

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A BRIEF PROFILE**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses a detailed account of English language teaching in India. The discussions are further sub-headed as a) Historical background to the English language in India, b) the pre-independence period, c) the post independence period, d) the present status, e) English language teaching in India, f) historical background to the English language education in Assam, g) structure, growth and develop of education in Assam, h) present education system of Assam, i) position of English in the school curriculum and j) problems in teaching English

#### **3.2. Historical Background to the English Language in India**

This part provides a historical perspective by discussing the place of English in Indian education and the circumstances which led to the establishment of the present day education; the discussion of this historical background has been divided into two parts for the convenience of better understanding as (a) the pre-Independence period and (b) the Post- Independence period.

#### **3.3. The Pre-Independence Period**

English is considered as a legacy of British rule in India. According to Pattanayak (1981), “India fought British imperialism, but it has retained English as window to wider knowledge, a tool of international understanding and as the language of international status, commerce and diplomacy.”

The founding of the East India Company and its political establishment led to a number of development activities such as the social reform movement, missionary activities etc.

### **3.3.1. Growth of English Education in India through Missionary Activities**

The earliest attempts at spreading English education in the country were made by missionaries, private societies and individuals. The then existing situation has been summed up by Paranjape as follows: “During the first thirty years, Christian mission were the only private agency in the field, but government did not have the courage to entrust the work of education to Christian mission whose primary aim was to secure converts of Christians”.

### **3.3.2. The Charter Act of 1813**

The missionary education did not contribute in any substantial measure to the modern movement in education. The real movement in education began with the Charter Act of 1813. Clause 43 of the Act which contained the first legislative admission by the East India Company of its responsibility for educating the Indians ran as follows: “That it shall be lawful for the Governor General to direct that out of any surplus which may remain of the rent, revenues, a sum not less than one lakh of rupees a year shall be set apart and applied to the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories of India.”

This act did not; however make any mention of the medium of instruction for popularizing the Western scientific knowledge among the Indians as the Company was of the view that the Western scientific knowledge was to be imparted through the mother tongue of the learner. The implementation of the Act was however delayed until 1923 as there was no agency to administer the funds sanctioned by the Act.

In the twenties of the nineteenth century a climate of opinion was created in favour of English education in the country, when the Hindu College was established at Calcutta in 1817 to give instruction, in literature and science of Europe and Asia. This was the first official step by the Company’s Government for the popularization of English education in India. This period also witnessed the formation of educated Indian elite who championed the cause of English education as passport for technical advancement and material prosperity.

### **3.3.3. Anglicist-Orientalist Controversy**

In 1823 a General Committee of public Instruction was appointed and its chief function was to encourage instruction in oriental languages through the establishment of Sanskrit colleges. There was a difference of opinion among the members of the Committee over the competing claims of Oriental and Occidental learning. When the committee made preparation for the establishment of a Sanskrit college at Calcutta, Raja Ram Mohan Roy submitted a memorial to Lord Ambrest on 11th December, 1823 registering his protest against the spread of Sanskrit education. He wrote: "If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would have been allowed to displace the system of school. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would best be calculated to keep the country in darkness." The Committee continued to remain indifferent to this protests.

#### **3.3.4. Macaulay's Minutes: 1835**

The Anglicist-Orientalist controversy was ultimately referred to the Government. The result was the famous Minute of Lord Macaulay, which attempted to provide a solution to the dilemma posed by the educational clause in the Charter Act of 1813. While interpreting clause 43 of the Act, Macaulay wrote in his famous Minute dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1835, that it contained nothing about the particular languages or sciences which were to be studied. He raised the final question "Which language is worth knowing?" to which he himself answered: "on grounds of utility and intrinsic merit of literature to which it would give access, the English language was superior to the classical language of India." Macaulay knew that English could not be carried to the vast masses of people and hence wanted the educated Indian elite to be interpreters between the British and the millions whom they governed.

#### **3.3.5. Lord William Bentinck's Educational Reforms: 1835**

On 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1835 Bentinck issued a resolution which asserted that "the great object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed in English education alone."

#### **3.3.6. English as the Language of Administration: 1837**

Persian which was the language of law courts was replaced by English in 1837 and English became official language in the higher branches of administration.

