CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English today has been a complex and challenging job. This is because ELT as a discipline has undergone a number of changes and paradigm shifts over the decades. Changing socio-cultural environment has not only warranted the urgent need for a relook at and redefinition of objectives, priorities and approaches but has also brought in its wake newer problems and complexities that demand equal attention for their redressal. Innovations in the field of methodologies and approaches in ELT are in fact reflections of the recognition of the need for changes in learner needs and the subsequent efforts at shuffling and reshuffling of priorities and pedagogic orientations.

There have been pedagogical debates from time to time about how English should be taught, and what should be taught etc. In fact such debates have preceded every new movement or shift in the curricular and methodological innovations in the field of ELT. Throughout the long history of English Teaching the influence of current social, political and economic factors on what constitutes ‘English’ and how it is taught has been a recurrent phenomenon characterizing ELT with considerable diversity even in recent years, the world over.¹ It is this situation that perhaps prompted Dr. M. Nagarajan to describe ELT as a ‘globally controlled discursive practice.’²

Globalization as a world event has warranted a fresh look into the position of English as well as into its objectives of teaching, rendering the traditional approach almost anachronistic in the world of today. It has brought
in far-reaching implications in the field of ELT. It has created the urgent need for empowering the learners with the mastery of the skills of effective communication so as to enable them to transcend cultural barriers.

The advent of technology has also revolutionized the ELT scenario today in a big way. This too has been a global phenomenon and we Indians can hardly afford to remain unaffected by it. This phenomenon of technology in ELT has brought in various implications. This has led to a situation where even the very role and importance of the teacher has come to be questioned. Some even go to the extent of apprehending the replacement of the human teacher by technology, though in fact such anxiety is unwarranted in as much as technology is not the teacher, it is merely a tool, a supplement. But even then technology has come to stay and we can’t avoid it, rather we have to welcome it.

The impact of all these events on the ELT practices has been felt and acknowledged everywhere accordingly. Professor Z.N. Patil while visualizing the need for changing priorities in teaching English in the present perspectives in Asia comments: „the objectives of teaching English as a second and foreign language are constantly being shuffled and reshuffled. There was a time when the goal of English Language Teaching was to develop linguistic and literary competence in the learner. Accuracy was prioritized over fluency and appropriateness. Recently we are talking about reordering our priorities. Here Professor Patil prioritizes his objectives in the order of confidence building, fluency, appropriateness and accuracy – the ultimate goal being developing the learners into effective communicators in English.
ELT practices in general and in higher education in particular are urgently in need of a paradigm shift – a reforming of the discipline making it flexible enough rather than rigid, permanent and changeless to suit the demands of the changed socio-cultural perspective. The mismatch between theoretical development and quality and progress in actual ELT practice is what calls for our attention towards such a reforming. Some other major issues of concern for the ELT practitioners today are the rural-urban divide, the gap between theory and practice, teacher student power equations and better teacher-student rapport that continue to leave their impact on the discipline.

There has been at present a growing craze for English in our country and that is not without reason. The socio-cultural milieu of the present day world in the wake of globalization has led to an unprecedented demand for English at almost every walk of life – be it higher education, trade, commerce, IT, Internet, telecommunications and so on. MS Eunice Crook summarises the situation in the following words ‘State governments recognize that access to English is going to be vital for the workforce of the future and that is recognised at all levels of society. They recognize that the divide between rich and poor will be increased if some have language skills and not others or let us say it can be diminished by ensuring equality of access to English language training. …Parents with buying power are buying English medium education. At the level of colleges and universities the authorities are recognizing that if their graduates have good English language skills they will have an economic advantage in the market place. And employers want employees who can get their message across and who have the full range of communication skills, who
can listen and understand what the customer wants and who can respond to the customer in a language which can be understood.\textsuperscript{5} As a result of all this, English has made deep inroads into the central domains of our public as well as to some extent private lives and 'for a fast multiplying number of people in most parts of India English is becoming not just a language of the work place but of the family common room.'\textsuperscript{6}

English is taught as a second language in the schools of our country. Students learn English at the school stage for a period of 5-8 years depending on the level of introduction of its study besides another 4 years study of it at the college level. But inspite of this most of the learners specially those from the vernacular medium schools fail to master the basic competencies in the language to use it with any degree of accuracy or acceptability. This leaves us with a host of questions staring in the face - why do our learners fail to acquire adequate communication skills in English even after having studied it for so long a period? Are the teachers to blame? Is the system faulty? Is the curriculum wanting / inadequate? Where lies the fault? Where lies the remedy?

Theorists in English language teaching continue to offer solutions in terms of curricular and methodological changes and innovations. But the problems continue to remain unsolved. Such a situation has been the result of, the gap between theory and practice in ELT and several other related factors. The practice of looking for and trying imported methodological and pedagogical answers regardless of their socio-cultural and ecological suitability often does more harm than good in the target situation. For language teaching methods evolved and in practice in a particular socio-cultural context remain tied to that
ecology, socio cultural context and transfer of such methods and pedagogical innovations to an alien linguistic and cultural context is likely to prove counterproductive. Unfortunately such a situation continues to prevail in the ELT scenario almost everywhere. This is more so the case in the non-English medium ELT situation where the ELT classroom stands in sharp contrast to those in U.K. or the U.S.A. in almost everything—infrastructure, class size, social expectations, learner backgrounds, teacher competency and so on. The solution lies 'in keeping alive a healthy dose of skepticism in looking at imported methodological answers, in looking for answers that have grown in comparable classroom situations and subscribing to the belief and awareness that in so far as the challenges are related to the factors that are largely local, the best methodological answers have also, in good measure, to be local.'

While speaking in justification of his 'Communicational Teaching Project' N.S. Prabhu also appears to have suggested the same solution in this regard. Dr. Prabhu observes that relating specific dimensions of a situation to particular aspects of a pedagogic proposal can in itself be a fruitful activity. Typologies of teaching situations should thus be seen as an aid to investigating the extent of relevance of a pedagogic proposal. Prof. V.D. Singh also strikes the same note when he observes that second language pedagogy has at the present time been reconceptualised on the basis of a new understanding of language, the way it is learnt, its goals and the role of the socio-cultural and other factors on language use and its learning and the role of the teachers in such a situation should be such that rather than led by prescriptions descending to them they should practise what suits their learners, their classrooms, their
resources and yields results. This calls for micro-level studies of the ELT dynamics and problems so as to gain closer insights into the needs and realities of the particular ELT ecology. The sooner we realize this the better it is for us.

As time goes on there has been a gradual awareness everywhere about the need for exploring alternative approaches in the field of ELT. ELT in India is no exception. Top-down initiatives in the direction of changes drawn from theorizing and successful practices in the west have failed to deliver the goods. The distance between the top and the bottom being very long, the message quite often gets diluted and distorted during the process of reaching the bottom. The alternatives explored should suit the learners, their specific needs, conditions and resources. This necessitates the abandonment of our characteristic tendency, while dealing with the teaching of English and its problems, of looking to other countries for solutions to our problems. It is time we looked for approaches that are indigenously devised and would work at our situations. Such a move in turn calls for undertaking of some serious studies on the teaching of English 'and the failure of the teaching of English in a vast majority of our schools – schools that are outside the English medium, the Kendriya Vidyalaya, the Navodaya Vidyalaya and the residential schools systems, may be, to speak in the vein of V.D. Singh, the motivating factor in this regard.' The time has come to undertake research for investigating and finding answers to the gaps and lapses in the pedagogical practices that lead to such large scale failures in the ELT programme of our nation.
HISTORY OF ELT - PEDAGOGIC PERSPECTIVE:

The history of English Teaching is a vast subject. Teaching English today has attained the status of a global industry. The spread of English round the world in the wake of trade, empire-building, migration and settlement has ensured the teaching of English a significant role in the educational history of almost each and every nation/country on earth.

The teaching of modern vernacular languages and for that matter, the teaching of English, was under way in England towards the end of the Middle Ages. It was a time when the supremacy of French as a language of communication was fast losing its stronghold in England. Royal initiative and patronage was one of the strongest motivating factors paving the way for the gradual coming in of English in the activities of political, social and educational life of the nation. The reign of Henry V, proves to be a fertile soil for the growth and sustenance of the English Language while by the end of the fifteenth century it gained a still wider use and circulation. It is during this period that the dialect of the East-Central Midlands established itself as the standard speech of the nation. However it had to wait till the turn of the century and the beginning of the next before any serious attempt was made to produce a scholarly description of the language.

During this period in the absence of any standard model of teaching, the teaching of English was based on the Latin model of teaching texts through dialogues. The methodology thus used was based on the ‘Catechistic’ technique in which questions were used as prompts to the memory that served
to break the text into digestible chunks which could be learnt by heart. This technique was used till 1800 and sometimes later as well.

Humble beginnings in the direction of teaching English as a foreign language may be said to have been made towards the sixteenth century after the arrival of large numbers of French Huguenot refugees in the 1570s and 1580s. But even before this attempts at learning English by the Mercantile Community began on the other side of the English Channel particularly in Flanders. Growth of Commerce had a role to play in the interest shown in learning English by the members of the Mercantile Community. William Caxton, his assistant Wynken de Worde are a few of the writers who catered to the requirement of learning materials by producing some manuals – short books of dialogues suitable for the learners of the period. Inclusion of English as a Foreign Language in the Polyglot dictionaries and phrase books which were a popular device for learning or acquiring a ‘survival knowledge’ of foreign languages in renaissance times is another contribution towards the learning of English as a Foreign Language. *Septum Linguarum* is a seven language dictionary published in 1540 in Antwerp that included English for the first time that popularized the learning of English amongst the multi-lingual North-European cloth merchants in the sixteenth century. This is followed by Gabriel Meurier’s efforts in the field. He can claim to be the first teacher of English as a Foreign Language. His double manual entitled *A Treatise for to learn to speak French and English* was published in Antwerp in 1553. Noel de Berlement is another name that deserves mention before Gabriel Meurier. Anyhow these were the humble beginnings on the Antwerp quasides and the next stage in the development of English Language
Teaching was marked by major religio-political events in the mainstream of late sixteenth century. The exodus of protestant refugees from Flanders, Italy and even Spain itself to England and their settlement in the country during the Elizabethan period proved an eventful phenomenon in the history of English Teaching. It was a period of refugee teachers who represent a cross-section of the language teaching community of the time. Of the three noteworthy figures, the name of Jacques Bellot comes first. In fact, he it was who devoted himself more seriously to the teaching of English to the immigrant French Community in London and his mother tongue (French) to the native population. The Second is Claudius Holyband – a leading professional language teacher of the day with a high level of pedagogical expertise while the third one is John Florio. As for the teaching method all of them used the traditional bilingual method of the earlier manuals. Jacques Bellot’s two small English manuals – *The English Schoolmaster* (1580) and *Familiar Dialogues* (1586) were based on the pedagogic priorities of basic literacy and everyday conversation, while Holyband’s priorities were on pronunciation and grammar as seen in his works such as *The Schoolmaster* and *Littleton* etc. Florio, who was primarily a teacher of Italian also claimed to be a teacher of English as a foreign language and his students were drawn from the small but significant group of Italian refugees resident in London. His two principal double-manuals include *First Fruits* (1578) and *Second Fruits* (1591) although his masterpiece was his translation (into English) of Montaigne’s *Essays* in 1603. But by the close of the century activities of the refugee teachers faced strong antagonism from the locals as represented by no less a writer than John Eliot with the result that Foreign
Language Teaching and for that matter the teaching of English falls into a state of decline in the early seventeenth century.

