

English Language Teaching in Govt. Primary Schools, Mizoram: Problems and Remedial Suggestions

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Abstract

English Language is now an international communicative tool, a means of achieving countless transactions which is indispensable in today's world. Even for remote North Eastern Indian state like Mizoram, and specifically in the backward rural southern part of Mizoram, its importance is no less defined. It is surprising to see many students of Higher Secondary and Colleges terribly struggling in the English communication skills, which prompted this small study. The study focusses on the teaching of English to Primary students which is manifesting in the English language communicative competency of the elementary students. This level is selected with an assumption that the elementary level is the root where the problems which shows in the later levels are concentrated. The study looked into the teaching process, the text-books and the socio-economic context of the study area.

Keywords: Mizoram, Teaching, communication, competency, elementary

Introduction:

“It is the use of language which sets humans apart from other members of the animal kingdom.” (Lo-khandwala, 2004)

Man is a social animal living in a group which shares his joys and sorrows with near and dear ones. Language is the thread that knit members of a social group together. The *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* (2008) defines language as “The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in an agreed way”. A member of the human group communicates to the other through verbal or other linguistic signs. Human language is unique and differs from the communication systems of other animals in that it is verbal, arbitrary, conventional, rule-governed and species-specific. Based on the influence of Leonard Bloomfield (1935) who believes that language/speech is a system of stimuli-response interaction we have the behaviourist school of thought on the origin and development of language. Bloomfield expresses the difference between human language and animal language as, ‘Human speech differs from the signal-like actions of animals, even of those which use the voice, by its great differentiation.... In human speech, different sounds have different meanings’ and added, ‘A language is the same no matter what system of writing may be used to record it, just as a person is the same no matter how you take his picture’. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Paul Kay and Willet Kempton, 1984) emphasizes that language is such an important part of human existence that a language determines the way a person perceives the world around him, the more elaborate his language, the more detailed his knowledge of the world around him.

In the words of Ronald Langacker (1968), “Language is everywhere. It permeates our thoughts, mediates our relations with others, and even creeps into our dreams. The overwhelming bulk of human knowledge is stored and transmitted in language. Language is so ubiquitous that we take it for granted, but without it, society as we know it would be impossible”. Thus, one of the most important factors determining the continuous existence of any society is a common language through which successful social interaction is being done.

The importance of English for communication in the world today is reflected by Dr. R.N Sharma (2004) as, ‘... it is one of the major vehicles of the culture of modern world. By ignoring English, no nation, western or eastern will prosper. In the present world there is no wider means of communication than English’.

Statement of The Problem:

Seeing how many students of Higher Institutions in Mizoram are unable to communicate in English, neither fluently nor in correct grammar whether in writing or speaking, it is surprising how they managed to get through Secondary and Higher Secondary level where majority of the subject textbooks are written in English and the medium of instruction is English. It may be assumed that most of the students went through their courses by blind memorisation without understanding the proper concepts.

In Mizoram, English was introduced in the vernacular schools by the Welsh Missionaries as early as 1901. However, to this date English has always been treated as one of the knowledge subjects like Mathematics, History, etc., and not as a tool of communication. H.G Widdowson (1978) says, ‘... the teaching of language as communication calls for an approach which brings linguistic skills and communicative abilities into close association with each other’. But this aspect of language teaching has been ignored, due to perhaps ignorance of what ‘to teach a language’ means. The current blooming of English medium Schools in Mizoram is one of the evidences of the rising importance in the English language status.

The predicament of the learner of English in Mizoram is clearly expressed by J. Donald Bowen (1972) in the following lines:

Usually he (the student) must depend upon the classroom for his total experience in his new language (English), and any imbalance in the class representation will be reflected by a comparable imbalance in his total control of the language. Yet traditionally, our second language classrooms have been modelled on first language situations. Students are taught the formal forms of language, and major attention is given to writing from the very first meetings of the class. The result has been an inadequate control of the language for even the best student.

Thus, considering the amount of time (more than ten years) students are exposed to English in the schools and the important role played by English in everyday life, the pathetic level of competency in English communicative skills shown by Mizo students is almost a crime. This is reflected by Yashwant M. Sharma (2001) as follows, This is the harsh reality of the Indian class rooms. All the imported approaches, methods and techniques remain ineffective because they are not modified keeping in view the needs of the Indian classrooms. On the other hand, there is fear that the syllabus may not be completed in the stipulated time. Then there is no alternative left for the English Teacher except to use Grammar-Translation method in a lecture delivering mode.

