of language in social research while dealing with different kinds of models, styles of writing. In the same manner, Robert k. Merton (Merton, 1957) has highlighted this linguistic confusion in the discussion of term ‘Function’ while dealing with his treatment of Functionalism and offering his paradigm for analysis. He talked about one term, many meanings and one meaning and many terms regarding ‘Function’.

Besides this, Harold Garfinkel wrote on the significance of language while conceiving a new perspective of Ethno methodologically (Garfinkel, 1967) understanding social world and reality of actors. To emphasize this, he had conducted various experiments, which he has elaborately mentioned in his book. In one of such experiments, he asked his students to take extreme literal meaning of the language used by their family members and friends during routine conversation consistently and to record their reactions to highlight the socio-contextual relevance of language (Agrawal, 2000, op.cit.). Here Garfinkel is trying to assert that the commonplace conversations convey a good deal of more meaning than is carried immediately by the words themselves. Ethno methodology focuses on interpretive paradigm and indexical expressions and also tries to study the nuances of language. “The focus on verbal accounts, indexicality, processual dimension of role, everyday life, common sense and glossing practices, led to the development of variety of approaches within ethno methodology. One such approach, Cognitive sociology emerged out of verbal account and social aspects of language” (Agrawal, 2000, ibid.p.206).

This whole discussion would be incomplete and irrelevant if one does not take into account the influence of Ferdinand de Saussure on Structuralism and Semiotics. Right from Levi-Strauss to later Structuralism, influence of Saussure is clearly discernible, once again bringing the focus on language in social research. Levi-Strauss even said that the society is understood in the mode of language and society is like a linguistic system. Levi-Strauss was interested in comprehending structure of all structures.

Among the more contemporary post structural writings, any reference to language and social research would be incomplete without obvious emphasis on Habermas, Derrida, Lyotard and Michel Foucault.

According to Habermas, science and technical rationality function as ideologies in modern societies that are often used for oppression and control over human beings. He thinks that the rationalization in general is not problematic rather it is the rationalization of purposive-rational action. For Habermas, the solution to the problem of rationalization of purposive-rational action lies in the rationalization of communicative action where unrestricted, free and open communication is possible, where there is no domination or oppression to obstruct free communication. The rationalization of communicative action means emancipation, “removing restrictions on communication” (Habermas, 1970). This obviously highlights the role of language in human behaviour.

Habermas also deals with the knowledge systems and human interests in his later book (Habermas, 1971). He believes that the knowledge systems function at objective level while human interests are subjective factors. The objective and subjective factors are inseparably intertwined. Each knowledge system has certain underlying interests that are unknown to the common man and it is the duty of Critical Theory to bring it to light. One kind of knowledge system identified by him is the ‘hermeneutic enquiry’ based on meaningful understanding and arising from the human need for mutual understanding and communication. Its underlying interest is in understanding the world. This once again focuses on the role of language in social scientific theory and research.

According to Habermas, in discourse the victorious argument is not dependant upon the power or force of the actor arguing rather better argument emerges victorious. The weight
of evidence and argument will decide what is valid or true (Habermas, 1975). The arguments that emerge from such a discourse are true where a consensus develops among the participant actors. In discourse there would be an *ideal speech situation* where all parties have equal opportunities to engage in dialogue, without undue domination by one party, without restriction and without ideological distortion. In this, ideas are openly presented and defended against criticism; unconstrained agreement emerges during argumentation.

In this way, Habermas proposes a consensus theory of truth instead of replica of reality. According to Habermas, this is part of all communication and the objective of Habermas’ evolution theory is full expression of this truth. All genuine attempts at true rationale of communicative action demands claims to validity and one of the validity claim demands the actor’s speech has to be understandable and comprehensible (Habermas, 1979).

Derrida’s work is based more upon linguistic and focuses on the meaning of language (Derrida, 1976). He has given extra importance to decentering/deconstructing the texts to subvert the established hierarchies of social reality, which start from language itself. Deconstruction is a tactic of decentering, a way of reading, which first makes us aware of the central term. Then it attempts to subvert the central term so that the marginalized term can become central. The marginalized term temporarily overthrows the hierarchy.

‘Derrida claims that deconstruction is a political practice, and that one must not pass over and neutralize this phase of subversion too quickly. For this phase of reversal is needed in order to subvert the original hierarchy of the first term over the second. But eventually, one must realize that this new hierarchy is equally unstable, and surrender to the complete free play of the binary opposites in a non-hierarchical way. Then you can see that both readings, and many others, are equally possible (Powell, 2000).

