CHAPTER 1

1.0. Introduction

English occupies a very important position in the life and education of the people of India. English is an important language for communication at the international level. Due to this fact, it is considered as an important language for material progress, research, and for development of Indian people. English has got very prestigious place in Indian society. It is taught as a compulsory subject throughout the educational cycle. The people who can speak English are considered successful and honoured. Significance of English may be easily estimated in academics, as it is a compulsory at all levels. But the irony of the situation is that, even though the wide scope and growing importance of the language is known to everyone, a sorry state of affairs still exists in linguistic behavior of the students. English language teaching is overwhelmed with countless techniques and methods in ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom. Language reflects life, and perhaps teaching English should, therefore be as varied as living and include as many ways as possible. English Language students often commit errors in syntax, vocabulary, and pronunciation which are often thought to result from the influence of their L_1, such as mapping its grammatical patterns inappropriately onto the L_2, pronouncing certain sounds incorrectly or with difficulty, and confusing items of vocabulary known as false friends. This is known as L_1 transfer or "language interference". It is because of problems of teaching English at the secondary level. The way English is taught, can affect the academic achievement of the L_2 learners especially at the secondary level, English language teacher usually employ uniform pedagogical methods without addressing the particular needs, set of habits, cultural background as well as areas of weakness of the young learners. Much has been investigated to develop the teaching strategies in terms of

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English language learning. Even then the the Public Sector and Private Sector teachers neither update themselves nor take advantage of the latest researches in English language teaching. So there is a great need to solve the problems, which the students face at different stages of learning English. Teaching is an act to reduce the problems of every subject including English, which is related to the teaching of all four skills of language that is listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

1.1. First Language and Second Language

Klein (1986) stated that "A language is 'first'-and so is its acquisition-if no other language was acquired before; otherwise it is second." He further stated that the mother tongue which is acquired primarily by a child when his language cells are empty is first language (L_1), and the language which is acquired / learnt in addition to the L_1 is second language (L_2). In this context, the term 'second' can refer to any language that is learnt subsequent to the mother tongue. Thus, it can even refer to the learning of third (L_3) or fourth Language (L_4).

(Chaturvedi and Mohale, 1976:21) defined the terms 'first language' and 'second language' The first language, broadly is the language introduced in the school as a subject from grade I to X, and it is commonly used as a medium of instruction at the school level and as a medium of expression by learner in his social communication. It is usually the mother tongue or regional language of the child. The second language is the language which is introduced compulsorily either at the end of primary stage or in the beginning of the lower secondary stage after the attainment of sufficient proficiency in the first language by the learner.

The main objective of the second language is to enable the speaker for wider participation in society and the nation leading to secondary socialization.

Hence, the second language is usually the official language of a state or national language.

1.2. Foreign Vs Second Language

The phrase 'foreign language' is used to denote a language that is learnt through instruction where it is not used. 'Second language', on the other hand, is one that becomes another tool of communication along with the first language. It is typically acquired / learnt in a social environment in which it is actually spoken or in tutored settings. Thus, English has been taught as a second language in most of the countries, i.e. India, Nigeria, etc., where English has an internal function in all the domains, and in the countries like China, Japan, etc. English is taught as foreign language where English has no internal function, but it is learnt there for employment opportunities and to be adapted them with the computerized world.

1.3. Communication Strategy

Cook (2001) says that the learners adopt certain strategies when they try to express things just beyond their current level of functioning L_2. Further, he says communication strategy of L_2 learners will enhance the learning', and the learners' strategy indicates that the learners are encountering the linguistic problems in the process of learning. The learners knowingly and unknowingly use the inter and intra lingual strategies to convey their message to others. But, they fail to convey the message as they are intended due to their linguistic inadequacy. By using the strategy they get satisfaction, assuming that they have conveyed the meaning completely to the questions asked by the researcher. The learners adopt the strategies whenever they encounter problems at all the levels of language like phonological, morphological, syntactical and discourse.

Further, Cook says that the conceptual strategies are not same as those used in native speech when speaker cannot remember the word he wants to use. That is, while describing the parts of his car need to be repaired by a mechanic, he says there is oil dropping from the sort of junction in the pipe behind the engine. This is an analytic strategy; this strategy allows him to communicate without knowing the correct words. This does not mean that the speaker adopts the strategy not because of his linguistic inefficiency. But the strategies followed by the L2 learners are different from the native speaker's strategy cited above.

