

CHAPTER 3

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

3.0. Language Teaching in India

The purpose of this survey of ELT methods in India is to know the present situation in a clear perspective. An attempt is also made here to highlight certain problems connected with the methodology of English teaching in India since the last few decades to till today. There is no document which contains a comprehensive survey of ELT methods in schools and colleges, covering this century. However, an idea of the general situation can be gleaned from various sources such as government reports, popular text books on the teaching of English in use in training colleges, and the personal experience of the generation that went to school in twenties and thirties.

The method most popularly used in schools at the turn of the century is called The Grammar – Translation Method. During this period the emphasis was on the teaching of formal grammar. The Students were drilled in memorizing the rules of grammar and translating a passage by the students' on their mother tongue into English and vice versa.

Another important method of teaching English in Indian schools was the Direct Method. The first book advocating the use of this method in India was P.C. Wrenn's (1911) *The Direct Teaching of English in Indian Schools*. The Direct Method secured wide acceptance at the official level also. The method was characterized by certain features like oral work, complete exclusion of the use of the student's mother tongue, the sentence as a unit of speech and inductive teaching of grammar. While this is true, the other one feature is that teachers happened to single out from this useful list of techniques was the ban on the use of the mother tongue. Curiously enough there does not seem to be any evidence to show that the other features ever made any impact on the teaching activities of the teacher. It was, however, a good

success in schools especially English medium schools. Its successful implementation required competent teachers, those who had themselves perfect command of both written and spoken English. One of the effects of the First Method was the gradual weakening of the teaching of formal grammar. It encouraged speaking skill but other skills like reading and writing did not receive proper attention and as a result the students could not write correct English independently.

In the twenties and thirties regarding vocabulary selection, a great deal of work was done in America and Europe. Lists ranging from Thorndike's Teacher's Word Book (1921) to the Caregie Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection (1936) were compiled. In the allied field of reading, M. West published his Bilingualism in 1926 (based on his research in Dacca); and the Experiments and Studies in Modern Language Teaching by Coleman and Fife came out in 1934. Both the reports emphasized the importance of Reading and accorded a secondary place to speaking which was the main tenet of the Direct Method. Michael West also published his now famous New Method Readers based on his ideas on vocabulary selection and the primacy he gave to the systematic teaching of 'reading.' This period was marked by pioneering work in the twin fields of vocabulary selection and reading. Also, serious efforts were made to evolve a scientific approach to language teaching and substantial progress was recorded.

In the 1920s the ideas of M. West and H. Palmer were steadily gaining ground. The pace of progress in the direction of modernizing English teaching could not remain steady because of two significant events – the Second World War and the Independence of India. These events brought their own urgent problems to be solved and as a result ideas quickly gaining acceptance in the thirties were almost forgotten and no new ground was broken in the forties.

The development in the field of foreign language teaching that took place during the forties in the USA and UK had far reaching influence on ELT in India in the following decades. Hence a brief account of these developments seems to be appropriate here. In America during the second World War the first wide – spread application of Structural Linguistics to foreign language teaching was made in the Army Specialized Training Programme (ASTP). The ASTP provided intensive courses on various languages, emphasizing the ability to speak the language and understand it when spoken by native speakers. The drilling of the fundamental structures until they became automatic was an important feature of the programme.

At the University of Michigan Dr. Charles Fries developed his Oral Approach. The underlying principles of this approach are clearly enunciated in his book *Teaching And Learning English As a Foreign Language* (1945) 34 Apart from its emphasis on oral use of the language, the approach also developed the idea that the structures of the mother tongue and English should be compared, to determine the points where they differed. These differences were considered to be the chief source of difficulty in learning a second language. During the same period Dr. I .A. Richards and Miss C.M. Gribson developed and popularized The Graded – Direct Method. Dr. Richards conceived language teaching method as an arrangement of graded sentence situation units forming an ‘organic’ sequence in which each step was defined as one in which it was used. A change in sentence structure was always exemplified by a change in the illustrative situation. Over in Britain at the University of London Institute of Education a methodology more or less similar to Dr. Richard’ graded – Direct Method was developed in the late forties. The methodology laid explicit emphasis on the selection and grading. It favoured oral, situational presentation and oral drilling of the carefully graded structural items whining a limited vocabulary.

