Chapter 7

Conclusions and Recommendations

7.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises of four sections: summing up, findings of the study, conclusions, suggestions and recommendations. The summary of the study tries to look at the overall parts of the study. The findings of the study explore the results of the study. The conclusions of the study will reveal the pedagogical implication of English vocabulary items meant for Assamese medium learners of English of rural areas. In order to do that it concentrates on the problematic areas relating to learning English vocabulary in Assamese medium schools along with the strategies that Assamese medium learners adopt while learning English vocabulary as well as the method and approaches that English teachers in Assamese medium schools adopt while teaching English vocabulary items. The suggestions and recommendations are provided in order to face the problems of learning and teaching of English vocabulary items for rural Assamese medium learners of English.

7.1 Summing up

The first chapter deals with the introduction and general background of the study. Both English and Assamese originated from the Indo-European language family, making us aware of the fact that some features are bound to be common to both the languages. English descended from primitive Germanic and Assamese descended from Sanskrit. The structures of both the languages are different. It is obvious that it becomes a problem to study the English language and its implication for Assamese learners in context of second
language teaching scenario since the negative transfer of the Assamese language does exist in learning the structure of the English language.

English, being a global language in twenty first century, occupies the unique position in our educational system as well. It is the national language of a number of countries, where as Assamese enjoys the status of primary and official language of Assam. English, being the associate official language for inter-state communication and communication between the states and the centre, it is the only language, which is understood by the educated people over the country. English serves to play a role of Indigenized variety of English (IVE) in India. From the functional point of view, it seems that English has become one of the Indian languages, which is recognized throughout the country.

The present work attempts to study the implication of pedagogy of English vocabulary items for basic level Assamese medium learners of Kamrup district. In such a teaching situation, the problematic areas of different aspects of English vocabulary are subject of discussion along with the appropriate vocabulary teaching methods and approaches adopted by English teachers suitable for Assamese medium learners. It also assesses the Assamese learners’ strategies in order to learn English vocabulary items.

Vocabulary is central and the building block of the language since it labels objects, actions, and ideas without which people cannot convey their meanings. It is a vehicle of understanding and self-expression.

Learning vocabulary is a complex process. The students’ aim to be achieved in learning vocabulary is primarily their ability to recall the word at will and to recognize it in its spoken and written forms. The principles focus on
vocabulary teaching on the assumptions that learners can be taught and can teach themselves.

The text books 'New English Reader I', 'New English Reader II', 'New English Reader III' for classes V, VI and VII respectively used in Assamese medium schools in Kamrup district, are based on communicative approach. It highlights on achieving linguistic performance on the part of the learner. Language learning involves an understanding of how it is actually used in day-to-day communication. Students must take an active role during the process of learning. The classroom should provide an opportunity so that the learner engages himself in using the language to communicate. But what is noticed is that the situation is not conducive for practicing this approach. The textbooks aim to develop the four language skills in a communicative way but the problem arises when teaching the courses as most of the teachers are not well-equipped in a communicative way.

There are many problems prevalent in teaching and learning situation of the English language in Assam. The first problem, one notices, is the dismal performance shown by the Assamese medium learners after ten years of studying the English language in Primary and High School stage. In general, in Assamese medium schools what is found is that the standard of teaching as well as learning English is very weak. The teachers of English employ grammar translation method to teach English as well as English vocabulary which cannot help the students to use the language productively as far as active communication is concerned. Teachers even knowing the importance of using English in the classroom to get the students familiar with it, frequently use word-to-word translation from English into Assamese, perhaps thinking
that if translation, not being used, might result in lack of comprehension of the
text on the part of the students which affects the students' passing the
examination. Even if the teachers start teaching English without translation,
students feel uncomfortable and they expect the teachers' use of translation
since they have been familiar and accustomed to it so far. It has also been
noticed that a good percentage of teachers of English are unable to speak
English as well. They are not at all qualified to teach English. Majority of the
English teachers do not even participate in teacher's in-service training
programme conducted by "English Language Teaching Institute"(ELTI),
Kahilipara and even if some teachers participate in order to update themselves
for acquiring new information in the area of language teaching, they hardly
implement those for teaching English in mother - tongue dominated English
classroom situation. There is a need to change the situation of teaching and
earning English in the Assamese medium schools where the focus of teaching
should shift from 'teaching about English' to 'teaching English.' After all,
teaching English efficiently constitutes an awesome challenge to the teachers.
While English is a skill subject, they would teach it as knowledge of content
subjects like History or Social studies. In most cases, there is no real urge
among the students to learn English, since the learners can 'get on' easily with
their own mother- tongue that is Assamese. Motivation is a stimulus to
speaking and it should be created among the students by the teachers of
English.

‘Teacher-learner-classroom’ can be clubbed together to constitute a
pedagogical issue. The classrooms are mixed classrooms. The learners come
from different socio-linguistic background. The competence levels of the
learners are different. The teacher is the one who can identify the learners’ problems and can teach them accordingly. He is the one who is concerned with adopting effective approach or methods as well as suitable teaching strategies. For this to happen, the language teacher has to be proficient enough who can be a role model to his/her students.

