CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

6.1 Major findings

The present study focuses mainly on the different methods of English language teaching, teaching techniques and aids used in the English language classrooms in the SEBA (Board of Secondary Education, Assam) affiliated high schools of Cachar district. This study also examines whether the use of these methods, techniques and aids helps in motivating the learners and in facilitating effective teaching-learning. At the same time, it also compares the vernacular and English medium classrooms English language teaching in terms of methods, teaching techniques and aids. The major findings of the study are:

6.1.1 Goal of Teaching:

The students and teachers of the high schools equally value the importance of English language. They need English for higher education (Table 5.8), to communicate in real life (Table 5.7), to get good marks/grades (Table 5.6), and to get a job (Table 5.9). Nobody can deny the importance of English language in our day to day life. Here lies the importance of mastering the ‘communicative competence’ on the part of the learners. This is well reflected when 96.43% teachers say that the main goal of teaching English is to enable the learners to communicate in real life (Table 5.10).

On the contrary, the attitude of parents and school administration as reflected in the teachers’ questionnaire presents an astonishingly dismal scenario in respect of English learning. The parents and school administration want the teachers to prepare the
learners for examination only (Table 5.11). Any deviation from the prescribed textbook brings a negative impression on the teachers. This is because of the fact that English teaching is directly related with the overall result of the learners and hence guided by the evaluation system. The existing examination system demand teachers ‘transmit’ the content knowledge by means of giving word meaning and paraphrasing the lessons, provide answers to the crammed questions. The learners in turn memorise them (often incorrectly) like a ‘parrot’ so that they can pass out the examinations with flying colours(!). Hence, it is a well-accepted fact that students will be more interested in mastering those items, which may be tested in the examinations. Naturally, they will not show any interest on items which do not form a part of examinations. Keeping in view the need based notion of English language teaching-learning, adoption of a proper evaluation system is the need of the hour.

It is often said that the practices of English language teaching are much better in the English medium schools than that of the vernacular medium schools. Data elicited from the students’ questionnaire vindicates that a huge number (75.47%) of students studying in vernacular medium schools think that English should be learnt only because it is included as a common subject in the school curriculum, while only 7.02% students from English medium schools agree with this view (Table 5.4). Again, most surprisingly, it is found that most of the students of vernacular schools (84.91%) want to learn English for getting good marks, while only 18.42% students of English medium schools opine that English should be learnt for getting good marks (Table 5.6). Such analysis clearly shows that still the students of the vernacular medium schools have not realized the importance of English language in their real life. The fact is much
highlighted when only 66.04% students of vernacular medium schools opine that they want to learn English for communicating in real life situation, whereas 92.11% students from the English medium schools can realise its importance (Table 5.7). This clearly shows that still the students of vernacular medium school lag behind the students from other category schools who have internalized the communicative value of English language. They (96.49%) are also found more conscious of the fact that English is the key to higher education, the vast storehouse of knowledge (Table 5.8). On the contrary, majority of students from vernacular medium schools (96.23%) regard English as the key to getting a job (Table 5.9). From such analysis, it is not very difficult to opine that still a large number of students studying in vernacular medium schools harbour the age-old notion about learning English for securing good marks and subsequently getting a job. They are viciously unaware of modern approaches towards the language. In this regard, it is well acknowledged that the students of English medium schools grab the front row.

6.1.2 Teaching Methods:

It is found that the teachers of vernacular medium schools translate the content of the text into the mother tongue of the students, while in English medium schools the teachers illustrate the meaning of the content in English. Irrespective of vernacular or English medium schools, teachers provide the students with word-meaning and question answer, and assign homework. But only a few teachers ask learners to read aloud in vernacular medium schools, whereas the percentage is very high in English medium schools – 84.21% (Table 5.42). A large number of teachers opine that instead of
following a particular method of teaching English, they prefer to teach their students using their own method as per their convenience (Table 5.43).

