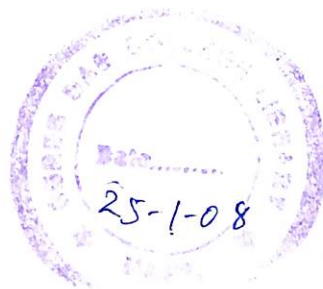


**PROBLEMS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND
LANGUAGE IN RURAL AREAS**
(An Investigative case studies in Hajo Area)

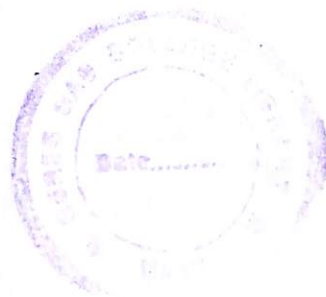
Report of Minor Research Project
Prepared with the Financial Assistance of
University Grants Commission
2007



Ali Akbar Hussain, M.A., B.Ed.
Sr. Lecturer, Department of English
Suren Das College, Hajo
Assam

CONTENTS

Chapter – 1	Introduction	:	2
Chapter – 2	Scenario of English Studies in India	:	6
Chapter – 3	Psychology and Implications of Learning a Second Language	:	14
Chapter – 4	Factors Controlling the Process of Learning a Second Language	:	20
Chapter – 5	Investigative Case Studies in Hajo Area.	:	25
Chapter – 6	Conclusion and Suggestions	:	38
	Books and References	:	41
	Appendix	:	43



PREFACE:

The present age is generally referred to as the Information Age in which English has attained the status of global language. Even within India English has emerged as the most commonly accepted link language. In such circumstances, it is absolutely necessary for the teachers of English to identify the hindrances in the path of effective learning of English and also to work out the strategies for removing them in an efficient manner. For the elite class or city people it is not a problem, as there are well-established English medium school. But the picture of teaching English in rural areas is quite dismal and not encouraging. SO the problems of teaching English in rural areas and their remedial measures have been recommended in the study.

The report has been prepared with the financial assistance of the University Grants Commission and I take the opportunity to acknowledge my heartfelt gratitude to the commission. I also thank the chairperson and faculty members of ELTI, Kahilipara; the controller of examinations, SEBA, ELT, Dept. of Gauhati University for their co-operation in the collection of data. My special thanks goes to the Heads of the schools for their active co-operation.

Finally, it may expected that the study which proves to be very pertinent in the present academic circumstances will come to help the teachers, planners and policy makers and thus help the society and the country at large.

Date:
Place:

Ali Akbar Hussain
Dept. of English
Suren Das College, Hajo.

CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION:

English has been an important role in our educational system as well as in our national life. It helped in the growth of nationalism in India and served as a great force in our struggle for independence. Study of English has enriched the Indian language and literature, science and technology. Its role as a national link language, as an international link language and as a library language compels us to reorganize teaching of English in India on scientific lines.

English studies in India now-a-days is no more a colonized language but a language of power, a source language with ample opportunities. In spite of being a second language, English becomes an essential part of our academics.

In view of the importance of English in terms of communication skills or language of comprehension, teaching of English in rural areas deserves to get due attention. The scenario of English studies in rural areas is not encouraging. No effective teaching of English is being done at present in schools and colleges situated in rural areas. Of course the situation is quite different in the urban areas, for there are well-established English Medium Schools to which are sent the children of the upper class and middle class urban elite. English has been regarded as the largest killers of students in the

final examinations. To avoid this problem of large scale failure, proper diagnosis of the issue has to be done.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

In this paper an attempt has been made to deal with the issue from practical approach keeping in mind the following objectives:

- (i) To explore necessary factors for learning a second language with a focus o competence of teachers,
- (ii) To highlight students' status, background and motivation necessary for learning a second language,
- (iii) To assess parents' background and consciousness for learning a second language.
- (iv) To find out some remedial measures for the improvement of English in rural areas.

3. METHODOLOGY:

For the convenience of study 5 sample schools of rural areas of Hajo targeting bio-data of 500 students of class X or matric standard have been taken into consideration.

Questionnaire, interview, group discussion, previous achievements, test etc. are adopted. As per original plan of the work and to achieve the objectives mentioned I prepared questionnaires relating the competence of teacher, socio-economic background of parents, students' motivation and

infrastructure requirements as well as management. I have already collected questionnaires, interviewed some of the teachers and head of the institutions. I collected information and data from the school authority. I contacted SEBA and collected some related information. I purchased equipment, materials and books related to my research work. I studied the formats and detected some problems of teaching English as a second language. I analysed the data in my final report.

In this study an attempt has been made to understand the extent, nature, and gravity of the issue and to find out the root causes behind the mass failure of students in English in the final examinations. In the study English has been highlighted as global language because of the political and economic dominance of Britain and the United States of the World scene in the modern age. In the present work an analysis has also been made on the current and changing scenario of English studies in India, its role as a means of communication as well as a language of opportunities in the age of science and technology, psychology and implications of learning English as a second language has been dealt with in the study. The prime concern of the study is the factors controlling the learning process of a second language and also the necessary conditions for learning English as a second language. Specially, the teachers' competence, socio-economic background of student's parents, lack of infrastructure and teaching materials and teacher's attitude have been taken into account in the discussion. Factors responsible for determination of standard of English in general and rural area in

particular have been pursued. A field study has been conducted in the selected schools on the issue and some relevant data have been collected with the help of tools like questionnaire, interviews and discussion. The data collected are analysed and the findings of the investigation have led to the reaffirmation of the objectives of the study. On the basis of the investigation, the problems basically related to teaching of English in rural areas have been highlighted. As recommended by some scholars and linguists, some remedial measures have also been suggested in the study for the improvement of the situation.

CHAPTER – 2

SCENARIO OF ENGLISH STUDIES IN INDIA

ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE:

Today, English is the most widely spoken language of the world. It is the common means of communication between the peoples of different nations. One person out of every four can be reached through English. India, English continues to be the medium of instruction in a large numbers of schools, colleges and universities and is the language of administration. It is the language used for national, international conferences, workshops and summits. The compulsions of learning English in present time is not only political but also scientific and technological. English is no longer the language of Great Britain only. It is the language required by the world for greater understanding, "it is the most international of languages." (Quirk 5).¹

English is the mother of our 500 million people belonging to many races and nations. No language, ancient or modern, can be compared with English in the magnitude of geographical distributions of the houses, shops, factories, and offices in which the language is used for speaking, writing and reading purposes. Though Chinese and Russian too are spoken by millions of people, English alone can boast of a world wide distribution and an overwhelming numerical superiority.

