

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTION

The present research study focused its attention on identifying the various kinds of problems of learning English by the 12th standard Assamese medium students of Barpeta district. Various factors in teaching-learning situation like goal/objective, effectiveness of the English syllabus, efficiency of the English teachers, effectiveness of the classroom teaching, methodology and other classroom activities, exposure to English, and some other factor that contribute to the problem of learning English were taken into consideration and have been discussed thoroughly in the preceding chapter of this study. In this concluding chapter, all those findings have been summarized along with some remedies and suggestions. The areas to be explored further in this field are also mentioned for future researchers.

6.1. Goal of teaching English

It has been observed that both the students as well as the teachers hold the knowledge of English in high esteem, as they require English for higher education, to get a job, to read books, to develop their personality, to know the world around them and so on. Most of the teachers opine that the main goal is scoring good marks as well as ability to communicate in English. But, for most of the students, scoring good marks in the examination is more important than the ability to communicate. On the contrary, some of the students as well as the teachers say that scoring good marks in the examination is important than the ability to communicate. That is why from the first hand experience of the researcher, the researcher would like to mention with regret, that many students scoring letter mark (80⁺) in English in the HSLC examination just fumble if they are asked something in English by the time they come to higher secondary school. Whereas the students are expected to have acquired a reasonable degree of language proficiency in English by the time they come to class XI, and so, the course aims essentially, at promoting the higher-order language skills. But most of the Assamese medium students, who come in Arts Stream, do not come with adequate English proficiency as expected in the 10th Standard English syllabus.

From this analysis it is well realized that, both the teachers and the students are interested in teaching and learning English mainly with a special purpose, either to

get a job, or to pursue higher education or get connected with the outer world through internet. Therefore, they require such an English course which can create job opportunities for them. Again, it is observed that whatever may be the teachers' consideration of the goals of teaching English, for students 'scoring good marks' in examination is always a vital factor in the process of learning. Therefore, the students, irrespective of teachers' goal of teaching may prefer to follow that way, in which they will get more scope to decorate their marks sheet.

6.2. Need of English

English is learned everywhere because people have realized that knowledge of English is a passport for better career, better pay, advanced knowledge, and for communication with the entire world. English is also learned for the literature it possesses, and for the variety and rich experience it provides. In this computer age, English is bound to expand its domains of use everywhere. Everyone wants to appropriate English as their own. So, a few of them consider English as a status symbol too. Almost all the students express their highly positive response regarding the knowledge of English in the present days.

6.3. Effectiveness of English Syllabus

For a large number of the students, the higher secondary stage is a preparation for the university, where a fairly high degree of proficiency in English is required. But for another large group, the higher secondary stage is a preparation for entry into the world of work. The core course of the English syllabus intends to cater to both groups by promoting the language skills required for academic study as well as the language skills required for the work place. The mark allotment has also been done in such a way, so that the target objectives can be achieved by the learners.

But the researcher comes to know from his intense observation as well as personal discussion with the students and the teachers, that some of them express almost mixed perception regarding English syllabus. Most of the student respondents as well as the teachers express that their English syllabus is helpful for improving the English language skills.

The teacher respondents express various opinions regarding the relevance of the English text books. Many of the teacher respondents support that the prescribed text books are relevant to the students' need. But most of the teacher respondents did not support it. They feel that job requirement is something irrelevant and different from the quality and relevance of the text books of higher secondary level. No doubt, the quality of education may be based upon the prescribed syllabus and text books. Only a few of the teacher respondents were even not certain regarding the relevance of the prescribed text books. This group of the respondents wants to opine that going through the same syllabus and text books, the performance of the students varies to a great extent. The students' scoring varies from almost zero (0) to more than 95% in the examination. Thus, it is not the syllabus where problem lies.

6.4. Efficiency of English Teachers

The researcher comes to know through observation and informal interaction with the students that many of the students do not want to come across with the English teacher under any circumstance without any special reason. But in any teaching-learning situation, a healthy relation between the teacher and the learners is imperative.

Most of the students hold their English teachers in a high esteem saying that their English teachers are very helpful and co-operative. Only a few of them do not want to comment about their English teacher. Regarding the proficiency of English teacher though, some of the students say that their English teacher can speak as well as teach English well; most of them say that their English teacher can teach well, but cannot speak fluently. On the contrary, only a few of them feel that their English teacher can neither speak fluently nor teach effectively. It is noteworthy that lack of adequate proficiency on the part of the teachers imposes negative influence on the learners as they regard teachers as their role model.