During the period that followed and till the early eighteenth century the main concern of the schools was the teaching of Latin and to some extent Greek and the classical curriculum was dominant and unchallenged. Roger Ascham, Joseph Webbe, Comenius, William Lily and Francis Bacon etc. are the masterminds that dominate the language pedagogy of the period. Roger Ascham's *School Master* (1570) gives a pedagogical plan based on the Quintilian model in which 'the methodology consists of imitatio (writing texts on the model of great authors), paraphrases (reformulation), epitome (Summarising), Metaphrasis (transforming a text from poetry to prose and vice versa) and declamatio (Public eloquence).'* Such a teaching methodology was expected to develop the learners' sensitivity to language use. To Ascham learning of grammar was subservient to the study of original texts while Joseph Webbe dispensed with grammar altogether as, to him, the study of grammar merely 'shakled the learner's progress.' He therefore focussed on the exercise of communication skills which were the key, in his opinion, to the starting point for language learning. Comenius advocated the concept of natural pictures for teaching languages and believed that language should not be the object of learning but the outcome, the product of interplay between the learners and the outer practical world. Again, to him content and not form was of overriding importance.

After this since about 1670 the teaching of English as a Foreign Language steadily rose to a standard of expertise and professionalism it had not
enjoyed before. It was some French teachers whose contribution in this respect deserves to be noted. Paul Festeau, a native of Blois and Guy Miege, a Swiss, Manger, John Wallis and Christopher Cooper are the names worth noting in this regard. Guy Miege’s *Nouvelle Methode pour apprendre l’Anglois* (New Method of Learning English) (1685) is a landmark in the development of English Language Teaching to the Immigrant Community. In 1672 Festeau published his *Nouvelle Grammaire Anglois* and was able to make a mark in the field by joining forces with Mauger. His more academic contemporaries are John Wallis and Christopher Cooper. Miege based his teaching on a thorough grounding in the basics of pronunciation, spelling and grammar followed by practice and language study using dialogues and phrases. He disapproved of learning a language without grammar. To speak in the vein of Howatt ‘The teaching of English as a Foreign Language came of age with Miege’s *Methode*... [as] Miege was able to provide a substantial manual for the more discerning and sophisticated public’\(^{14}\) of the time.

**The Spread of English Language Teaching in Europe:**

Since mid eighteenth century English Language Teaching started spreading out from Britain to other nations. First there were the countries immediately bordering the Channel — France, Netherland, Denmark and Germany. This was followed by the outer circle of the Mediterranean and Baltic countries and then Russia in the late eighteenth century. Bengal in India is the only non-European territory that came within this network during this period.
In Netherland we have the tradition of English teaching throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was followed by France which had a history of ELT before 1600. Festeau’s *Nouvelle Grammaire Anglois* (1672) and Miege’s *Nouvelle Methode* of 1685 reissued in the form of double grammars were landmarks in the field. V.J. Peyton, Siret etc. were the other writers working in the field. The real breakthrough for the English Language however came towards the end of the century in Germany where an unprecedented interest grew up round the dramatic works of English literature particularly, Shakespeare. This trend continued throughout the century which was marked by a sudden spurt in publications in the last twenty years. Henry Offen’s *Double Grammar For Germans to Learn English and for Englishmen to Learn the German Tongue* (1687), Theodore Arnold’s *Grammatica Anglicana Concentrata*, Oder Kurz Gafasste’s *Englishche Grammatica* (1718) are some landmark publications of the period. Again writers like Sammer, Moritz, Canzler, Ebers, Kohler and Fick from 1780 onwards produced grammars in large numbers and wrote the first of the New Grammar Translation Method courses. Denmark also comes into the limelight with a grammar by Frideric Belling in 1678. Next comes Italy where the interest in ELT is evident with a grammar called *Grammatica Inglese per gl’ Italiani* by Ferdinando Altieri published in 1728. Another Italian teacher working in the field of ELT was Evangelista Paterno. However the most successful English Course in the eighteenth century Italy was a dialogue text book called *New and easy English Course* (1766) by Eduardo Barker. Portugal also showed an interest in English earlier than Spain with Jacob de Castro’s *Grammatica Lusitano Anglica* – a
double grammar published in London in 1731. Thomas Conelly, an expatriate
native-speaker is credited with having written the earliest Grammar for Spanish
speakers. *A New English Grammar prescribing as Certain Rules as the
Language will bear for Foreigners to learn English* was brought out in 1662
by James Howell in both Portuguese and Spanish. In Scandinavia and Denmark
also the ELT activities were carried on and textbooks for learning and teaching
of English continued to appear during the rest of the eighteenth century though
on a small scale basis. Next we have Russia where the principal role of English
was in naval affairs – teaching English to the Cadets at the naval Academy.
Here the programme was carried on by such leading figures as Mikhail
Permskii, Prokhov Ivanovich Zhdanov and Vasili Stepanovich Kryazhev – all
writers of calibre who supplied the course material. Textbooks produced by these
writers include *Prakticheskaya Angliskaya Grammatika* (Practical English
Grammar) (1766) a translation from an unknown English original made by
Mikhail Permskii, *Anglishka Grammatica* (1772) and *New Guide to the English
Tongue* (1751) by Prokhov Ivanovich Zhdanov and *Handbook of English
Grammar* (1791) and *English Grammar* (1795) by Vasili Stepanovich
Kryazhev. And finally the ELT activity in what is called the third world during
the eighteenth century is said to have taken place in Bengal in India with the
publication in 1797 in Serampur of a source book for teaching English entitled
*The Tutor or New English and Bengalee work well-adapted to Teach the natives
English* by John Miller. The salient features of the book include – the English
alphabet at the beginning followed by chapters on pronunciation, vocabulary list
which is both modern and practical and is arranged in alphabetical order with
Bengalee translation equivalents, incidental grammar and handwriting practice at the end.

In the meantime it was time to work for standardization of the English Language so as to make it a fit vehicle for a vernacular system of education and a strong vernacular literature in the empire. This called for stabilization of the orthographic system, writing a grammar and a national dictionary. Accordingly orthographic reform continued well into the seventeenth century with significant contributions by Alexander Gill, Charles Butter and Richard Hodges. With the progress of the century the focus shifted from orthography to the description and teaching of grammar led by leading grammarians of the time like John Wallis and Christopher Cooper. In the eighteenth century, apart from the emphasis on correct grammar, the other focused areas were the promotion of good speech, the arts of polite conversation, public speaking and elocution. The name of Thomas Sheridan, the dramatist, figures as one of the leading elocutionists of the period. But grammarians of the time were arbitrary and prescriptive in nature passing judgements on what was correct in grammar and usage, besides being Latin-based. The modern notion of an objective, scientific description of language as a self-justifying activity in its own right did not take root until the development of philological studies in the nineteenth century. But the endeavour for spelling reform continues with unabated vigour throughout the period between sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. John Hart and Richard Mulcaster are the two representative writers working in this field in the late sixteenth century. Hart was the innovator seeking to replace the existing system with a specially designed alternative while Mulcaster with his conservative
approach tried to bring a greater degree of order into the system with the minimum of dislocation. On the other hand Ben Johnson and John Wallis also made an interesting contrast in their differing approaches to the description of English for foreign learners with Johnson relying heavily on the traditional Latin framework and Wallis deliberately setting out to describe English as an independent language with its own characteristics. Besides dictionary makers like Samuel Johnson, John Walker and Noah Webster and grammarians like Robert Lowth and his followers also shared their contributions towards the elaboration of standard English.

: In the Nineteenth Century:

As modern languages began to enter the curriculum of European schools in the eighteenth century they were taught using the same basic procedures that were used for teaching Latin. Textbooks consisted of statements of abstract grammar rules, list of vocabulary and sentences for translation. Speaking the language or its usage as a tool for real communication had nothing to do with the course. The only oral practice was the reading aloud of the translated sentences by the students. This Latin based approach had become the standard way of studying foreign languages in schools. A typical textbook in mid-nineteenth century consisted of chapters or lessons organized around grammar points. Each grammar-point was listed, rules on its use were explained and it was illustrated by sample sentences. This approach to foreign language teaching became known as the Grammar-Translation Method. As Howatt writes 'The Grammar-Translation Method was devised and developed for use in secondary
schools. It could even be called the 'Grammar-School Method' since its strengths, weaknesses and excesses reflected the requirements, aspirations and ambitions of the nineteenth century Grammar school in its various guises in different countries. It began in Germany or more accurately Prussia at the end of the eighteenth century and established an almost impregnable position as the favoured methodology of the Prussian Gymnasien after their expansion in the early years of the nineteenth century... The origins of the method do not lie in an attempt to teach languages by grammar and translation. These were taken for granted anyway. The original motivation was reformist. The traditional scholastic approach among individual learners in the eighteenth century had been to acquire a reading knowledge of languages by studying a grammar and applying this knowledge to the interpretation of text with the use of a dictionary... the grammar translation method was an attempt to adopt these traditions to the circumstances and requirements of schools as the earlier scholastic methods were not well suited to school teaching. It preserved the basic framework of grammar and translation because these were already familiar both to teachers and pupils from their classical studies.15

The principal aim of the method was to make language learning easier while its central feature was the replacement of the traditional text by exemplificatory sentences. The following were the characteristics of the Grammar-Translation Method.