¹ Quirk, Raudolph: The use of English, London, Longman, 1962.

The various manifestations of modern science and technology, especially the latest means of communication, information technology and transportation – have made the world shrink to the size of a global village, consequently the people from different parts of the world have started coming into contact with each other for different purposes such as commercial, social, scientific, academic, aesthetic, emotional and political more frequently than ever before. English has established itself as the important global language in all the fields mentioned above. The learning of English as a second / third/ foreign language is increasing day by day all over the world.

“The twenty first century, opens new avenues of globalization, and English is the most suitable language as far as globalization is concerned because of its richness and flexibility.”²

ENGLISH AS A NATIONAL LINK LANGUAGE:

As teachers of English, it is necessary for us to understand the role of English studies in India during past, present and future. English is growing stronger and stronger with the passage of time despite its unrelenting condemnation by some political and social forums. English is spoken by only 5-6% of the population, yet it is the associate official language. India is a land of diverse cultures, languages and ideas, but it is English that

² Ghotra Balavindra : English Studies in India, 2005, p.23.

performs the role of a link language between the linguistically desperate regions with higher education institution, English is the preferred medium, specially in the field of science and technology. We the teachers of English, must be aware of the historical, political and social factors responsible for the steady rise in the social standing of English in India.

India is the third largest English using land in the world after the United States of America and United Kingdom. English becomes the common means of communication among the Indians. Today English has entered the fabric of India's culture. The first three decades of the 19th century marked the beginning of English education in India, but it was a period of slow incubation. However, the study of English strengthened in the years that followed Macaulay's Minute on Education in India and with the implementation of the educational policy of Macaulay, a social, cultural and literary renaissance swept over the whole of India. This also resulted in the adoption of English as the official language of India, and helped to revivify the regional languages. Another and far more important consequence of the use of English was that it stimulated a new consciousness, among the people, of political and cultural nationalism and encouraged the quest for the true meaning of the Indian experience of history in relation to the west. New movements, religious, social and cultural also sprang out of this encounter.

For us, Indians, English has a special place. This is not merely because English is a world language but because it has historical associations and has made an impact on our cultural life. For this reason

English is not a foreign language to us, it is a second language. It is unlike Russian or French or German to us. So, in the teaching of English in India, we should treat it as a second language and not as a foreign language.

We need English not only for operational purposes but also for identifying ourselves with those who use the language in India and abroad. Moreover, a large number of Indians, prefer this language for their creative exploration.

ENGLISH AS A LIBRARY LANGUAGE:

English is a gateway or window to world literature, perhaps the most important role, English has to play in India is as a library language. English is the key to the store-house of knowledge. Books on all branches of knowledge are available in English. Besides, 60% of the world's technical journals, news papers, periodicals, etc. are published in English. Through English we can have the test of world literature. In this age of information and technology, English has played a key role in collecting information and knowledge from varied sources.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM:

The official language commission appointed by the govt. of India clearly indicates the position of English in our educational system. Since we need knowledge of English for different purposes, the content and character

of the language as well as the method of imparting it have to undergo a change. English has to be taught principally as language of 'comprehension' rather than as literary language in the schools. The three language formula, first suggested by the National Integration Commission (1962) and later recommended by the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) envisages compulsory study of English either as a second language (L_2) or as a third language (L_3) for a duration of six years or three years respectively in non-Hindi speaking areas, and as a second language of six years duration in Hindi speaking areas. The regional language or the first language (L_1) is to be taught from Class-I to Class-X and the second and the third language are to be introduced in Class-V and Class-VIII respectively. This has been modified from time to time. In Assam, at present, introduction of English from Class-I has been suggested to minimize the difference between English medium school and vernacular schools.

OBJECTIVES OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE SCHOOLS CURRICULUM:

As observed by T.C. Baruah in his illuminating work 'The English Teachers Handbook,' the objectives of teaching of English at school stage may be summed up as developing in the pupils the following skills and knowledge.

- (1) To understand English with ease when spoken at normal conversational speed.

- (2) To speak English fluently and correctly
- (3) To read English with comprehension and at a reasonable speed so as to use it as a library language for gathering information and for enjoying reading.
- (4) To write neatly and correctly at a reasonable speed.
- (5) To enjoy simple poems in English.
- (6) To acquire knowledge of the elements of English for practical command of the language.
- (7) To translate common English words, phrases and sentences into their functional equivalents in mother tongue and vice versa.
- (8) To develop interest in English.

The other important aspect which have a bearing on defining the objectives of a language course etc. (i) the situation in life where the students will have to use their language skills, and (ii) the course content i.e. lexical items, sentence pattern etc. that the students will learn at different stages of the course. In other words, we must define the framework of life situations and language content within which the language skills are to operate. Such a frame work would tell us exactly where we expect our students to use English and amount of language material should be supplied to them for the purpose.

As regards life situation, the aim at the school stage is to enable the students to use English in ordinary every day situations, such as carrying on ordinary conversations, listening to radio news and talk in English, reading non-technical prose, enjoying simple poetry, writing personal letters, applications, reports etc.

In pre-independence India, we need English only for operational purposes, but in post-independence era it acquires the status of the language of opportunity both at the national and international level. So, our aim in teaching English to our students is to enable them to use English with ease and comfort. The basic aim of teaching any second language is to enable the students to develop the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Teachers of English should undertake the task of giving a sound knowledge of English to our students keeping in mind a radically enlarged view of the function of English in India as well as in the world today. The emphasis ought to be on good and not on English just as library language, classroom English or text-book English but on standard English which is necessary for real communicative purposes or to express himself in speech or writing in a much greater variety of contexts.³

TEACHING ENGLISH IN BILINGUAL PATTERN OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA:

Bilingualism is the practice of using two languages alternatively. According to C. Hoffman, it is a "multifaceted phenomenon."⁴ India is a vast country having a large number of varieties and contrasts. People from different provinces speak in different languages. Indians have varying types

³ Broughton, Geoffrey and others. Teaching English as a Foreign Language, London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p.35.