Teaching of English vocabulary, in its proper perspective, is still one of the most neglected areas regarding the teaching of the English language. Traditionally teaching of vocabulary in Assamese medium schools is meant to be giving the exact equivalent meanings of the English words in the learner's mother tongue that is Assamese. There is less focus seen on correct pronunciation, spelling as well as on word formation in Assamese medium schools. Considering all these, there is a need of teaching English vocabulary concerning all the aspects of knowing a word for upper primary level learners.

The second chapter talks about review of related literature. There is not a single work done on this topic in Assam as far as our knowledge goes, yet there are some published and unpublished work related to our study. N. Dasgupta’s unpublished Ph.D. research work submitted to Gauhati University entitled ‘Vocabulary: A study’ (1975) is a major attempt to study vocabulary. He has shown how important vocabulary is in teaching English along with the criteria of selection and gradation for teaching English vocabulary. He tried to locate the problem at the hypothetical gap that exists between the students of age level 12(plus) reading in non-English medium schools in Meghalaya. Another work on vocabulary study is “An Investigation into the Basic Assamese vocabulary” (1978) by Nandita Sarma submitted to Gauhati University for Ph. D. She has shown the learning of basic vocabulary in the
first language perspective as well as how the vocabulary grows. Besides this, she tried to show how vocabulary crop up as a problem area in reading materials in Assamese for children.

In order to determine the difficulty of a word, there are a number of factors for a learner. They are usually categorised as ‘intralexical factors’ (intrinsic properties related to the word’s form and meaning) and ‘interlexical factors’ (pertaining to the relationship between the word and familiar words either in L2 or other languages). Our study showed that Assamese medium learners of English face innumerable problems on both the factors, i.e. intralexical and interlexical.

Though there are a number of works available in Assamese phonology and English phonology separately, still it is limited as far as the comparative study of English and Assamese phonology is concerned. The works so far done by G.C. Goswami are pioneering on Assamese phonology and morphology. G.C.Goswami’s published research work ‘Structure of Assamese’ (1982) gives a basis for the analysis along with the description and analysis of Assamese phonemes prepared by RCILTS, IIT, Guwahati. Besides this the contrastive work done by Anita Verma Tamuli ‘Sound Patterns of English and Assamese: A study in contrastive ontogenetics’ (2002) sheds light on the phonological similarities and differences of Assamese and English.

The third chapter comprises of the problem areas faced by upper-primary level Assamese medium learners of English while acquiring English words. It covers phonological, orthographical, morphological and semantic aspects of words intended for basic level Assamese medium learners. In phonology section we have discussed phonology of British RP., Phonology of
Indian English and Phonology of Assamese and of course established Phonology of General Assamese English. We have shown the comparison of phonological systems of British RP and General Indian English. An attempt was also made to compare the phonological systems of British RP and General Assamese English. Similarly we tried to compare the phonological systems of General Indian English and General Assamese English. We have pinpointed the problematic areas regarding the acquisition of English sounds by basic level Assamese medium learners. In order to show the problematic areas of pure vowels, the monophthongal correlation between British RP and General Assamese English was shown diagrammatically. An attempt was also made to show how RP diphthongs are substituted by General Assamese English monophthongs as well as diphthongs. Similarly difficult RP consonants are also shown along with how those phonemes are replaced by General Assamese English phonemes by Assamese medium learners of English. The main cruxes are shown as the following:

In RP, there are twelve pure vowels or monopthongs. These are /iː, ɪ, e, æ, ɜː, ə, ʌ, ɑː, ɒ, ɔː, u, uː/. These sounds are represented by only five letters viz. a, e, i, o, u. On the other hand, there are eight pure vowels in General Assamese English and these are: /i, e, E, a, O, o, U, u/. In General Assamese English, no long vowel sounds are there. RP /iː, æ, ɜː, ə, ʌ, ɑː, ɒ, ɔː, uː/ are absent categories in G.A.E.

1. /iː/ > /i/, for example, /fiːt/ > /fit/ ‘eat’.


4. i) / > /E/\(^7\), for example, / baut/ > /Ebaut/ ‘about’.
   iii) / > /a/ ~ /ar/ ~ /Or/\(^9\), for example, /drɑ: mə/ > /drama/ ‘drama’, /pɪkt/ > /piksar/ ‘picture’, /d ɒktə mɪ/ > /dOktOr/ ‘doctor’.

5. / > /a/ ~ /O/, for example, /b s/ > /bas/ ‘bus’, /k mp nu/ > /kOmpeni, ‘company’.

6. / > /a/, for example, /t :t/ > /sart/ ‘chart’.


8. /u:/ > /u/, for example, /pu:l/ > /pul/ ‘pool’.

9. / > /O/, for example, /h t/ > /hOt/ ‘hot’.


