

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

English in India has undergone a remarkable transformation since its inception as a ‘library language,’ as described by the National Commission on Education (1964-66), initially reserved for scholarly pursuits and higher education. The shift in perception became more evident following the introduction of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986), which emphasized the importance of mother-tongue-based multilingualism.

The New Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 further underscores this evolution, emphasizing a multilingual approach in early education and offering flexibility in language choices, including English, for a more inclusive learning experience. The policy recognizes English as a global language and seeks to enhance teaching methodologies to meet the demands of the 21st century. National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2023) guided by the emphasis on multilingualism as outlined in NEP 2020, emphasizes that the main aim of English teaching is not to isolate English but to cultivate multilingualism. The goal is to create individuals who are proficient in multiple languages, thereby enriching all languages within the national context. This aligns with a broader national vision of promoting linguistic diversity and ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to engage effectively in a multilingual society.

1.2 Objectives of English Language Teaching in Indian Schools

The Position Paper on English in India’s NCF 2005 (National Council of Educational Research and Training-NCERT, 2005) articulates the national vision for English teaching in India as the cultivation of multilingual individuals capable of enriching all languages spoken in the country. The paper emphasizes the concept of ‘communicative competence’, advocating that English instruction should prioritize the development of students’ linguistic skills to enable them to effectively engage in diverse real-life situations.

Language acquisition naturally progresses through exposure and meaningful use in various contexts. To become proficient language users, learners need to actively engage with the language both inside and outside the classroom. English, often taught

as a second language (L2), presents diverse teaching and learning resources, including the quality of English language educators, teaching materials like textbooks and supplementary resources, and the overall English language environment within schools.

Effective language learning is closely tied to connecting it with students' immediate surroundings. Textbook activities and teacher-led tasks should take into account the real-life experiences of learners (NCERT, 2017). The ultimate aim is for English language learning outcomes to be achieved by all students, enabling them to proficiently use the language in practical situations.

According to Thompson and Wyatt (1952), the primary objective of English Language Teaching (ELT) at the school level can be succinctly summarized as teaching students to actively listen, comprehend spoken English, understand written English, express themselves fluently in English, and effectively communicate through written English. This entails recognizing the interconnectedness of language skills. In most interactions, both formal and informal, speaking and listening are intertwined, and students should be aware of this. Foundational language skills should be introduced early in formal education and consistently nurtured throughout a student's educational journey. The overarching goal of teaching English is to develop these foundational skills, enabling students to use the language effectively not only within the classroom but also in real-world contexts.

NCERT (2017) has outlined several key learning objectives for English language education, particularly at the upper primary level. Some of these expectations for Class VIII students include:

- Responding to instructions and announcements in various settings.
- Engaging in English conversations across diverse professional contexts.
- Using polite expressions for effective communication, such as requesting permission or expressing disagreement.
- Formulating questions in different contexts and situations, using appropriate vocabulary and accurate sentence structure.
- Participating in various events like roleplays, debates, speeches, quizzes, etc., organized by the school and other organizations.
- Narrating stories and sharing experiences in English.

- Reading textual and non-textual materials and identifying details, characters, the main idea, and the sequence of ideas and events while reading.
- Engaging in critical reading and inferring meanings of unfamiliar words through contextual reading.
- Make use of dictionaries, thesauruses, and encyclopedias for reference while reading and writing.
- Writing informative pieces based on gathered information from printed and online sources.
- Crafting coherent paragraphs and responses to questions.
- Writing responses to textual and non-textual questions, drawing character sketches, and attempting extrapolative writing. This includes writing emails, messages, notices, formal letters, and descriptions.

These learning outcomes underscore the development of fundamental language skills encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW) alongside the cultivation of communicative competence. Consequently, teachers are encouraged to adopt an integrated skills approach for literacy and language learning, emphasizing various strategies for language instruction.

In the same vein are the curricular objectives set forth by NCF (2023) for R2 language learning (including English) at middle stage, which encompasses English and other languages, are as follows:

- Students should develop independent reading comprehension and summarizing skills across various text types.
- They should attain the ability to articulate thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to social events.
- They should cultivate effective communication skills by utilizing language for description, analysis, and response.
- They should explore the structure of different literary devices and forms of literature.
- They should develop the ability to recognize basic linguistic aspects, including vocabulary and sentence structure, and apply them in both oral and written expression.

1.3 Present Status of ELT in Assam

Following extensive debates and critiques from literary organizations, educators, political parties, and others, the Assam Cabinet has decided that starting from the 2023 academic year, Mathematics and Science will be taught in English from the third grade onward in all Government and provincialized Assamese and other vernacular medium schools. Textbooks for these subjects will be published in English also. However, school authorities have the flexibility to introduce English medium alongside Assamese or other vernacular mediums without replacing them. This change is aimed at improving students' performance in national-level exams and encouraging parents to enroll their children in these schools.

This development underscores the significance of the English language without undermining vernacular languages like Assamese and other regional languages of the state. Proficiency in English offers the students numerous opportunities, and in contemporary Assam, it plays a vital role in various aspects of life, including official work, the legal system, and professional education in fields like medicine and engineering. The proliferation of computers and the internet, primarily using English, has further amplified the importance of the language. Like the rest of India, English is seen as a vehicle for opportunities and upward mobility in Assam.

In accordance with the NCF (2005), the success of 'English medium' schools highlights a crucial insight: language is most effectively learned when it is absorbed through exposure within a meaningful context, rather than being explicitly taught as a subject. This perspective serves to bridge the divide between viewing English merely as a subject to be studied and understanding it as a practical medium of communication. It underscores the need to transition towards a unified educational system that does not distinguish between "teaching a language" and "using a language as a medium of instruction." This shift aims to create a more integrated and seamless approach to language education, emphasizing the practical application of language for effective communication.

In Assam, English is introduced as a compulsory L2 from the primary level. English medium school students typically find it easier to learn the language since all subjects are taught in English. However, in government/provincialized schools, English is primarily taught as a 'subject' rather than a 'skill'. In most of these schools, traditional

methods of teaching English, especially GTM. is very much prevalent where emphasis is put on writing with accuracy, preparing the students for examinations and obtain good grades (Dutta, 2015; Karim, 2015; Choudhury and Dutta, 2015; Deka, 2020; Awal and Karim, 2021; Changkakoti, 2023). Anything unrelated to the examination is typically regarded as a nonproductive use of time. Oral communication tests, for instance, are not specifically evaluated, so both students and teachers question their significance. Additionally, factors like students' socio-economic background, parental literacy, and resource limitations hinder language acquisition. Many students from these schools manage to pass the HSLC Examination, however, they lacked fundamental communication skills in English. The underperformance in English after a decade of schooling is a significant concern, and most government and provincialized secondary schools struggle to provide quality English education. Prabhu (1987) observes that in India, while students may construct grammatically accurate sentences within the classroom, they often struggle to apply correct English language usage once they leave the educational institution. Regrettably, this observation remains relevant in many government or provincialized schools in Assam even today.

Nevertheless, efforts have been made by the government over the years to enhance students' learning outcomes across the country. While there has been substantial improvement in students' overall achievements at the primary level, concerns persist regarding their performance in English. Even though prescribed English textbooks include various activities for practical communication skills, many provincialized schools tend to skip them due to syllabus constraints, examination pressures, and students' disinterest.

Given this challenge, English teachers need to employ effective teaching methods that would motivate students to use the language for real communication in practical settings, rather than solely focusing on accuracy. Teachers at the elementary level play a crucial role in inspiring young learners and maintaining their interest in language learning. If early language learning is unsuccessful, it can demotivate students and lead them to believe that English lessons are difficult, boring, or a waste of time. Poor teaching at this stage can have long-term consequences, necessitating re-motivation efforts in the future. As the overarching goal of teaching English as a L2 is to enable learners to use the language in real-life situations, rather than just imparting

theoretical knowledge, ELT should adopt methodologies that promote communicative competence.

1.4 A Comprehensive Overview of ELT Methods

One of the most prevalent approaches, especially in the 20th century, was the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). It is still widely used in L2 classrooms, including those in India. This method was favored for its emphasis on grammatical exercises and was considered conducive to learning. However, this approach attracted criticism for its teacher-centered instruction, placing a disproportionate emphasis on grammar teaching and practice. Rooted in a behaviorist perspective on learning, it prioritized accuracy in writing. Courses structured under this method adhered to predefined grammatical syllabi, organizing grammar and structures according to arbitrarily determined levels of complexity (East, 2021). Nevertheless, many language teachers still prefer it, as it allows them to teach the target language using the learners' mother tongue, though this can leave students lacking in proper exposure to productive language skills, hindering their fluency.

In response to the limitations of the GTM, other approaches emerged, including the Direct Method, Structural-Oral-Situational method (SOS), and Silent method, each emphasizing different language skills. The Direct Method aimed to develop speaking and conversation skills in the target language. It required students to associate words directly with their meanings in the foreign language and used sentences as examples when explaining words. Popular among the private language schools, this method involved extensive practice, including dictation, to improve fluency. However, it was criticized for failing to consider the practical realities of classrooms, and also relying too much on teacher's skill. It expected impeccable spoken English skills from teachers, including proper pronunciation and native fluency (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Very often, instructors were compelled to make significant efforts to refrain from using the learners' native language, even in situations where a brief explanation in their native language could have been more effective in facilitating comprehension.

SOS placed significant emphasis on speech, language structures, and vocabulary. Dating back to 1920s and remained influential for an extended period, it eventually drew criticism for its adherence to a behavioristic theory of habit formation (Chomsky, 1957). This approach limited the learners' ability to generate original

sentences. It centered on spoken language, preceding written materials in the classroom, with the exclusive use of the target language. New language components were introduced and practiced in specific contexts, with reading and writing introduced only after a solid foundation in vocabulary and grammar was established. Despite its benefits, SOS was criticized for prioritizing the mastery of language structures at the expense of fostering communicative proficiency.