### **3.3.7. English Education Essential for Government Services**

Lord Hardinge made the historic announcement in 1844 that for employment in public offices preference would be given only to those who had been educated in Western Science and were familiar with the English language. Ever since this announcement was made adequate command over the English language was insisted upon for higher categories of government jobs. In this context it is interesting to consider the views of Lott (1974) who says: “English was being taught and learnt because it was to serve as a tool for effective administration of government. Good skills in the language were the lowest rungs of the ladder to success in public service, and Indians about this time did indeed begin to assume the responsibilities required of the higher posts in government administration.” By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the British administration had spread its web far and wide and English became the only medium of instruction at the school and college level. There was however no uniformity with regard to the place of English in the curricula at the school level. Commenting on the variety in the pattern of school, Lott (1974) says: “Bengal went all out for English from the beginning of School while Bombay favoured the vernaculars. In the Punjab even a sketchy knowledge of English was a feather in cap and skill in the language was demanded at the primary levels of instruction.”

With the growth of the national movement, there was a demand that English should no longer continue as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. This was a legitimate demand because generations of Indian children had to spend over one third of their total school time trying to learn a language which many of them could not use later in life. The compulsory study of English, it was observed made learning largely a matter of rote memory, and thus hampered the free development of thinking and expression.

During 20s and 30s English was replaced by the Indian languages as the medium of instruction at the school level. Although many educationists advocated a

policy of 'hastening slowly' the process of change-over, some others opined that the obstacles which made the change-over difficult should be overcome at an early date. This was the general state when India attained her independence in 1947.

### **3.4. The Post Independence Period**

We saw in the last section that the period preceding Independence was one of confusion and uncertainty concerning the role of English in language education. Some of the state governments in their enthusiasm for restoring the pride of place to the regional languages in the curriculum took the retrograde step of reducing the quantum and quality of English taught in the high schools. The state Government's active interest in restoring the pride and place of the regional language in the curriculum was calculated to prevent the progressive deterioration of English teaching and its ultimate disappearance from the curriculum. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Minister for Education, Government of India warned the people that "undue and unplanned haste in transforming the linguistic situation and the political prejudice against the English language would cause incalculable harm to the country."

#### **3.4.1. The Appointment of University Education Commission, 1948**

In spite of the timely warning of the national leaders, a good deal of unthinking prejudice was engendered against English, and it had its far-reaching effect on the teaching and learning of English in the country. The Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Radhakrishnan was appointed against this background of uncertainty and confusion concerning the role of English in language education. The Radhakrishnan Commission submitted its report in 1949. On the subject of medium of instruction, it accepted that the basis for the federal language would be provided by the Western Hindi. The Committee however recommended the continuance of the study of English in the following words: "English however must continue to be studied. It is a language which is rich a literature, humanistic and technical. If under sentimental urge we should give up English, we should cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge."

The Commission also recommended the study of three languages. These languages were (a) the regional language (b) the federal language, Hindi, and (c) English.

### **3.4.2. Statutory Recognition of Hindi as the Official Language of India**

The recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Commission guided the development of University education in India in the Post-Independence period. Under Article 343 of the Constitution of India, Hindi in Devanagari script was made the official Language of the Union. In order to make the transition to Hindi gradual and acceptable to all shades of the populace provision was made in the constitution of India for the use of English to continue until 1965 for all official purposes. It was also decided that Hindi was to be used first in addition to English, and later on it should replace English gradually. The Constitution also provided for the appointment of a Language Commission to suggest steps about the medium of instruction from time to time.

### **3.4.3. Report of the Secondary Education Commission**

Under the Chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanswami Mudaliar, the Secondary Education Commission reiterated the recommendation of the Radhakrishnan Commission about the role of the regional language, the federal language and English at the higher secondary and the University stages.

### **3.4.4. The Three-Language Formula and Its Implementation**

The three-language formula seemed to be the only practical solution which guided language in India. It was suitable for a situation which was characterized by linguistic multiplicity in as much as it provided a satisfactory solution to the following two problems: (a) it satisfied the sentimental attachment of different ethnic groups to their mother tongues, and (b) it offered guidelines for pedagogic problems. Initially the educational policy in India accepted the need for all students to learn three languages, namely, Hindi, the national official language; English, the auxiliary National official language and the regional official language, which could be one of the 14 Indian languages listed in the 7<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution. Two major problems arose with this formula: students of Hindi-speaking States in which the Regional official language was also the National official language were required to

learn only two languages, whereas students whose mother tongue was neither Hindi nor English had had to learn four languages.