1. 'The goal of Foreign Language Learning is to learn a language in order to read its literature or 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. The first language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second 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 are presented with their translation equivalents and translation exercises are prescribed.

4. The sentence is 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 the distinctive feature of the method. Earlier approaches to foreign language study used grammar as an aid to the study of texts in a foreign language.

5. Accuracy is emphasized. Students are expected to attain high standards in translation, because of the high priority attached to meticulous standards of accuracy which, as well as having an
intrinsic moral value, was a prerequisite for passing the increasing number of formal written examinations that grew up during the century.

6. Grammar is taught deductively – that is by presentation 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.¹⁶

Exponents of the Grammar-Translation Method include such names as Johann Seiden-stuecker, Karl Plotz, H.G. Ollendorff, Johann Meidinger though it is the last named German scholar who is credited as being the originator of the method.

The earlier Grammar-Translation Course for the teaching of English was written in 1793 by Johann Christian Fick (1763-1821) and published in Germany. The title of the book was *Practical English Course for Germans of both Sexes, following the method of Meidinger’s French Grammar* which was modelled on an earlier work of Meidinger. The other two leading writers who contributed to the teaching of English through the Grammar Translation Method are Franz Ahn (1796-1865) and H.G. Ollendorff (1803-1865). Both Ahn and Ollendorff brought a practical approach to the Grammar-Translation Method by bringing in certain modifications in its basic framework. They adopted a grading system and put some control on the detail of explanation. In fact these
two writers catered more to the needs of adult learners of the period and their courses were spread on the teaching of German, French, Italian and other languages besides English.

'Grammar-Translation Method dominated European and Foreign languages teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s and in modified form it continues to be widely used in some parts of the world today.'¹⁷ But in mid and late nineteenth century opposition to the Grammar-Translation Method gradually developed in several European countries that ultimately led to the emergence of the Reform Movement. Several factors contributed to the questioning and rejection of the method. Neglect of the spoken aspect of the language and its practical and conversational use, over emphasis on academicism, the growth of the new class of learners without the grammar school education, industrialization and mass communication and above all the spate of publications like pamphlets and articles and more particularly the formation of professional associations and societies like the International Phonetic Association together with the publication of its journal Le Maitre Phonétique in and since 1889 are the factors to reckon with in this respect. At the initial stage individual language teaching specialists like C. Marcel, T. Prendergast and F. Gouin etc. laid the foundation of the Reform Movement with their innovations in the field of language pedagogy that were based on child language learning principles. Speaking proficiency rather than reading comprehension came to be considered the goal of language learning. And although the seminal ideas of reform advocated by Marcel, Prendergast and Gouin failed to attract widespread support and attention, with the entry of practical linguists like Henry Sweet,
Wilhelm Vietor and Paul Passy into the scene from the 1880s the reformist ideas of their predecessors got strengthened and reinvigorated. The International Phonetic Association formed in 1886 also played a crucial role in disseminating the ideas of reform it advocated through its journal. The discipline of Linguistics was revitalized Henry Sweet with his *Practical Study of Languages* (1899) championed the cause of the Reform Movement by arguing that sound methodological principles should be based on a scientific analysis of Language and a study of psychology. Other important innovations he emphasized include selection, gradation and sequencing of instructional material. Otto Jespersen in his *How to Teach a Foreign Language* (1904) advocates the use of contextualised learning material. In Germany Wilhelm Vietor expressed his views in his influential pamphlet *Language Teaching Must Start Afresh* (1882) in which he strongly criticized the inadequacies of the Grammar-Translation Method and emphasized the importance of training in Phonetics and Speech patterns for teachers of language. Vietor, Sweet and other reformers in the nineteenth century despite their differences in certain aspects shared many beliefs about the principles on which a new approach to teaching Foreign Languages should be based and the guiding principles of reform were thus ‘1) The Primacy of Speech, 2) The centrality of the connected text as the kernal of the teaching-learning process and 3) Absolute priority of an oral methodology in the classroom.’ The efforts of this Reform Movement at evolving a principled approach to language teaching based on applied linguistic principles eventually led to the development of the natural methods variously labelled as the Natural Method, the Conversation Method, the Reform Method,
the Phonetic Method and ultimately to the development of what came to be termed as the Direct Method.

The Direct Method was based on the following principles and procedures.

1) Classroom instruction was conducted exclusively in the target language.

2) Only everyday vocabulary and sentences were taught.

3) 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.

4) Grammar was taught inductively.

5) New teaching points were introduced orally.

6) Concrete vocabulary was taught through demonstration, objects and pictures, abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas.

7) Both speech and listening comprehension were taught.

8) Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.¹⁹

It was Gouin, L. Sauveur, F. Franke and M.D. Berlitz at whose efforts the Direct Method enjoyed widespread circulation and stronghold throughout Europe and America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The modern tradition of Natural Approaches originated in the work of a teacher of genius- Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Another practitioner of the method was Gottlieb Heness, a disciple of Pestalozzi who applied the ‘object lesson technique’ to the teaching of Standard German in South
Germany. His initial success encouraged him to extend his network further on at Yale University in America and his success there led him to start a language school and start teaching French too along with German – a venture in which he was joined by Lambert Sauveur. The joint venture of the two men next saw the establishment of a school of modern language in Boston in 1869 and the publication of some major works in the field which include *An Introduction To The Teaching of Living Languages without Grammar or Dictionary* (1874) by Sauveur for French and the other one an adaptation for German by Heness. Sauveur’s book was intended as a kind of ‘teacher’s manual’ to accompany his course book. His method of teaching was based on conversation and intensive oral practice. The Sauveur-Heness school of modern languages gradually started getting on well and within a decade or so the Natural Method, as the Sauveur approach was known had become the most seriously considered new development in language teaching in America. And then comes Maximillian Berlitz, another German scholar who with his network of language schools named the Berlitz schools first in America and then in Europe popularized the Direct Method on an extensive scale. For, as Howatt observes, ‘without Sauveur the Direct method would not have happened when it did, without Berlitz very few people would have benefited from it.’ The teaching methodology used in the Berlitz system was based on the avoidance of translation, a strong emphasis on oral work, avoidance of grammatical explanations and the maximum use of questionnaire techniques.

But the popularity of the Direct Method also came in for criticism on a number of grounds. First it required teachers who were native speakers or who
had native-like fluency in the foreign language and not all teachers were proficient in the foreign language. Secondly the large resources of the first language were left completely unexploited or untapped in the method on account of its ban on the use of the first language in the class. This resulted in uneconomic and lengthy ways of explaining meanings which could otherwise have been explained easily with the use of the mother tongue of the students. 'It offered innovations at the level of teaching procedures but lacked a thorough methodological basis. Its main focus was on the exclusive use of the target language in the classroom but failed to address many issues that Sweet thought more basic.' It is because of this that the use of the Direct Method declined in Europe by the 1920s. In France and Germany attempts were on to develop modified versions of the Direct Method for teaching Foreign Languages. In the USA also similar attempts were made to implement the Direct Method. But the Coleman Report of 1929 with its emphasis on reading knowledge of the Foreign Language as the goal of Foreign Language learning was instrumental in putting the Direct Method into a state of decline.

In the wake of the above situation fresh moves towards developing language teaching methods and approaches were about both in U.K. and America in the subsequent years.

: English Language Teaching Since 1900:

During the first half of the twentieth century the teaching of English as a Foreign language emerged as an autonomous profession. Another distinguishing feature marks this development; it is a redefinition of the role of English in the
empire. The earlier notion of the spread of English as a tool for assimilation of British culture was on the wane when by the twenties the utilitarian function of English in the communication of knowledge had begun to emerge until in the fifties the modern distinction between English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) became widespread. The foundation towards this direction was laid by Daniel Jones and Harold Palmer during 1900-1922 to be followed by a host of other practical linguists of the century. The trend started with Daniel Jones delivering a series of lectures on the phonetics of French and then that of English during 1907-1910 to school teachers. Success of these lectures was so enormous that Jones soon went in for publishing a series of source books for English Teachers. These included The Pronunciation of English (1909), The English Pronouncing Dictionary (1917), Outline of English Phonetics (1918). This was followed by Harold Palmer’s publications like The Scientific Study and Teaching of Languages (1917), The Oral Method of Teaching Languages (1921), The Principles of Language Study (1921) and a number of course books like English Through Questions and Answers (1930) etc. Then follows the decades of the twenties and thirties which Howatt (1984) has designated as ‘the period of research and development.’ Palmer next as the Director of the Institute For Research in English Teaching (IRET) in Japan published some research-based works like English Through Actions (1925), Systematic Exercises in English Sentence Building, Substitution Tables (1924-5), English For Children (1927) and The Techniques of Question-answering (1931) etc. Next he was working on vocabulary research. Another scholar in the scene was Michael West, who in his capacity as an official in the Indian
Education Service working in Bengal made substantial contribution in the field of English Teaching. The fruits of his extensive study on the needs of learners learning English in the Indian context came out in print in the form of a lengthy report entitled *Bilingualism, with special reference to Bengal* (1926). West advocated a reading approach facilitated through simple reading materials written within a controlled vocabulary. West then published his *The New Method Grammar* (1938), *The New Method English Practice Books* (1939) and a number of New Method Readers. About the same time the Coleman Report (1929) entitled *The Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages in the United States* also recommended a reading approach. It said that the primary objective of language teaching should be reading fluency. Next comes Lawrence Faucett who published his *The Oxford English Course* (1933) that offered a course package that established a pattern. C.E. Eckersly (1893-1967) originally a school teacher in London made his mark in the twenties as a materials writer for English. His *Essential English For Foreign Students* (1938-1942) is a landmark publication in the field of teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners. Eckersley's *Essential English* remained one of the leading EFL courses for around thirty years when it was overtaken by more overtly Situational Courses like L.G. Alexander’s *First Things First* (1967). C.K. Ogden’s *Basic English* published in 1930, though provoked some controversy, failed to make any lasting impact in the field.