Another popular method ensued in 1950s, the Audio-lingual method that prioritized precision, memorization and repetition of grammatically correct phrases. It aimed to introduce more authentic language use to classrooms, by following a structural syllabi and engaging students into extensive listening and speaking drills. Pattern practice was a basic classroom technique, emphasizing habit formation in language use. It was teacher-driven, with a strong emphasis on linguistic accuracy, particularly in pronunciation. However, this approach was critiqued for potentially leading learners to comprehend and produce rehearsed phrases effectively but struggling with spontaneous expression outside the classroom. When faced with unscripted situations, learners became unsure of how to respond.

Linguists and language practitioners have dedicated significant effort to address the limitations of earlier methods and have been striving to create an approach to language instruction that prioritizes the needs and preferences of the learners. In addition to this, various methods such as The Natural Approach, the Silent Way, the Physical Response method, Suggestopedia have made noteworthy contributions to the field of L2 acquisition over the years.

Overall, the traditional language teaching methods prioritized grammatical competence as the foundation of language proficiency. These methods relied on direct instruction and repetitive practice, often through drilling exercises. Grammar teaching followed a deductive approach, where students were presented with grammar rules before practicing their application. The focus was on building a repertoire of sentences and grammatical patterns, aiming for accurate and swift production in appropriate contexts. Once students attained a basic oral proficiency through drilling and controlled practice, the four language skills - speaking, listening, reading, and writing - were introduced, typically in that order (Richards, 2006). Common techniques included memorizing dialogues, engaging in question-and-answer

sessions, substitution drills, and various guided speaking and writing activities. Attention to precise pronunciation and grammatical mastery was emphasized early on in language learning, as errors were believed to potentially become ingrained in the learner's speech if not corrected promptly.

During the 1970s, there arose a critical examination of the role of grammar in language teaching and learning, challenging the prevailing notion that language proficiency solely depended on mastering grammatical structures. Halliday (1973, 1978) rejected the idea of focusing solely on language structures and advocated for the development of communicative proficiency in language education. While grammatical competence remained important for producing correct sentences, the emphasis shifted towards acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for using grammar and other language elements appropriately in various communicative contexts. The importance of communicative competence became apparent, emphasizing the need to use language effectively for communication purposes.

This approach balanced attention between the functional and structural aspects of language, as highlighted by Richards and Rogers (2001). They favored Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) because it moved away from rote memorization of language structures. Instead, CLT emphasized contextualization, prioritized meaning, allowed incidental drilling, and overall focused on fostering communicative competence.

1.5 Communicative Language Teaching

In the 1970s and 1980s, the incorporation of tasks into language teaching gained significant importance during the CLT movement. The development of CLT was influenced by Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence, which aimed to address the limitations of strongly behaviorist and strongly innatist approaches to language teaching. Instead, it adopted a more interactionist-influenced perspective on the teaching and learning of language. This shift in language teaching marked a transition from questioning whether language should be taught communicatively to exploring how one can teach languages communicatively (Benson and Voller, 1997).

According to Nunan (2004), CLT is a comprehensive language teaching approach that draws on various academic fields like linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. As described by East (2021), CLT marked a departure from the artificiality

of language teaching, moving away from decontextualized grammar and vocabulary learning seen in previous methods like grammar-translation. Instead, it promoted the idea that language is meant for real communication in authentic contexts with real people.

Within the CLT spectrum, there was a division into weak and strong CLT. Weak CLT, which emerged in the 1970s, shared some principles with earlier methods like grammar-translation and audio-lingualism. It typically followed a structured syllabus, with a focus on teaching grammar, often employing a Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) model. This approach prioritized grammar accuracy over fluency (East, 2021).

In contrast, strong CLT developed as a response to methods like grammar-translation and strongly grammar-focused PPP sequences. It emphasized communication over formal grammar instruction, asserting that learners can deduce grammar rules through genuine communication. This approach favored fluency over strict grammar accuracy.

Thus, the ‘strong’ version, which asserts that mere involvement in communication suffices for learning, advocating the exclusion of traditional techniques like explanations and drills; and the ‘weak’ version, which acknowledges the possibility of incorporating traditional methods within a communicative framework. These versions carry distinct implications for language learning in the classroom and the role of the teacher. While both versions require teachers to facilitate communicative activities, the weak version allows for controlled and analytic learning methods, offering a more familiar structure for both teachers and learners (Littlewood, 1981).

1.6 Emergence of Task-based Language Teaching

The inception of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) can be traced back to the CLT movement, which underscored the importance of integrating authentic tasks into English language education. TBLT arose as a reaction to the criticism of the SOS Approach, which was found inadequate in addressing the language learning needs of L2 learners. The widely used PPP model faced criticism from many linguists and ELT experts due to its restricted focus on speaking and listening (Willis, 1996; Richards, 2006). This is despite its assertion that it could guide learners from controlled practice of language elements to the free and automatic use of language in any or all four language basic skills.

Based on the behaviorist principle of repetition, the PPP cycle commences with the presentation and practice of a small language sample, emphasizing a specific linguistic form. The teacher introduces a specific grammar concept to the class. Following this, students participate in practice activities aimed at reinforcing the grammar point, which include various exercises focused on grammar practice. Once students have sufficiently practiced the grammar point, they are encouraged to apply the rule in communicative scenarios replicating real-world situations. The primary aim of these communicative activities is to apply the practiced grammar rule. The language practice is tightly controlled, emphasizing correctness through drills, dialogues, and exercises. In the final 'P' stage, students are provided an opportunity to apply the new pattern in a more open context through activities and role-plays. However, as there are minimal opportunities (if any) for students to creatively utilize language beyond the scope of the practiced material (Richards, 2006). Willis (1996) argued, true "free" production is often not achieved, as it's not genuinely free if students are required to produce pre-specified forms.

PPP drew criticism for putting excessive pressure on learners to achieve flawless performance, resulting in anxiety, diminished self-esteem, and motivation issues (Willis, 1996). Additionally, PPP was faulted for its focus on isolated language items, promoting a linear sequence of language learning without revisiting and expanding language skills, and relying on exercises that foster habit formation rather than encouraging independent problem-solving. According to Skehan (1996), language learners should develop their interlanguage systems in more complex ways, and Ellis (2003) stressed the significance of transitional stages in language learning, a consideration PPP lacked. Consequently, learners might not acquire language in the presented classroom order.

The Bangalore Communicational Teaching Project (CTP), initiated by Prabhu in 1987 in India, emerged as a response to dissatisfaction with prevailing accuracy-focused approaches, including SOS syllabus. The project advocated for a natural and effortless approach to language acquisition, placing a strong emphasis on communication as the conduit for learning. In this method, language items were not preselected, and there was no focus on deliberate grammar practice or production at any stage. Instead, each lesson was structured around real-world problems or tasks, incorporating diverse subject matter, even delving into mathematical challenges. When learners made

errors, teachers responded by rephrasing the incorrect statements with the appropriate language forms. Remarkably, there was no whole-class explanation or practice. The central assumption was that, through engagement in such tasks, learners would organically “use” and eventually “acquire” the language. Explicit attention to language was entirely incidental and responsive, triggered by specific responses to learners’ output (Prabhu, 1987).

TBLT places a strong emphasis on how teachers design and execute tasks systematically, allowing for adaptability in adjusting task complexity and highlighting specific grammatical aspects. Furthermore, TBLT seamlessly integrates LSRW skills, while PPP predominantly concentrates on grammar and form, necessitating supplementary skill lessons for listening and reading practice and enhanced language exposure. In a typical PPP lesson, specific objectives and procedures are narrowly defined by the teacher, who selects the language to be taught. The focus is on the teacher’s perspective, with limited room for student input. However, in TBLT, the approach is more flexible. During the analysis stage, students are encouraged to explore various aspects of language freely. TBLT provides a framework that allows for a gradual shift from language experience to language analysis, seen in the task cycle where there is progression from task phase to language focus stage. Unlike in PPP, where the teacher dominates, in a TBLT class, the teacher sets up the tasks, delegates responsibility to students, intervenes as necessary, and reviews each phase at the end.

Crucially, TBLT is deeply rooted in experiential learning, which highlights that language acquisition is most effective when students actively collaborate on projects or tasks, engaging in phases of exposure, participation, internalization, and dissemination. This approach fosters meaning negotiation and learner collaboration, promoting the transformation of knowledge within learners, active involvement in collaborative groups, a holistic approach to subject matter, an emphasis on the learning process over the final product, self-directed learning, and intrinsic motivation instead of relying on extrinsic incentives (Nunan, 1989).

Thus, TBLT has evolved as an instructional approach that places paramount importance on the meaningful use of language while considering its structural aspects. TBLT accentuates the value of harnessing learners’ innate ability to naturally acquire

language as they engage in meaningful communication. This contrasts with structural methods that emphasize the systematic teaching and intentional acquisition of language.

1.7 Theoretical Framework Underlying TBLT

The theoretical framework of this study is anchored in Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1983), Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Human Learning (1978), and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982). These theoretical perspectives offer valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying language learning, emphasizing the role of interaction, social mediation, and affective factors in the language acquisition process in TBLT.

Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1983b, 1996) posits that language proficiency development is optimally achieved through direct face-to-face interaction and communication. Central to this hypothesis is the concept of "meaning negotiation", which occurs when communication encounters obstacles, prompting participants to collaboratively bridge gaps in understanding. This process of modified interaction involves various strategies such as adjusting language use, asking questions, employing gestures, making clarification requests, and utilizing confirmation checks. Furthermore, Long emphasizes the crucial role of corrective feedback provided by educators or proficient peers in refining language output and enhancing the clarity of conveyed meaning.