1.4. Learning Strategy

Learning strategy is an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language (Tarone 1980 : 67). The strategy of learning adopted by the learner is different from communication strategy. The strategy of learning differs from learner to learner. However, O'malley and Chamot (1990) have defined three types of strategy used by L_2 students:

1) Metacongnitive strategies involve planning and thinking about learning such as planning one's learning, monitoring one's own speech or writing, and evaluating how well one has done.

2) Cognitive strategies involve conscious ways of tackling learning, such as note-taking, resourcing (using dictionaries and other resources) and elaboration (relating new information to old).

3) Social strategies mean learning by interacting with others, such as working with fellow students or asking the teacher's help.

1.5. Background to the Problem

The use of English in India started as a historic-political "accident seems to have now become an economic-academic reality. The need for English as a

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language of 'opportunity' and 'development' has been pointed out by several educational commissions and expert bodies specially instituted to examine and define the role of English in our country; and to plan and organize the English curricula accordingly. Some of these needs which provide a reasonable justification for the continuation of the teaching of English in our educational institutions have been identified as follows:

Window on the world – Before independence the goal set before students of English was that of mastering the language for the purposes of knowing English literature, life and thought, of developing a refined sensibility and expression and so on, after independence the goal was spelt out as that of using it as a tool to keep in touch with up-to-date knowledge in his particular discipline. A vast fund of information in all branches of human knowledge - Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Technology, Medicine and Humanities and so on --- is available in English. Now, unless we have an adequate proficiency in 'reading English with understanding' this knowledge will not be accessible to us. This stresses the importance and need for developing an ability to comprehend, English writing on One's special subject --- an essential prerequisite for the pursuit of higher studies. Needless to say, how important the expertise in these disciplines is for the scientific and economic development of the country. Therefore, English must serve as the language in which all contemporary knowledge in accessible. As the language of science and technology, English will be important for industrial and economic development. Our doctors' engineers and scientists and technologists must be able to have access to the latest available professional literature related to their subjects of specialization.

In addition to its role as our 'Window on the world' English has important functions to serve as the associate official language in administration, the medium of instruction in all institutes of higher education in the country, the

language used by the UPSC , the legal and the banking systems, trade and commerce.

At the individual level the value of English as 'the language of opportunity' is widely recognized. Any individual seeking socio-economic advancement will find ability in English an asset. The acquisition of all the language skills in English will continue to be needed by all those seeking higher prospects and opportunities in all spheres of life in this country for many years to come. Therefore, certain minimal competence in all the four language skills (Reading , writing, Listening and Speaking) with high premium on 'four skills' should be the focal points of Compulsory English Courses at secondary level.

The Reports of the two study Groups on the Teaching of English (2011 and 2012) also made a strong plea for teaching the skills of communication. The recent thinking regarding the teaching of English at secondary level, enunciated in the abstracts and reports of the conferences at national level such as the ELT workshop on Training Programme cum workshop on Language Teaching, Tasting and Evaluation, June, 2011 held at the Assam University, Silchar sponsored by Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore and National Seminar on English Language Education in India: Theory and Practice"- organized by Centre for English Language Studies, University of Hyderabad, January 2012. Mostly the emphasis was given on the need to promote and consolidate communication skills in English at secondary level.

The first Study Group (2011), for example, recommended: The introduction of the compulsory English Course from " a liberal art literature course to "a Course in language skills." "Special emphasis on the cultivation of language skills rather than a study of literature." The introduction of 'lower level' and 'higher level' courses is Compulsory English at the secondary level. For the 'lower level' teaching will be 'skill-based' with a distinct emphasis on

Reading comprehension, at the 'higher level' "there should be greater emphasis on written and spoken English.

The second study Group (2012) concerned itself with the examination and review of the present ELT situation - its failure and success. The Group felt that 'Men, Materials and Methods' are the three cardinal factors mainly responsible for the success or failure of a teaching programme and "each of these factors calls for thoughtful care and careful planning and each in its present state in this Country is in need of reform"

The new philosophy to teaching English is neatly underlined by the phrase "English as a library language", which has come into wide use after it was used in the reports of the Education Commission (1964-68) and the second study group (2012). The idea underlining this expression ---- that the skill of reading should be developed --- is commonly accepted as the objective of teaching English in India.

These views stirred fresh thinking among the educational authorities, language planners and pedagogues (teachers) on the problems of teaching English at different academic stages in our schools and colleges. There has now been a growing awareness of the inadequacy of the teaching of English in secondary level. One most welcome result of the recent thinking is the teacher's growing concern for the learner – his motivations, needs, difficulties and expectations. Desirable reforms are being contemplated and implemented in the curricula and examination system to make the teaching of English in our schools relevant and beneficial to the learner.