\(^7\) If / / occurs word initially in RP
\(^8\) If / / occurs word medially in RP
\(^9\) If / / occurs word finally in RP
15. /əu/ > /Oi/ ~ [oi], for example, /əil/ > /oi/ ‘oil’.
17. /e / > /e/ ~ /iar/, for example, /eərəplein/ > /erUplen/ ‘aeroplane’, /be / > /biar/ ‘bear’.
19. / t / > /s/, for example, / t em/ > /sen/ ‘chain’.
20. / / > /j/, for example, / st/ > /jast/ ‘just’.
21. /f/ > /ph/, for example, /fæn/ > /phEn/ ‘fan’.
22. /v/ > /bh/, for example, /væn/ > /bhEn/ ‘van’.
23. /θ/ > /th/, for example, /θri:/ > /thri/ ‘three’.
24. /ð/ > /d/. For example, /ðen/ > /den/ ‘then’.
25. /z/ > /j/, for example, /zebra/ > /jebra/ ‘zebra’.
26. / / > /s/, for example, / p/ >/sOpe/ ‘shop’.
27. / / > /j/, for example, /meʒ / > /mejar/ ‘measure’.
28. /w/ > /hw/ ~ [hOa], for example, /w u/ > /hwat/ [hOat] ‘what’.

While dealing with General Assamese English, we find a number of features besides the substitution of phonemes. These are metathesis, prosthesis, anaphyxis, etc.
In **orthography section** we have concentrated on the difficulties or problem areas regarding spelling of important English words for class V to VII. We have shown the correspondences between sounds and letters that how a single sound can correspond to a various number of letters as well as a single letter may not correspond to a single phoneme in English. English writing system is ‘phonologically opaque’ in which the correspondences between sounds and letters are far from regular. A single sound can correspond to a various number of letters as well as a single letter may not correspond to a single phoneme in English. It is not consistent in English. It is because of such irregularities between the sound and spelling that a basic level Assamese learner of English requires more effort to make the connections between letters and sounds in terms both of correspondence rules and orthographic regularities and as a result of this he finds difficult to learn the correct spelling and consequently makes mistakes. When we consider English spelling from the point of difficulty faced by Assamese medium learners, we have to consider it on the basis of error analysis. It has been found that it has far more to it than the correspondence of letters and sounds. It is the most difficult aspect for them. We will consider the errors made by the Upper Primary level Assamese medium learners of English in five broad categories: omission and addition of vowels and consonants, substitution of vowels and consonants, sound-based errors, transposition and other errors.

The **third section**, that is, the problematic areas of acquiring English vocabulary from the point of morphology is concerned; some irregular patterns of various types of inflexional suffixes are found which cause difficulty to Assamese learners of English. /s/, /z/, /ɪz/ are the three variants of
the plural morpheme —s. These three suffixes to indicate plurality are ‘regular’. Hence it causes not so much difficulty for Assamese medium learners of English although they pronounce /s/ for all the three variants. It is found that Assamese learners of English encounter problems basically in irregular patterns of word-structure. Regarding the prefix-suffix formation Assamese learners of English encounter problems as to what affixes can go on what words. The Assamese learners of English encounter problems as to what affixes are added to what words in order to make nouns from verbs. Probably they are unaware of the restrictions or they make errors for their failure to retrieve the appropriate forms from memory as there is a gap of listening English as seen in Assamese medium schools of rural areas. Regarding confusions in similar lexical forms, the basic level Assamese medium learners do not make errors in all the ten categories, as they are exposed to limited number of vocabulary and even may not be exposed to one synform of the pair of sets at the same time. Yet it is found that basic level Assamese medium learners make synformic confusions.

In the fourth section, that is, the semantic aspect of English vocabulary considering words from related meanings from the point of view of problematic areas, we have to keep in mind the context. That is, a group of words which shares a general sense and so may be interchangeable in a limited number of contexts, but if we consider the words with a closer inspection, we will have the idea that there is some degree of difference in the words regarding conceptual meaning which causes problem for the Assamese learners of English as due to proper lack of knowledge of the usage, they confront difficulty in learning the words. It is very difficult for an Assamese
medium learner of English to know when there is and when there is not a difference of meaning. This is because learners learn the word forms and the meanings, but confuse which form goes with which meanings, a phenomenon that is known as ‘crossassociation’. ‘Crossassociation’ is a genuine problem for the Assamese learners of English.

Regarding the problem areas caused due to different meanings of words stand in front of the Assamese learners of English, we have to consider the words from the point of homonymy, polysemy and antonymy. When we consider opposite meanings of words from the difficulty point of view in order to acquire, we have to consider relational antonyms or rather converses. These are pairs in which one describes a relationship between two objects, and the other describes the same relationship when the two objects are reversed. However it is found that Assamese learners of English have confusion regarding the actions that represent relational antonyms.