Such analysis clearly substantiates the point that most teachers of English in the schools of Cachar district largely use traditional methods while teaching English. They are still reluctant to use modern methods like Communicative Language Teaching. Thus, they fail to develop students’ language proficiency which is the basic objective of teaching English as a second language. Classroom observation by the researcher also witnessed the same scenario where teachers accomplish teaching English language simply explaining the text either in English or in the learners’ mother tongue, or by preparing the students with ready-made textual answers for the examinations. But this scenario is slightly better in English medium schools where students are provided with the opportunity of developing their speaking, reading skills and above all teachers try to bring the real world to the English classroom. Again, it has been observed that though ‘oral English’ form an integral part of the syllabus of Class IX, the teachers hardly teach pronunciation, stress and intonation pattern of English. This scenario is again found to be much better in the English medium schools. The teachers of English medium schools ‘very frequently’ teach the students to speak English using proper pronunciation, stress and intonation (Figure 5.8), while 77.36% students negates the fact (Figure 5.9). This proves the fact that the students of English medium schools get ample scope for developing their oral skills, whereas the students of vernacular medium schools lag behind remarkably in this sphere. The interviews conducted with the students studying in vernacular medium schools well reflects the fact that in many vernacular medium schools the students are not taught ‘oral English’; rather marks for such units are simply
added to the total mark. Thus, the goals envisaged by the curriculum designers, i.e., developing ‘learners’ communicative proficiency’ are never practised by the teachers inside the classroom.

6.1.3 Teaching Techniques and Aids: Their Role

Use of teaching techniques and aids plays an important role in effective teaching-learning. Different students learn in different ways, the introduction of a new technique helps a student overcome a learning problem (Allen & Valette, 1972). It is found from the undertaken survey that teachers use techniques of teaching with a varying degree. Teachers mostly use ‘question’ and ‘homework’, while ‘discussion’, ‘conversation practice’ and ‘pair and group work’ are rarely used, though these are regarded as very important factors in developing ‘communicative proficiency’ of the learners in a learner-centred classroom. Only teachers of English medium schools sometimes use innovative techniques like ‘conversation practice’ and ‘pair and group work’ (Table 5.38 & 5.39). Such analyses justify the assumption that the practices of English language teaching are much better in the English medium schools than that of the vernacular medium schools.

Most of the teachers and students express the importance of using teaching techniques and aids in teaching-learning (Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4). They opine that the use of teaching techniques and aids motivate the learners (Table 5.40 & Figure 5.7). But in reality, teaching aids are scarcely used in teaching-learning process. Sometimes only charts and posters are used (Figures 5.5 & 5.6). The teachers cite a number of reasons for not using teaching techniques and aids inside the classroom. Large number
of students, lack of infrastructure, limited time period etc. are some of the major barriers as cited by the teachers. (Table 5.41).

6.1.4 Exposure to the language

Since every child is born with a built-in language learning mechanism, exposure to the rich variety of linguistic materials of the target language helps in its activation. In this sphere also, the students of vernacular medium schools lag far behind the students of English medium schools. It is revealed that the students studying in English medium schools have far better exposure to English. They use English with their teachers, friends, read newspapers, magazines etc. in English (Table 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.14). On the contrary, 91.51% students studying in vernacular medium schools use only mother tongue in classroom, whereas 95.61% students of English medium schools use only English (Table 5.22 & 5.23).

