Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This research work makes an attempt to study the present situation of English language among the undergraduate students in Barak Valley districts of Assam namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi with special emphasis on Basic English Grammar.

1.1 Background of the Study

Background of the study includes the definition of language, origin of English language, Position of English language, Rise and spread of English language in India, English language in the North-east, Geographical location of Barak Valley, a map of Barak Valley districts where the research has been undertaken, colleges in Barak Valley and the present position of English teaching and learning in these colleges.

1.1.1 The definition of language

‘Language is the system of communication in speech and writing which is used by the people of a particular country or region (Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary of Current English ed. A.S. Hornby). Language is a social phenomenon. It is the medium through which human beings transmit their ideas to each other. It is the sound produced by a person and the other receives it through ear. However, dumb and deaf can also transmit their ideas to others with the help of indications made by fingers or other parts of the body which is called the body language. The transmission of sounds to others to convey any idea is speech which is termed as
sentence and thus each part of the sentence is called a part of speech i.e. a word. And to from a word, a letter or letters are necessary which are some fixed signs or symbols. These signs and symbols are essential for writing the language. Again, for writing, some rules are necessary and these rules are called grammar. Thus every language has its own grammar which controls the language and becomes a common affair for everybody’s understanding.

1.1.2 Origin of language

There are innumerable languages in the world and English is one of these languages. But English is the only language spread all over the world. This language originated from the Indo-European group “the largest and well defined genetic family which includes most of the languages of Europe, past and present and extends across Iran to territorial half of the Indian sub-continent” (Bright : ed. 1992; Vol-II). According to western philologists, Greek and Latin were the oldest languages indicating that there was a parent language from which all other languages emerged. It is said that English descended from the primitive Germanic language.

1.1.3 Position of English language

English has occupied a unique position in the international field. It plays a pivotal role in the field of communication. David crystal (1985:7-9) gives a figure of two billion users of English. He says, ‘ … if you are highly conscious of international standard, or wish to keep the figures for world English down, you will opt for a total of around 700 million in the mid-1980s. If you go to the opposite extreme and allow in any systematic awareness whether in speaking,
reading or writing, you could easily persuade yourself of the reasonableness of two billion”.

English is the national language of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Of course, there are differences in pronunciation and vocabulary. In India also, like other countries, English has a special place in the midst of so many languages spoken by the people of this country.

1.1.4 Rise and spread of English in India

British came to India for business purpose and their business organisation was East-India Company. But it had eye on Indian political situation. After 1765, it became a political power in India and gradually they captured political power and ruled over India for two hundred years. During this long period, English was spread all over India. The Christian missionaries also played an important role in spreading English in India side by side with their mission of preaching Christian religion among Indian people. A section of people also started believing that the access to education and knowledge was possible only through English. But the general people thought that English was essential to get government jobs easily.

But after two hundred years of British rule, India acquired her independence in the year 1947. But meanwhile, English had already established its strong position in this country. The debates of constituent Assembly held in 1949 clearly indicated the significance of English in India. But Hindi was declared to be the official language of the Union and English was given the status of an Associate Official language for a period of fifteen years. Article 343 of the Indian
Constitution says, “... for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement”. However, special provisions were made for the retention of English language under the discretion of the parliament even after the 15 year period for the following purposes:

i) All proceedings in the Supreme Court and the High Courts

ii) Authoritative Text of Bills, Acts, Ordinances, Order, Rules, Regulations and Bye Laws issued under the constitution or under any law (Kochhar)

In the academic field also, all the education commissions appointed after India’s independence, recommended the study of English as an international link language, as a window to the world and as library language side by side the use of Indian languages as media of instruction at different stages of education. According to the University Education Commission (1948-49), English is to be studied in High School and in the University in order that we may keep in touch with the living stream of ever growing knowledge. Even the Kothari Commission and the Education Policy of 1968 had emphasised the “... three language formula which included Hindi, the regional language and English in the curriculum”.