⁴ Ghotra, Balavindra, English studies in India, 2005, p.73.

of social etiquette. Different religio-philosophic customs and socio-cultural pattern can be found everywhere in India. Language behaviour varies from one socio-geographic group to another. English has been Indigenized (in contact with local codes) in Indian socio-lingual context. Nirupama Sarma, a scholar of repute, opines that bilingualism can also prove to be a big asset in overcoming other problems related to the learning of English as a second language.

Advocating bilingual method some of the scholars opine that the teaching of English can be carried out more effectively by using the Bilingual Method than by Direct Method. This is so because – (i) the majority of the students in the vernacular medium schools have poor knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and spoken English, (ii) the parents of most of the students being illiterate/ semi-illiterate are not in a position to help their wards at home, (iii) there is no congenial environment to have an interaction only through English. In such a precarious situation, the judicious use of the students' mother tongue has a very vital role to play in enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of teaching/learning of English as a second language.

CHAPTER – 3
PSYCHOLOGY AND IMPLICATIONS OF LEARNING
ENGLISH

Psychology and implications of learning English as a Foreign /
second language (Factors controlling learning process of second language):-

(a) Learning a Language:

'Language acquisition' should be distinguished from 'Language learning.' 'Language acquisition means the natural process of acquiring a language, say one's mother tongue, 'learning a language' refers to learning a second language or a foreign language.

Learning a language involves the establishment of the links between the language forms and their meanings. The three factors involved in the process are :-

(i) the form, (ii) the content or meaning and (iii) their association.

In speaking, the speaker associates the appropriate form with the meaning that he has in mind, and in understanding he has associated the meaning with the form he has heard. At normal conversational speed the speaker produces 500 sounds per minute, organizes them into meaningful units of words and sentences, uses the appropriate register to suit the occasion and the listener takes notes of the listener's reactions and necessary adjustments on the basis of these reactions, etc.

LANGUAGE AS A RULE GOVERNED BEHAVIOUR:

The problem of learning a language is primarily a problem of establishing a 'bond' between a language form and its meaning and this sometimes sought to be explained in terms of the psychological process of 'conditioned learning' in animals. But human learning can not be explained away by such a simple mechanistic theory of stimuli and responses. Nor is language learning entirely a matter of habit. The difference between animal learning and human language learning can be easily seen if we observe a parrot learning a language. If a parrot is taught, for instance to say Raju is playing when a boy named Raju is playing, and to say Mira is reading when a girl named Mira is reading, the parrot would be able to produce these two sentences correctly on these two specific occasion. But if one occasion the boy happened to be reading (instead of playing), the poor parrot would not be able to substitute his name in the second sentence and create a new sentence to fit the occasion. Raju is reading. A human child is capable of making this substances because he can grasp a system, which an animal or a bird cannot. In learning his mother tongue, though the child makes numerous mistakes at first, in course of time he unconsciously makes his own generalizations and adhoc rules (which he keeps modifying as he comes across more examples) about the major systems of his language to produce new sentences and to avoid incorrect constructions.

The number of possible sentences in a language is infinite. But the system that control the various language forms are finite and structures of

English are also finite. These limited patterns are used over and over again, in what is known as a 'recursive patterning,' to form larger construction, and a child completely masters these patterns of his mother tongue at a fairly early age. A child internalizes, grammar into automatic habits and it is called 'Ruled Governed Behaviour'⁵ of language.

LANGUAGE AS A SKILL:

Language is often called a 'skill' rather than a 'subject.' Though a skill does not altogether preclude intellectual activity, it is more a matter of 'doing' than of 'knowing.' In learning the mother tongue, the first skill that a child acquires is the ability to understand the spoken word, the skill of listening. Next, he tries to reproduce these sound sequences to express his own desires and needs and thereby acquires the skill of speaking. For an illiterate person, these two basic skills constitute his language ability. The abilities to read and write are matters of literacy. But since we want our pupils to be literate in the language, the skills of reading and writing are also included as basic language skills in the school course. Language is there fore called a complex skills comprising of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

⁵ Baruah T.C.: English Teachers' Handbook, 1995, p.159.

KNOWING A LANGUAGE:

Knowing a language is not the same thing as knowing about a language. A child or an illiterate person generally does not know anything about his mother tongue, yet he can use it with perfect facility. On other hand, a grammarian may know a great deal about the grammar of a foreign language and yet he may not be able to use it with the same facility as a child or an illiterate native speaker does. Knowing a language not only implies the ability to produce the sounds and structures of the language as a matter of automatic habit but also the ability to hold under attention the entire utterance which demands a Memory span and to notice the errors in one's utterance i.e. Monitor Function.

INTER-RELATIONSHIP OF LANGUAGE SKILLS:

It is observed that two language skills, namely, listening and reading, are comparatively passive, requiring less exertion on the part of the learner. These skills are called receptive skills because when listening or reading the person is at the receiving end of the communication channel, speaking and writing on the other hand, are active skills. Here the person, being at the transmitting end of the channel, has to take the initiative. These two skills are called productive skills.

The skills can also be grouped in another manner. Listening and speaking which demand the exercise of the auditing and the speech organs may be called audio-lingual or Aural-oral skills; while reading and writing involving the visual and the psychomotor organs may be called Graphic-

motor skills. It will be seen that the skills overlap and there is more than one way of grouping them. When we are in conversation, we are to listen and speak almost at the same time. So is the case with reading and writing. Further, no one can produce a sound he has not heard or write a letter he has not seen. The common factor involved in all these skills are the 'language code' i.e. the different system of the language.

LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE:

Language skills, like any other skills, can be acquired only through practice. In the case of the mother tongue, the child gets sufficient scope for this practice in his daily environment. He uses the language at home, in the playground, at school, - everywhere. And he has so many teachers; his parents, other members in the family, friends, relatives, almost everyone with whom he comes in contact in his daily life. He has also the strongest motivation or urge to learn the language, for if he cannot express himself in his mother tongue, some of his basic needs are likely to remain unfulfilled. The child practices the language without being conscious of the fact that he is learning a highly complex code. The environment supply him with the models for imitation and example for formulation of his adhoc rules about the language.

