Chapter 5

Approaches and Methods of Teaching Vocabulary

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter we will try to state the theoretical background of various English language teaching methods and approaches in general and English vocabulary in particular especially employed by teachers in different Assamese medium schools of rural Kamrup District with a view to making a comparative analysis of the efficacies of the methods and approaches and thereby making suggestions for the English teachers in Assamese medium schools.

5.1 Teaching of English Vocabulary and Different Methods

“A methods in language teaching determines what and how much is taught, and the order in which it is taught, how the meaning and form are conveyed and what is done to make the use of language unconscious” W.F. Mackey (1965). A method therefore includes all these four components—selection, grading, presentation and repetition. A method should serve the aims of teaching a language, it should also relate to the conditions available in the school (teachers, pupils, equipments, etc.). Methods and approaches that have emerged in the last century differ in their goals, assumptions and techniques.

5.1.1 The Grammar Translation Method

The Grammar Translation Method is one of the most traditional methods, dating back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, originally used to teach the classical languages like Latin and Greek.
This method is based on German scholarship and was originally known in the United States as “The Prussian Method” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986:3). The Principal characteristics of the grammar translation method are a focus on learning the grammar rules and their application in translating texts from one language into the other. Most of the teaching is provided in student’s first language vocabulary and is presented mainly through direct translation from the native language and memorization, using bilingual word list:
e.g., “the flower” – “phul”
“the book” – “kitab”

The basic unit of a teaching process is a sentence. The sentences in English and the mother tongue were compared and contrasted side by side. The teacher translated all the words, phrases and sentences into the mother tongue of the pupils. The pupils were also required to do the same.

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), the main characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method are the analysis of grammar, the memorization of grammar rules, the translation of sentences and an emphasis on word accuracy.

It is based on the following principles:-

(a) Translation interprets the words and phrases of the foreign language in the best possible way.
(b) The foreign phraseology is best assimilated in the process of teaching.

Structures of foreign language are best learnt when compared and contrasted with the mother tongue.

The main merit of this method, according to Rivers (1968:171) was that it was not demanding on the teacher. It was learner centered. Grammar was
taught here to serve the purpose for which logic was taught viz., developing the analytical skills and mental discipline.

The demerits of this method are:-

1. Speaking skill was totally neglected.
2. It isolated grammar from language practice thereby making it mechanical. There was no scope for interesting involvement or interaction. The ghosts of grammar with its monotony haunted the learners.

Prator and Celce – Murcia (1979:3) list the major characteristics of the Grammar translation methods as follows:-

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue; with little active use of the target language.
2. Much Vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
5. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
6. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercise in grammatical analysis.
7. Often only the drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
8. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

According to Larsen – Freeman (2000: 9-11), some of the important assumptions of the Grammar Translation Method are:-

1. The basic purpose of learning a foreign language is to read its literature.
2. If foreign language learners can translate from one language into another then they are considered to be successful.

3. The ability to communicate in the target language need not be a goal of instruction.

4. The primary skills that are to be developed are always reading and writing.

5. Learners should be conscious of the grammatical rules of the target language and when possible, grammatical paradigms should be committed to memory.

6. Deductive application of an explicit grammar rule is a useful pedagogical technique.

Larsen – Freeman (2000: 13) provides expanded description of some common/typical techniques closely associated with the grammar translation method.

1. Translation of a literary passage (Translating target language to native language).

2. Reading comprehension questions (Finding information in a passage, making inferences and relating to personal experience).

3. Antonyms / Synonyms (Finding antonyms and synonyms for words or sets of words).

4. Cognates (Learning spelling / sound patterns that correspond between L1 and the target language).

5. Deductive Application of Rule (Understanding grammar rules and their exceptions, then applying them to new examples).
6. Fill-in-the-blanks (Filling in gaps in sentences with new words or items of a particular grammar type).

7. Memorization (Memorizing vocabulary lists, grammatical rules and grammatical paradigms).

8. Use words in sentences (Students create sentences to illustrate that they know the meaning and use of new words).

9. Composition (Students write about a topic using the target language).

The objectives of the grammar Translation Method have been summarized by Richards and Rodgers (1986: 5-6):

1. The goal of foreign language study is to learn a language in order to read its literature or in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study. Grammar Translation is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. It hence views language learning as consisting of little more than memorizing rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language.

2. Reading and writing are the major focus; little or no systematic attention is paid to speaking or listening.

3. Vocabulary selection is based solely on the reading texts used, and words are taught through bilingual word lists, dictionary study and memorization. In a typical Grammar Translation text, the grammar rules
are presented and illustrated, a list of vocabulary items is presented with their translation equivalents and translation exercises are prescribed.

4. The sentences are the basic unit of teaching and language practice. Much of the lesson is devoted to translating sentences into and out of the target language and it is this focus on the sentence that is distinctive feature of the method.

5. Accuracy is emphasized. Students are expected to attain high standards in translation.

6. Grammar is taught deductively that is by presentation and study of grammar rules, which are then practised through translation exercises.

7. The student’s native language is the medium of instruction. It is used to explain new items and to enable comparisons to be made between the foreign language and the student’s native language.

Very few modern language teaching experts would be quick to say that this is an effective language teaching method, and few would dare to try and assert that it results in any kind of communicative competence. As Richards and Rodgers (1986:5) state, “It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory.”

Brown (1994:53) attempts to explain why the method is still employed by pointing out:

“It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored. Many standardized tests of foreign languages still do not attempt to tap into
communicative abilities, so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies, translations and rote exercises”.