The Foregoing account of the developments during the last few decades indicates that in the last thirty or forty years there has grown a vast literature on the subject of foreign language teaching , and a large fund of experience has been built up in a great number of countries. The account also focuses attention on the absence of any systematic thinking in this field in India during the two decades after west left India.

Until the mid – forties most of the principles associated with the various movements had made little or no impact on the ELT situation in the country. It is distressing to note that until then courses and examinations remained practically untouched by the principles and practices associated with the pioneering work of Jespersen, palmer, West and their successors. It is intriguing how West with his monumental Bilingualism and New Method Reader to his credit , failed to have any impact on either the construction of Readers or the methods of vocabulary teaching . Among other ideas of the period that were similarly not accepted and exploited were:

- (a) The crucial importance of structural words.
- (b) The distinction between productive mastery and receptive mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of English.
- (c) The acceptance of an agreed core vocabulary
- (d) The importance of oral work and
- (e) The importance of practice through interesting drills.

The only issue that continued to interest and worries the workers in this field was the use or non use of the mother tongue in an English lesson. Officially the Direct Method was advocated but everywhere (except in English medium schools) Grammar–Translation was the method practiced almost universally. In the fifties , however, consequent on the changed position of English in the country a great need was felt for the improvement of materials and methods of teaching English at all levels. The establishment of the Central Institute of English at Hyderabad and subsequently the other English Language

Teaching Institutes in Several states to train teachers and produce modern teaching materials was recognition that the need must be supplied.

The fifties and the sixties witnessed the large- scale acceptance of what has come to be called the Structural Approach to the teaching of English. The Approach, basically a sound one, embodied the principles of

- a) Structural grading ,
- b) Vocabulary control
- c) Oral situational presentation , and
- d) Repeated practice for establishment.

Through rigorous control it led to systematic organization of language materials.

These fifteen years or so have perhaps been the most eventful in the annals of English Teaching in India. They have seen the introduction of new syllabuses and new instructional materials, organization of systematic in service training and the setting up of English Language Institutes in various states to perform the functions of training, materials production and research. These efforts have borne fruit. Many beneficial changes and reforms have been introduced. Indeed, the situation would have been much worse if the new methods and materials were not available.

The seventies pose a new challenge to the ELT Methodologist. The changed context and the consequent reassessment of objectives and syllabus reforms demand fresh and realistic thinking on the choice of a method.

The relative emphasis to be placed on the various skills depends on the objectives to be achieved. We must decide what we want. If reading is the aim, well designed reading materials are required. The problem is clearly one of developing methods to meet adequately the specific needs in different parts of the country. This is to be achieved by incorporating, in a balanced manner, the principles and practices formulated and tested in the last half century. One thing which we have to bear in mind is that designations of

methods as 'grammar translation', 'direct', 'new' etc. are extremely misleading. They do not imply any strict taxonomy; they simply call attention to certain major emphases in the teaching procedures. The efficiency of a method surely depends upon a complex of factors which vary from place to place and situation to situation. The challenge today is to avoid dogma and rigidity through fresh consideration of priorities a, and to root all new strategies in the realities of the situation.

3.1. Raise of Modern Education in Assam

In Assam territory the development of modern education started with the emergence of British rule in 1826. Debi (1897:1-2) has stated that for a long period Assam was having her aboriginal system of Imparting elementary education through formal Institutions like Pathsalas for Hindus, Tools for Brahmins and upper class Hindu, Madrasas for Muslims and Satras for the Vaisnavites. It is to be noted that 'these indigenous systems were largely replaced by modern education pattern under British company's patronage. Before the charter act of 1833, there was no perceptible development in the field of education in Assam, but after that both government and missionaries vigorously took part in educational field. The knowledge of English became a historic necessity both for administration and increasing commercial intercourse with the growth of missionaries and British rule in Assam, India. Bose (1989:90) has aptly pointed out that the 'aim of the English to educate the Indians was either to produce caricatures of European characters who would be willing to accept the Gospel of Christ or to get a regular supply of cheap clerks to serve them in the business organization of the government of India and subsidiary undertakings of the British Subjects'