In case of a second language, particularly when it happens to be a foreign language, like English, these natural resources are not available to the learner. A second language is learnt deliberately, usually in formal

classroom teaching. Therefore, the classroom teaching must provide sufficient motivation and scope for practicing the language. Further language material presented for practice is to be carefully selected to highlight the regularities of the language of the language so that pupils can make their own adhoc rules.

THE PULL OF THE MOTHER TONGUE:

When a child acquires his first language (mother tongue), he begins as it were, with a clean state. As he acquires the language, its forms, meanings, and their associations get impressed on his mind and they became part of his reflex actions. When he begins to learn a second language, the situation is quite different whenever he wants to express something in the second language, he has to keep the habits of the first language in check in order to produce the new sounds and structures. His ears have become so accustomed to the mother tongue sounds that he does not easily hear the difference between the sounds of the two languages and as a result cannot produce the distinctive sounds of the second language. This compels him to replace the sounds of the second language with the similar sounds of his mother tongue. The same is the case with structures. This tendency of replacement is known as 'pull of the mother tongue.'⁶

⁶ Baruah, T.C.: The English Teachers' Handbook, 1995, p.163.

CHAPTER – 4

FACTORS OR CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

We, Indians, are not native speakers' of English; to us English is a second language. So, learning it is not as natural to us as to the native speakers. The native speakers imbibed the language with his mother's milk. For us learning English is essentially a deliberate effort at developing a command and control of the different components of the language; its phonology (sound system, its morphology (the patterns and parts of words), and its syntax (the patterns of phrases and sentences). The question is : how can we Indians, master these components of English when we learn it as a second language?

We know that the native speakers acquire his mother tongue through imitation. From the moment of his birth the child is exposed to the sounds of the language. He is thus in constant contact with these sounds. He is exposed both to spoken language and natural speech. He acquires what he is exposed to. If he is exposed to two languages because of his bilingual environment, he acquires both languages simultaneously.

One of the important conditions of learning a second language is abundant exposure to the language. As D.A. Wilkins observes, "One year in the classrooms provides the equivalent of from one to three weeks contact in

a language.”⁷ A very significant factor in language learning is motivation. The child acquiring his mother tongue has his motivation in the recognition that he wins all around in the urge to establish identity with other children. But the second language learner has his motivation in the need to communicate whatever be the level of communication he wants to reach. So, emphasis should be laid on the communicative use of language. The classroom activity should be geared to this, and the learners should be well-motivated to ensure effective learning through a natural urge to communicate.

The child learns to speak first; then only does he learn to write and that too when taught; speaking he does without being formally trained. On the analogy of the child's language acquisition should the second language learner be taught speech first, and writing next? In other words, is it psychologically necessary or beneficial for speech to be learnt before writing? The history of human language shows that it came to be spoken first and written afterwards.

There are certain variable factors which are of great importance in second language learning. The most important of these factors is the duration of exposure to the language. In India English is taught as a second language in schools and colleges for five or six hours in a week perhaps this duration is hardly adequate; also the courses are spread over years.

⁷ Verghese, C. Paul: Teaching English as a Second Language, 1998, p.20.

Another factor in learning is classroom conditions. These conditions include the number of students in a class the physical arrangement for the class, the teaching materials such as chalk, black board, audio-visual aids, library etc.

It is very important that second language classes are of the right size. A class consisting of forty or thereabout become un wildly and no individual attention can be paid to students. One of the reason why teaching English in India does not leave any desired impact on the students is that the class is too big for the teacher to do any worth while job.

The availability of the right type of teaching materials and audio-visual aids can certainly make the teaching of English in India quite effective. Audio visual aids are integral part of the learning situation as important as the blackboard and chalk. In India teaching English suffers as a result of the inadequate and poor availability of these resources.

The two vital factors in a second language learning situation are the student and the teacher. The teacher's problem to tackle when he is faced with the task of teaching a class of students who show varying capacities of assimilation. In India even at the college level a large number of students have to be given elementary lesson in the language. They as well as the students who have a better standard feel that the lessons and the methods adopted are not appropriate to their age or status. The result is a kind of general resentment. In such circumstances, the teacher will have to convince

the students that what he wants to do is in their own interest. Some of the students are weakly motivated owing to their social and family background. Here the teacher must have himself stimulate and sustained motivation. The variation that exists in the standard of students in the same class pose other problem too.

Like the students, the teacher himself is a variable factor in the scheme of teaching a second language, his skill and personality are instrumental in creating the necessary conditions for teaching. He should be proficient in the language, his knowledge of and expertise in the method and techniques of language teaching should be of a reasonably high standard. As Robert Lado says **"the language teacher must be educated, atleast to the level of his peers. He must have the general preparation of a teacher... (He) must know the target language well enough to be imitated by his students."** The teacher's language is the principal model for students. In India the main problem is to have competent teachers of English. A large number of present teachers are relatively ill taught and are noted for their lack of professional skill in their understanding of language and language learning and in their command of methods and techniques of language teaching.

Every second language teacher has a serious problem to cope with in the students' bilingualism. In India, this problem is more linguistic than social or cultural. Actually, the social and cultural context is in favour of English learning. But it is a linguistic problem in so far as the habits of

speech in the first language its syntactical structures, its phonological system etc. can become impediments to the learning of English. For example, a Hindi speaking student is likely to say, "though I gave the examination, yet I failed," on the analogy the linguistic pattern with which he is already familiar in his first language.

"Teaching English as a second language in India is beset with problems such as poor motivation, inadequate exposure to the language, poor classroom conditions, lack of teaching aids and materials, incompetence of teachers, bilingualism and its effects on the learner etc.⁸

However, some worth while teaching is possible if the right relationship is established in the attitudes of the learner, the teacher, the learner's parents, and if, through this relationship, the learner is properly motivated.

⁸ Verghese, C. Paul; Teaching English as a Second language, p.27, 1998.

CHAPTER – 5

INVESTIGATIVE CASE STUDIES IN HAJO AREA

Hajo, a place of historical importance was ruled by the Koches, the Ahoms and the Mughals at different period history. Before the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, the Tols, Madrasas, and Satras were the centres of education for the people. Under the policy for expansion of education, Mr. David Scott, the then British Commissioner of Govt. established 11 primary schools of which 1 school was established at Hajo. In 1834 Captain Jenkins became the British Commissioner in Assam. He took interest in the spreading of English education in Assam. In 1835 the first English school namely Guwahati Government Missionary was established. This schools is the present Cotton Collegiate H.S. School.