‘According to Derrida, all language and all texts are, when deconstructed, like this, and so is human thought, which is always made of language. He says we should continuously attempt to see this free play in all our language and texts-which otherwise will tend toward fixity, institutionalization, centralization and totally totalitarianism. For our anxiety we always feel a need to construct new centres, to associate ourselves with them, and marginalized those who are different from their central values’ (ibid.p.29).

Among the most recent and contemporary post-structural, post-modern scholars, Lyotard has talked of “narratives, language-games, denotative language games, meta-narratives and micro-narratives.” According to Lyotard, the development of post-industrial society and postmodern culture began at the end of 1950s, although the rate of development and the stage reached vary between and within countries. He sees these developments related to technology, science and society, but, most importantly, to changes in language. The key concept he uses is that of ‘language-games’. He seems to see social life as being organized around these language-games. Language-games serve to justify or legitimate people’s behaviour in society. They are games in which the participants can try to assert certain things to be true or right. Each statement or utterance is a ‘move’ that may aid the participant in trying to win the game – to get his or her version of what is true or right, and is accepted. He further adds that the post-modern era has two main characteristics: First, the search for truth is abandoned as denotative language –games fall into disrepute. Knowledge fragments into multiplicity of different language-games that are specific to particular areas of science or social life. Diversity is the order of the day as people lose faith in the search for one great truth that unites and justifies all knowledge. Second, denotative language-games are replaced by technical language-games. Here statements are judged not by whether they are true, but by whether they are useful and efficient or not (Lyotard, 1984). Michel Foucault has dealt with discourse, bringing language into force once again. According to Madan Sarup, by discourse Foucault meant ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Sarup, 1988). In this context, Foucault attempts to
explore the discourse on the relationship between power and knowledge, which he finds virtually inseparable. He says:

*We should admit that power produces knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations* (Foucault, 1991).

II

Thus, in the light of foregoing discussion, one can safely argue for giving role of language very high priority in social research and teaching. Incidentally, Indian academics suffer a dual dilemma in the post-colonial period as far as language is concerned. As a matter of policy, the local, regional languages and National language (Hindi) are being promoted to enrich the regional and Pan-Indian culture and also to facilitate students from tribal, rural and backward regions to take advantage of spread of education for their empowerment and upward mobility. In sync with the objectives and ideals enshrined in our Constitution, this has helped the National, regional languages, deprived sections of society but has diluted the quality of education, academic research as most of the literature in social sciences belongs to English medium. Eminent scholars have not made efforts to contribute to writing academic pieces in National and/or regional languages. Consequently, writing or translating academic writings in social sciences in National/regional languages has become a second rate effort which does not bring any recognition of significance to the scholar as in case of scholars writing in English. Thus, most of Indian students read text books and other translated works by academicians who are either not well versed in the discipline or who simply lend their name to ghost writers propped by the spurious publishers to cater to the lucrative and burgeoning demands of Hindi/ regional languages market in social sciences. Secondly, most of the literature of the social sciences literature is in English riding on the wheels of English as its lingua franca. Ironically, in the era of globalization, the social science teaching and research shows very poor progress excepting some centres of excellence in Metropolitan cities and all this is the product of reduced importance of English as a medium of instruction. Consequently, most students, young teachers and researchers are either not reading good social science literature or originals available only in English.

The Methods and Approaches adopted to teach English in India: It is highly imperative to be clear about the objectives that are desired to be achieved by way of teaching English as a language. This will help and facilitate the teacher to decide about the methods and devices to be adopted towards it.

1. The Linguistic Objectives
2. The Literary Objectives
3. The Cultural Objectives

This is intimately connected with the methods and approaches to be selected for teaching English as a language. It involves certain definite principles underlying them. The following are some of the most important principles: -

1. The method to be chosen should be a practice method.
2. The predominance of oral work should be there.
4. The use of the pupil’s knowledge of mother tongue or regional language.
5. Connection with life should be there.
6. The principle of interest should be followed.