“English in India today is a symbol of people’s aspiration for quality in education and a fuller participation in national and international life. Its colonial origins now forgotten or irrelevant, its initial role in independent India tailored to high education now felt to be insufficiently inclusive social and linguistically; the current state of English stem from its overwhelming presence on the world stage
and reflection of this in the national arena….” (National Focus Group on Teaching of English for NCF-2005). Thus English made its strong position in the midst of multilingual Indian nation. It plays the role of a link language among the different language speakers of India.

1.1.5 English Language in the North-East

English language in the North-Eastern states of India plays a role of link language among the educated people of North-East India. There are eight states in the North-East namely, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. English is the medium of instruction at the Post Graduate Level in all these states. However, in under graduate level both English and Assamese are the media of instruction in Assam. In Barak Valley districts namely, Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi under Assam University, the medium of instruction is only English. In Arunachal Pradesh, English is the only medium of instruction from primary level to post graduate level and it is the first language taught from the primary level onwards. English is the state language of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim. Assam is geographically divided into two valleys namely, Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley. While the official language of Brahmaputra Valley (Upper and Lower Assam) is Assamese, the official language of Barak Valley (Southern Assam) is Bengali. Besides Assamese and Bengali, the two major languages of Assam, other languages like Bodo, Mishing, Karbi, Hindi, etc. are also used by these communities. However, in the tribal states like Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, majority of the people embraced Christianity as Christian missionaries convinced them. These Christian
missionaries set up schools and colleges in which English is the medium of instruction. Of course, in Assam and in other north eastern states, Christian missionaries also set up English medium schools which are playing a major role in the field of education. Holy Cross School was the first English medium school set up by the Christian missionaries in 1966 at Silchar. But now Don Bosco, St. Joseph, Roland School, St. Capitanio, St. Mary’s Schools are there in Barak Valley. These institutions are imparting education in English and there is environment where English language is practised. The students of these schools can speak English fluently. But these schools are very expensive and thus beyond the reach of common people.

1.1.6 Geographical location of Barak Valley

The Barak Valley is situated at the southern border of Assam covering three districts i.e. Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. The three districts possess the geographical areas of 3245, 1809 and 1327 km² respectively. They collectively cover an area of 6381 km² that stands on the bank of the river Barak and her tributaries (www.mapsofindia.com/maps/assam/assamdistricts.htm). It is bound by the hill ranges in three sides — on the north by the N.C. Hill district of Assam, on the south by the states of Mizoram and Tripura, on the east by the state of Manipur. Only towards the west, it is bordered by the plane lands of Bangladesh (Sylhet Division) (ibid). The population of the district of Cachar is 17,36,319, Karimganj is 12,17,002, and Hailakandi is 6,59,260 which may be totally counted as 36,12,581 (Ibid). The Bengalees are the largest linguistic community in the area and so Bengali is the official language in these three districts unlike the rest of Assam where the majority people are Assamese speaking. Apart from the
Bengalees, the Meitai Manipuris, Bishnupria Manipuris, Dimasas, Rongmai Nagas, Mizos, Khasis and the Kukis are the other linguistic groups who reside in this Valley (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cachar-district). The Hindus and the Muslims are the two largest religious communities in the region and next to them there remains the Christians. As per census report 2011, the literacy rates of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts are 80.36%, 79.72% and 75.26% respectively. (www.govt.nic.in).

In the Medieval period, the districts of Cachar and Hailakandi along with a part of North Cachar Hill district formed the principality of Cachar under the Dimasa kings since 1745 A.D. In 1832 after the assassination of the last Dimasa ruler Govinda Chandra, the territory was passed over to the British rulers (U.C. Guha: Cacharer Itibritta : Hoogli Chapra Srirampore pp167-169). The district of Karimganj was a part of the neighbouring Sylhet region of the Eastern Bengal and thus it constituted a part of the Bengal Subah under the Mughal Emperors. When the whole of Bengal was conquered by the British after the Battle of Palashi in 1757 the region went under the British along with the entire Eastern Bengal (J.B. Bhattacharjee: Cachar Under British Rule in North East India : Radiant Publication : New Delhi:1977 pp 30-32). In 1874 the British rulers added the modern districts of Cachar and Hailakandi (then constituted the district of Cachar) along with the district of Sylhet (Modern Karimganj district was its subdivision) to Assam for administrative convenience. As a Bengalee dominated zone in the state of Assam both the districts were specifically identified in the Government records as the Surma Valley Division of the state (W.W. Hunter : Statistical Accounts of Assam.1879 p375). Just before the Independence of India, in July 1947 the
Referendum of Syllhet took place on the question of the partition of the country. In the Referendum the major part of the Sylhet district decided to go with Pakistan and only three and half thanas of the Karimganj subdivision voted to join India. They were added to the district of Cachar as the Karimganj subdivision at the time of independence (Census of India Cachar District 1951 p7). In 1983 Karimganj and in 1989 Hailakandi were separated from Cachar and were made two new districts for administrative convenience. In the post-independence period the entire region covering the districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi became popularly known as the Barak valley after the name of the principal river the Barak flowing over it.

People of Barak Valley speak the Sylheti dialect of Bengali. But they speak standard form of Bengali on special occasions like delivering lectures on the stage before microphone. They also use standard form when they write. There are Manipuri, Bihari or other Hindi speaking people, Marwari doing business, Reang, Burman and small number of Khasi people live in Barak Valley. But all of them use Sylheti dialect as a link language.

1.1.7 Colleges in Barak Valley and Present position of Teaching English in these colleges

There are many colleges in Barak valley. In Cachar district, there are G.C. College (Silchar), Cachar College (Silchar), Women college (Silchar), Radhamadhav College (Silchar), M.C.D. College (Sonai), Kabugonj College (Kabugonj), Pailapool College (Pailapool), Kalain College (Kalain), West Silchar College (Barjatrapur), Jagannath Singh College (Udharbond). There is also a
Medical College and an Engineering College (NIT, Silchar), A.K. Chanda Law College (Silchar) and B.Ed. College (Silchar). In Karimganj district, Karimganj College (Karimganj), R.S. Girls’ College (Karimganj), R.K. Nagar College (R.K. Nagar), Nilambazar College (Nilambazar) & Patharkandi College (Patharkandi) are there. In Hailakandi district, S.S. College (Hailakandi), Lala Rura College (Lala), A.L.C. College (Algapur), M.H.C. Memorial Science College (Algapur), S.C. Dey College (Katakhal), S.K. Roy College (Katlicherra) & Women College (Hailakandi) are there. All these Degree colleges are affiliated to Assam University, Silchar. The oldest Colleges of the Barak valley are G.C. College, Silchar established in 1935, Karimganj College (Karimganj) in 1946 and S.S. College, Hailakandi established in 1950.

Although the medium of instruction is only English in these colleges, there is no English speaking environment. All the students speak Sylheti dialect even in the college campus. Except a few, almost all the teachers also speak this dialect. Even in classes, majority of the teachers deliberate their lectures in this Bengali dialect or in Standard form. Majority of the science teachers think that the students do not understand English and hence for their better understanding of the subject, they use local language. In Arts classes also some teachers use local language. Only in English classes, teachers use English but sometimes some of them mix Bengali while deliberating their lectures. As a result, the students do not listen English and are weak in speaking English. Side by side, many teachers are also not comfortable in speaking English in Barak Valley. In Barak Valley, there is no environment for listening and speaking English and this is reflected in the
1.2 The present study

The present work is an attempt to study the situation of English among the undergraduate students of the three districts of Barak Valley namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. This study also attempts to analyse the Basic English grammar which are essential for speaking and writing correct English and also for securing good marks in the examinations.

English has occupied a place in the international field which no one can deny. Thus English has become a compulsory subject of study in all educational institutions. The syllabus is also designed in such a way that along with literature, grammar is also included. It is very natural that no one can write or speak correct English without grammar. Learners start learning English almost from the early stage of their academic life and continue learning English upto under graduate level. During this long period of study, the students must be well aware of this subject. But practically it does not happen. They cannot speak or write English comfortably. Of course, English medium students are exceptions as they get the environment for listening and speaking English. In vernacular medium schools, English is taught very seriously and the old grammar-translation method is followed. Even then the students are very weak in English. Along with prose and poetry, grammar is also taught by the teachers with interest but the result is not achieved.
When the students come to undergraduate level, it is found that even at this stage majority of the students are not able to speak English and their knowledge of Basic English grammar is very weak. Although the students having English medium background can speak English, their knowledge of Basic grammar is found very weak. It is sometimes contradictory to note that some vernacular medium students are better than the English medium students as far as grammar is concerned. It is found that while speaking English, the English medium students use expressions like ‘cousin brother, cousin sister, blunder mistake, fill up the blanks, return back, with bag and baggage, did not went, I am hoping , I would be knowing and many more which are wrong.

Hence the purpose of this study is to deal with English language with special emphasis on Basic English grammar and to analyse it so that both the teachers and students find interest in teaching and learning English respectively. As for grammar, if the teachers teach sincerely and the students learn it with interest, it will not stand as a barrier for students in answering the questions on grammar in the examinations or writing correct English. Thus the aim of the researcher is to investigate the present status of English among the under graduate students of the three districts of Barak Valley namely, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi and to advance findings and some suggestions after data collection and analysis.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

English is comparatively an easy language and its grammar is also easy to understand. But there is a wrong notion among the people that this is a hard subject
of study and the students are also not the exceptions. Some students are afraid of English particularly its grammar and hence they become fully dependent on the teacher and go for private tuition with the intention to pass the examination or to get good marks in English. Although they pass or get good marks in the subject, they do not learn the subject properly and remain weak for the rest of their life.

Students know that English is a language of much importance in the national and international level. It plays a pivotal role in the field of communication. In India also it has a special place. This language is used in the interviews and competitive examinations as a common language. Students get the scope for a long time to study the language upto degree level. But it remains a hard subject to many students. Again, it is found that grammar remains a dry subject of study and even most of the teachers of English in colleges are indifferent to teaching English grammar and some of them expressed their inability to teach grammar in a very close discussion. As for students, even after coming to undergraduate level their base in English particularly in grammar is found very weak. Majority of the students feel uncomfortable in listening and speaking English. They also feel embarrassed when questions on grammar are asked or when they are asked to speak English. The study of grammar is an interesting field but a very few show interest in the study of grammar. Many of the teachers prefer to teach prose, poetry etc. and remain confined to syllabus so that it can be finished in time. By syllabus, some teachers mean prose, poetry, drama or novel and they say that the students should practise grammar and composition themselves at home as they were taught grammar and composition earlier upto H.S. level. So Grammar remains untouched at degree level. Grammar is not included in Dibrugarh
University syllabus as their idea is that the students must have the basic knowledge of grammar because they studied grammar up to H.S. level.

The researcher has undertaken the study of grammar at under graduate level for certain reasons. Normally, English grammar and composition are prescribed at degree level by many universities. In Assam University degree syllabus, grammar is prescribed for Degree First Semester students, composition for second semester students. So Degree first semester is the last stage of learning English grammar for Assam University students. In second year and third year Degree classes, there is no General English subject. The Assam University has prescribed some grammar in first semester which were studied earlier by the students. It is clear that the University authority wants that the students should have the last chance to revise their knowledge of grammar. Moreover, 50% of the syllabus is based on grammar so that the students can score good marks in English. But the researcher has found from his long teaching experience that students do not get good marks in English rather many of them fail in this subject although the syllabus is very small. Where the defect lies has become a subject of research and to find out the solution or remedy is a big task. Barak valley is within the reach of the researcher and hence he has undertaken this research project to study the situation of English particularly the Basic grammar among the students of Barak Valley districts. Side by side, he aims to analyse grammar in an easy way so that both the teachers and students find interest to study this subject. With this end in view, a detailed investigation has been made. The outcome of the research work may be helpful in overcoming the defects of the teaching process. The teachers may take help for further
improvement of their present teaching ideas. Again it would be of great help for the future researchers to work on the related field. Moreover, in future, the findings of the research may influence the public authorities who make policies and the persons who design the curriculum.

1.4 Objectives of the research work

The main objectives of the research work are:

1. To investigate the present situation of English in general and grammar in particular among the undergraduate students of the three districts of Barak Valley, namely Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi.

2. To analyse the Basic English grammar which are necessary to speak and write English correctly and which are also prescribed in the syllabus of Assam University, Silchar.

3. To help the teachers to know the best methods and ways of teaching English grammar so that the students can learn it easily and remember it forever.

The other objectives of the undertaken research are as follows:

1. To make the teachers conscious about the difference between the British English and the American English as students are confused when they use computer because in computer normally we find American English. However, it can be converted to British English also for the convenience of the learners.
2. To make the teachers aware of the varieties of English and the particular dialect which is standard English and used as official language so that they can inform the students about it.

3. To inform the teachers about the importance of listening and speaking skill so that they encourage the students to listen and speak English.

1.5 Hypothesis

The proposed research work is based on the following hypothesis:

1. The competency level of English language by teachers and students is not effective upto the mark.

2. The teachers’ and students’ lack of interest in teaching and learning English grammar respectively is the main cause which hampers the teaching and learning process.

3. The grammar study remains a neglected part as much care has not been given to it by many concerned with it.

1.6 Statement of the problem

English is a compulsory object of study in all classes upto under graduate level. Students get the scope for a long time to learn the subject. When the students come to under graduate level their knowledge of English must be good. But it is not normally found with majority of the students. Students who studied in English medium schools earlier can speak English but the vernacular medium students cannot speak. As for grammar, both the section of students are found weak in grammar. The condition of vernacular medium students is very pathetic. Except a very small number of students, majority of them can neither speak nor write the
language correctly. Even when the students having English medium background speak English, they use wrong expression like cousin brother, cousin sister, blunder mistake etc. It is also found that some students are afraid of English. They memorise and somehow manage to pass. But most of the students fail in the subject even at the under graduate level although the syllabus of Assam University is very small. Every year many students have to clear back papers in English. The question arises how these students passed the examinations earlier.

Normally in vernacular medium schools, students do not listen English in the mouth of their teachers who teach English and the students are also not required to speak English. When these students come to degree level, they feel very uncomfortable when they are required to listen the lectures of the teachers in English. Many of them express that they do not understand English and request the teachers to speak in the local dialect. Teachers also feel that they do not understand English and hence the lectures often become bilingual. But a big question arises why the students are very weak in grammar particularly the Basic grammar which are prescribed in the syllabus. A number of factors associated with both the learners of English and the teachers of English are there. Most of the college teachers concentrate on teaching prose, poetry, drama, novel etc. but they do not prefer to teach grammar or avoid it. Students are also not serious about it. Hence grammar remains a neglected part.

The present study tries to investigate these problems : the part being played by learners of English while learning and the teachers while teaching English particularly the Basic English grammar at under graduate level in Barak Valley
districts as Assam University, Silchar has prescribed a syllabus for degree course in which general English is made compulsory in first year where 50% of the syllabus is based on grammar and composition. A student can pass the examination only with the help of grammar and composition or can secure good marks but this does not happen to many students under this university.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study is based on ten colleges of the three districts of Barak Valley which are under Assam University, Silchar. Three colleges from each district have been taken. Out of these three colleges, one college is from urban area, one college is rural based and one is girls’ college. Total three colleges from urban area, three from rural areas and three women colleges are there. Also the only one Science College in Barak Valley is taken as field of study and as sample. The number of colleges has been limited to ten only for time constraint and for better results.

1. Colleges from Urban areas
   i. G.C. College, Silchar
   ii. Karimganj College, Karimganj
   iii. S.S. College, Hailakandi

2. Colleges from Rural areas
   i. M.C.D. College, Sonai, Cachar
   ii. Nilambazar College, Nilambazar, Karimganj
   iii. A.L.C. College, Algapur, Hailakandi

3. Ladies’ Colleges
   i. Women College, Silchar
ii. R.S. Girls’ College, Karimganj

iii. Women College, Hailakandi

4. M.H.C. Science College, the only Science College in Barak Valley.

The above categories are made for the convenience of data collection and analysis. Only the students of Degree third semester are taken as the target group so as to find out the real scenario of the English language teaching and learning. The researcher has decided to examine the third semester students and collect data from them because they have already passed the general English subject. They have gathered the experience of teaching and learning situation in degree first year; how they were taught by the teachers and how much they achieved from the class room teaching of English particularly the Basic English grammar which were prescribed for them.

1.8 Methodology of data collection

Definition of the sample: The study is based on survey. The data required for the study have been collected from the teachers and students of ten colleges of the three districts of Barak Valley. Three colleges from Cachar district, three from Karimganj district and three from Hailakandi district and a Science College located at Hailakandi are taken. Data used are both primary and secondary.

Tools used for the study: The data required for the study are collected with the help of:

1. Questionnaires
2. Personal interview
3. Observation of classroom teaching.
4. Two sets of questionnaire have been prepared for collection of data. One set is prepared for teachers and another for students. After collection of data, these have been interpreted and analysed.

1.9 Organisation of the study (Chapterisation)

The researcher has undertaken a survey in total ten colleges of Barak Valley of which three are from urban areas, three are from rural areas and three are ladies colleges and one Science College covering Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi on the basis of the objectives of the study.

The entire thesis is divided in the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Chapter 3: English Language Teaching : A Brief Profile

   3.1 Introduction to Teaching English
   3.2 Teaching Basic English Grammar
   3.3 Common Errors in English
   3.4 Pronunciation: An Important Issue
   3.5 Methods of Teaching and the Teacher’s Role

Chapter 4 : Curriculum and Syllabus

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Chapter 6: Findings and Suggestions

Chapter 7: Conclusion

These chapters are followed by a Bibliography and Appendices.
Chapter 1: This chapter is Introduction which includes the background of the study, geographical location of Barak Valley and a map of Barak Valley districts where the research has been undertaken, rationale of the study, objectives of the research work, hypothesis, statement of the problem, scope and limitation of the study, names of the colleges in Barak Valley and present position of teaching English in these colleges. Also the names of the colleges where the survey has been conducted, methodology and data collection (definition of the sample, tools used for the study) and organisation of the study (chapterisation of the thesis) are there. In the background of the study, the researcher has presented a brief description of language, origin of English language, position of English language, rise and spread of English language in India, role of English language in the North-Eastern States.

Chapter 2: This chapter is the “Review of Literature”. In this chapter, the researcher has highlighted various works available which are related to this field of studies. During the library visits, various research works have been found on English language teaching both at national and international levels. But it is very difficult to find research works on the related field at the Barak valley level. Moreover, it is also very difficult to trace any work on the systematic study of Basic English grammar. As far as the researchers knowledge goes, no similar work has been done on the Basic English grammar till date. However, some existing literature related to the present study both at national and international level are found and reviewed in this chapter. The present study is based on teaching Basic English Grammar in Barak Valley. Hence some grammar books which are available in Barak Valley need to be reviewed. With this end in view, the
researcher visited some famous book stalls of Barak Valley and collected the grammar books which are normally sold by them and followed by the students and teachers of Barak Valley. Some of the grammar books are also reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: This chapter is ‘English Language Teaching : A brief profile’. There are five sub-chapters under this chapter.