It is important to be clear of one’s objective in English language teaching. Even before chalking out the objective of the task at hand, it is a clever move to look around and far ahead as expressed by Wilga M.

Rivers (1983), “Before we decide what our objectives in language teaching should be at any particular time in any specific place, we need to consider carefully where our society is headed, and the demands this future will make on our students”.

The main objective of any language teaching process is to impart communicative competence to the learner which according to John Munby (1991) includes, ‘... the ability to use linguistic forms to perform communicative acts and to understand the communicative functions of sentences and their relationships to other sentences’. In the present case, even after learning English for more than 10 years, i.e, from Class - I in the Primary school up to higher Secondary Schools, most students are still unable to express themselves in English. In other words, they failed to communicate. This study is an attempt to find out the problems in Teaching English by studying and observing how the teaching of English is currently undertaken in the primary School level. The main focus of the study will be to find out the problems in the Teaching of English and thereby suggest a remedial solution to the problems.

Theoretical Framework:

The present study chooses the framework of the communicative approach since the ultimate goal of any linguistic activity is communication of messages. The traditional approach to the study of learner’s problems in English or Second Languages have been mostly confined to an analysis of the errors and their sources or the analysis of the structural input necessary for teaching or learning the language. Noam Chomsky (1965) seems to be aware of this limitation when he differentiated ‘*performance*’ from ‘*competence*’. By ‘*competence*’ he meant the knowledge of rules of a language and by ‘*performance*’ he referred to the application of these rules in real life context. Widdowson (1978) preferred the term ‘*communicative competence*’ which was the ability to produce the appropriate sentence in a given context, and which he distinguishes from the knowledge of the rules of grammar. Dell Hymes (1971) also criticizes the structural point of view in language teaching- learning, he favours the communicational approach to language learning. This is also reflected by Widdowson (1972) as, “We are generally required to use our knowledge of the language system in order to achieve some kind of communicative purposes”.

The communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1971) referred to as ‘*communicative competence*’, a term in partial modification to Chomsky’s ‘*competence*’. For Chomsky, the focus of linguistic theory was to characterize abstract abilities speakers possess that enable them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language. Hymes held that linguistic theory needed to be seen as part of a more general theory incorporating communication and culture. His theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community.

At the level of language theory, Communicative Language Teaching has a rich, if somewhat eclectic, theoretical base. Some of the characteristics of this communicative view of language are as follows-

1. Language is a system of the expression of meaning.
2. The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
3. The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4. The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning exemplified in discourse.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced at a time when British language teaching was ready for a paradigm shift. Situational Language Teaching was no longer felt to reflect a

methodology appropriate for the seventies and beyond. CLT appealed to those who sought a more humanistic approach to teaching, one in which the interactive processes of communication received priority. The rapid adoption and implementation of the communicative approach also resulted from the fact that it quickly assumed the status of orthodoxy in British language teaching circles, receiving the sanction and support of leading British Applied Linguists, language specialists, publishers as well as institutions such as the British Council. (Jack C. Richards & Theodore S. Rodgers, 1986)

Thus, communicative competence includes the ability to use linguistic forms to perform communicative acts and to understand their functions in a sentence and their relationships to other sentences. Recent theoretical developments make it necessary for us to be aware of the importance of other linguistic aspects not only of structures, to the point where the learner can use them to communicate meanings in real situations.

Review of related literatures:

A thorough search has been done to find previous studies related to the present study in Mizoram. However, the research scholar is able to find only very few works in the field of English Language Teaching-Learning in Mizoram. He further found that none of the previous studies had touch the Primary School level of English Teaching which made him able to declare the present study original and a first in its area.

Research Methodology and Analysis of the Data:

The main objective of the study is to find out how English is taught at Primary School level in Mizoram. The study is carried out in a descriptive manner and follows the following steps.