In Hajo the first M.E. School was established in 1916. In 1936 it was raised to High School and in 1958 it was upgraded to Higher Secondary school and presently it is S.B. S.K.R.H.S. School, after the name of Siksa Bistar Samittee and Late Kanthiram Bharali who was the pioneer of English education in Hajo area.

Now a days, more than 20 high schools (including private schools), 5 H.S. Schools, 3 degree colleges, grew up in the greater Hajo area. Still the standard of English education in Hajo area is not satisfactory. Specially in the rural vernacular medium schools a large number of pupils fail in the final examination. The scenario of English education in the area is not

encouraging. English turned to the largest killer of students in the final examinations till date. While the pass percentage of students in Assam (Table 1) in the 2007 is 54.93, in Kamrup district, it is 66.98% and the pass percentage of the schools undertake for study has been given in table 3. Pass percentage of Hajo Girls' High School is only 18.1. In the private schools the results is better than that of the Govt. Schools.

The result of the private schools in this area is comparatively good. Some bitter truths and unspeakable facts related to lack of administration and mentality of teachers and guardians can be observed on the basis of the confidential report of the supervising officers in various final examinations in the area. As shown in table 3, some of the schools have shown good results in HSLC examinations. But in reality, the quality of the student is very very poor. This can be observed on the basis of the performance in class IX and test examination of HSLC examination of those schools. By hook or crook they want to pass their wards in the examination. My own observation as supervising officer also convinces this attitude.

Table – 1
Results of HSLC examination in Assam

Year	No. of candidates appeared	No. of candidates passed	Pass %
2001	167295	55670	33.27
2002	177075	72374	40.87
2003	175183	77274	44.11
2004	184771	92011	49.79
2005	207083	109917	53.07
2006	199786	106983	53.54
2007	203820	111956	54.93

Table – 2
Result of HSLC Examination in Kamrup District.

Year	No. of candidates appeared	No. of candidates passed	Pass %
2002	23443	11857	52.83
2003	22332	12380	55.43
2004	23556	14517	61.62
2005	25400	16200	63.77
2006	25627	16572	64.66
2007	24408	16350	66.98

Table – 3
Result of HSLC examinations

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Adarsha High School	46	39.2	34	29.6	50.9	61.5	45
Hajo Girls' High School	15	16	17	28.6	16.7	36.4	18.1
F.M. High School	58%	54%	39	50%	34%	48%	43%
R.B.K. High School	36	45	60.6	41.4	43	58	70
B.A.S. H.S. School	54	44	61	91	93	57	71
Barni High School	66.2	45.6	85.2	66.6	83.7	62.1	79.5
Doloitola High School	61.5	37.7	69.8	85.9	81.05	62.6	94.5
Khowpnikuchi High School	75	37.5	59.5	62.9	86.3	72	77.7

In this study I have prepared some information sheet-cum questionnaire formats (A, B, C & D). Format-A – related to background, status, and motivation of students and parents (filled by students). Format-B – related to competence of teacher filled by the English teacher. Format-C – Related to infrastructure, teaching staff, socio-economic background of parents, filled up by Head of the institution. Format-D – Related to

supervision and planning of academic activities and school management, filled up by the Head of the Institution.

Besides I arranged seminar and discussion among the teachers and students to discuss the topic, 'Problems of Teaching English in their schools and try to find out some remedial measures of the problems. While analyzing the responses of the questions on parents qualification and occupation, students' motivation, competence of teachers, physical facilities, teaching materials and school management and find the following responses.

(A) Family Background of Students:

The study undertaken in schools covering 500 students reveals that 25% fathers and 43% mothers are illiterate, while 41% fathers and 48% mothers are under matric. 4% fathers and only 1% mother are graduate. Only 1% father is post graduate and post graduate mother is nil. Regarding occupation of parents we find that 29% fathers are service holder, 37% businessmen, 6% cultivators and 28% professed other occupation of meager income. Of the mothers 89% are house wives, 5% service holders, 3% are business persons and 3% followed other occupation of low income or no income. The parents who are themselves not well educated and whose financial condition is not sound, they are not aware of the needs of the children or they can not show right direction to their children.

For their backwardness and miserable condition they cannot supply the required materials to their kids.

Moreover, 16% of pupils have less than 4 family members while 84% pupils have more than 4 members per family. The parents of low income group having children can not think of the education of their children. They cannot provide the teaching materials to their kids. Nor do they take proper care of the children. 90% pupils watch T.V. or listen to radio, sometimes. Now a days T.V. or radio is an important media playing crucial role in language training. Many programmes are already there in the T.V. that can be used as an important teaching aid. The students can exploit the media for academic purposes, 71% pupils have no dictionary at home. 90% cannot read newspaper, magazine, and study books or journals for want of money. Lack of teaching materials is a factor that hinders in our educational processes. 71% of the students study less than 6 hours. Hard work or study is key to success. How can we expect success without hard labour? 41% have no text books. 96% students do not listen to B.B.C. news. 88% students need tutorial classes. So lack of teaching aids, interest and motivation and important factors stand as hindrance in the teaching learning process of English.

(B) Competence of Teacher:

As per responses in the Format-B, it is seen that out of the 20 school teachers in the schools, I have undertaken in my study, only 2 teachers are having English major and ELT training, others are simple B.A. 2 teachers have done M.A. in Political Science and also have done B.Ed. but without

any formal ELT training. Most of them are not aware of the nature, extent and gravity of the problem of teaching English in India. Neither they are familiar with the principles and techniques of teaching English as a second language. None of them prepared lesson plan and unit plan for the effective teaching in the classroom. Of course the other side of the issue should not be ignored. The teachers are not given proper incentives and salary in due time. In most of the educational institution, even good teachers are gradually losing interest in classroom teaching.

An important factor in teaching of English, lack of competent teacher. The main obstacle in teaching English at the moment seems to be the almost absence of trained teachers in the subject. There is a general apathy towards the improvement of teaching and the policy of appointment of teachers is based not on merit but on other extra academic factor. Since good and committed teachers are not available, students donot feel sufficiently motivated and the environment for the study of the subject is almost absent. Teachers of English should be able to fashion their own tools according to the need of the students. They should be willing to do their job with commitment and efficiency.