To find a remedy for the difficulties experienced by the learners and to remove the inequality mentioned above, the Central Advisory Board of Education revised the Three-language formula at its 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting held in 1956. The revised Three-Language formula was approved by the Conference of Chief Ministers in 1961. According to the revised Three-language formula, all Secondary students were required to study (a) the regional language, (b) Hindi, or where this was the L1, any other Indian language and (c) English, or any other modern European language. One of the guiding principles of the formula was to force the students of the Northern Indian States to Study a South Indian language in order to ensure national cohesiveness. Unfortunately, in the Hindi-speaking areas the Three-language formula was honoured more in the breach than in the observance when the students of the Hindi-speaking areas chose to opt for Indo-European languages which were closely related to Hindi, rather than opt for a south Indian language. The revised Three-language formula continued to throw up its implementation inequalities.

The Education Commission (1964-66) examined the details of the implementation of the Three-language formulas in the different states, and recommended “modified” Three-language formula. According to this National Language Policy for Education, the teaching of the mother tongue or the regional language was required to begin from the very first class and go up to the tenth standard. In other words, the first language is to be taught on a compulsory basis from Standard one to Standard Ten. During these stages, a student could also offer to study Hindi or English. From class VIII to X, however, all the students were required to study three languages : besides the first and the Second languages, another language that not been studied previously should be studied as a third language for three years compulsory from Standards VIII to X. During these years a student could also study one or two modern language as Optional Subjects. At the Higher Secondary stage, a student would be required to study any two of the language he had studied earlier, or any two of the following in addition to one or more modern Indian languages as optional subjects : (a) Modern Indian Languages, (b) Classical Languages (Indian or Foreign), and (c) Modern Foreign Languages.

Prior to Independence, the study of English was regarded as a content-based, cultural, humanistic discipline. Also it was a language which could make available to the people of India Western science and technology. This duality of approach to the study of teaching is also seen in Macaulay's Minutes. In the Indian Universities and colleges the teaching of English continued the two aims of introducing the culture embodied in English literature as well as giving Indians the ability to use the language effectively through a sustained exposure to the great works of English literature. The Schools in India have traditionally been a preparation for the University. Thus, it could be said that the kind of dual approach to the study of English represented in college and university curriculum also reflected in the teaching of English in Schools. One significant development after the Independence has been the polarization of attitudes towards English and its function in India.

### **3.5. Present Status**

The status of English in India is different from its status in a western European country. In a western European country, where it is treated as a foreign language, here in India, English has the dignified place of second language, and as such, it is widely used in the media, education, administration, non-localized business etc.

In the majority of cases, spoken and written English are learnt through formal education. While school textbooks are written in Standard English, students are continuously exposed to many varieties of Indian English outside of the classroom. English is mainly used as the medium of instruction in English medium schools in the country. English medium schools of varying standards are now available in most of the cities and small towns too. In other schools, English is taught as a subject within the curriculum. At university level, the usage of English is more intense. It is the medium of instruction in all the prestigious institutes of technology, institutes of medical science, agricultural universities and the university departments of engineering and technology. It is also the favoured medium of instruction at post-graduate level for almost all the subjects in the majority of the universities.

### **3.6. English Language Teaching In India**

The position of the English language in India is different from its position in other countries .Although it is a foreign language; it still occupies the role of an



associate official language. It is used widely as a link language in offices and among the educated people. In the interest of wider communication with the outside world, learning of foreign languages is being encouraged. The Indian languages with their rich treasures did not get a proper chance to be used for inter-state communication in the past. In recent years the English language has been used widely to occupy the position of a link language in addition to its use as the official language. So long as Hindi develops itself along with other state languages to be the all-purpose language, English will continue to be used in the land. Moreover, English is the language of science and technology as well as the medium of instruction at most of the colleges and universities. In such a background English occupies a very important place as a second language in the school curriculum and for higher education. Without exception, every secondary school child has to learn English as a subject usually for six years but in some cases for three years only. The place of English in the scheme of languages as envisaged in the recent Indian Education Commission Report is as follows.

1. Lower Primary Level: (Class 1-4)

Mother Tongue should be used as a medium of instruction.