Regarding the English speaking environment in the classroom, it has been observed that almost all the teachers rarely speak English in the English class. Thus, the teachers who could work as one of the agents to improve the students' listening skill, have failed to do so, probably because they do not have well developed skills or they do not feel it imperative to put some extra care to develop their speaking skill.

6.5. Methodology and other classroom activities

As far as the syllabus is concern, the methods and the techniques used for teaching English should promote habits of self-learning and reduce dependence on the teacher. In general, a multy-skill, learner-centred, activity based approach is recommended, of which there can be many variations. It is important that the students should be trained to read independently and intelligently, interacting actively with texts, with the se of reference materials (dictionaries, thesauruses etc.) where necessary. Students should be encouraged to interpret texts in different ways. In general, the teachers should encourage the students to interact actively with texts and with each other along with oral activity.

The researcher comes to from observation that the teachers do not use any specific method indeed in teaching English. But regarding the use of methodology, most of the teacher respondents express that they use one or the other methods in teaching their concern subject either regularly or irregularly. Unfortunately some of the teachers were found who do not have any clear cut concept regarding any specific method indeed.

Regarding the use of audio-visual aids, most of the teachers acknowledge that they do not use any audio-visual aids in the classroom, though it is an essential part of language learning. Only a few of the teachers rarely use audio-visual aids in order to supplement the learning process. Though the Assam Government has taken initiative to develop the infrastructure of the schools, the schools did not equip with any audio-visual aids as well as any extra English reading materials. Hence, the students' only source of English language exposure is their text books and the teachers. The students also express the same view regarding the use of audio-visual aid in the English classroom.

6.6. Exposure to English

Exposure plays a crucial role in learning a second language, especially in a situation where it is not used for normal communicative purpose. But in Assamese medium schools, the students communicate among themselves only in their mother tongue, and apart from English, all other subjects are taught in Assamese. That is why the exposure to English is almost nil as most of the English teachers teach English in

Assamese language. The use of Assamese is essential to make the students understand the textual matter which generally hinder the English learning process. Again if the teachers use English language in the class, almost all the students do not understand anything of the class content.

The students' English speaking practice is alarmingly poor inside as well as outside of the school campus. No student regularly or even often practise English speaking even in the school. Showing the reasons behind their unwillingness to speak English, majority of the say that they cannot speak English and therefore they hesitate to speak; some of them fear that if they make any mistake in speaking English, their classmates will laugh at them.

6.7. Teachers' views on the English syllabus and the examination system

Commenting on the existing English syllabus, a few percentages of the teachers say that it is proper and up-to date. But a majority of the teachers express various short comings in the existing syllabus. They feel that the English syllabus is out dated, not need-based, and uninteresting to motivate the learners, less practical and above all, it cannot help the language learning. Giving suggestions for improvement of the existing syllabus, the teachers say that the literature portion of the syllabus should be reduced, so that the teachers can get sufficient time to practise real English. Most of the English teachers of the Assamese medium higher secondary schools still believe that the grammar part is the most important part of the syllabus and the only way to learn a language is to master the rules of its grammar. This type of belief is incarnated in structural approach to language teaching, which is based on the belief that a language can be mastered by mastering the rules of its grammar.

In the present study, a majority of the teachers blame the examination system and the English syllabus for the students' unwillingness and inability to communicate in English. Justifying their point, they say that as the communicative ability is not properly evaluate in the examination system, the students do not feel any compulsion to open up the mouth and consequently, classroom communication does not take place. Suggesting the need for examination reform, some of the teachers say that, as it is happening at present, the examination should not be based on common question pattern. The question should be set in such a way that they can measure the actual language ability of the students. The learners' expertise of a subject is often

determined by the marks scored in the subject. Hence, scoring good marks in examination always get priority above all. Therefore, the examination system should be designed in such a way that it can lead the students toward the ultimate goal of learning. In other words, if the ultimate goal of learning English is to achieve the communicative competence in the learner, then the examination system should be designed in such a way that it can measure that particular ability of the learner. That means, a student who scores better marks in examination, should have better possibility of acquiring the communicative competence.

6.8. Difficulties faced in different skills by the Assamese medium students

Knowing a language depends on the mastery on four language skills. But acquiring proficiency in all the skills of a second language is not an easy task. While learning English, like other second language learners, the Assamese medium students too face lots of difficulties in different areas. The findings of various kinds of difficulties in acquiring the four skills have been summarized below.

