From the time when the scattered kingdoms of Jambudweepa\(^1\) started to identify themselves as parts of a common nationality, India had the privilege of being known as a multi-ethnic and multilingual country. This multicultural conglomeration of kingdoms evolved into the great nation which we now know as India. After India gained independence from the British and became an independent nation, it was not an easy task for the policy makers to maintain a perfect balance among the various regions. A major problem sprang up from India’s multilingual nature-on what basis are the various regions to be demarcated for the purpose of administration. Eventually, the problem was solved and the various states were created on the basis of the dominant language of the region. At present, with 1652 mother tongues\(^2\), more than 200 classified languages and 22 official languages, India posits as the largest multilingual democracy in the world.

The English language came to India with the British and since then nearly four centuries have passed. The language which was brought to India to serve the colonial masters has crossed all bounds of acceptability and popularity among the citizens. The reasons for the popularity of English are many, but, whatever the reason be, this language has managed to reach a near-native acceptability in certain regions in India; especially the North Eastern Region.

Today, English in India has become a symbol of quality education and social mobility and there is a growing demand for English among the school-going students of the country. Along with the people of the rest of the country, the people of Assam are also equally eager to learn English for academic as well as social advancement. But as English is being taught as a second language in a multicultural setting, the cross-linguistic influences often affect the teaching and learning of English in a typical Indian context.
1.1 Statement of the problem:

In India English is an official language recognized by the Constitution of India. From the utilitarian point of view of language learning, English plays the role of a second language here. To keep the multilingual spirit of the Indian nation alive, the Kothari Commission (1964) recommended the “three language formula” to be applied in schools. It is a policy meant to foster feelings of national pride (through Hindi), a sense of group identity (through the regional language), and induce technological progress (through English). The central government has accepted it and all schools follow it. As a consequence, learning the English language has become compulsory for learners from the elementary level up to the undergraduate level.

Yet, in terms of educational context, the learners’ exposure to English is very limited. Assamese being the dominant language, majority of the regional medium schools have Assamese as the medium of instruction. Therefore, they miss the opportunities of interacting in English. Opportunities of interaction in the target language could be made available through course or curriculum interaction and social interaction. For most learners in the regional medium schools, curricular interaction is possible only in the English language classroom with the English language teacher. Moreover, the teacher has to use the regional language as a support base to make the lessons comprehensible to the learners. Regarding social interaction in English, opportunities are even less, as Assamese, being the dominant language in most places, is used for interaction.

In such a limited setting, when the learning of English takes place, we are bound to find many cross-linguistic influences that delimit the acquisition and the learning processes. It is a well known fact that in spite of the best efforts of the policy makers, students studying in the regional medium schools of Assam often fail to acquire the required linguistic competence in English. It is assumed that the cross-linguistic factors slow down the process of language acquisition of the students studying English in the regional medium schools in Assam. The conflict between the home language of the learners and the medium of instruction on the one hand, and the medium of instruction and the target language (English) on the other often makes the learning process a highly challenging one for the students who have little exposure to English.
outside the classroom.

1.2 Objectives of the study:

It has already been mentioned that every learner has to study English as a compulsory subject up to the undergraduate level. Since it is an integral part of the curriculum, no learner can avoid the subject even if they feel uncomfortable with it. Hence, it becomes absolutely necessary to find out the difficult areas in the teaching-learning situation of English and to know about the difficulties faced by the learners of English in Assam. The selection of these areas (the areas of difficulty) will help us prepare the teachers for facing the problems faced by the learners in acquiring and learning the target language English. To get a more specific picture of the learner difficulties, looking into the production errors of the learners is important. Demarcating the areas of difficulty in the target language and finding the type of production errors made by the learners, can give a better causal explanation to the problem of low proficiency level among the learners of English in the regional medium schools in Assam. To know about the level of proficiency of the learners, an analysis of their production errors also need to be done. This will help in assessing the stage of interlanguage of the learners of English.

To know about the above mentioned problems in detail, an elaborate study on the second language learning scenario and the influences that help or hamper the learning of English in Assam becomes necessary. This study named 'A Critical Study of the Cross-linguistic Influences on Learning English in the Regional Medium Schools in Assam has been started with such an aim. Empirical evidences like results of the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) and Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate (HSSLC) examinations and interactions with secondary level students of regional medium schools suggest that in spite of the avowed objectives of the syllabus, very negligible progress has been made in the English language acquisition scenario. The levels of progress of the learners also suggest that the cross-linguistic influences act as a factor. Most learners project errors which seem to have sprung from the influence of the first language (L1) on the acquisition of the second language (L2).