3.2 Development of Education under British benefaction

During Oriental -Anglicized controversy, David Scott, agent of governor general of Eastern frontier favoured the encouragement of oriental learning by improving the indigenous system of education. Gradually, the need for English education became apparent for administrative advantage. Mr Jenking, commissioner of Assam (1834-61) urged to government to set up English school. As a result Gauhati Jila School opened up in 1835, which was the harbinger of modern educational advancement in Assam and the forerunner of the Cotton college, the Earl Law college, the Jorhat Normal school and Department of Mohammedan education. Effective British policy in the field of education had begun with the Macaulay's (President of the committee of Public Instruction) downward filtration theory. Later, Educational Dispatch (1854) of Charles Wood opened a new era in the history of Indian education and provided a comprehension plan of education covering all stages from primary school to the university. Accordingly government extended grant-in-aid to Assam (Resolution of 1882) and this brought in a considerable increase in primary and secondary schools. By 1880s, there were around 1760 primary schools, 98 High schools and several Reading schools. Primary schools consisted of Government schools, aided schools and indigenous schools. 'Secondary education was imparted in three types of intuitions, namely the High schools, the Middle schools and Vernacular schools. Special schools consisted of Guru training classes, and schools devoted professional studies. Scholarships were given to the students for college studies' (Chand, 1967: 135-148).

3.3 Role of Missionaries in the Expansion of Modern Education

For promoting the cause of educational progress in Assam the Christian missionaries also deserved credit. To impart modern education through the

mother tongue was initiated by Rev Nothon Brown and Rev., A.T. Cutter were the pioneers and started their work of doing same. The Annual report of American Baptist Mission Schools, 1902 stated that American Baptist mission, Roman Catholic mission & Welsh mission set up several schools and they prepared text books and translated many articles in English language. They also published the first ever magazine Aronodof in Assam. The wives of the missionaries established Zenana schools for female education. They took the additional task of 'maintaining several government schools and at the same time normal schools were opened by missionaries for teachers trainings. Further, Debi, 1987:59-63 has mentioned that the Zamindars of different localities also donated money for the promotion of education. In 1902-03, there were 199 private elementary institutions and by 1937 there were 870 unrecognized schools for 33,197 male & 3,610 female pupils.

3.4. Progress of Secondary Education in Post-Independence Period

It is noticed that the scheme of primary and secondary education is rather similar to the system of neighboring states in the country. The greater impetus to the secondary education was provided by the Hunter Commission (1882) and the resolutions of 1904 and 1913, the Sadler Commission of 1919. The commissions recommended for introduction of diversified courses at this level and asserted that university education, cannot improve without improving the secondary education. As its aftermath in 1935 there were 213 high schools including 28 government High schools and several aided, non-aided high schools were running along with various courses. Yet, there were weakest links in secondary education (See Zakir Hussain Committee Report of 1937, Radhakrishanan Commission Report of 1949). To remove these difficulties the post-basic education based on the principle of education through craft (schemed by Talim Sangh) and multi-propose schools were

introduced. Debi (1987:99). The primary 'aim of these courses is an all round development of the students both as an individual and as a useful member of the society and to provide varied types of courses for students with diversified abilities and interests'

Table: 2 Rise of schools from 1937 and 1945

Number of Schools in 1937 and 1945			
Year	High School	M.E. School	Mid-vernacular
1937	100	297	240
1945	203	440	331

(Source: Devi, 1986)

The Gauhati University was initially the supervisory authority for secondary school so far as administration was concerned, although the Department of Public Instruction ran the administration of secondary education, till 1962. In 1962, the Assam Secondary Education Act came into force. Henceforth, the High school Leaving Certificate Examination and Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination were conducted by a board, called the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA), The Kothari Commission (Report, 1965) found that post-basic schools as well as the multi-propose schools were not able to achieve the desired purposes. The Assam Secondary Education Act (1961) scheme gives a comprehensive pattern of education and school administration. The education commission of 1966 has further emphasized the need to relate education to productivity and also to give a strong vocational basis to secondary education. To achieve these objectives, Assam Government introduced many vocational courses and founded several institutions. The Central Advisory Board of education in 1974 lent strong support to introduction of Adult and non-formal education in the country. Assam Government launched the programme of Adult education which has its great significance for the success of 156 universalization of Adult

education and the removal of Illiteracy. The University of Calcutta had also a jurisdiction in Assam which exercises effective supervision over secondary schools. The middle stage of education comprises Classes V-VII, and the Secondary stage consisted of classes VIII to X in Assam. (Source: Singh 1999) The Senior Secondary stage consisted of classes from XI-XII. The following shows the growth of number of schools in Assam (1975-1994