The methods of teaching a language vary according to the objectives for which it is taught. In the teaching of English, different methods have been popular at different times. The term method includes the selection and gradation of material to be taught. A method determines
when and how much is to be taught, hence the meaning and form are conveyed, and what is
to be done to make the use of the language. It is only after the formation of objectives of
teaching English that a teacher has to decide which method will help to achieve a particular
objective. If the objective is information, only vocabulary is the predominant factor.
Grammar of course comes next to it. Translation is the simple and straight method of
getting that information. It has little to do with ability to speak or even read out. Since
language is a means of communication, it has to be learnt as an activity. The modernists
hold that the objective of teaching English is to enable the students to acquire a practical
command of English. This requires new methods of teaching English. For this a sound
knowledge of various methods and approaches, their advantages and limitations is essential
for a subject teacher.

Many teachers and scholars use the terms methods and approach interchangeably. But there
is a lot of difference between the two as an approach is a broader term than a method.
Generally speaking approach is the study of self-evident truths. Approach states a point of
view or philosophy or an assumption, which one believes but cannot necessarily prove. On
the other hand a method is an overall plan based on some approach. Method is an overall
plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts and all
of which is based upon the selected approach. Thus approach deals with assumptions,
whereas method is a procedure based on some assumptions. In this way, within one
approach there can be many methods.

The Translation Method: It is one of the oldest methods of teaching English and is still very
much in vogue. It is sometimes called ‘Translation-cum-Grammar Method’ or Classical
Method, because translation and grammar play equally important parts in it. This method
makes no provision for training in speech but lays stress on reading. It gives equal
importance to grammar in the course in as much as the linguistic material presented for
study is graded on a grammatical plan, and teaches the meaning of new English words,
phrases and sentences by means of word-by-word translation in the vernaculars. The last
point implies that English is taught through the medium of the mother tongue. Another
important feature of this method is that the unit of speech or reading is not a sentence- a
sentence comes last of all, first letters and words and then sentence. The advocates of this
method assert that it is based on some sound principles such as the following: -
1. Foreign phraseology is best interpreted through translation.
2. Foreign phraseology is best assimilated in the process of interpretation.
3. The structure of foreign language can best be taught by comparing and contrasting it
    with that of mother tongue; and this is best affected through translation.

Critical Reappraisal: If this method is judiciously used, it is of much value. Its chief
advantage lies in the sphere of vocabulary building among students. Translation of English
words and phrases into one’s vernacular gives a better and quicker understanding of those
words and phrases. It certainly avoids vagueness of meaning and is conducive to clarity
besides, it brings in exactness and definiteness. When the student is translating a word or a
phrase or a sentence into his vernacular, he/she has to find out the exact equivalent or
equivalents. In translation, the student associates the foreign word with the native word and
consequently a strong memory bond is established. The learner has the advantage of
proceeding from the known to the unknown. However, the most serious failing of this
method is its complete neglect of speech-practice as a necessary preliminary to the learning
of a new language. Reading and writing come before speaking and it is an unnatural order.
Even the grammatical basis is alien to the student. The language learning becomes a
difficult and tedious task. The method is not reliable even with regard to vocabulary getting.
The acquisition of vocabulary in English is delayed as this method does not help in
establishing direct association due to the intervention of the Mother-tongue/Regional
language.
This method does not encourage direct thought and expression in the language to be learnt. A learner who has been taught by this method gets into the habit of first framing his/her thoughts in the Mother tongue and then converting them into English. Thus, consequently the learner finds it difficult to express himself/herself, overtly, or otherwise, in English. The learner is constantly reminded of his/her mother tongue and is thus not encouraged to employ the new medium. This method gives importance not only to translation of English words and phrases into vernaculars but also to that of vernacular words and sentences into English. The danger is that the students might form the habit of literal and unidiomatic translation, if the teacher does not take the problem seriously.

The Direct Method: The Direct Method was introduced in India in the early twentieth century as a reform or a reaction against the Translation Method with a distinct grammatical bias. It is a method in which an attempt is made to teach English or any foreign language without the mediation of the mother tongue. It seeks to establish a direct and immediate bond between the English word, phrase or idiom and its meaning. In other words, this method connects a new word or expression of the learner directly with what it stands for or with his/her experience.

The main objective of teaching English by this method is to enable the learner ‘to think in English’ and to discourage the practice of thinking in one’s vernacular first and then translating it into English. Opportunities are provided in this method for constant hearing and speaking of English from the very beginning. Commands and their execution, dialogues and conversations, questions and answers, object lessons, etc., are a few of the exercises in oral work. Oral work is considered essential for learning pronunciation. Learners learn by imitation and practice. They do not hesitate in expressing their ideas in English and take delight in the classroom conversation. The learners are made ‘spontaneous memorisers’.