1. Selection of study area: For area of study Lunglei District, Mizoram is selected for the following reasons. Lunglei District occupies the middle region of Mizoram geographically and is at present the largest District in the State of Mizoram. The whole state of Mizoram is topographically similar, north-east-west-south, mainly covered with hills and small rivers, small patches of plains thrown here and there randomly. Social and economic conditions are somewhat homogeneous throughout the State, especially language barring some remote and backward areas where certain slightly different but related dialects are spoken. It is believed that selecting Lunglei District to represent the whole state of Mizoram would be adequate for the said purpose. From the demarcated study area, Twenty (20) Government Primary Schools in and around Lunglei District are selected by simple random sampling, excluding English Medium Primary Schools. The selected schools are Mizo (Vernacular) medium and it is assumed that these schools will satisfactorily represent the true English Teaching- Learning scenario in Lunglei District, which further would reflect the big picture on the situation in the State of Mizoram.

It is assumed that the biggest problems in the teaching and learning of English language are to be found in the vernacular medium schools run by the state government hence the schools selected for study are only from this group. Moreover, only the Government run schools are those which exist even in the most remote villages, whereas the private schools are clustered in the towns and bigger villages where financial and economic prospects are more favourable.

2. Evaluation of Students English language competency: The second step involves finding out the competency level of the students of those selected schools in writing and speaking skills by administering a simple Written and Oral test from class-I to Class-IV.

3. Distribution of Questionnaires to Teachers: A set of questionnaires comprising of 20 close-ended questions is distributed to teachers of Primary Schools who are currently teaching English after giving them detailed instruction on how to respond to them. These are collected later while giving the teachers sufficient time to respond to them.

4. Teachers' Interview: 20 teachers in total are being interviewed by selecting one English teacher each from the selected schools using a set of self-designed interview questions. The questions are structured so as to find out the opinions of the teachers regarding the problems they faced in their classroom English Teaching and asked them to suggest remedial steps towards them.

5. Class Teaching Observation: Real classroom teaching was observed in person or by recording the class proceedings which are later analysed. The process is a valuable step in acquiring first-hand information on the nature of English Teaching – Learning process at Primary Schools in the Mizoram.

6. Analysis of the prescribed text books: The English Text Books of Class I – IV are carefully studied and analysed in a systematic manner to see how satisfactory and efficient they are in the imparting of English language communicative competence.

7. Data Analysis: The collected Data through the various mentioned tools are studied and analyzed thoroughly and interpretations are given accordingly.

Findings of the study and suggestions:

1. Selected Schools conditions: The twenty Govt. Primary Schools selected for the study are distributed over an area covering rural and semi-urban locations in and around Lunglei Town. The Schools are established in between 1932 to 1988. Majority of the schools have Semi-Concrete buildings, which are in good conditions apart from few schools which are outside Lunglei Town area having Assam Type buildings which are very old. There is only one School building which is completely concrete. Only few of these schools have Electric connections. On the other hand, all of these primary Schools are situated in very good locations with ample space for the students to play and study nature if required. Since majority of the students attending these schools are coming from poor family background, mostly BPL families; even though school uniforms are prescribed, they could not be enforced in most of the schools, especially those in remote rural areas. Many students come to the School without uniforms or with maybe a single item of the uniform set, many without proper shoes and all. Thus, discipline could not be maintained thoroughly except inside the classroom. Number of teachers vary from 3 – 9 per school. Since primary class is from class I – IV, for schools where there are only 3 teachers, at least two classes have to be covered by one teacher at all times. If a teacher had to go on leave due to any reasons, the rest of the teachers have a hard time managing the classes, and sometimes have to close the school which in turn affect the educational welfare of the students.

2. Written & Spoken English skill tests Result: It is found that most of the students secured very low grades in their respective level tests indicating that they are very weak in English language skills. Even though girls are a little more in number they did not fare much better than the boys. This may mean that sex doesn't determine their language proficiency. In the case of oral test, we get a result which is worse than the written test. It is found that most of them could not respond meaningfully to the simple questions asked indicating that that even after three years of learning English in the lower classes, they haven't acquired simple communicative skills in those classes within the past three years.