Another historic development of the time is the establishment of the British Council (1934-35) which, with its network of British Institutes and other centres overseas, played an active role in strengthening the sense of purpose and
direction after 1945. More particularly the publication of its journal with its dedication to the cause of ELT since 1946 together with the scholarly editorship of persons like A.S. Hornby, R.T. Buttin and W.R. Lee gave a sense of direction to the ELT activity in the U.K. After this the activities of the council received a new boost up with government funds released to continue and expand its activities at the initiative of Dr. Charles Hill, then member of the government. With its position thus strengthened, the council now arranged for advanced training both for its own personnel and for sponsored students from overseas. This was followed by the setting up of some schools of applied linguistics at the Universities of Edinburgh, Leeds, Essex, Lancaster and London, etc. till late sixties.

"On the otherside of the Atlantic quite a few developments had taken place about the sametime that revolutionized language pedagogy to a great extent." American wartime language programmes initiated between 1941 and 1943 were of crucial importance in this development. They changed the approach to language teaching in the USA in a radical way viz., (a) linguistic scholars were given a leading role in the solution of the language teaching problems that had to be faced especially in the learning of less commonly taught languages. (b) The Armed Forces Foreign Language Training programmes demonstrated that language training does not necessarily have to be done in the conventional school type language course, so much taken for granted so far, (c) They claimed to show that languages can be taught to much larger populations of ordinary learners, servicemen and much more quickly than had
previously been thought possible; and (d) They demonstrated the possible advantages of intensive language training and of an oral emphasis.

A landmark development of the time is the foundation in 1939 of the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan with Charles Fries as its director. This was the first of a several new language centres established in the following twenty years. In addition to teaching English to foreign students, the English language institute prepared new materials and undertook linguistic research. Charles Fries and his student and successor Robert Lado between 1941 and 1950 developed a language pedagogy which was based on linguistic research and embodies psychological principles of language learning which were derived from the prevailing behaviouristic psychology of the time. Other landmark publications and events having a bearing on the language pedagogy of the time include Bloomfield’s *Language* (1933), *Outline Guide For the Study of Foreign Languages* (1942), Lado’s *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957), Skinner’s *Verbal Behaviour* (1957), the writings of Kenneth Pike, Eugene Nida, Zellig Harris, H.A. Gleason and Charles Hockett besides Charles Fries and Lado in the fifties – all inspired by Bloomfieldian thinking, the new technology of the language laboratory and the grants made available for language research and development.

The Army Specialised Training Programme (ASTP), particularly developed for military personnel was initiated in the USA in 1942 in which ‘fifty five American Universities were involved in the programme by the beginning of 1943.’24 The objective of the programme was the attainment of conversational proficiency by the students in a variety of foreign languages
through intensity of contact with the target language with its oral-based approach. Though short-lived, the Army Specialised Training Programme had its impact on the prevailing trend of language pedagogy of the time and together with the aforesaid factors led to the development of the Audiolingual theory in the USA. Fries in his *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (1945) set forth his principles of Contrastive Analysis in which the problems of learning a foreign language were attributed to the conflict of different structural systems – differences between the grammatical and phonological patterns of the native tongue and the foreign language. Lado, who succeeded him, also believed in Contrastive Linguistics and applied its principles in his *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957) with regard to curriculum development, preparation and evaluation of teaching materials and the diagnosis of learning problems as well as testing.

The Audiolingual Method was based on some of the characteristic features of Bloomfieldian linguistics and the Skinnerian model of learning and its basic aspects are primacy of the spoken aspect, the use of the target language as the medium of instruction, situational presentation of new language points, vocabulary selection with an eye on the coverage of an essential service vocabulary, gradation of grammar items on the principle of from ‘simple to complex’ and introduction of reading and writing after a sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established.25

The Audiolingual Method enjoyed widespread popularity and circulation in the USA during the fifties and till the early sixties. It was widely used in North American Colleges and universities. It provided the
methodological foundation for materials for the teaching of foreign languages as also English as second or foreign language at College and University level in the United States and Canada. In fact the period between 1958 and 1964 is called the Golden Age of Audiolingualism. But by the end of the decade its theoretical basis came to be questioned as a result of changes in American Linguistic theory in the sixties, more particularly after the attack on structural linguistics and behaviouristic psychology by Chomsky. Empirical research found the audiolingual method wanting with regard to its real achievement in as much as it failed to enable students to transfer skills acquired through it to real communication outside the classroom and involved a lot of boredom in its techniques. 

Chomsky rejected the structuralist approach to language description as well as the behaviourist theory of language learning. To him language learning is not a habit structure. Ordinary linguistic behaviour characteristically involves innovation, formation of new sentences and patterns in accordance with rules of great abstractness and intricacy. His theories were to revolutionize American linguistics by focussing the attention of linguists and psychologists on the innate or mental properties of humans that have a bearing on language use and language learning. Unlike the Behaviourists who equated language learning as similar in principle to any other kind of learning, Chomsky argued that human language use is not imitated behaviour but is created anew from underlying knowledge of abstract rules. Sentences are not learned by imitation and repetition but generated from the learner's innate 'competence'. This led to the development of the Cognitive Code Learning Theory. John B. Carroll (1966)
also advocated a reorientation of the prevailing language theory (Audiolingualism) of the time in the direction of joining it with some of the better elements of the Cognitive Code Learning theory. S. Pit Corder in his *The Significance of Learner's Errors* (1967) echoed the same tenor of the Chomskian concept with his suggestion of the learner's adherence to a 'learner-generated' or 'built-in syllabus'. L. Selinker in his *Interlanguage* (1972) refers to the innate and creative capacities of learners.

Thus in the wake of the Chomskian thinking in the field of language learning, language learning came to be seen as a cognitive, mentalistic process with learners ultimately responsible for their own learning. With this shift in focus to the active role of the learner many factors that affected language learning were studied: Social, motivational, affective, experiential, instrumental, biological and cognitive and factors related to their aptitude and personality. The Chomskian revolution played a significant role in bringing about a change in the direction in linguistics as well as psychology more at the theoretical and research level. But it contributed little to alter the way language was actually taught in classrooms.

After this another shift took place in the approach, methods and techniques in language pedagogy with Dell Hymes (1966) introducing the concept of 'Communicative Competence' in the USA. British Applied Linguists like D.A. Wilkins, Christopher Candlin, Henry Widdowson, Christopher Brumfit, Keith Johnson and others drew on the work of British functional Linguists John Firth and M.A.K. Halliday and emphasized the functional and communicative potential of language and realized the need to focus on
communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures in language teaching.

The communicative movement began almost simultaneously in Europe and North America. In Europe it began as a response to the language needs for adults for increased interaction in the wake of the rapid expansion of the European Common Market.\textsuperscript{27} D.A. Wilkin’s Notional Syllabus (1976) with its advocacy for a more functional approach in language teaching reflects a clear manifestation of the new paradigm shift in language pedagogy. This meant building a course around the uses or functions to which language is put. Van EK and Alexander’s (1975) formulation of language pedagogy based on language functions, notions and structures, Krashen and Terrel’s (1983) advocacy of course designs based on topics and situations, the procedural syllabus of Prabhu and Carrol (1980) all reflect the emphasis on communicative orientation of the pedagogic shift in language teaching. As a result of this shift from linguistic competence to communicative competence several communicative syllabuses like Functional (Jupp and Hodglin 1975), Structures Plus Functions (Wilkins, 1976), Learner-generated (Candlin, 1976). Interactional (Widdowson 1979) Functional spiral around a structural core (Brumfit, 1980), Instrumental (Alen 1980), Competency-based (Grognet and Crandall, 1982) and Task-based (Prabhu, 1983) – all with emphasis on ‘language for communication’ have been proposed.\textsuperscript{28}

The Communicative Approach to language teaching enjoyed widespread practice and popularity and language teaching made great progress for some years. But even then this is not above criticism as Michael Swan in 1985 (ELT
Journal 1985) found fault with it when he said... 'Along with its many virtues the communicative approach has most of the typical vices of an intellectual revolution; it over-generalises valid but limited insights until they become virtually meaningless; it makes exaggerated claims for the power and novelty of its doctrines; it misrepresents the currents of thoughts it has replaced; it is often characterized by serious intellectual confusion; it is choked with jargon.'

After this several humanistic approaches like Caleb Gattegno's Silent Way (1972) which helps learners to build up their 'innate criteria' to help them determine what is appropriate and correct without much guidance from the teacher, Georgi Lozanov's Suggestopedia (1978) which advocates a childlike role for the learners to make them feel secure and less inhibited by creating a pleasant and trusting learning environment where the learners can be more spontaneous, Asher's Total Physical Response (1982) and Krashen's Natural Approach (1983) are some of the competing approaches that have been developed after the Communicative Approach.

