2.1. AGE AND ENVIRONMENT-

According to Piaget and other psychologists and educators who support constructivist-learning theory, knowledge is not an external package but something that is constructed by an intrinsically motivated cognitive being through interaction with the environment (Stone & Bradley, 1994; Holmgren, 1996). While Piaget focused on the interaction between the child and the environment, Vygotsky emphasized another element in constructivism, which is the interaction of the child with the social environment (Cameron, 2001). Despite the differences between them, Piaget and Vygotsky agreed that a strictly behaviorist theory of learning is inadequate to explain how young learners learn. Rather than merely reinforcement of learning connections, experience provides many opportunities for learners of all ages to assimilate and accommodate - the two important components of learning (Cuthill, Reid & Hill, 1996). What is more, the educational implications derived from Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s theories clearly have features in common, such as the opportunities for active participation, inquiry oriented experiences, and the acceptance of individual differences (Cameron, 2001; Tzuo 2007). This research is based on the philosophical paradigm of constructivism and adopts these principles as the theoretical framework for the process of learning.

Alanis, I. (2004) has examined development of literacy skills where the achievement gap is the most severe. To narrow the gap, she has identified and discussed the factors like classroom environment, activating prior knowledge and instructional approach. Coehlo, E. (2004) guides teachers for establishing a supportive environment, focusing on “how English works,” e.g., phonology, vocabulary, communicative competence and language learning theories, and how instruction can best be structured to meet learner needs. Genesee, F. (1995) was of the opinion that integrated instruction was more effective than language learning in isolation because, when integrated with content, language is used for authentic communication. In these content-based language classes there are rich opportunities for language practice in an activity-centered environment with increased attention to language forms. Thus the classroom environment and instructional methods adopted by the teacher play important roles in ensuring learner needs are met and language skills are developed.

2.2. BASIC SKILLS

Learning a language essentially consists of developing some key skills with respect to usage of the language. In teaching English, the objective is developing these skills in the students.

A. LISTENING SKILL-
Hearing is essentially a physiological process, and involves three interconnected stages: reception of sound waves, perception of sound in the brain, and auditory association while listening is a very complex psychological process. According to Brownell (2006), successful communication takes place only when the receiver participates and listens actively and decodes and interprets what the sender/communicator intends to convey. Thompson & Rubin (1996) describe the listening process from an information processing perspective. They describe it as ‘an active process in which listeners select and interpret information that comes from auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express.’ In addition, the desire as well as the capability to listen (comprehension) must be present with the listener for the successful recognition and analysis of the sound (Tomatis, 2007). Thus, the listener plays an important role in effective communication.

A broader conceptualization of ‘listening’ is made by Feyten (1991) who in her research on listening comprehension finds that meaning is constructed, by speakers as well as listeners, through communicative exchanges that include linguistics, such as spoken words; para-linguistics, such as tone of voice, intonation and pitch; and via nonverbal communication, such as body language. Further, studies have been conducted on effective listening skills. For instance-according to Ritter and Wilson (2006) in ‘Active listening’, the listener mirrors or reflects the information by re-stating or paraphrasing what the speaker has said, followed by a question to check for the accuracy of what he thought he heard. Such listening behavior greatly reduces miscommunication and errors in perception by clarifying the message and creating common ground.

Linguists believe that a listener is involved in guessing, anticipating, checking, interpreting, interacting and organizing by associating and accommodating their prior knowledge of meaning and form (McDonough and Shaw, 1993, Rost, 1991, 1990). Thus, listeners "co-author" the discourse and they construct it by their responses. Thus, listening constitutes an important skill to be focused on when examining English language teaching.