6.8.1. Listening Skill

Listening is the first and foremost among all the four language skills and an integral part of the total communication process. But it is the most neglected skill among the four and very little attention is paid in the English classrooms too. In the 12th standard syllabus also there is not anything specific regarding the development of this skill. Therefore, the second language learners have to face many facet difficulties in listening.

It has been observed that due to the poor knowledge of vocabulary, most of the Assamese medium students fail in deducing meaning of any kind of information. It may be either news item or simply an announcement of any kind. The limited vocabulary and problem with the perception of acoustic forms, the students often face difficulty in processing audio input. The students often do not know the meaning of the words that appear in the spoken discourse, or they are not able to recognize them in the string of connected speech. Failure in understanding the input correctly also makes the learners face difficulty in anticipating the upcoming discourse. Whenever they encounter an unknown word, they stop to think about the meaning of that word and thus miss the next part of the speech.

The difficulty in inferring implicit as well as explicit information and deducing meaning was a major problem found among the Assamese medium students of Barpeta district. Inferring implicit information includes implicit understanding and drawing inferences from input texts. Sometimes the information required is not clearly stated, and the listener must go beyond the surface information to see other meanings which are not explicitly stated in the text. The Assamese medium students have difficulty in this area. Because while listening, they are unable to deduce a speaker's intention or attitude towards a topic, relate utterances to their social and situational contexts, or recognize the communicative function of those utterance, and so on. Most of the student cannot follow even a simple announcement, which meaning is very much explicit. Of course, some of the students have simple ability to understand words in a familiar context but almost cannot follow the connected speech. Some of the students have the ability to follow short connected utterance in a familiar context with limited accuracy.

The Assamese medium students face difficulty in recognizing various kind of grammatical errors in sentence level. It has been observed that most of the students were not able to recognize the grammatical errors which were found in the given items due to the poor grammatical knowledge of the students. They failed to recognize the distinction between plural and singular nouns, tense markers, verb inflections, and auxiliaries which were wrongly put in the test items. But it does not mean that they do not know these very simple and common grammatical rules at all. Their performance is good to some extent in writing skill regarding these common and simple grammatical rules. But in case of listening, their performance in this regard is poor, because they cannot immediately cohere the words into sentence to comprehend the sentence as a whole. As a result they fail to detect any grammatical error of a sentence. It is a known fact that the recognition of grammatical features in the sentences is important. Any difficulty found in recognizing these linguistic features affect the intended meaning of sentences.

The Assamese medium students are found remarkably weak in distinguishing the slight phonemic change of the group of words given in the test items such as 'caught, taught, ought, doubt, thought'. This type of poor performance of the students may be due to the fact that the students are not able to discriminate the slight variation in the pronunciation of the words or the phonetic changes of the words.

It has been observed that most of the Assamese medium students face immense difficulty in recognizing the difference between voiced and voiceless sounds. Many a time they cannot distinguish the difference between /t/ and /d/, /k/ and /g/, /p/ and /b/ etc. As most of the students' word level articulation is not accurate, they usually tend to commit error in case of differentiating some voiced and voiceless sounds in word. As a result, they fail to comprehend the intended meaning of the speaker which hampers the communication process.

As the Assamese medium students have difficulty in all level of listening comprehension, they face a lot of problems in recognizing and recalling numbers. Lots of the students fail to produce exact word order and miss some parts (words) from the sequence. The reason for the wrong responses of the students was due to the failure and carelessness of the students in listening to the readout numbers. Further they failed to differentiate the ending of numbers like seventy, forty, eighty, seven and so.

In simple discourse level also most of the students show very poor expertise. They fail to respond to a simple question which is made of all their known words. For instance, in the question 'what do you do on a holiday?' all the words are well familiar to almost all the students. But most of them fail to make a meaning out of the sentence as soon as it uttered. Instantly they cannot make sentence level meaning out of the words.