What happens in reality is that the efficiency and competence of the teachers engaged in teaching of English in the most of the schools especially in the rural areas is poor and taking to private coaching for their livelihood, as they donot even get their salary for months together.

Approaches, techniques and methodologies continue to be the same old ones. For instance lecturing has been an age old technique and teachers still adhere religiously to lecturing. They believe that courses should be more literature oriented than language-oriented; they do not teach students how to speak and write English; there is neither oral practice nor written work in class, tutorial work is neglected; regular periodic test for the purpose of evaluating the progress and achievement of students are not held. The teachers' excuse for the scant attention they pay to tutorial work and test is that classes are large and the students do not have any interest in assignment, composition exercises and test.

So what is most needed is a change in the attitudes of our teachers – a change that will make them aware that lecturing is not the only teaching technique as such they are teaching English as a second language. This awareness will have to be accompanied by their preparedness to enjoy new methodologies, approaches and techniques for imparting instruction in the four language skills and for creating an interest in both English and its literature.⁹

(C) Infrastructure:

While analysing the data furnished in Format-C, we find that the schools undertaken for study lack physical facilities. They have no adequate

⁹ Verghese, C. Paul: Teaching English as a Second Language, 1998, p.121.

classrooms, auditorium, electricity, provision of library and other teaching materials. Moreover some of the schools are affected by flood compelling closing of classes for weeks. Teaching staff is not sufficient, at least competent teachers are not available. Teachers with training in the subject or specialization in the subject are not sufficient – resulting in ineffective teaching. Socio-economic background of the pupil's parents is quite bad. Most of the parents are of low income group (below Rs.3000pm) being unable to provide the students with their required materials or failing to take proper care. These have adverse effect on the learners.

60% of the children are first generation learners having no academic environment or guidance in the family. The schools under study are mostly dominated by minority community and backward class. Financial position of the schools is not sound. Inspection or supervision by higher authority is not frequent. The schools in the rural areas do not have even the essential infrastructural facilities not to speak of the modern technology like computer, CD's Radio, Television, Tape Recorder etc.

(D) Teachers, Students and Parent Relationship:

From responses in the Format-D, we see that though teachers need training to update their knowledge and skill for good performance still most of the school can not facilitate their training. The schools under taken for study do not have proper mechanism to keep constant co-ordination with the guardians. Signing or Merit Card, attendance in the guardians meeting, and

on prize day, are not compulsory for parents. No effective monitoring mechanism is there to check whether the parents are aware of the home work given to their children. Only one school under my study namely Hajo Girls High School has taken initiative to send a group of teachers to the house of the students once a week to take of the students.

PROBLEM OF TEACHING ENGLISH IN RURAL AREAS:

a) Problem Relating Parents:

- i) Lack of education,
- ii) Parents in rural area are mostly of low income group,
- iii) They are not aware of their children's education,
- iv) Lack of co-ordination with school authority,

b) Problems Relating Students:

- i) Lack of motivation,
- ii) Not taking home work/ class work seriously,
- iii) Less study and inattentive due to lack of destination,
- iv) Lack of teaching materials, like dictionary, news papers, magazines, texts books, etc.
- v) Fear psychosis.

c) Problem Relating Teacher:

- i) Lack of teaching staff,
- ii) Incompetent teacher,
- iii) Lack of training,
- iv) Not inspiring or motivated or committed,
- v) Badly paid,
- vi) Politically appointed,

d) Problem Relating Infrastructure:

- i) Inadequate class room,
- ii) Overcrowding in classroom,
- iii) No reading room/ library,
- iv) No auditorium,
- v) Dilapidated school building,
- vi) Lack of teaching aids,
- vii) No toilet for boys and girls separately,
- viii) Text books are not supplied in time,
- ix) Syllabus is not suitable,
- x) No supervision by upper authority,
- xi) Flood, draught

Moreover, the reason behind the deteriorating of result in English are lack of clear objectives, substandard text books, unsatisfactory evaluation system, dearth of competent teacher.

REMEDIAL MEASURES:

Problems	Remedial Measures
1. Lack of exposure	1) In learning L_1 the learner gets exposure and proper environment at home, in school and in every walk of life. In learning a second language the learner should get abundant exposure. The learner must be informed the linguistic forms in a well-regulated and systematic manner.

2. Lack of Motivation	1) The L ₂ learner must realize the need to communicate and must grow a natural urge to communicate. So, emphasis should be laid on the communicative use of language.
3. Less exposure	3) While L ₁ is exposed for long hours a L ₂ learner finds less exposure to the language. The duration of exposure of English must be increased to create sustained interest and inculcate a sense of progress and achievement in our students.
4. Classroom conditions (crowded class).	4) The classroom conditions include the number of students in the class, physical arrangement, teaching materials etc. A class consisting of forty or thereabouts becomes un wieldy and no individual attention can be paid to students.
5. Lack of teaching materials	5) The schools lacks infrastructure. For effective teaching right type of teaching materials and audio-visual aids must be provided.
6. Poor standard of students	6) Variation exist in the standard of students. Some of them are weakly motivated due to their family background. Others lack elementary knowledge of the language. If the class is of small size, individual attention becomes fruitful, Grouping of students on the basis of merit can be done.

7. Incompetence of teacher	7) The main obstacle in teaching English in India is the absence of competent teacher. The teacher must be proficient in the language. His knowledge of and expertise in methods and techniques of language teaching should be of a reasonably high standard.
8. Parents' socio-economic background	8) Education becomes costly. Poor parents' cannot provide the wards the modern gadgets, teaching aids. The govt. should provide the institutions audio-visual aids, computer, C.D. etc. That institution also can supply teaching materials to poor students.
9. Fear psychosis of inferiority complex	9) Most of the students from vernacular medium schools lacks confidence and suffers from inferiority complex as they come from rural background areas. The students are to be encouraged. The teacher must be liberal and sympathetic in helping them.

Besides these the following steps can be taken for improvement of the students' linguistic performance –

- (1) Important syntactical types / methods in tabular form should be kept on the study table for regular practice.
- (2) The teacher should use grid system for giving the students practice in the formulation of sentences. For instance, the students can frame dozen of sentences from a small grid like –

I am going to be

In town At midnight On Saturday

In the country At six O'clock On Tuesday

- (3) Group study or certain practice in chorus may be helpful to correct the student's error. Group discussion make them friendly and encourage for conversation.
- (4) The quiz contest, debating or language game help the students to learn English in a play-way manner.
- (5) Modern audiovisual teaching aids can play a vital role in accelerating the pace of language learning.
- (6) The learners should be motivated to listen to the speech of native speakers of English on radio or television or given the opportunities to interact in phone-in-programme.
- (7) The inculcation of the habit of reading standard English newspapers and magazines regularly can also worth wonders in improving the students command the English language.