B. READING SKILL-

The development of independent reading skills is the goal of teaching language learners in the context of classroom. This independence is achieved through strategy development such as skimming, scanning and pre-reading, also referred to by Gunderson as study guides. Considerable time is spent discussing specific strategies for technical reading. These strategies are given acronyms such as “SQ3R.” (Gunderson, L., 1991). Peregoy, S., & Boyle, O. (2001) summarize their conceptual framework best by stating that “students must learn to set a purpose for reading, use their background knowledge, monitor their reading based on the purpose, and organize and remember what is important.” According to Crandall, J., Jaramillo, A., Olsen, L., & Peyton, J. K. (2002), free reading can build vocabulary and reading habits. However, students may need to be taught how to select appropriate reading material for level and interest. Pre-reading tasks need to motivate the learners and build background knowledge through pre-
teaching of vocabulary and concepts, making predictions, engaging the first language by potentially drawing community resources, and addressing learning strategies. (Graves, M. F., & Fitzgerald, J., 2003). During-reading activities suggested by them are silent reading, teacher reading, student read-aloud, guided reading and the modification of text. This research will draw upon these findings in coming up with strategies for building English reading skills in learners.

C. WRITING SKILL-
Great writers have often had not only their own writing ability but also strong motivation, supportive parents, inspiring teachers, informative literature and direct experiences, as well as exposure to skillful peers and fine writers. (Trudy W., Winifred E. Stariha & Herbert Walberg, 2004). Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy.

While readers form a mental representation of thoughts written by someone else, writers formulate their own thoughts, organize them, and create a written record of them using the conventions of spelling and grammar (Steve Graham and Dolores Perin, 2007). Effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information, a high degree of accuracy so that there is no ambiguity of meaning; the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis; and a careful choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns and sentence structures to create a style which is appropriate to the subject matter and the eventual readers.” (Tricia Hedge, 1999). These can be considered as elements of writing skills and teaching how to employ the English language in writing will involve developing skills in all of these.

D. SPEAKING SKILL-
According to Stevick (in Fauziati, 2002: 126), ‘speaking refers to the gap between linguistic expertise and teaching methodology’. Linguistic expertise concerns with language structure and language content. Students can give better speeches when they can organize their presentation in a variety of different ways, including sequentially, chronologically and thematically. They need practice in organizing their speech around problems and solutions, causes and results, and similarities and differences. (Trudy Wallace, Winifred E Stariha and Herbert Walberg, 2004)

Thus, this is a skill which can be developed through practice - both in terms of conversation in the language and speaking on specific topics. Also, the teacher by her own expertise and fluency in spoken English can model various aspects of effective speech. This is even more relevant for ESL learners who may not get opportunities to use this language in their family and social settings. According to Bialystok “The age at which second language acquisition begins is not significant factor but the length of residence indicating the amount of time spent speaking the second language is significant.”
2.3 METHODS AND APPROACHES OF TEACHING-

Much research is found in existing literature on teaching strategies for effective language teaching and learning. While the nomenclature of these approaches and specific elements prescribed may differ, the important methods share some common elements. Effective teaching involves the integration of the four language strands of speaking, listening, reading and writing (Cary, S., 2000). There is also a shared emphasis in literature on interactive communication in the class-room and learning as a collaborative effort. According to Cary (2000), the ideal language learning classroom is communicative, constructive and collaborative which draws on critical pedagogy, whole language approaches, process writing and brain-based learning and supports the development of learning strategies; i.e., Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). This approach can be considered as a combination of pedagogical and interpersonal aspects of a model teaching strategy.

Crandall, J. (1994) also described specific strategies like cooperative learning, task-based learning, whole language and the use of graphic organizers. Thus, the media and teaching aids used in the class-room and specific tasks which facilitate both team-work and language organizing skills; facilitate the learning process. The emphasis of these strategies is to enable students to continue in their development of content knowledge while language grows. Dutro and Moran have prescribed an architectural approach to language instruction for content learning to draw attention to the importance of program design. They advocate daily explicit, systematic language instruction that is both embedded in and foundational to the content. (Teo & Wong, 2000).

Another important approach is Problem-based learning (Boud & Feletti, 1999); an innovative measure to encourage students to learn how to learn via real-life problems. Further research is however needed on application of this approach.