6.8.2. Speaking Skill

It has been observed that most of the students of Assamese medium schools are badly poor in speaking skill. As soon as the students come to know that they have to speak in English with the researcher, they get confused and nervous. It has been observed that even most of the students of Higher Secondary level after learning English as a core subject for almost 10 years, fumble in the name of English speaking, where they should acquire a fair degree of oral proficiency. Their English competency is not up to the mark, rather worse, because they are less oriented to listening and speaking skill in the English classroom. Whatever English they speak cannot be termed as 'English language' indeed. The students adopted some strategies in order to make up their oral communicative deficiency which can be discussed as below:

It is found that in the process of learning to speak, the students followed certain strategies in their communication to conceal their linguistic inadequacy. The avoidance is the first and foremost strategy followed by the students. Many of the students avoided to talk with the researcher in English and to speak on given topic due to the anxiety, language shock, cultural shock and the linguistic inadequacy.

It is found that the Assamese medium students face certain difficulties in speaking English with proper pronunciation which is mostly due to the interference of L1. This is because; English enjoys a more variety of vowel and consonant phonemes than Assamese which leads to substitute of phonemes by the Assamese students causing phonological error.

In addition to the above strategies, the students follow inter and intra lingual strategies. The students adopt the strategy of inter lingual transfer when there is a difference between first and second language. The inter lingual strategies are phonological interference, diminishing diphthong, vowel lengthening, and avoidance of initial consonant cluster and addition of vowel at the end position of word.

Further, it is identified that the learners have adopted the intra lingual strategy where there is an irregularity in the rules of target language. The learners have often over generalized the target language rules. For instance, the learners have the tendency to add simply 's' to all singular nouns whenever the need arises for the use of plural form. And also, the suffix 'ed' is mostly used while changing the verb into a past form. The students have conjugated the 'ed' morpheme even to the irregular verbs. These are the some of the intra lingual strategies followed by the learners in their oral communication.

Avoidance of initial consonant cluster by including a vowel in between the consonant cluster and addition of vowel sound at the end position of the words which end with stop and fricative sounds. Reduplication of the consonant sounds is another peculiar strategy adopted by the learners. These are some of the interlingual strategies adopted by the learners in their communication.

Message abandonment is another strategy followed by the students. The students initiate the communication on a specific topic, but in the middle they cut short due to difficulty and due to the anxiety about the linguistic elements in the target language system. The most serious problem in speaking is about meaning transfer. How to say is a major problem to them rather than what to say, because most of the time it is seen that while speaking they either forget the word or cannot express

properly. So, their major problem is mainly to find a way to transfer the meaning in L2 communication by choosing the correct words.

Sometimes the students follow the word-for-word translation from the native language to L2, and use the fillers in their communication whenever they encounter gap and linguistic inadequacy. Self repairing, drawling and repetition are yet other types of strategies followed by them. In the strategy of self repairing, certain vocabularies, grammatical items are self corrected. Sometimes, the self corrected items have gone wrong. Drawling is of lengthening the syllables. This strategy provides time to the speaker to search for the forthcoming elements. Repetition is also one of the strategies followed by them. In this strategy the students have repeated certain items such as words, partial sentence and full sentence. It is found that the repetition of full sentence gives more time to the learners than the word or partial sentence repetition.

Syntactic avoidance is yet another type of strategy, in which they have avoided to construct sentences. Instead of constructing sentences, they have given elliptical responses for the questions asked. The strategy of semantic avoidance is of peculiar type, in which the students have avoided to follow semantic cooperation for the questions asked.

The students reduce their voice when they feel that they are incorrect. The strategy of voice reduction shows that they have no confidence in L2.

Further, it is observed that some of the students have invented certain new words in their oral communication, when they fail to find appropriate word or for the word which is absent in their mental lexicon. In certain contexts, the students follow the code switching strategy. That is, they use certain L1 words in L2.

Lack of fluency is a dominant problem found not only among the Assamese students but also among the teachers. Most of the students as well as teachers while trying to speak English get stuck in middle of the words and sentences. Inability to recall the proper word suitable to the context and inability to form correct grammatical structure instantly are the most common causes of speaking deficiency of the Assamese speakers.

Most of the Assamese medium students have command over a very limited number of vocabularies. Lack of adequate vocabulary is a main obstacle for oral communication for the students.

6.8.3. Reading Skill

Like the other language skills the Assamese medium students face a lot of problem in reading too. For a substantial number of the students, reading is a many facet problem. Though they are definitely familiar with all the letters of the English alphabet, many of them do not know the combination of the letters into words; the combination of words into sentences. As a result, their pronunciation of some words become odd listening and sometimes horrible. And in the sentence level reading, they lost the English (melody) sweetness of the sentences. Though a lot of emphasis has been given by the teachers in developing the reading skill, yet, lots of problems are still prevail among the Assamese medium students.