2. Higher Primary Stage: (Class 5-7) two languages

(a) Mother tongue or the regional language

(b) Hindi or English

3. Lower Secondary Stage: (Class 8-10)

(a) Mother tongue/regional language

(b) English

(c) National language (Hindi)

The report also stated that a working knowledge of English would be a valuable asset for all students and a reasonable proficiency in the language will be necessary for those who proceed to the University. English will also be used as a library language. Earlier in the State of Assam, English was introduced in the Class

V. In the year 2000 it was introduced in Class III; and in the year 2008, English was introduced in *Ka-shreni* (Lower Primary Level). The commission not only showed an awareness of the degree of proficiency that should be acquired in learning the language but observed that proficiency depends in addition to the number of years during which it is learnt, and the motivation of the student, the stage at which it is studied, the type of teacher, equipment provided and the method of teaching adopted and so on.

### **3.7. Historical Background to the English Language Education in Assam**

Assam is the second largest state of North-East India. N.B. Biswas (1999) says that the history of the region reveals that all the other states of the region, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh, were with Assam with the exception Manipur and Tripura. The state is located at the south of the eastern Himalaya. Assamese is the official language of the state which is the descendent of the Magadhi Prakrit group of the Indo-Aryan family of languages. The English word ‘Assamese’ has been coined by the addition of the derivational suffix –ese in the same manner as Japanese and Chinese are derived. Assamese is spoken in and around Guwahati is accepted as the standard Assamese. The script of the language is similar to Bangla script: the only difference is the graphological symbols used for /r/ and /w/ in both the languages.

Assam had been the centre of education for the North-Eastern states. It had the same indigenous system of education which prevailed in the rest of India. This system was modeled on the Sanskrit-oriented Vedic education. Formal education was first introduced by the Aryans who migrated to Pragjyotish or Kamrup. Before the arrival of the British, the Namghars which are Hindu religious institutions were the provider of education in the state. At that time religious knowledge was the basis of any educational pursuit.

With the arrival of the Christian Missionaries, English education was introduced to the region in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. American Baptist mission, the Dutch Baptist, Presbyterian groups and the Roman Catholics were the first missionary groups to arrive at this part of the country. Renu Devi (1987) says that the missionaries emphasized on English education to help the local scholars in exploring different sphere of activities and

job opportunities. With the expansion of the British rule in India, knowledge of English became essential for administrative and commercial activities.

However, there was hardly any noticeable progress in the field of education before the Charter Act of 1833. It was due to the gap between the theory and practice of the educational policies. The controversy between the orientalist and the advocates of the western education also arose. David Scott, the agent of the Governor General for the whole eastern frontier, encouraged and favoured the indigenous oriental education for Assam. According to him, over emphasis on English would hurt the local sentiment as well as spoil the image of the rulers. These ideas of Scott were accepted by the Government of East India Company and consequently, the orientalist's view prevailed at the official level. But from 1813 to 1834 there were visible changes which made the people think about the advantages of English education.

Scott's proposal to encourage the indigenous schools by land grants was accepted by the Government in 1826. Thus, eleven schools were established in lower Assam. By appointing the local youth, educated in the indigenous schools, in the Revenue and judicial departments Scott acknowledged their educated status, But the European official found them incompetent in maintaining the documents and files due to their unfamiliarity with English language. Thus, in order to appoint local people in the Government offices, English language education became essential.

After Scott's death, Christian Missionaries played an important role in the educational field. The American Baptist Mission established 14 schools at Sibsagar in 1844. The striking feature of these missionaries' policy was their emphasis on the mother tongue education. They prepared text books and grammars in Assamese and translated the Bible from English to Assamese. In 1867 Miles Bronson, an American Baptist Missionary, prepared an Anglo-Assamese dictionary with 1400 words. The contribution of the missionaries was seen in the publication of the first ever Assamese magazine, '*Arunodoi*' in 1840 in Sibsagar. Recognizing the need of the local youths' employment in the government offices, the missionaries also emphasized on the teaching and learning of English language.

The first secondary school of Assam was established in Guwahati by the General Committee of Public Instruction on the 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1835. At that time, the school was called the Guwahati Seminary, where the medium of instruction was Assamese. Today, it is

known as Cotton Collegiate Higher Secondary School. This school was the result of the efforts of Captain Jerkin, who wanted to train the Assamese youth for government offices.