The fourth chapter discusses about acquisition of English vocabulary items, various vocabulary learning strategies along with the student’s role in learning them, motivation of the students especially the basic level Assamese medium students of rural areas. Most of the Assamese learners seem to have instrumental motivation for learning English. They learn English just for the sake of school requirement as English being a compulsory subject like any other subject. In the indigenized varieties of English (IVEs) setting, “the reasons for studying English and the skills desired are overwhelmingly the ones normally labelled instrumental” (Shaw, 1981:121). Many a times, it is noticed that lack of motivation becomes one of the reasons that majority of the students fail the examination. It is a reality in front of the learners learning
English in Assamese medium schools. Since motivation to learn English is low for Assamese learners especially of rural areas, they are low achievers. Students find the English period in Assamese medium schools quite uninteresting and difficult which create a hindrance as far as motivation to learn English is concerned. While encountering the unfamiliar word, the students ask the teacher to explain the meaning of it in their mother tongue. It is the least laborious strategy adopted by the Assamese learners of English. However, it is interesting to note that a small number of basic Assamese learners follow bilingual dictionary in order to get the translations of L₂ into L₁. In this regard, they are least bothered to word associations. Guessing from context hardly takes place in vocabulary learning process by Assamese medium learners, as their own vocabulary size is very limited. They are poor meaning-focused readers. The rate of gaining lexical knowledge incidentally through reading is low. Vocabulary acquisition can be best conceived as a process in which L₂ learners negotiate word meaning from a text level to a word level. Word knowledge includes the ability to recall meaning, infer meaning, comprehend a text, and communicate orally. No single approach can satisfy all of these skills. The most efficient and practical learning approach of vocabulary involves a carefully selected combination of both explicit and implicit instruction of learning.

The fifth chapter deals with approaches and methods of teaching vocabulary. The theoretical background of various English language teaching methods and approaches in general and vocabulary in particular are discussed in order to make a comparative analysis of the efficacies of the methods and thereby making suggestions for the English teacher of Assamese medium
schools. In a majority of Assamese medium schools in rural Kamrup District, it is found that the Grammar Translation method, which is generally considered to be most wasteful, is still followed. Oral work is neglected while teaching English language. There is no oral practice seen, on the part of the students in overcrowded classroom. Even if some oral practices are included in the “Exercises” of textbooks, teachers do not do them because they are not examinable. Most of the teachers in Assamese medium school resort to explaining meanings of English words in the mother tongue. Most of the teachers serving in Assamese medium schools in rural Kamrup district give the meanings of English words, phrases and sentences in Assamese at the very outset. On the contrary, using the mother tongue should be the last resort in teaching not only words but also languages. It is noticed that most of the teachers while teaching the words employ neither any visual techniques, demonstrations, verbal context nor any association techniques although some pictures of vocabulary items relating to the lessons are included in the text book to some extent. The students are not taught words, used in the lesson, in association, their synonyms or antonyms. There are two distinct steps available in teaching second language vocabulary items, viz., a) presentation and b) practice. Presentation of an English word involves giving students its “sound”, the “sense” and the “shape”. In other words it means the teaching of pronunciation, meaning and spelling of the word. In order to enable the students to make the words an active part of their vocabulary, they should be given much practice in the use of these words in speaking, reading and writing thus, practice of new words is integrated with pattern practice.
The sixth chapter deals with research methodology and data analysis. It includes the participants along with samples and research methods used for collection of data. The participants comprise of the Assamese medium students of classes V, VI, VII of rural Kamrup District along with the teachers of the concerned schools and the data have been collected from three channels: by using questionnaires for both students and teachers, by using informal interviews for teachers and by administering tests for the students.

The pilot study was carried out in two Assamese medium schools of Kamrup District, namely, Mirza Girls’ High School and Ramdia Higher Secondary school in order to determine the validity of the instruments of the study. Of these the first one is a girls’ High School and the other one is a co–educational higher secondary school. The questionnaires were distributed among 60 students taking 10 students from each classes V, VI and VII of two concerned schools. It was found out from the pilot study that the students hardly understood the question items. The items were to be translated orally into Assamese and it took enough time and labour for us. We had to give a second thought into the questionnaires and finally the questionnaires were given the final touch and distributed among the students of three other Assamese medium schools of Kamrup district. We almost found the similar results from all the five schools, though the data analysis will be presented on the basis of the second revision only. The results of the pilot study helped us to assess, revise and improve the final version of the questionnaires especially the student questionnaire.

The question items of the pilot study were modified on the following points:
• The questionnaire for the students was translated into Assamese so that the students understood the items that were asked.

• The question items were prepared short and simple keeping in mind that they are intended for upper primary level Assamese medium learners and changes were made accordingly.

• Students’ comments and suggestions have been omitted from students’ questionnaire.

• For the administration of spelling test, test items for Class V, VI and VII were modified and prepared separately.

• For the administration of morphology test, an example was provided for the students against each question item so that the subjects could understand the question items well.

The survey was conducted during one academic year in 2009-2010 in three high schools of three different places: Sualkuchi, Hekra and Bihata Chariali of rural Kamrup district. The schools are all Assamese medium and selected randomly from the nook and corner so that they can represent the rural areas of Kamrup district.

We distributed 609 copies of students’ questionnaires and 11 copies of the teachers’ questionnaires. We randomly selected 25 students from each class and thus making the total of 75 students from one school covering the grand total of 225 from the three concerned schools. We administered test for the students in order to investigate the problems they face while learning English vocabulary.