English has around 44 sounds which are represented by only 26 letters in the written form. Evidently these 26 letters (which represent the written mode) cannot represent all the 44 distinctive sounds exactly when they are used in writing. But anyway according to the rule, we have to represent all these 44 sounds by these 26 letters in the writing mode of English. Therefore, there is no exact correspondence between the English alphabet and their sounds. As a result spellings of the words are not similar to their pronunciation. A sound knowledge of the spelling system of English is very much essential for proper reading. In this regard, the Assamese medium students are found victim of English spelling/sound inconsistency like other L2 learners, because, reading a word becomes easier if the language is written as it sounds. But English does not follow this system. So, the Assamese medium students face difficulty while reading. In English, pronunciation of word is related to its meaning, which means that when a reader mispronounces such word, it affects his/her reading comprehension and confuse other listeners too. The same thing happens to the Assamese medium students. Phonological difference between L1 and L2 is also one of the reasons that make reading difficulty.

Lack of fluency in reading is one of the common problems found among the Assamese medium students. The students, while reading, get stuck in the middle of words and sentences. Though they are definitely familiar with all the letters of the English alphabet, many of them do not know the combination of the letters into words; the combination of words into sentences. The students while reading get stuck

in the middle of words and sentences as they cannot assimilate the letters into words. Comprehension difficulties also disrupt fluency.

Lack of reading comprehension is another serious problem for the Assamese medium students. Most of the Assamese medium students do not understand while reading even a simple and short text. The students struggle with their very limited and insufficient vocabulary which is the reason for their inability to comprehend the reading materials. Moreover, a reader's proficiency depends upon his /her linguistic competence, background knowledge about the subject and the words employed in the text.

Further, in finding synonymous words, the students show their poor expertise because of their limited vocabulary knowledge. There is a possibility of not understanding the contextual meanings of the underlined words (co-worker, dusk, fruitful, famous and expensive) in sentence, and also synonymous words were given in the options. So, failure of understanding either the contextual meaning or the underlined words or the meaning of the optional words should have driven them to choose incorrect synonymous words.

In recognizing homophonous words, the students not only express poor vocabulary but also cannot recognize the orthographical differences and the corresponding phonetic sounds. Due to their inadequate vocabulary skill, the respondents fail to filter the word meaning from the given context and have made an incorrect choice. The inability to recognize the phonetic sounds confirms the shortcomings of bilingual and Grammar Translation Method which are frequently used in the classroom.

In subject-verb agreement, though some of the students' show expertise, many of them lack the conceptual clarity regarding the number and person of a sentence. They do not seem to know that if two different nouns refer to two parts of a whole or two closely related things they may be considered as a singular subject. Such a state of learning may be the result of short time memory or rules and ignorance of the exception of the rules. Only strict adherence to a couple of selected grammatical rules tend to make the learners ignore other possibilities.

In verb correction also, majority of the respondents fail to determine the correct forms of verbs. Among the incorrect responses the respondents choose not only incorrect forms of verbs such as, 'haved', 'haven', and 'hav', but for verbs they also used different lexical and functional items like preposition (to, in), pronoun (we), articles (the, an) etc. The responses obtained indicate that the students are confused with tense and its lexical representation. The error committed by the students emphasizes the effect of rule learning as well as the students' lack of exposure to the language. Moreover, the errors like 'haved' 'hav' reconfirm the learners' inadequate grip over English vocabulary which in turn is indicative of limited exposure to the language. The learners are totally reliant on the rules of grammar taught by the teachers and do not seem to be independent users of English.

6.8.4. Writing skill

In the 12th Standard English syllabus, the writing skill has occupied a unique place in comparison with the other skills. Out of total 100 marks, 35 marks have been allotted for advance writing skill, which covers almost everything related to writing skill. The syllabus is designed in such a way, so that the students can write English independently and creatively as soon as they complete the higher secondary level. The students are expected to acquire a fair command on any kind of situational writing such as, writing advertisement and notice, designing or drafting posters, writing formal and informal invitation and replies, all kinds of business and official letters, job applications, writing compositions based on visual or verbal input etc. After all, they are expected to be expert in writing. But, it has been observed that most of the Assamese medium students' writing skill deserves indeed special care to fulfill the expected objectives of the syllabus.