As the name of the method itself suggests, the teaching material would normally consist of chapters depicting various grammatical categories, and translation texts. Here the vocabulary gradation and vocabulary presentation for the teaching material and in the practical teaching and learning in the classroom context are mainly based on the affiliation of the vocabulary item to the particular grammatical category. Apart from this, vocabulary is taught out of context and in isolation. The vocabulary is taught by associating it with the meaning in the mother tongue of the learner. Normally exact semantic equivalents or partially semantic equivalents are given. A formal or informal bilingual dictionary is a common aid in this method to teach the vocabulary. In some cases, the vocabulary used would be given at the end of the chapter along with the meaning with a supplementary list of vocabulary items that can be memorized in the context of that lesson. Many times the vocabulary learned would be confined to literary domain and some would be obsolete even. Here vocabulary learning is equated almost to learning a list of vocabulary items.

5.1.2 Direct Method

The Direct Method, which emerged between the mid and late nineteenth century, came into use as a reaction to the Grammar translation method in an attempt to integrate more use of the target language in instruction. It incorporated techniques designed to address all the areas, viz., oral communication, more spontaneous use of the language and developing the ability to think in the target language. Webster’s New Dictionary says, “Direct method is a method of teaching a foreign language, especially a modern
language, through conversation, discussion and reading in the language itself, without translation and without the study of grammar. The first words are taught by pointing to the objects or pictures or by performing actions”.

The appearance of the “Direct Method” thus coincided with new school of thinking, dictating that all foreign language teaching should occur in the target language only, with no translation and an emphasis on linking meaning to the language being learned.

In the words of Krashen (1987) the major characteristics of the Direct Method are as the following:

First, all discussion, all class room language is performed in the target language which includes the language of the exercise and teacher discussion used for class room management. The method focuses on inductive teaching. The goal of instruction is to guess or workout the rules of the language.

According to H.E. Palmer (1925) direct method has the following major characteristics:

- Translation in every shape or form is banished from the class room, including the use of mother tongue and of the bilingual dictionary.
- Grammar, when it is taught, is taught inductively.
- Oral teaching precedes any form of reading and writing.
- The use of disconnected sentences is replaced by the use of connected texts.
- Pronunciation is to be taught systematically on a more or less phonetic line.
- The meanings of words are forms and taught by means of objects, or by natural context. The vocabulary and structure of the language are
inculcated to a large context by questions asked by the teacher and answered by the pupils.

Richards and Rodgers (1986:12) summarize the major characteristics of the Direct Method as follows:

- Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.
- Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.
- Oral communication skills were built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question and answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes.
- Grammar is taught inductively.
- New teaching points are introduced orally.
- Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration, objects and pictures; abstract vocabulary is taught by association of ideas.
- Both speech and listening comprehension are taught.
- Correct pronunciation and grammar are emphasized.

Diane Larsen – Freeman (2000: 26-27) provide expanded description of some common / typical techniques closely associating with the Direct Method:

- Reading aloud (Reading sections of passages, plays or dialogues out loud).
- Question and Answer Exercise (Asking questions in the target language and having students answer in full sentences).
- Student Self – Correction (Teacher facilitates opportunities for students to self correct using follow-up questions, tone etc).
• Conversation Practice. (Teacher asks students and students ask students question using the target language).

• Fill-in-the-blank Exercise. (Items use target language only and inductive rather than explicit grammar rules).

• Dictation. (Teacher reads passage aloud various amounts of times at various tempos, and then students write down what they hear).

• Paragraph writing. (Students write paragraphs in their own words using the target language and various models).

Direct methods emphasize the value of oral training in learning L₂. The students are provided sufficient practice in listening to the language and then speaking it. It also lays emphasis on knowledge of phonetics to acquire an intelligible pronunciation. Since sentence is the unit of speech, the teaching through direct method starts with teaching of sentences, and not individual words. Direct Method facilitates teaching of new vocabulary after careful selection and gradation. Controlled vocabulary is taught in definite stages. New words are taught by material association, explanation or use in a suitable context. The direct Method is undoubtedly a highly effective method in terms of creating language learners who are very competent in terms of using the target language communicatively. Hence, it is a natural method. However, it requires small class sizes, motivated learners and talented teachers in order to succeed really well. Students of foreign languages need more than just the ability to communicate confidently – they need to be able to demonstrate grammatical accuracy as well as good reading skills. This method is difficult for students who have problems in reading their L₁. Since suitable teachers to teach English are not easily available, it cannot be applicable especially in rural
areas of Kamrup district, because the pity of the matter is that most of the English teachers themselves have got defects in pronunciation. Their own knowledge of the language is not so rich that they can handle classes through this method.

It is not suitable for all students as well. Direct method suits only those students who are linguistically minded, as its basic principle is that the aural – oral appeal is stronger than the visual in learning a foreign language.

Other aspects of language training unlike the emphasis on speech training are not given due attention. Regarding teaching of vocabulary through explaining its meaning, direct method ignores translation completely except association, definition and context. The learner, learning a target language by this method should learn the vocabulary of the target language by associating them directly with the objects or actions without any medium like translation. The process thus started by associating a word with the thing would be extended for associating the thing with the context and the context would be associated with an expression in the target language.

This method gives prime importance to the selection, gradation, and presentation of vocabulary of the target language. The vocabulary selection for the course material is made

(a) on the basis of the frequency of vocabulary items in the language, i.e., with the help of frequency counts of vocabulary items,
(b) from the day to day conversations and experiences,
(c) potentiality of vocabulary item for easy visualization, picturization with an aid for action in the classroom,
selecting the words that have only one meaning and by avoiding multi-meaning vocabulary items.

These are the general criteria that are borne in mind while selecting the vocabulary for course materials.