In the context of TBLT, which emerged in the 1980s, the Interaction Hypothesis underscores the importance of comprehensible input and interaction in facilitating Second Language Acquisition (SLA). According to this perspective, learners engage in interactive tasks where they receive input, process it, and produce output while monitoring their language use. Through these interactive experiences, learners not only acquire linguistic knowledge but also develop communicative competence in real-life contexts. Educators play a pivotal role in guiding and scaffolding these interactive learning experiences, fostering language acquisition through meaningful engagement with the target language.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) supplements the Interaction Hypothesis by emphasizing the social aspects of learning and the significance of social mediation in cognitive growth. According to this perspective, language acquisition occurs through

dialogic exchanges within specific social contexts. The theory posits that every aspect of a child's cultural development initially manifests on a social level and later on an individual level - first, through interactions between people (interpsychological), and subsequently, internally within the child (intrapsychological).

This sociocultural theory views learning as fundamentally a social process, where interpersonal connections play a pivotal role in knowledge and comprehension development, which can be illustrated by the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The ZPD represents the space between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). Through scaffolding, language modifications, and feedback, learners progress from tasks they can accomplish with support to those they can master independently. Interaction, within this framework, serves as a mediating mechanism facilitating the internalization of language structures and functions. This process leads to the development of linguistic fluency and automaticity.

TBLT embodies Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory by prioritizing authentic tasks and collaborative activities. These tasks necessitate meaningful language engagement and often involve interaction with peers, aligning with Vygotsky's emphasis on the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Additionally, the concept of ZPD is inherent in TBLT, as tasks are designed to be challenging yet achievable with appropriate support, allowing learners to progress within their ZPD with guidance from teachers and peers. Thus, TBLT provides a pedagogical framework that aligns with Vygotsky's principles, fostering language acquisition through social interaction, collaboration, and meaningful engagement in tasks.

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasizes the role of affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, and self-confidence in language learning. According to Krashen, a high affective filter impedes language acquisition by blocking access to comprehensible input. Conversely, lowering the affective filter through supportive and engaging learning environments promotes language acquisition by creating a conducive atmosphere for learning and reducing learner anxiety. TBLT, with its learner-centered approach, collaborative activities, and engaging tasks, plays a significant role in lowering the affective filter, thereby facilitating language acquisition. It creates a supportive and engaging learning environment that helps

lower learners' affective filters by promoting meaningful language use and fostering a positive attitude towards learning. By engaging learners in tasks that are relevant, interesting, and achievable, TBLT encourages active participation and reduces anxiety associated with language learning. Furthermore, TBLT encourages collaboration and interaction among learners, which can increase motivation and confidence in language use.

In summary, the integration of Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1983), Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), and TBLT provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the complex dynamics of SLA. These theories collectively highlight the interactive, social, and affective dimensions of language learning, offering valuable insights for language educators and researchers alike.

1.8 Understanding 'Tasks' in TBLT

Various scholars have offered their definitions of tasks in the context of TBLT, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of tasks in language learning. These definitions highlight several key aspects of tasks, including their focus on meaning, real-world applicability, linguistic and cognitive engagement, and the achievement of non-linguistic goals.

Long (1985) characterized tasks as activities undertaken for oneself or others, whether voluntarily or for some form of reward. In a more recent definition (Long, 2015), tasks were described as the real-world activities that individuals think of when planning, conducting, or recalling their daily experiences. These tasks can vary widely, from mundane to complex, and may or may not require language use.

Breen (1987) emphasized the structured nature of tasks, which can range from brief practice exercises to intricate workplans, all involving spontaneous communication. Tasks should have a clear objective, appropriate content, a defined procedure, and specific outcomes.

Prabhu (1987) defined task as an activity that necessitated learners to derive an outcome using provided information through cognitive processes, while allowing teachers to supervise and guide the process. While Richards et al. (1986) viewed tasks as actions resulting from the processing or comprehension of language. Tasks may or

may not entail language production, and teachers must specify what constitutes successful task completion, for example, students can draw a map while listening to the instructions given on a tape, or listen to an instruction and accordingly perform based on the given command.

Nunan (2004) proposed that tasks entail communicative language use, with a focus on conveying meaning rather than linguistic structure. Learners engage in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language while mobilizing their grammatical knowledge. Tasks should possess a sense of completeness, standing alone as communicative acts.

Willis (1996) emphasized tasks as goal-oriented activities where learners employ the target language for communicative purposes to achieve specific outcomes. Learners can utilize their language resources to solve problems, with the main focus on meaning.

According to Ellis (2003) and Ellis and Shintani (2014), tasks serve as tools for language learning that focus primarily on conveying meaning. They demand learners to utilize their own abilities to accomplish the tasks, feature a communicative gap that requires communication, and lead to outcomes that involve real communication rather than merely using language for the sake of it. These tasks involve authentic language use and engage cognitive processes that facilitate language learning. Tasks can engage productive or receptive, oral or written skills, as well as various cognitive processes.

Skehan (1998) outlined criteria for tasks, stating that meaning is of paramount importance, learners are not allowed to simply reiterate meanings from others, tasks should resemble real-world activities, task completion is the primary concern, and tasks are evaluated based on task output.

Samuda and Bygate (2008) provided a concise definition that links input, output, and interaction to SLA. They defined tasks as holistic activities involving language use to achieve non-linguistic outcomes while facing linguistic challenges that ultimately promoting language learning.

East (2021) opines that a task is characterized by a specific objective that necessitates the processing of information, generating a response, and engaging in interactions with others in order to achieve that goal.

In essence, these definitions collectively affirm that ‘tasks’ in TBLT are not mere grammar practice exercises disconnected from real-world language use. It is the key focus of TBLT's learner-centered and experiential approach, where learners actively participate in meaningful, real-world language activities that involve understanding, expressing, and interacting with others. Highlighting the complexity and richness of this pedagogical approach, these definitions underscore key elements of tasks, including their emphasis on meaning, real-world relevance, structured objectives, and communicative language use. Long (1985) and Long (2015) emphasize the practicality of tasks in daily experiences, while Breen (1987) stresses the importance of clear objectives and outcomes. Prabhu (1987) and Richards et al. (1986) focus on the cognitive processes involved in task completion, while Nunan (2004) and Willis (1996) highlight the communicative aspect and goal-oriented nature of tasks. Ellis (2003) and Ellis and Shintani (2014) emphasize the authentic use of language in task-based activities, while Skehan (1998) outlines criteria for meaningful task design. Samuda and Bygate (2008) link tasks to SLA, underscoring their role in promoting language learning through input, output, and interaction. East (2021) emphasizes the objective-driven nature of tasks, emphasizing the importance of information processing and interaction in achieving goals. Together, these definitions offer a comprehensive understanding of tasks in TBLT, illustrating their significance in promoting meaningful language learning experiences.

1.9 ‘Task’ versus ‘Exercise’ in TBLT

Ellis (2003) argued that an exercise is premised on the need to develop linguistic skills as a prerequisite for the learning of communicative ability, whereas a task is based on the assumption that linguistic abilities are developed through communicative abilities. Drawing further distinction between task, exercise and activity, Richard (nd) defined an exercise involves practicing a specific language aspect, such as reading comprehension, in a controlled or guided manner, while activities encompass various classroom procedures aimed at achieving course goals, like singing songs or participating in discussions. A task is an activity undertaken by students using existing language resources, relevant to their needs, with a focus on meaning, and involving communication strategies and interactional skills, allowing for reflection on language use. Although exercises may contain gaps, these gaps typically do not necessitate interaction to decipher meaning. The outcome of exercises is predominantly linguistic

and not communicative, serving as a demonstration of technical proficiency rather than achieving communicative objectives (East, 2021).

Willis and Willis (2007) proposed six questions to evaluate whether an activity qualifies as a task:

- (i) whether the activity engages learners' interest
- (ii) whether there is a primary focus on meaning
- (iii) whether there is an outcome
- (iv) whether success is judged based on the outcome
- (v) whether completion is a priority
- (vi) whether the activity relates to real-world activities

The difference between 'task' and 'exercise' can therefore be concluded as:

Table 1.1 Difference between Task and Exercise

Task	Exercise
Primary focus is on trying to communicate – learners are trying to understand descriptions/instructions	Primary focus is on using language correctly
There is some kind of gap – learners have to convey information, to reason or express an opinion	There is no gap
Learners choose their own linguistic (first language (L1) and L2) and non-linguistic resources (gestures, facial expressions, etc.)	Learners are given some language and they are required to manipulate the language (fill-in-the -gaps, word substitute, etc.)
Communicative outcome of the task is achieved	Accurate use of the language feature

1.10 Tasks Types in TBLT

Prabhu (1987) introduced a trio of task categories, all aimed at closing knowledge gaps by revealing or supplying initially unknown information. These fundamental tasks essentially became the foundation for the different task types employed in TBLT-oriented classrooms. These categories encompass:

- Information Gap Tasks: involving the discovery of new information.
- Reasoning Gap Tasks: entailing problem-solving and deduction of solutions.
- Opinion Gap Tasks: requiring the expression of personal viewpoints.

Willis (1996) provided a more extensive classification of tasks, potentially increasing in complexity. This classification encompasses:

- Listing tasks
- Ordering and sorting tasks
- Comparing tasks
- Problem-solving tasks
- Sharing personal experiences tasks
- Creative tasks

Additionally, Willis (1996) and Ellis (2003) also distinguished between closed and open tasks. Closed tasks are highly structured, with specific goals and a single prescribed approach and outcome. These are ideal for beginners as they are easy to do and evaluate. In contrast, open tasks offer more flexibility, with less defined goals, allowing for multiple potential outcomes.