Though the error level among the English language learners is high, yet a con-
siderable number of learners learn the language enthusiastically. Many learners show satisfactory academic performance in the target language (English). To comment on the performance level of the English language learners enrolled in the regional medium schools in Assam is very difficult. This is because the academic performance report gives a very polarised picture- at one pole are the successful learners of the language showing satisfactory performance and at the other pole are the learners who show very negligible progress in the target language.

Assuming that the native language have certain amount of influence in the learning of the English language, this study has been designed to study the cross-linguistic influences on learning English in the regional medium schools in Assam. Assamese is the dominant language in the linguistic environment of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Moreover, the majority of the high schools have Assamese as the medium of instruction. As such, it could be assumed that the learners of the regional medium schools, especially the schools where the medium of instruction is Assamese, are influenced by the Assamese language both positively and negatively. To see the truth of this assumption, this study has chosen certain specific objectives. The specific objectives are:

• To find the area where the cross-linguistic influences occur most.
• To find the production errors in writing.
• To analyse the most common type of error found among learners in writing tasks. This will help us to find out the area of difficulty.
• The attitude of the learners and the teachers towards the learning of the English language.
• Learners use certain cognitive strategies to learn any language. The use of the previous knowledge of Assamese can act as a support base to learn the target language English.
• To find the sociolinguistic factors that influence the learning of English in the Regional medium schools in Assam.
• To contribute towards the preparation of pedagogical methods meant for the teachers of English language of Assam, based on field realities.

These objectives were taken as the basic support base in preparing the design of
the study. From these objectives the research questions were formulated for the study.

1.3 Research Questions:

The rationale behind this study is to find out the major cross-linguistic influences that hamper or help in the English language learning process among the learners of the Assamese medium schools in Assam. This study would attempt to answer some major questions like—

- What are the areas where the cross-linguistic influences in learning English occur most?
- What are the common production errors in writing?
- Is the knowledge of the first language (Assamese) a factor that helps the cross-linguistic influences to surface?
- Is the previous knowledge of the first language (Assamese) a help in the learning of the second language (English)?
- What attitude do the learners of the English language in the regional medium schools of Assam display towards the learning of the second language?
- What attitude do the teachers have towards the learners of English in the regional medium schools in Assam?
- Why do some learners show more proficiency in the acquisition of the second language English than others?

1.4 Hypothesis of the study:

In sorting out the specific objectives and research questions of the study both the qualitative and quantitative aspects are brought under consideration. From here the study can assume a hypothetical stand. This study begins with two hypotheses that:

- Students learning English in Assam are influenced by the knowledge of the first language. Hence, they are a source of errors made by the learners of the English language.
- Though the cross-linguistic influences from Assamese are a source of error, yet the previous knowledge of the first language (Assamese) act as a support base to learn the target language (English).
1.5 Review of Literature:

The decision to take up any topic for research means that we need to know thoroughly about that particular area. And, review of all relevant literature on the topic becomes necessary. In the course of this study, many important books have helped in various stages, thus enriching the study and making it more relevant. The most important contribution of the literary review on the topic is that it had helped in selecting the vacuum – the area where many important queries have been hitherto left unanswered. There are a number of books which have been perused during this study. It is impossible to write a review on all of these books in detail. Hence, an attempt has been made to review the major treatises that have helped in the conceptual formulations and in trying to seek the answers to the research questions and objectives of this study.

Conceptual Formulations:

To get the initial introduction into the subject certain books were of great help. The topic of this research “A Critical Study of the Cross-linguistic Influences on Learning English in the Regional Medium Schools in Assam” can be broadly placed within the purview of Applied Linguistics. S.Pit Corder’s views helped a lot in placing the topic in the proper domain of second language acquisition studies. The other authors too were of great help. The rubric of cross-linguistic influences comes within the domain of second language acquisition and language transfer studies. The books mentioned below were of much help in clarifying the definitions associated with this study. Some of them are Bilingualism, Second Language Acquisition, Cross-linguistic Influences, etc. We shall deal with them in the second chapter in detail.

The various theoretical concerns that are associated with this study are Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis and Interlanguage. This study has a sociolinguistic perspective as well as a few psycholinguistic concerns even though the sociolinguistic point of view will be the main perspective in the interpretation of the data. The various sociolinguistic dimensions like the microsocial and the macrosocial factors are brought in to analyse the data. The following review of the literature includes all the major works that had helped in giving this study a valid structure.
1. *Introducing Applied Linguistics* by S.Pit Corder  
(Penguin Books 1973)

Through *Introducing Applied Linguistics* S.Pit Corder tries to show the relevance of those studies which are connected with language teaching. In three parts Corder very vividly stirs the interest of both groups of readers—those who have formal training in linguistics as well as those who do not, yet who wants to know what Applied Linguistics is all about. Part 1 deals with language and learning where Corder deals with the various views, functions and the variability of language along with the concept that language is a symbolic system.