The vocabulary item thus selected and graded are presented in the classroom with the help of visual aids and objects present in the classroom because the words presented refer to the immediate experience of the learner. The process of associating the vocabulary to meaning is achieved through gestures and actions, so to say through dramatization. While the concrete meaning is acquired through the association of the vocabulary with object and action, the abstract meaning is taught through the association of vocabulary to idea. When the students have mastered the target language adequately, the target language so far learned will be used to explain the new items and meanings of new items. This is in the initial stage of learning. In the later stages still more abstract vocabulary also would be presented and in this case the learner would be explained to such vocabulary either in the linguistic or social context so that the learner could be made to deduce the meaning on his own with the help of the context. Since this method gives more importance to the spoken form of the vocabulary items than to their written representations, the presentation of written forms would be delayed for sufficient time. Even when the written form of word is presented the learner would be made to concur the meaning directly from the written form without the help of translation. In this method vocabulary learning is not equated with learning a list of words but the vocabulary learning takes place in the context in which the items being learnt would be used.
5.1.3 Audio-Lingual Method

The Audio Lingual Method was derived from ‘The Army Method’ so called because it was developed through a U.S Army program devised after World War II, so as to produce speakers proficient in the languages of friend and foes. Based upon habit formation model of behaviorist psychology and on the structural linguistics theory of language, the Audio Lingual Method emphasizes on memorization through patterns drills and conversation practices rather than promoting communicative ability.

This method is based on the principle of behaviour psychology. It adapted many of the principles and procedures of the Direct Method, in part as a reaction to the lack of speaking skills of the Reading Approach.

The Audio Lingual Method is called the “New Key” or “Scientific Method” or “American Method”. It is based on the behaviorist theory of stimulus response and reinforcement. The emphasis on speech is considered not only as a goal of instruction, but also as a medium of instruction. Listening and speaking skills are taught before reading and writing. According to this method, teaching items are carefully selected and graded in accordance with the ability of the learner. New material is presented in the form of a dialogue. Based on the principle that language learning is habit formation, the method fosters dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrase and overlearning. Structures are sequenced and taught one at a time. Structural patterns are taught using drills. Audio Lingual Method contains four basic drill types: simple repetition, substitution, transformation and translation (Krashen, 1987).

Little or no grammatical explanation is provided; grammar is taught inductively, Listening, speaking, reading and writing are developed in an
orderly way. Vocabulary to be learnt is strictly limited and learned in context. Teaching points are determined by contrastive analysis between L₁ and L₂. At the beginning of the course there is an extended pre-reading period. Importance is given to precise native-like pronunciation. Use of the mother tongue by the teacher is permitted, yet it is discouraged among and by the students.

Larsen Freeman (2000: 45-47) provides expanded descriptions of some common techniques closely associated with the Audio-lingual Method:

1. Dialogue Memorization (Students memorize an opening dialogue using mimicry and applied role-playing).
2. Backward build-up (Expansion Drill) (Teacher breaks a line into several parts; students repeat each part starting at the end of the sentences and “expanding” backwards through the sentences, adding each part in sequence).
3. Repetition Drill (Students repeat teacher’s model as quickly and accurately as possible).
4. Chain Drill (Students ask and answer each other one-by-one in a circular chain around the classroom).
5. Single Slot Substitution Drill (Teacher states a line from the dialogue, then uses a word or a phrase as a “hint” that students, when repeating the line, must substitute into the sentences in the correct place).
6. Multiple – Slot Substitution Drill (Same as the Single slot drill except that there are multiple cues to be substituted into the line).
7. Transformation Drill (Teacher provides a sentence that must be turned into something else, for example, a question is to be turned into a statement, an active sentence to be turned into a negative statement etc.).

8. Question – and – answer Drill (Students should answer or ask questions very quickly).

9. Use of Minimal Pairs (Using contrastive analysis, teacher selects a pair of words that sound identical except for a single sound that typically poses difficulty for the learners. Students are to pronounce and differentiate the two words).

10. Complete the Dialogue (Selected words are erased from a line in the dialogue and students must find and insert the words).

11. Grammar Games (Various games are designed to practise grammar point in context, using lots of repetition).

Moreover, no explicit grammatical rules are allowed in the classroom as Larsen – Freeman (2000) put it, “Students are given no grammar rules, grammar points are taught through example and drill.” It emphasizes on the oral form of the language and mastery of these patterns indicates the mastery of a target language.

Prator and Celce – Murcia (1979) present the key features of Audio Lingual Method that can be summarized as follows: (Brown 1994:57)

1. New material is presented in dialogue form.

2. There is dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases and overlearning.
3. Grammar structures are sequenced by using contrastive analysis and taught one at a time.

4. Repetitive drills are used to teach structural patterns.

5. Inductive analogy rather than deductive explanation is used to teach grammar, little or no grammatical explanation is given to the learners.

6. Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context.

7. To supplement his demonstration the teacher uses tapes, language labs and visual aids.

8. Great emphasis is laid on pronunciation.

9. Very little use of the mother tongue by teachers is permitted.

10. Successful responses are immediately reinforced.

11. Great effort is put on getting students to produce error free utterances.

12. There is a tendency to manipulate language and disregard context.

According to William Moulton (1961) “Language is speech, not writing … A Language is a set of habits … Teach the language, not about the language… A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they aught to say … Languages are different.” (Rivers, 1964:5) Since language learning is a process of habit formation, the importance of the drill method cannot be over emphasized. It is repetition which ensures retention and helps the learner to cultivate a fresh set of habits.

