CHAPTER V

PLAN AND PROCEDURE

CHAPTER - V

PLAN AND PROCEDURE

This chapter discusses the methodology adopted for the present study, which includes: a. a detailed description of the title of the study and its operational framework, b. objectives of the study, c. the formulated hypothesis, d. tools and techniques, e. the sample, f. data sheets, g. collection of data, and h. the limitations of the study. The hypothesis formulated is based on the objectives that have resulted as logical consequences to the discussions in Chapters I - III, and especially the assumptions made in Chapter III in view of the interference of the L1 (Bengali) in the process of the training in the TL (the Russian segmental features).

As discussed in the 'Background of the study' (I.1) and the 'Problem of interference and its classification' (I.3), the entire planning of data collection and interpretation have to be carried out on the basis of an analysis of the two systems of sound segments and data have to be collected keeping in mind the so called 'difficulties' that are faced while teaching the Russian segmental features, especially to Bengali speaking learners.

It is important to note here that although, while teaching the Russian segmentals to the Bengali speaking learners, by 'problems', one understands the difficulties faced at the giving end, however, this very act has to be understood by analysing the results from the learners' end. What seems more important is that for the approbation of the formulated hypothesis, the survey has to be done on the basis of the 'so called' difficult nature of some of the segmental features of the Russian language. Hence, it

is certain that data collected will reflect the problems, more from the learners' end, and the difficulties in teaching or training in the TL have to be viewed on the basis of the probable solutions to such problems, and the possibility of a direct access to the process of the formation of foreign articulation, especially in view of the interference of the L1 (the Bengali language).

It may be noted here that most of the learners of a foreign language (in the Indian context) are expected to be exposed directly or indirectly to atleast two more languages apart from their MT (L1).Hence, an average Bengali student of the Russian language more or less knows English and Hindi well, which can be treated to be their L2 and L3. One may well know English better, while the other Hindi. Thus the actual phonetic data have to be gathered keeping in mind the typical difficulties faced by Bengalis and those segmentals and their combinations, which are important to be learnt at the initial stages but seem difficult.

V.1 THE TITLE OF THE STUDY AND ITS OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The title of the study is: "PROBLEMS OF TEACHING RUSSIAN SEGMENTAL FEATURES TO BENGALI SPEAKING STUDENTS"

In the context of this study the key terms may be understood as carrying the following specific meanings. Thus by 'PROBLEMS' -- the so called difficult nature of training is meant; by 'TEACHING' -- training in is understood, which, combined with PROBLEMS reflects the difficulties more from the learners' end; by 'SEGMENTAL FEATURES' -- the linear units of the Target Language (TL), their combinations in continuous speech, i.e.

"to which specific phonetic (articulatory as well acoustic) properties are assigned". (Halle, M., "The sound pattern of Russian", Mouton, Paris, 1971, p.20) are understood; by 'RUSSIAN' LANGUAGE' -- the Target Language and by 'BENGALI SPEAKING STUDENTS' -- the L1 of the learners is understood.

V.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main task of this study is to find out the actual problems of introducing the Russian segmental features to the Bengali speaking students. Hence, the objectives are:

1. To analyse the two systems of segments (Russian and Bengali), and arrive at theoretical assumptions on the expected nature of the difficult segments in speech for the Bengali speaking students while learning the Russian language.

2. To work out, on the basis of the above analysis, phonetic material, the order in which it is to be administered to the Bengali speaking students for testing and actual approbation of the same.

3. To produce/ compile relevant phonetic material on the Russian segmental features in connected speech, based on the theoretical assumptions and approbation of the same on a selected group of students with Bengali as the L1 background.

4. To interpret the above data and establish the actual sphere of interference of the MT and influence (positive transference or negative influence) of the OTs of the students, and find out the degree of deviation in terms of the type of errors: both in speech and in writing.

5. To formulate guidelines for the correctness that could be achieved while introducing the Russian segmentals to the Bengali speaking learners and evaluation of the same, and to propose ways and means for the assessment of the effectiveness of the proposed approach for teaching the segmental features of the Russian language to Bengali speaking learners.