The primary aim of the present study is to make a critical assessment of the present trends and features of the English teaching programme at the secondary school level in the district of Cachar, Assam, particularly in the schools located in Silchar Subdivision. The place is most representative of the culture and linguistic character of Assam. It is heartening to record here that State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Assam

is the only secondary institution in the state, has been very responsive to the new ideas and current thinking on ELT in Schools. Some of the innovations suggested in the two Study Groups Reports have already been introduced with certain modifications to suit the local conditions and requirements. However, the pedagogical implications of the new changes have yet to be examined in detail and the outcome of this critical examination has to be formulated in terms of certain guidelines to the teacher, regarding his class room methods of instruction. The present study specially is an attempt to strive at such formulations.

1.6. Reasons for selecting the problem

Ever since I joined the teaching profession, in my own limited way I have felt concerned for the problems of teaching English to the secondary students. But, without any exposure to any kind of training in ELT or literature on ELT, my thinking on the ELT problems was, naturally, more of a rambling than a systematic one. In May-June, 2011, I had the opportunity to attend a workshop programme in English at Assam University. This training opened an altogether new horizon and I wished to study some depth the problems related to the teaching of English and the pedagogies' of the current thinking on the subject. It was during this period that my hitherto ramblings on the problem of ELT began to crystallize and my interest and motivation and requisite training to undertake a systematic study of ELT in the secondary schools of Silchar, Cachar Assam. As John W. Best says that, research is "the more formal, systematic, intensive process of carrying on scientific method of analysis. It involves a more systematic structure of investigation, usually resulting in some sort of formal record of procedures and a report of results or conclusions. 'My three years' teaching experience in Bezara College, Guwahati, Assam was sufficient to enable me, at least to visualize the nature of the problems facing elsewhere in Silchar Subdivision.

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My own experience as a college teacher coupled with training in the teaching of English provided a reasonably sound framework to undertake the present investigation systematically. I believed that a motivated teacher with an appropriate teaching method can, do a great extent, make the teaching of English at secondary schools level more efficacious and meaningful than what it is today. This belief impelled me to take up the study of teaching problems; 'Men' and 'Materials ' the two cardinal factors , according to the Second Study Group (2012), responsible for the success or failure of an ELT programme, appear in the study as important variables affecting methods. Another reason of selecting this study on Bengali schools was that, mostly the Bengali medium students belong to a status which is socially, economically, and educationally backward one.

1.7. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the present study is to describe and analyze the 'strengths' and 'limitations' of the current English Teaching practices of the secondary school teachers in Silchar, Assam. Since the opinions on 'which method is effective' and 'which is not' are only tentative , the investigation had to be in the nature of a critical survey of teaching methods used by the school teachers for teaching English. There is a need for authentic information relating to the techniques of teaching English in school classes which, I am sure, will provide valuable cues to the syllabus / curriculum planners, teachers and educational authorities concerned with English teaching at school level. ELT programme can be made more relevant and purposeful, mainly, by refining teaching strategies in the light of this information.

1.8. Scope of the Present Study

The present study thus tries to identify the performance and areas of problems in the process of learning language by the 10th standard secondary school students studying in the schools of Silchar sub division and to suggest certain remedial measures to overcome the problems or hindrance encountered by them.

1.9. Objectives of the Study

(i)   To highlight the status and importance of teaching English as a second language in India, status of English in North East and Assam, place of English in school curriculum of Assam, problem of teaching English in Assam and present position of teaching English in high schools of Cachar.

(ii)   To identify the methods and strategies adopted by the teachers in the classroom and the problems they face in using appropriate method, while they encounter the students during the process of teaching English.

(iii)   To find out the loopholes of the present syllabus and strategies to be adopted to make it more effective for the students to develop the communicative competence of them.

(iv)   To identify the factors affecting in teaching-learning process of English in Bengali medium schools.

(v)   To identify the problems encountered by the students in listening skill.

(vi)   To identify the problems encountered by the students in speaking skill.

(vii)   To identify the problems encountered by the students in reading skill.

(viii) To identify the problems encountered by the students in writing skill.

(ix)   And to suggest remedial measures to improve learning in the four skills.

1.10. Hypothesis and assumptions

All teaching methods are practiced in a certain educational environment and classroom conations. No teaching method can stand by itself without a context of teaching. In order for a particular set of classroom methods of instructions to succeed, certain minimum essential prerequisites by way of understandings and attitudes on the part of teachers and students are to be adequately met, in addition to the administrative/ physical inputs such as the size of the class, facilities of audio- visual sides, number of periods allotted to the teaching of English and so on. These factors, as I perceive them, are identifiable in the following terms.