The theoretical foundations of Audio-lingualism were attacked by linguists as being unsound in terms of both language theory and learning theory. Students were often found to be unable to transfer skills acquired
through Audio Lingual method to communicate in real life situations outside the class room. Linguist like Noam Chomsky rejected the structuralist approach as well as behaviorist theory of language learning arguing that language learning is not all about a set of habit formation. It is a cognitive process. He argues, “Language is not a habit structure. Ordinary linguistic behavior characteristically involves innovation, formation of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intricacy.”


5.1.4 **Situational Language Teaching**

Situational language teaching (SLT) is an approach that includes structural – situational and oral approaches. Structural approach is an improvement over the traditional methods of teaching, viz. the translation method and direct method.

According to F.G. French (1948-1950) the structural approach is based on the following principles:

- The importance of speech as the necessary means of fixing firmly all ground work.
- The importance of forming language habits, particularly emphasis on the habit of arranging words in English standard sentence pattern, to replace the sentence patterns of the learner’s mother tongue.
- The importance of the pupils’ activity rather than the activity of the teacher.

French defined a sentence pattern “the word pattern means a model from which many things of the same kind and shape can be made, like houses which look the same or shoes made alike, or a number of lorries all of same
size and shape though perhaps of different colors. A sentence pattern is
therefore, a model of sentences which will be of the same shape and
construction although made up of different words”. In structural approach,
sentence is the unit of speech. An English sentence has a specific pattern SVO.
Structural approach is linked with the oral approach, the drill method and the
situational approach. Oral work is the basis of this approach because language
is primarily observed as speech. Speech was considered as the basis of
language and structure was viewed as being at the heart of speaking ability.
According to Frisby (1957:134) “Word order, Structural words, the few
inflexions of English, and content words, will form the material of our
teaching.” Since learning a language is a process of habit formation, the
importance of drill cannot be neglected. Repetition ensures retention and as a
result of this, it helps the learner to cultivate a set of habits. It emphasizes
teaching of language structures in context of situations, not in a vacuum.

According to Pittman (1963: 179) “Our principal classroom activity in
the teaching of English structure will be the oral practice of structures. The oral
practice of controlled sentence patterns should be given in situations designed
to give the greatest amount of practice in English speech to the pupil.”

There are British Linguists like J.R. Firth, and M.A.K. Halliday who
developed powerful views of language in which meaning, context and situation
play a pivotal role. In the words of Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1964: 38)
“The emphasis now is on the description of language activity as part of the
whole complex of events, which, together with the participants and relevant
objects, make up actual situations”.

According to Richards and Rodgers (1986: 39) Situational Language Teaching has the following characteristics:

1. Teaching a language begins with the spoken language. After teaching material orally to the students, it is presented in written form.
2. Except the target language, no other language is used in the classroom.
3. New language points are introduced and practiced in contextual situations.
4. In order to ensure that an essential general service vocabulary is covered, vocabulary selection procedures are followed.
5. Following the principle that simple forms should be taught before complex ones, grammatical items are graded.
6. After a sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established, reading and writing are introduced.

Situational Language teaching facilitates an inductive approach to the teaching of grammar as well as vocabulary. The meaning of words or structures is not to be provided through explanation in either the mother tongue or the target language, but the meaning is to be induced from the way, the form is used in a situation.

Billows (1961: 28) comments, “If we give the meaning of a new word, either by translation into the home language or by an equivalent in the same language, as soon as we introduce it, we weaken the impression which the word makes on the mind.” Explanation of a particular structure or a vocabulary item is discouraged as the learner is expected to deduce the meaning from contextual situations in which it is presented. The learner is expected to use the language learned in the classroom to real life situations outside the classroom.
Situational language teaching employs a situational approach to present new sentence patterns as well as vocabulary items and a drill based manner of practicing them. Pittman (1963:155-156) states: “Our method will … be situational. The situation will be controlled carefully to teach the new language material … in such a way that there can be no doubt in the learner’s mind of the meaning of what he hears … almost all the vocabulary and structures taught in the first four or five years and even later can be placed in situations in which the meaning is quite clear”.

5.1.5 Bilingual Method

Dr. C.J. Dodson was the originator of the Bilingual Method which aims at:

1) To make the students speak English with fluency and accuracy.
2) To make them write English fluently and accurately.
3) To enable the students to use their mother tongue concepts for bilingual proficiency.

Reacting against the situational method, the bilingual method believes that it is the wastage of time for recreating a situation while teaching a foreign language. It advocates that teaching learning method is useful when mother tongue equivalents are given to the learners without duplicating the situation.

Bilingual Method differs from Translation method in two respects:

- It is the teacher only who uses the mother tongue to explain meaning.
  Students are not permitted to use mother tongue.
- Pupils are given a lot of practice in the drill of sentence patterns. Such practice is not provided in the translation method.
It is an easy method since an average teacher of English can teach successfully. It promotes both fluency and accuracy. Since it requires little equipment and is thus suited to all types of schools, rural as well as urban, much time is saved which can be utilized to provide pattern practice to the pupils. The use of mother tongue concepts helps bilingual proficiency. It emphasizes introduction of reading and writing at a very early stage. Like any other method or approach, the bilingual approach has its own limitations. In the hands of an unimaginative and careless teacher, it may degenerate into the translation method.

5.1.6 The Total Physical Response Method

This approach, also known as TPR was developed by James. J. Asher. In this method, both language and body movement are synchronized through action responses and use of the imperatives.