V.3 HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The hypothesis of the study is as follows:

It is possible to have a direct access to the process of the formation of foreign articulation, especially in view of the interference of the MT, through a special and oriented approach, since, difficulties in the process of training in the Russian Language (segmentals) by Bengali speaking learners will mainly depend on the differences in the articulatory systems of the two languages in contact.

V.4 DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

The compilation of the study will have to be done with the specific purpose in mind, i.e. to find out the difficulties faced while training the Bengali speaking students in the Russian segmental features. Hence, such institutions will have to be identified where students, with Bengali as their L1 are learning the Russian language at the beginning stage, and from all the students that the researcher may and will come across, data (perceptual, environmental and phonetic) will have to be collected. The following institutions are expected to be visited:

1. The Centre of Russian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

2. The Department of Russian Language, The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Baroda.

3. The University of Calcutta, Calcutta.

4. Gorkij Sadan, calcutta.

5. Rama Krishna Mission, Calcutta

6. Pushkin Institute, Moscow.

7. The Peoples' Friendship University, Moscow.

The institutions 1 and 2 will provide samples of Bengali students learning the Russian language in a non-Bengali language environment. Since institution No. 1 has widely been accepted to be one of the best institutions for training in the Russian language in India, data collected here are expected to have a lot of importance. It may be noted that the researcher himself has learnt the Russian language at this institution and it is expected that he will be able to discuss with the teachers of this institution and gather their opinions on various aspects of the problem under study.

The institution No. 2 is actually the one, where the researcher is teaching the Russian language. Hence, it will be convenient for him to collect data here.

The institutions No. 3,4 and 5 will provide samples, of those learning the Russian language in a Bengali language environment.

The institutions No. 6 and 7 are expected to furnish samples of those learning the Russian language in the Russian

language environment. It is also important to note that the above two institutions are expected to have teachers, who are the native users of the Russian language, whereas in some of the previous institutions 1 -- 5, a part of the teachers may actually be the native users of the TL.

In all the above institutions, except for No. 2, the researcher has to collect data by visits. Hence, the researcher will have to bear in mind the related factors in visiting these institutions, especially the institutions at Moscow, and male necessary preparations for the same.

V.5 TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND DESCRIPTION OF DATA SHEETS

The tools for the proposed research will mainly consist of interview data sheets for:

A.PERCEPTUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DATA:

The researcher will be required to interview each respondent on his/her perceptual and environmental background with a view to correlating the same with the phonetic data, and establish the reasons for deviation and influence of perceptual and environmental background.This will require a special data-sheet, which should include information about the respondents' educational qualifications, language background, local language(s),i.e. where the Russian language is being learnt, medium of instruction, occupation, duration of leaning the TL, childhood setting, motivation, marital status, which will have to be preserved for analysis as and when required and convenient.

B.PHONETIC DATA:

The researcher will have to prepare/compile suitable phonetic test model on the basis of existing TEXT-BOOKS and methods of teaching the Russian Language to foreigners (as no separate work is available for the Bengali speaking learners). This will have to be read out aloud by the respondents, which will have to be taped on audio cassettes for future analysis. Pre-taped cassettes of these texts and modules, read by the native users of the Russian language with correct pronunciation and intonation will be used as guiding material. The researcher will be required to also monitor the errors committed by the students, if necessary explain them and retape such units again. This will help the researcher to single out the errors that occur **1.due to carelessness of the students, and 2.due to the automatisation that may have already set in at that stage.**

The PHONETIC TEST MODEL has to be prepared on the following guidelines, and PHONETIC DATA should include:

a.   **SIMPLE TEXTS** in Russian meant for beginners, i.e. those who have undergone training in the same language (TL) for one to six months atleast. These materials will be picked up from four standard Russian Text Books, widely used all over India, considered to be standard and easily available Text Books for beginners, which are:

1."Russian for English Speaking Learners", by Wagner., V.N., 'Russkij jazyk', Moskva, 1984.