3. Teachers' Questionnaires responses: Out of the 40 teachers who responded to the questionnaires distributed among the 20 selected Schools within Lunglei District, all of them teaches English for less

than 5 years only showing that there are no specific teachers appointed as English Teachers. The teachers simply took turns teaching English whether they like it or not and taught it along with other subjects. However, Teaching other subjects along with English doesn't seem to create any problem. Fortunately, most of the teachers enjoy teaching English, more so the female teachers and prefer to teach it over other subjects if given an option. Educational qualification, length of service in teaching English and working location do not have a significant impact on whether a teacher enjoyed teaching English or not. Most of the teachers find teaching English difficult, whether they are from rural or semi-urban locations, those with lower educational qualifications the more so. Ironically, those teachers with ELT training seemed to find teaching English more difficult and preferred to teach other subjects over English than those without training. More than half of the teacher respondents attended a training course in ELT which however were only 1- 3 days Courses, and all the respondents felt they needed to attend more and proper training in ELT. The medium of instruction in the Govt. Primary Schools under the present study is the vernacular Mizo Language. All the teachers use Mizo language most of the time even inside the English classroom, more so by the female teachers. The teachers neither speak to their students in English outside the English classroom nor use it at their own homes. Likewise, the students do not have any opportunity to use what they learned in their English class in their everyday life. This could be due to many reasons like lack of exposure, linguistic homogeneity of Mizo society and attitude of the students towards English in general. In the classroom it is found that those teachers who do not attend a training course use Mizo more than those with ELT training.

The Teachers considered the present prescribed English Text books to be good enough, though they believed that if more local materials like folk tales, names, cultural history, etc., are included, it will help the students to better understand their lessons and development of English language skills. The teachers showed a very low self-esteem in terms of their English Communicative skills. Female teachers have lower self-esteem than the male teachers. Majority of the teachers assessed their English proficiency level at 'weak' and 'very weak', while only few teachers placed themselves at 'good' level. Most of the respondents stated that 'speaking' is their weakest skill, followed by 'writing', 'reading' next and 'listening' comes last. Here, attending a training course in ELT doesn't seem to raise a teacher's English language proficiency level which brought a question to the mind whether the training courses conducted are sufficient or not. Family background of the students is believed to be a very strong factor in determining ease and difficulties of learning English language skills specifically and education in general. Most of the students in the schools under study come from families which are broken, poverty stricken and mostly very backward.

4. Problems faced by the students in the Learning of English Language:

1. Lack of exposure to English Language in real life situations: Students of Primary Schools in Mizoram faced a constant disadvantage of living in a homogenous linguistic Society. Since Mizo language is used extensively even in and out of the English Classroom and that the medium of instruction in most Govt Primary Schools is Mizo Language, the children have little or no chance to employ whatever English skills they acquired in Schools anywhere. This is more so in the case of students from rural and semi-urban schools, where the only non-Mizo speakers they confronted could not speak English either. Moreover, being situated in remote locations where even Television sets are luxury items for many households, the problems in the teaching of English under such conditions is surely to be bigger than those in urban areas.

2. **Family background of the Students:** Most of the students in the study area come from very poor and un-developed families. Many of them lived in broken families with single parents or with their grandparents. Within these circumstances, not only English language learning, but even education as a whole is not properly appreciated and children are hardly encouraged in this direction. The parents, as well as society do not realize the importance of education in general. The parents hardly support or encourage their children in their studies and were satisfied if they could supply them with the bare minimum, text books, writing materials and uniforms. Even these are not properly supplied to many children. Whatever new things they learned in English language class are never reinforced at home hence they are lost easily. The parents never supervise their children's studies. In short, the children are allowed to spend their time out of schools to do whatever they liked. The parents or guardians did not care as long as they do not disturb them. Thus, it is very difficult for teachers to inculcate the linguistic skills to these children within the school hours only.
3. **Inadequate Teacher Training:** The study found that there are no teachers specifically appointed to teach English in Primary Schools. Most of the teachers take turns year after year, to teach English. It is found that none of the teachers previously or currently teaching English received proper training in the teaching of English. The government agency like SCERT sometimes conducted a short 1-2 days course in ELT which could not be attended by all teachers, especially those from remote areas. Even those who attended the courses declared that all that they received in these training courses were not context based hence inapplicable to their school conditions. Thus, the teachers who teach English language went teaching it without proper knowledge of ELT methodology. Many are doing it so because it is their turn, not because they are interested to do it and are satisfied if they could finish the prescribed lessons within the stipulated time.
4. **Students attitude towards English language:** Another prominent ailment that plaques English language teaching – learning process is the students' attitude towards English language. Most students associated the language with the advanced and civilized English speaking people of the world and developed a very high feeling of respect for it. They considered it a much better language than their mother tongue and failed to see it as a tool of communication. They could not believe even they would be able to use it as their own and are traumatized into the point that they are very afraid to use whatever little skills they acquired for fear of making mistakes. Moreover, Mizo students have a bad habit of laughing at or ridiculing others who make mistakes in using English language which greatly discouraged them from practicing it.
5. **Confusion between English and Mizo Languages:** English alphabets are introduced to the young children at the same time with Mizo alphabets which are both roman in character. The main confusion arises from the fact that there exists certain differences in the pronunciation of the same letters in Mizo and English which poses confusion and problems for the young learners.
6. **Lack of Proper Teaching Aids:** Apart from the Text Books, Charts, Chalk and Black Board, no other Teaching Aids are available in the remote rural areas. Everything depends on the resourcefulness of the teachers.
7. **Effect of CCE on Students:** The introduction of CCE (Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation) scheme, even though bringing many new and positive innovations have a negative impact on the students. For instance, the students thought they could no longer fail and hence become lazy and irresponsible. Even the teachers have to adjust to the new scheme, where time is very limited and teach-