In part 2 Corder establishes the significant nexus between the various branches of linguistics like Psycholinguistics and Applied Linguistics with language teaching. The author believes that the “object or goal of language teaching is to develop in the learner the knowledge and skills which enable him to play certain roles in another language community, to turn him into a performer in the target language, to give him a communicative competence.”

Part 3 is all about the techniques of applied linguistics. This part is concerned with the principles and techniques of selecting what goes into the preparation of the syllabi of a language teaching course along with relevant topics like comparison of language varieties, contrastive studies, error analysis, and the like.

2. *Second Language Acquisition* by Wolfgang Klein  

In *Second Language Acquisition*, Wolfgang Klein draws attention to the fact that the acquisition of a second language, be it by everyday communication or by guided instruction, follows certain principles. These principles stem from various properties of human language processing, from the learner’s specific motivation and from the way in which samples of, or information about, the target language is made accessible to the learner. Klein unveils the process of second language acquisition based on these principles through the two specific parts that he creates in his treatise.

In the first part the author deals with the very process of language acquisition, elucidating some fundamental facts and focal issues along with some very well known
theories in the field. The theories of second language acquisition selected by Klein include the Identity Hypothesis, the Contrastive hypothesis, Krashen’s Monitor Theory, Theories of Learner Varieties, Pidginization Theory.

The second part of the book highlights the learner’s point of view. Here, Klein attempts to trace the ways in which second language learners utilize the linguistic input available to them in order to develop their individual language varieties and, in doing so, how they gradually approximate to the target language.

3. *Language Transfer* by Terence Odlin

   In his treatise, Terence Odlin adopts a comprehensive approach to language transfer. He starts with a historical overview leading the reader through the dramatic change from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Odlin focuses on the fundamental issues of transfer and presents them clearly. His work considers a pertinent question: how much influence a learner’s native language can have in making the acquisition of a new language easy or difficult. The discussion of the main issue is conducted at various levels discourse, semantics, syntax, phonetics, phonology and writing systems. Odlin analyses and interprets research, showing many ways in which similarities and differences between languages can influence the acquisition of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. The existence of transfer and its subtlety is demonstrated through presentation and analysis with data obtained from empirical studies.

4. *Introducing Second Language Acquisition* by Muriel Saville-Troike
   (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

   This book is written in the form of a text book and introduces the reader to the field of second language acquisition in a comprehensive manner. The book is written keeping a few goals in mind like providing a basic level of knowledge about second language learning phenomenon, to stimulate in second language learning, and to offer practical help to second language learners and teachers. The book includes a broader range of second language acquisition phenomenon and emphasizes the importance of integrating linguistic, psychological and social perspectives on the same.

   The focus of the book is on the acquisition of second language competence, but
this construct ("competence") has been broadly considered from different points of view like "linguistic competence", "communicative competence", and as knowledge required for participation in communicative activities involving reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

5. *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching* by Vivian Cook

This book provides an introduction to the application of second language acquisition research to language teaching and is meant for teachers, students and researchers working in this area. The scope of the book ranges from particular aspects of language and language teaching to broader contexts of second language acquisition and general ideas of language teaching.

The highlights of this book are the factual language materials, the general theoretical models of second language acquisition, the background study of the teaching methods of the twentieth century, and the society related issues. The book lays stress on the point that English is the chief language that has been investigated in second language acquisition research and hence most of the discussions are concerned with the L2 learning and teaching of English.

6. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition* by Lourdes Ortega
(Hodder Education, 2011)

The field of second language acquisition research has widened to a good extent since it beginning and includes many rubrics within its fold. This book offers a "wide-encompassing" survey of this broadening area. The various findings of the author, the proposed theories, the different research paradigms and the futuristic approaches mentioned in this book adds to its value in the field of second language research.

The book deals elaborately with the various aspects of second language acquisition. But the elaborate discussions on the rubric of cross-linguistic influences and the linguistic environment make it very useful for the researchers in this field.

7. *Error Analysis* by S.Pit Corder
(Oxford University Press, 1981, Fifth impression 1987)

This book is a major contribution to the study of interlanguage theory which is
acknowledged to be of central importance in applied linguistics. This collection of Corder’s own papers is divided into two parts with six papers in each part. The first six papers deal with error analysis. The author believes that the learner’s systematic errors are significant because they reveal how far the learner has progressed. These errors provide useful evidence of the processes by which a language is learnt.

The remaining six essays deal with the concept of interlanguage. According to Corder, the term “interlanguage” suggests that “the learner’s language will show systematic features both of the target language and of other languages which he may know, most obviously of his mother tongue. In other words, his system is a mixed or intermediate one.”