(i)   The extent to which the students respond positively to the teaching activities followed by secondary schools teachers teaching English in the classroom.

(ii)   The degree to which the students respond positively to the model of English used by the teachers to present the contents materials of the course books.

(iii)   The extent to which the trend of examinations supports the goals of teaching. Passing examinations seems to be the main 'motivation' of the students. It is this important factor which largely determines the teaching methods; whereas, ideally, development of communication skills should be the main goal of teaching English at under secondary level (the view strongly advocated by the Study Groups and recent thinking on ELT) If the examinations support these goals of teaching, the teachers can exploit this situation most profitably to develop and consolidate the 'skills for communication'

(iv)   The usefulness of teaching materials as appropriate means of developing language abilities as perceived by the teachers.

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(v) The extent to which clarity regarding the aims and objectives of teaching English provides direction and purpose to the pattern of 'teacher-behaviors' as expressed through the teaching activities adopted by him in the classroom .Clearly stated aims would help the teacher to go beyond his limitations and personal views on how English texts ought to be taught. For efficiency of what he does his teaching activities should be adequately backed up by the system covering, mainly, syllabuses, teaching materials and examinations.

(vi) The extent to which the teachers are sensitive and educational needs of the students they are teaching.

(vii) The extent to which the language skills covered by the syllabuses and examinations have relevance to the practical / professional needs of the students in later life after they leave school.

(viii) The extent to which the school teachers aware of the plus points and shortcomings of various teaching methods.

(ix) The need and usefulness of professional training in the teaching of English to teach the language oriented course books in English more effectively and efficiently.

(x) The extent to which the college teachers in Silchar, Assam make conscious use of a method. There does not seem to be any deliberate attempt on the part of the teacher to develop any of the four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

(xi) The extent to which the text teaching in the general class is pedagogically related to the teaching of 'grammar' and 'composition' in the composition class.

(xii) The Second Study Group (2012) feels that the success or failure of a programme of teaching English depends largely upon 'three cardinal factors' 'Men' (Teachers), Materials (contents of the

Course-books) and 'Methods'. While accepting this argument I feel that any innovation introduced at any one level of this three-tier system of language teaching programme is doomed to fail or prove unproductive if it is not adequately followed by corresponding changes at the other two levels. For effective and meaningful teaching a perfect co-ordination between the three is an essential prerequisite. In the existing English – teaching programme, unfortunately, this coordination is lacking.

(xiii) Students do want to learn English at secondary level but they are handicapped by certain factors such as bad teaching lack of motivation and interest on the part of teachers' inadequate content materials and so on.

A critical study of secondary school methods would therefore, necessarily involve an examination of the variables described above. And, the most dependable mode of studying them is to ask the secondary teachers and the student involved in the process of teaching and learning English at the school level what they think about them. Their opinion and reaction would either corroborate the researcher's assumptions or invalidate them.

Researches and experiments have shown that no method can be intrinsically good or bad. The efficiency of a teaching method is in the first place related to the objectives of teaching; the teacher who handles it; and lastly, the learner-his motivation for and attitude to the learning of English.

I do not think it is possible to evolve a single full proof teaching procedure which takes proper care of all the variables discussed in the foregoing pages in all the contexts of teaching even in a single college, let alone in all the colleges of a state. However, I believe that with minor changes and modifications in the present content materials, modes of testing and educational environment, a motivated teacher with an appropriate teaching method can significantly improve the existing shape of English teaching

programme at secondary level. 'How' is the question which the present work attempts to study in some depth.

1.11. Limitations encountered in executing the study

The field work was confined to ten secondary 10th standard Bengali medium schools affiliated to SEBA, (Board of Secondary Education Assam) in Silchar Subdivision of Assam. However, a detailed of other districts of Assam has not yet been attempted in the present study as this was surely beyond the scope of this investigation. Only those portions have been scrutinized which were relevant to the hypotheses. Ideally the actual classroom teaching of all the teachers who filled up the questionnaires should have been observed. This would have given greater authenticity and validity to the results. Then, in order to get an objective and accurate picture of the teaching procedures as are normally and usually followed by the school teachers. The observation of the actual classroom teaching should have preceded the administration of questionnaires to these teachers. And to cross validate the two, only those students should have been interviewed who were taught by those teachers. All this would have meant much more time than was available and more active co-operation from the teachers and the principals than was forthcoming. However, the questionnaires were adequately supplemented with personal discussions with the vast majority of the respondents.