It is observed that the students commit errors in almost all level of language. The past and past participle form of the irregular verbs create a lot of difficulty among the students as they are liable to generalize the rules for all the verbs by adding '-ed' to the root in their past and past participle form. Most of the learners are unknown of the fact that there are some verbs in English which do not follow the regular morphological process. Instead of taking '-ed' as past tense marker, some of them take zero morpheme or change internally and sometimes completely in their past and past participle form. The students tend to over generalize the verb forms due to the

irregularity found in the formation of the past and past participle form of the verb. Because of this deviant morphological process, the learners tend to over generalize the already learned rule of affixing ‘-ed’ with the present form of the verb to make past form.

The errors are also identified in the usage of nouns. Most of the students tend to over generalize the rules where there is an irregularity in forming plural number. The words like news, furniture, etc. are widely used and treated as countable in Assamese but they are uncountable in English. Because of these differences in the morphological process of Assamese and English, the English learners whose mother tongue is Assamese make a negative transfer on certain elements to English morphology importing from Assamese morphology unknowingly. Majority of the students concept is that the plural nouns are generally made by adding only ‘-s’ and ‘-es’ to the singular noun. So, more than an average number of the students indiscriminately added ‘-s’ and ‘-es’ to make the plural form of a singular noun. Especially the students get confused and committed error in the irregular plural form (such as womans, foots, etc.) and plural form with zero morpheme (such as sheep, deer etc.).

It has been observed that the article ‘an’ is used before words beginning with vowels and ‘a’ before words beginning with consonants without considering the quality of letter or phoneme that begins in a word. It is evident that ‘an’ is used before the consonant ‘h’ which is silent or mute in the beginning of word, and ‘a’ is used before the vowels which have sound quality of consonant. The reason for the wrong substitution might be the strong pressure of the continuous drilled rules that ‘an’ is used before nouns begin with vowels and vice versa. Due to such habit formation, the students extend these rules as ‘a Sun’, ‘a Mahabharat’ etc. The definite and indefinite articles are indiscriminately used before noun/noun phrases and sometimes unnecessarily omitted where they were required. These types of errors have appeared due to the ignorance of the grammatical features of articles and influence of the first language. Moreover, it is found that ‘a’ is dominantly used by the students rather than ‘an’ and ‘the’. This may be because of the fact that ‘a’ is simple as well as first learnt element.

Another type of error found out in the students' writings is the use of prepositions. That is, the preposition 'on' is used before 'yesterday' 'tomorrow' 'last month', etc. This error has occurred because of the overgeneralization of the rule that 'on' is used before days as 'on Monday', 'on Sunday', etc. and also, the prepositions are unnecessarily deleted and added.

Moreover, errors have also been identified in the use of grammatical item like auxiliary verbs. The auxiliary verb 'am' is unnecessarily added in between the subject 'I' and verb (past form). This is due to the fact the copula verb 'am' functions as a main verb in certain contexts (I am a student). Because of the impact of this structure, learners unconsciously use 'am' whenever they have to use 'I' in a subject position. Further, the auxiliary verbs are wrongly substituted by the students. The wrong substitution of auxiliary verbs 'are' instead 'is', 'am' instead of 'was', 'are' instead of 'were' and vice versa is due to the ignorance of the linguistic features of auxiliary verb and failure in understanding the meaning of the given sentences. As soon as the students see the verb followed by 'ing', they tend to use auxiliary without considering the tense which is implied by the adverb.

The students under study have not properly handled the verbs as well. Their performance was not up to the mark regarding the function of verbs in a sentence. Most of the sentences produced by the students (whether in speech or in writing) have lost their meanings and functions due to inappropriate use of the verb forms. The use of double past, a peculiar kind of error, found in the students' writing. This type of error occurs due to the fact that in Assamese, tense is expressed in main verbs without splitting the verbs whatever may be the sentence type. But in negative and interrogative sentence of English, the tense is expressed with the help of both auxiliary and main verb. Many of the learners know the rule of using tense in auxiliary. However, by the influence of Assamese language, the learners are satisfied only when tense is expressed through main verb. Thus, they use double tense in their writing, especially while writing interrogative and negative sentences.