In this method the sentence is the unit of teaching. The teacher presents each sentence with the help of appropriate action or situation. Thus the students are carried through experience and expression, simultaneously. Here grammar is taught inductively. Advocates of this method say that complex rules of grammar do not help the child in learning a foreign language, rather these kill their interest and initiative in learning, as the learning of grammar is not a precondition of learning the language. In Direct Method, learning precedes grammar.

Critical Reappraisal: It is conducive to the understanding of English by establishing a direct association between the word and its meaning; it enables the learner to grasp the sense of what he hears or reads in English. Direct method makes the study of English interesting and lively by its emphasis on the spoken idiom. The linguistic sense thus cultivated facilitates the study of English literature. The technique adopted in this method calls for alertness and activity on the part of learners. The use of objects, illustrations, actions and demonstrations makes the lessons concrete. It brings out the main principles of modern education e.g., the particular must precede the general, the concrete must come before the abstract and practice ought to precede theory. However, there are people (teachers) who take an exception to the name ‘Direct Method’. They say that it is a misnomer, for only a limited number of words can be directly associated with their meanings or objects they represent. The teacher often takes the help of synonyms, definitions and explanations or even contextual inference. Often the words employed in explanation may be more difficult than the word explained or defined, e.g., the word ‘mist’ is defined or explained as the ‘condensed drops of vapour hanging in air’. There are many other words which cannot be explained directly in English without wastage of time and effort--- words such as ‘beautifully’, ‘thinking for’, ‘cool’, ‘shiver’, ‘faint’, ‘stumble’, ‘honesty’, ‘truth’, etc. illustrate the point. The teacher will experience the same difficulty if he/she is asked to demonstrate directly the difference in
meaning between ‘tremble’ and ‘shiver’ or ‘fat’ and ‘thick’ or ‘pretty’ and ‘beautiful’ or ‘fetch’ and ‘bring’ or ‘say’ and ‘speak’ and ‘tell’.

The Direct Method is criticized for its exclusive stress on the active command of the language and its neglect of the systematic written work and reading lessons. There is difficulty even in given practice in oral work. Small classes of homogeneous type and individual practice are essential for conducting oral lesson successfully and these facilities do not exist in most of the Indian institutions.

Direct method overlooks a simple fact of human nature, of learner’s nature in particular. An Indian student cannot utter in thought the vernacular equivalent of the new English word taught to him, because in associating the new English word with a familiar word in the vernacular, he is simply stimulating the memory of the old friend. The Direct Method in all its rigour mistakes the end for the means, the goal for the path that leads to it- the direct association of words and phrases with their meaning is the eventual objective of language study and not a means. One cannot expect the learner to make the association at the outset.

Bilingual Method: When the Direct Method of teaching English also failed in India, it was felt that sometimes use of mother tongue becomes necessary. Therefore, it was recommended that a modified method be used in which mother tongue may be used when necessary. Thus came the Bilingual Method, which means a method in which two languages, i.e. the language to be learnt and the mother tongue are used. A student learns the mother tongue, forms the concept or grasps the situation and learns the foreign language words simultaneously. In this method, the mother tongue is used to learn the target language.

Bilingual Method is comparatively a recent method and claims to be very effective in learning a foreign language. This method is based on the similarities and differences between the child’s first language and the foreign language. In Bilingual Method mother tongue is used to convey the meaning of words, sentences and idioms of the foreign language and unlike the translation method, it is the teacher who uses the mother tongue. Learners only practice patterns of English.

Critical Reappraisal: Bilingual method of teaching English promotes both fluency and accuracy. It promotes fluency as it lays stress on speech and pattern practice. Unlike the direct method that ignores the linguistic habits already acquired by the children in the process of learning their mother tongue, the bilingual method makes use of them. However, if the teacher is not well versed in both the languages, he/she may create confusion in the student’s mind, because he/she may turn it into translation method by excessive use of mother tongue.

Structural Approach: The basic principles and technique of the Structural Approach do not differ widely from those of the Direct Method and there are many people who still believe that it is the Direct Method with some additions and alterations necessitated by modern researches into foreign language learning. It is true that there are many points of contact between the two, but the fact remains that by following the new arrangement of structures and grammatical forms instead of the old jumble of unselected structures, the Direct Method is greatly improved.