In 1874 Assam was separated from Bengal Presidency and a separate education department was created. Consequently, an Inspector of schools was placed in the charge of the newly formed education department until the appointment of the Director of Public Instruction in 1906. Many secondary schools were established hereafter. These schools were the pioneer in the spread of western education and science. The pupils of these schools were eventually recruited in different government offices. According to the General Report of Public Instruction of Assam, there were 10 high schools in 1878 in the state and in 1900 there were 20 schools, with an increase often. By the time of Independence in 1947, there were 742 middle schools and 191 secondary schools in the state. At present, there are around 1600 high schools, out of which 69 conduct higher secondary classes. Until 1962, secondary education in Assam was under the dual control of Guwahati University and the Department of Education, Assam. Guwahati University was looking after the academic sphere while the Department of Education was concerned with, the administrative work. However, in 1962, the Board of Secondary Education, Assam was established to look after the secondary education in the state while some of the English medium schools got affiliated to CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) and ICSE (Indian Certificate of Secondary Education).

With the spread of schools the literacy of the state was on the rise. In support of the statement, Md. Mohsin Ali (2004) stated that according to the Census of 1971, the literacy rate of the state was 33.94, in 1991 it was 52.89 and in 2001 the literacy rate was 64.28, He further added in the year 1998-99, there were 31,888 primary schools in Assam with 86,810 teachers and the number of students enrolled were 32,93,825. In the year 1999-2000, there were 33,435 primary and preprimary institutions in the state with 87,009 primary school teachers.

Today, many institutions have paved new paths for those who want to pursue higher education in Assam. The achievements in the educational domain has touched new height with the establishment of institutions such as Indian Institution of Technology (Guwahati), Tezpur University, Assam University (Silchar), K.K Handique State Open University, Guwahati University, DibrugarhUniversity, Assam Medical College, Assam Agriculture University (Jorhat), Assam Engineering College

(Guwahati) and Jorhat Engineering College (Jorhat). Thus, the state has six universities; one deemed university, one institution of national repute and many important professional institutions which attract a large number of students from the North-East and beyond. The establishment of different technical and professional institutes gives the students exposure to new career opportunities and thus, the whole education scenario is undergoing a radical change. In most of the higher education institution the use of English as the medium of instruction is imperative.

Assamese or English is used as medium of instruction in the state schools. The state Government has introduced the policy of free and compulsory education for students up to the age of 14 under the right to education act.

### **3.8. Structure, Growth and Development of Education in Assam**

After the recommendation of the Mudaliar Commission (Secondary Education Commission, 1952) certain changes took place in terms of restructuring the secondary education system in the state. Consequently, in 1956 the policy of upgrading the high schools (the schools which have classes from *ka shreni* to class X) into Higher Secondary (the schools which have the senior secondary section) Schools was introduced. Since 1973, Assam has been following the 10+2+3 pattern which is the national pattern used in the rest of the country. Earlier the structure of the formal system of primary education consisted of four classes, that is, I, II, III, and IV. This four year pattern made it different from the other states, which follow the 5+3+2 pattern up to the secondary level. But since 2010 as the implementation of the 'Right to Education' is introduced, our state also follow the same pattern to the other states, i.e.5+3+2 pattern up to secondary education. Until 1999, a very small section of pupils had the pre primary education, but in 1999, the govt. of Assam decided to introduce the *ka shreni* in all lower primary schools of the state. Secondary education covers class IX and X. After completing ten years of school, students pursue +2 or higher secondary education either in higher secondary schools under the directorate of secondary education of the government of Assam, or in the degree colleges under the directorate of higher education of the government of Assam where higher secondary sections are there. Some students also go to the junior colleges which are solely for the purpose of higher secondary education. The higher secondary stage is under the jurisdiction of Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) which was

established in 1985. There is not any definite pattern for the access to higher education. After passing out the higher secondary examination, the students are eligible to join the next level of education according to their performance in the examination.

### **3.9. Present Education System of Assam**

On the basis of medium of instruction, schools of Assam can be divided into two main groups- regional/vernacular medium schools and English medium schools. Among the regional medium schools, majority of the schools are Assamese medium schools. Assamese can be opted as the medium of instruction up to the undergraduate level, while at the masters' degree level, with the exception of the language subjects, English is the only medium of instruction. Moreover, English is considered as a compulsory subject up to the undergraduate level. In most Assamese medium schools and colleges, English is taught with the help of the mother tongue of the students.