8. *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* by H. Douglas Brown
(Prentice-Hall, 1987)

Douglas Brown designs this book to provide the readers with a comprehensive grasp of the theoretical foundations of foreign language teaching. It lays essential groundwork for the full understanding and use of methods and techniques. Here we get an overview of the current theoretical issues in the field. The subject matter of this book is examined from the interdisciplinary perspectives of linguistics, psychology, and education, the three major disciplines which have contributed to language teaching methodology over the past four decades. The plan of the text, as seen through the chapters, is “to build toward a comprehensive, integrated understanding of the teaching-learning process, such that one will be able to construct a personalized rationale, or theory, of second language acquisition.”

9. *Language Transfer in Language Learning* by (editors) Susan M. Gass and Larry Selinker

This book is an edited volume comprising of several research articles on language transfer studies and a very enriching introduction by the editors Susan Gass and Larry Selinker. The chapters in this volume provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of language transfer and recognition of its importance as part of the overall picture of second language acquisition. This book also presents a selective
history on the topic of language transfer studies. Each chapter in this volume deals with a different dimension of the concept of language transfer and the introduction of the book tries to bring forth the common elements of transfer from the varied dimensions mentioned in the articles.


(Oxford University Press, 1994, Reprinted 2009)

In her own words, why Suzanne Romaine calls this book *language in society* rather than *language and society* is "to emphasize the fact that the study of society must accord a place to language within it at the same time as the study of language must take account of society." In her book Romaine intertwines the various concepts with empirical instances from varied sources, giving the work a very authentic touch. The issues of language and dialect, language choice, societal multilingualism, sociolinguistic patterns, language and gender, the social perspective of language change, pidgins and creoles, and the societal linguistic problems are dealt with very adroitly in eight chapters.

In the conclusion, Romaine claims that "language has no existence apart from the social reality of its users. Although language is a precondition for social life, it does not exist on its own and it does not simply reflect some pre-existing reality."

11. *Sociolinguistics* by R.A. Hudson


This book presents sociolinguistics through the eyes of a descriptive and theoretical linguist, making the most of the points at which sociolinguistics throws light—especially on questions that highlight the structure of language and the nature of linguistic competence. The introduction of the book is an eye opener to the novice where the phenomenon called sociolinguistics is vividly described. This is followed by the description of varieties of language like dialects, registers, diglossia, pidgins and creoles. Next, Hudson introduces the interrelation between language, culture and thought. In chapters four and five he deals elaborately with the study of speech—its quantitative study as well as speech as an identity marker, which is followed by the issue of linguistic and social inequality. The concluding unit is a theoretical summary
of the functions and structure of language.

Studies on Methodology

To conduct any research successfully, thorough knowledge on research methodology is a necessity. Research on a topic associated with language learning requires specific knowledge regarding the various technicalities associated with it. Since this study adopts a methodology which combines both qualitative and quantitative methods, the methods would also be different from other studies. To get a clear perspective of the various methods of research of language learning, several books were of great help. The book that that helped in this study to a great extent is the David Nunan’s Research Methods in Language Learning.

12. Research Methods in Language Learning by David Nunan

In this work Nunan provides a contemporary account of the various traditions, methods and techniques, analysis and evaluation in language learning and teaching. With the help of logico-deductive argument and empirical evidence he discusses the key issues and practical concerns of actually carrying out research in language learning. The book reveals to the reader that research standards are subject to change with practice and there is no such thing as a “substantive, universal, ahistorical methodology” in language learning-teaching research. This treatise aims to help researchers and non-researchers develop critical and analytical skills which will enable them to read and evaluate research reports in an informed and knowledgeable way. Assisting readers to develop relevant research skills is another aim of the author as revealed in this book.

The Indian Perspective:

“With 1652 mother tongues, between 200 and 700 languages belonging to four language families, written in ten major script systems”⁸, India represents a multilingualism unparalleled in the entire world. This proves the nature of complexity that would arise in the studies that deal with the language teaching-learning scenario in India. Amidst this state of affairs, English enjoys the position of an official
language. As the government of India recommends the three language formula, students need to learn English as a second language. The teaching-learning situation of English in India is a unique phenomenon analyzed by many researchers. An attempt has been made to express some of their thoughts in the review given below.

13. *Multilingualism in India Edited* by D.P.Pattanayak
(Orient Longman Private Limited, 2007)

*Multilingualism in India* is a challenging and stimulating study of the nature and structure of multilingualism in the Indian subcontinent. With a multitude of communities, India's multilingualism matches its pluriculturalism. This book is a collection of articles that discuss sociology, psychology, pedagogy and demographic aspects of multilingualism. They bring out some of the salient problems of literacy in a multilingual world and give a language planning perspective.