2."Russian Phonetics -- An Introductory Course ", by Anysimova, G.S.,et.al.'PPH',New Delhi,Ahmedabad, Bombay,1971

3."Russian - 1 -- A Text Book for Indian Philologists", by
Bakaya, R.M., Chakravarti, C.N., Mkr.tchjan,E.N., and
Kozlova,G.i.'R.usskij jazyk', Moskva, 1982

4."RUSSIAN - Text Book", by Bagga,R.S., Budai,V.G., and
Menon, R.N. 'R.usskij jazyk', Moskva, 1982.

The   simple   texts   (as   described   in   a.   above)
selected/compiled on the basis of the above Text Books will be
carefully typed out on data sheets and they will also have to be
made available to the respondents in hand-written form for
convenience of reading. Students will be given the freedom to
choose as to whichever sheet they wish to read from.

The criteria for the selection of the texts will be as
follows:

1.The minimum that a student is expected to know after the
completion of the basic phonetic course of one to six months.

2.The so called 'difficult' segments and segmental combinations
of the Russian speech for the Bengali speaking learners.

b.   **MINIMAL PAIRS OF CONSONANTS**

1.VOICED -- VOICELESS --: VOICED CONSONANTS

2.HARD -- SOFT CONSONANTS

A total of 55 pairs under b.1 above and 74 pairs under b.2
above will be taken along with 131 units, where voiced consonants
are to be devoiced due to different kinds of assimilation or
other rules. There will be 45 such units as well, where voiceless
consonants should change into their voiced counterparts.

c. COMBINATION OF CONSONANTS

1.TWO CONSONANTS
2.THREE CONSONANTS
3.FOUR CONSONANTS

There will also be 24 units of combinations of two consonants, 30 units of combinations of three consonants, and 10 units of combinations of four consonants.

Apart from the above, the phonetic data will include 35 units of combinations of prepositions and nouns involving voicing and devoicing of consonants.

d. QUALITATIVE CHANGES IN CONSONANTS and CONSONANTS NOT TO BE PRONOUNCED

There will be 41 units involving various kinds of changes in consonantal segments. There will also be 17 such units, where some consonants are silent.

e. CONSONANTS WHICH ARE OFTEN CONFUSED

Under this category 43 such minimal pairs will be taken separately, where consonantal segments are often confused and misidentified by the students.

f. STRESS AND REDUCTION OF VOWELS

This category will include 100 such words, where all the Russian vowels appear in initial, middle and final positions under stress and/or undergo reduction in separate cases.

C.DICTATION DATA

The above Texts under B.a. and words under B.f.will be used for dictation. These dictation data sheets will be superimposed with the errors that are reflected while reading the same texts.

This will be required in order to find out as to what extent the errors in speech are reflected in writing and what is the extent of deviation in speech and writing.

D. INTERVIEW DATA

a. All the respondents will be required to answer a set of questions by the researcher to furnish their individual opinion on the problems of learning the Russian speech segments. They will be asked to comment on the types of problems and the reasons thereof.

b. Atleast one teacher from each of the above institutions (a minimum of five teachers) will be requested to comment on the problems of teaching the Russian segmental features to the Bengali speaking learners, as it is expected that they would have actually come across such students, and have gathered experience. However, care has to be taken that the above teachers should have actually taught the beginners.

The above interview data will be very helpful while interpreting the phonetic data.

V.6 CLASSIFICATION MODEL

It is expected that there will be several types of errors, that will be reflected in the above B. Phonetic, and C. Dictation data. These errors will have to be stored and classified (as described in Chapter-III) under:

    a. PHONETIC ERRORS
    b. PHONOLOGICALLY DIFFERENTIAL ERRORS
    c. MIXED ERRORS

While labelving the errors on the above pattern, the following information will be required to be noted down for further interpretation:

1.The position or positions that the error occurs in.

2.Any particular CC, CV, or VC combination that the error takes

   place in.

3.Frequency of the error.

4.Any apparent reason(s) for the error in relationship to the L1

   background.

5.Main difficulty in overcoming the error.

Having computed the phonetic data on the above lines, the
same exercise will have to be undertaken once again, and data
will also have to be collected from atleast another 10 such
students, whose L1 background is a language other than
Bengali, because of the fact that all the errors need not be
attributed to the L1 conditions, and these data will be put
under category III (described later in this chapter in
details). All other information on perceptual and environmental
background will also have to be collected from respondents under
category III.