Thus in the present day situation language teaching is no longer visualized in terms of a single methodological prescription as there has been no universal methodology nor will there be any. Again the vast plethora of methods and techniques has put both the teacher and the learner in as much a situation of wider option as in a state of problem of choice. What teachers and students should do in such a situation is just choose the right approach or method that best suits their need and environment. And the resourceful and committed teachers and learners, it is hoped, will be in a position to overcome this situation with not much difficulty.
The introduction of English in India has a long and eventful history to reckon with. It has indeed an over-three-hundred-year old history marked with the interplay of divergent factors and forces at work at different stages leading to a final and formal consolidation of its teaching and learning with the official recommendation of T.B. Macaulay in 1835 followed by William Bentinck’s initiative to support and strengthen the cause of English Language and English Education in India. Started with the initial objective of creating a set of English knowing clerks ‘Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect’ to help the British administration, the objects continued to change with the changing demands of the time. Material advancement that the knowledge of English and contact with the rulers used to bring came to be the goal of learning English at the initial stages of the British period. This period witnessed a tremendous craze of the people for learning English so much so that ‘the local people were demanding more English than the rulers were willing to let them have.’ The period from 1835 to 1853 is replete with the efforts to popularize English both by the rulers and Indians themselves. During this period English became the sine quonon for the scholar, the job seeker, and the effluent in the society. And the period following witnessed as much a consolidation of the movement for English education as a gradual undercurrent of conflict between the national and the colonial interest and the Indian voice began to be more emphatically heard in favour of a national system of education to be imparted through the vernaculars and fostering love and respect for India and her languages, literatures and cultures. But even then English continued to
gain in importance in pre-independence India. English medium schools and colleges multiplied rapidly. It became an important tool for acquiring new knowledge and information – technical or otherwise. It also became the common medium of communication amongst the leaders of the Freedom Movement of India and also an invulnerable weapon to decode and subvert colonial designs. It became strongly entrenched in the domains of journalism, administration and the judiciary. But most of all it added another voice to the Indian multilingual repertoire though a voice that did not rise from its grassroots nor perhaps a voice that could never reach its grassroots.32

English continues to retain the same focussed position even in independent India although there had been considerable rethinking on its place in the curriculum at various levels. Newly independent India at the very initial stage experienced some sporadic manifestations of an anti-English attitude on account of the psychological indeference of a section of the people to English as a language of the colonizers. But consensus of public as well as official opinion however soon emerged in favour of retaining English in view of the practical and utilitarian considerations of its worth in modern India. The Radhakrishnan Commission underlined the importance of studying English by stating that English must continue to be studied for the rich literature it offers in the humanistic, scientific and technical domains and that giving up the study of English under sentimental urges would amount to cutting ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge, a position that would prove detrimental to our progress as a nation. Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India also could foresee the importance of English in our national
life and made arrangements, both administrative and academic, for its retention and study in the chosen line. Independent India thus now displays a perceptible amount of concern for setting the teaching of English on the right footing by sorting out the problems and deficiencies in the system. The alarming deterioration that had set in with the regionalization of the medium of instruction since the 1930's caught the notice of the Government and accordingly a number of commissions, committees and study groups etc. are constituted to probe the situation and suggest remedies for improvement. The Radhakrishnan Commission has already been referred to above. Next comes the Kunzru Committee appointed by the University Grants Commission in 1955 to examine the problems connected with the question of the medium of instruction and to recommend measures to ensure adequate proficiency in English at the university stage. The committee stressed that in the interest of academic standards the change from English to an Indian Language as the medium of instruction should not be hastened. Even when a change is effected English should continue to be studied by all university students as a second language. It underlined the importance of a proper foundation in English being laid at the secondary school stage so that a student entering the university would be able to follow lectures in the English language and books pertaining to his subject. In 1958 the Commission convened a conference of English Teachers to consider the recommendations of the Kunzru Committee. This conference after a consideration of the teaching of English at the pre-university and university level made some important recommendations with regard to the time to be set apart for teaching, the teaching methods, the size of lecture and tutorial classes,
textbooks and examinations etc. all aimed at ensuring better teaching and learning of English. After this we have Central Institute of English, Hyderabad which had drawn up a programme of action after a consideration of the reports of the Kunzru Committee and the English Teachers' conference. The plan of action aimed at the improved standards of English at the university level also concerns the college and school level of English teaching as the three levels are linked together in as much as the quality and standard of college and university education is dependent on the quality and standard achieved at the school stage. The following are the recommendations of the Institute and they concern the English teaching at the secondary school level first – increasing the vocabulary list from the existing 2700 words to 3600 words, appointment of trained and qualified teachers, supply of suitable text materials, introduction of simplified novels and books of stories written in a controlled vocabulary of 2000 words, streaming of students and teaching them accordingly, designing of lessons to be taught by expert teachers, reduction of the learning burden of students, use of gramophone in teaching spoken English etc. For the college and the university levels the recommendations of the Institute are – arrangement of special course in English for PUC students with poor grounding in English, special pre-college training of 6 weeks in English for students aspiring to join college after school leaving, small tutorial classes with 15 students for 4 times a week for PUC students and 2-3 times a week for degree students, compulsory training for all PUC level English teachers, change of examination procedure to discourage memorization and cramming, replacement of the focus on linguistics by a course on modern English usage in the BA and MA English syllabus and
revision of the curricula in the training colleges so as to make it need-based.\textsuperscript{34} The Official Language Commission (1956) recommends that English should be taught as a language of comprehension rather than as a literary language so as to develop in the students learning it a faculty of comprehending books and writings in the English language. After this the English Review Committee (1960) was constituted by the University Grants Commission with a view to examining the problems and issues responsible for the decline in standards in teaching of English and suggesting remedies for improvement of the situation. Recommendations of this committee are significant in the history of English Language Teaching in our country as the experts in the committee viewed the teaching of English from the school level to the university level as one integrated process where the quality and standard at the university level teaching is seen to be inexorably dependent upon the quality of teaching and learning of English at the school level. The committee clarifies its view in the following words – 'The first thing to bear in mind is that English at the university stage can not be thought of in isolation from English in the school. The university must begin where the school leaves off. ...Hence the improvement of standards at the college and university level depends very much upon the standard obtaining in the high school and the effort to improve must begin there. Also the effort at school will yield better results than the same amount of energy put in at a later stage in the college or university.'\textsuperscript{35} This historic realization led the committee to make certain important recommendations with regard to English teaching at the school level along with those of the college and university level. The major recommendations include –
i) That English should be taught for at least 6 years and for 8 periods per week setting at naught all controversies in this regard, ii) That arrangements should be made for proper training of the English teachers, iii) That a select vocabulary of 2500-3000 words be taught and reading materials should include specially-written passages intended to revise the more difficult structures and simplified passages from good modern English literature and iv) That the question paper should keep in view the level of students' competence at the end of their school programme. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommends that English should be studied as a library language. The Study Group on the Teaching of English (1964) also made a number of recommendations on policies and programmes, syllabus, methods and materials. Another Study Group (1969) which was asked to prepare a working paper outlining a practical programme of actions for improving the teaching of English both at the school and the university stage also made a number of recommendations in this regard. The major ones are – English be studied for at least three years at the school stage with the discretion to some states to arrange for its study for a longer period, care be taken to prepare students at the transitional stage between school leaving and joining the college level with the necessary command over English, arrangement of varied courses be made to suit learners of varied levels of attainment at the college level, retention of English as the medium of instruction for all post-graduate level institutions be ensured, enhancement of students' competence in the translation skill at the college and university level and above all improvement of the position of men, methods and materials at all levels of English teaching including the teacher training institutions be ensured.
Formation of these various commissions and study groups etc. at short intervals thus signifies not only the concern and commitment of the national government for the improvement of the teaching of English but also to give it the right direction. Almost all the commissions and study groups point to the state of deterioration of standards and quality and the urgent need for remedial action and the recommendations put forth by all of them relate to some common areas and issues. The decades following are marked by fresh attempts to redefine the objectives and reshuffle and reorientate the English Language Teaching at all levels to make it conform to the demands of the changed situations.

At Present:

Now English in India is a global language in a multi-lingual country. No longer a coloniser's linguistic tool, English by now has been made to divest itself of its past role reminiscent of a colonial legacy and it has been poised for its new role of empowering the learners with the much-needed communicative and social functions in a globalised world. For India is fully aware of the overwhelming position English has come to assume on the world stage and the growing surge in English language learning the world over. As a result there has been an explosion in the demand for English in our schools. The craze for this is reflected in the attendant demand for the introduction of English at an early stage or at the very initial stage of schooling. Majority of the state school systems are in favour of this popular demand and have introduced the study of English at an early stage.36 'English is introduced in class I or class III by 26
states or union territories out of 35. Only seven states or union territories introduce it in class IV or class V.\textsuperscript{37}

A variety of range of English teaching situations prevail in our country owing to the twin factors of teacher proficiency in English and pupils' exposure to English outside school. There is a great diversity of schools and linguistic environments across the country characterized by the above two factors. There are thus four major types of schools such as – English-medium private/Government-aided elite schools, new English medium private schools, Government-aided regional-medium schools and Government regional medium schools run by District and Municipal Education authorities.\textsuperscript{38} These school types marked and differentiated as they are by variables like types of school management, teacher proficiency and environmental English are reflective of the wide range and diversity in the ELT scenario that calls for a balanced and well-thought-out pedagogic plan, a cohesive curricular policy based on guiding principles for language teaching and acquisition which allows for a variety of implementations suitable to local needs and resources which provides illustrative models for use. ELT as a discipline, more particularly, its curricular practices have been planned in the light of current insights from linguistics, psychology and associated disciplines. As the Focus Group (2006) states the ELT curricular practices in present day India have to be designed with an awareness and understanding of the role of English not in isolation but in the context of regional medium schools, English medium schools, in relation to other subjects and in relation to the multi-lingual context.
The Major aims of ELT in India as stated in the Position Paper on Teaching of English by the Focus Group are -

(i) To enable the learners to master / acquire the minimum level of proficiency in English to master the spontaneous and appropriate use of the language for at least everyday purposes, to be able to comprehend and use the language in real time.

(ii) To enable the learners to acquire a ‘cognitive academic linguistic proficiency’ in English – a kind of higher order literacy in English meant for higher learning. Setting of these goals are based on the broad vision of language education of our country and the concept of transferability of language skills across languages and for that matter to a second language.

The Curriculum:

The curriculum envisaged includes the following features –

1) Input rich Environment:

Input rich environments are a prerequisite for learning any language – be it L₁, L₂ or L₃. Languages are best learnt in an environment rich in comprehensible input and it is such an input-rich curriculum that can ensure spontaneous language growth and language production in the learners. Same is the case in learning English as a second language. Evolving a meaning-focused curriculum targeted at providing meaningful language exposure or input not only in class room but also outside it in a variety of ways is therefore the answer to the need in question.
The level-wise thrusts of the curriculum:

The level-wise thrusts of the curriculum include the following –

1) Building Familiarity with the language -a preliteracy curriculum:
Regardless of the level of introduction of English the aim of the first one or two years of teaching English should be to build familiarity of the learners with the language through primarily spoken or spoken and written input in meaningful situations so as to enable the learners to acquire a knowledge of the language as against the currently popular practice of stressing on early literacy and mastery of answers to prescribed texts. Inputs here include textbooks, other print materials such as big books, class libraries, parallel materials in more than one language, the media support including learner magazines, newspaper columns, radio/ audio cassettes etc. and the use of authentic materials.