Pattanayak in the beginning of the book gives a very enlightening introduction on the multilingual or bilingual education scenario in India. Talking about the functionality of language and the mother tongue, he goes on to explain the different ways of approaching equality in education in a multicultural situation. He even comments that in the West bilingualism is seen as a static structure where two languages are at war with one another. The West cannot see that under the pressure of heteroglossia or polyglossia situations change and decisive movements take place in the lives of speech communities.

Pattanayak then moves on to establish the importance of mother tongue, which is the expression of primary identity and of group solidarity.

The volume ends with a discussion on language and social identity.

14. *English Language Teaching* by V.Saraswathi
(Orient Longman Private Limited, 2004)

This book fulfills the need for a textbook book which looks at the practice of English Language Teaching (ELT) from an Indian perspective. It has a training-oriented approach and the themes chosen for each unit are fundamental to the discipline. With the “basic-concepts approach”, the reader is introduced to the theories of language acquisition, methods, testing and research.
The book follows a learner-centered approach encouraging teacher-researchers to self-direct their learning. Each unit begins with a scene-setting activity, followed by the aims of the lesson unit. The content comprises of short texts which are chosen to provoke thoughts in that sphere. Each unit also provides guidelines for projects and assignments with a bibliography for further perusal.

15. **L1 as a Scaffolding Device in the Learning of L2 Academic Skills: An Experimental Study By Lina Mukhopadhyay.**

(Unpublished Thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy in English Language Teaching, submitted to the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, 2003)

This work through an experimental method tries to examine the role of the first language as a resource that can provide cognitive support and enable second language learning. The study has employed prior knowledge of the first language as a scaffold to cognitively support the learning of a second language. Generally in the area of second language learning the pedagogic role of a first language has been viewed more as a hindrance than as a resource in terms of its pedagogic value. Through the findings of this experimental study the researcher proves the previous assumptions wrong and tries to indicate that a first language can serve as a scaffold and can augment learning in a second language within an academic context. This work also gives a closer perspective of the English language learning scene at the secondary level in India.

16. **The English-Vernacular Divide by Vaidehi Ramanathan**

(Orient Longman Private Limited, 2007)

This book offers a situated exploration of the role of language policies in key educational sites. It discusses ways in which English and ‘vernacular’ language policies are “embedded and reified in a host of domains, including textbooks, curricular materials, pedagogic practices, institutional mandates and language ideologies, all of which collude together to privilege the ‘English-medium’ Indian middle class, and which shut doors on ‘vernacular-medium’ students.” Though the book offers an in-depth ethnographic account, yet some of its explorations and beliefs are emotionally loaded and cannot be generalized, especially in the context of Assam.
According to the National Policy on Education, 1986, the National System of Education should be based on a national curriculum framework which will contain a common core along with other components that are flexible. This National Curriculum Framework is reviewed at regular intervals and the previous review was done in 2000, followed by the review in 2005. The latest review came out in the year 2011. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) is a set of guidelines which aims at evolving a national system of education capable of responding to India’s diversity of geographical and cultural milieus while ensuring a common core of values along with academic components. The NCF is envisioned as a means of modernizing the system of education in India.

The significant guiding principles of the NCF are:

- Connecting knowledge to life outside the school,
- Ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote methods,
- Enriching the curriculum to provide for overall development of children rather than remain textbook centric,
- Making examinations more flexible and integrated into classroom life, and
- Nurturing an over-riding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country.

The most important addition of the NCF, 2005 is the emphasis laid on two significant issues:

1. Emphasis on Habitat learning
2. Emphasis on Life Skills

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 contains the Position Papers of the National Focus Groups in three volumes. One of the position papers is on Teaching of English (Volume 1, Curricular Areas), which is of much importance in understanding the policy and field-related background of our study.

The scenario in Assam

"A Study of Transfer and its Manifestations in the Acquisition of English by Assamese Learners.” By Padmini Bhuyan.
This is an unpublished PhD thesis from Gauhati University. This study concentrates basically on the effects of transfer in the acquisition process of a target language. In this case the target language is English and the learners are Assamese speakers. The study investigates many levels of language production and looks at transfer effects in phonology, grammar (including morphology and syntax), discourse and pragmatics. The level of pragmatic transfer is more closely looked at for it offers insights into the cultural and social influences of the first language on the learners' second language.

**Resuming the review**

The review of literature given above clarifies the major aspects related to second language learning. The articles of D.P. Pattanayak and the other Indian researchers have made the Indian English Language Teaching scenario very clear. But the corpus of literature on the English learning and teaching scenario in Assam is very limited. And hardly a few researchers talk about the cross-linguistic influences that affect the learning of English in Assam.