6.1.5 Role of Teachers and Learners: Language Proficiency

The role of the teacher has been envisioned as a facilitator in a learner-centred classroom in the prescribed textbook of Class IX. But the survey reveals an opposite scenario. It is found that 82.14% teachers act as a transmitter of knowledge, where the learners act as passive recipients (Table 5.29). They think that for successful teaching-learning, the teacher must be able to dominate the classroom environment. Again, the prevalent classroom scenario is also traditional which does not facilitate the application of modern methods like Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Language Teaching etc. Most of the teachers teach, explain, and give notes and students take down the same (Table 5.30) reflecting the age-old traditional role of teachers as in the
‘banking system of education’, where learners are considered to be similar to bank accounts (Freire, 1982). Of course, it is a well acknowledged fact that physical condition, prevailing syllabus-oriented and examination-driven education do not allow teacher to play the innovative role of a facilitator. Lack of proficiency on the part of the teachers poses a remarkable hindrance in the process of teaching learning (Table 5.31). This creates a serious pedagogical and educational problem. Talking about the language proficiency of the students, it is found that 91.23% students of English medium schools use connected English sentences outside classroom (Table 5.28), while 82.08% students studying in vernacular schools use English words in sentences of mother tongue (Table 5.27). Such revelation well indicates better English language teaching-learning scenario in the English medium schools.

6.1.6 Teaching the four language skills: LSRW

The study justifies that students of English medium schools get a little scope to develop the skills of English language; but in the vernacular medium schools, students get hardly any scope to develop their skills. Teachers are either unaware of recent trends or reluctant to deviate from the traditional norms. They do not have sufficient time to read texts aloud and make the students fill in tables, charts etc. Nobody uses debate/extempore speech, role play, etc. to teach speaking skill (Table 5.49 & 5.50). In the name of teaching reading, most of the teachers ask students to read aloud the text and then they explain the same and solve exercises (Table 5.51). The current syllabus and the examination system compel teachers and students rely heavily on textbooks. Textbooks determine the components and methods of learning. In other words, textbooks control the content, methods, and procedures of learning. During interview
with the teachers, 90.48% opine that the present system of examination directly or indirectly compels the learners to be well-trained in producing the memorized important answers in the answer-sheets and secure good marks. English learning has become as similar as learning other subjects in the curriculum. The envisioned goal of improving the language proficiency of students cannot be realized in reality; rather, the present examination system trains learners only in mastering the literary content of the syllabus. No fruitful efforts can be undertaken to improve Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW) skills, Study skills, and Dictionary skills etc. of learners.

6.2 Suggestions and Recommendations

The researcher feels that in teaching English as a second language in Assam in general, particularly in Cachar, it is the best way to start by teaching the spoken form which comprises listening and speaking skills. Common observation indicates that learners in English medium schools, who start with the spoken form of English, eventually end up almost mastering all the four language skills. On the contrary, learners in vernacular medium schools, who start with reading and writing, end up with a mastery (sometimes partial) of only these two skills.

Prasad (2009) observes, “The examination system is more achievement oriented rather than performance oriented, leading to an emphasis on grades and positions rather than issues of fluency or proficiency. Indirectly, the teacher remains in many classrooms even today, the facilitator of examinations rather than of linguistic or communicative proficiency.” In such a hostile context, the teacher will be definitely at a sea to decide whether to complete the prescribed materials and make the learners ready for the examination or make judicious use of innovative techniques and methods to uplift.
language proficiency and competence of the learners. The restrictions imposed on the teacher by the examination system to cover the syllabi make the teaching of English a teacher-centred rather than a learner-centred activity. The learner remains a mere passive receptor receiving the content delivered by the teacher which he/she has to regurgitate in the examination hall to score good grades or marks. In this regard, it is apt to mention that parents and administrators of schools should change their attitude. The head of the school as well as the parents of the pupils should approach the English teacher with constructive criticism. They should encourage the English teacher to teach this language by new techniques and methods. Hence acquiring fluency in the use of English in this context remains out of question (Mishra 2012). Hence, reform in the prevailing examination system is the need of the hour. Due stress should be laid on testing of oral work and pronunciation. There should be questions on the texts to test speaking ability and reading comprehension and appreciation.