2.4 ENGLISH-SECOND/FOREIGN LANGUAGE—

Koydemir (2001) analyzed foreign language teaching of young learners in terms of quality-covering teachers’ behaviors, classroom management and methodology. Based on a study of fourth and fifth grade students, she concluded that it is beneficial to start foreign language education at early ages when proper teaching conditions are achieved.

Krashen also suggests that a second language is most successfully acquired when the conditions are similar to those present in first language acquisition. Thus in context of present study where family conditions may not be conducive for early acquisition of English language, it is the education system that needs to create these conditions by introducing ESL learners to English as early as possible.
2.5. CURRICULUM-

Curriculum is closely linked to instructional methods and both in combination are the ammunition from which a teacher draws to achieve the learning objectives. There may be flexibility in terms of the latter for an individual teacher or school, subject to availability of resources and expertise. However, in a formal school system, there may be a prescribed curriculum and the teacher will need to function within the framework, at least as far as minimum required teaching input is concerned.

Knowledge of content & curriculum models found in literature can enhance efforts of educators involved in curriculum development as well as teachers who can innovate and add to the curriculum as may be prescribed by governing institutions. Bigelow, M., Ranney, S., &Dahlman, A. (2006) have proposed the “connections model” as a framework for curriculum development. This is intended to be flexible and dynamic, providing contextualized language learning through a task-based approach.

CALLA is another widely used curriculum framework and instructional model for teaching language in the content language skills, scaffolding to content and building background knowledge(Chamot, A., & O'Malley, J. M., 1994, Gibbons, P., 2002). It focuses on pedagogical strategies and the integration of teaching ESL across the curriculum. A communicative approach is presented as the most effective means to engage learners in meaning making and authentic language use. Language is viewed as a functional skill that is required to learn curriculum content. Gibbons proposes that these skills be integrated and supported across the whole curriculum. Brinton, D. M., Snow, M. A., &Wescohe, M. (2003) examine the three approaches to content-based language instruction: thematic instruction, sheltered classrooms and adjunctions which suggest an integration of content and language objectives where the form and sequence of language learning is dictated by the content material. All three models account for language needs, incorporate target language, build on background knowledge and provide an opportunity for meaningful language use.

2.6. TEACHER COMPETENCY-

Teacher is the primary human medium in school education and teacher competency is a non-negotiable factor. Competency can be viewed in terms of ‘teaching skills’- knowledge of and practice in application of effective teaching strategies for English. Coppola (2003) developed a short workshop to familiarize teachers with language teaching strategies and support the collaboration of teachers across subject disciplines. Strategies that these educators found successful were the use of visuals to support comprehension, planned opportunities to practice
language, collaborative work such as small group projects and peer editing, and building background knowledge.

Met, M. (1994) addresses the challenge of teaching language in the content classroom in three phases of planning, teaching and assessment. The author pays particular attention to the need for coordination of teacher efforts to meet content and language goals of language learners in the mainstream classroom. Competency also refers to the motivation of the teacher in playing a supportive, facilitative role in the learning process. Ovando, C. J., & Collier, V. P. (1998) posit that language is best learned within a meaningful, non-threatening context with comprehensible input at the instructional level. As children learn by “doing” it becomes the educator’s role to ensure that active, inquiry-driven learning takes place through authentic, hands-on tasks where process and meaning are emphasized.

Another important factor is of course teacher’s proficiency in English. As Robert Lado says, “The language teacher must be educated, at least to the levels of his peers. He must have a general preparation of a teacher, must know the target language well enough to be imitated by his students”. Wilkin is right when he observes. “It should be unrealistic to expect a teacher to set objectives which he himself is not capable of reading. A teacher who himself is not capable of reading, a teacher who himself has difficulty in speaking the language that teacher is not going to succeed in giving his students a command of spoken English.”