Thus we used qualitative and quantitative methods comprising test administration for the students, questionnaires (students’ questionnaire and
teachers’ questionnaire) and informal interviews of 8 English teachers in the form of discussion to investigate the pedagogical aspect of English vocabulary for Assamese medium learners as they are low achievers. Data were analysed by statistical descriptive analysis.

7.2 Findings of the study

No significant differences regarding the problems encountered by male and female teachers as well as students are seen.

7.2.1 Regarding the questionnaire of the students the findings of the study are mentioned as below:

Majority of the students report that English vocabulary is important to learn the English language and they feel the importance of pronunciation, spelling, plural formation as well as the past tense of verbs in learning English vocabulary. Almost all the students think that their English teacher emphasizes on meaning, pronunciation and spelling equally to teach English words. Not a single student thinks that their English teacher focuses on prefix-suffix formation in order to teach English words. Almost all the students believe that their English teacher teaches English words by giving meanings in Assamese and 98.3% agree that they only ask their teachers the Assamese meanings of English words in order to know the words. Majority of the students don’t even know what a dictionary is. 96.7% students report that they remember words by verbal repetition. 98.9% students think that they have problems in all the four skills of language whereas 0.5% students have problems in speaking English in the classroom as well as in writing class-notes. 99.0% students report that they have weaknesses in learning English and its vocabulary as they find English a
difficult subject. 99.2% students think that they study English and its vocabulary in order to pass the examination. Their motivation is purely instrumental.

7.2.2 Regarding the questionnaire of the teachers the findings of the study are mentioned as below:

Teachers of English in Assamese medium schools have not been exposed to the phonetic features of the English language. Even the basic sounds of English language cannot be satisfactorily produced by most of the English subject teachers, who have to teach English pronunciation. The teachers have the same difficulty as the students of hardly having had the opportunity of listening to the language in the classroom and never had the opportunity in a natural environment outside the classroom. Only 30.0% English teachers report that they attended in service training programme and for a shorter duration of 3 to 7 days, whereas 70.0% teachers never attended any in service training programme.70.0% English teachers have their bachelor degree and 30.0% are reported to be H.S.L.C. passed. Not a single teacher has specialization in English in their Bachelor level. 80.0% English teachers use Grammar-Translation Method whereas 10.0% use Direct Method (claimed by the teachers but its practice is doubtful) and remaining 10.0% use both Grammar Translation and Communicative Language Teaching method. All the English teachers of Upper Primary level report that they do translate the vocabulary items into Assamese as the majority of teachers follow the Grammar Translation Method in teaching English and its vocabulary. The majority of teachers start the lesson with the vocabulary activity provided at the
beginning of the lesson. All the teachers state that they pay attention to the activity including ‘Read and say’ exercise for drilling sounds of English words. All teachers agree that teaching of vocabulary should occupy an important place in teachers’ teaching programme. 50.0% teachers agree that they are satisfied with the guided vocabulary tasks incorporated in the lessons, whereas 40.0% teachers do not agree to that. Some teachers are of the view that the ‘guided vocabulary’ will develop the ability of the learners to write English as a second language so that they can perform a variety of linguistic functions in real life situation. But the learning load is heavy for class VI. 60.0% feel that students have problems in all the four skills of language that is, in speaking English in classroom, in understanding English of teachers, in reading English of the text-book and in writing class-notes. 40.0% teachers think that students have difficulties with the vocabulary items because of difficult vocabularies incorporated in the syllabus. 30.0% teachers believe that students have difficulties with English vocabularies because they have poor language skills. 20.0% teachers state that students have problems with the vocabulary items because they are less motivated to learn English and its vocabulary. As far as vocabulary teaching is concerned, 40.0% teachers find pronunciation as a serious problem, where as 30.0% teachers find pronunciation and spelling as the problematic aspects, 10.0% find both pronunciation and prefixes-suffixes.

Regarding the present syllabus of the concerned classes, 60.0% teachers report that they are satisfied with the present syllabus and text-books of English for upper-primary level, whereas 40.0% teachers are not satisfied with the existing syllabus and text-books. They feel there is a need to change and the text-books should be made simple. They are of the view that the heavy burden of the
syllabus should be made less so that they can finish the course within the working days. Majority of the teachers add other difficulties and problems faced by them while teaching English vocabulary as:

- The students do not get text-books at the beginning of the academic year.
- Most of the pupils of provincialised schools are below poverty line.
- ‘Mid day meal’ scheme rendered to the provincialised school degrades the educational environment in schools and consequently creates problems in teaching-learning situation of English and its vocabulary.
- The quantity of the students is increasing. But the quality of the students is decreasing.
- The number of students per class is more and there is a poor infrastructure in Assamese medium schools and is not conducive to proper classroom environment.
- Learning load of the English syllabus should be minimised. The exercises of the lessons are long.
- The guardians of the students are illiterate from the rural areas and are responsible for the weaknesses of students’ learning English and its vocabulary as the parents cannot help their wards in informal learning-teaching situations. There is hardly any consciousness seen among the guardians.
- The ratio of the teachers and the students is not balanced.
- Some of the students cannot even write their names in English because of poor background.
• Time allotment for teaching English is not sufficient. Teaching pronunciation requires maximum time. Though it is an important aspect of vocabulary, practically there is less attention paid on pronunciation as it is not a part of the examination system.