Complementing and supplementing teacher inputs:

Awareness of the dismal picture arising out of the English teacher’s limited language proficiency and his consequent failure to provide comprehensible input in the class it has been suggested (by the Focus Group) to explore and make use of ways to complement as well as develop teacher competencies or input. Some suggested ways are projects such as Interactive Radio Instruction, Story reading, Story Retelling, Shared reading of Big Books, use of Reading Cards, Talking Books, use of meaning-focused activities in the classroom, making the class an inclusive space sensitive to individual learner needs and learning styles to help build an environment of spontaneous and not-forced-out language growth and language production.
Using existing cognitive and linguistic resources:

Exploiting learner resources, more particularly their available cognitive and first language resources in teaching English as a second language is a sure way to successful L₂ teaching as has been proved by the task-based methodology of N.S. Prabhu (1987) and this has therefore been proposed to form another guiding principle of the ELT pedagogic practice.

Besides gearing the delivery system with affirmative action intervention, allowing room for wider curricular freedom and flexibility with scope for the use of both teacher and learner chosen texts, an effective teacher education programme which needs to be ongoing and onsite through formal or informal support system so as to make teachers professionally competent for their role in the changed perspective and reorienting the evaluation mechanism to measurement of language proficiency rather than keeping it simply a practice of achievement measurement with respect to particular syllabi as of now are some of the major suggestions on the curricular and systemic reforms offered by the Focus Group (2006) on the teaching of English in India.

ELT Methods and Practices in India – A Historical Overview:

To begin with it must be noted that no comprehensive history of the English Teaching methods or ELT practices in our country is available till date. An idea about the present perspective may however be obtained from the scanty sources such as Govt. reports, School textbooks, Teaching practices in the Training Colleges, various project reports, published expert lectures, reports of ELTI conferences etc.
Considering the current status of English in India, Sunita Bhan observes that ELT as a discipline has come of its own during the past several decades both in India and abroad. As a result we notice that there is a considerable body of literature devoted to this area of study. But in India even though English Language Teaching has been going on for many decades now there is no document which contains a comprehensive history of English Language Teaching in India. However as far as methodology is concerned its history may be traced back to the turn of last century. For India too, like many other parts of the world used the Grammar Translation Method almost up to 1915. It was a method in which grammar and translation predominated. It was in a sense no method but a kind of bilingual work with focus on grammar and literature. It was an era when formal grammar reigned supreme.

The period between 1915 and 1955 saw the growth and emergence of the Direct Method under the influence of Henry Sweet, Michael West, Harold Palmer, PC Wren, Jespersen and others like Champion. The pioneering works that were instrumental in popularizing the Direct Method of teaching English in the Indian situation included P.C. Wren’s *The Direct Teaching of English in Indian Schools* (1913), Henry Sweet’s *Practical Study of Languages* (1964), Otto Jespersen’s *How to Teach a Foreign Language* (1956), and Harold Palmer’s *The Principles of Language Study* (1964). The method first got popularized at the training colleges and then gradually it got down to the school-level teaching of English. The features associated with the method were oral work, suppression of the mother tongue, acceptance of the sentence as the unit of speech and inductive teaching of grammar. Interestingly the ban on the
use of the mother tongue came to be 'treated by the teachers as the only distinguishing feature of the method. The method prospered in the English medium schools while in the large majority of vernacular-medium schools it could not be implemented effectively and was practised, if at all, with ruinous consequences. 'During this period pre-service training for school-level teaching was given importance with changing labels like LT, BT, B.Ed etc. There was no in-service training and usually the school inspectors were the interpreters of the direct method. College-level teaching was thought not to require any training. Anyway there was no specialized training to the teaching of English.'

The thirties and forties brought in a perceptible change in shift and approach in language teaching and for that matter the teaching of English. This was the result of a great deal of work done in America, Asia and Europe in the field of vocabulary selection and the primacy of the reading skill. Thorndyke's *Teacher's workbook* (1921), *Carnegie Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection* (1936) had their impact on the field. Equally important were the publication in 1926 of West's *Bilingualism* based on his research in Dacca and the experiments and studies in Modern Language Teaching by Coleman and Fife that came out in 1934. Both the reports emphasized the importance of reading and accorded a secondary place to speaking and writing. Michael West also published his *New Method Readers* based on his ideas on Vocabulary Selection and the primacy he gave to the systematic teaching of reading. This period was thus distinguished by pioneering work in the twin fields of Vocabulary Selection and Reading as also witnessed the culmination of what may be termed...
as the Reading Approach that emerged as a reaction to the impracticality of the Direct Method.

In the thirties the ideas of West and Palmer were steadily gaining ground. But in India this period being the hectic years of the war of independence teaching of English failed to receive due attention as issues more urgent than ELT demanded priorities. Similarly no new ground was broken in the forties as well.

Meanwhile significant developments in Foreign Language Teaching were taking place during the forties in the USA and UK and these developments were to exercise far-reaching influence on the ELT scenario in India in the fifties. In America during the second world war the first widespread application of structural linguistics to foreign language teaching was made in the Army Specialized Training Programme (ASTP). It was a programme innovative mainly in terms of the procedures used and the intensity of teaching rather than in terms of its underlying theory. The approach was intensely oral-based with emphasis on the ability to speak and understand the language through intensive contact with the target language. America emerged as a major international power catering to the growing demand for a foreign expertise in the teaching of English. The ASTP was established in more than 50 colleges and universities of the U.S.42 At the University of Michigan in 1939 was developed the first English Language Institute in the United States which specialized in the training of teachers of English as a Foreign Language and in teaching English as a Foreign or second language. And it is here that Dr. Charles Fries, Director of the Institute developed his oral approach. The underlying principles of this
approach are clearly enunciated in his *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (1945). Apart from its emphasis on oral use of the language the approach also developed the idea that the structures of the two languages ($L_1$ & $L_2$) should be compared to determine the points where they differed as contrastive analysis of the two languages would allow potential problems of interference to be predicted and addressed through carefully prepared teaching materials.

During the same period Dr. I.A. Richards and C.M. Gibson developed and popularized the Graded Direct Method at The Language Research Institute, Cambridge. Dr. Richard conceived language teaching method as an arrangement of graded sentence-situation units forming an organic sequence suitable for situation-specific language functions. Over in Britain at the university of London Institute of Education a methodology similar to Dr. Richards’ Graded Direct Method was developed in the late forties. The methodology laid explicit emphasis on the selection and grading of structures and formulated explicit criteria for grading. It favoured oral situational presentation and copious oral drilling of the carefully graded structural items within a limited vocabulary.

The above account, though by no means exhaustive, indicate that during the last four decades till the eighties there has grown up a vast literature on the subject of Foreign Language Teaching including the Teaching of English in a great number of countries while as far as India is concerned it is marked by the absence of any worth while thinking or publication in this field during the two decades after West left India.
Until the mid fifties most of the principles associated with the movements had made little or no impact on the ELT situation in our country. It is rather distressing to note that until then the principles and practices of the pioneering work of Jespersen, Palmer, West and their successors continued to go practically unheeded in the ELT planning and practices of the country.

However some of the basic ideas of effective teaching of English including those of vocabulary selection and control were accepted and practised. Ideas relating to the crucial importance of structural words, the distinction between productive mastery and receptive mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of English, the acceptance of an agreed core vocabulary, the importance of oral work, the importance of practice through interesting drills found favour with the ELT practices in India. And though officially the Direct Method was advocated it was the Grammar-Translation Method that was practised everywhere except in the English medium schools. In the fifties however consequent upon the changed position of English in the country with the gradual adoption of Indian languages as the media of Secondary and Higher Education a great need was felt for the improvement of materials and methods of teaching English at all levels. Hopefully enough this period saw some solid work done in the field of ELT in India. The first English Language Teaching Institute was established in Allahabad in 1954 with the collaboration of the British Council. Between 1955 and 1985 there was a lot of emphasis on in-service training for teachers of English. Pre-service training in the Colleges of Education did not keep pace with the growth of knowledge in the field and got neglected during this period. The structural syllabus prepared at the London
school was brought to Madras by the British Council and the All India seminar on the teaching of English held at Nagpur in December, 1957 was the first move on an All India basis to adopt a structural syllabus for the teaching of English in secondary schools. This weakened the teaching of grammar in a big way. The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages was established in 1958 by an Act of parliament for improving the standards of teaching English in the country. A study group appointed by the ministry of Education in 1964 submitted its report The Study of English in India in 1967. Another report appeared in 1971. As part of the in-service training Summer Institutes were started and this gave birth to all kinds of crash courses. This period thus was the most eventful in the history of English Teaching in India. The period had seen the introduction of new syllabus and new instructional materials, organisation of systematic in-service training and setting up of English Language Teaching Institutes in various states to perform the functions of training, materials production and research. And with all this the ELT situation in the country starts improving.

By the late 1970s the structural Approach began to fall into disfavour as it failed in giving the learners the language that was deployable or usable in real-life situations although it helped learners to make sentences in classroom situations. This resulted in a shift of emphasis from the form-focussed teaching of English to the meaning-focused approach that was basically aimed at teaching language use in meaningful contexts. Communicative competence rather than mere grammatical competence came to be considered the best methodological answer at the moment. ELT practitioners in India therefore
subscribed to the Communicative Language Teaching Method since late 1970s. But as the National Focus Group on Teaching of English observes the Communicative Method succeeds best in the English medium private/Govt.-aided elite schools where teacher proficiency, the availability of environmental English and the learning opportunities are of a high order. It is not that suitable for the majority of our schools where what is more important is not so much communicative competence as the acquisition of a basic or fundamental competence in the language. But in recent years even the Communicative Approach has also started losing its appeal and efficacy, Stephen Bax has even announced ‘the end of CLT as a Teaching Method’ and Deepti Gupta, talking in terms of the Indian situation, argues that communicative language teaching has to undergo some drastic paradigm shift with the dethronement of CLT and its priorities as the central focus and the explicit enthronement of the context in which the language pedagogy operates along with simultaneous empowerment of the teachers so as to enable them to stand up to the needs of the changed paradigm.