As far as teaching methods is concerned, it is evident from the study that teachers still use traditional methods like Grammar Translation Method or Direct Method, etc. which do not allow the teachers to act as ‘a facilitator to stimulate learners’ response’, as envisaged in the prescribed textbook. The main focus, as cited in ‘A Note to the Teacher’ in the textbook, will be on presentation by the teacher, performance by the learners and consolidation through pair work and group work. But the scenario observed inside the classroom presents a fully opposite picture. It is felt that lack of trained teachers with ELT background and more importantly the prevailing evaluation system are accountable for this appalling condition. Teachers should be trained and encouraged to apply methods like structural-situational, communicative language teaching, etc. so that the said problem
can be solved to a great extent. Oral practice/oral drill suggested by the structural approach is highly recommended for effective teaching-learning of English in the high schools of Cachar district, especially in the vernacular medium schools. The learner should be able to apply the language learned inside the classroom in real life situations, as recommended by the situational approach, which is the need of the hour.

In a fast changing world – a world of internet and technology, robots and exciting media presentations – the classroom teaching of English is still traditional, dull with ‘chalk and talk’, uninteresting and irrelevant; the learning culture has changed tremendously but the teaching culture is still ‘stagnant without any innovation’. English teaching needs to be entertaining and interactional in addition to being instructive as well as informative. Here lies the inculcation of various teaching techniques such as role play, pair work and group work, information exchange, interaction through discussion, conversation and so on. Learners should be engaged in debate, extempore speech etc. thereby making them ready to communicate in real life situations which is authentic and unpredictable.

It is directed to the concerned teachers in the prescribed textbook of English by SEBA that ‘audio cassettes providing speech practice will be used as and when practicable’ in order to train the learners adequately in the spoken form of the language. But the irony of the fact that has come to light during the researcher’s visit to the schools is that classrooms are adorned with only desk-bench and chalk-blackboard; and are bereft of any teaching aids. Hence, it is the ardent call of the time to realize the printed objectives of the textbooks inside the classroom so that teaching takes place in its true form. It is the avowed duty of the concerned authority to equip the English teaching classroom with the
minimum requisite paraphernalia; let’s not talk on modern innovative interactive devices like Computer-Assisted Learning or Computer-Assisted Language Learning. Adequate funds should be given for providing teaching aids and to equip the English class-rooms. A few aids like tape-recorder and lingua-phone etc. can be provided and aids like pictures, flashcards, charts & models etc. can be improvised by the teacher himself.

Along with these, learners should be encouraged, if possible facilitated, to listen to watch English news, movies, and other programmes telecast in English. Listening to BBC programme, reading English newspapers etc. can be an added advantage for the learners in mastering the skills of English language. Low cost audio materials like radio, tape-recorder, audio discs; audio-visual materials such as television, printed materials with recorded sound etc.; and visual materials like pictures, flash cards, charts, posters, models etc. should be supplied in order to make English teaching-learning a pleasant and fruitful experience. With the help of such materials learners can easily comprehend what they listen, speak, read and write; resultantly they help the learners to be proficient in using the language in day-to-day social context. It is worthwhile to mention here that teachers should be trained to use such aids in the classroom to acquire maximum benefit from such use. At the same time, the concerned authority should encourage the teacher folk to use their own innovations in order to make English learning an enjoyable experience.

During interviews with students as well as teachers, the researcher could realize the absence of any remedial measures being carried out for the learners during the normal teaching periods. The teaching inside the classroom mostly confine to reading, explaining and paraphrasing the prescribed content, dictating notes and giving occasional homework
to the students. Such ‘teacher-textbook-traditional classroom affair’ activities are not sufficient enough in improving the learners’ competence and proficiency in the target language.

Teaching of English should not aim at teaching only about the language; rather it should involve presentation and practice of such linguistic items which are closely related with real life situation. At the same time, teachers should be well-aware of their role and internalize the fact that learning is a bidirectional process. “Silence” inside the classroom should not be regarded as a positive sign; rather it should be treated as an indicator of failure of teaching-learning process. Teachers, as a counsellor or a manager in the process of teaching-learning, should create a congenial atmosphere wherein students feel at ease to open up their mouth. At the same time, teacher - as a role model - should possess enough proficiency in the language, and use proper pronunciation, stress and intonation so that learners can inherit those qualities from him/her easily.