7.2.3 Regarding **test on phonology**, the findings are mentioned as the following:

Assamese medium learners of English under study have problems in pronouncing the basic words of English. They have problems in articulating words representing pure vowels, diphthongs and consonantal phonemes. They have replaced the difficult sounds of English with near and easy sounds exist in Assamese phonology. It is found out that they hardly articulated the consonant clusters. Even the basic clusters are difficult for them as probably they are not aware of the spellings of the clusters which of course lead their inability to pronounce the words.

7.2.4 Regarding **test on orthography**, the findings are mentioned as the following:

It posed a problem for us in analysing the test items for spellings because of the fact that it was seen that the upper primary level Assamese medium learners are really poor in correspondences between sound and letters. It has been noticed that some of them can’t even write the English alphabets and it is really a pathetic situation prevalent in Assamese medium schools especially found in rural areas. It is found out that some of the errors are basically due to the omission and addition of vowels and consonants, substitution of vowels and consonants, transposition, other errors (dropping of
consonant doubling). But most important than all of these errors that could be categorized, there are numerous errors that could be recognized as idiosyncratic errors, posing problems for us in analyzing and fitting them into the above mentioned categories.

7.2.5 Regarding test on morphology, the findings are mentioned as the following:

It has been found out that the Assamese medium students of the concerned classes when they were tested on plural formation of English vocabulary, they hardly could answer them. Not a single student could respond all the plural forms correctly. Majority of the students wrote either ‘s’ or ‘es’ in all the irregular plural forms. 2.7% students’ writings were not legible to be assessed. Even the majority of the students could not write the past tense formation of some frequent irregular verbs like ‘live, eat, leave, build’ etc. The students when they were assessed the comparative and superlative degree of words like ‘beautiful, good, and big’ they hardly wrote the correct answers. Regarding the prefix- suffix formation also, they invented their own vocabulary which perhaps don’t exist in English at all.

7.2.6 Regarding test on semantics, the findings are mentioned as the following:

The analysis was made on 79.1% students of Classes V, VI and VII. For 20.9% students, some of them did write the question item as it was or some of the writings were not legible enough to assess. It has been found out that student subjects blindly matched the opposite words when they were asked to do so, without any proper knowledge of opposite meanings of the words like
‘ugly, small, short, happy’ etc. They simply did as they were instructed to do that. As far as the making sentences of the words given in the test, only a few students answered the question. Not a single student has attempted all the items regarding making sentences. The students were very poor even in short composition test like making sentences. They hardly know how to construct a sentence in English.

7.3 Conclusions

The study focuses on the pedagogical implication of English vocabulary items for Assamese medium learners of three Assamese medium schools of rural Kamrup district as we mentioned above. In order to do that, we have concentrated on the problematic areas relating to word-knowledge along with the strategies that Assamese medium learners of English adopt. As far as the pedagogical aspect is concerned, we have also focused on the approaches and methods that an English teacher uses in order to teach English vocabulary items. The broad areas relating to the pedagogical aspect also covers the problems encountered by the English teachers of upper primary level Assamese medium schools. The analysis of the problems regarding the phonological, orthographical, morphological and semantic aspect of English vocabulary items encountered by Assamese medium learners of rural Kamrup district face, helps us to have a clear and correct information regarding the actual situation prevailing in Assamese medium schools especially in rural areas which results in poor language skill on the part of Assamese medium learners of English.

The study focuses on the implication of pedagogy in a systematic and organised manner in order to improve the pathetic condition of students regarding the knowledge of English language as teaching and learning English
and its vocabulary are unsatisfactory in Assamese medium schools. The study tries to contribute to the field of English vocabulary teaching in Assamese medium schools. The study has tried to locate the roots and causes of the problems encountered by both English teachers and students of Assamese medium schools regarding English vocabulary items and consequently can be concentrated in order to improve the second language teaching learning scenario.

The present study has used both the methods: quantitative and qualitative. We have prepared two types of questionnaires— one is for teachers and the other is for students, so as to get on their views and perceptions regarding teaching-learning of various aspects relating to English vocabulary items. The number of students and English teachers that are assessed through questionnaire was 609 and 10 respectively. The subjects were selected from three Assamese medium schools of rural Kamrup district, namely, Sualkuchi, Hekra and Bihata Chariali. Informal interviews were conducted with 8 English teachers in the form of discussion regarding over-all teaching–learning scenario. Tests were administered for students in order to assess the problematic areas of phonology, orthography, morphology and semantics of English lexical items. All the tests were taken during the regular classes. Students were informed that the purpose of the testing was for research only and that no credit would be given for the results.