Assam is a state with a multicultural and multi-lingual mosaic. Assamese is the major dominant language here. The learning of English as a second language in such a setting is affected due to several cross linguistic influences. This kind of a mosaic opens up new vistas of research in the field of second language learning. Research in the field of second language learning has become a necessity in Assam as this would ensure the flow of information and analysis which will definitely go a long way in creating a body of knowledge that would be of utmost help to the teachers and learners in this field.

Studies on second language learning and transfer studies have been done in Assam but hardly any specific study could be found on the cross-linguistic influences on learning English. The reviewing of the available literature on this area has helped in finding the vacuum. This study can definitely help in fulfilling this knowledge gap in Assam.

This kind of a study would contribute to the creation of a pedagogy which is based on the ground realities of this region.
1.6 Methodology:

To conduct the study on cross-linguistic influences on learning English in the regional medium schools in Assam, we have taken help from both primary and secondary data.

For the secondary data we have referred to several books on the subject and the associated disciplines and also treatises on the theoretical discourses. The major part of the library work had been done in the Ramesh Mohan Library, English and Foreign Language University (EFLU), Hyderabad. Many journals are also referred to for both old and new inputs on the subject. The bibliography has the list of all the books, journals and other secondary data that had been referred to.

A detailed discussion on the help taken from the various books and journals has been described in the review of literature.

In the entire course of the study we have met several researchers and senior professors and, of course, teachers who have been working in this field for a long time.

From the conceptions formed from the secondary sources, we formed a conceptual framework. So to convert and extend our work from the conceptual to the empirical level, we conducted an empirical study through the observation and interview method. This forms the primary data of this study. For the collection of the primary data both the qualitative and quantitative approaches have been adopted in order to empirically verify the study.

For the empirical dimension of the study, a survey had been conducted in two phases. In the first phase a pilot survey was conducted in several schools in the Kamrup district. Schools of both urban and rural background were selected at random. All the schools are regional medium (Assamese) government run and provincial schools.

*The urban schools that we visited are:*

1. Geetanagar High School, Hatigarh Chariali, Guwahati-21
2. Bhaskar Vidyapeeth Higher Secondary School, Zoo-Road, Guwahati-21

*The rural schools that we visited are:*

1. Chandrapur High School, Chandrapur, Pin-781150
In these schools we met the teachers who teach the English Language in classes 9 and 10. They were given a questionnaire asking for their educational and training backgrounds. Next, the study group of eight to ten students, both boys and girls, were selected at random from classes 9 and 10. The students too were given a questionnaire asking for their backgrounds. This was followed by certain exercises:

1. A composition on any topic they want to write like water, market, etc.
2. A task on pronunciation—a list of around ten words

Questionnaires were asked to be filled by the learners of classes 9 and 10, and these respondents were also selected on a random basis. From every school there were 4 or 5 respondents. Interaction was also held among teacher respondents and these inputs were of immense help.

The pilot survey was the eye opener regarding the field situation prevailing in the regional medium schools in Assam. It gave a glimpse of what can be expected in the English teaching-learning scenario in Assam. Because of this pilot survey better preparations could be made for the second phase of field survey. The interaction with the respondent teachers and learners in the pilot survey was a guiding force in the second phase of field survey and its tools.

The second phase of field study was conducted in 9 districts of the Brahmaputra valley; the 4 regions of Upper Assam, Central Assam, Lower Assam and the North bank are covered. We have selected the schools on a random basis and two schools from the urban and two schools from the rural background are included from all the districts. The districts are:

- **Upper Assam**: Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh
- **Central Assam**: Nagaon and Morigaon
- **Lower Assam**: Dhubri and Barpeta
- **North Bank**: North Lakhimpur and Dhemaji

The Upper, Central, Lower regions and the North Bank of the Brahmaputra valley are the areas where most of the government run and provincial schools have Assamese as the medium of instruction. As the study plans to look into the cross-
linguistic influences from Assamese into the learning of English, the districts selected will justify the purpose. Another rationale behind the selection of the districts is that, these districts fairly represent the Brahmaputra valley.

The schools that were selected at random from both rural and urban blocks formed the universe of the study. The schools in sample are given below:

The list of schools from the nine districts is mentioned here.

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### 1.7 The Study Group

This study selects its study group among students of classes 9 and 10 studying in Assamese medium Government run schools and also provincial schools.

The majority of the learners have Assamese as the native language or first language.

The other minor group of learners, whose mother tongue is not Assamese, gets sufficient exposure to the Assamese language as it is the most dominant language in the region and is widely spoken for almost all purposes. All the learner respondents have been exposed to training in Assamese medium for at least a period of 11 years and have also been exposed to English teaching in the Assamese dominant setting for a minimum of 6 to 7 years or more. As such, these respondents had ample scope to
listen and use the Assamese language in school, among their peer group, marketplace, as well as in other establishments, they are supposed to have acquired enough communicative competence in Assamese.