Real-world tasks and pedagogical tasks are categorized as such, as outlined by Nunan (2004). Real-world tasks involve everyday activities, while pedagogical tasks are designed specifically for classroom use, possessing a sense of wholeness and serving as communicative acts. Although pedagogical tasks may not mirror typical real-life situations, the interactions within them are valuable for language learning. Pedagogical tasks are particularly beneficial for foreign language learners who do not have practical English language needs outside of the classroom, as highlighted by Ellis (2003).

Tasks can follow either an input-based approach, where learners process provided information to demonstrate comprehension (commonly involving listening and reading), or an output-based approach, where learners must speak or write to accomplish the task's objectives (Ellis, 2003). Additionally, tasks can be unfocused (involved using a whole lot of language) or focused (involved the use of a grammatical structure), while the primary focus of both remains on meaning and achieving task outcome.

To accommodate learners' proficiency levels and abilities, tasks should be designed with flexibility, progressing from close, focused and input-based tasks to more intricate open, unfocused and out-based tasks, while adhering to essential task characteristics. This approach aligns with learner-centered pedagogy and empowers learner autonomy.

1.11 TBLT Frameworks

The implementation of TBLT in English classes has been a subject of extensive discussion among scholars. There are different designs of task-based language teaching (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 1989; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). Ellis (2006) has identified three common phases in almost all frameworks: pre-task, during-task, and post-task. However, there is a difference of opinion among scholars regarding pre-tasks. According to Willis (1996) and Long (2015), explicit grammar instructions may divert learners' focus from meaning and information exchange. On the other hand, scholars like Littlewood (2007), Shehadeh (2012), and Kim (2013) argue that learners should be equipped with grammar to perform tasks. Ellis et al. (2018) emphasizes the use of modelling techniques instead of explicit grammar instruction before the task. Teachers can highlight specific language structures or functions relevant to the task, providing targeted practice and acquisition opportunities for learners.

One of the extensively referenced and applied in academic research TBLT framework is Willis' 1996 model. It underscores the significance of the pre-task, task cycle, and post-task phases (language focus).

(i) Pre-task

The initial phase of the task is designed to provide content knowledge about the topic, discuss important vocabulary and expressions, and

introduce the task and its goals. The materials utilized during this stage should guide students towards the task. It is a concise phase, and explicit instruction is required to ensure that students are able to execute the task appropriately. In this stage, it is crucial to include all learners, guaranteeing their active involvement. It may involve, for instance, granting students the opportunity to listen to a recording of a similar task being completed (as long as this does not reveal the solution to the problem) or read a section of a text, if the task is based on the text. During this stage, the teacher may point out valuable words and expressions but should not provide prior instruction on any new structures. Students may be allotted some time for planning and preparation of the content.

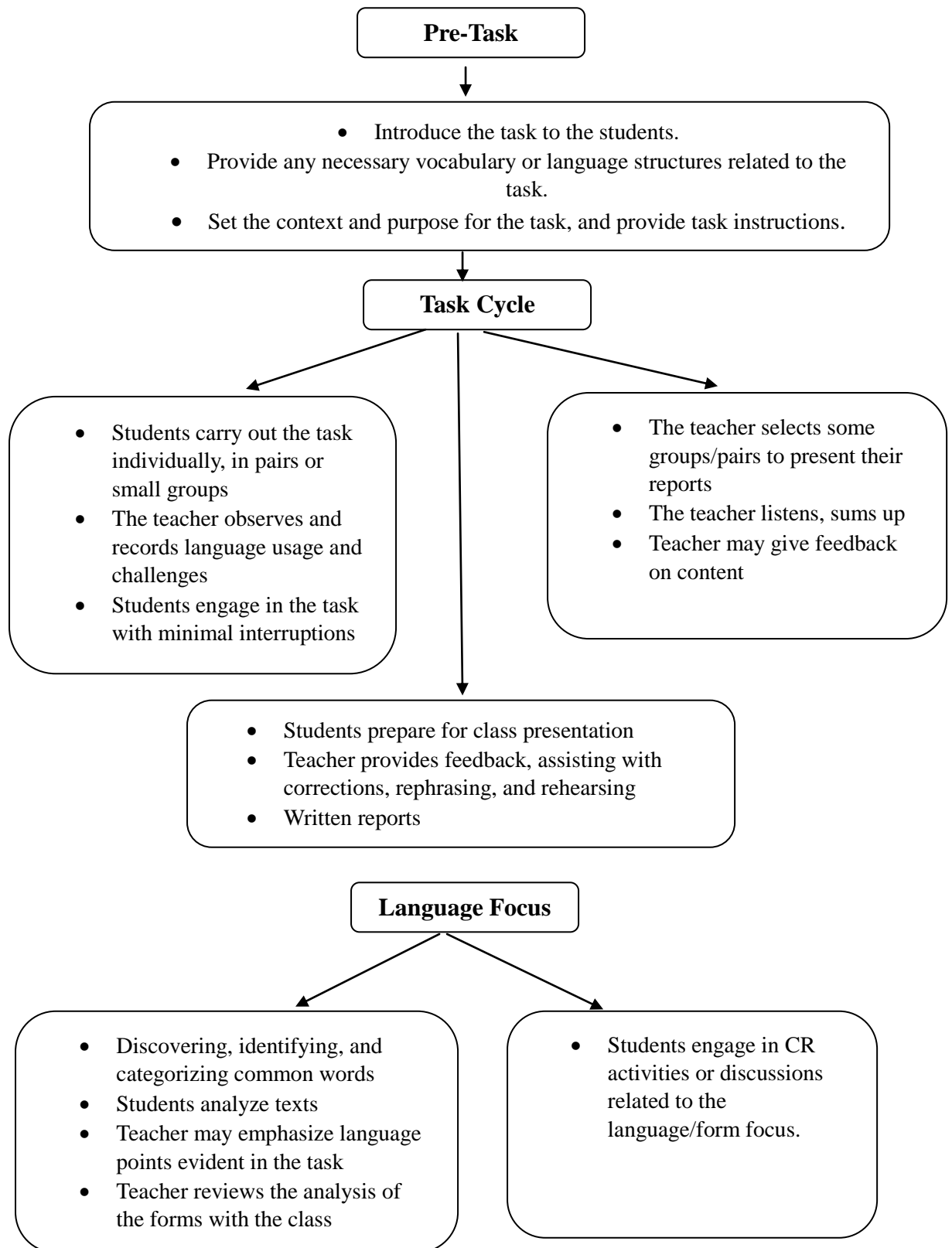
(ii) **Task Cycle**

During the task cycle, students mostly work in pairs or groups to accomplish the task, nevertheless some tasks can be done individually. At the task's completion, students prepare their reports and rehearse to present it. They take turns to present/report their activity to the class. The students may share their opinion about the tasks reported, provide peer feedback. The teacher provides Corrective Feedback (CF) if there are any errors, highlights any particular modifications, if needed, etc. This is the stage where learners are guided once they complete their task, with the teacher repeating sentences to help students recognize their mistakes.

(iii) **Post-task (Form Focus)**

The final stage involves a more in-depth examination of key language elements used during the task, which can be teacher-led or peer interaction. This is followed by practice or Consciousness-Raising (CR) activities, based on what was discussed during language analysis. The activities can include choral repetition, sentence constructions, grammatical exercise, and more. Willis' (1996) delineation of TBLT is represented in Figure 1.1:

Figure 1.1 Framework for Task-based Language Teaching (Adapted from Willis' 1996)



1.12 Flexibility within the TBLT Framework

Willis' (1996) framework of the task-based approach has frequently been utilized with a certain level of adaptability, while still maintaining its fundamental structure. Various planning scenarios have been examined in studies, encompassing both pre-task and on-line planning phases. In the pre-task preparation stage, participants are provided with target words, audio recordings as examples, or guidance from the teacher, followed by an opportunity to plan. Task execution can take place individually, in pairs, or in groups, with teachers providing guidance or allowing learners to work independently. The duration for planning and task execution can either be fixed or flexible. In the post-task phase, teachers may offer corrections, address common errors, and learners may review their audio recordings to transcribe and comprehend mistakes. Tasks can be repeated with different partners or group members, with flexibility in how students are grouped or paired. Grouping can be based on proficiency levels, which allows weaker students to learn from peers and build confidence, while more proficient learners can support those with lower proficiency. However, pairing learners of similar proficiency levels may promote equality but can present challenges in negotiating meaning. On the other hand, pairing learners of differing abilities can facilitate support in accordance with sociocultural language acquisition theories, but it may not benefit the more proficient learners (East, 2021).

Components within the framework can be adjusted to meet learners' needs. For instance, confident but inaccurate learners may receive additional time for oral and written reporting. Students may choose to repeat tasks with different partners during the language-focused phase. Depending on factors such as topic familiarity and task complexity, one or two task cycles can be incorporated into a single lesson or spread across multiple sessions. Language analysis activities may be assigned as homework and reviewed in subsequent lessons (Willis, 1996).

Consequently, the task-based approach offers flexibility, allowing researchers and educators to customize it according to the learning environment, learner proficiency, and context suitability.

1.13 Balancing Fluency and Accuracy in TBLT

One of the primary objectives of TBLT is to foster fluency in language usage, which occurs when speakers engage in meaningful interactions and maintain clear and continuous communication despite limitations in their communicative skills. Fluency, characterized by natural language use and ongoing communication, is cultivated through activities that involve negotiation of meaning, use of communication strategies, and efforts to avoid breakdowns in communication (Michel, 2017). In contrast, accuracy-focused tasks prioritize the formation of correct language examples without necessarily fostering meaningful communication.