Growth In the number of Schools In Assam (1975-1994)				
Year	No of Primary School	No of Upper Primary Schools	No of High Schools	No of Higher secondary schools
1975-76	20248	3533		1627
1980-81	21727	4194	1838	155
1985-90	25900	4782	2218	356
1990-93	28876	5703	3084	367
1993-94	28876	6729	3072	582

(Source: Singha ,1999:21)

Table 3: Growth In the number of Schools in Assam (1975-1994)

The position of English; language in India is different from its position in other countries. It is used widely as a link language in the offices and among the educated people. 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. 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 language 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 medium of Instruction.

2. Higher Primary Stage (class 5-7)

Two languages

(a) Mother tongue or Regional Language

(b) Hindi or English

3. Lower Secondary Stage

(a) Mother Tongue/Regional language

(b) English

(c) National Official Language (Hindi)

1. Secondary Stage

(a) English

(b) National Official language/Regional language

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 would be necessary for those who proceed to the university. The English would also be used as library language. Earlier in the state of Assam English was introduced in the class V. In the recent year it is introduced in class III, however 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, on the motivation of the student, the stage at which it is studied, the type of teacher, equipment provided and the method of teaching adopted.

3.5.1. Introduction of Three languages Formula in the state

The state has introduced the Three-Language-Formula in its educational system “The Three-Language Formula”, India’s most representative language policy, is a compromise between different linguistic groups in India. Though the term “the Three-Language Formula” is seldom used by the Government of India in official documents, the term is widely accepted and used. The Three-Language-Formula was worked out as a way of accommodating the interest of each linguistic group. The formula is a policy to encourage them to choose and learn three languages at school. The first one of the three languages, in most cases, is speaker’s mother tongue/regional language while the second one is Hindi (a language of national pride and unity). And the last one is English (a language of administrative efficiency, technological progress and international communication). The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – 2005 strongly advocates multilingualism in school education. This confers definite cognitive advantages. Researches have shown that that there is a highly positive relationship between bilingualism / multilingualism, cognitive flexibility, and scholastic achievement. (Peal and Lambert 1962; Gardner and Lambert 1972; Cummins and Swain 1986). Bilingual children not only have control over several different languages but they are also academically more creative and socially more tolerant (NCERT Position Paper: Teaching of Indian Languages 2005). Using the multilingual aspect in the classroom as resources to teach the subjects would benefit the teacher in locating the child in his / her context. This also takes us to language across the curriculum perspective. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) – 2005 provides the following guidelines for language education in schools.

Language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of the number of languages offered to children but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource. Home language(s) of

children should be the medium of learning in schools. If a school does not have provision for teaching in the children home languages(s) at the higher levels, primary school education must still be covered through the home language(s). It is imperative that we honour the child's home language(s). According to Article 350A of our Constitution, 'it shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups'. Children will receive multilingual education from the outset. The Three language formula needs to be implemented in its true spirit, promoting multilingual communicative abilities for a multilingual country.

3.6. Prospect of Education System of Assam

Assam is one of the eight states of North East India . Dispur is the Capital of Assam Demographically the state can be divided into Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley. The Official language of the Brahmaputra Valley is Assamese, while Bengali is followed in Barak Valley. Like all states in India, Assam is a multilingual state. Apart from the Assamese language, Bengali, Manipuri (Meitei), Hindi, Bodo, Bhojpuri, Nepali, Rajasthani etc. languages are also used by different communities. There are also schools teaching several languages spoken by the members of the Scheduled Tribes. It would be worthwhile to identify the position of English in the system of education in Assam. The English education was first introduced in the state by the missionaries who came with the East India Company. Later Ramakrishna Mission also took up the task of spreading English education in the state. A number of English medium schools was established and run by the missionaries are still operating very successfully for the promotion of English education in Assam. Later many governmental non-governmental secondary schools have been set up for upliftment and spread of English

teaching in the state. In general, the system of primary and secondary education is rather similar to the system of neighbouring states in the country. In the context of secondary education the Hunter Commission (1882) and the resolutions of 1904 and 1913 provided greater impetus to the secondary education. The Sadler Commission of 1919 recommended for introduction of diversified courses at this level and asserted that university education, cannot improve without improving the secondary education.