A special effort was made to create as relaxed atmosphere as possible in order to reduce the exam-like tension. The time-limit for the completion of each test was not set, but completing each test did not exceed 45 minutes.
The findings reveal the fact that there is a need of pedagogy regarding sound, spelling, prefix-suffix formation, meanings of English vocabulary items as we are aware that Assamese learners of English are low achievers. They have lack of motivation. The difficult aspects of vocabulary knowledge can be overcome by adopting appropriate teaching methods along with inculcating positive attitude and motivation among students. It is the language teacher who can take note of the problems and make necessary corrections of all these. What is more important is the awareness that the language teacher must have about all the problems that his students face so that he can make the language teaching process much more easy and which fosters students to learn faster and easier than before because of new insights into the working of English and its vocabulary on the part of English teachers.

As far as the methods and approaches to English vocabulary pedagogy are concerned, the teachers should make use of communicative language teaching approach which is a function-based and task-centred situational approach. Translation though seems to be a useful tool for teaching English vocabulary in Assamese medium schools; it should be used with caution.

Regarding vocabulary learning strategies it is revealed that Assamese medium learners restrict themselves in asking word to word Assamese translation of English words in order to have word knowledge. They are poor at consulting a dictionary. Most of them even do not know what a dictionary is. At the same time they are poor meaning-focused readers.

7.4 Suggestions and Recommendations

Here an attempt is made to suggest the pedagogical issues and academic principles which underline the teaching of English vocabulary items in
Assamese medium schools of rural Kamrup district. Such consideration can help us to understand the problems related to teaching as well as learning English and its vocabulary in Assamese medium schools.

### 7.4.1 Academic factors

1. In-service training programme should be made compulsory for teachers and it should be conducted for longer duration. The notification regarding training of teachers should reach the schools on time and the school authority should release the teachers so that they can improve their skills and equip them with the teaching methods and modern techniques.

2. Teachers of English in Assamese medium schools should be exposed to the phonetic features of the English language so that they can teach their students correct pronunciation of English words. They should have a comparative knowledge of English sounds and Assamese sounds, to be able to correct the spoken form of English words of their students.

3. The schools should be provided the text-books at the very beginning of the academic year.

4. Students’ enrolment per class should be less and the number of English periods should be increased.

5. Efficient and knowledgeable teachers should be recruited to teach English. The selection of teachers should be impartial and fair.

6. The syllabus should be objective- oriented. It must be focused and should have a gradation.

7. Oral work should be encouraged and practised sufficiently.
8. The teacher should adopt communicative language teaching approach which is a function-based and task-centred situational approach. He should provide all the resources necessary for communication to be effective in every context.

7.4.2 Pedagogical Issues

Form teaching of a word should precede presentation of meanings. Teaching of forms and concepts should be separated. The mental processing of the basic level Assamese medium learners is very limited and when focus of learning is on form, meaning will not be attended to and vice-versa. The teacher should draw attention to the form by:

a) showing how the spelling of the word looks like.

b) giving its pronunciation and stress patterns.

c) showing the prefix, stem and suffix that make up the word.

d) getting the learners to repeat the pronunciation of the word.

e) writing the word on the board.

f) pointing out any spelling irregularity of the word, if any.

The teacher can quickly give the meaning by:

a) using an Assamese translation, if it is an abstract concept.

b) using a known English synonym or a simple definition in English.

c) showing an object or picture.

d) giving quick demonstration.

e) drawing a simple picture or diagram.

f) breaking the word into parts and giving the meaning of the parts and the whole word. (the word part strategy)
g) giving several example sentences with the word in context to show the meaning.

h) commenting on the underlying meaning of the word and other references.

Careful attention to pronunciation is essential part of vocabulary teaching if new lexis is to be used effectively, or understood without difficulty, in spoken English. The degree of attention paid to the pronunciation of a lexical item depends on the importance of the item in spoken English and the extent to which it poses problems for the students in question.

• Before teaching pronunciation the teacher should highlight the new vocabulary while writing it on the blackboard. The teacher has to use the technique ‘Mimicry-Memorization’ through repetition drills to teach pronunciation. The teachers can use minimal pairs in order to teach two similar sounds that create problems. The teacher can make error-analysis and correction in different areas of pronunciation learning so that the students become able to distinguish vowel sounds -in rounding or reduction of rounding, in the lengthening or shortening of vowels, in the consonant sounds absent in Assamese or in consonant clusters.

In order to teach the pronunciation of the English vocabulary, the teacher has to follow the following:

a) Say the sound in a word.

b) Say the sound alone.

c) Get the students to repeat it in chorus.

d) Contrast it with other reinforced sounds.
e) Get individual students to repeat the sounds in contrast in words.

The teacher puts up words on the blackboard that the learners have met during the week. The teacher pronounces them and the learners repeat after the teacher. Then the learners take turns pronouncing the words without the teacher’s model and get feedback on their attempts. Regarding the articulation of RP vowels /iː, æ, ɒ, ɔ, ʌ, ɑː, ɔː, uː/ in the lexis in question, the teachers should pay attention to the spoken form of English vocabulary and guide the learners accordingly. In the articulation of English fricatives /f, v, θ, ð, ʃ, z, ʒ/ in the lexis should be taken care of as these fricatives do not have equivalent sounds in Assamese. The English teacher should take note of these and make necessary corrections accordingly. As far as the articulations of /ʧ/ and /ʤ/ are concerned, the language teacher himself should be aware of articulating the correct pronunciation, as well as in the pronunciation of his students in order to make the language teaching process much more easy and smooth.