The integration of language form within the TBLT framework has sparked debate among theorists. Krashen (1981, 1982) advocated that language acquisition can be achieved solely through communicative interaction, while Prabhu (1987) placed greater emphasis on meaning rather than grammatical forms. The notion that TBLT may lead to learners prioritizing fluency over accuracy has frequently faced criticism. The concern arises: do learners sacrifice accuracy in their pursuit of fluency?

Willis (1996) addresses this by illustrating that within the adaptable task framework, there exists an inherent emphasis on language structure. After completing the task cycle, teachers have the freedom, as advocated by Willis and Willis (2007), to isolate specific linguistic forms for further study, detached from the communicative context. This flexibility allows instructors to focus on language structures and address learners' difficulties effectively. Additionally, within the same framework, there is a natural focus on language form as students prepare to 'Report' to the entire class, thereby striving for both accuracy and fluency. This approach underscores the integration of language form within TBLT, promoting a holistic approach to language learning. However, pre-task instruction should not be used for extensive language teaching, especially not for teaching specific grammatical structures, as suggested by Willis (1996) and Willis and Willis (2007), and supported by Samuda and Bygate (2008).

Opportunities exist to introduce language form focus during the pre-task phase by allowing learners to plan before performing a task, considering what they want to say and how to say it. Proponents of pre-task grammar instruction argue that learners need grammar knowledge to perform a communicative task, as noted by Ellis (2003) and Littlewood (2007). Nunan (2010) supports the integration of focus-on-form activities

into the task-based instructional cycle, although such activities do not constitute tasks in themselves. Long (2015, 2016) opts out of pre-task grammar instruction and instead underscores its teaching during tasks when learners require it for comprehension.

The present study has adopted Willis' (1996) TBLT framework, where the language focus is strategically positioned as a post-task activity. Within this framework, the stages of 'Analysis' and 'Practice' encompass both CR activities and practice to effectively impart language forms to my students. This approach also aligns with Ellis' (1993, 2002b) assertion that grammar teaching should encompass both practice and consciousness-raising, recognizing their complementary roles in facilitating language acquisition. By adopting this balanced approach, the investigator aimed to highlight the importance of both fluency (meaning) and accuracy (form). This approach aligns with the prevailing belief that integrating grammar instruction into meaningful and communicative contexts produces better outcomes than isolated grammar teaching.

1.14 Role of L1 in TBLT

Cummins (1981) asserts that fostering the growth and retention of one's L1 contributes significantly to the advancement of the L2. He emphasized the importance of providing opportunities for students to continue developing their L1 while acquiring L2. Proficiency in L1 serves as a transferable skill that can facilitate the learning of a L2.

TBLT acknowledges and considers the use of L1 within its framework (Ellis, et al. 2019). Complex tasks conducted without L1 utilization may deprive learners of a vital cognitive tool (Swain and Lapkin, 2000). However, the use of L1 should be systematic and supportive, such as for understanding unfamiliar words or explaining complex ideas, to enhance communication in English. During the task phase, learners are encouraged to utilize any language they are familiar with (Willis, 1996; Ellis, 2003), while the teacher typically steps back to support learners' communication attempts. This approach aligns with TBLT's emphasis on meaningful interaction and communication, as utilizing L1 during this stage allows learners to express themselves more naturally and effectively, facilitating better comprehension and communication.

The inclusion of L1 is particularly crucial for young learners and beginners, as it provides essential feedback to the teacher about students' comprehension of spoken English (Ellis et al., 2019). This feedback aids in effective 'negotiation of meaning,' ensuring successful communication. TBLT suggests beginning with simple tasks in the target language and gradually reducing L1 use as students become more comfortable. However, Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009) emphasize the primary aim of the L2 classroom as the learning of the target language, highlighting the need to avoid practices that detract from this objective.

In the task-based phase cycle, the planning and reporting phases are designed to address this concern. During the planning phase preceding the report stage, learners engage in rehearsal in L2 to focus on fluency, accuracy, clarity, and organization suitable for public presentation during the report stage.

In the study, the students used their mother tongue during the initial days of implementation, particularly in the 'task-phase' to fulfill the task outcomes. At the planning stage, the researcher provided useful correction and advice on the language form, since the learners would prepare to present in front of the class accurately and fluently. The researcher consistently promoted English communication at all stages, providing scaffolding with necessary phrases and words when students sought help or required assistance. Over time, students significantly minimized their use of the mother tongue while doing the tasks, though not entirely. This approach aligns with the NEP (2020), which emphasizes bridging the gap between a child's spoken language and the language of instruction from the outset, thereby underscoring the importance of using the child's home language or mother tongue whenever feasible.

1.15 Role of Feedback in TBLT

CF serves as a crucial tool for learners to gain insights into their errors or inaccuracies in the target language, especially when encountering specific linguistic challenges during interaction. It not only aids learners in recognizing gaps and potential deficiencies in their interlanguage development but also provides valuable scaffolding for teachers to support ongoing L2 development (Kartchava, 2019).

Debate surrounds the effectiveness of different types of CF. Lyster et al. (2013) argue that learners are more inclined to attend to and recognize explicit forms of CF, such as direct correction or metalinguistic explanations, compared to implicit forms like

recasts. They further suggest that prompts, which prompt learners to clarify or elaborate on errors, are more effective than recasts. Additionally, Lyster et al. (2013) and Ellis et al. (2006) propose that explicit CF may yield more immediate learning benefits, particularly in the short term.

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is typically provided as part of post-task feedback to improve grammatical competence and accuracy, similar to oral CF. WCF can be administered explicitly through direct correction or implicitly through underlining or marginal notes, including metalinguistic feedback. In the context of TBLT, Focused Written CF (FWCF) targets specific grammar structures emphasized in the task or those posing the greatest challenges for learners, aligning well with interactionist perspectives. From a cognitive standpoint, FWCF allows learners to focus on overall writing proficiency, promoting risk-taking and fluency development. Additionally, FWCF enhances error awareness and understanding by focusing on a limited number of grammatical items, while also facilitating gradual progress within learners' ZPD from a sociocultural perspective (East, 2021 and Lee, 2019).

In the context of this study, the researcher has employed CF in all phases of the tasks, particularly in the form of elicitation, recast, and sometimes explicit correction."

1.16 Teacher's Multifaceted Role in TBLT

In the context of TBLT, the role of the teacher is often described as that of a facilitator. He/she must act as selectors and sequencers of tasks, tailoring them to the learners' age and proficiency levels while also considering the learning context and specific needs of the students. Additionally, teachers are responsible for preparing students for the tasks by providing pre-task instructions, task introductions, and reviewing relevant vocabulary. They also guide students during the task, provide corrective feedback, and give examples for clarification. The teacher's role as a scaffolder in TBLT, particularly in providing feedback, is an essential element in fostering SLA, and this perspective is applicable from both cognitive-interactionist and sociocultural-interactionist viewpoints (Van den Branden, 2009).

As pointed out by Ellis (2009), teachers play a crucial role in designing tasks and should possess a deep understanding of what constitutes a task. It is crucial for both teachers and students to understand the goals of these tasks, as incidental learning through tasks enhances language skill, and communicative skills in general. Teachers

must make thoughtful decisions at every stage, from selecting tasks to determining their difficulty and arranging their sequence. Pedagogical considerations are also vital during task implementation. The emphasis should be on learners actively using language to accomplish task objectives, guided by the teacher. The teacher's involvement includes setting up tasks, ensuring learners comprehend and engage with them, and concluding them.

The role of the teacher may vary depending on the aim of each task component. They are required to act as language guides during the language-focused stage and course guides, explaining the overall course objectives and how the components of the task framework contribute to these goals. During the task cycle, the teacher takes on different roles such as a monitor during the main task phase, a chairperson during the reporting stage, and a language advisor during the language focus stage. As Willis (1996) aptly states, teachers must exercise self-control and have the courage to step back and observe learners, allowing them to work on the tasks independently.

Nonetheless, implementing TBLT in classrooms is not without challenges, as noted by Littlewood (2007). Motivating students for tasks that require enthusiasm can be difficult, and managing a noisy classroom can pose its own set of challenges. Therefore, teachers need to be proactive, enthusiastic, and motivated when applying innovative methods like TBLT. This approach places teachers in the role of facilitators, responsible for ensuring that the exposure to and use of language are balanced and of suitable quality.

Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2011) pointed out that the language teacher adopting task-based approach in the foreign language classroom is responsible for three primary roles (i) selecting and organizing tasks; (ii) preparing learners for tasks; and (iii) raising consciousness. In this study, the researcher has endeavored to make deliberate decisions at each stage, carefully curating tasks, determining their difficulty, and arranging their sequence to suit students' proficiency levels and learning objectives. The aim is to ensure that the tasks are engaging, relevant, and scaffolded appropriately. Moreover, during task implementation, considerable efforts have been dedicated to skillfully managing classroom dynamics, offering essential support and guidance to enhance language learning effectively.