3.7. Problem of teaching English in Assam

The position of English in state is not very different from what is at the national level. But nevertheless, the standard of English is still very poor among the large majority of the students due to the negligence of the language in schools where medium of instruction is other than English. In the majority of these schools, the teaching of English is in a near chaotic condition. This is largely due to the difficulty of getting qualified teachers with adequate training in the latest methods of teaching of a foreign language. It would, therefore, be worth considering giving teacher – training programme a sound pedagogical orientation. This can be done by focusing attention on the actual needs of the learner, his motivation, and the socio-economic conditions obtaining in the majority of our educational institutions. Reviewing the falling standards in English V.K. Gokak observed:

“What is needed is something like a
Revolution in the methodology of
English taught in our training institutions.”

3.8. Limitation of Education System of Assam

India as a developing country acquired a prominent position in post modern period. In the field of education, India played a very important role in Third World Era of intellectual development. Assam as an integral part of the country has been producing highly fertile brains and personnel. Though Assam has constructs a proper channel of education system from primary level to university level in its own territory, yet a number of difficulties and problems are hampering present education system in the state. The administrative inefficiency and the lack of resources are the immediate problems in all stages of education.

After Indian independence the all India primary education mission could not achieve expected goals. In Assam, the children education faced two formidable difficulties in enrolling all the children. The major difficulties come from the resistance of the parents to send their girls to the school and the creation of infrastructure in the rural areas. Among the causes for failure to implement the only Directive Principles of state policy in education may be included, the large birth-rate and consequent population explosion, the inability of the government to raise the required financial resources, the apathy of the illiterate masses, the tradition resistance to the education of girls, the poverty of the parents which compel them to use the labour of children, small and scattered habitations etc. (Shekhawat, 2007:15).

In this context, the Kothari Commission recommends that the step should be taken to reduce wastage and stagnation by seeing that not less than 80 percent of children who enter class I reach class VII. Besides improving the general education of the teachers, steps should be taken to see that nobody is recruited who has not completed his matriculation, and also provision should be made to improve the professional training of the teachers which should be at least two years in duration. The commission also recommended ancillary services like midday meal, free supply of text books, school uniforms etc.

The secondary education system is not functioning properly and could not fulfil the national objectives. The two main defects are that it is academic, without taking into account either the variations in the interest of the students or need of the society, and that even the academic education that is given by the secondary schools is not satisfactory, as it does not enable the students to pursue higher education at university level. On the other hand, the secondary education is not geared to meet the needs of industrialization.

For the betterment of secondary education system the diversified curriculum has been introduced at this stage which inevitably implies development of a strong and effective guidance programme. Guidance involves the strategies of helping the boys and girls to plan by themselves their own future in the light of the personal factors of ability, aptitude, and interest and the availability of job opportunities. The Secondary Education Commission recommended that Educational Guidance Bureaus should be established in every state and attempts should be made to broaden the pupil's understanding of the scope, nature and consequences of various occupations and industries. The Kothari Commission also recommends that and guidance and counselling should be regarded as an integral part of education assisting individual to make decision and adjustments (Aggarwal, 2004: 505-508).

The above study identified that after 1950, notable development in primary, secondary, higher secondary, and tertiary education appeared on the forefront, at the same time drawing attention to the challenges ahead in its further progress. The study also observed that the government as well as other educational bodies need to focus on the following major issues:

1. The growth and prospect of women education is something very essential since the administrative machinery, school administration should prepare them to face consequent challenges. Flexible curricula, improved school and college education, continuing education programs for girls need greater attention.

2. The major problem is the under representation of the inadequacy of resources and competent teachers. Non-elitist private managed schools to suffer from the lack of informed supervision and monitoring whereas govt. Institutions suffer from red- tapism and unnecessary interventions. The shortage of teachers in this region can be addressed through a flexible approach: inviting visiting and adjunct teachers, partnership arrangements, contractual engagements of professionals and support institutions.