This is a cause of concern as far as learning environments relevant to this study are concerned. Prof. V. K. Gokak says ‘the Foundational years for the teaching of English in schools are in the hands of teachers who neither know enough English nor are familiar with the latest and far reaching development in the pedagogy of English’. [BhatiaK.K.]

2.7. USE OF AUDIO-VISUAL-AIDS/ SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL-

Hernandez (2003) has placed strong emphasis on vocabulary development through supplementary materials. The use of appropriate materials requires creating materials that are both linguistic and age appropriate while dealing with necessary content. This process supports the development of concepts and refines language through communication.

According to Sukhia S.P. ‘Instruction is the foundation of any educational programme. Audio – visual teaching aids are a component part of that foundation.” The term audio –visual aids include all means, techniques and the various paraphernalia. Appealing to various senses at the same time and making content more interesting, these aids can facilitate attention, absorption and retention by the students. This is especially true of young learners who are more responsive to images and sound rather than symbolic representation in verbal form.
Richard-Amato, P. A. (1988) recommends the use of visuals and regalia, simplified support, when possible, for the first language and culture, frequent comprehension checks, use of bilingual dictionaries, reinforcement of key concepts and building background knowledge. Vaughan emphasizes use of multimedia in language teaching and says, creating multimedia projects is both challenging and exciting. Fortunately, there are many multimedia technologies that are available for developers to create these innovative and interactive multimedia applications (1998).

2.8. INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS-

Several researchers have strongly recommended involvement of parents and the community in the learning process (Hill, J., & Flynn, K., 2006). Since family is the primary social institution that a child belongs to, family environment can help as well as hinder the learning process. In the context of this research, parents from poor socio-economic background may not be able to provide instrumental support in terms of modeling the use of English language or have resources for improved learning by child such as books or other content. However, through involvement in learning process and collaboration with educators, they can play a significant helpful role. Parents and public in general often complain that children graduate from the schools without attaining competencies corresponding to the level of certification. Studies have also shown that even when children attend school regularly for five years, they still fail to successfully graduate the primary education cycle (Aggarwal, TN cohort, 2001).

Research suggests that parental and community inclusion and support is crucial, particularly for those most at risk of being labelled as learning disabled (Lopez, 2001). Empowering both teachers and parents to develop a functional, respectful relationship is essential in meeting the unique needs of ESL students with special education needs. Kalyanpur & Harry (2000) recommend establishing reciprocal teacher–parent relationships. Cultural reciprocity, as coined by Harry, Kalyanpur & Day (1999), suggests that educational practitioners must establish a two-way process of information sharing and mutual understanding and cooperation to facilitate communication between teachers and parents. Teachers and administrators need to find ways to connect with parents by understanding how educational institutions are viewed in their native contexts. Teachers might find ways to effectively communicate with non-English speaking parents through the use of informal meetings, interpreters and translated texts in the hopes of limiting misunderstandings and promoting parent participation (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004).

2.9. CO-OPERATION OF SCHOOL HEADS AND GOVT. POLICY-
Process of teaching English is situated in the class-room but is also subject to influence from the larger context of the educational institutions and the education system as a whole. This context provides the physical infrastructure as well as resources for the learners and teachers to draw from. It also provides educational guidelines, prescribed curriculum, educational philosophies etc. which act as frameworks within for the teaching-learning process occurs. Hence, improvement at micro-level of individual student or class of students needs larger systemic changes.

Mohan, B., & Beckett, G. H. (2003) argue towards a more comprehensive vision for educational system which can acknowledge the relation between issues concerning ESL students and issues concerning the system as a whole, coordinate reforms in ESL education with general reforms, explicitly and systematically integrate language learning and content learning, and which can build more positively on the multilingual and multicultural nature of modern education for all students.

Prof. Ronald Mackin  (Jayanti 2011) has pointed out the main problems of teaching English in India. "The old fashioned type of benches and dusts which restrict movement, the bad light, the noise from neighboring classes which may be separated from them by nothing more than a bamboo screen, insufficient provision for the subject in the timetable, lack of aids, all kinds of interference from parents or a dominating, conservative headmaster and finally the requirements of an examination system which places a premium on the written language and consequently seem to favour the grammar grinder of the old school."