Now a days, Assam Sarba Siksha Abhijan provides free education in govt. aided schools up to class VIII. Thereafter up to HSLC examination (class x), education is under the control of Secondary Board of Education, Assam (SEBA). 10+2 level comes under Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC), while the degree colleges are affiliated to different affiliating universities of the state. On the other hand the private schools are either autonomous or they form a group of their own. Earlier private schools were almost synonymous to English medium schools but recently for the last two decades many Assamese medium private schools have been established in the nook and corner of the state and their numbers are increasing day by day. On the other hand, most of the govt. aided schools were once private in the sense that they were established by some local people in order to educate the students of their locality and those venture schools sought govt. affiliation and later some of them were undertaken by the govt. of Assam. The process is going on and even today there are many venture schools in the state. But in context of the present study, private schools refer only to those schools which not seek any govt. aid. Neither they abide by the govt. holiday list, nor do they follow govt. rules and regulations strictly. To a great extent, they are guided by their own rules and regulations. Up to class VIII, these privately managed schools adopt a comparatively vast syllabus with two or three more extra subjects than that of provincialised schools.

They have few holidays and more working days and hours. On the other hand, the admission fee and the monthly tuition fee of these schools are quite high. (As it has already been mentioned that in govt. schools, education is provided free of cost up to class VIII). Moreover in most of the private schools transport facilities are provided to carry the students and staff, which is not available in govt. and provincialised schools. Thus the expenditure being very high, these private schools are not affordable to all classes of the society.

### **3.10. Position of English in the School Curriculum**

The state policy on language education, curricular statements and syllabi and materials for teaching-learning of English along with teacher inputs decide the quality of education in schools, especially in rural schools. Any curricular reform ought to take into consideration the fact that whatever appears relevant and essential today may not be suitable for tomorrow. Curriculum in the countries like India bases itself on the diverse characteristics of the nation with its multiplicities. Goals for a comprehensive language curriculum need to bring in aspect of language, culture, practices of people in the learning process in accordance with the local needs and concerns so that learners are able to connect with real life situations. A national curriculum (in language education) should aim for *‘a cohesive curricular policy based on guiding principles for language teaching and acquisition, which allows for a variety of implementations suitable to local needs and resources, and which provides illustrative models for use’*(NCERT-2005, p-3). A syllabus which is a medium to realize the aims of language education is driven by various needs and concerns that a curricular framework aims to achieve. We expect a syllabus to present textbook developers for destining such materials that would give scope and space for teachers to exploit the perspective to maximum extent and to go beyond the textbook to engage the learners with their peers and immediate surroundings. The main objective of a good syllabus is to enable the learner to achieve proficiency in the language in different domains.

Nobody can deny the fact that it is through English that we are able to keep ourselves updated with the recent developments around the world. English is also of utmost importance in case of higher education and research in the field of science and technology and for those who want to find a good livelihood in this competitive

environment. Here lies the inclusion of English language teaching from the early years of education. English as it serve as the common medium for political, historical and scientific thought for the people of the world, has found a place of interest in the school curriculum. The Secondary Education Commission 1952-53 gives emphasis on the retention of English in school curriculum as it is thought that English language and literature would help in bringing unity in the political and other spheres of activity in India. The Indian Education Commission 1964-66 also recommended the continuance of English in the interest of national integration or for higher academic work. The three language formula first suggested by the National Integration Commission 1962 and later recommended by the Indian Education Commission 1964-66 contemplated compulsory study of English either as a second language (L2) or as a third language (L3) for a duration of six years or three years respectively in non Hindi speaking areas and as a second language for six years in Hindi speaking areas. Even when the different educational commissions and committees at different times recommended the adoption of the mother tongue or the regional language as a medium of instruction, English finds its due place in the curriculum. Though most of the universities including Guwahati University and Dibrugarh University in Assam have switched over to regional language as medium of instruction (up to graduate level), they have retained English as a compulsory subject of study up to graduate level.

T.C. Baruah 2006 finds out some objectives of teaching English at the school stage. According to him, the teaching of English must aim at developing in the pupils the following skills and knowledge.

1. To understand English with ease when spoken at normal conversational speed.
2. To speak English correctly and fluently.
3. To read English with comprehension and at a reasonable speed as to use it as a library language for gathering information and for enjoying reading.
4. To write neatly and correctly.
5. To enjoy simple poems in English.
6. To translate common English words, phrases and sentences into their functional equivalents in mother tongue and vice versa.
7. To develop interest in English.