The criteria for the selection of this study group helped in the objective of the study, which is to find out the influence of Assamese on the learning of English.

1.8 Survey Tools that were used for the study:

The interview method was used to interview the teachers from these various schools to get the perspective of the teachers.

Another tool for the data collection used was the questionnaires. The questionnaires are attached at the end of the work.

1.9 The Data collection:

For collection of data from the field, a three stage simple questionnaire was designed. The first stage of the questionnaire was related to the demographic data pertaining to the informants. The second stage was for collection of data about the awareness about the learning process of the Second language and in the third stage it was attempted to assess the knowledge of English grammar and comprehension. Over and above this questionnaire, another set of questionnaire was also designed to collect data from the teachers who have been teaching English in higher classes of the schools.

For collection of data initially the researcher visited the schools in sample. From each of the identified school, two permanent English teachers were interviewed who regularly teach English in higher classes especially in class IX and X. In the process, a total of 64 teachers were interviewed and the specified questionnaire set was distributed. Apart from the data collected through questionnaire, various other data was also collected especially information about students. Depending on information provided by the teachers five students from each selected schools were interviewed and finally they were explained how to fill up the specific questionnaire.

The questionnaires were handed out personally to the respondents in their respective schools. There were three sheets and the third was a worksheet to test their knowledge and proficiency in the linguistic category of verbs. A free writing task was also given. The analysis of the errors detected in the worksheets is discussed in a later chapter and the questionnaires are given as annexure at the end of the work.
The students were given specific dates within which they were to fill up the questionnaire. The filled up questionnaire was then collected from the students.

During the survey a total of 174 respondent (student learners) were examined out of which 73 (41.95%) were females and 101 (58.05%) were males. Among the respondents, majority belonged to class X (56.90 percent); but differences can be observed between boys and girl respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL No.</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Class-IX 38</td>
<td>52.05</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33.66</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>41.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Class- X 35</td>
<td>47.94</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66.34</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>58.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is essential to mention here that the work of data collection for the quantitative study was done by the researcher personally and also with the help of few research scholars from Gauhati University, Guwahati. These research scholars were trained for the purpose by several experienced personnel working in the field of statistics. This quantitative approach was adopted to get an objective account of the English language learning scenario in Assam directly from the field.

After the volunteers returned the duly filled questionnaires, the researcher visited several of the schools at random to cross-check the information. This cross-verification is a necessary exercise for the qualitative dimension of the study. The information collected objectively may be inadequate in answering certain sociolinguistic queries. This subjective experience from the field is important for the ideographic assessment of the study.

The data thus collected was analysed statistically with the help of a statistical package. The analysis would be discussed in detail in a later chapter.

The study is both a qualitative and quantitative study. The nomothetic and the ideographic points of view are taken into account.

1.10 Chapterization

After the completion of the various methods used for the study and after the
analysis of the findings, the study “A Critical study of the Cross-linguistic Influences on Learning English in the Regional Medium schools in Assam” can be organized in five chapters. Brief descriptions of the chapters that are going to follow are given below.

Chapter—1
Introduction

The introductory chapter introduces the topic of the study—“A Critical Study of the Cross-linguistic Influences on Learning English in the Regional Medium Schools in Assam”. In trying to do so, we first give the statement of the problem. The objectives of the study are given very specifically here. The objectives of the study are followed by the research questions. The objectives and the research questions are the guiding dimensions on the basis of which the hypothesis is formulated.

This is followed by the hypothesis of the study. It is on the basis of this hypothesis we are going to begin our research. The hypothesis is followed by the review of literature. The review of literature helps in the finding the knowledge gap that exists in the domain of English language learning and teaching in Assam.

After the review of literature, the introductory chapter gives a description of the research methodology that has been adopted to conduct this particular research.

The description of the selected methodology is followed by the chapterization. The chapterization in this chapter briefly describes the contents of the five chapters.

The introductory chapter concludes with the statement of the justification of the study. It is an echo of the rationale behind the study—what new knowledge is it going to add to this branch of study. It states how the study would help in the English language teaching-learning scenario in Assam.

Chapter—2
Theoretical Framework

In the second chapter we are going to deal with the existing theories of Teaching and Learning of English. The teaching and learning of English fall within the domain of Second Language Acquisition. Hence, we need to get acquainted with those theories of Second Language Acquisition which are associated with the learning of English.

The theories and hypotheses which have received considerable attention in
second language research will be discussed in brief in this chapter. Before the theories are discussed, this chapter will highlight the definitions required to be clarified before the study begins like- second language acquisition and learning, bilingualism, cross-linguistic influences, to name a few.