J.J. Asher (1977) defines the Total Physical Response method as one that combines information and skills through the use of the kinesthetic sensory system which allows the student to assimilate information and skills at a rapid rate. As a result, a high degree of motivation occurs. The teacher gives a host of commands with the students then responding by “acting out” the command: “Stand up”, “Go to the door”, “Sit down” etc. Kinetic movement of the hands and arms is incorporated in lieu of rote memorization. Total Physical Response is very effective in teaching temporal states, personal pronouns and some grammatical structures.

Asher states that the command directed to young children requires the child to respond to them physically rather than verbally. He is of the view that a second language learner too undergoes the same process because meanings in
the target language can be conveyed best through actions. (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:73). Asher states that “most of the grammatical structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skillful use of the imperative by the instructor (1977:4).

The total physical response combines elements of speech and action and tries to teach language through motor actions. (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

Asher views first and second language learning as parallel processes. He sees three processes as central:

- Children first develop listening competence so as to develop the ability to speak. In order to spontaneously produce utterance, they have to first understand complex utterances.

- In order to respond physically to spoken language in the form of parental commands, children have to acquire listening comprehension.

- Once a foundation in listening comprehension has been established, speech evolves naturally out of it without any effort. (Richards and Rodgers 1986/2001:74).

Regarding this method of teaching vocabulary, Larsen Freeman, (2004:113-115) states that vocabulary and grammatical structures are emphasized over other language areas. These are embedded within imperatives; the imperatives are single words and multi-word chunks. One reason behind the use of imperative is their frequency of occurrence in the speech directed at young children in learning their native language. So as to produce the utterances, children have to understand the spoken word. The spoken language is emphasized over written language. Students often do not learn to read the commands they have already learned to perform until ten hours of instruction.
It is necessary to understand the spoken language before developing the skills of speaking. Imperatives are the main structures to communicate information. The student is not forced to speak, but is allowed to spontaneously begin to speak, when the student feels that he is comfortable and confident in understanding and subsequently produces the utterances. The following are the techniques associated with Total Physical Response method:

- **Step 1.** The teacher says the commands as he himself performs the action.
- **Step 2.** The teacher says the command as both the teacher and the students then perform the action.
- **Step 3.** The teacher says the command but only students perform the action.
- **Step 4.** The teacher tells one student at a time to do the command.
- **Step 5.** The roles of the teacher and the student are reversed. The student gives the command to the teacher and to other students.
- **Step 6.** The teacher and the student allow for command expansion or produces new sentences.

### 5.1.7 The Silent way

The silent way, developed by Caleb Galtengo (1972), is based on the premise that the teacher remains silent as much as possible in the classroom whereas, the student is encouraged to utter as much language as possible.

According to Richards and Rodgers, (1986:81) the theory of leaning underlying this method is as follows:

- Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned.
Learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects.

Learning is facilitated by problem solving involving the material to be learned.

The silent way takes a structural approach to teach the target language. The sentence is the basic unit of teaching. Instead of communicative value, the focus of attention lies on propositional meaning on the part of the teacher. Students are encouraged to adopt largely inductive process to learn the grammatical rules of the language.

According to Gattegno, vocabulary is considered as a central dimension of learning a language and hence the choice of vocabulary is crucial. Regarding selection and gradation of vocabulary, the learner deals with the most functional and versatile words of the language and many of them don’t have even direct equivalents to the learner’s mother tongue. The ‘functional vocabulary’ provides a key to comprehending the ‘spirit’ of the language. By ‘spirit’, he means the way how each language possesses its unique sound system and melody, composed of phonological and supra segmental elements. (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:82)

The silent way aims to provide oral and aural facility in basic elements of the target language and to teach the correct pronunciation for learning near-native fluency in the target language to the beginning level students. It avoids the use of the vernacular. It promotes to create simple linguistic situations that remain under the complete control of the teacher. He passes on to the learners the responsibility for the production of language relating to the descriptions of the objects shown or the actions performed without direct oral instruction from or unnecessary modeling by the teacher. To create simple linguistic tasks for
the beginning level students the teacher models a word, phrase or sentence and then seeks to elicit learner responses. Learners then seek to produce language by putting together old and new information. Charts, rods and other aids may be used to elicit learner responses.

Teacher modeling is minimal, although the teacher concentrates on what the students say and how they are saying it, drawing their attention to the differences in pronunciation and the flow of words. The absence of correction and repeated modeling from the teacher help the learner to develop “inner criteria” to come to their own conclusions. Stevick (1980:56) states the role of the teacher under this method as:

(a) To teach (the presentation of an item once, typically using non-verbal clues to get across meanings).

(b) To test (after teaching, testing follows immediately. Testing is referred as elicitation and shaping of the production of utterances made by the learner in a silent way).

(c) To get out of the way (the teacher silently monitors learners’ interactions with each other and may even leave the learners struggling with their new linguistic tools).

Experimentation and peer-group corrections are encouraged. Teacher speaks only to correct an incorrect utterance if no peer-group correction is forthcoming. Bruner (1966:83) summarizes the theory of learning behind this method as a problem solving, creative, discovery activity, in which the learner is a principal actor rather than a bench-bound listener.
5.1.8 Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is based on the pioneering efforts of Bulgarian Psychiatrist-educator Georgi Lozonov (1978). Suggestopedia is derived from Suggetology which Lozanov describes as a “science ………. concerned with the systematic study of the non rational and / or non conscious influences.” (Stevick 1976:42)

Richards and Rodgers (1986:100) summarizes the most conspicuous features of Suggestopedia as follows:

- Decoration
- Furniture
- Arrangement of the classroom
- The use of music
- The authoritative behaviour of the teacher.