English will continue to dominate the school curriculum not only as a language, but as a medium of learning too. The anti-English spirit or English hatred is



dying out and will slowly diminish in coming years as it is perceived as the language of hope and better life. While some of our native languages are losing their battle for survival where English is taking the 'killer' role and the curricular documents calling for collaborative bi/multilingualism, what in reality felt is subtractive bilingualism. This dangerous trend may lead to mass conversion to English medium instruction in our schools, both urban and rural schools. We must ensure that English as a language in education is fully realized in terms of the basic conditions for learning the language and those educated through native medium schools attain the proficiency that would not hamper them to move forward to higher education and employment any other urban English medium educated child would compete.

### **3.11. Aims of Teaching English as a Second Language**

The emphasis given on the study of highly literary and difficult prose, poetry and drama in the past has now given place for the students in Indian schools to the acquisition of the skills of the language. H.E. Palmer says that the learning of a second language must proceed on a philological basis and not on a literary one because of the fact that before learning the literature, one has to master the language. In order to enable the students to develop a practical command over the English language during the school course, the following four aims of teaching English can be formulated.

1. Understanding English when speaking: This means that the learner should be able to understand English when spoken within a general vocabulary, under conditions of normal communication among native speakers at a conversational speed. For this they are required to be given ear training exercises and opportunities of listening to correct English sounds.

2. Speaking correct English: The learner should be able to speak English correctly on topics of everyday interest with an acceptable pronunciation and correct intonation within an appropriate vocabulary. In order to master speech the learner has to master four tasks viz., i) comprehension of speech of others, ii) building a vocabulary iii) combining words into sentences, and iv) pronunciation.

3. Understanding written English: The "learner at the school stage should be able to read with comprehension simple untechnical English of ordinary correspondence, newspapers, popular magazines, school text books and books of general interest in simple modern English.

4. Writing correct English: On completion of the school course the child should be able to write letters in simple English, pen down his personal experiences and express his views on an ordinary subject correctly.

The four aims may also be classified into two pairs (i) receptive or passive and (ii) expressive or active.

Outcome of teaching should be the development of both these abilities, receptive ability and expression ability, in children and as such, all the pairs are equally important for the teaching and learning a language, first or second. This can best be supported by answering the question: What is meant by knowing or learning a language?

### **3.12. Problems in Teaching and Learning English**

Various kinds of problems are prevailing in teaching and learning situation of the English language in the educational sphere of Assam. As a result we can notice the dismal performance shown by the mother tongue medium learners after learning English for 10 to 12 years as a compulsory subject. Most of the students remain unable to communicate orally in simple English. Even they do not dare to write an application in English. If the basic aim incorporated in the syllabus is to enable the students to communicate and participate in real life situations then why these students fail to do so is a serious problem.

Before starting to teach English, the teacher must bear in mind that it is a foreign language which has no similarity with the modern Indian languages. Along with many other features it has vast syntactical differences with the Indian languages. Yet, the linguistic attainment in the mother tongue is believed to help the students to learn the target language, but at the same time special care must be taken to see that this influence does not become fallacious. Students should not seek to find out equivalents for all syntactical and lexical items in these two languages. Again linguistic attainment is the foremost goal of teaching and learning English in our

country. But this linguistic goal is in fact very difficult to attain in our society, especially in a state like Assam, where English is not used for ordinary communicative purpose. It has been observed that the people of other North-Eastern states can speak better English than the people of Assam, as most of the students of those states have adopted English as the medium of instruction right from the very beginning of their formal education. But in case of Assam, though it is the home land of different tribes and communities, people usually use Assamese to communicate with people of other tribes and communities. English is used either in some highly formal situations or to express fury or under some compulsions. Remarkably the English used under such circumstances are of fragmentary type, and not complete sentence. Speaking English without compulsion is considered as showing too much. Students, in fact get only a little exposure to English and such situations are very rare where they are compelled to speak the language. Therefore, the students have to learn English only in the classroom environment which is completely artificial. At the same time, what is learnt in the classroom cannot be practiced in real life situation. This in fact creates a great wall between theory and practice, and teaching and learning. In order to practice real English teachers and students of the language class have to imagine different situations and try to react accordingly. But this imagination can't help much as it may not create an urge to open up the mouth.