Among the hypotheses mentioned above, the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and the Error Analysis are most relevant for us. These two hypotheses would be dealt with in detail. Our study would be especially based on the findings of Error analysis conducted on various study groups.

One important objective of this study is to see the sociolinguistic factors that influence the learning of English in Assam. To analyze this objective the sociolinguistic theories and the microsocial and macrosocial factors also needs to be discussed in this chapter on theory. The sociolinguistic theories that gets importance in this study are Ethnography of Communication, Social Psychology, Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory, Accommodation Theory, Interaction Hypothesis, and Schumann’s Acculturation Model.

Most of the theories dealing with the teaching and learning of English are Eurocentric in nature, having their origin either in Europe or America. Hence, through them we get a perspective of the teaching of English as a second language in the international canvas. In this chapter, we plan to deal with the international scenario in English learning and teaching. Also, the framework for the interpretation of the study would be framed in this chapter.

Chapter—3
The Study

In this chapter the entire study conducted from the beginning till the formulation of the tables would be discussed in detail.

In other words, the study of the cross-linguistic influences would be applied from the conceptual level to the empirical level.

The chapter begins with the elaboration of the methodology adopted to conduct the study. This is to be followed by the presentation of the statistical reports that were prepared with the help of a statistical package. This presentation of the quantitative study has been analysed with tables and diagrams.
Chapter—4
Data Analysis

This chapter concentrates on the elaborate analysis of the data that had been collected from the two phases of the survey conducted for the study.

The chapter would first present the reading of the findings. These findings would then be analysed on the basis of the theoretical frameworks that had been adopted for the purpose of the study.

Chapter—5
Conclusion

This chapter forms the most important one as it would discuss the cross-linguistic influences that affect the learning of English in Assam. The entire body of findings along with the analysis would be related to the hypothetical framework that was formulated at the beginning of the study.

Assamese is a culture specific language and so is English. When English is learnt in a non-native scenario like Assam, we are bound to encounter a conflict between two different cultures. And, in this chapter a discussion on the English teaching-learning scenario would be presented in the context of Assam.

The concluding chapter would sum up the whole study by dealing with the various aspects— starting from a hypothetical situation, how did we go about finding the reality and finally reaching a point of theorization. Here, we shall deal with the gap that existed in this field of study and how this study fulfilled it and to what extent.

The contribution of this study to the field of second language learning will be placed here in this chapter. Along with it, suggestions and policy level implications would also be stated.

Finally, this study would justify the necessity of a pedagogy of action for the teachers of English based on the ground realities and context of Assam.

1.11 Justification and Rationale behind the study

This study “A Critical Study of the Cross-linguistic Influences on Learning English in the Regional Medium Schools in Assam” tries to delve deeper into the English language learning scenario in Assam. Several studies have been done in the
domain of second language acquisition and learning, but very few works have concentrated on the area selected by this study— the cross-linguistic influences or the influence of the first language on the learning of the second language. The specific contribution of this study is the finding of the areas of difficulty faced by the learners of English in Assam. Most learners seem to find the Tense System very difficult and this study comes to this conclusion on the basis of the error analysis done. An elaborate discussion on the tense system of both Assamese and English is put forth by this study. Along with this, a sociolinguistic interpretation of the cross-linguistic influences that influence the learning of English in a typically multilingual setting in Assam makes this study a relevant one.

The findings of the study would be of much help for the researchers who intend to do intensive study in the field of English language teaching and learning.

The researcher feels that the contribution of this study would go a long way in preparing a paedagogy for teachers in the field of English language teaching and learning based on the field realities of Assam.

The suggestions and policy level implications given in the concluding chapter, if adopted by the stake holders in the English language teaching scenario in Assam, can create an impact on the entire second language learning domain in the North Eastern Region of India.

1 Ancient name of India was Jambudweepa. It was a group of several kingdoms.
2 This record is from the 1961 census, based upon the language classificational scheme of the Linguistic Survey of India.
3 Three long-range goals of teaching English in post-colonial India have been identified by Krishnaswamy and Sriraman (Krishnaswami, N. and Sriraman, T. (1994) in English Teaching in India. T.R. Publications Ltd., Chennai). They are:
   • Mobility (the utilitarian function of English as the language of opportunity).
   • Modernization (the interactive function of English as the “window of the world” and as an instrument of change).
   • The projection principle (the interpretative function of English as an international language to project our identity and values and to promote better human understanding).
4 The definition of second language has been given in detail in the second chapter.
5 Interlanguage— The definition and explanation of the various stages are given in chapter 2 in detail.
6 This is proved in the empirical data of this study. The data is presented in tabular forms in the third chapter.
7 The entire list of books and journals and other references have been mentioned in the bibliography attached at the end of the book.
8 D. P. Pattanayak in a commentary in Multilingualism in India, Orient Longman, 2007