ers have to rush to meet the dateline for finishing the course which invariably affects the quality of their teaching.

8. The English Text Books: The prescribed English Text books, with their attractive covers and interactive contents are notable for the absence of local elements which is thought to be a negative attribute.

5. Suggested Remedial Solutions for the problems faced in Teaching of English:

1. There should be specially appointed English Teachers with proper ELT qualification to teach English language like another language subject, Hindi. English Teachers needed to attend a proper training course in ELT which should be at least one month to three months duration and regularly conducted.
2. Parents should know they play an important role at home towards their children's education besides financial support and hence should help their children at home in their studies.
3. Society must be aware of the importance of education and education campaign should be organized from the official.
4. There should be good teaching equipments in the school.
5. The text book should be so designed as to meet the needs of the most backward area students, easier with more local ingredients which will help the students in identifying themselves with the content to increase their interest, i.e, even changing the names of the characters in the text books to Mizo names as far as possible will be a positive change.
6. English should be spoken as much as possible in and outside the classroom. English conversation should be practiced as much as possible in the classrooms.
7. CCE scheme should be reviewed. It is important that weaker students are allowed to sit in the same class for more than one academic session.
8. Government must give priority to Primary level education and supply sufficient teaching materials even to the most remote rural schools.
9. English and Mizo alphabets are introduced to the children at the same time, in Class I. Since there are resemblances in the alphabets of English and Mizo, especially in the vowels where the same letters are pronounced differently in Mizo and English, this created a lot of confusions. Apart from this, the difference in the sentence structure of Mizo from English and the tonal property of Mizo language which is distinct from English posed more difficulties for the students especially in the field of phonetics.
10. The evaluation system should be regularly reviewed and teachers should be trained accordingly. The Syllabus should be designed in such a way that the four fundamental language skills are tested and that oral test, observation, rating scale, checklist, etc., are introduced in every school to test pupils' English skills. The evaluation system needed to be consistent, not changing too frequently.

6. Findings from Class Teaching Observation:

The medium of instruction in the English Classroom is Mizo language, which is used extensively. The class period is of 35 minutes duration and the only teaching aids available are Chalk and Black Board along with the prescribed text books. The teacher occupies maximum class time where the students are passive audience, without having any chance of interaction. Main teaching method is translation from English to Mizo along with drilling involved in reading. Teacher moved from one part of the lesson to the next quickly, whether the pupils grasp the concept properly or not in order to finish the prescribed

portion within time. This resulted in the students failing to properly understand the lesson they learned. Thus, when the teacher fired a set of questions related to the lesson in order to test what they learned most of the students could not respond correctly to them. Moral lessons are emphasized and words which are considered important to the lesson are explained elaborately. Throughout the class period, most of the students are found bored, sleepy and not at all interested in the way the class is conducted.