The next step will be to marl such errors which are common
for students with Bengali as the L1 and students with other
languages as L1. Having done the above it will be clear as to
which of the errors can be treated as common for almost all
beginners, in the Indian context, wanting to learn the Russian
language. Hence, these and the remaining errors will have to be
further classified under:

I. ERRORS COMMON FOR MOST OF THE STUDENTS WITH DIFFERENT L1

   a.Errors, that could be rectified with time, more practice and

   proper training.

   b.Errors, that remain and get reflected in speech, its

   recordings and writing even after ample scope of

   rectification.

II.ERRORS COMMON FOR MOST OF THE STUDENTS WITH BENGALI AS THE L1

a.Errors, that could be rectified with time, more practice and proper training.

b.Errors, that remain and get reflected in speech, its recordings and writing even after ample scope of rectification.

Having completed the above task, data will be interpreted so as to arrive at logical conclusions as under:

ERRORS THAT ARE COMMITTED AT RANDOM ONLY BY THE BENGALI L1 STUDENTS, AND THE ERRORS WHICH ARE COMMON FOR THE OTHER L1 STUDENTS AND DIFFICULTIES FACED WHILE TEACHING THESE PROBLEMATIC SEGMENTS AND THEIR COMBINATIONS TO THE BENGALI L1 STUDENTS.

V.7 VALIDATION OF DATA SHEETS

The data and interview sheets as planned above and prepared vide:

APPENDIX - A. Perceptual and Environmental Data;

APPENDIX - B. Phonetic Test Model / Sheet;

APPENDIX - C. Dictation Data;

APPENDIX - D. Interview Data (Teachers);

APPENDIX - E. Interview Data (Respondents);

have been validated and comments upon them were gathered from linguists and professors/teachers of the Russian language from five major institutions. The comments given by these experts have helped the researcher immensely in various ways, including in the process of working upon the methodology of this study.

Data and interview sheets thus formulated and used in the process of this study have been appended at the end of this dissertation, as described above.

V.8 COLLECTION OF DATA

Data have been collected from all the students of the Russian language with Bengali as their L1 as described earlier in this chapter. The researcher visited the Indian Institutions of the Russian language (as proposed earlier), and has collected data during his stay at New Delhi and Calcutta.

The researcher was nominated by the University Grants Commission, Govt. of India to visit Moscow under the then Indo-USSR Cultural Exchange Programme for teachers of the Russian Language, and stayed in Moscow from 13th February to 15th March, 1985 and again from 25th September to 25th November, 1991, during which the researcher collected data at the USSR institutions (as mentioned under V -(v) above), and was also able to read related literature, and present papers of the subject under study.The following libraries were visited:

a.Lenin Library, Moscow.

b.INION Library, Moscow.

c.Library of the Pushkin Institute, Moscow.

d.Gorlij Library, Moscow.

e.Library of the Moscow State University, Moscow.

f.National Library, Calcutta.**

g.Library of the Centre of Russian Studies, JNU, New Delhi.**

   **(During visits to Calcutta and New Delhi)

Phonetic data and data on perceptual and environmental background of the respondents were collected under three categories of respondents, viz.

CATEGORY   - I   <u>Bengali students learning the Russian Language in the Indian environment.</u>

CATEGORY   - II   <u>Bengali students learning the Russian Language in the Russian environment.</u>

CATEGORY   -III   <u>Students, other than those with Bengali as their L1, learning the Russian Language.</u>

The perceptual and environmental background of students under the above Category III were somewhat similar to those with Bengali L1 background. These 10 students were picked up over a period of two years from the classes that the researcher actually taught himself, and these students had learnt the Russian language for 6 - 8 months.

Further that the above Category - 1 included both a. Bengali students learning the Russian Language in a Bengali Language environment, and b. Bengali students learning the Russian Language in a non-Bengali Language environment.