Language teaching is not similar to the teaching of other subjects like Mathematics, Social Science, General Science etc. 'How to use it' should be the main concern of the language class, especially at the primary level. In order to teach English as a skill subject, the teacher has to be well trained and well equipped. A black board and a textbook are not enough for teaching a second language. A language teacher may have to go even beyond the classroom and the prescribed syllabus. Standard textbooks and other teaching materials, efficient teachers and a favourable atmosphere-all are essential for effective teaching. Yet many of our teachers are believed to be untrained and unskilled in this business, and many of them teach English only as a subject, and not as a language. In a traditional English class, the teacher uses nothing except the textbook and the black board. Again, there is a doubt regarding the qualities of the text books and the relevance of the course contents. Many text books are doubted to have less practical value. Again, a wrong evaluation system may mislead the entire process of teaching and learning. As the

students study mainly to get good marks in the examination, they concentrate more on those questions which may be asked in their examination. It is observed that in the existing evaluation system, a student can do quite well if she/he can predict the 'common questions' and produce their readymade answers in the examination. This type of examination system cannot help much in learning a language, because apart from the writing skill, here all other skills are almost neglected and language proficiency cannot be acquired without an overall development of all the four skills. This is because a student even after learning the language for more than 12 years fails to speak three correct English sentences at a stretch. Moreover, language learning needs constant practice, reinforcement, assessment and modification. This can be ensured only if examinations held at a frequent interval covering all the language skills equally.

As it is very difficult to get English exposure in our real life situations, the classrooms have to be well equipped with different teaching aids like various kinds of charts, pictures and audio visual aids etc. In Assam, many school buildings are worn out, furniture are insufficient and classrooms are overcrowded, though the schools are getting aids from the govt. for the development of school infrastructure and other necessary materials on a regular basis.

Educationists agree to the point that right motivation plays an important role in imparting education. But in rural areas, where many people live below the poverty line, it is in fact very difficult to make the learners properly motivated. Many of the students do not find the school going practice a fruitful business. They are just coming to school mechanically as to pass time. It is indeed a tough job to train up such students. Moreover, many students come to school with a predominant notion that English is a very difficult subject and this input is given either at home or they learn it from their surroundings, and it is re-emphasized by the teacher's repeated warning that English is in fact a very difficult subject. This type of English phobia hinders the learning process to a great extent. Though the original intention behind the warning is to make the students study the language more attentively, it creates a negative impression in the students' mind that as English is a difficult subject, the performance level in English may not be as high as that of the other subjects. Students seem to be satisfied with poor marks in English. To learn the language, it is necessary for the students to form a reading habit right from the early stage of their

life. At the beginning, they may start with some interesting books, such as comics, storybooks, tales etc. and later on they should be encouraged to read for both enjoyment and knowledge. For this, the schools should have good library facility with some selected English books, weekly and monthly magazines; news papers etc. so that the students can read those in the library or borrow them to read at home. But unfortunately, there is no provision of library facility up to Higher Secondary level in the education system of Assam. Whatever books the schools are having in their office, most of them are text related and these books are kept in one or two book shelves or almirah which they regard as 'library'.

It has been observed that many of the teachers are not interested to participate in the teachers' in service training programme conducted by English Language Teaching Institute (ELTI) Kahilipara and some other institutes offering training programme. Even if some of the teachers participate in the programmes in order to update themselves for acquiring new information in the area of language teaching, they hardly implement those for teaching English in mother tongue dominated English classroom situation where English is taught as a subject only. Moreover, the teachers always remain under pressure to complete the course within the stipulated period of time. As a result, the teachers compelled to emphasize on the contents rather than the skills of the language. So, it is imperative to change the situation of teaching and learning English in the Assamese medium schools where the focus should be shifted from teaching about English to teaching English. That is why teaching English efficiently need a daring challenge to the concerned teachers. While English is a skill subject, they would teach it as knowledge of content subjects like History or Social Science. The skill of listening and speaking are neglected in English classroom. And there is hardly any action research undertaken by the teachers. Moreover, learning English is basically dependant on the learners desire to learn. English as a subject is taken to be difficult by the students. In most cases there is no real urge to learn English since the learners can get on easily with their own mother tongue. There are many more such problems that hinder the teaching-learning process in this context. Some of those are related to the teachers and guardians, some problems may be related to the infrastructure as well. But whatever may be the problem, a resourceful teacher with his own skill and innovation can bring remarkable change to the entire scenario.