1.17 Basic Language Skills in English

Proficiency in a language is often assessed based on an individual's ability to master the four fundamental language skills: listening (l), speaking (s), reading (r), and writing (w). These skills serve as the basis for effective communication and are essential in various aspects of life. Language learning endeavors typically revolve around acquiring and refining these four competencies. Davies (2000) emphasizes the interconnectedness of these skills, highlighting their symbiotic relationship in the language acquisition process. The developmental trajectory of language skills begins in early childhood, with listening preceding speaking and reading preceding writing. This sequential progression emphasizes the inherent connection between receptive and productive language abilities. In real-life interactions, such as conversations, individuals seamlessly engage in a combination of speaking and listening, blurring the boundaries between the skills. Despite their interrelated nature, proficiency in one skill does not guarantee proficiency in others, necessitating tailored instruction for each domain (Monroe et al., 1960). Therefore, it is crucial to foster and nurture these skills from the beginning of formal education, starting from kindergarten and continuing throughout all stages of learning. Traditionally, speaking and writing have been classified as active or productive skills, while listening and reading have been considered passive or receptive skills (Greene and Petty, 1963). However, recent perspectives challenge this dichotomy, acknowledging the active involvement required in both listening and reading. Davies (2000) argues that effective listening and reading involve significant cognitive engagement, encompassing processes such as guessing, anticipating, interpreting, and organizing information. Essentially, listeners and readers actively and consciously participate in the comprehension process. Therefore, the distinction between receptive and productive skills is redefined, with listening and reading recognized as active and engaging processes similar to speaking and writing. This comprehensive understanding highlights the dynamic nature of language acquisition and the active role of individuals in understanding and producing language.

1.17.1 Listening Skills

Listening plays a crucial role in the acquisition of language, laying the foundation for the development of other language skills. While hearing is simply the reception of

auditory stimuli, listening goes beyond this passive act by engaging the mind in a process of discernment, interpretation, and understanding. As an active process, listening involves not only receiving spoken and non-verbal messages but also constructing meaning and responding appropriately. Therefore, the cultivation of effective listening skills is of utmost significance, especially in language learning contexts where learners are exposed to diverse linguistic environments. The approach to teaching listening has evolved over time, moving from a bottom-up linguistic processing approach to a schema-based perspective. In the past, during the 1970s, the focus of listening pedagogy was on helping learners identify words, sentence boundaries, and phonetic features – a process that exemplified bottom-up processing. However, in the 1980s, there was a shift in listening instruction. Educators began to prioritize the activation of learner’s top-down knowledge, moving away from solely linguistic comprehension to incorporating contextual cues and background knowledge in order to understand the intended message (Hinkel, 2010). This shift represents a departure from the linear processing of language elements, advocating for a more holistic and interactive engagement with spoken language.

1.17.1.1 Sub Skills for Listening

- ✓ Ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context
- ✓ Discriminating between distinctive sounds
- ✓ Listening for gist
- ✓ Understanding cohesive devices
- ✓ Listening for specific information and important details
- ✓ Recognizing functions of stress and intonation in spoken language
- ✓ Identifying keywords
- ✓ Making inferences and identifying the topic and theme of the aural input

1.17.1.2 Teaching Strategies for Listening Skills

Recent research has shed a great deal of light on the processes and the learning of L2 listening and it entails both bottom-up and top-down cognitive processing (Hinkel, 2006). Various teaching strategies have been advocated for effective development of listening skills:

- ✓ Engaging learners in tasks that prepare them for listening, such as activating prior knowledge, setting objectives, and making predictions about the content.
- ✓ Implementing strategies that support listening comprehension, such as focusing on the main idea, identifying important details, and monitoring understanding.
- ✓ Providing opportunities for learners to reflect on and strengthen their understanding of the listening materials through tasks like summarizing, discussing, and responding to comprehension questions.
- ✓ Enhancing learners' awareness of their own listening comprehension processes by teaching them how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their performance.
- ✓ Tailoring listening activities to meet the diverse needs and proficiency levels of learners, incorporating varied content, task types, and levels of challenge.
- ✓ Integrating listening practice with speaking, reading, and writing activities to reinforce language learning and promote holistic language development

1.17.2 Speaking Skills

Speaking plays a crucial role in language acquisition as it allows individuals to effectively convey their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. It is an interactive process where information is shared and understood by listeners, thereby facilitating communication (Richards, 1985). The development of speaking skills is not only important for self-expression but also for improving other language abilities. While speaking naturally evolves in children, deliberate efforts are required in SLA to achieve proficiency (Mukalel, 1998). Effective speaking is closely linked to listening, reading, and writing skills, and contributes to overall language competence. Tarone (2005) emphasizes the changing goal of pronunciation teaching, shifting from striving for a native-like accent to prioritizing intelligibility, ensuring that the speaker's utterances are understood by the listener. Proficient speakers demonstrate clarity, coherence, and fluency in their speech, utilizing appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation to convey their message accurately. Moreover, skilled speakers engage in active listening, adapt their communication style to their audience, and effectively respond to verbal and nonverbal cues, fostering meaningful interactions and mutual understanding.

1.17.2.1 Sub-skills for speaking skills

- ✓ Pronunciation of distinctive sounds
- ✓ Mastery of stress and intonation patterns
- ✓ Grammatical accuracy in word forms and sentence structures
- ✓ Appropriate use of vocabulary, and language suitability for different contexts
- ✓ Articulate ideas clearly, convey meaning accurately
- ✓ Engage in meaningful interactions

1.17.2.2 Teaching strategies for speaking skills

- ✓ Integrating speaking with listening, reading, or writing activities, allowing learners to engage in discussions, presentations, or oral reports.
- ✓ Incorporating real-world contexts and topics to enhance learners' motivation and relevance, promoting active participation and language production.
- ✓ Preparing learners to speak through both bottom-up (focus on language elements) and top-down (focus on content understanding) processing, helping them understand content, develop vocabulary, and organize discourse (Hinkel, 2006).
- ✓ Addressing pronunciation to enhance intelligibility rather than achieving native-like accents, focusing on segmental clarity, stress, intonation, and pausing.
- ✓ Emphasizing communication strategies to equip learners with the skills needed to navigate various communication situations effectively.
- ✓ Fostering cultural sensitivity to help learners understand cultural nuances and adapt their language use accordingly.
- ✓ Encouraging self-reflection and continuous improvement by providing opportunities for learners to assess their speaking skills and set goals for improvement.

1.17.3 Reading Skills

Reading is a multifaceted skill involving both perception and cognition, encompassing word recognition and comprehension processes. It encompasses various reading techniques such as skimming, scanning, extensive, and intensive reading (Grellet, 1981). Proficient reading is essential for comprehension and knowledge acquisition. It enables individuals to engage with diverse texts, from

literature to informational materials, to gather information, explore new ideas, and broaden their understanding of the world. Effective reading entails not only decoding words but also understanding context, making inferences, and critically evaluating information. Furthermore, skilled readers can analyze texts, identify main ideas, and synthesize information, enabling them to extract meaning and gain insights from various sources. Paran (1996), Birch (2002), and Koda (2005) stress the significance of integrating bottom-up processing, focusing on linguistic proficiency, with top-down reading skills, which involve utilizing background knowledge and context for comprehension. Balancing these approaches helps learners navigate and comprehend written texts in a second language.

1.17.3.1 Sub-skills of reading

The development of reading skills encompasses various sub-skills essential for effective comprehension and interpretation of written text. These sub-skills include:

- ✓ Phonic awareness,
- ✓ Vocabulary development
- ✓ Comprehension strategies,
- ✓ Fluency
- ✓ Critical thinking skills
- ✓ Textual awareness
- ✓ Cultural awareness
- ✓ Independent reading skills

1.17.3.2 Teaching strategies for reading skills

- ✓ Creating a reading culture that is extensive involves establishing an environment that encourages reading for pleasure. This can be achieved by providing a range of materials, such as books, magazines, and online resources.
- ✓ Vocabulary development can be integrated into reading activities, with an emphasis on active engagement with new words using context clues and word analysis.
- ✓ Rather than focusing on every detail, teaching students to concentrate on grasping main ideas and concepts promotes a better understanding of the text

- ✓ Catering to students' interests and reading levels, it is important to offer a diverse range of reading materials, including fiction, non-fiction, and different genres.
- ✓ Helping students manage unfamiliar vocabulary through strategies like context clues and word analysis and ensuring comprehension.
- ✓ Reinforcing vocabulary learning through regular review and practice activities like word games and flashcards.
- ✓ Encouraging independent reading habits, students can be assigned regular reading tasks and given the freedom to choose materials based on their interests.
- ✓ Monitoring comprehension and making predictions, encouraging students to apply them independently.
- ✓ Providing constructive feedback and support, while monitoring students' progress.

1.17.4 Writing Skills

Writing serves as a powerful tool for communication, allowing individuals to effectively convey ideas and messages. Unlike speech, which involves immediate interaction, writing requires clarity and coherence to ensure comprehension. Writers not only generate and organize ideas but also transform them into readable texts that represent their thoughts and perspectives. This process involves careful consideration of language choice, sentence structure, and overall organization to create a cohesive piece of writing. Additionally, writing provides the opportunity for individuals to express themselves in a structured and thoughtful manner, allowing for deeper exploration of topics and themes. Overall, honing writing skills is essential for effective communication and self-expression in various contexts.

1.17.4.1 Sub-skills of writing

- ✓ Planning and organization of ideas
- ✓ Vocabulary and language use
- ✓ Grammar and syntax
- ✓ Sentence structure
- ✓ Punctuation and mechanics
- ✓ Paragraph development

- ✓ Cohesion and coherence
- ✓ Audience awareness
- ✓ Style and voice
- ✓ Revision and editing

1.17.4.2 Teaching strategies for writing skills

- ✓ Designing activities that focus on spelling and word recognition to build fundamental skills in accurately recognizing and spelling words.
- ✓ Teaching syntactic parsing of morphemes, phrases, and sentence structure and the functions of words and phrases within sentences.
- ✓ Introducing tasks like personal narratives to encourage creative expression.
- ✓ Integrating writing instruction with reading, grammar, and vocabulary learning, using diverse texts.
- ✓ Engaging students in meaningful writing tasks related to academic subjects.
- ✓ Incorporating form-focused writing instruction to improve the quality of L2 prose.
- ✓ Helping students analyze texts to identify genre-specific features and language usage.
- ✓ Exploring different types of written discourse (e.g., emails, news reports) to show how language changes based on context and audience.
- ✓ Fostering critical thinking about genres and their linguistic features

1.18 Segregated-skills Approach versus Integrated-skills Approach

Until the end of the 1970s, language instruction primarily focused on teaching the four language skills in isolation, driven by traditional teaching methods. For instance, in the GTM, the emphasis was on analyzing grammar rules and translating texts, which did not adequately prepare students for real-life communication situations (Oxford, 2001). Similarly, the dominance of Audiolingualism, which prioritized oral language skills, hindered students' ability to express themselves effectively (Pardede, 2017).