The details of all samples enumerated above have been described in the following table:

TABLE : 14 PLACES OF DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE SIZE

CATEGORY -- J (Bengali students in the Indian environment)

Sr.No.	Place/ Institution	Sample Size	Male/ Female	Mode of data Collection
1.	The M.S.University of Baroda, Baroda.	15*	05/10	While teaching the Russian Language at this institution during the last 8 years.
2.	Centre of Russian Studies,JNU,N.Delhi.	11*	04/07	By visits.
3.	University of Calcutta, Calcutta.	10*#	06/04	By visits.
4.	Gorkij Sadan, Calcutta.	22**	10/12	By visits.
5.	Rama Krishna Mission, Calcutta.	06**	04/02	By visits.
	TOTAL	64	29/35	

* Non-Bengali Language Environment.
** Bengali Language Environment.

CATEGORY - II (Bengali students in the Russian environment)

1.	Pushlin Institute, Moscow.	06	02/04	During visit to the USSR, sponsored by the UGC for collection of material for Ph.D.
2.	Peoples' Friendship University, Moscow.	09	05/04	-do-
	TOTAL	15	07/08	

CATEGORY - III (Students with other languages as L1)

1.	The M.S.University of Baroda, Baroda.	10	02/08	While teaching them.
	GRAND TOTAL	89	38/51	

The above sample under Category II.2 included 05 students from Bangladesh, studying other subjects than the Russian Language, but in the Russian medium of instruction in Moscow, i.e. in the Russian environment. These students had no knowledge of the Russian Language prior to arriving at Moscow, and had been there for six - eight months each.

Data collected from Category I.1 included students, learning the Russian Language under the guidance of the researcher. Data were collected from each after they completed six - eight months' training (and also during this period) over a long period of time. All problems faced during this period were meticulously noted down for further study and analysis.

Data collected from Categories: I.1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 included such students who had studied the Russian language for 4 - 9 months, and 10 students, who had studied the same for 1 - 2 years.

Data collected from Categories: II.1 and 2 included a mixed group, who had studied the Russian language for 1 - 2 years in India, and then went to the Soviet Union, and each of them had undergone training in the Russian language for more than two months (except for the students from Bangladesh).

Thus all information were noted down by the researcher on separate data sheets, as described earlier, and for the phonetic data, apart from taping the speeches of the respondents, model speeches by the native users of the Russian language were also used as guiding texts. All phonetic data, based upon the Test Model were taped on magnetic tapes and transcribed for the

purpose of classification and interpretation. Data on dictation and interviews were also maintained as planned and proposed earlier.

V.9 TIME DEVOTED

On each respondent approximately 30 - 40 minutes were needed to gather required information for perceptual and environmental data. For phonetic data 120 - 180 minutes were needed, and another approximately 30 minutes were spent on discussions with each respondent. In some cases the entire data could not be collected in one sitting, and the same had to be completed over two or more sittings.

The informants (five teachers of the Russian Language) gave their opinions over many interviews and discussions. Hence no timing was possible to be recorded, nor was it felt necessary.

V.10 CODING

In view of the absence of IPA or Appropriate Phonetic Transcription in the software used/available to the researcher, special codes had to be devised for description of phonetic materials. A separate list of **decodings** has been included in the thesis.

V.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

a.   It has been noticed that data collected from some of the above institutions have also reflected errors, transmitted to the students by the teachers due to their belonging to the Bengali L1 background themselves, or incorrect/inadequate knowledge of the target language. Though necessary care has been taken to

make note of such cases, however this has made the worl
difficult at times. Considering the fact that such cases were
very few, and they could be cross-checked with other phonetic
data, the same have been considered negligible.

b. The entire phonetic transcription has been done by the
researcher without using any equipment (except for the tape
recorders of good quality of reproduction) of the kind
— sonagraph etc. It would have certainly been better if this
could be possible, and then certainly more accurate results could
be achieved.

c. This stu/dy does not incorporate psychological implications
of the problem in the given context, because information on the
same was not adequately reflected in the data collected.

d. Many students of the Pussian Language drop out after
approximately a month's training, and their main difficulty, as
it was found, is that of articulation of Pussian segments.The
researcher was not able to gather enough data from such students.

· The following chapter includes analysis and interpretation
of data collected from respondents as mentioned above.