3.1 Introduction to teaching English: In this heading, an introduction to teaching English is given. It is very essential on the part of the teachers to know the varieties of English and which variety of English is being taught, the learners should know that. There are varieties of English viz. British and American and also in British English there are dialects. The teachers should inform the students the particular dialect which is Standard English and used as official language. So these are discussed in this sub-chapter.

3.2 Teaching Basic English Grammar : In this sub-chapter, Basic English Grammar has been discussed. By Basic English Grammar, the researcher means that the grammar which are necessary to write correct English and to speak correctly and also which are prescribed in the Syllabus for General English as a compulsory paper. The discussion has been started from the Alphabet as English grammar starts from its Alphabet. The chapters like Vowel and Consonant, Word and Sentence, Use of capital letters, Subject and Predicate, Parts of speech, Objects, Verbs, Correlatives, Gender, Number, Person, Case, Mood, Gerund and Verbal noun, Transformation of sentences, Tag question, Determiners including Articles, Tense, Voice, Quasi-Passive Verb, Narration
(Direct and Indirect Speech), Degree of comparison, Punctuation, Clause and its analysis, Subject-Verb agreement (concord) etc. are discussed. From School level to Degree Pass Course level, some of the above chapters are normally prescribed in the Syllabus for study. The journey of English grammar starts from alphabet and ends with written composition. Unless a student is fully aware of Basic English grammar, he or she cannot write compositions correctly. Each of the above chapters has been discussed separately with some techniques wherever possible so that the students can understand grammar easily and remember it forever.

3.3 Common Errors in English: In this sub-chapter, there is a discussion on common mistakes in English which are often committed because of the lack of clear knowledge of Basic English grammar. Correct English is based on grammar and usage. So some incorrect sentences are discussed on the basis of grammar and usage.

3.4 Pronunciation: An Important Issue: In this heading, there is a discussion on pronunciation of English words including the wrong pronunciation of some Indian names and places. Pronunciation is a tough task for both teachers and students whose mother tongue is not English. The same is the case with English speaking people also. British came to India and ruled over this country for two hundred years. But they could not pronounce the Indian names of people and places in a proper way. To achieve correct pronunciation, training is necessary and the best way to pronounce is to imitate proper pronunciation of the words. It may be done
comparing the pronunciation of an unknown word with a known word e.g. **bury** as in **cherry**, **deaf** as in **dead**, **tortoise** as in **forties** and the like.

### 3.5 Methods of teaching and the teacher’s role

In this sub-chapter, different methods of teaching English are discussed along with the role of teacher. There are many methods of teaching and some of the important methods are discussed in this chapter.

**Chapter 4:** This chapter is ‘**Curriculum and Syllabus**’. In this chapter, the Curriculum and the Syllabus of Assam University are discussed critically. Also there is a common discussion on the syllabus. Assam University Degree General English syllabus is limited to first year. Drama, Novel and Essays, are not included. Hence General English should be extended to second year also to accommodate drama, novel, and essays. Communicative English should be there and ‘Listening and Speaking’ should also be included as it is in Assam Higher Secondary Syllabus.

**Chapter 5:** This chapter is ‘**Data Analysis and Interpretation**’. In the beginning of this chapter, the methodology adopted for the study is discussed in detail. However, this chapter is the basis of the present research work. The study is based on data collected from field survey through questionnaires, personal interviews and classroom observations. The study was conducted during the academic years 2013 and 2014 in the colleges of Barak Valley. The data so collected are analysed and interpreted in this chapter for the purpose of findings and suggestions.

The study is based on data collected from field study. The data required for the study were collected from total ten colleges of Cachar, Karimganj and
Hailkandi. Total population of the students was 400. There were thirty students from arts section from each college, twenty from science where science section was available and twenty from commerce section where commerce was available. Extra ten questionnaires were supplied to M.H.C. Science College, Algapur, the only science college in Barak Valley to make the total population of students 400 for easy calculation of percentage.