Once the teacher is able to diagnose the malady correctly it will be quite easy to find a correct remedy.

CHAPTER – 6

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Our investigation on the issue, group discussions, interviews, and research activities help us to formulate some conclusions and findings and thereby forward some suggestions.

The importance of English in India cannot be ignored. The link language turns to a source language or language of opportunity. Colonised language, become global media, so we should reorganize the teaching of English in India on scientific lines. But the conditions of the schools in the rural areas is not satisfactory and scenario of English teaching in the rural schools is not encouraging. The problems of teaching English in the rural area are many un-advanced ; i.e., lack of infrastructure, crowded classes, unavailability of teaching materials, pull of the mother tongue or bilingualism, non-holding of classes due to flood, and draught, rain and wind etc. fair and festivals, bandhs, lack of student's motivation, ignorance of parents, and their poor economic background, lack of trained staff as well as attitude of the teacher. Moreover the reasons behind the deteriorating of results in English are lack of clear cut objectives, sub standard text books, unsatisfactory evaluation system and dearth of competent teacher.

The attitudes of teachers in general are yet another factor that stands in the way of effective English language teaching in India. These attitude are

a legacy of the past and have become part of our traditional thinking and practice, and can be overcome only with proper training and motivation.

Approaches, techniques and methodologies continue to be the same old ones. For instance, lecturing has been an age-old technique in schools and colleges and teachers still adhere religiously to lecturing. They believe that courses should be more literature oriented than language oriented, they do not teach students how to speak and write English; there is neither oral practice nor written work in class, tutorial work is neglected, regular periodic tests for the purpose of evaluating the progress and achievement of the students are not held besides the dearth of competent teachers, lack of teaching aids and materials account for the pitiable state of affairs in the schools.

Having mentioned some of the major factors that have had the most deteriorating effect on English teaching in India over the years we may suggest that the remedy lies in getting down to grassroots and in concentrating on methodologies in the six years between the Fifth Standard and the tenth standard. It is desirable that English teaching commence from the Fifth Standard as at that level the language can be taught by secondary school teachers who need to be trained in English Teaching. With the availability of trained teachers, new syllabi, properly graded for each standard, for the students to proceed gradually from simple to difficult, from difficult to more difficult patterns of sentences and to learn newer and newer words to improve their expressiveness, may be introduced. New Methodologies with

emphasis on the four language skills will have to be initiated. What is most needed is a change in the attitude of our teachers who are to employ new methodologies, approaches and techniques for imparting instruction in the four language skills and for creating in students an interest in English. Some worthwhile teaching is possible if the right relationship is established in the attitudes of the learner, the teacher and the learner's parents and if through this relationship the learner is properly motivated.

The foregoing discussion shows that one of the major and basic causes of the learner's poor achievement in English is their rural backward vernacular school where infrastructure must be developed and the teaching materials must be supplied and above all it is the competence of teacher who will handle the process successfully.

BOOKS & REFERENCES:

1. Quirk, Randolph; The Use of English, London, Longman, 1962.
2. Ghotra, Balavindra : English Studies in India, Book Enclave, Jaipur (India) 2005.
3. Bronghton, Geofrey and Others: Teaching English as Foreign Language, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.
4. Barua, T.C.: The English Teacher's Handbook, Sterling Publishing Pvt. Ltd. 1995.
5. Verghese, C. Paul: Teaching English as a Second Language, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1998.
6. Baishya, P.: Hajor Siksar Buranji, 1996.
7. (Souvenir), Manikut. 65th Assam Xahitya Sabha, Hajo Session, 1999.
8. Results of HSLC Examination, 2001 to 2007, SEBA.
9. Kohli, A.L.: Techniques of Teaching English in the New Millenium, Dhanapati Publishing Company, 2005.
10. Raman, Minakshi: English Language Teaching, Atlantic Publishers & Distributors.
11. Richards Jack C.: Approaches Methods in Language Teaching (CUP) 2001.
12. Wilkins, D.A., Linguistics in Language Teaching, London, Edward Arnold, 1980.
13. Lado, Robert, Linguistics Across Cultures, Arn Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1957.
14. Crystal David. Linguistics, Hammondsworth, Penguin Books, 1971.

JOURNALS AND PERIODICALS (SELECT ISSUES)

- 1) India Today
- 2) Reader's Digest
- 3) Competition Review
- 4) Wisdom
- 5) English Journals, Dibrugarh University
- 6) University News.

NEWSPAPERS (SELECT ISSUES)

- 1) The Telegraph
- 2) The Assam Tribune
- 3) The Sentinel
- 4) The Times of India
- 5) The Hindu.

APPENDIX

INFORMATION SHEET-A

(Related to background, status and motivation of students and parents)

1. Name of the student :
 (i) Male/ Female (ii) Class Roll No.-
 (iii) Home Address:
2. Father's Name:
 (i) Educational Qualification: *Illiterate/ Under-matric/ Matriculate/ H.S. Passed/ Graduate/ Post-Graduate.*
 (ii) Occupation : *Cultivator/ Service / Business/ Any other occupation.*
3. Mother's Name:
 (i) Educational Qualification: *Illiterate/ Under-matric/ Matriculate/ H.S. Passed/ Graduate/ Post-Graduate.*
 (ii) Occupation : *Cultivator/ Service / Business/ Any other occupation.*
4. Number of total members in the family :
5. Your hobbies :
6. What is your ambition : *An Educationist/ A Writer/ A Politician/ A Social Worker/ A pilot/ An Industrialist/ A Sportsman/ An Actor/ An Officer/ Any other occupation.*
7. How often do you watch T.V. or listen to radio? : *Always/ Sometimes/ Never*
8. Do you have an English Dictionary at your home? : *Yes/ No, Name:*
9. Do you read English Newspaper/ Magazine/ Story books etc.: *Yes / No*
10. Time you devote to study (in hours) :
11. Do you attend the school regularly and punctually: *Yes / No*
12. Are you aware of your clean cloths and personal hygiene: *Yes / No*
13. Do you have necessary text books, reading or writing materials : *Yes / No*
14. Are you active in class work and home work : *Yes / No*
15. Are you co-operative with/ participate in group work: *Yes / No*
16. Do you participate in extra curricular activities: *Yes / No*
17. Do you listen to B.B.C. News: *Yes / No*
18. Do you feel free to converse in English with your friends/ relatives/ teachers: *Yes / No*
19. Are you confident about your ability : *Yes / No*
20. Do you attend tutorial classes / remedial classes : *Yes / No*
21. Do your parent aware of the Teaching materials you need : *Yes / No*
22. Do your parent helpful to you in academic activities: *Yes / No*
23. Do your parents attend academic/ cultural and extra curricular activities programme held in your school?"