2.10. STUDENT CENTERED-

Finally effectiveness of teaching depends on the student who needs to attend to and participate actively in the learning process. Hence the motivation and engagement of student is an important factor. In planning the curriculum as well as teaching methods and aids, the focus needs to be on making the process student-centric.

Gianelli, M. C. (1997) discusses thematic teaching in light of its benefits for language learners. Thematic teaching is touted as a meaningful way to engage language and content in a context that promotes the learning of difficult concepts. According Law, B., &Eckes, M. (2000), students must be engaged in learning and doing, supported by development of higher order thinking skills and provided with many opportunities for interaction. And students are best assessed through multiple and diverse measures such as observation, discussions, project work and oral tests with simplified language. Studies have shown that students learn language best when engaged and interested. Since language learning is embedded in context, students learn better when they can draw on background knowledge. (Hill, J., & Flynn, K., 2006)
Sophia Jaychandran in “English is Fun” aims at providing teachers with student oriented techniques in order to efficiently manage large classrooms and keep the students involved in class activities. Many studies have shown that extending learning time by lengthening classes, extending the school day, summer school participation and assigning homework promote language learning. Also, in case of students from slum areas, the socio-economic as well as language background of the students needs special consideration. Studies show that immigrant and language-minority students and those from homes of lower social status may need much more language instruction and more opportunities for practice (Trudy Wallace, Winifred Estariha and Herbert Walberg, 2004).

2.11. VOCABULARY-

In teaching English language, development of vocabulary needs special attention. This is especially true for ESL learners who have limited exposure to conversational or textual English beyond the classroom activities.

Jesness (2004) recommends the ‘sheltered English class model’ consisting of controlled vocabulary and simplified texts with a general focus on vocabulary development. Sophia Jaychandran has highlighted some interesting and innovative ways of helping students to understand the English language. According to her, in the Student Centered Learning Process which is much in vogue, pedagogical theories are supplemented with practical and purposeful domains. Activities pertaining to domains such as Affixes, Conversion, Homophones, Homonyms, Idiomatic Expressions, Anagrams and Newspaper Headlines have been assimilated to enrich the students’ vocabulary and to assure a healthy acquisition of English.

2.12 HELP OF FIRST LANGUAGE-

In the context of ESL learners from disadvantages communities, at times, it may be found necessary and useful to leverage on the students’ as well as teacher’s proficiency in the first language or mother-tongue. This has been recommended by several researchers. Mohan, B., & Beckett, G. H. (2003) recommended “Knowledge frameworks” method and participation of the first language community, whenever possible.

Ovando, C. J., & Collier, V. P. (1998) recommend the use of first language and participation of the first language community, whenever possible in the English education process. To achieve this the texts need to be written in a clear, readable style, integration of the two fields needs to be emphasized and teacher needs to carefully explain and clarify contradictions between the two languages.

2.13. LINGUISTIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR ASSESSMENT
Practitioners may have difficulty distinguishing between language development characteristics and the characteristics of a learning disability (Case & Taylor, 2005). Linguistic errors caused by normal language development in ESL students can sometimes resemble linguistic errors caused by learning difficulties resulting in the misplacement of ESL students in special education.

Specifically, demonstrated errors in the areas of pronunciation, syntax and semantics caused by normal second language development can resemble those caused by a learning disability in monolingual speakers of English. They may share difficulties with the omission, substitution and addition of word sounds as well as difficulties with word order, negation and figurative language (Case & Taylor, 2005).

Paradis (2005) also noted many similarities in the language production characteristics of normal-functioning ESL learners and monolingual speakers of English with learning disabilities. Therefore, ESL learners cannot be assessed for learning disabilities using the same criteria as their monolingual peers. Educators need to carefully understand these differences to ensure clear classification of the two groups of students and that their needs are addressed accordingly.