- Though English has a very irregular spelling system, there are patterns and rules which can guide learning. Basic level Assamese medium learners need to pay particular attention to writing the letter shapes. In order to teach spelling of English vocabulary items to the basic level Assamese medium learners the teacher has to follow the following:

1. Monosyllables will constitute a very good pedagogical starting point.
2. The teacher has to point out the irregularities and contrast with the regular items.
3. Basic level Assamese medium learners should be taught the phoneme-grapheme and grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules.
4. The learners should be advised to use the dictionary to assure themselves that they are getting the appropriate spelling to reflect the meaning they desire. (e.g. ‘accept’/‘except’, ‘advice’/‘advise’ etc).

5. The teacher should undertake some activities by word and sentence dictation. Learners write words that the teacher dictates to them. This can be easily marked if one learner writes on the blackboard. The teacher corrects this and the other learners use it to correct their own work.

6. The teacher can arrange the learners to work in groups with a list of words to see if they can find any spelling rules.

7. The teacher can undertake some activities regarding spelling:
   A) a list of words is given, and the correctly spelt words have to be identified by the students.
   B) blank filling activities, that is, certain areas which pose problems can be identified and learners asked to fill in the blanks.
   C) jumbled words, that is, letters of a word are given in jumbled order and learners have to put them in order. Words which are a problem (especially long words) can be used for this activity.

- As far as teaching of forms of English vocabulary is concerned, the teacher should highlight of regular and irregular forms. In the classroom, teachers need to clarify regular forms and common irregular forms for their students. These will merit considerable attention: irregular verbs, irregular plural of nouns, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs, etc. The teacher should spend enough time on the plural and possessive forms of nouns at the
upper primary stage. The teacher should maximize teaching vocabulary by word families instead of individual word forms. When teachers introduce a new word, they should mention the other members of its word family. The teachers may eventually ask students to guess a new word’s derivatives at the time of introduction. Regarding prefix-suffix formation the teachers should teach the learners the high frequency affixes of English so that they can relate the meaning of the affixes to the meaning of the whole word. He should guide the learners to:

1) decide which affixes their learners should know.
2) test to see if their learners know them.
3) design a range of activities to help them learn the affixes.

The teacher should be aware of the range of factors which pose difficulty in recognising and using word parts. He has to teach his students some generative rules corresponding the formation of words with affixes. He has to treat the derivatives as individual items and teach those which are most important for their productive vocabulary. He has to equally anticipate error of the students.

The teacher should teach the learners to study word parts, but at the same time he should be cautious that his students do not mistranslate a word according to its morphological components as it is deceptively transparent. Knowing the problem of deceptively transparent words, teachers may warn students not to rely on word morphology too much and not to draw conclusions on the basis of the sum of meanings of the individual words, as some words are pseudo-familiar. Students should be taught not to resort to this strategy without
checking the meaning against wider context. Synformic confusions can be handled by teachers with his explicit teaching. But he should not teach several new synforms together; instead he should have the students practice them after all members of the pair or group have been encountered individually.

- The teacher should use translation judiciously with words especially abstract words that have an exact equivalent in Assamese in order to teach meaning especially in early stages of learning. Translation is justifiable for explaining conceptual similarity of the words so that the distinction between them is clearly drawn instead of lengthy and possibly futile explanations for lower level learners. The teacher should be accustomed to group items together by synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy, and other types of sense relations so that learners can understand semantic boundaries that separate lexical items.

a) The teacher should make students incorporate new words into language that is already known by similarity of meaning features (e.g., pretty, beautiful); by lexical relations: synonyms (shallow, superficial), antonyms (cry, laugh), subordinates (animal, cat), superordinate and co-hyponyms (vehicle, car, train).

b) The teacher should make students interact with words.

c) The teacher should make students use the mental processing.

d) The teacher should avoid teaching similar words at the same time (e.g. push, pull; affect, effect). He should teach the most frequent or useful word of a pair first and after it is well established, then introduce its partner (e.g. deep, shallow).
• Regarding teaching vocabulary learning strategies for learners, teachers should think of ways to provide less successful learners. Teachers should decide which strategies to give attention to and how much time they need to spend on instructing. The teacher should model the strategy for the learners. Teachers should inculcate some typical vocabulary learning activities, such as, guessing from context, using dictionary and notebooks. Teachers can see what learners do, and learners can assess how effectively they can apply the inferring strategies they are taught. Learners should be guided to write the words they encounter on their vocabulary notebook and add Assamese translation or other knowledge they gradually acquire about the words such as inflections, roots and derivations and semantic associations. He should teach his students to use a mnemonic system, like the keyword method. The teacher should enhance students’ motivation by setting vocabulary learning goals which state that goals are seen as important and possible to achieve. Setting specific goals (e.g., I will learn 10 words per week) are preferred to general ones (e.g., I will improve my English) as specific goals lead to higher performance.