Some tests were administered to students to measure their achievement in English as the result of current teaching practices. This could have, in some measure, given some idea about the efficacy of current English teaching methods in terms of the learning they produce. As said earlier, the present study covers only the students studying in Silchar sub division of Assam. Effort has been taken to evaluate the text book, the teaching methods, teacher, etc. along the students' performance in the English language

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learning. Problems encountered by the students in English learning have been taken into consideration, and the remedial measures for all the problems identified have been suggested centering and focusing the students. The present work studies the problem of learning English in different skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing faced by the students studying in 10th standard of Bengali medium schools in Silchar sub division of Assam.

1.12. Social Relevance of the Study

Since the present study concentrates on all the four different skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing levels of the English language, it will present a total picture about the learning of English language of the high school level students.

As it also talks about the process of learning English by the class X level students, it finds reasons of some of the learning problems of English. Based on the findings of the present study, certain apt remedial measures have been advocated.

In the Indian educational span of the students, the stage of class X plays a crucial role which determines the students' further and future education. This terminal course should provide the students a strong foundation for their English language development. Therefore, English has to be properly developed for strengthening it. The present study therefore gains a social vitality and validity as it provides enough insights about the English learning of the high school students.

1.13. Selection of the Sample for the Study

For the present study, 150 students have been selected from eight Bengali medium government (provincialized) high schools located in Silchar subdivision.

Sl. no.	Name of the schools	Medium of instruction	Number of the students selected	
			Boys	Girls
1.	Cachar High School	Bengali	15	15
2.	S.C. Deb Vidyapith	Bengali	10	10
3	Town High School	Bengali	8	7
4	Niranjan Paul Institute	Bengali	8	4
5	Chote Lal Seth Institute	Bengali	12	8
6	S.V.B. Vidyamandir	Bengali	12	12
7	Biplabi Ullaskar Vidyamandir	Bengali	8	7
8	Surya Kumar High School	Bengali	8	6
		Total no of students	150	

Table 1: Selection of the Sample for the Study

For the present study, 150 students, 15 teachers, and 10 schools were selected as sample from eight 10th standard Bengali medium provincialized (high) schools located in Silchar subdivision, Asaam.

1.14. Methodology of the Study

The present study adopts certain modern methods and approaches available in the field of linguistics in general and applied linguistics in particular. They are:

Questionnaire method: For the present task, five questionnaires (one for each level and one for general information) have been prepared and the students have been tried out in the field through pilot study and based on the results

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drawn through the pilot study, the questionnaire have been modified and finalized. The finalized questionnaires were used for data collection (Questionnaires are added in the appendix).

Interview method: The interview method also was adopted to carry out the study. Thus, a structured questionnaire was used to elicit data from the students of both the sex through interview method, (or) conversation and the responses of the students were recorded using the tape recorder.

Observation method: Along with the questionnaire and interview methods, observation technique was followed with the aim of filling the gap in the corpus drawn by the questionnaire and interview methods.

Personal data sheet: In addition to the above tools, a personal data sheet was developed to collect the information from the students related to the variables included for the investigation.

1.15.1. Data Elicitation

The finalized questionnaires were administered with the informants and the testing procedures were carried out in two phases. In the first phase, tests on listening and speaking were conducted. First, the students were asked to listen to some topics and questions were asked based on them. To test the speaking skill, questions which were constructed in the interview schedule were asked and then the students were instructed to speak on any one of the given topics or of their own interest. The responses of the students were also recorded using a tape recorder. For these two types of tests, 120 minutes were allotted (30 and 90 minutes respectively). After two days gap in the second phase, reading and writing tests were carried out. For each test 30 minutes were allotted. To test reading skill students were asked to read out a passage and questions were asked based on it. To test writing skill, separate answer sheets were given to the informants and then the questionnaire were distributed to the students and in certain circumstances questions were read

out by the researcher. Further, instruction about the each questionnaire was given to the students. In this way, the data collection was carried out in all the schools under study. Data was also collected on the status of Bengali language, attitude of the teachers, students and society on English learning, motivation of learning English language etc. In addition to this, the students-teachers classroom interaction, and peer group interaction were observed and their quarterly, monthly test papers were also examined. Moreover, data have also been updated then and there in order to fill the gap found in the corpus and to verify the authenticity of the data.

1.16. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis has been organized in the following chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Chapter 3: English Language Teaching in India: An overview

Chapter 4: Curriculum and Syllabus Design

Chapter 5: Methods of Teaching English as a Second Language

Chapter 6: Techniques, Aids and Modern Educational Technology
            in Language Teaching

Chapter 7: Data Analysis

Chapter 8: Findings and suggestions

Chapter 9: Conclusions

            Bibliography

            Appendix