The present situation poses a new challenge to the ELT methodologist. The changed context and the consequent reassessment of objectives demand fresh and realistic thinking on the choice of a method. The efficiency of a method surely depends upon a complex of factors which vary from place to place and situation to situation. The challenge and opportunity today is to avoid dogma and rigidity through fresh consideration of priorities and to root all new strategies in the realities of the situation. As Krishnaswamy et al., observe, ‘The English Teaching situation in India needs a new thrust. There has to be serious
rethinking on several issues like making use of the resources of the first language, the positive use of translation in the teaching of the second language, evolving a pluralistic poly-methodological plan of action that leaves the choice to the learner using a method that is best suited to him. The theorizers are busy trying to theorize, teachers are busy trying to 'cover' the 'portion' and in trying to 'cover the portion' they stand exposed. And if we donot act with a sense of urgency the great drift will continue in the sea of confusion and all of us will become anachronisms in the field – may be there won't be any field at all."47

To sum up, as regards the choice of a suitable ELT methodology in India we have to consider the insights of more recent historical analysis of methods which have brought out some significant facts. The revelations of such analyses are that language teaching methods are embedded in the culture, politics and value systems of their respective times and places and circumstances and it becomes counter-productive to study or evaluate them away from these contexts. The revelation holds further significance for the Foreign Language teacher working in a non-English medium classroom/ situation. ‘Most importantly there is as yet no universal methodology and there may never be one. More specifically a non-English medium classroom in India differs from an ESL classroom in the UK or the USA in almost everything – its size, its setting, its furniture and more importantly those social expectations, behaviours and beliefs that shape its nature and character. And in so far as the challenges are related to the factors and forces that are largely local, the best methodological answers may also in good measure have to be local."48
ENGLISH TEACHING IN ASSAM:

English is taught in the schools of Assam as a compulsory subject and as a second language from class V for a period of six years. The goals of teaching English at the upper primary level here i.e. from class V – VII are to help the learners to (i) Listen to and understand English spoken by their teacher, classmates and others, (ii) Speak English and perform certain language functions while talking to their teacher, classmates and others, (iii) Read and understand the given reading materials, (iv) Write simple English in answering questions and doing language exercises, (v) Recite / Sing rhymes in English and (vi) Learn elements of the language – such as sounds, words, phrases, sentences and their structures. And the course materials to be taught at this stage are based on widely followed principles of teaching English as a second language such as – a) Learning through use, b) Learning through speech, c) Learning through situations, d) Learning through communication, and e) learning by doing. The English teacher is expected to play a crucial role in transacting his job of teaching by performing a set of functions expected of him and helping learners as a facilitator to practice and perform the activities meant for them. Similarly at the secondary stage (Classes VIII – X) same are the objectives of teaching English although a relatively higher order literacy in acquiring the language skills by the learners is emphasized here. For, while with the students of the upper primary level, acquiring the performance skills of the language are aimed at enabling the learners to perform a set of language functions such as greeting, introducing, thanking, making request, offering help and so on, leading to the development of the communicative ability of the learners, the learners of the
secondary level are expected to learn 'not only how to manipulate the structures of English but also how to develop strategies for relating these structures to their communicative functions in real life situations. In order to help them achieve this the curricular focus is on engaging learners in meaningful activities and tasks where language is used for communication. And accordingly a special focus is laid on a relatively higher order mastery of the language skills than that meant for learners at the preceding level which is sought to be achieved in relation to some specifications while mastering the language skills. The course content or language learning materials are sourced from literature: Prose, Poetry, Fiction – a Reader containing prose and poetry lessons for intensive study and a Rapid Reader meant for extensive and independent reading by the students.

As for the pedagogic and methodological framework the English Textbooks Series meant for the secondary course defines in clear terms the role of the teacher in handling them besides stating its core objectives. As stated these Readers have been designed to develop in learners not only the linguistic skills but also those skills which are necessary for effective communication. And in order to facilitate this the textbooks have been prepared with more eclectic principles. Unlike the Graded English Readers which were strictly within the framework of the Structural Approach both in terms of course design and methodology, the present series the Learners' English which replaces the Graded Series 'incorporates the elements of several approaches namely those of the Structural Approach, the Situational Approach, the Bilingual Approach and the Communicative Approach. As far as handling of the Readers is concerned
it is recommended that oral work should precede writing, language items should be taught and practised in situations, groupwork and pairwork activities should be promoted, teachers should facilitate pupils to explore the text on their own, classroom work should be planned in keeping with the objectives and teachers should exercise their imagination and resourcefulness to supplement the exercises incorporated in the books which are to be treated as samples only.

The Variety and Range:

Like as in the Indian situation the teaching and learning of English in Assam is characterized by a diversity of schools and linguistic environments supportive of English acquisition on the one hand and on the other by systemically pervasive teacher-beliefs-dominated and examination-oriented classroom procedures of teaching English. Broadly categorized management-wise there are four types of secondary schools in Assam. These are Govt. Secondary Schools, Secondary Schools run by Local Bodies, Private Aided Secondary Schools and Private un-aided Secondary Schools which constitute respectively 75.86%, 8.62%, 13.80% and 1.72% of the secondary schools in the state. But in fact, including these four broad categories the following types of schools are functioning in the state –

1) Govt. Secondary Schools
2) Provincialized Secondary Schools,
3) Govt.-aided Secondary Schools,
4) Private English Medium Schools,
5) Private Assamese Medium Schools,
6) Venture Secondary Schools,
The variety and range of the English Teaching situation is determined by two basic factors – namely – the teachers’ English language proficiency and the pupils’ exposure to English outside school i.e., the availability of English in the environment for acquisition and the same is true of the schools of Assam. For while we have teachers with high English language proficiency and varying degrees of English in the environment in the English-Medium private or Govt.-aided elite schools, the variables of teacher proficiency and environmental English are not as high in the other non-elite general type of New English Medium private schools as they are in the elite categories. On the otherhand English teaching in the Govt. regional medium schools – here in our case the Assamese medium provincialised schools is marked by the variables of teachers with the least proficiency in English and poor exposure of the pupils to English both within and outside schools. A discussion on the English teaching situation in the vernacular medium schools therefore will not be out of place here so as to gain a better understanding of the ELT situation in the Assamese medium schools of the district of Kamrup.

Commenting on the characteristics of the regional medium schools in our country P.T. George states that there are two types of regional medium schools in our country – Government and private. The chief characteristic of these schools where the majority of children study is that the majority of the teachers don’t know English well enough themselves to speak or teach it well. There are not enough self-teaching facilities such as good children’s libraries. In a sense they are resource-starved. The social situation around these schools does not facilitate the learning or the using of English outside the classroom. The
salient characteristics of the regional medium schools as visualized by P.T. George here are — high student enrolment, low teacher proficiency, poor resource status, and a social environment around these schools that proves un-conducive to the learning of English. Bright and McGregor talk of the aspect of pupils’ exposure to English in a non-English medium school in the following words — ‘in a non-English medium school there will not even be any exposure to the language of history, geography, mathematics or the sciences. The model provided will also be in the teaching mode and the social situation that of a teacher in a classroom. Pupil participation will generally be minimal and will consist not of initiating or maintaining a conversation but of answering specific questions. The pupil will be offered as a model for his future use, the way a teacher talks to a class. It will not be his fault, if, when he attends his first committee meeting he talks to his colleagues as if they were school children.’

What can be summarized from the above comments of the authors here is that the inadequacy of pupils’ exposure to English in a non-English medium school is the result of the absence of an English-Across-the Curriculum Policy, minimal pupil participation in conversation or interaction resulting in inadequate preparation of pupils for communicative functions in English. M.L. Tickoo summarizes the situation when he states that for the vast majority of those who enter the publicly funded non-English medium schools and colleges English is primarily meant to provide access to the world of learning and scientific scholarship. The demand for a high level oral or communicative competency is not the central concern of the ELT in the state-level school system. Tickoo here seems to be making the true assessment of the objectives
of teaching and learning English aimed at the non-English medium i.e. regional-medium schools of our country. His critique of the situation echoes the spirit of the ELT objectives set by the Kothari Commission in terms of helping students to learn English as a library language which fails to prepare the learners with the much-needed communicative competence in English. Elsewhere Tickoo distinguishes the non-English medium classroom situation in the Asian Perspective – particularly India, Indonesia, Malaysia or Myanmar from an ESL classroom in the UK or the USA in terms of almost everything; its size, its setting, its furniture and more importantly those social expectations, behaviours and beliefs that shape its nature and character. National Focus Group while outlining the major characteristics of the Govt. regional medium schools states that "these are the schools which enroll the largest number of elementary school children in rural India. They are also the only choice for the urban poor who however, have some options of the access to English in the environment. Their teachers may be the least proficient of the four major types of schools in India and pupils' exposure to English in these schools is quite meagre." 

The Assamese-medium provincialized schools in the district of Kamrup are no exception and they also reflect the broad characteristics of the pan-Indian prototype of regional medium schools of the provincialised category. In the district of Kamrup these are the schools –

(1) Which enroll the largest number of children in rural Assam, in our case rural Kamrup.

(2) Which are the only choice of the rural as well as urban poor or disadvantaged sections of the society.
(3) Where most of the teachers are the least proficient in English or in other words don’t know English well themselves to speak or teach it well.

(4) Where there is little or no exposure of the pupils to English in the school as well as in the environment outside the school.

(5) Which are very much resource-starved and acquisition-poor in their infrastructure and environment.

(6) Where English is taught through Assamese with the practice of unsystematic and unrestricted use of the mother tongue (L1) in the classroom.

(7) Where the social environment does not facilitate the learning or using of English outside the classroom.

(8) Where majority of the classes are large classes that present constraints to better teaching and learning of English.

(9) Where English is taught as a content subject rather than as a skill subject.

(10) Where the gulf between theory and practice in ELT defeats the very objectives of the programme.