It has been found that a lot of errors are committed by the learners in sentence level due to the dissimilarity of syntax pattern between L1 and L2. Further, it is found that the interrogative sentences are used in the reverse order as where + sub + aux + verb (where he was going) instead of where + aux + sub + verb + (where was he

going). This is due to the influence of L2 spoken form on writing. And also there are a number of incomplete sentences found in the learner's writings. Hence, another problematic area is orthographical, that is spelling. It is the fact that the English spelling rule is one of the reasons for the spelling errors in addition to the L1 interference and learners incorrect speech habits. The analyzed data show that both the interference of L1 and learner's incorrect speech habits have paved the way for the spelling errors in the place of consonant clusters. Only the incorrect speech habits mirror in their spelling in the place of vowels and vowel clusters. Moreover, there are some students whose writings are not intelligible to the readers. They even cannot shape all the English letters accurately and intelligibly, and whenever they try to combine the letters to form words, it becomes something different than English word.

6.3. Suggestions

Listening is the root-cause for the development of other skills of language. Any shortcoming of listening will affect the development of other skills eventually. However, to overcome the listening shortcoming, the following remedies will be helpful for the L2 learners.

1. Teaching listening comprehension should not be ignored. It may be taught in the following manner: That is, how to understand a context, how to deduce meaning of an unknown vocabulary in a context, and how to understand the contextual/situational meanings of words.
2. The tape recorded dialogues could be played before the students, and they could listen to them, then the theme as well as questions may be asked on the basis of the dialogue. This type of practice will help the students' understanding capacity as well as communicative competence.
3. Introducing the listening games like sound discrimination (k, g, kh, gh), Recognition of minimal pairs (put, but), Recognizing morphemes (free and bound morpheme), Recognizing syllables in words, Recognizing silent letters in words, identification of parts of speech etc. will help to build up listeners ability to discriminate L2 phonemes, morphemes and phonetic variation of sounds.
4. The students can be made to listen to different current vocabularies and allow them to write down the synonymous and antonymous words for those vocabularies. Further, practice of finding equal L1 words for L2 as well as translation of

sentence from L2 to L1 and vice versa will help to develop the linguistic competence of the students.

5. Watching TV programs, films and listening to radio programs will certainly help to understand how the native and non-native speakers use the English language. It will help them also in understanding the dialectal variations of the language.
6. Observing public announcements (Railway announcement, transport announcement, etc.) will help to strengthen the sociolinguistic knowledge and the presence of mind.

To enhance the communicative competence of the students in the English language, the following suggestions will be helpful, and these suggestions would eradicate or at least minimize the problems encountered by the learners in the process of learning oral communication.

1. To develop linguistic competence of the students, the language may be taught linguistically. That is, linguistic approach in teaching of English from the beginning may be helpful for the development of competence in English.
2. Different types of conversational discourse of L2 may be taught, and the students may be given enough time for the development of conversational discourse in the school hours. The conversational discourse training will eliminate language shock and cultural shock. Further, that will help to develop communicative competence of the students.
3. While teaching vocabulary of English, the grammatical functions of words should be taught. Further, the words should be distinguished and differentiated in addition to the semantic value of those words.
4. The similarities and differences between L1 and L2 may be taught especially while teaching syntax which will eliminate the habits of literal translation from L1 to L2.
5. While teaching pronunciation of words, the phonetic similarities and differences of the phonemes may be demonstrated in the class room, and practices may be given in this area properly. Further, the awareness about the interference of L1 in the pronunciation of foreign sounds should be given timely to the learners.
6. The students may be motivated to interact with teachers and peer groups in second language in the home front in addition to the school atmosphere. Further, watching English programs, on TV listening to radio, local reading and reading dailies would help to develop the spoken language of English.

The following suggestions will be helpful for the enhancement of reading comprehension of the higher secondary students.

1. Practice of differentiating the lexical and grammatical items, recognition of unfamiliar words and understanding of their literal and contextual meanings with the help of the teacher or dictionary will enhance the reading comprehensibility.
2. Practice of labeling parts of speech and recognizing the word boundaries and tense markers will develop the linguistic competence of the students. Further, that will be helpful for enhancing the understanding ability of texts.
3. Easy and simple vocabularies may be used in reading materials. Further, the hard and unknown vocabularies may be introduced in familiar context of the students. If it is unfamiliar context, both the context and vocabularies and hard words give them trouble. So, the use of unknown and hard words in a familiar context of the students will increase the understanding ability of the students.
4. Teaching of reading comprehension has to be done. That is, how to read, how to understand a text and how to understand a contextual meaning as well as literal meaning of words will increase the reading ability of the students.
5. The reading games may be introduced in classroom. That is, finding phrasal verbs, differentiating the mono, die and tri syllable words, differentiating the nouns like common, abstract, animate, inanimate, etc. and the verbs like transitive and intransitive in sentence or discourse will be helpful for the development of linguistic competence which will enhance the reading comprehensibility of students.