7. Findings from Text Book Analysis:

After a careful study of the prescribed English Text Books, following features are observed. The prescribed English text books for Primary Schools under MBSE from class-I to Class-IV are well designed, attractive, interactive, properly graded and reasonably priced. The supplied exercises and interactive items are clear, interesting and well presented. They are designed in such a way as not to leave out any aspects of the necessary linguistic skills which are to be developed in the students. The multicolour appearance of the text books, the well-drawn illustrations will surely make the students eager to go through them. However, the context of the teaching-learning circumstances seemed to be neglected and overlooked. Majority of the school locations in Mizoram where these text-books are to be used are in remote rural areas where English is never used outside the classroom even by grownups. Only very little amount of local items and things of everyday lives experienced by these students are included in the texts. For instances, most proper names of the characters, places of things, etc., found in the texts are not locally identifiable. Most stories are from other cultures which might further isolate English language from the learner while being one of the official languages in the State of Mizoram. All in all, as previously mentioned, we have only one Mizo folk tale found in Class IV Text Book 'Aihniara', a Mizo legend. Apart from this, we have only few Mizo proper names found here and there. Moreover, some of the teachers believed that the standard of the text books is a bit higher than suitable for their students. This may be due to the fact that the teachers do not have proper training in ELT, where even those that attended a training course were attending only one or two-days courses which are far from sufficient. The importance of inclusion of local cultural elements in the text book is also suggested by D. Mary Kim Haokip (2003). She stated that the inclusion of a student's cultural element help the students in gaining confidence and develops a positive attitude towards the target language and while developing the communicative ability of the students, cultural values of the student are preserved, hence a true proverbial 'two birds with one stone' process.

Remedial Suggestions:

From the findings of the study through analysis of the data collected from the students' tests, Teachers' Questionnaires and interviews, class-room teaching observation and text-books analysis the following points of suggestion may be considered with care for the development of English language teaching at Primary School level in Mizoram.

1. Even though English language is introduced to the Mizo people since the coming of the British Missionaries, the teaching-learning of English seems to be at a very young age. The true nature of English as a language subject, requiring the development of skills and which handling should be left at the hand of able and trained teachers seemed to elude the authorities. This manifested in the fact that there are still no teachers specifically appointed as an English Teacher in Primary Schools. It is as reflected by D. Krishnaswamy & Lalitha Krihnaswamy (2006) with regards to the teaching of English in India, "The supervision of English Teaching in Schools continued to be neglected, with hardly any

trained specialists engaged”. The teaching of English required not only the teaching of sets of grammatical rules and knowledge of the language structure but the inculcation of language skills which will enable the learner to communicate effectively in real life situation. Thus, the present practice of all the teachers of a school taking turns in teaching English without proper training in the field is surely one of the culprits regarding the lack of competency in English communication skills on the part of the students in Mizoram. The authorities needed to realize the difference between knowledge subjects and language subjects. Here, it may be suitable to mention that the other official language in India and Mizoram, Hindi is treated differently in such a way that specific teachers are appointed to teach it. The day when specific English Teachers are appointed in Primary Schools is hoped to arrive in the near future.

2. As the day when specific English Teachers would be appointed in Primary Schools is not yet at hand, the urgent and immediate possible steps towards the meaningful development of English language competency in the students is to train the currently employed teachers in the ELT methodology and techniques. Presently, most of the Primary School teachers teaching English think that the main objectives of teaching English is to teach them word meaning, to make them able to talk and write in English, to teach them the four language skills, etc. The course designers of the Mizoram Primary English Text books gave the aims of the course as –
 1. Inculcating and further developing in the learner the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing;
 2. Sharpening the learner’s communicative skills;
 3. Activating the cognitive and affective faculties of the learners by stimulating their minds and emotions.

Through the findings of the present Study, it can be seen that the aims and goals of the course are not achieved. Thus, in a place where teachers are still the only dependable resource available, proper training of the teachers in ELT is the most important steps towards the success of English language teaching-learning under the present circumstance.

3. The students’ confusion between Mizo and English language is another considerable factor. There are certain similarities and differences between Mizo and English which if not clearly understood could easily confuse the learners to no end. This is more prominent in the case of the vowels, lesser in the consonants. For instance, ‘a’ is pronounced (*a*) in Mizo while (*æ*) in English, ‘e’ is (*e*) in Mizo but (*i:*) in English, ‘i’ is (*i:*) in Mizo but (*ai*) in English, ‘u’ is (*u:*) in Mizo but (*uu*) in English. Regarding the consonants, the letters are pronounced as they are seen in Mizo language, whereas in English letters are sometimes silenced and other times the same vowel acquires different sound which is very confusing for the young learners. This is one of the reasons why students find the pronunciation of English very difficult and faced many problems in their spellings. Thus, the present practice of introducing English at the same time with Mizo language at Class – I needed to be reviewed carefully. Now if one of the two languages is introduced from Class – II, the young learners would have a firm grasp of the previously introduced alphabets of the language and confusion between the two language might be minimized. This however may have to go against the present practice as endorsed by the Report of the Mizoram Education Reforms Commission, 2010.
4. The Text Books as previously stated are very well organized and designed. However, apart from all the positive attributes they still seem to lack one important characteristic, the local elements. As stated repeatedly, Mizo people in general considered English as a very noble and advanced language, associating it with the more developed Europeans who use it as their native language. Thus, the students need to find out that English is nothing but a tool of communication, serving the same purpose