Oxford (2001) noted that language programs often offer separate courses on listening comprehension, grammar, advanced writing, spoken English, pronunciation, etc. due to logistical convenience and a belief that focusing on multiple skills simultaneously

might be impractical. The discrete skill approach, based on the idea that focusing on individual skills improves language acquisition, resulted in the teaching of each skill independently. In the approach that separates skills, the focus is on mastering individual language skills such as reading or speaking, with the belief that this leads to successful learning. This approach usually involves keeping language learning separate from content learning (Mohan, 1986; Cantoni-Harvey, 1987). However, this contradicts how people naturally integrate language skills during communication and goes against the direction language teaching experts have been moving towards in recent years.

During the 1970s, numerous researchers and methodologists observed that teaching language skills couldn't be achieved by isolating and focusing solely on individual structural elements because these skills are interconnected and interdependent (Kaplan, 1970; Stern, 1993). Widdowson (1979) advocated for integrating language skills, emphasizing that language use occurs within specific social contexts, requiring learners to develop both receptive and productive skills together. Support for this integrated approach comes from Willis (1996), who highlights that some language teaching approaches focus on isolated skills, while others emphasize integrated skills. In real communication, language skills are rarely used in isolation, as people not only speak but also observe their interlocutors' reactions and listen for responses. Similarly, writing involves reading, checking, and revising what has been written.

In integrated-skills approach, learning one skill leads to learning others (Oxford, 2001; Brown, 2001). For example, students listen to instructions in English, engage in discussions, and produce written reports, thus integrating various skills. Consequently, courses labeled under one skill may actually reflect an integrated approach (Oxford, 2001). Nunan (2004) echoes this notion, emphasizing the significance of integrating language skills to foster genuine communicative competence and enhance learners' language proficiency through engaging in linguistic and communicative tasks that encourage authentic language use. East (2017) argued that recognizing the importance of integrated skills in communicative approaches acknowledges that speaking, for instance, requires listening as an essential component.

Thus, integrated approach recognizes that in everyday communication, all four language skills are utilized together along with the vocabulary, spelling,

pronunciation, sentence structure, meaning and usage. Therefore, it is crucial to interweave all four skills to effectively use English for communication. The approach is founded on the idea that in daily communication, individuals employ all four language skills simultaneously. Relying solely on one or two skills to develop independently may be theoretically possible, but this do not ensure effective utilization of English for adequate preparation for academic, professional or everyday language use.

1.19 Integrated-skills Approach in TBLT

TBLT is arguably the most extensively embraced approach to integrated language instruction and is widely regarded as the classroom method that closely replicates real-life communication interactions (Hinkel, 2010).

The comprehensive classroom tasks designed for groups or pairs often involve a combination of listening and speaking, reading and speaking, or reading, writing, and speaking. Activities such as listening to audio materials, playing interactive games, or collaborating on tasks involving information exchange and problem-solving necessitate learners' active participation in integrated language use as group or pair work can only be accomplished when participants collaborate, engage in discussions, share information, or read and pool their resources. In this evolved perspective, TBLT does not limit tasks solely to speaking; it accommodates various modes and skills, including the three other language skills. It also acknowledges the role of input-based tasks, such as listening comprehension activities, especially for beginners.

Learners engaging in speaking activities might also be asked to create a collaborative written response. For instance, they could be tasked with summarizing or reporting the results of their spoken activity in written form. As pointed out by García-Mayo and Imaz Agirre (2019), research has suggested that speaking-focused tasks encourage learners to prioritize meaning, while tasks incorporating a written component provide more opportunities for learners to concentrate on accuracy and grammatical structure. Tasks involving some form of written output also lend themselves to individual work, which can be integrated with other language skills, such as reading and responding (e.g., replying to a letter) or listening/watching and responding (e.g., summarizing key points of an announcement). Individual writing tasks can be completed as part of whole-class activities, where the entire class listens

to or reads the same input and produces individual written responses. This can lead to pair, group, or whole-class collaboration, where outcomes are shared, and feedback opportunities are provided. Additionally, these tasks can be extended into monologic speaking activities, such as individual presentations (East, 2021).

TBLT has evolved into a relevant and effective approach for the integration of language skills. This approach acknowledges the interconnected nature of language skills and their natural integration in real-life language use. It aligns with the idea that language skills are best developed when used together, fostering constant practice, granting students greater opportunities to delve into and hone each of these skills through exploration and extensive practice.

1.20 TBLT in Assam's ELT Landscape

In Assam, English proficiency among upper primary students remains notably low due to the pervasive use of traditional teaching methods (Dutta, 2015; Changkakoti, 2023). To address this issue effectively, it is imperative to understand that irrespective of individual learning styles, four fundamental conditions stand out as critical for efficient language learning: exposure, use, motivation, and, optionally but valuably, a focus on language form (Willis, 1996).

(i) Exposure: Central to language learning is the essential condition of exposure to genuine, comprehensible language input, reflecting the kind of language learners aspire to understand and employ. In task-based approach, students engage in peer interactions, read texts, listen to recordings, write their reports about the tasks, rehearse, and present to the class. These activities provide a rich and contextually relevant linguistic environment mirroring real-world communication.

(ii) Opportunities to use language to exchange meanings: Students are immersed in authentic language experiences where they can articulate their thoughts, engage in meaningful conversations, and collaboratively tackle problems. TBLT empowers students to experiment with language, honing their linguistic skills while gaining practical experience. This approach encourages them to speak and write English with practical relevance, surpassing the limitations of rote learning and memorization.

(iii) Motivation: It plays a pivotal role in language learning, and TBLT is designed with motivation in mind. The clear task-based goals ignite students' intrinsic

motivation to complete tasks and accomplish objectives. The tangible, real-world applications of language acquired through TBLT further enhance motivation. Learners are no longer studying English merely as a subject; they are actively using it as a tool for communication and problem-solving, motivating them to excel. The successful completion of tasks serves as an internal driving force.

(iv) Focus on language form: TBLT seamlessly integrates the focus on language form into its framework. The teacher can either conduct pre-task grammar instruction (Ellis, 2003) or after the completion of task cycle (Willis, 1996). TBLT allows students to engage in activities centered on language form. During these activities, students analyze language usage and enjoy the freedom to work at their own pace. This approach empowers students to make discoveries and apply them when the need arises, without the constraints of a one-size-fits-all approach.

These four fundamental conditions form the foundation of effective language acquisition. However, the challenges associated with nurturing basic language skills in English among upper primary students in Assam necessitate a transformative approach like TBLT.

Besides meeting the previously mentioned language learning requirements, task-based approach, strives to provide students with diverse language experiences and opportunities for language use. This comprehensive exposure helps them acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for various types of exams. The task phase improves their oral test performance and boosts their confidence in using the language. The planning and report stages assist in producing accurate language and teach students editing and self-correction skills. Additionally, the language focus phase enhances their grasp of grammar and allows them to select patterns and vocabulary relevant to their interests, which can be incorporated into their writing.

Moreover, this approach proves particularly valuable for beginners and young learners (elementary and secondary school learners), as advocated by Ellis (2020). Its inherent flexibility provides learners with input-based, pedagogic, and closed tasks, establishing a comfortable starting point. Contrary to the common belief that tasks are primarily output-based (especially speaking tasks), it's worth noting that early task definitions emphasized input-based tasks, such as drawing a map while listening to a tape or following an instruction. These input-based tasks emphasize comprehension,

the cornerstone of L2 learning. Importantly, they allow learners to engage in real-world communication without the immediate pressure of language production. A gradual transition to output-based tasks from input-based tasks, can further enhance the learning process (Ellis, 2020).

Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that L2 are acquired most effectively when learners focus on meaning rather than form (Willis and Willis, 2007; Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2003; Prabhu, 1987) emphasize this principle. TBLT aligns with this approach, where linguistic structures, vocabulary, grammatical rules, and rhetorical aspects are acquired incidentally, diverging from traditional methods where they are consciously learned. With its primary emphasis on meaning, TBLT empowers students to focus on fluency and provides the freedom to use language forms without excessive concern for accuracy.

In the ELT scenario in Assam, TBLT offers a transformative pathway for students, enabling them to learn English not merely as a subject but as a practical skill. By aligning with the fundamental conditions of language learning - exposure, use, motivation, and a focus on language form - TBLT ensures that students are well-prepared to communicate effectively in real-world contexts. This approach is particularly advantageous for beginners and young learners, providing them with opportunities to engage in authentic communication without the immediate pressure of language production. TBLT empowers students to use English as a tool for real-life interactions, effectively bridging the gap between language learning and language use.

1.21 Rationale of the Study

Despite English being introduced as a major subject from Class I, many students from Assamese medium schools face substantial challenges in developing their basic language skills in English language. These challenges encompass difficulties in comprehending spoken and written English, as well as effectively interpreting and responding to written texts, navigating complex vocabulary, and grasping auditory information. Among these hurdles, the development of speaking skills presents a particularly formidable obstacle, due to fear of making mistakes, peer pressure to conform to their peers' proficiency level, limited exposure, vocabulary constraints, pronunciation concerns, and a lack of speaking practice in their educational environment.