The following suggestion will be helpful for the enhancement of writing comprehension of the higher secondary students.

1. To avoid errors in writings, students should be practiced to write stories and the written items should be spotted by the teachers and then the reasons for the errors should be indicated to the students. Further, editing practice should also be given to the students.
2. To prevent L1 interference on L2 sentence, various sentence types of both L1 and L2 should be differentiated and distinguished and that should be demarked to the students. The awareness about sentence types of both languages will automatically eliminate the errors in syntax. Thus, effort has to be taken to create syntactical awareness among the students.

3. To avoid the overgeneralization of verb forms and other grammatical items the regularity and irregularity of the language rules should be taught and reinforced.
4. To prevent the agreemental problems, the relationship between words should be taught and if the problems are due to L1 structure, the relationship and variation between words of L1 and L2 in sentences should be indicated to the students.
5. To avoid orthographical errors, an appropriate pronunciation drill should be given to the students.
6. By the prevention of L1 sounds in their L2 pronunciation, the spelling errors can be minimized in the learners' writings.

Some other suggestions to enhance the teaching-learning process of English have been mentioned below:

Selection and appointment of teachers play a vital role in realizing the goals of English language teaching-learning. Therefore, it should be thoroughly impartial and fair and strictly following the basic criteria of teacher's appointment. Many of the teachers have a limited command over English which is a major constrain. Hence, it is pertinent to note that all the English teachers of higher secondary level should have adequate proficiency in English.

The in-service training programme should be made mandatory for the teachers in order to develop their language skills and make them up-to-date with the latest and innovative system of teaching English. If possible, the authority should arrange the spoken English programme and refresher course for the teachers after a regular interval.

For better performance, the infrastructure of the schools should also be developed. The schools should be equipped with language laboratory, library with available English reading materials; weekly, monthly English magazines etc.

Parents should encourage their children to read English newspapers, magazines, watch English programme etc so that they can get exposure to English language even out the classroom.

Instead of focusing only on writing skill, second language teaching should aim at sequential development of all the four language skills.

The teacher must realize that teaching and learning is a bi-directional process and teaching may not ensure learning. For effective teaching, the learners' participation in the process is very much essential. Therefore, while teaching, the teacher should take care of the process of learning. At the same time, the teacher should not forget that

now a days, the students have become somehow different from those of earlier times; some of them are in fact very difficult to handle. Therefore, the teachers need to be equipped with new skills to meet the new demands of their profession.

The contemporary goal of teaching and learning English in India is to develop communicative competence in the learners. Communicative competence is developed in the process of struggling to communicate. Therefore, the teacher should create such a situation where the students feel some urge to communicate in English. Instead of following the language of the text book and the teacher, the students should be encouraged to use their own English.

Instead of dominating the classroom, the language teacher should create a favourable and friendly atmosphere for the students where they can feel comfortable to open up their mouth. The teacher should be a counselor or a manager in the process of learning.

The English teacher should be a role model for the students. The teacher should be proficient in spoken English and should take special care to speak with correct pronunciation, stress and intonation, so that the students can listen and follow. The students should be encouraged to communicate in English inside the English classroom, with friends, and if possible, with parents and other people who can communicate in English.

Grammar should be taught inductively. Grammar rules should not be taught in isolation. Special care should be taken to see that the student do not suffer from grammatical over dose. Over consciousness for the rules of grammar may hinder the verbal fluency of the students.

The teaching and learning of English can be made more enjoyable and effective by applying various teaching aids. Training should be provided to the 2nd language teachers about how to use different teaching aids in classroom teaching.

6.4. Scope for future research

This study deals with the problems of learning English by the 12th standard Assamese medium students of Barpeta district. However, further research can be carried out in the following areas of study:

1. Studies can be conducted to look at the different methods of teaching English in the Assamese medium schools of Assam.

2. Study can be undertaken to find out the problems and prospects of the existing evaluation system of the Assamese medium high schools/higher secondary schools of Assam.
3. A study can be undertake to compare the effectiveness of the teaching of English in Assamese medium and English medium high schools of Assam.
4. Studies can be conducted to compare the effectiveness of teaching English in rural and urban, government and private schools of Assam.
5. The problem of skill development among the English learners of the Assamese medium high/higher secondary schools can be studied in detail.