In view of the above characteristics, in a sense, most of these schools may be termed in the words of Michael West ‘the unfavourably circumsntanced schools – schools with over 30, usually 40 or 50 students congested on benches accommodated in an unsuitably-shaped room, ill-graded with a teacher who perhaps does not speak-English well or very fluently, working in a hot climate.'
In view of all these constraints English teaching in Assam is as yet far from satisfactory. It is, to speak in the vein of V.K. Gokak, still in a 'chaotic state.' School level English teaching in Assam is still to a great extent in the hands of teachers who neither know enough English nor are familiar with the latest and far-reaching developments in the pedagogy of English. As a result of this students learning English in these schools fail to master the minimum level of competency in the language even after studying it for long six years at the school stage. During the field work it was noticed that even now there are schools, not small in number, which register 100% failure in English in the H.S.L.C. examination. The poor state of things prevailing in the ELT scenario of the state has also been brought into focus by a classroom based research project conducted by ELTI, Assam in recent years. This study identifies teachers' poor linguistic competence, lack of exposure to English, gap between theory and practice in ELT as the factors mainly responsible for the failure of the programme to deliver the goods. As against this English teaching in the English medium schools in the state continues to go applauded. Back in early sixties of the twentieth century Prof. V.K. Gokak noted this difference in performance in ELT between the regional medium and the English-medium schools when he observed 'the teaching of English in our schools is in a chaotic state today ... ... ... the situation may be different in a few English medium schools.' National Focus Group (2006) also expresses a similar view while making an assessment of the present position of ELT in our country. The Focus Group observed that on account of variables like high teacher proficiency in English and wider exposure to pupils in the target language the English medium
schools perform better in ELT than the regional medium schools which are handicapped by low teacher proficiency and poor target language exposure. Here in Assam both elite and popular views are now in favour of the English medium schools as far as their performance in ELT is concerned and hence parents and guardians here prefer an English medium schooling for their children. Private schools including both English-medium and Assamese medium ones in the state constitute 15.52% and students enrolment in these schools constitute 10.83%. Such a situation has led the Government and its education authorities in our state to opt for introduction of the teaching of English from an early stage virtually proving the national Focus Group observation that the level of introduction of English is now a matter of political response to peoples' aspirations rather than an academic or feasibility issue. In Assam English has been introduced from class III since 2000 and recently the Assam Govt. has decided to introduce its study and teaching from class I onwards and has sent its directives to various concerned authorities asking them to undertake necessary action in the matter thus extending the system further downwards. This is obviously reflective of the popular demands for an early introduction of English in the educational system in view of the growing importance of English in the modern world as well as the concern and commitment of the Government in this regard.

The Study:

The present study aims to investigate into the problems of teaching English in the vernacular medium secondary schools of the district of Kamrup
and is entitled "A Critical Study of the Problems of Teaching English in the Vernacular Medium Secondary Schools in the District of Kamrup, Assam."

Objectives:

The research work aims at studying the problems of teaching English at the vernacular medium (Assamese-medium) secondary schools in the district of Kamrup, Assam. The study also aims at focussing on the correlation between the theory and practice of ELT in the context of these schools and also tries to arrive at an objective assessment of the ELT scenario of the district. And as the schools belong to urban as well as rural areas the study endeavours to bring into focus the magnitude of the problems in the light of rural-urban variation in the impact of the problems felt. Again as teaching and learning are seen as an integral process where the aim of teaching is to produce learning the study brings into its ambit the whole phenomena of teaching and learning English so as to gain a comprehensive outlook in investigating the problems of teaching English in the schools of the district.

Thus the broad objectives of the study are

(i) To investigate the problems of teaching English in the vernacular medium secondary schools in the district of Kamrup, Assam.

(ii) To evolve and suggest remedial measures for eradication of the problems as well as improvement of the ELT situation in the schools of the area under study.
Hypotheses:

The study is based on the following hypotheses:-

Broad hypotheses:

(1) There are problems in the field of teaching English in the vernacular medium secondary schools in the district of Kamrup which merit a study of the kind for their redressal.

(2) There is scope for improvement of the programme of teaching English in the schools of the area under study.

(3) Improvement of the teaching (and learning) of English in the above schools is likely to lead to an overall educational improvement of the learners at this stage.

Spelt out clearly and in a more specific way the hypotheses on which the study stands are –

i) There is dearth of trained and competent teachers in the schools under study.

ii) The schools suffer from the problem of large classes

iii) There exists a theory-practice gap in the ELT practices of these schools which stands in the way of effective teaching and learning of English.


v) The pedagogic and classroom practices in the schools fall short of the requirements of the true and successful ESL classes.

vi) Departmental initiative to improve the teaching of English is not adequate.
vii) Pupils’ exposure to English both inside the class and outside it is not adequate.

viii) Parental support to students is inadequate.

ix) Socially and economically disadvantaged learners create problems.

x) Low aptitude, inadequate motivation, classroom anxiety of students affect teaching and learning of English.

xi) Teachers’ negative attitude to students’ abilities/capabilities affects teaching and learning of English.

xii) Socio-cultural/out of class environment is not conducive to learning English.

**Delimitation:**

The study proposes to critically investigate the problems of teaching English in the vernacular medium secondary schools in the district of Kamrup. The term vernacular-medium here is used to indicate the Assamese-medium secondary schools in the district. Secondary schools in the study refer to the schools (some higher secondary schools also included) with classes from VIII to X. Besides only the provincialized Assamese medium schools of the district are selected for the study.

As for the district of Kamrup, it is the capital district of modern Assam. It is situated between 25.43 and 26.51 degree north latitude and between 90.36 and 92.12 degree east latitude. The total geographical area of the district is 4345 sq. km. and its population as per 2001 census is 25,15,030. The district comprises two civil sub-divisions namely, Guwahati sub-division and Rangia...
sub-division and comprises the areas covered under 17 Community Development Blocks such as – Bangaon, Bezera, Bihdia-Jajikona, Boko, Chamarua, Chandrapur, Chayani-Barduar, Chaygaon, Dimoria, Goroimari, Goreswar, Hajo, Kamalpur, Rampur, Rangia, Rani and Sualkuchi and the Guwahati Municipal Administrative area and the town committee areas of Rangia, Palasbari and North Guwahati. Kamrup district included in the study is not the Kamrup district bifurcated into Kamrup, and Kamrup (Metropolis) since 2003 but the one integrated district as it existed prior to its bifurcation into the above two districts. The numbers of educational institutions in the district as per 2001 census are as follows – L.P. Schools-2121, M.E. Schools-401, High Schools-320, Higher Secondary Schools-49, Colleges-32, I.I.T.-1, Engineering Colleges-1. But the total number of Government and Provincialised Secondary Schools in the district is 279 while Assamese Medium Provincialised Schools in it are 267 in number (as per records available with the Office of the Inspector of Schools, Kamrup District Circle).

**Significance of the Study:**

In Assam today, like in other parts of India and elsewhere English has come to be widely regarded by students and parents alike as the language of opportunity, opening the door to higher education, a better job, upward social mobility and so on. A better foundation in the language is sure to entitle the learners to all these prospects in the modern world. But English teaching in the vernacular medium schools in the district remains deplorable on account of various factors. Result Analysis carried on by SEBA in 2001 shows that
Kamrup district stands second with 24 schools in the list of Bottom 200 schools registering 0% pass or 100% fail in English in the HSLEC examination of 2001 and all these schools are Assamese-Medium Schools. Another analysis of the results of the HSLEC examination under SEBA for the period from 1987 to 1992 reveals that 70-80% of the unsuccessful students fail in English. Again from an investigation into students' performance in English in the HSLEC examination in the Assamese medium schools in the district of Kamrup covered by this study it has been seen that the average pass percentage of students in English during the period from 2001 to 2005 is 48% which means that even now 52% students of these schools fail in English. All this throws light on the deteriorating status of ELT in the Assamese-medium secondary schools of the district as well as the state. In view of this a study into the problems of ELT appears to be significant and the need of the hour.

Besides, although some M. Phil / M.Ed. level research studies have been done on the problems of teaching and learning English with special reference to the secondary schools in some parts of Kamrup district like Rangia sub-division, Greater Guwahati, Palashbari Revenue Circle, Jagiroad Revenue Circle etc. no study with reference to the whole of the Kamrup district has so far been conducted on the problem. This is another important reason why a study of the kind is necessary and significant.

The necessity of the study has been further accentuated by some interesting findings that emerged from some investigations, seminars etc. conducted in the field of ELT at the secondary school level in some parts of the district during the last decade. In a survey conducted in 1998 by the researcher
in the Assamese medium schools of North Kamrup district involving 35 schools
with a view to investigating the problems of teaching English particularly from
teachers' perception point of view it was seen that most of the teachers teaching
English in these schools tried to put the whole blame on the students' lack of
interest, motivation and aptitude for learning English besides inadequacy of
guardian awareness. Similar was the revelation that emerged in the course of
two seminars organized by the researcher on the topic 'Teaching English at the
school stage - problems and solutions' involving secondary level English
teachers of the North-East region of Kamrup district as the participants. One of
these seminars was held at Baihata Chariali B.Ed. College, Baihata Chariali on
June 9, 2002 and the other one at Goreswar College, Goreswar on November
21, 2003. Both these seminars were addressed by senior ELT experts from
ELTI, Assam. SEBA and the North East India Forum For English Studies,
Guwahati as resource persons and attended by around 100 secondary-level
English Teachers and a few Headmasters and Principals of the region. The
deliberations of these seminars and the consensus arrived at were very
significant in as much as the prevailing trend of teacher beliefs and perceptions
as regards the problems of teaching English was found to be misplaced and
unfounded concentrated as they were all on the students - their lack of interest,
motivation, aptitude besides their unsuitable home environment. The seminars
also called upon all the stake holders of the programme of ELT in the region to
make a proper assessment of the problems. A proper assessment of the
problems of English Teaching in the Assamese medium schools of the district
as against this deeply-entrenched negative attitude of teachers to students'
capabilities is therefore very urgent and significant and the present study is aimed at fulfilling such an objective.

The findings of the study are expected to be of help to both educational planners and the real practitioners in the field of teaching English in re-orienting the ELT programme of the state to make it need-based as well as more effective and result-oriented in practice.

Again an improvement in the Teaching and Learning of English at the secondary level is sure to have a tremendous positive effect on the overall educational performance of a vast majority of learners. Its effect on the immediate and subsequent stages of learning is undeniable and the present study is expected to lead to such an improvement in the teaching and learning of English in the schools under study. In view of all these considerations the present study is considered significant and justified.
References:


42. Richards J.C. and Rodgers T.S. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching – A Description and Analysis*, 44.


63. Source: Office of the Board of Secondary Education, Assam, Guwahati.