Total number of teachers’ population was twenty five. These twenty five teachers were available during data collection. Eleven teachers were from Cachar district, seven teachers were from Karimganj district and seven teachers were also from Hailakandi district.

The data were collected with the help of questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations. Two sets of questionnaires, one for the student respondents and the other for the teacher respondents were prepared. The students’ questionnaire contains sixty five questions covering Basic grammar from various angles and on language. The questions on grammar are normally included in the syllabi which are necessary for basic knowledge of English language and also which are set in the examinations. The teachers’ questionnaire contains only seventeen questions mainly based on students and syllabus. The researcher personally visited the colleges under survey taking permission from the principals of the respective colleges, met the students in the classroom and teachers in their common room and distributed the questionnaires among the respondents and collected the questionnaires from them.

Out of sixty five questions of the students’ questionnaire, question numbers 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 are based on English language, numbers 63 and 64 are about
the teachers and the other questions are based on English grammar. Question Nos. 5, 9, 10, 11, 39, 63 and 64 were to be answered only by giving tick (√) mark against the chosen answer. Other questions were to be answered in one sentence or in one word. The questions on grammar were based on the definition of ‘grammar’, consonants, semi vowels, definition of the word, subject and predicate, determiners (including articles), syllables, parts of speech, antecedents, complements, objects, strong verbs, weak verbs, defective verbs, quasi-passive verbs, participles, correlatives, gender, number, mood, modal verbs, case, transformation of sentences, tag question, tense, voice change, narration, clause, prefix, suffix, word-order, phrase, idiom and group verbs, substitution into a single word, formation of sentences and correction. Serial number 65 has thirty three sentences covering various angles of grammar which were to be corrected by the students in a very short way.

On the other hand, the teachers’ questionnaire was based on teachers’ opinion about their students, syllabus etc. Only the opinions of the teachers were sought to find out the present situation of English in Barak Valley. Questions are:
1. Whether the teachers teach English grammar.
2. Whether the teachers prefer to teach English grammar.
3. Whether the teachers complete the grammar prescribed in the syllabus or not.
4. Whether students are aware of Basic English grammar.
5. Assam University General English is confined to first year only, whether it should be in second and third year also.
6. Most of the students in Barak Valley cannot speak English, why?
7. Whether the teachers deliver the lectures in English or in Bengali or Bilingual.
8. When the teachers speak English inside the class, students understand it or not.
9. Teachers’ opinion about grammar - an interesting
subject or a dry subject. 10. Whether the students request the teachers to explain
the subject in local dialect or not. 11. Whether the teachers are in favour of a
separate class for spoken English. 12. The students are getting sufficient time in the
present semester system or not. 13. Teachers’ opinion about the students – whether
they are interested in learning English or not. 14. Whether the students have base
in English. 15. Whether General English should be included in second year or third
year. 16. Any student is zero-based at the under graduate level or not. 17. There are
some anomalies in the Oxford Dictionary about ‘Lakh’ and ‘Crore’ and the
teachers’ opinion was sought.

The researcher also interviewed students and teachers during his visit to the
colleges under survey and collected some information (data) from them about the
actual situation of teaching and learning in Barak Valley. The researcher also
observed the class room situation while he met the students in the class room.

After the data collection, the researcher analysed, both the students’ and
teachers’ questionnaires. And the results found from the data are presented
separately in tabular form. The responses are also mentioned in percentage.

Chapter 6: Findings and Suggestions: This is the most important chapter of this
research work. In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented in detail and
suggestions are put forward.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: This is the last chapter and in this chapter, the researcher
has drawn a conclusion about the research paper which will help in improving the
teaching and learning of English not only in Barak Valley but also in other places
of the country. In this chapter, the scope for future research on teaching and
learning English is also discussed.