On the basis of medium of instruction schools can be divided into two main groups' vernacular and English medium schools. English is considered as a compulsory subject up to the undergraduate level. In most vernacular medium schools and colleges English is taught with the help of bilingual method i.e. both vernacular and English language are used in the English classroom.

3.9. The Educational Scenario of Cachar

The Cachar is one of the largest districts of Assam having a number of well known educational institutes in North East India. Silchar the district headquarters is a learning hub of Assam. The district has a central university The Assam University which is situated in Dargakona 18 kilometer from Silchar. It also has NIT Silchar one of the 30 NITs in India. The Silchar Medical College and hospital is the only medical college of southern Assam. The district also includes a number of degree colleges viz. Gurucharan College, Cachar College, Janata college, Neheru college, Ramanuj Gupta Memorial junior college Sonai college etc.

Cachar one of the three districts of Barak Valley houses 254 secondary and senior secondary schools both English and vernacular medium. The missionaries started its venture of spreading English language in Cachar District by establishing Holy Cross School in 1960. Prominent schools in the district include Silchar Collegiate School, Cachar High School,

Pranabananda Vidya Mandir, Adhar Chand Higher Secondary School Narsing School, Government Boys and Girls schools, S.C. Deb Vidyapith, Town High School, Holy Cross School, Niranjan Paul Institute, Chote Lal Seth Institute, Murshedul Alam Choudhury Memorial Academy, S.V.B. Vidyamandir, Pranabananda Holy Child School, Biplabi Ullaskar Vidyamandir, South Point School, Maharishi Vidya Mandir, 4 Kendriya Vidyalayas, Don Bosco School, etc. But the position of teaching English in Cachar is not satisfactory rather appalling. The standard of English is falling here day by day. The active vocabulary used by the students is very poor. Quite significant number of students cannot even use the simplest structures. If we analyse the situation we are rather astonished by the sorry state of affair.

Generally, the teaching of English at the school level in Cachar was confined mainly to (i) lecturing on or paraphrasing of the contents of the literary texts prescribed for various classes, and (ii) preparing the students for the annual examination. In this context the most commonly used practice with the teachers was to dictate notes to the students on important questions and get them memorized.

The objectives behind these traditional teaching practices were nowhere explicitly stated. Nor did the syllabuses contain any guidelines for the teacher regarding the strategies of teaching. The syllabus in most cases was nothing beyond being a blue – print for text – books meant to be covered in the classroom during the academic year.

Besides literary text there was also a language component to the teaching of English at the school level. Traditionally, the writing of long essays and paragraphs on given topics, summarizing and précis – writing, sometimes translation, formed the language ‘paper’. Some grammar and items of usage were also included in the language paper. It intended to test the student’s knowledge of idioms, phrasal verbs, transformation of sentences and so on.

This language paper was taught in tutorial composition groups. Here what was taught in practices as some grammar or structures and the exemplifications of the rules of grammar rather than skills of communication such as speaking and writing. We know that proficiency in the use of a language implies two things :

(a) Knowledge of the basic structures and their inter-relation in English and

(b) The ability of the learner to use sentences in English in performing acts of communication both through spoken and written medium

The implication of the above is that in teaching grammar we must set ourselves two goals. We must

a) Impart a knowledge of the basic structural principles (i.e. linguistic competence) and

b) Ensure that our students know how to put their knowledge of these principles to practical use i.e. communication situations (i.e. communicative competence)

For a vast majority of teachers of English in our schools, teaching grammar would mean only (a) Not much attention was paid to the processes which enabled the students to use their knowledge of grammatical rules effectively either in writing or speaking. Consequently, most often the learners knew the grammar rules extremely well but made elementary mistakes in the actual use of the language.

In the following the researcher has tried to depict the actual attitude of students of learning English reading in class x standard, attitude of the teachers of Cachar, Assam towards teaching of English and role of parents.