Lozanov believes “that relaxation techniques and concentration will help learners tap their subconscious resources and retain greater amounts of vocabulary and structures than they ever thought possible.” (Omaggio 1986:84) This innovative approach to language pedagogy maximizes the learners’ natural holistic talents. Lexis is central and lexical translation rather than contextualization is stressed in Suggestopedia. It emphasizes on memorization of vocabulary pairs – a target language item and parallel to it, its native language translation. Little emphasis on grammar is given.

According to Lozanov, the centrality of music and musical rhythm helps to induce a relaxed attitude, which he refers to as ‘concert pseudopassiveness’. In the state of relaxation, anxieties and tension are relieved and power of concentration for new materials is raised.
A Suggestopedia course is given to small groups of approximately 12 students, consists of ten unit of study which lasts 30 days. Classes are held 4 hours a day, 6 days a week. Each unit contains a dialogue consisting of 1,200 words or so with an accompanying vocabulary list and grammatical commentary.

According to Bancroft (1972) the Suggestopedia class consists of three parts:

a) An oral review section, done through previously learned material, traditional conversation, games, plays and other methods.

b) Presentation and discussion of new material, introduced in the form of new dialogue and its native language translation and discussion on issues of grammar, vocabulary or content that the teacher feels important or the students are curious about.

c) Concert session, which is a truly original feature and the heart of Suggestopedia and is divided into two parts. In the first part, the active séance, the teacher reads the dialogue, while the students follow the text with its mother tongue translation and engage in deep rhythmic yoga breathing. These activities are co-ordinated. The second part of the concert involves music. The central activity is the teacher’s reading of the dialogue of the text with an emotional intonation. Each member of the class is given a new name and a role to play to overcome their inhibitions in Suggestopedia class.

(Krashen, 1987)

Larsen Freeman (1986:84 -86) summarize the typical techniques closely associated with Suggestopedia as the following:
(i) **Classroom set-up** (Greater importance is on the emphasis of creating a physical environment that does not “feel” like a normal classroom and makes the students feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible).

(ii) **Peripheral Leaning** (Students can absorb information “effortlessly” when it is perceived as part of the learning environment, rather than the material “to be attended to”).

(iii) **Positive Suggestion** (Teachers appeal to student’s consciousness and sub-consciousness in order to better orchestrate the “suggestive” factors involved in the learning situation).

(iv) **Visualization** (Students are asked to close their eyes and visualize scenes and events, to help them relax, facilitate positive suggestion and encourage creativity from the students).

(v) **Choose a New Identity** (Students select a target language name and/or occupation that place them “inside” the language they are learning.

(vi) **Role – Play** (Students pretend temporarily that they are some one else and perform a role using the target language.

(vii) **First Concert** (Teacher does a slow, dramatic reading of the dialogue synchronized in intonation with classical music).

(viii) **Second Concert** (Students put aside their scripts and the teacher reads at normal speed according to the context, and not the accompanying pre-classical or Baroque music – this typically ends the class for the day.)
(ix) **Primary Activation** (Students “playfully” re-read out the target language loud as individuals or in groups).

(x) **Secondary Activation** (Students engage in various activities designed to help the students so as to learn the material and use it more spontaneously—activities include singing, dancing, dramatizations and game focusing ‘communicative intent’ and not ‘form’).

### 5.1.9 The Lexical Approach

The term ‘lexical approach’, coined mainly by Lewis (1993), emphasizes lexis-based approach to language teaching. It refers to one derived from the belief that the building blocks of language learning and communication are lexis, that is, words and word communications, not grammar, functions, notions or some other unit of planning and teaching. The centrality of the lexicon to language structure, language learning and language use is greatly emphasized by the lexical approach.

Nattinger (1980:341) has rightly commented as lexis is believed to play a central role in language learning. He states that our teaching should, perhaps, be based on the assumption that, language production consists of piecing together the ready made units suitable for a particular situation and that knowledge of these patterns to predict situations. Our teaching therefore, would centre on these patterns and the ways they can be pieced together, along with the ways they vary and the situations in which they occur.

According to Lewis (2000:184), the lexical approach has lacked a coherent learning theory. He provides the following assumptions about learning theory in order to rectify this:
For a second language learning to take place, the necessary and sufficient condition is to encounter new learning items on several occasions.

The necessary but not sufficient condition for “input” to become “intake” is to notice lexical chunks or collocations.

For “input” to become “intake” noticing similarities, differences, restrictions and examples contribute, although formal description of rules probably does not help.

Acquisition is based on an accumulation of examples from which learners make provisional generalizations, but not on the application of formal rules. Language production is the product of previously met examples, not formal rules.

No linear syllabus can adequately reflect the nonlinear nature of acquisition.

Lewis further extends the lexical approach when he provides specific roles for teachers and learners. Supporting Krashen’s Natural Approach, Lewis suggests that teacher talk is a major source of learner input in demonstrating how lexical phrases are used for different functional purposes.

Wills (1990) proposes that teachers have to understand and manage a classroom methodology based on stages composed of task, planning and report. Teachers bear the role of creating an environment in which learners of second language can operate effectively and then helping learners manage their own learning. And for this to happen, teachers should “abandon the idea of the teacher as ‘knower’ and concentrate instead on the idea of the learner as ‘discoverer’” (Willis 1990:131).
5.1.10 The Natural Approach

The natural Approach, with echoes of the ‘naturalistic’ approach of the Direct Method was developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983). It was based upon Krashen’s theories of second language acquisition, emphasizing ‘comprehensible input’ distinguishing between ‘acquisition’ – a natural subconscious process, and ‘learning’ a conscious process. According to the Natural approach, learning cannot lead to acquisition. The focus is on meaning.