as their mother tongue. In order to achieve these, the inclusion of more Mizo cultural elements is believed to be an important ingredient. For instance, if there are more folk stories which the children are familiar with, names of the characters in the books are local names as far as possible and the settings and contents of the exercises are situated in the local setting with which the students identify themselves, they might gradually realize as they learn their lessons that English language is also accessible to them, and that it is a tool they can command. This will hopefully coax them to treat English as a second language, not as a foreign language.

5. The present evaluation system is practiced through the introduction of CCE in Mizoram from 2011 through the enforcement of RTE Act of 2009 (The nodal Department is SCERT). According to the present system of evaluation no students are allowed to fail and sit in the same class for two years or more, obviously a move in order to minimize school dropouts. However, this seemed to have a negative side effect against the good intention of the overall plan. The students are led to believe that since they could not fail anymore or sitting in the same class was abolished, they could take it easy in their studies. Many students succumbed to laziness and in the absence of parents and senior family members who supervise and encourage them in their studies their overall performance declined as to be expected. Thus, many of the teachers are of the opinion that repetition of the same class twice be allowed in the case of students who are extremely weak in their studies as promoting them to the next class on and on may produce students with degree but without intellectual ability which in turn will increase educated unemployment rate in the state of Mizoram.

Conclusion:

The locations and socio-economic conditions of the schools under study are not very favourable for the development of English language skills, even education in general. The people are aware of the importance of education to the extent that they felt they have done their duties by sending their children to schools and neglected to supervise, support and encourage them at home in their studies. Since it is found from the teachers' response that the family background of the students is an important factor in the education process, the fact that many of the students in the study area comes from a very poor and undeveloped families, some even coming from broken families is surely to bring a lot of problems in the teaching-learning of English. As mentioned previously, the schools' locations are quite good, even the same could not be said for the buildings and the uneven distribution of teachers in the schools which ranges from 3 – 7 doesn't seem to create any visible problem in the teaching of English.

The present study may be concluded with the verdict that English is not being taught for communication in a proper and significant way at the Primary level in Mizoram. It is being taught as another knowledge subject, not as a skill development project. There are no teachers specifically appointed for English Language Teachers and those that have been teaching them did so because they have no other choice. Moreover, those that have been teaching them are not properly trained in the methods of English Language Teaching and they are using the teacher-centred method of teaching, without room for communicative interaction. Notwithstanding the important role played by the mother tongue in the acquisition/learning of a second language, the employment of Mizo entirely for the teaching of English doesn't seem to be the best technique in English Language Teaching process. According to Thompson & Wyatt, as quoted by Dr. Y. K Singh (2009), the aims of teaching English to schools are –

- a. To understand spoken English.
- b. To speak English.

- c. To understand written English.
- d. To write English.

All said and done, the present process of English language teaching-learning needed to be developed in such a way as achieve the best possible goal towards the development of communicative competency among the Primary School students of Mizoram. Since the goal of teaching English at school level is as laid out by T.C Baruah (2006) as,

“...to enable the students to use English in ordinary everyday situations, such as carrying on ordinary conversation, listening to radio news and talks in English, reading non-technical prose, enjoying simple poetry, writing personal letters, applications, reports, etc.”

Delimitation & Suggestions for further studies: The present Study neither claims to cover all aspects of the teaching-learning of English in Mizoram nor professed to suggest foolproof solutions to the problems uncovered. The Study focused within Lunglei District, which is merely one of the eight Districts in Mizoram, except that it's the largest in geographical area. Apart from this, it is beyond the limitation of this Study in terms of magnitude and financial positions to cover the English Medium Primary Schools, which are mostly under Private ownerships. It is up to able and interested Scholars to pursue further research in the area and related fields.

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