3.10. Attitude of the students of Cachar

The Bengali students are unable to leave their mother tongue while learning the English language because they are strongly associated with their own

Bengali culture, their home and a sense of belonging. Despite the fact that most learners struggle to become proficient in English, they are more inclined to their mother tongue, Bengali. Though they feel the importance of English they still hold Bengali in high esteem. Most learners don't have any interest in learning English as they informed to the researcher that they do not like English but as they needed it for work, they learn it for future prospects. A large number of students claim not to understand examination questions due to the fact that they are in English. The attitude of the Bengali medium learners is significantly much negative than those of other learners. The Bengali students further remarked that they would receive much better marks if they are given a chance to write the examination in Bengali. For some learners English is fundamentally linked to job opportunities, social mobility, success and power and not to the mother tongue and cultural identity which they would want to maintain. To them English was only for formal communication and Bengali for other informal communication and purposes. In this school during break time teachers also communicate with learners in Bengali. Lack of attention, anger, frustration, fear and sadness were observed among the students because of their inability to understand and cooperate with the teachers in the class. Learners reported that feelings of anger on account of their lack of understanding of the language of instruction which ultimately led to frustration. Another aspect of the learners' behavior encountered in interviews with parents is that learners memorize their reading lessons without understanding which affirms that they don't have enough potential to develop their knowledge with the progress of the syllabus in the school.

3.11. Attitude of the teachers of Cachar

Teachers play an intense role in student's learning. English has a direct effect on the attitude of the students. But the results of the questionnaire, in

general, show that Bengali teachers are more favorable to the idea of adopting Bengali as an instructional medium rather than English. They agree that instruction in Bengali can promote student learning better. The teachers in this study favored Bengali -medium instruction considering the difficulties that students have to face if instruction is given in English. The government is also required to take necessary steps to support English education considering the participation and the atmosphere in the classrooms, where Bengali is a medium of instruction. Considering the benefits and opportunities of learning English and lack of quality in English language teaching in the secondary school education, and the different needs of students, we have to bring this English-medium instruction into discussion not just taking instructors into consideration, but also the government and other stakeholders. Although we cannot deny the fact that English is currently very dominant in the education and business environments, we should take other alternatives (elective or compulsory courses in Bengali and English, assignments in Bengali) into consideration. We cannot just say without evidence that “English-medium instruction is the one that works now and we do not have any other proposed alternatives”.

3.12. Role of the guardians of the Bengali medium schools

Education is the process of inculcating in an individual the experiences already acquired by the society. Education of a child is not just the responsibility of the school but a corporate responsibility of the schools and the parents. This principle applies to the learning and teaching of English too. There is widespread misunderstanding among parents that the linguistic development of the students depends solely on the teachers. The parents forget the fact that children spend more than two third of their time at home. The common people too seem to blame the teachers for the poor performance of the students in the learning of English. The public, the

teachers and the parents themselves are not aware of the important role to be played by the parents in learning English. Parents play a crucial role in the learning of the students. Their positive attitude, help and encouragement make their children's learning easy and efficient. Therefore we need to educate the teachers, parents, and the public on the importance of the role to be played by the parents in language learning. But one pathetic fact is that most of the parents of Bengali medium schools of Silchar subdivision are less literate; they have little knowledge about the importance of English language learning. They don't take proper care towards their children learning and they believe that going to school is enough for the learners. They believe that whatever they need to learn they are learning within the school environment and parents have nothing to do with it. They are unable to understand the fact that language learning is not only confined to school environment but also in the home domains. Due to this negligence of the parents, the students are unable to perceive enough knowledge regarding language learning and suffer from depression. The children in the study reported that they are afraid of English, a fact that may be indicative of depression causing from inability to learn.

However, there has been a growing awareness, during the past two decades or so, that the teaching of English in its traditional form is no longer considered relevant. The reasons are, principally:

- 1) Students today do not possess the preliminary language ability to benefit from this form of 'teaching by exposure' Most of the texts are incomprehensible to students, whose vocabulary and comprehension skills are not up to the mark. They do not, therefore, acquire the hoped – for experience of language.

- 2) Even if students had the ability to benefit from this form of teaching, it could not be argued that the traditional 'literary –humanistic' approach to the teaching of English constituted the most effective form of language

education. The aims (if any) of such teaching were far vague, and they did not take into account divergent needs and interests of the students.