- **Activity types:** activities allowing comprehensible input, about things in the here-and-now. Focus is on meaning not on form.

- **Learner roles:** should not try and learn language in the usual sense, but should try and lose themselves in activities involving meaningful communication.

- **Teacher roles:** the teacher is the primary source of comprehensible input. He must create positive low-anxiety climate, must choose and orchestrate a rich mixture of classroom activities.

- **Roles of materials:** materials come from realia rather than textbooks. Primary aim is to promote comprehension and communication, not form (structure, grammar). The importance of vocabulary is emphasized suggesting the view that a language is essentially its lexicon and only inconsequently the grammar that determines how the lexicon is exploited to produce messages. The lexicon for both perception and production is considered critical in the construction and interpretation of messages.

According to Krashen and Terrell (1983:67) the Natural Approach is primarily “designed to develop basic communication skills--both oral and
Communicative activities prevail throughout a language course employing the Natural Approach which focuses on a wide range of activities including games, role plays, dialogues, group work and discussions. There are three generic stages identified in the approach:

- **Pre-production stage:** Students “participate in the language activity without having to respond in the target language.” (Krashen and Terrell, 1983:76). For example, students can act out physical commands, identify student colleagues from teacher description, point to pictures and so on and so forth). It is for developing listening skills.

- **Early production stage:** Students respond to either or questions, use single word and short phrases, and use fixed conversational patterns, for example, ‘What’s your name?, How are you?’ Students struggle with the language and make many errors which are corrected, based on content and not on structure.

- **Speech emergent phase:** Students involve themselves in role play and games, contribute personal information and opinions, and participate in group problem solving. It extends production, promoting fluency through a variety of more challenging activities.

The natural approach includes command based activities from Total Physical Response; Direct Method activities in which mime, gesture and context are used to elicit questions and answers; and even situation-based practice or structures and patterns. Group work activities are often similar to those used in communicative language teaching.
Richards and Rodgers (1986:187) summarize the four kinds of responsibilities of the learner as:

- He provides information about his specific goals so that the topics and situations most relevant to his needs can be focused on as far as acquisition activities are concerned.
- He takes an active role in order to ensure comprehensible input. He should learn and use conversational management techniques to regulate input.
- He is the one who decides when to start producing speech and when to upgrade it.
- He decides with the teacher about the relative amount of time to be devoted to learning exercises (where they are to be a part of the program) and perhaps even complete and correct them independently.

The natural approach was based upon Krashen’s theories of Second language acquisition and five Hypotheses are as follows:

1) The Acquisition / Learning Hypothesis
2) The Monitor Hypothesis
3) The Natural order Hypothesis
4) The Input Hypothesis
5) The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Richards and Rodgers (1986:183) summarize the following obvious implications of these five hypotheses for language teaching:

1) As much comprehensible input as possible must be presented.
2) For comprehension, visual aids are useful, as is exposure to a wide range of vocabulary rather than the study of syntactic structures.

3) The emphasis in the classroom should be laid on listening and reading; speaking should be allowed to “emerge”.

4) Students work should focus on meaningful communication rather than on form in order to lower the affective filter. Input should be interesting so as to contribute to a relaxed classroom environment.

5.1.11 Communicative Language Teaching

During the 1980s and 1990s approaches emerged which concentrated on the fundamentally communicative functions of language and language classrooms were characterized by attempts to ensure authenticity of materials and pragmatic, meaningful tasks.

Communicative Language teaching has emerged as the norm in second language teaching. Celce-Murcia (1991 a) states that language is an instrument of communication and communication, being the goal of second or foreign language instruction is “content-based, meaningful, contextualized and discourse-based, rather than sentence based.”

David Nunan (1991:279) summarizes five basic characteristics of communicative language teaching as the following:

1) An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.

2) The introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation.

3) The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on the language but also on the learning process itself.
4) An enhancement of the learner’s own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

5) An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

The communicative Approach is a learner-centered approach. The learner and his/her needs become the focus of the learning process. The learner gains knowledge not only on grammatical competence, but also acquires a social skill as to what to say, how to say, when to say and where, in order to satisfy his daily needs or larger aims. Cooper (1968) rightly comments: “to communicate effectively a speaker must know not only how to produce any and all grammatical utterances of language but also how to use them appropriately. The speaker must know what to say with whom and when and where.”

Johnson (1982) states that in order to acquire communicative competence, the learner should have three types of knowledge as the following:

1) Knowledge of the systematic competence; the ability to form grammatically correct sentences;

2) Knowledge of significance; the ability to signify the use of different language forms;

3) Knowledge about language use.

Regarding the teacher’s role in the communicative approach, he becomes a co-participant with the learner in the teaching-learning process. He is in the background helping all students to take part in the language task given, for example, a group discussing how to book a railway-ticket or a room in a rest house, what language to use or even dramatizing some textual or other
material etc. He is the one who provides all the resources necessary for communication to be effective in every context. He becomes a guide and organizer of different learning activities. Regarding teacher’s roles, Breen and Candlin (1980:99) states as the following: “The teacher has two main roles: the first role is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. The second role is to act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group”. (Cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1986: 167)

Brown (1994:43) has discussed the following general objectives of the communicative language teaching:

1) Classroom goals are focused on all of the components (grammatical, discourse, functional, socio-linguistic, and strategic) of communicative competence. Goals therefore must interwine the organizational aspects of language with the pragmatic aspect.

2) Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

3) Fluency and accuracy are considered as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use, fluency is more focused than accuracy.

4) Students in a communicative class ultimately have to use the language productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts outside the
classroom. Therefore classroom activities must equip students with the skills necessary for communication in those contexts.

5) Students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.