The Structural Approach means the arrangement of words in such a way as to form a suitable pattern. There can be many sentence-patterns e.g., He reads. He reads a book. Will he read a book? The structure of all these sentences is different, though all refer to the act of reading in one form or the other. Therefore, different arrangements or patterns of words are called structures. Structures may be complete patterns or they may form a part of a large pattern. Basically structures are tools of a language. They are not to be confused with sentences. Once a structure is learnt any number of sentences of the same type can be constructed. Structures do not need any grammatical backgrounds, whereas sentences are grammatical order of words.
There are four types of structures: -
Sentence pattern, having complete sentences, e.g., I have a book. He plays basket ball.
Phrase pattern, having emphasis on phrases, e.g., in the last hour, on the table, with a knife.
Idioms, are group of words that must be taught as a whole and not as separate words, e.g., in the teeth of, at the eleventh hour.
Formulas, are group of words used regularly on certain occasions, e.g., Good Morning, Thank You. How are you?
The sentence pattern structures are of six kinds, which can be taught easily.
Two part patterns. – Nisha danced. Stars twinkle.
Three part patterns. - I played cricket. She played on sitar.
Four part patterns. - My father told me a story. I gave her a nice toy.
Patterns with ‘There’. – There is a well in the compound. There is a tap in the school.
Questions beginning with a helping verb. – Do you want to read? Will you sing a song?
Commands and Requests. – Run fast. Come here. Please bring me a cup of tea.
Now for using these structures, gradation is must and is based on the following three principles: -
Structures, which identify things and persons.
Structures, which locate them in space.
Structures, which fix them in time.
Critical Reappraisal: The distinguishing features of Structural Approach are that it is based on the fundamental presumption that in the learning of a foreign language mastery of structures is more important than the acquisition of vocabulary. An intensive, systematic and scientific drilling in the use of sentence patterns or structures is more useful and less time consuming than the laborious process of learning English through its grammatical rules. Since one needs to learn English in its functional form and not in its literary form, Structural Approach is the quickest and the shortest way to teach and learn English. However, the Structural Approach lays over emphasis on oral presentation and it neglects reading writing and vocabulary expansion. It does not advise the teacher how to present each new teaching point. It does not speak about linking of teaching point with drill for consolidating it with material for written exercises. This approach over emphasizes drill work, which often degenerates into mechanical activity.
One can also say that this approach is still in an experimental stage and different institutes of English teaching are trying to improve it. There is no denying the fact that this approach is superior to the older methods of teaching. This approach leads to an understanding of the most characteristic human activity and helps in linking it up with the rest of main patterned and systematic behaviour.
Communicative Approach: There has been a shift in emphasis in recent years from teaching language forms to teaching language functions. Many teachers and experts nowadays feel that the whole methodology should be made communicative. So a change was proposed in favour of the communicative approach. The Communicative Approach is the result of laying emphasis on the practical or user aspect of the language. It enables the students to communicate their ideas freely in and outside the classroom. It came into being with rapid development and industrialisation; as the people had to increasingly interact with people around the world. Since the basic purpose of a language is to impart ability to communicate one’s ideas, notions, needs and feelings, the communicative approach aims at communicative competence, including linguistic competence and ability to use the language appropriately.
This relationship between what is taught; how it is taught is much less direct and explicit in the Communicative Approach than in other procedures. Also it is much more similar to natural language learning than the Structural Approach. Here grammar rules are not to be
taught as such because these rules can be incidentally internalized with the repeated use of language.

Critical Reappraisal: It overlooks the importance of grammar and structures and only stresses the need of communicative aspect.

As it has not yet been fully implemented anywhere, its outcome is still ambiguous. Its benefits are uncertain.

To impart such type of education to the students, the teachers need to be specially trained, and at present India does not have such teachers as such.

III

Through this paper, the author is attempting to stress that improving linguistic abilities in English is imperative for improving the quality of teaching and research in social sciences. Language is not merely the medium of instruction at all levels of education; it is the medium of growth. It provides capacity for preservation and communication of intellectual life. At higher level, language provides the medium for free and fresh thinking and research. Some people would like to define language as speech symbols being used in communication of ideas. In education, it is supposed to communicate knowledge and in general life, it is the instrument to pick up information. But in broader sense language does more than this. Every language has its own life and vitality, which influence the mind possessing that language. Its literature is the amalgam of so many brilliant personalities. It makes the mind imaginative, widens intellectual interests by giving intellectual training in social, racial, national, literary, scientific, religious and occupational life. In social and national life it maintains intellectual and cultural traditions, keeps the emotional bonds intact by providing new emotional overtones.

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