However, there has been, as stated above, a growing awareness of the unsuitability of the traditional forms of teaching English in secondary schools. Recently the Board of Secondary Education helped to create and propagate this awareness of English language teaching in schools level. As a result various commissions and committees of several universities have initiated and adopted measures for reform. This indeed, is a gratifying feature, which reflects the belief that more emphasis should be given to the text books and the 'readers' specifically designed for language learning. Although these books are meant to be 'worked-through', unfortunately, in practice, they are 'lectured on'. These books were not written to support scholarly lectures on the materials found in the texts and so the untrained teacher finds it extremely difficult to teach them in the way he has not been accustomed to. It is of course, impossible to lecture on them and sustain the interest of the students.

The foregoing description of the teaching methods as practiced by most school teachers of Cachar is, however, not meant to suggest that there is nothing really worth while in the current methods practiced by teachers. Some learning may still take place in spite of such teaching. However, there is need to evolve a clear outline for a methodology and give it a justification.

3.13. The present prospect of teaching English language in the secondary (high) schools of Silchar subdivision.

The Silchar stands in the bank of river Barak. It is located in the Southern part of Assam. Silchar the (Cachar) district headquarters is a learning hub of Assam. There are 2 Government HS & MP Schools, 26 HS &MP provincialised schools, 75 provincialised High schools, in Cachar District of

Assam of which 13 provincialised high schools and 5 HS schools are in Silchar subdivision (Office of the Inspector of Schools, CDS. Silchar 2011). The missionaries started its venture of spreading English language in Silchar by establishing Holy Cross School approximately in the year 1960 and later many educational institutions have been set up to uplift the teaching and learning system in region. However, the position of teaching English in Silchar is not satisfactory rather appalling. There is no clear cut objectives of teaching English, faulty evaluation system, faulty textbooks, confident competent and qualified teachers, faulty methods of teaching English, insufficient training of teachers, and inadequate provision of audio visual aids, no parental unawareness and interference.

The position of English in Silchar subdivision of Assam, India is very poor among a large majority of students due to the negligence of the language in the schools where the medium of instructions is other than English. In the majority of those schools, the teaching of English is in a near chaotic condition. This is largely due to the difficulty of getting qualified teachers with adequate training in the latest methods of teaching of foreign language. Teachers are generally not much aware of the effectiveness or otherwise of what they do in the classroom; the finding of the present study has presented before them the state of their teaching, and this will definitely help them much to determine what should be done with English teaching in the secondary schools. Below are the conditions under which English is taught and learnt in most of the schools of Cachar. (i) Academic conditions, (ii) lack of purpose and clear cut objectives of teaching English, (iii) Burdensome curriculum and faulty textbooks, (iv) Faulty evaluation system, (v) lack of confident competent and qualified teachers, (vi) Faulty methods of teaching English, (vii) Apathy to new procedures and techniques, (viii) Insufficient training of teachers, (ix) lack of incentives for in service growth of English teachers, (x) Inadequate provision of audio visual aids, (xi)

Insufficient time for the subject in time table, (xii) Domination of the conservative headmaster (xiv) lack of research in the field of methodology of teaching English, (xv) Examination oriented attitude of the school authorities teachers and parents.

Physical condition: (i) Unhygienic physical condition and (ii) Growth in numbers and large classes

Social conditions: (i) lack of exposure and (ii) Parental unawareness and interference.

It is also noticed that, in schools, English is taught as a compulsory subject at all levels of the primary, secondary and higher secondary courses. The situation regarding these English courses has two distinct features:

(a) 'Language –oriented' text – books are prescribed for secondary and higher secondary students. These texts have exhaustive exercise material in them.

Grammar and composition have been kept for these courses on the plea that without adequate proficiency in the understanding and actual use of language grammar , students will not be able to respond to and appreciate literature.

(b) 'Literature – oriented' course –The component of literature is included at this level in the form of poetry and drama.

Besides compulsory English, some schools offer Alternative English course, Students who take Alternative English have to study under MIL (Modern Indian Language) as a special subject.

While accepting that new course- books represent a significant improvement upon the traditional literary – texts, it is regrettable that they have failed to produce any corresponding improvement upon the teaching / learning of English. One reason, perhaps, could be the lack of adequate orientation and resourcefulness of the teacher to translate the 'new thinking' behind the recent changes.

In the following pages I have made an attempt to evaluate curriculum and syllabus along certain pedagogically sound criteria which, I believe, will most likely make for more purposeful and useful teaching of English than what it is today.