It is observed that in vernacular schools, the mother tongue of the learners occupies the classroom teaching. As a result, such students lag behind in the sphere of spoken skills of English language, hindering the very process of teaching-learning English. Hence, the use of the mother tongue should be judicious and purposive and teachers should encourage their students to use English. They may struggle and commit mistake; but communicative competence develops in the process of struggling to communicate. The students should be encouraged to communicate in English with friends, if possible with parents and other members of their family and society. Over emphasis on only written skills in such schools should be discouraged under any circumstances. Here lies
the need of reformation of the prevailing evaluation system. The examination system should encompass different units that evaluate equally all the skills of English language.

The study shows that the students of English medium schools are more realistic, practical and well aware of the fact that without the knowledge of English language, it is impossible to walk in this competitive age. But unfortunately, though a meager percentage, a few students from vernacular schools are not aware of the vital role that English plays in every walk of life. It shows that still there is an urgent need to illuminate the minds of many such students who have not yet realized that English language has proved to be the part and parcel of our life. Parents, teachers, social workers should enlighten those students showing the necessity of learning English thereby injecting a zeal for learning the language.

Vocabulary items should not be taught in isolation. Mere translating them into the mother tongue or explaining them in easy comprehensible way is not sufficient. Students should be encouraged to use them in real contexts.

Selection and appointment of teachers play a vital role in realizing the goals of English language teaching-learning. Therefore, it should be thoroughly impartial and fair, strictly following the basic criteria of teachers’ appointment. The vast majority of teachers themselves have a very limited command of English. The biggest constraint is the low English proficiency of teachers. Many school teachers cannot speak English, even if they can read it with hesitation. This is a bigger problem in the vernacular medium schools. The situation is slightly better in the English medium schools. Hence, it is pertinent to note that all teachers who teach should have basic proficiency in English.
In-service training programmes should be conducted by the concerned authority in order to improve teachers’ skills and equip them with various innovations and developments in relation to methods, techniques etc. If possible, spoken English programme should be undertaken for those who lack basic proficiency in the oral skill of the language.

The class-size should be smaller and the number of English periods should be increased.

For the teaching of English the physical conditions in schools should be improved. Enough lighting arrangement, proper seating and other necessary facilities should be provided in English Classroom so that the pupils may be motivated and take interest in learning English.

The teacher should actively create and build intrinsic motivation in their learners, to empower them with the ability and confidence to “learn how to learn”, to develop a sense of responsibility for their own development, and to regard peers as possible sources of learning as well. The idea that errors are a natural and even necessary part of the learning process needs to be encouraged and supported.

English language teaching should be incorporated from Nursery. The time allotted to teaching English and the number of English class need to be increased. The students from vernacular school face difficulties in English speaking; they need a congenial, friendly and ‘fear proficiency free’ atmosphere to learn this skill.

Many teachers, particularly in vernacular medium schools (government/provincialised schools), don’t turn up in time and skip classes. In the name of teaching a language like English, many teachers are contented only with giving notes to the important questions so
far as the examination is concerned. Such practices should be curbed under any circumstances.

Parents should encourage their children to read English newspapers, magazines, watch English news etc. so that they can get exposure to English language even outside the four walls of the classroom.

6.3. Scope for Future Research

This study deals with the practice of English language teaching in the SEBA affiliated high schools of Cachar district. However, there are further questions that need to be investigated and further research can be carried out in the fields:

✓ Studies can be conducted to compare the effectiveness of teaching English in rural and urban, government and private schools.
✓ Problems faced by the students of vernacular medium schools in learning English can be investigated in detail.
✓ Problems faced by the teachers of vernacular medium schools in teaching English can well be looked into in detail.
✓ Studies can also be conducted on the problems faced by the students in learning the four skills of English.
✓ Role of teachers inside the English language classroom can be studied critically.
✓ A critical study can be undertaken on the existing syllabus of English language in the high schools.
✓ Study can be undertaken on place of English grammar in the teaching-learning process of English language.

✓ Problems of teaching-learning English grammar in the secondary schools can also be studied in detail.