

# CHAPTER - I

## 1.1 Introduction

The role played by grammar in the language teaching-learning process cannot be undermined. Scholars are of the opinion that grammar can help learners to develop their linguistic competence as part of their communicative competence, especially in a second language learning situation.

Robert Lado (1964) defines the learning of a second language thus:

Learning a second Language is defined as acquiring the ability to use its structure within a general vocabulary under essentially the conditions of normal communication among native speaker at conversational speed. More specifically it means the acquisition of the ability to use in speaking; the units and patterns of content that together constitute the language. And it means the acquisition of the ability to group the units and patterns of content when listening to the second language. It means in other words learning the expression, the content when listening to the second language. It means in other words learning the expression, the content and their association for repaid use in the proper position within the system of the target language.

In the above situation proper knowledge of grammar facilitates quick and correct learning of the target language. Littlewood (1994) mentions that communication through correct grammar could help learners make a wider and more creation range of meaning choices. Wilkins (1972) believes grammar is the means through which linguistics creativity is ultimately achieved. Chomsky (1982) mentions the importance of the notion of grammar rather than notion of language. He says,

I do not know why I never realized that clearly before, but it seems obvious. When you think about it, that the notion of language is much more abstract than the notion of grammar the reason is that grammar has a real existence, that is there is something in your brain that correspond to the grammar that got be true. But there is nothing in the real world corresponding to language. In fact the notion of language might turn but just to be a useless notion.

Keeping these notions in view this project would like to focus on certain common grammatical errors committed by students at the undergraduate level in regard to the correct use of tense in English.

## **1.2 Objectives of the proposed project**

- (i) Studying the problems of learning and teaching English at the under graduate level both vernacular and English medium.
- (ii) To identify common errors and problem areas with reference to the use of tense.
- (iii) To investigate the problems of inculcating correct knowledge of grammar.

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

In Assam today as in other parts of India and elsewhere, English is regarded as the language of opportunity and exposure. Hence a better foundation in the language becomes imperative if our students are to make use of their full potential and the prospects that are open to them both in and outside the country. Analysis has shown that among the unsuccessful candidates in the state, almost seventy percent fail in English. As such, such a study can aim at the improvement of teaching and learning of English at the under graduate level and the study stands significant and justified.

## **1.4 Methodology**

The type of research adopted in his particular project is mainly empirical. It is data based and the primary data has been collected mainly from students belonging to the Higher Secondary and Under Graduate level.

Structured questionnaires including activities based on different tenses issued in English were distributed amongst the students to be filled up. It consisted of seven exercises on the simple present, past, present perfect, past perfect, present continuous, past continuous, present perfect continuous and future time. The questionnaires were later collected and analyzed for findings.

## **1.5 Sources of Data**

The questionnaires were distributed to the Higher Secondary and the Under Graduate level students of Handique Girls' College, Pragjyotish College (Bharalumukh), Ulubari Higher Secondary School (Ulubari) and Purba Bharati Junior College (Noonmati).

Each student of the TDC second year (Major) involved three participants from both the vernacular and English medium background and got the questionnaires solved. In the analysis of the questionnaires the students of the First Semester (English Major) were involved.

**1.6 Results and Discussion**

In the present study one thousand questionnaires were distributed among the Higher Secondary and Under Graduate students of different colleges in Guwahati. Out of the one thousand questionnaires distributed, 378 errors were identified in the use of the Simple Present tense, 696 in the use of the Simple Past, 849 in the use of Present Perfect, 861 in the use of Past Perfect, 413 in the use of Present Continuous, 785 in the Past Continuous, 909 in the use of past Perfect Continuous and 448 in the depiction of the future time. This has been indicated in the table below:

Simple present	378
Simple past	696
Present perfect	849
Past perfect	861
Present continuous	413
Past continuous	547
Present perfect continuous	785
Past perfect continuous	909
Future time	448

**Table I: Number of Errors**