Upon discussion with the teachers of the schools and interaction with students, the researcher has come to know of the prevailing focus on syllabus completion and exam preparation. In government and provincialized Assamese medium schools, English language instruction in government and provincialized Assamese medium schools has traditionally relied on traditional lecture methods and rote learning, notably the GTM (Changkakoti,2023; Awal and Karim, 2021; Deka, 2020; Choudhury and Dutta, 2015; Dutta, 2015; Karim, 2015; Baishya, 2011). The primary objective has been exam preparation, with an overarching emphasis on the ability to respond to questions, complete grammar exercises, compose essays, paragraphs, etc. Regrettably, this approach has often fallen short in equipping students with overall language skills in English.

Compounding these challenges is the socio-economic background of a significant portion of students in Assamese medium schools, many of whom hail from economically disadvantaged families. Furthermore, their parents may not have received a quality education themselves, limiting their capacity to provide effective support for their children's English language learning. The home environment often lacks opportunities for English language practice, making it challenging for students to perceive English as a practical skill they can develop both within and outside their homes.

Recognizing the global significance of English as a lingua franca and the growing demand for English proficiency across various sectors, it is essential to shift the pedagogical focus in English language instruction from rote learning to skill development. English should be viewed as a practical skill that empowers students to communicate confidently in real-life scenarios, whether in academic or professional contexts. This idea underscores the importance of task-based approach creating contexts for the natural use of language, where language serves as a tool for communication rather than being studied solely as a subject. This approach prioritizes meaning over linguistic form (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996; Skehan, 1998, 2011; Long, 1985, 1991, 2014;), aligning with the goal of equipping students with the ability to effectively use English in authentic and meaningful ways.

By prioritizing the development of LSRW skills, students can lay a robust foundation in English, enabling them to communicate effectively in everyday situations. This

focus on practical language use aligns with the objective of furnishing students with the tools requisite for navigating a globalized world, where good communication skills in English is often considered a prerequisite for success. Only once students possess a firm grasp of these language skills, they should be progressively introduced to the more intricate and literary aspects of the subject. This includes fostering an appreciation for prose and poetry, conducting literary analysis, and developing the skills required for creative writing and responding to literature-related queries.

Reorienting English language instruction from rote learning to skill development, with a pivotal emphasis on LSRW skills, empowers students with practical tools for effective real-world communication. This shift fosters an environment where students can engage meaningfully with the language, gaining confidence and competence in using English in various contexts. By establishing this solid foundation, students can develop a deeper appreciation for the nuances of the English language and literature, enriching their overall learning experience and preparing them for success in academic and professional endeavors.

Moreover, within the realm of English language instruction, it is essential to consider the pedagogical approach to grammar. While grammar instruction remains an indispensable component, an excessive focus on rigid rules and accuracy, at the expense of fluency, can potentially diminish students' interest in the subject. Instead, adopting a dynamic, communicative approach to teaching grammar offers a more engaging and effective alternative. Within the framework of TBLT, grammar is seamlessly integrated into meaningful tasks and authentic communication contexts. This approach not only facilitates the comprehension of how language functions practically but also kindle students' interest and motivation. Furthermore, TBLT emphasizes error tolerance, constructive feedback, and a gradual shift of grammatical complexity, fostering a comprehensive learning experience. It places learners at the center of the learning process, prioritizing real-world language use.

TBLT represents a promising departure from traditional ELT methodologies and is acknowledged in NCERT (2005b)' s Position Paper on Teaching of English. The introduction of TBLT into Class VIII of Assamese medium schools holds significant potential to revolutionize the landscape of English language education. By incorporating tasks that mirror genuine language use, this approach can bridge the gap

between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Furthermore, it aligns with NEP (2020) holistic approach towards language education which highlights the need for a shift in language learning from a mere emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, and literature to a more experiential approach that places greater importance on conversation, interaction, and the teaching-learning process.

While TBLT aims to create meaningful L2 contexts, it acknowledges the value of students occasionally drawing on their L1 resources, aligning with the recognition of the naturalness of translanguaging when a shared L1 exists (Bui and Tai, 2022; Willis, 1996). The judicious use of the L1 to aid in task performance, can serve as a valuable resource to help learners better comprehend, conceptualize, and articulate their ideas in English. By recognizing that learners may initially rely on their mother tongue for certain tasks, such as within-task phase, educators can encourage a smoother transition toward increased L2 usage over time. These insights from TBLT highlight the importance of considering the role of the mother tongue as a potential scaffolding tool for learners. The NEP (2020) and NCF (2023) emphasize a more holistic and multilingual approach to education, recognizing the importance of preserving and promoting students' mother tongues while also promoting proficiency in multiple languages, including the regional language and English.

Educational bodies such as NCERT, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), and Board of Secondary Education (SEBA), Assam, have acknowledged this imperative; however, disparities between the current learning environment and curriculum content suggest potential shortcomings in facilitating integrated LSRW skill development among students. The adoption of task-based approach offers promising prospects for long-term enhancements in students' language proficiency and their adeptness in real-world communication scenarios. Moreover, TBLT's departure from rote learning towards practical language application is anticipated to reshape students' perceptions of English as an effective communication tool. Additionally, the cognitive demands of TBLT tasks foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills, preparing students for intricate communication scenarios.

A thorough review of previous studies has brought to light there is an urgent need to change the language teaching method from teacher-centered to learner-centered in government and provincialized schools of Assam, while a few studies have

highlighted the challenges faced by Assamese medium school learners when it comes to learning English (Baishya, 2011; Ahmed, 2016; Awal and Karim, 2021). Studies on TBLT are sparse, for instance Choudhury and Dutta (2015) explored higher secondary students' perceptions for the implementation of TBLT in the English Classroom, while Dutta (2015) conducted an investigation into the constraints and opportunities of implementing TBLT. All these studies have highlighted the challenges, possible solutions for these challenges, etc. However, the practical implications of innovative language teaching approach is done only Deka (2020) who implemented constructivist approach to improve English language learning in lower primary students and Changkakoti (2023) who has seen the effectiveness in developing writing skills.

Given these prevailing shortcomings in English language teaching in Assam, the researcher aims to find a solution through the practical implementation of TBLT. One of the primary objectives of the study is to assess the development of the integrated language skills through the implementation of TBLT. The task-based module designed for this objective is replete with various tasks that embody the integration of the language skills along with the overarching aim to develop overall language proficiency and other important skills such as communication, collaboration, critical-thinking skills, etc. The communicative outcomes of the tasks are in sync with the learning outcomes outlined by NCERT/SCERT Assam for Class VIII. From this perspective, the study is unique because majority of the previous studies conducted in the realm of TBLT have focused on segregated skills. The fundamental premise on which this study is built is that language acquisition and learning cannot take place in isolating skills. Each individual skills should be seamlessly woven to create a “strong tapestry” for language learning (Oxford, 2001).

Additionally, it is also important to understand students' perspective about their experiences in English learning because most of the students have reservations for English subject as a whole. They hesitate to speak, for the fear of making mistakes, in addition to facing hurdles in writing, reading and comprehending. In such situations, it is essential to understand whether students are ready for innovative approaches like TBLT, considering their familiarity with traditional examinations and passive learning.

In a nutshell, through an examination of the potential advantages of TBLT in fostering language skills for Class VIII students, this study endeavors to elevate the quality of English language instruction in Assam. By doing so, it seeks to equip students with English language abilities that extend beyond examination requirements, enabling them to engage in meaningful communication and prepare for future success in various aspects of life.

1.22 Statement of the Problem

The study's problem is titled as **Effectiveness of Task-Based Language Teaching in Developing Language Skills in English among Class VIII Students.**

1.23 Operational Definitions of the Key Terms

(i) **Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT):** TBLT is an instructional approach that emphasizes learning through the completion of meaningful tasks or activities ((Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). In the context of this study, TBLT entails a methodical implementation of tasks specifically designed to improve students' proficiency in the four fundamental language skills in English, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

(ii) **Language Skills in English:** It entails quantifying the proficiency level of Class VIII students in Assam by measuring their ability to proficiently utilize the English language across four fundamental language skills in English.

(iii) **Class VIII Students:** Students enrolled in the eighth grade within the provincialized and government-run vernacular medium co-educational schools, who are the primary participants of this study.

1.24 Objectives of the Study

1. To develop a Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) module based on Class VIII English textbook to foster English language skills.
2. To study the effectiveness of TBLT module for developing listening skills in English among Class VIII students.

3. To study the effectiveness of TBLT module for developing speaking skills in English among Class VIII students.
4. To study the effectiveness of TBLT module for developing reading skills in English among Class VIII students.
5. To study the effectiveness of TBLT module for developing writing skills in English among Class VIII students.
6. To study the effectiveness of the TBLT module for developing overall language skills in English among Class VIII students.
7. To assess the attitude of the students towards TBLT after intervention.

1.25 Hypotheses of the Study

HO₁. There is no significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the control group and experimental group in developing their listening skills in English.

HO₂. There is no significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the control group and experimental group in developing their speaking skills in English.

HO₃. There is no significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the control group and experimental group in developing their reading skills in English.

HO₄. There is no significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the control group and experimental group in developing their writing skills in English.

HO₅. There is no significant difference between the mean pre-test and post-test scores of the control group and experimental group in developing their overall language skills in English.

1.26 Delimitations of the Study

1. The study is delimited to holistic enhancement of integrated language skills, encompassing LSRW as macro skills. However, the research does not specifically delve into the examination of micro skills within each of these broader language components.
2. The geographical scope of the study is delimited to the Guwahati block within the Kamrup Metro district, Assam.
3. The study is conducted within provincialized co-educational Assamese medium schools operating under the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) board.
4. The study's target population consists of students in Class VIII.