6) The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and guide, not an all-knowing bestower of knowledge. Therefore, students are encouraged to construct meaning through genuine linguistic interaction with others.

Communicative language teaching aims to develop communicative competence in learners so as to acquire the skill of effective communication in the target language. The focus has shifted from form to meanings and functions of the language. Language is acquired rather than learnt consciously. According to Krashen (1987:10) “acquisition is a natural process, similar to the way children develop ability in their first language. It is a subconscious process when students are not aware of the fact they are acquiring language but are using the language for communication.” The aim is to involve the learner in the learning process so that language develops automatically and spontaneously.

The communicative language Teaching has its main principles that can help the teacher to understand it and enables to apply it with his students. Kitao and Kitao (1999: 25-27) give a set of principles for this method as the following:

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate.
• Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities.
• Fluency is an important dimension of communication.
• Communication involves the integration of different language skills.
• Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error.
• Games are useful in language teaching, because they have characteristics in common with real communication.
• Small group work is useful, because it allows each student more opportunity to communicate.
• Students should be given a chance to express their opinions.

To conclude, communicative language teaching refers to classroom activities in which students use a language as a vehicle of communication, and the main purpose is to complete some kind of given tasks. Students are required to use the language that they know, and gradually they develop their strategies in communication. There is a place for both controlled presentation and semi-controlled language practice, which fosters optimal development of student’s language skills.

5.2 Factors affecting choice of techniques

Regarding the most eclectic and pragmatic approach of teaching English vocabulary, it is the good teacher along with the choice of materials and techniques that he adopts, play a crucial role. There are few factors affecting choice of techniques and these can be mentioned below:

• The objectives of teaching English.
• The class from which it’s teaching is started.
• The age, the ability and capacity of students.
• The ability and training of the teacher.
• The availability of aids.
• The size of the class.
• The location of the school, rural or urban.

Hence, there can be no single method, which can suit all people, all places and all conditions.

5.3 Techniques of teaching English vocabulary

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. Words may be presented through the following techniques:

a) Visual techniques include picture, or charts, match-stick figures on the blackboard or material displayed on the flannel board.

b) Demonstration techniques include the showing of actual objects or realia or performing actions by the teacher.

c) Association techniques include telling the synonyms or antonyms of words.

d) Verbal context includes giving definition or explanation of a word in the target language itself or using it in a self-defining context.

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. However, no practice is needed with passive vocabulary. In order to teach passive vocabulary the teacher can quickly give the meaning in simple English or through the mother tongue. The students may be asked to refer to a dictionary for the meaning.

5.4 Methods employed by teachers in Assamese Medium Schools

In a majority of Assamese medium schools in rural Kamrup District, it is found that the Grammar Translation method, which is 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. Of course, there are words that may be explained with the help of the mother tongue, but explanation of words in the mother tongue should be an exception rather than the rule. According to Harmer (1991) translation seems to be a useful tool if it is used sparingly, but it should be used with caution. The teacher employs the mother- tongue in teaching vocabulary and the activities are as follows:

- Meaning of words, phrases and idioms are given in the mother tongue.
- Whole sentences including grammar points are translated into the mother-tongue.
- Continuous passages are translated into the mother -tongue.
- English usages are translated in the mother- tongue.
However, there are certain words in English that it is not possible to find out the exact meaning of words from one language to another. For example, Assamese learners of English through translation cannot grasp the difference between “ice” and “snow” since there are no appropriate equivalents available in Assamese. Similarly the use of the mother tongue in the class deprives the students from an opportunity to listen to English.

The English textbooks of classes V, VI, VII, are based on communicative language teaching approach, which is a function-based and task-centered situational approach. The learner is asked to provide a set of language functions such as greeting, introducing, thanking, making requests, offering help and so on, leading to the development of the communicative ability of the learners.

(New English Reader I: ii)

But the present state of affairs in Assamese medium schools by and large is that the learners fail to use English for any of the above purposes, because they are not exposed to anything other than the textbook language. Both teaching and learning are examination oriented.

It is found that 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 words. 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, in the lesson, in association, their synonyms or antonyms. For example,

- Bad vs. good, ugly vs. beautiful
- Brave ~ bold, intelligent~ clever, pretty ~beautiful

Similarly, the students are not asked to build the following:

- Nouns from verbs (e. g amuse – amusement)
- Nouns from adjectives (e. g weak- weakness)
- Verbs from nouns (e. g. joy- enjoy)
- Verbs from adjectives (e. g. wide-widen)
- Adjectives from nouns (e. g .air-airy)
- Adjectives from verbs (e. g .enjoy – enjoyable)

If the students know the meaning of “kind” and “true” then they can at once understand the meaning of “unkind” and “untrue” when they are told that “un-“ is a negative prefix.

5.5 Conclusion

The teaching of vocabulary should be thorough and systematic. Mere translation of English words, except when there is absolutely necessary, will not help them learn the concept for which the word stands. The teacher may teach productive words by showing objects, pictures, models, through drawings and sketches on the black board and by using them in meaningful context and situations. It is the teacher who has to select for himself the best in all methods according to his needs.

However, in recent years, there has been a major shift in perspective in the language teaching scenario. Modern methods reflect on promoting real communication in the classroom, help students understand spoken and written
language, and participate in conversations. In modern methodology, two main
tendencies set apart: methods in which the teacher has the most important role
to play and he is the one who chooses the items, students will learn opposing
the one where focus shifts away from the teacher to the students. This makes
students more responsible for their own learning and allows meeting individual
needs of each student (Gairns and Redman, 1986). But unfortunately, this is not
happening in most of the Assamese medium schools.

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