INFORMATION SHEET – B

(Related to competence of teacher)

1. Name of the teacher :
(i) Male/Female (ii) Married/ Unmarried (iii) Place of Residence
2. Educational Qualification : Teaching Experience:
3. Diploma / Certificate course done in English:
4. Any in-service training undergone during last 3 years:
5. Hobby :
6. Do you feel the necessity of participating regularly in in-service training :*Yes/No*
7. Do you find the students cooperating, participative and friendly in your class :*Yes/ No*
8. What are the materials you need for your teaching :
Are you supplied with these : *Yes / No*
9. What method you generally follow in your teaching :
10. Do you feel free to converse in English with your colleagues/ friends / students:
Yes/No.
11. The most common problem you face in your teaching :
12. Do you feel the necessity of lesson plan in your teaching : *Yes / No*
13. Have you ever presented demonstration/ seminar paper/lesson plan in teacher's training programme:
14. Do you feel sufficient with your present status of English:
15. What do you think to be the reason for failure of students in English :
16. Please give at least three suggestions for the improvement of students in English:
17. Do you find the students bringing teaching materials in classrooms?
18. Which method do you prefer in bilingual pattern?
19. Do you have computer education?
20. Are you from English background i.e. schooling at English medium schools or having major in English?

INFORMATION SHEET – C

(To be filled up by the School Authority)

1. Name of the School :
2. Year of establishment :
3. Physical facilities :
 - a) No. of class rooms – *Adequate / inadequate*
 - b) Ventilation – *Good/ Poor*
 - c) Type of building – *Pucca / Kutcha*
 - d) Class room furniture – *Adequate / inadequate*
 - e) Provision of electricity – *Yes / No.*
 - f) Provision of drinking water – *Yes / No*
 - g) Provision of first aid – *Yes No.*
 - h) Separate toilet for boys and girls – *Yes / No*
 - i) Provision of library – *Yes / No*
 - j) Auditorium – *Yes / No*
 - k) Communication facility to the school – *Good / Bad*
 - l) No. of teaching staff in class IX & X – *Adequate / inadequate*
4. Provision of protection from rain / flood – *Yes / No*
5. Teachers and staff :
 - a) About English teachers teaching in Class IX & X during the last three years:

Name	Class	Educational Qualification	Period	Training received	Award received

- b) Teachers transferred to and from school during the last three years .
 - (i) Mr/Mrs/Ms..... to/from..... School
 - (ii) Mr/Mrs/Ms..... to/from..... School
 - (iii) Mr/Mrs/Ms..... to/from..... School

c) No. of Headmasters transferred or changed during the last three years.

d) Distance traveled and mode of travel by teachers from home to school:

0 – 5 kms. By% of teachers

5 – 20 kms. By% of teachers

Above 20 kms. By% of teachers

Usual mode of travel - Foot/public transport / own conveyance/rickshaw etc.

6. Socio-economic background of parents of children passing HSLC examination during last three years:

a) Low income group (below Rs.3,000.00 p.m.%)

b) Middle income group (Rs.3,000.00 – Rs. 10,000.00 p.m.%)

c) High income group (Above Rs.10,000.00 p.m.%)

7. A) Socio-economic background of students passing H.S.S.L.C

a. First generation learners%

b. Second generation learners%

c.. Third generation learners%

B) Categories of students who appeared and passed H.S.L.C. exam. In the last three years:

Year	Appeared					Passed				
	Gen%	SC%	ST%	OBC%	Others%	Gen%	SC%	ST%	OBC%	Others%

8. Financial position - *Adequate/Inadequate.*

9. Inspection/ supervision/ academic support during the last three years.

INFORMATION SHEET – D

(For Heads of Schools)

1. Name of the Headmaster :
2. Previous experience :
3. Do you take any class yourself, (If yes what subject):
4. Do you supervise the activities of your teachers : *Yes / No*
(If yes which of the following steps have you taken).
 - a) Supervision with the help of a regular time table,
 - b) Supervise checking:
 - c) Casual checking:
 - d) Any other (mention)
5. Have you included remedial teaching classes in your routine : *Yes / No*.
6. How do your teacher evaluate students:
 - a) Through half yearly and annual examination only.
 - b) Continuously through unit test, half yearly, annual examination etc.
 - c) Any other method.
7. Do you think that your teachers need training to update their knowledge and skill for good performance : *Yes / No*.
8. Do you agree that parents are also responsible for poor performance of their children: *Yes / No*.
9. Have you maintained coordination with parents : *Yes / MO*.
10. Give ranks to the following starting with 'I' to the most responsible habit leading to poor performance in the H.S.L.C. examination.
 - a) Over dependence on private tuition.
 - b) Studying less than five hours daily because of distraction (TV, Films etc.)
 - c) Adopting cramming habit.
 - d) Not taking home task seriously.
 - e) Not seeking help from teachers and parents.
 - f) Not taking studies due to lack of confidence in the present system of education.
11. What are your teachers reaction / response to inspection/ supervision:
 - a) Favourable , b) Unfavourable, c) Indifferent

12. Do you take up any activity like inspection/ supervision : *Yes / No*.
13. How many of your teachers have a positive attitude towards their profession:
a) All of them, b) None of them, c) Very few of them.
14. Do you have any monitoring mechanism to check whether the parents are aware of the home work given to their children : *Yes / No*.
(If yes. Specify)
15. Do your teachers conduct class test frequently : *Yes / No*.
16. Mention a few infrastructural deficiency affecting students' performance: