

**ENGLISH IN SCHOOL EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH:  
FOCUS ON URBAN SCHOOLS**

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the requirements for the award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled **English in School Education in Bangladesh: Focus on Urban Schools** submitted by **Faheem Hasan Shahed**, in part-fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of **Master of Philosophy** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is an original work.

We recommend that this dissertation should be placed before the examiners for their consideration for the award of the above mentioned degree.

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Chairperson

*Dedicated to*

*'Maa' & 'Papa'*

*and to*

*the innumerable primary and secondary school students in Bangladesh  
who are never shown the colour of education in its true perspective*

...How many times must a man look up  
Before he can see the sky?  
How many ears must one man have  
Before he can hear people cry?  
...How many times can a man turn his head  
Pretending he just doesn't see?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind.  
The answer is blowin' in the wind

Bob Dylan

(from the song *Blowin' in the wind*)

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BEERI	Bangladesh Education and Extension Research Institute
BELT	Bachelor of English Language Teaching
BOU	Bangladesh Open University
BTV	Bangladesh Television
BUET	Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology
CUP	Cambridge University Press
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
IER	Institute of Education and Research
IML	Institute of Modern Languages
IUB	Independent University of Bangladesh
MT	Mother Tongue
NAEM	National Academy of Educational Management
NCSC	National Curriculum and Syllabus Committee
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
OUP	Oxford University Press
PTI	Primary Training Institute
SL	Second Language
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
TD	Teacher Development
TISS	Tata Institute of social Sciences
TTC	Teachers' Training College
TL	Target Language
USIS	United States Information Services

*Chapter One*

**INTRODUCTION**



**A**s regards English in Bangladesh, one might ask oneself some very simple questions. What is the state of English in Bangladesh at present ? What section of people's lives are touched by English . and in what ways ? What role does English play in the administrative, educational, business sectors, as well as, in the socio-cultural life of Bangladesh? How closely is the issue of Bengali nationalism entwined with the question of the status of English? Are the people in general suffering from any linguistic chauvinism?. To be precise, is the teaching of English in Bangladesh still a hegemonistic enterprise, or it is a *need* in the real sense of the term?

These inquiries create a fair amount of awkwardness as far as the issue of English education in Bangladesh is concerned. There has been much hue and cry from the public, as well as the professionals, over the apparent decline in the academic performance of pupils in general, and English in particular. The question of this declining standard is a debatable one, but this seems, at least in part to be linked with the descending standards of proficiency in English, which is taught as a compulsory subject in schools and colleges.

The teaching of English starts right from class one and continues till class twelve. In such a case , the decline in the proficiency level is well enough to raise questions like: What are the students being taught for twelve long years then? Academicians as well as expects have been relentlessly engaged in pinpointing some reasons such as--faulty and ill--planned textbooks comprising only the traditional literature-based items, inappropriate teaching methods, lack of quality teachers, woeful school environment and so on. Their overall dissatisfaction, however , is with the entire curriculum design regarding English at different stages of education . Along with all these ,the fact that create dissonance is the alarming disinterestedness of all concerned authorities in regard to finding any proper solution of the problem.

Therefore, as the existing system proceeds, so all the effects and after-effects sustain -- resulting in constant dispute over the matter.

Because of these, the ultimate 'academic anarchy' has been revolving round the issue of 'English or less-English'.

In this connection, let us focus first on some of the arguments *against* and *in favour of* English education which have been highlighted by a section of intellectuals and politicians in Bangladesh since long. If we try to sort them out, the following aspects emerge rather clearly :

### **HEGEMONY**

- 1) English teaching has been enmeshed with cultural politics and ideological control in both pre- and post-colonial period. From Macaulay's time, it was clear that English education was being developed for social division and cultural hegemony.
- 2) The growing significance of English as a Second Language (ESL) was inextricably coupled with the economic and political interests of both the UK and USA. They explicitly considered it as a part of cultural diplomacy meshed with economic, political and military diplomacy.
- 3) Thus the English-speaking imperialists have been continuously reproducing their hidden agenda through hegemonic operations; and the elites, intelligentsia and the rapidly expanding middle-class, in the process of educational expansion, have strengthened the neo-colonial forces in the perpetuation of this hegemony of English.
- 4) Because of this hegemony, a relatively small but extremely influential portion of the population has been enjoying the upperhand in the domain of governmental establishments, law, commerce and the media, whereas the majority is lagging far behind. Hence a socio-economic imbalance, in terms of education, has been created.

## NEED

- 1) Being the most widely spoken language in modern times, English is the 'window' on the world. Any literate and educated person in the globe is devoid of perfection if s/he does not have any knowledge of English.
- 2) The pre-eminence of English in the exchange of information and knowledge in the international field is unchallenged. The English language is being continuously enriched by the publication of innumerable books and quality journals embodying the latest findings in modern research. Even the reports and the data published in Bangla and in other languages are also being translated and incorporated into English. At present, it is extensively used in all the continents in trade and commerce, industry and diplomacy. Bangladesh, as a developing country, is also a part of the global trend, and so it cannot afford to stay away from English.
- 3) All the books and journals in at the graduate and post-graduate levels in various fields are in English. Those who are waiting for the day when those books will be translated into Bangla will have to wait in vain. Because the horizon of human knowledge is expanding so fast that by the time the books are translated, the contents are likely to become obsolete. Gap in technological knowledge can hardly be filled up by relying solely on the mother tongue (MT)-- whereas English can easily bridge the gap.
- 4) English never stands in the way of Bangla. Bangla, being a very rich language, will ever exist in this region of the world. Mere emotional linguistic chauvinism will propagate negative results. Bilingual proficiency is definitely an asset for any human beings in today's world.

With respect to all these arguments and counter-arguments, the basic reality that keeps on haunting us is this : there is now a new generation of Bangladeshis who, after twelve years of schooling and having studied English as a compulsory subject in their curriculum, fails to communicate

in English-- either verbally or writing. Professor Rahela Banu, one of the foremost ELT experts in Bangladesh, concisely projects the picture as such:

...After ten years of exposure to English, the student would still write *He do* and not know where he went wrong. Whether the inadequacy is a result of the student being an *unsuccessful language learner* or because he has been a *victim of an unsuccessful language teacher* is a very pertinent question ...<sup>1</sup>

Under such circumstances, the need for a serious rethinking on the position of English in the curriculum has been suggested by a section of the academicians quite often. What should be the status of English education at the school and college levels? Can the status of English be modified in such a way that it will not be a burden for the majority of the people struggling below the poverty line? What should be the appropriate areas of English teaching that will be relevant to the requirements of the people? And more importantly, what should be the suitable *level* at which English will be introduced as a foreign language?

This dissertation is a modest attempt to investigate all these issues. Since the focus-point is primarily the secondary level English education in Bangladesh, several related aspects like--teacher education, curriculum development, schooling infrastructure etc. will also come to the fore. Hopefully, the discussions will set readers thinking seriously about these issues.

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*I. Rahela Banu (1984), cited by Monsur Musa(1998) Defining a New Status for English in Bangladesh in BAFOLTA JOURNAL vol.1, no.1; Dhaka 1997. p13.*

*Chapter Two*

**EDUCATION in BANGLADESH  
and ENGLISH**

**A. THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL  
STRUCTURE in BANGLADESH**

**B. THE PLACE of ENGLISH in the  
EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**A**s is evident from the title, this chapter deals with two aspects. Firstly, it provides a brief overview of the prevailing educational framework of Bangladesh (starting from the primary to the post-graduate level), and secondly, it depicts a picture of the status of English at each level.

**PART ONE**  
**THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE IN**  
**BANGLADESH**

**THE MAINSTREAM EDUCATION SYSTEM:**

The mainstream education system of Bangladesh may be broadly categorised in four stages:

- a. Primary education,
- b. Secondary education,
- c. Higher education and
- d. Technical and professional education.

Primary education is imparted in Primary schools, Secondary education in High schools and Intermediate Colleges, Higher education in Degree Colleges and Universities, and Technical education in Technical Institutes.

**a. Primary Education**

Primary education usually begins at the age of six. There are five grades in primary schools, i.e. class one to five. For each grade, an annual subjectwise examination is held and each student has to pass all the subjects to get promotion to the next higher class. Bangla, English, Arithmetic, Social Science etc. are mainly taught at this stage with specific preference given to reading and writing.

Each institution conducts examination according to prescribed courses and syllabuses. There is no public examination at the end of class five. The Head Teacher of respective institution issues school-leaving certificates to the successful students.

However, there is a system of SCHOLARSHIP examination, known as Primary Scholarship Examination, at the end of class five (i.e. after completion of the annual examination). Each institution selects its best students to appear in this examination that is conducted by the 'Thana (sub district) Education Officer'. Merit scholarships are awarded to the successful students. There are two grades of scholarship--talentpool and general.

The administration of primary education is looked after by the Directorate of Primary Education under the Ministry of Education which has field officers in every District Head Quarters. [There are a total of 61550 primary schools in Bangladesh and more than 80% of these schools are run by the government<sup>1</sup>]

Primary education in the government primary schools is free.

#### **a.1. Pre-Primary Education**

Some formal arrangement for pre-primary education are found in urban areas. This does not fall within the public education system. There exists a good number of privately managed nursery and kindergarten schools in the urban areas.

In the rural areas, however, informal pre-primary education is often arranged by the local communities.

#### **b. Secondary Education**

Secondary Education in Bangladesh may be divided into three stages-- Junior Secondary, Secondary, and Higher Secondary.

Secondary education is offered at secondary schools known as High Schools, and Higher Secondary education is offered at Intermediate Colleges and at the intermediate section of Degree Colleges.

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1. Ministry of Education (1996) *Bangladesh Education Statistics-1995*.

Dhaka: B B S.

Normally a High School comprises five grades, i.e. class six to class ten, while an Intermediate College comprise two grades, i.e. class eleven and twelve. There are quite a large number of High Schools in Bangladesh which combine the primary stage (I to V) and offer teaching up to class X.

There is yet another type, called Junior High Schools, which have training facilities upto class VIII.

The curricular structure is uniform up to class VIII where the basic programme is of general education. There is no public examination up to this grade. Each institution conducts its own examination. Classwise annual examination is held and promotion to next higher class is given only if a student gets minimum prescribed marks in each subject.

As at the primary stage, a countrywide scholarship test, known as Junior Scholarship Examination, is held after completion of the annual examination of class VIII. This is conducted by the Deputy Director of the Secondary and Higher Education of each administrative Division. Merit scholarships are given to the successful students.

Diversification of curriculum has been introduced at class IX, where students separate into three streams of courses- - science, social science and commerce. The academic programme is intended to be terminal at the end of class X where students appear at a public examination called Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination.

At the higher secondary stage, the academic programme for general education is of two years duration (class XI and XII) with a public examination called Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination at the end of class XII. Courses are diversified into science, commerce, social science, home economics, agriculture and music.



Secondary and Higher Secondary Education is administered by the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education that has field offices in every Division and District.

Secondary schools, Intermediate colleges and Intermediate sections of Degree colleges offering general education require affiliation to the regional Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education for academic and examination purposes. There are four such Boards having their Head Quarters in Dhaka, Comilla, Jessore and Rajshahi.

All the schools are bound to follow the curriculum and syllabus prescribed by the respective Boards and all the examinations of the SSC and the HSC are arranged by the Boards. Although these Boards are completely separate in their academic-cum-administrative affairs, their general schemes of studies are uniform. Academically all the secondary schools and the higher secondary institutions are under the control of the Boards, which grant the 'affiliation'-- without which, schools and colleges can neither admit candidates for public examination, nor arrange any examination for the levels of SSC and HSC. The methods of examination are mostly 'written' in nature, and practical examinations are given in science subjects and other subjects where required.

For the purpose of grading, 100 marks are allotted for each paper. Minimum marks for First Division, Second Division and Pass are 60, 45 and 33 respectively. A student who secures at least 75 percent marks in aggregate is awarded a 'Star'. The pass mark for individual paper is 33.

Successful candidates are awarded certificates by the Boards concerned. To qualify for a certificate, a candidate must pass in all the subjects (for those requiring practical examinations, it is necessary to pass in theory and practical separately).

A candidate without any formal schooling can appear in SSC and HSC examinations as private candidates with the permission of the Boards concerned. Similarly, external candidates can also appear

in the examinations.

### **c. Higher Education**

Academic control of all Higher education including Medical, Engineering and Agriculture rests with three affiliating Universities of Bangladesh, i.e. University of Dhaka, University of Chittagong and University of Rajshahi.

The Agricultural University of Mymensingh has two affiliated agricultural colleges.

Apart from this, all these universities are themselves residential in nature with their respective academic programmes.

The other universities which are not affiliating, but work as independent residential universities are :

Jahingirnagar University,  
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET),  
Sylhet Shahajalal University of Science and Technology,  
Islamic University of Bangladesh and  
Khulna University.

Besides these, there is a good number of private universities, (as per Private University Regulation Act) functioning in Dhaka, Comilla, and Chittagong--which operate academic programmes relating to Business and Commerce, Science and Technology, Social Sciences and Humanities, Medicine and Surgery.

The universities are fully autonomous in character. There exists a University Grants Commission (UGC), an autonomous organisation, established for coordinating the academic programmes of the Universities as well as promoting research activities. Besides, it coordinates developmental activities of the Universities with the Government. The Institute of Scientific Instrumentation under the UGC offers training to technicians for maintenance, repair and development

of expensive and sophisticated scientific equipments used for teaching and research purposes in the universities and colleges.

The Medical colleges and institutes, Engineering and Agricultural colleges which fall within the academic jurisdiction of the affiliating universities, have different set ups in terms of their general administration. The Medical colleges and the institutes are managed by the Ministry of Health. There is a college of Physicians and Surgeons for conducting Fellowship (*FCPS, MCPS*) programmes.

Higher education may be classified into eight categories such as :

- (i) General education consisting of Humanities, Science, Social Sciences, Commerce and Environmental Science,
- (ii) Agriculture,
- (iii) Engineering,
- (iv) Higher Technology,
- (v) Medicine,
- (vi) Teacher Education,
- (vii) Law and
- (viii) Post Graduate Research.

These are offered in Universities and in various Degree colleges. After passing the HSC, the students can enter into Universities or Degree colleges or professional colleges according to their ability and aptitude. There are two courses for the Bachelor's degree--Pass and Honours, available in Degree colleges and Universities. The duration of Pass course is two years and that of

Honours course three years-- which are followed by Master Degree course mostly available in the Universities.

Master degree courses are also taught in some important and renowned Degree colleges. Master Degree course is of one year for holders of Honours degree, and two years for holders of Pass degree. The duration of degree course in Engineering and Agriculture is four years and in medicine five years. Higher Degree can also be obtained in Engineering and Agriculture in BUET and Agricultural University.

Ph.D and M.Phil courses in various subjects are offered in the Universities. Duration of studies for Ph.D is three years and for M.Phil two years after Master Degree. [Recently the University of Dhaka has introduced four-year Honours course and discarded the M. Phil course, which means that students can now opt for Ph.D right after their Master degree.]

### Technical Education

Technical Education in Bangladesh is organised in three phases, viz. certificate, diploma and degree.

The Certificate courses which prepare skilled workers in different vocations are of 1-2 years duration (after class VIII schooling) and are imparted in Vocational Training Institutes (V.T.I.).

Polytechnic Institutes and Monotechnic Institute offer Diploma Courses in Engineering, Commercial and Industrial subjects. The duration is three years for technical courses, and two years for commercial courses after SSC.

Public examination is held for every type of course under the auspices of the Bangladesh Technical Education Board, and all diplomas and certificates are awarded by it. The Board has full academic control over technical and vocational institutions, and they require its affiliation for all academic purposes.

Following are the types of examinations conducted by the Technical Education Board:

1. Diploma in Engineering,
2. Diploma in Commerce,
3. Textile Examination,
4. Diploma in Printing,
5. Certificate in Secretarial Science,
6. Certificate in Business Typing,
7. Diploma in Ceramics and
8. Diploma in Survey.

Technical Institutions, managed by the Technical Education Directorate are affiliated to the Technical Education Board for Examination purposes. Besides, the Institute fo Marine Technology and the Technical Training Centre run by the Ministry of Women's Affairs are affiliated to the Board for Academic purposes.

Some private technical Institutes are managed by the respective District Councils.

The Ministry of Agriculture operates a number of Agricultural Extension Training Instutes where a 2- year course for a Diploma in Extension Work is given after the SSC.

## **THE PARALLEL EDUCATION SYSTEM:**

Apart from the mainstream education, there exist the Madrasah Education and Non-formal Education. We will now take a brief look at these too.

### **Madrasah Education**

Madrasah Education offers traditionally Islamic instructions to Muslim boys and girls, It has the following stages :

Ibtedayee (*Primary of 5 years duration*)

Dakhil (*Secondary of 5 years duration*)

Alim (*Higher Secondary of 2 years duration*)

Fazil (*Bachelor Degree of 2 years duration*)

Kamil (*Master Degree of 2 years duration*)

Subjects taught in these madrasahs focus mainly on the study of Holy Quran, *Hadith, Tafsir, Fiqh, Usul* and Arabic language and literature.

In addition, provision has also been made for the teaching of General science, Mathematics, Social sciences, Bangla, English, Persian and Urdu in appropriate levels, so that the madrasah students have the scope to become qualified for general vocations as well. At all the stages, except Ibtedayee, Public examinations are held under the auspices of Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, and certificates and degrees are awarded by them.

All the madrasahs of different stages require affiliation and recognition of the Madrasah Education Board. Courses and curricula are designed by them and academically the Board has full control over the madrasahs. Examination procedures are the same as those of general system of education. Degrees are awarded in First division, Second division and Pass.

Apart from the public system of madrasah education, a good number of private institutions offer traditional Islamic Teaching to Muslim boys and girls. These are known as Furkania madrasah, Hafizia madrasah and Quaumi/Nizamia madrasah.

Traditionally students obtaining a *Kamil* degree of the madrasah education prefix a title MOULANA with their names.

### **Tol Education**

There are Sanskrit and Pali institutions in Bangladesh, about 200 in number. These, known as Tols, offer traditional religious education

to the minority communities, mostly Hindus and Buddhists. Sanskrit teaching mainly focuses on Sanskrit language and Hindu religious teaching and scriptures, while Pali teaching focuses on Buddhist religious teaching and scriptures. Courses are offered in three grades of studies of one year-- known as *Adya* (basic), *Madhya* (middle), and *Upadhi* (title), and the institutions are also classified accordingly as Tol, College and *Chotspadi* respectively.

There is a Government recognised board named Bangladesh Sanskrit and Pali Education Board which co-ordinates the academic and administrative functions of Tols. The Board receives substantial Governmental assistance for running these Tols. The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education looks after these activities.

### **Homeopathic Education**

After HSC a student can join Homeopathic Medical college for a five year course in the Homeopathic system of Medicine.

On successful completion of this course, Homeo MBBS. degree are given by the Bangladesh Homeopathic Medical Board. All academic activities including syllabuses and curricula of Homeo education is controlled by the Board. This Board, recognised by the Government, gets grant for all promotional activities of Homeopathic Medical education.

### **Non-formal Education**

With the introduction of Universal Primary Education, the Government has also adopted adult and non-formal education for the objective of eradicating illiteracy from the country. Adult and Mass Education Centres have been opened in the country which are engaged in imparting literacy to adult men and women and also educating them on environment, agriculture, fisheries, cooperatives etc. The curricula includes simple reading, writing and arithmetic. Textbooks and follow-up books have been designed for these purposes, which are normally taught by trained adult education

teachers.

Mass education programme has been undertaken to eradicate illiteracy from the country. Under a systematic programme Mass Literacy Centres have been opened in many villages of the country where voluntary teachers, drawn from local educated youth, teachers, social workers and students trained for this purpose, are engaged in teaching.

Special primers and follow-up literatures including teacher's guides have been printed for free distribution among the students and the teachers. The Radio and the Television also arrange regular teaching programmes in accordance with the approved primers and follow-up literatures.

## **PART:TWO** **THE PLACE OF ENGLISH IN THE EDUCATION** **SYSTEM**

As a compulsory academic subject, English occupies a significant place in the national curriculum in Bangladesh. According to the recommendation of the National Curriculum and Syllabus Committee (NCSC), English has been a compulsory subject from class one to the level of graduation.

But this status of English in the curriculum has undergone frequent changes for quite a long period after independence. English was kept out (as a compulsory subject) from the Degree and the Honours courses. Very recently it has again been included at the graduation level as a compulsory (100 marks) subject.

As a legacy of the British colonial rule in India, English found its place in the curriculum of Indian education in the first half of the 19th century and, hence, in continuity, it has been an important component in the national curricula of Bangladesh. The following is a brief description (stage-wise) regarding the place of English in the curricula.

### **Primary Level**

English teaching at the primary level is mostly centered around the teaching of the alphabet, names of familiar objects, birds and animals,



vocabulary, parts of speech and some grammatical elements.

The grammatical items are introduced step by step. These include the use of articles, the types and uses of tenses and so on. Simultaneously the different parts of speech are taught. The prescribed textbook for each class is 'English for Today' published by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

The general skills of English which students acquire at this level are likely to enable them to carry out simple language activities in English in real life situations. These activities include understanding simple statements when spoken, exchanging greetings and farewells, reading signboards and addresses, writing ordinal numbers such as first, second and third etc., and short descriptions.

The specific skill-wise objectives of teaching English at the primary level as envisaged by NCTB are as follows<sup>2</sup> :

**Listening skills :**

- (a) Recognise sound differences, stress and intonation in the context of words, phrases and simple sentences,
- (b) Understand commands and instructions given in simple and clear English and to carry them out,
- (c) Understand simple questions asked about him/ herself, friends, relatives, and
- (d) Understand simple statements spoken by others.

**Speaking Skills :**

- (a) Repeat words, phrases and sentences following the teacher.
- (b) Exchange greetings and farewells and to make simple introductions.

2. Hoque, M.S. et al (1997) *English Language Teaching and Learning in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: BOU.

- (c) Ask and answer suitable *wh* and *yes/no* questions,
- (d) Describe persons and objects to take part in conversation on appropriate topics.

**Reading Skills :**

- (a) Read and recognise statements, commands, greetings, questions and answers,
- (b) Identify and recognise cardinal numbers upto 1000 and ordinal number upto 12.
- (c) Read and understand simple letters, paragraphs and stories from textbooks and
- (d) Read instructions and carry them out.

**Writing Skills :**

- a) To write cardinal numbers upto 100 both in figures and words and ordinal numbers upto to 12th,
- b) Recognise and use different punctuation marks,
- c) Take dictation of short paragraphs from textbooks and
- d) Write short description of objects such *a cow, a cat, a book* etc

In short, at the end of the primary level education. Students are expected to have reached to an elementary level in the use of English. The main purpose of teaching English at this stage is to prepare the students for more serious and intensive study of the language at the secondary level.

## Secondary Level

The prescribed textbook for each class remains the same. i.e. 'English For Today' published by NCTB.

Apart from this, the 'Rapid Reader' is used from class 6 to class 10 as an assisting text.

English carrying 200 marks in each class equally divided into two papers. Students at this stage are required to study 20 basic structural patterns of English and acquire active vocabulary of 2000 headwords. They are expected to gain mastery over the four language skills, with greater emphasis on reading and writing skills. Reading and writing skills claim greater emphasis because students' performance in the examination depend mainly on their reading comprehension and writing ability.

At this stage, students are also taught to use reference books like dictionaries, and to translate passages from Bangla into English and vice-versa. So besides teaching the four basic language skills, students are taught to attain reference and translation skills.

The NCTB has specified skill-wise objectives of teaching English at this level as follows<sup>3</sup>:

### Listening Skills :

- (a) Distinguish between different sounds of English and recognise stress and intonation within appropriate communicative context,
- (b) Follow a short talk on a series of ample instructions given in appropriate English, and to take simple dictations,
- (c) Participate in conversations and
- (d) Understand texts of appropriate length and varied type-- such as narrative, descriptive and argumentative.

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3. *Ibid*

### **Speaking Skills :**

- (a) Give a series of instructions and commands,
- (b) Express opinions and explain what they have read and written,
- (c) Tell narrative and descriptive stories and talk about themselves and
- (d) Speak intelligibly in clear, correct English appropriate to the situations.

### **Reading Skills :**

- (a) Understand
  - (i) written instructions (ii) narrative texts (iii) descriptive texts (iv) argumentative texts (v) formal and informal letters (vi) authentic texts taken from newspapers and brochures and (vii) simple poems,
- (b) Use simple written sources as
  - (i) indexes (ii) tables of contents (iii) dictionaries (iv) general reference works related to their subjects of study,
- (c) Read extensively and with appropriate speed,
- (d) (i) Skim for gist (ii) scan for specific information (iii) infer the meaning of words from their context (iv) recognise topic sentences (v) distinguish fact from opinion and (vi) make simple inferences and draw simple conclusions and
- (e) Recognise the functions of different punctuation and graphological devices.

### **Writing Skills**

- (a) Write:
  - (i) simple instructions (ii) summaries (iii) clean arguments (iv) narratives (v) description (vi) dialogues (vii) formal and informal letters (viii) reports.

- (b) Fill in forms, job application, and to write curriculum vitae.
- (c) Take note from a short talk and to recognise coherent paragraph,
- (d) Demonstrate imagination and creativity in appropriate written form and
- (e) Use different punctuation and graphological devices appropriately.

In short, on passing this level, the students are expected to have gained a fairly considerable command of English with which they are expected to be able to communicate facts, ideas and opinion in actual social situations.

### **HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL**

The teaching of English at this level may be looked upon as a continuation of the secondary level study. This is a two year course with English carrying a total of 200 marks.

During the two years, the students are taught to acquire an additional vocabulary of six to eight hundred headwords. Further, they also practise additional structural patterns mainly with conditional clauses (such as '*unless....*' '*even if.....*' '*since...*' etc.) and with modal verbs (such as *dare, could, might, should, would etc.*) At this stage they also study short stories and poems. They have to answer comprehensive questions on these short stories and poems in the examinations.

Besides, reference skills and translation skills are nourished. The main purpose behind these two skills is to prepare the students for further studies in future-- reinforcing the vocabulary and structures of the syllabus and deepening their understanding of the structures and rules of the English language.

## TERTIARY LEVEL

As the students progress from the primary, through the higher secondary, to the tertiary level, they find a wide range of higher study options open to them. Some of them go to Medical colleges, some of them to BUET or the Engineering Institutes, still other go to the Agricultural University to pursue professional studies. But a huge chunk of students go to the general universities and colleges to study Honours or Pass courses in various faculties and subjects. English has to be encountered by them at these levels.

Degree Pass and Honours students under National University study one paper of compulsory English carrying 100 marks. Degree Pass and Honours students under other Universities study one paper of Optional English of 100 marks [recently from 1992-1993 session, all degree Pass and Honours courses in various colleges under other universities throughout the country have come under National University)

The main objective of teaching English is to reinforce the skills students have already acquired through remedial teaching. At this level also, greater emphasis is put on to reading and writing skills as the students are frequently called upon to use these two skills more than the others in their study.

Also recently, the University of Dhaka has introduced a 100 mark Compulsory English course in the Honours programme in each subject, and unless one passes in that paper, his/her Honours result will be withheld.

Those who go to study professional courses, have to engage themselves in intensive and extensive reading. They have to undertake various types of writing tasks. They have continual need for comprehension skills that focus on finding, processing and re-expressing information and ideas. Hence they are taught elements of English for Specific Purpos (ESP)--such as English for Medicine, English for Engineering, English for Agriculture etc -- with



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special emphasis on reading and writing skills.

They are also taught appropriate reference skills which they can profitably use in the study of their main discipline.

The listening and speaking skills are also nurtured as two useful fundamental skills for use in real life situations when needed.

It needs to be mentioned that the Madrasha education system, run by the Bangladesh Madrasha Education Board follows the same pattern in regard to English like the general Education Boards--though they have their prescribed textbooks.

So in brief, the place of English in the Education system of Bangladesh so far appears quite logical and technically sound, though it is debatable how far it can be, and has been, utilised in reality. As our discussion proceeds further, we will have an idea about the positive and negative features of actual ELT situation. One needs to keep in mind the wide difference between *something planned* and *something implemented*.

*Chapter Three*

**THE PLACE of ENGLISH in the  
SOCIO-CULTURAL SET UP  
in BANGLADESH**



This chapter is intended to deal with two related aspects. Firstly, the role and function of English in Bangladesh from historical standpoint; and secondly, this role and fall of the role and status of English in Bangladesh since independence.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE :**

On August 14-15, the world witnessed the birth of two independent and sovereign states in this subcontinent-- the Dominion of Pakistan and the Dominion of India. These two states were set up by the outgoing British Government in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Independence Act of July 1947. Pakistan was proclaimed as an Islamic Republic in 1956 and India became a secular democratic Republic in 1950.

The pre-independence education system implanted on the Indo-Pak subcontinent by a colonial government was far removed from the needs of an independent and dynamic nation. The education system introduced by the British imperialists had two primary aims :

- I. training and educating a section of the native people who could support and contribute to the running of the colonial administrative structure, and
- II. introduction and promotion of Western knowledge and culture.

The British educational policy in India was based upon the concept of colonial education. The nature and aims of this type of education are different from those in an independent country. The educational policy of all colonist powers in their colonies is determined by the same philosophy and the same motives. This is what has been termed as *Specific Education*<sup>1</sup> which aims at providing a training specially designed to prepare a person for the work of a certain vocation.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Michael West cited by Rahman, B. Wajihur (198) *Americaan Technique of Teaching English as a Second Language and their Application to the schools of East Pakistan* (Ph. D. Thesis). University of Colorado.

2. *Ibid.*

The relationship between colonial administration and education, in West's words, is

The educational organisation in a colony will be determined by the dominant interest in the colonizer's mind.<sup>3</sup>

This interest may be social stability, social development, or trade. The principal purpose of social development in a colony is to bring about and maintain social stability-- which in turn facilitates smooth administration. Social stability and smooth administration of the colony are essential for trade and other forms of exploitation by the colonizer.

A convenient tactic is developed to achieve these aims. It is to the advantage of the colonising nation to create an upper class. This class is given some share in governmental work. When this is done, dissatisfaction need not be feared from the people belonging to this elite group.

These people are expected to act as a buffer between the ruling class and the mass discontent. Under these conditions any large extension of the upper class is a serious social menace.<sup>4</sup> It is, therefore, in the interest of coloniser not to introduce an education system which is open to all. Hence, the clearcut policy of colonist the is

- I. To provide an education for the upper classes to fit them for their duties of Government (since the requirements of the new government are beyond any traditional knowledge they possess).
- II. To provide for the remainder of the population a specific training, which will fit them and encourage them to remain in their present vocation. This is the distinct tone of the whole of the government of India's despatches of 1854.<sup>5</sup>

The elite class thus formed is a governing class, and it wishes to remain so. The only thing it will teach the rest of the population is the lesson of obedience, which it hopes to receive from the people. As it will be seen later, this educational philosophy was very much alive in the Pakistani period, and still exists in independent Bangladesh.

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3. *Ibid.* p 2

4. *Ibid.* p 3

5. *Michael West cited in Ibid.* p 3

Cramer and Brown have characterised this nature of the colonial education system very clearly :

.... Such a programme (English education) was offered as a means of permitting the intellectual elite to take over minor administrative positions, and it was hoped that the influence would work from the top downwards. The result was the training, in English, of many capable clerks and aspirants for government positions, but the mass of the people were left unschooled. The system of education concentrate on the aim of public employment rather than on knowledge for its own sake and ignored the vernacular languages.

It might be thought that the British had a wonderful opportunity of instituting a nation-wide system of education. However, in the early days of British rule trade was the main objective, and even in England there was no system of national education. Later, when mass education became popular, the difficulties and the enormous cost for any such plan for India prevented the British from embarking on anything of the sort....<sup>6</sup>

In brief, Humayun Kabir, a renowned Indian academician, has noted,

... the East India Company and later the British crown were interested in introducing western education for utilitarian ends.<sup>7</sup>

The core of this new policy was formulated by an English historian, famous or infamous as one might say, Thomas Babington Macaulay, who was appointed the first legal advisor to the Governor General of India in 1833. Its purpose, as summarised in Macaulay's own words, are as follows,

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern-- a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from Western nomenclature and to render them by degrees, fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of populations.\*

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6. Cramer, J.F. & Browne, G.S. (1965) *Contemporary Education*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World. p 554

7. Kabir, Humayun (1955) *Education in new India*, New York: Harper & Bros.

The new policy brought to an end the longdrawn controversy between the *Orientalists* (people advocating the promotion of the native system of education and the *Anglicists* (those who supported the Western education through English) by categorically favouring the latter, but completely overlooking the possibility of a middle way through the synthesis of the two systems. This was a very significant event in the educational and cultural history of the sub-continent. It marked not only the end of an era but also the beginning of a new one with far-reaching repercussions.

The new policy did, of course, open a small window on the world through which Western education and ideas reached a fraction of the people--the fortunate few and the official elite.

But the *Macaulayan* objectives were never fulfilled. What actually happened was a progressive decline of education among the masses and a fast deterioration of the native languages. The disastrous effect of the new education policy on the Indian languages was succinctly described nearly seventy years later by Lord Curzon, the then Governor-General of India :

Ever since the cold breath of Macaulay's rhetoric passed over the field of Indian language and Indian text books ..... education of the people in their own tongue has shrivelled and pined.<sup>9</sup>

On 7 March 1835, the Governor-General of India passed orders for the appropriation of funds for English education.<sup>10</sup> From this time on, the imperial rulers took various administrative and legal measures to implement Macaulay's new policy in education. Every encouragement was given for the organisation of schools, which would teach the English curriculum. A resolution was adopted by the government for supporting the secondary schools in the principal town of the districts. These schools were intended to teach English as well as science via the medium of the English language. So accordingly most of these schools totally prohibited the use of the native languages for purpose of instruction; and although

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8. T. B. Macaulay cited by Huq. M. Shamsul (1966) *Sec. Edu. in East Pakistan in Pakistan Quarterly*, XIII. p 49.

9. Lord Curzon cited by Huq. M. Shamsul (1966) p 49

10. Narullah, Syed. and Naik, J.P. (1962). *A Student's History of Education in India*, Calcutta: McMillan and Co Ltd. p 61.

some of the provinces, including Bengal,<sup>11</sup> did not entirely exclude the local languages, they started giving English a heavily preferential treatment. The native system of schools was completely excluded by the new policy from the participation in public funds.<sup>12</sup>

This new policy was adopted and pursued against the recommendations of W. Adam, a missionary educator appointed by the Government to undertake a survey of education in Bengal during the years 1835-1838. This survey, the first of its kind, threw considerable light on the extent of education caused by the policy of utter neglect during the first sixty years of alien rule. Adam also put up a strong defence against the so-called *downward filtration theory* of education advocated by the colonial government.<sup>13</sup>

In 1837, another big boost was given to English and Western learning by the suppression of Persian as the language of the law courts of India. Since then, the teaching and learning of English, became the primary concern of schools, colleges and universities. Thus all the native languages were supplanted, and a foreign language became the only official medium of instruction from the secondary school to all the higher levels of education.

It was only natural that the subsequent social and cultural development centering around an obsessive, and at times historical, interest in the English language deeply affected the entire education system from the primary school up to the university.

With the consolidation of the colonial reign and the new educational policy, and as a direct result of government patronage and encouragement, English progressively assumed the position of the most dominant and the most prestigious language of the land. The teaching and learning of the language was considered to be the most important objective of the curriculum at all stages of education.

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11. *The province of Bengal was divided into two parts in 1949--East Bengal and West Bengal. East Bengal constituted the eastern province of Pakistan while West Bengal formed a province in India.*

12. Huq, M. Shamsul p 49.

13. Huq, M. Shamsul(1965). *Education and Development in South and South East Asia.* Honolulu: East-West Centre Press. p 33-34

The English language, English literature, and Western education and learning came to be regarded as synonymous, and the best means of social and vocational success. Western knowledge and ideas and Government service were available only to those who passed the new kind of education and skills in English. Most Indian Hindu leaders believed at the time that knowledge of the English language and education in the new system would lead to social and material advancement as well as to political salvation and national independence.

Many Muslim leaders of the subcontinent began to share this view of English or Western education as a result of the events prior to and following the abortive revolt of 1857, which is commonly referred to in Western History as the *Indian Sepay Mutiny*. Muslims were strongly urged to learn English and to receive the new education as the only means of survival, progress and fulfillment of their aspirations.

A new phase was set in motion, however in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the absolute supreme place of English in the country's educational system was being questioned even by celebrated personalities like Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore and Religious leader Swamy Vivekanand. As a realisation of the vital importance of the vernacular languages dawned upon significant sections of the Indian elite as well as the foreign rulers. The movement for a re-examination of the existing education system--gained momentum.

In 1917, a high level commission was appointed under the chairmanship of an English educator Sir Michael Sadler. This body was entrusted with the task of looking into the whole range of university, collegiate and secondary education, and of making appropriate recommendation for improvement.

This Sadler Commission stated categorically in its recommendation that it was unnatural for a secondary school student to receive his education through the medium of a foreign tongue. In a stinging indictment of the colonial educational policy of Macaulay, the Commission attributed most of the ills of the colonial system of education to the single factor of using English as the only medium of instruction at the secondary level.

The recommendation of the Sadler Commission marked a turning point in the history of education in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. The view of the Commission convinced the Government and the educational authorities to such an extent that the mother language of the people had to replace English as the official medium of instruction at the secondary stage.

Following the publication of the Commission's report, Calcutta University and later other Indian Universities introduced the regional native languages as the medium of instruction in secondary schools.

Although the replacement of the English language as the chief vehicle for instruction at the secondary level ushered in a significant and healthy change in the right direction, the total educational scene and its realities remained unchanged for a variety of reasons:

Firstly, the fundamental educational aims and motives of colonial rulers were the same, despite the fact that a great deal of lip service was paid by the Government to the cause of educating and improving the conditions of the masses. A number of political developments in India, in Britain and in the international area obliged the British government to initiate and publicise some progressive and liberal measures in its Indian Colony in order to create a semblance of enlightened rule.

Secondly, English continued to be the only official language of the land, and the native tongues were not employed in government, trade and commerce, higher education, law courts and other vocational fields. The objective of securing jobs with the Government and with the commercial firms continued to dominate the educational system.

Thirdly, English remained the only medium of instruction at the post Matriculation stage from class XI up to the University, and it was, ofcourse, the most important compulsory subject in the secondary curriculum.

Fourthly, English as the language of the rulers continued to enjoy social and psychological advantages of prestige, privilege and preference. All these factors contributed to the creation of wide spread myth of the inherent superiority of the English language and Western learning over the Indian

languages and oriental civilisation. As an inevitable result of this situation, the vernacular languages were neglected and their development languished.

Against this background, political independence came to this subcontinent in 1947. During the first four years of Pakistan's existence as an independent country, the controversy over the language issue was so deep and bitter that it led to a series of turbulent events threatening to destroy the infant state. Most of the key civilian and military positions were being held then by Urdu-speaking leaders. The first Governor General Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who led the Pakistan Movement and Liaqat Ali Khan, the first Prime Minister--both spoke Urdu, and so did all other powerful ministers and officials.

Advocates of Urdu made determined efforts to accord it official status and recognition as the only official language of Pakistan, while keeping English as the interim official language. This led to passionate resentment and agitation in East Pakistan. But the protagonists of the Urdu remained so adamantly opposed to the rightful claims of Bangla as to resort ruthlessly to political suppression of its advocates. This sparked off agitations and violence in East Pakistan in 1952 following the attempt by the Central Government to rank Bangla officially below Urdu, although Bangla was the language of about 55 percent of Pakistan's entire population.

The 1952 language movement resulted in the death of a number of young university students, but it was also responsible for a more realistic language policy formulated since by the Central Government. Influenced partly by this tragic episode, and partly by the oddities of her geographical entity, Pakistan's rulers have since avoided making any single language the 'national' one. Instead three have been adopted. Under the 1956 Constitution of Pakistan, Urdu and Bangla were given equal status as the national languages. English was retained as an interim official language for an initial period of twenty years for all such official uses as it had been put to before. The Constitution of 1962 confirmed this arrangement.

In spite of the constitutional recognition accorded to Bangla and Urdu, English remained Pakistan's high level lingua franca for all practical purposes. It kept on operating as the working instrument for almost all



Governmental affairs and for intercommunication between the two wings-- for the superior courts of law, federal politics and commerce major industrial and developmental projects, and for education.

Since 1947, the educational system of Pakistan has been the system of critical appraisal on numerous occasions. In 1947, the All Pakistan Educational Conference made comprehensive suggestions concerning educational reform and development in the country as did the 1951 Educational Conference, and the 1957 Educational Reforms Commission for East Pakistan. Apart from these, comprehensive review of the entire educational scene and proposal for its improvement were embodied in the Six-year National Plan for Educational Development (1952) and in the First Five Year Plan (1955).

Recommendations for Educational reforms were also made by such bodies as the Advisory Board of Technical Education, and the Pakistan Inter-University Board. In addition, the education system of the country was the subject of appraisal and proposals for reform by many foreign missions and experts.<sup>14</sup>

Although a plethora of proposals was made for educational reforms, few concrete steps were taken and little progress was made in this area during the first decade of independence. Time and again strong comprehensive recommendations urged for change, but very few could be carried out because of other political and economic preoccupations of the central and provincial Governments.

However, the regime that came to power in Pakistan following the military coup in October 1958, proved more effective and businesslike in initiating reforms than the previous Governments. In December 1958, the Commission on National Education was set up for the purpose of review, reorganisation and reorientation of the educational structure and its objectives. The commission deals with all aspects of the nation's existing educational system and spelled out in its recommendations broad guidelines laying the foundation for its reconstruction. A great deal of attention was

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14. *Government of Pakistan (1960) Report of the Commission on National Education, Karachi: Ministry of Education.*

devoted to what was considered to be the most critical stage of education, class 6 to 12. The Commission called for the development of a new English curriculum based on realistic objectives and national needs. It also emphasised the necessity of introducing modern techniques for more effective teaching and learning of English as a functional second language. The Curriculum Committee for secondary education, appointed in June 1960, re-arranged the entire secondary curriculum in the light of the objectives and general principles outlined by the Commission on National Education. Out of this reorganisation emerged new curricula in all subject areas including English, which were introduced in Pakistan's schools in the academic year 1961-62. The introduction of new instructional methods and techniques for the teaching and learning of English as a second language (ESL) was, however, a different and more complex matter. In spite of the recommendation of the 1958 Education Commission concerning the replacement of outdated and ineffective instructional procedures, the situation in this area remained as unsatisfactory as ever. The proposal could not be implemented due to a variety of social, political, economic and psychological factors stemming from the colonial past and the on going economic and political structure of the country.

The scenario did not undergo any significant change after the emergence of Bangladesh as far as the formation of new educational commissions was concerned. Rather it turned out to be a peculiarly complex phenomenon because of several additional issues. The emergence of Bangladesh as a monolingual country heated up public emotion in favour of the use of Bangla in every sphere. But side by side, the prevailing elites, We as well as the 'nouveaux riches' Should their inclination towards maintaining English. An inevitable stir was created consequently giving rise to a confusing State with respect to the Language policy will provide and evaluation of the entire picture in the following section.

### **THE STATUS AND FUNCTION OF ENGLISH: *FROM POST-LIBERATION PERIOD TO PRESENT TIME***

English language achieved its status of Official Language in Bangladesh region through a process that was intricately related to the colonial administration. To need for defining a new status for it in requires

an independent Bangladesh understanding of that process. A thorough understanding of that process will enable us to appreciate the *need for* defining a new States for English in the independent Bangladesh.

In 1972, Bangla was constitutionally declared as the Stage Language of Bangladesh. This indeed came as a set-back for the status of English-- but did not completely overshadow it. Instead, a mixed circumstance was created. Bangla was being tried to implement everywhere with and smotional feedback from a section of intellectuals and professionals. But English continued to enjoy its high status as a prestigious official language in some major sections, banks, court, and commerce.

One can find interest in what Professor Rafiqul Islam, a renowned Professor of Bangla in the University of Dhaka, remarked at a seminar in 1982:

... One might wonder that the national language of indenendent Bangladesh is not actually one but two -- English and Bangla. The national language of the rulers is English, while Bangla is of the ruled. Officers have English as their national language while the clerks have Bangla. The upper class has English while the lower class has Bangla, and the middle class has a farrago of Bangla and English. English is the national language of seminers, symposiums, while Bangla is the national language of public meetings. Professors' national language is English, but the common sttudents have Bangla ...<sup>15</sup>

This situation prevailed for quite a long amid heated and emotional debates *in favour of* and *against* English from every corner. In 1987, the *Bangla Procholon Aain* (Bangla Implementation Act) was passed in the Assembly, which became the medium of instruction in Governmental and Public services, law and judiciary, semi-government sectors and, to some extent, in the private sectors. Signboards and hoardings in all public places all over the country, along with the nameplates of cars and other vehicles, instantly switched to Bangla.

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15. From Prof. Rafiqul Islam's speach in Bangla-- while he was presenting a paper at a seminar at the Bangla Academy, Dhaka in 21st Feb. 1982--cited by Khan, Israil (1989). *The Politics of Language and the Crisis of Bangla(Bhashar Rajneeti O Banglar Shomoshya)*, Dhaka.

But all these, in reality, served very little purpose for the sincere implementation of Bangla in every sphere. Rather confusion with regard to use of English continued to prevail as usual. It was because of the fact that the 'significance' of knowing English has never been reduced in Bangladesh even a wee bit either in the Pakistani colonial days or in the post-liberation era. English will continue to enjoy its high status as long as Bangladesh will have to remain dependent on the donor countries -- which are basically English speakers.<sup>16</sup> And who does not know the chain-relationship between the economic and the social infrastructure and hence the inevitable side-effects? Since the upper-middle and the upper class, who have been the controllers of political and economic power of the country, worked (and have been working) as policy-makers of socio-cultural and educational units, therefore in case of anything related to something like language policy of the country, their interest would be in the fore front.

That is why, despite governmental orders for implementing Bangla in all levels, one may find that firstly, the intention were not actually sincere, and secondly, nothing constructive has been done regarding the introduction of textbooks in Bangla for general, technical and various courses at the higher levels.

Therefore, at present, Bangladesh operates internally in Bangla-- from the educational arena to the administration and judiciary. English is used in a considerable measure only in the private sectors-- like the NGOs, multinational companies, private financial establishments, media and so on. Also in the field of post graduate general and technological education, English is the medium of instruction.

But at the same time, in many cases, the quality of the English used is often far from satisfactory. The sentences spoken and written bristle with common errors. 'Yet, even a slipshod knowledge of a poor English seems to offer better job opportunities than not.'<sup>17</sup>

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16. Khan, Israil (1989)

17. Chowdhury, Kabir (1994) *The State of English in Bangladesh* IN OF GHOSTS AND OTHER ESSAYS. Dhaka.

From a social perspective, English in Bangladesh is mainly restricted to the urban educated class. That English has, over the years, absorbed many of the indigenous linguistic and cultural traits of the Bangladeshi context: Though there is no such formal records of this unique language contact situation, we may cite a few examples of such *Bangladeshi English* if they may be termed so:

### Common Vocabulary :

bazaar (*market*)

bed tea (*morning tea served in bed*)

cash memo (*receipt*)

half pant (*shorts*)

hotel (*an eatery*)

in charge (*a person in charge*)

pajama, panjabi (*special attire of men*)

saree, salwar, kameez (*special attire of women*)

side hero/heroine (*supporting actor/actress in films*)

tubelight (*fluorescent light*)

Dhaliwood (*Dhaka's film industry, i.e. Dhaka+Hollywood*)

Some words result from religious influence or political events, like:

lathicharge (*police action with batons/ sticks*)

hartal (*strike*)

gherao (*surround someone/authority in case of any demand*)

namaz-e-janaza (*last prayer for a deceased person before burial*)

qulkhani (*a ritual performed three days after one's death*)

iztema (*a vast religious gathering at Tongi near Dhaka held once a year*)

Some phrases are most common in use everywhere, like:

to carpet a road (*to macadamise, metal or pave a road*)

cent percent (*one hundred percent*)

give someone lift (*to promote someone for and help him/her achieve success*)

have a soft corner for someone (*to have a soft spot/sympathy for somebody*)

pen-down strike (*a type of strike where the staff report to the office but do not work*)

These can be taken as a Bangladeshi pattern of the variegated sociolinguistic phenomena evident in all parts of the English world.

A good number of English language dailies and weeklies is published which enjoy substantial readership. A fair proportion of television time is devoted to films and other programmes in the English language (in BTV Bangla programmes are dominating, at present but if one keeps in mind the cable TV network, English programmes enjoy overwhelming majority.)

In some western educated wealthy families, English along with Bangla is liberally used at home as the language of normal conversation, especially when an academic or a political point is hotly debated. Many of these upper class well-to-do families send their children to kindergartens and tutorial schools where the learning of English is more emphasised than the learning of Bangla. And along with the learning of English in the prevailing class-ridden social milieu, these students usually develop certain false and artificial values, they become rootless. One can visualise the quantum of English culture being imbibed by these children, or the admiration being infused for all they learn and receive from the Anglicised life style they sport later. Noble Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, Rebel poet Kazi Nazrul Islam or Sarod Maestro Ustad Alauddin Khan mean little to them, while they are enamoured of western pop music programmes (but not classical western music), dog shows or car races.

Therefore, the clear-cut situation is, on the one hand Bangla-isation in almost every sphere has been under trial for implementation, and on the other hand influential elites both inside and outside the Government have been relentlessly maintaining the Englishisation process - resulting a tug-of-war between *English* and *less-English* (nobody wants English to be overthrown completely).

A general assessment of the overall circumstances throws up the following facts:

- a) As a result of Bangla-isation in the administration, a big section of people lacking sufficient proficiency in English is now able to get into public service, other government/semi government jobs.

- b) The general proficiency level in English has fallen, as English remains only as a *subject* within the school and college level curriculum-- where students can easily pass by memorising bazaar notes. Simultaneously, the percentage of failure in English is increasing considerably.
- c) A class of 'educated' people has been created who does not possess the basic skills (like writing and speaking) in English.
- d) Due to the so called face to face 'encounter' between English and Bangla, the *myth* (that English is a symbol of power, prestige and class) has increased even more. Consequently, the elitists have constructed a society of their own, having a contemptuous attitude towards the vast majority .
- e) A recent trend of *Learning English* (specifically spoken English) has developed all over the urban areas *English Language centres* have mushroomed everywhere ensuring 100% guarantee to enable learners to master the English Language skills.

In this context, one may say that neither Bangla, nor English has gained a firm footing in the socio-education system of Bangladesh. And no wonder, issues like -- '*how much English is required in Bangladesh*', '*whether English is a burden for all*', '*what should be the ideal strategy for increasing proficiency of those who really need it*' etc have become prominent.

But then, there is a hope of maintaining English in the Bangladeshi setting, which can be the key to socio-economic mobility, educational advancement and international understanding-- while nourishing Bangla in its rightful place.

*Chapter Four*

**ENGLISH EDUCATION in SCHOOLS:  
The SURVEY and its FINDINGS**



Let us visualise an English class in an urban high school. The room, barely large enough to accommodate 30 students, looks somewhat congested with over 60 students sitting in benches for their teacher to arrive.

Out of these 60-plus students, more than fifty percent come from middle-class economic backgrounds. While the rest comprise both lower and higher economic classes.

The teacher of this imaginary but arguably representative urban class is Mr. Chowdhury, who believes it is his job to present information and his students' job is to listen and learn. His stand-and-deliver approach reflects the view that teaching is a centralised and unidirectional phenomenon.

He starts teaching grammar-- the past tense. He goes on to explain the various aspects of the past tense giving their definition, using Bangla quite often. He writes the examples on the blackboard which everybody does not necessarily see because of the reflection of the light on the board. But seldom is anybody bothered to complain. Some keep on copying the teacher's writings, some are engaged in whispering or drawing cartoons. Mr. Chowdhury's one loud scream makes them alert momentarily.

After sometime, he asks, 'Okay? This is it. Understood?'

'Yes Sir'-- people reply in chorus.

Now Mr. Chowdhury gives them some exercises to do, from the book of course.

The students try to work hard and solve them as he says-- 'Hurry up boys and girls!' Some of them from the front benches hand over their note-books, others cannot.

'What have you written yeh? Is this what I've taught for so long? Correct all these and show me ...' He returns a few note-books. The bell rings. Time is up. Students sitting on the middle and back benches heave sighs of relief.

This is the general situation in the English classes of most of the schools in the Metropolitan cities of Bangladesh including Dhaka. Precisely speaking, in most schools in Bangladesh, neither the classroom size nor the physical environment permit the ideal teaching-learning situation. Shortage of classrooms compels the students to be squeezed into one class, and inevitably disturbance and discomfort ensues.

In Bangladesh, the number of students in a class is usually 60 in a secondary school, with space constraints as a major drawback for academic environment.

We may now have a glimpse of the extent of time allocated for teaching English in the class routines in schools. According to NCSC, English has been allocated 3 periods per week in classes 1 and 2, 4 periods per week in classes 3 and 5, 5 periods per week in classes 6 to 7, and 6/7 periods per week in classes 9 to 10<sup>1</sup>. This is the time for Bangla as well, and both the subjects carry equal marks. But the problem is, a good number of schools tend to put less emphasis on the teaching of English.

In such a context, there operates another significant factor which is enough to depreciate the enthusiasm for learning English, i.e. the lack of proper Teacher Education programme. This issue will be elaborately discussed later, but the overall picture regarding the teaching of a skill-based subject like English in schools seems far from happy, and needs rigorous reforms.

But then, since school is the basic and the most significant stage in the students' attainment of knowledge especially of the knowledge of English, it was the fundamental inquiry of this study as to how students in Bangladesh get acquainted with and accustomed to English in schools. Therefore the study was aimed at finding suitable answers to question like -- What portion of students' lives are influenced by English? How do they acquire (if at all they do) the skills of English language and eventually use them in their real life situations? Do they really perceive their extent of their acquisition, and what is the feedback they are receiving in this regard?

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1. Hoque, M.S. et al (1997) p136

## **METHOD**

In order to find out answers to these questions along with several other issues, it was decided that a small-scale survey would be conducted among the school-students (one group from the *lower secondary level* i.e. classes 6, 7 & 8, and the other from the *secondary level* i.e. classes 9 & 10)- - as well as among the teachers. In this connection, two different sets of questionnaires were prepared comprising questions regarding the extent, influence and usage of English in and outside the classroom.

There are reasons for selecting students both from the lower secondary and the secondary levels. It is the lower secondary level where the most effective and significant teaching and learning of English is supposed to take place. In classes 6,7 and 8, the pupils undergo a phase of consolidating their existing language (which they acquire at primary level) and proceed further on the path of phrasal and structural acquisition.

In the same way, the learners in class 9&10 are imported advanced language skills on the basis of their acquisition at the lower-secondary level.

## **SAMPLE**

The sample included students and teachers from 10 randomly selected schools in Dhaka. These schools had students from all types of socio-economic status.

Students and teachers were given their respective questionnaires and were asked to fill those up independently and freely. Names and whereabouts of participants were not to be kept on record.

## **PROCEDURE**

The students had to be told the main purpose behind the survey, and that their responses would not anyhow be used against them (inside the country) had to be guaranteed. Also they were discouraged to take the questionnaires home and fill them up under any sort of parental influence. Hence, it took quite little time for them to fill up the questionnaires.

It was a real pleasure to encounter the students' enthusiasm in this regard. Same was the case with the teachers too.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We will present the findings in tables in order to get a clear picture. The respective analyses and discussion will follow each table.

### PART : ONE

**Table 1.a : Student Language for Conversation**

	In the Family			With Friends		
	Bangla %	English %	Both %	Bangla %	English %	Both %
Class-6,7,8	68.75	6.25	25.0	84.38	Nil	15.63
Class-9,10	84.38	3.13	12.5	68.75	3.13	28.13

**Table 1.b : Comparison of Preference between Bangla and English**

	Bangla %	English %
Class-6,7,8	75.0	25.0
Class-9,10	80.77	11.54

**Table 2 : Student Use of English in Conversation *inside* Classroom**

	Always use English%	Sometimes use English%	Not at all%
Class-6,7,8	6.25	55.63	38.12
Class-9,10	9.38	48.33	46.22

The impact of MT is evident from the findings of table 1.a, 1.b & 2. As students grow older and get into higher classes, eagerness for using English in conversation decreases.

An ELT expert has also pointed out the fact that, in a monolingual group, when the pupils have the greater wish to communicate orally, the greater urge to abandon English becomes evident -- and what they tend to use is the MT<sup>2</sup>. So it is not unusual that even in English classes (*Table 2*),

2. Abbott, G. (1981) *Encouraging Communication in English : A Paradox in ELT Journal* Vol. XXXV No. 3; April. Oxford : OUP.

they keep on conversing in Bangla quite frequently-- except in cases when they are discussing some academic issues with their teachers. But interestingly, that too depends mainly on teachers' role, i.e. whether the teachers are using English or not. Teachers are actually habitual bilinguals inside the class (*Table 1* in Part Two). They explain, it is very much difficult to keep using English all the time because -- firstly, the students come from different socio-economic levels, and they are not equally equipped with their listening skills in English. Even for a few 'weak' students, they have to use Bangla to conduct the proceedings of the class. Secondly, a general mood of *fear of English* prevails within the entire class since everyone has the pre-conceived motion that 'it is an alien language after all, which is unlike the language in mathematics or social science classes.' Hence an equal use of MT (or a slight use of MT) eases the situation, and makes students feel comfortable. Thirdly, the students do not find any social motivation for English conversation outside their classroom. It is in the class that they use some English. They seldom use English with friends at restaurants, playgrounds, parks etc. Those who do, come from posh English-oriented backgrounds.

**Table 3.a : Psychological Reaction of Students when Someone Converses with them in English**

	Comortable %	Uneasy %	Mixed %
Class-6,7,8	28.13	18.75	53.13
Class-9,10	31.25	18.75	50.0

**Table 3.b : Students' Response in such case- - whether they reply in English or not**

	Yes %	Often %	No %
Class-6,7,8	37.5	21.88	40.63
Class-9,10	23.6	25.0	52.5

These two tables reveal interesting phenomena as far as students' social interaction in English is concerned. Since in almost all cases they are in the habit of using MT, hence when in some irregular cases they are faced with English conversation-- their psychological reaction is mostly 'mixed' (*Table 3.a*), though a good number of them feel 'comfortable'. However, this 'mixed' phenomena requires a clarification.

The expression MIXED does not mean that they feel uncomfortable. Rather it means a sort of *wonder* in their minds thinking ' *Why is this man, a fellow Bangalee, speaking to me in English?*' ' *Does he hate Bangla?*' ' *Is he trying to show-off and prove to be smart?*' ' *This must be a crazy arrogant MTV-style guy ..... etc.*'

So, we can see that though students generate 'mixed feeling' among themselves, still a good number of them try to reply in English. Those who do not use English, do so not because they have some sort of 'nationalist' or 'emotional' feeling towards MT, but mainly because of extra consciousness, i.e. they fear they might commit grammatical errors while speaking.

This proves the point that English has not been able to become the language for social communication, because if it were (like in India or Phillipines) the students would not mind speaking even in 'wrong' English.

**Table 4.a : Students' Reading of English Newspapers and Books**

	Newspapers and Magazines			Story Books/Novels		
	Yes %	Often %	No%	Yes %	Often%	No%
Class-6,7,8	28.13	50.0	21.88	9.38	65.63	25.0
Class-9,10	40.63	40.63	18.75	18.75	68.75	12.5

**Table 4.b : Students' way of collecting English books**

	Buying from shops %	Borrowing from library/friends%
Class-6,7,8	20.83	79.17
Class-9,10	42.86	57.14

From *Table 4.a* we understand that the consciousness-level in regard to reading English newspapers and books is higher among the senior grade students which may be good enough to prove their motivation-level for learning English. Despite the fact that reading newspapers and books never helps acquiring speaking-skills, the students by this way are largely assisted for gaining reading and writing skills.

But one can notice that the percentage of reading English newspapers is higher than that of reading books-- and hence it is arguable as to how much they are really acquiring writing skills. Because newspaper-English

does not always reflect the stylistic patterns and literary structure of story books or novels (except in case of Editorials and Post-editorials). And people read newspapers basically for news items--out of which school-students normally go for sports or entertainment pages. So one may have reasons to doubt how far *mere newspaper reading* can contribute to the systematic acquisition of an FL.

But luckily, the students are not that much disinclined to English literary items as evident from *Table 4.a*. A major portion of them has access to this domain, while they collect books mostly from libraries or friends.

Some may wonder why can't they develop the habit of buying books. there can be various reasons of which economic reasons comes to the fore. English books for adolescents and teenagers are not much published in Bangladesh. A huge chunk of the published books in English are suitable for university students and elderly people-- which deal with socio-economic, political, cultural or historical issues. Since we are talking here of their reading 'storybooks' and 'novels', we find that whatever are available in shops are almost all from foreign publications. They are expensive enough to be out-of-reach of school students from middle-class families. So any ardent reader of English literature finds it easier to borrow books from friends or go to libraries. The British Council library, The USIS library or even the Dhaka Public library offer abundant English books of their choice.

So this should be appreciated as a welcome phenomenon that school kids have developed the tendency of visiting libraries.

**Table 5.a : Students' watching English Movies**

	Regularly%	Often %	Not at all %
Class-6, 7, 8	90.63	9.38	Nil
Class-9,10	66.25	33.75	Nil

Undoubtedly, everybody has a strong fascination for English movies. And this proves a clear distinction between *Reading English Books* and *Watching English Films*. While *reading* takes a thorough and concentrated effort of one's mind and understanding which is quite tedious for an irregular reader, *watching* movies are far more easier. The viewer need not grasp the meaning of every dialogues

**Table 5.b : Students' Medium of watching English Movies**

	Television %	Video %	British Council/USIS Audtm.
Class-6,7,8	75.0	25.0	Nil
Class-9,10	52.74	34.38	12.8

entred, rather the semantic meaning of the co-ordinated utterances(along with the happening displayed on screen) is enough to create 'enjoyment' in the viewer.

Also another point is, most of the students watch the films in television. The term *Television* incorporates all the movie-showing channels of the satellite network apart from the BTV. The telecast of English movies in channels like STAR TV, TNT is so regular and frequent that the situation can be compared to *voluntarily pouring coca-cola in someone's mouth who is allways thirsty for the beverage*. So such strong inclination to English movies does not mean any acquisition of English skills.

Rather one needs to take into account the percentage of students going to the British Council/ USIS auditoriums to watch movies. The very thin percentage of the students in this regard states the fact, school students are still not prepared to undergo the experience of watching serious classic movies (those are shown in these auditoriums)-- where a *reading-like mental effort*. What they watch in TV and video are mostly action thrillers and comedies.

**Table 6 : Students' use of English in Letters to friends/ relatives.**

	Yes, fully %	Some portions of it%	A few words %	Not at all %
Class-6, 7, 8	12.5	3.13	46.88	25.0
Class-9	9.38	12.50	50.0	28.13

The findings are interesting to watch, especially in contrast to the English movie viewing percentge. Here, *writing* is a matter of applying writing skills. It is quite natural that Bangla-speakers would opt for using MT while writing letters, but as 'supporting vocabulary or phrasal expression' they tend to use English too, and the percentage is the highest in using 'a few words' -- i.e. syntactic structure is kept intact in Bangla. We may recall *Table 3.b* where the percentage is the highest in 'not pesponding in English while conversing'. Like 3.b, here the reason for most students' not using full



syntactic expression in English is nothing but the fear that they might put 'wrong' or 'ungrammatical' structures, even 'spelling errors' while writing. And committing errors in writing means keeping those on record!

The small percentage who fully use English have a sound command over the language (though it does not mean they do not commit errors).

**Table-7 : Motivation to learn English.**

	(A)			(B)		
	Parental Encouragement			Self Awareness to Improve		
	Always%	Sometimes %	Never %	Always%	Sometimes %	Never %
Class-6,7,8	93.75	6.25	Nil	34.38	65.63	Nil
Class-9,10	90.63	8.57	Nil	81.25	18.75	Nil

These findings are definitely positive signs as far as the learning of English is concerned. The high percentage of parental encouragement (*Section A*) reveals the level of motivation at home. Parents in urban areas are more conscious about the need for education. As an integral part of their awareness, they do want their children to be adept in English, and do not hesitate to spend extra money for their children's English education.

But this finding does not state whether parents are at all sure as to how English should function in Bangladesh. The nature of the status of English remains confused as usual, and this finding may mean that parents *either* have never overlooked or forgotten the necessity of English despite the present Bangla-isation procedure in the country, *or* want their children not to be victims of the confused language policy existing in the country.

Also a clear-cut picture in regard to the 'TYPE' of parental motivation could not be found in this small-scale research. One is not sure whether parents are aware of the teaching techniques of EFL, or of the pros and cons of the English syllabuses in schools, or of the actual deep-rooted reasons behind their children's success or failure in English.

Nevertheless, from *Section B*, we see that parental encouragement obviously helped to create self-awareness among the students. Especially in the higher classes, students being a bit matured, displayed high consciousness level which also proves that they too are fully aware of their

loopholes and that they need to improve for keeping pace with outside world.

**Table-8 : Students' errors/mistakes that occur while writing essays and compositions (students' perception)**

Class 6, 7, 8			Class 9, 10		
S.No.	Types of Error	%	S.No.	Types of Error	%
1	Tenses/Verbs	84.38	1	Syntactic Structure	59.6
2	Prepositions	75.0	2	Tenses/Verbs	37.5
3	Syntactic Structure	59.38	3	Phrases	37.0
4	Phrases	53.13	4	Prepositions	34.38
5	Spellings	37.5	5	Articles	12.5
6	Articles	12.5	6	Pronouns	10.46
7	Numbers	9.38	7	Vocabulary	7.5
8	Pronouns	6.25	8	Numbers	6.63
9	Vocabulary	4.5	9	Spellings	2.5

Before any elaborate discussion, it needs to be made clear that the intention of the study in this regard was, and is, not to deal with the analyses of pupils' error as per above mentioned findings. Rather this would be a generalised discussion about the probable causes of such errors, with respect to the fact that these are all students' self-assessment, expressed from their own standpoint.

As from the previous discussions, we all know about the unsatisfactory state of ELT in the urban schools, So much types of crucial errors i.e. 'tenses/verbs' syntactic structures' or 'prepositions' are quite obvious.

Since the learners themselves openly expressed these views, one needs to appreciate their self consciousness. From the above findings, especially from the chronological pattern of the errors, we can infer the nature of their language at their respective points of learning career and discover what they still have to learn. It is the responsibility of the error analyst to describe and classify the errors in linguistic terms, and build up a picture of the feature of the language which are causing them learning problems.

If we consider the finding for classes 6,7 and 8, we can assume that *inadequate knowledge of the formation of rules in English* leads them to commit these type of errors. Since the teaching of rule formation officially begins from class 6 (continuing till class 8 ) one can understand the importance of the proper teaching-learning environment which includes well trained teaching staff, adequate materials, appropriate situation-based methodology,

well-planned syllabuses and so on. We have to remember that the students are as good as 'beginners' at this stage. So they start learning English as a real alien subject. All the grammatical elements of the new language are judged by them in view of their MT rules. So MT interference caused them to commit errors. Especially, when they make syntactic and tense /verb related errors, the basic role of the MT structures comes into play. That is, Bangla has 'SOV' (subject-object-verb) structure while English has 'SVO' structure. Then again, the use of preposition in both the languages is markedly different. In English, prepositions are separate entities and hence difficult to keep in their memory-- whereas in Bangla, prepositions usually acts as suffixes. and they are a lot easier to remember. This is the basic cause of such large percentage of verb/tense & preposition related errors.

Then, if we talk of 'syntactic errors' we find another point too. Apart from the 'SVO vs SOV' feature. We need to remember that in many cases sentences, sounding 'correct' grammatically, appear erroneous and unacceptable due to the specific context. Interpretation of context is essential to judge sentential errors. It is possible that a learner's sentence may be both acceptable and appropriate but nevertheless erroneous. After all, in any context there are always a number of different but appropriate things that can be said. We have additionally to satisfy ourselves that the learner's acceptable are seemingly appropriate utterance is, in fact, being interpreted by us in the way s/he intended it, that s/he is really saying what s/he appears to be saying. Inexperienced teachers would obviously fail to judge the learner's mind here, while the experienced teachers would possess an idea of what their pupils are or are not capable of saying. Sentences of this sort may be the result of the application of the wrong rules produced by chance, or simply the repetition of something learned as a whole, parrot-fashion.

What we mean is that, in such complicated circumstances, there should be teachers who have the capability and experience of dealing with the pupils-- which is a rare phenomenon, let alone at lower secondary, even at secondary levels.

Interestingly, the students of classes 9 &10 tend to commit 'syntactic error' more than the rest, and the reason lies in the fact that these students, having achieved some basic footing in the lower level, now display their tendency to her flourish in terms of writing skills. They have to write paragraphs, comprehension pieces, letters and essays more frequently, and

hence more errors are bound to occur. This is a natural phenomenon. What is pathetic is that they don't get any feedback from their teachers for the elimination of their errors (as would be evident in the later discussions).

Lastly, we need to remember, not everybody commits errors in the same way. There are *lapses* because of confusions of language structure. There are *slips of pen* which occur mainly in case of spellings, articles, pronouns and of course, unlike the native speakers who constantly use their language at home and every other place, learners of non-native countries do not get the scope of using the FL outside the classroom (*Table 1a & 1b*). So there are no 'social feedbacks' in this regard. They keep on learning (*memorising*) inside the class, commit errors inside the class and are 'corrected' inside the class. And then they switch on to MT environment outside the class. This is the reality.

**Table 9 : Teachers' Reaction to students' errors/mistakes**

	Becomes angry and gives punishment %	Becomes angry but doesn't punish %	Doesn't become angry %
Class-6, 7, 8	37.5	50.0	12.5
Class-9,10	17.19	67.19	15.63

Several interesting features relate to the findings above. The scanty percentage of teachers who 'does not become angry' when students commit errors/mistakes reveals the fact that, student-teacher relationship is not actually close. Teachers in general may denote their hundred percent effort in the teaching of English, but are not yet prepared to accept students' errors as a natural outcome of language learning activities.

The present reality helps us to identify three basic reasons behind this:-

### **I. THE LARGE SIZE OF THE CLASS:**

Since there are too many students in most of the classrooms it becomes difficult to look after them even in small groups-- let alone individually. Moreover the average time of 45 minutes allotted for each class makes things more troublesome.

What the teacher has to do is to indulge in 'one-sided activity' -- by giving lectures, writing on the blackboard, dictating etc. The students'

response to her/his teaching is seldom taken into account. Hence the teacher, due to lack of psychological intimacy with students remains unaware of the issues like why students do or do not understand what s/he teaches, why they do not speak out when they don't understand, and so on.

There is yet another point to consider. Because of the overflow of students in each class, the physical environment of the class becomes hostile towards sound academic setting. This create noise and disturbance which frustrates both students and the teacher.

So the obvious outcome (i.e. errors/mistakes) in students' scripts do 'agonise' the teachers, some of who do not hesitate to 'punish' them.

## **II. TEACHERS MAY BE TOO BUSY:**

Teachers' involvement in a major outside-the-class activity like 'private tuition' obviously hampers their performances inside the class. English teachers, apart from Mathematics teachers, enjoy the overwhelming privilege of group teaching at their homes as well as one-to-one private teaching at students homes, which help them to earn a huge amount of money. As a result they tend to perform to a minimum level in the class and are least bothered about students' extent of acquisition.

So either they *don't get angry* because of their confidence that they will easily make up for things in their private coaching classes, or they *get angry* with some pupils because those error-committing few may not be getting private coaching from them !

## **III. INADEQUATE TRAINING OF TEACHERS :**

Lack of 'proper' teacher education is one of the basic reasons operating behind this issue. The word 'proper' is emphasized due to the fact that there exist quite a few teacher-training institutes in the country running teacher education programmes-- but how far they are 'useful' or 'adequate' or 'up-to-the-mark' remains a debatable issue.

Teacher-training is not merely training teachers what to teach and deal with syllabusses, but it incorporates aspects like-- understanding students' psyche, effectively guiding the academically backward students and so on.

But as far as the 'realities' are concerned, the emotional and psychological features involved in the process of teaching and learning are hardly taken into account. May be the classroom environment causes the hindrance, but adequately trained teachers would no doubt bring fruitful results. Also lack of teacher-education limits teachers' performance despite their sincere efforts.

**Table :10 Teachers' Activities in response to Students' errors (students' perception)**

Teachers' activities	Class 6, 7, 8 (%)	Class 9, 10 (%)
Always explain the reasons for errors and try to help	39.38	27.5
Sometimes explain the reasons for errors and try to help	46.88	62.5
Never explain the reasons for errors and does not try to help	13.75	25.63

The findings reveal that the learners' perception about their teachers' cooperation is still far below their expectation. Especially in the higher classes, where students are preparing for their secondary final examinations, the teacher-activities regarding student's errors seem gloomy. And this may well support the assumption that teachers may be too busy in out-side-the-class activities and hence bother little to look after their students learning-level inside the class.

Table 9 and 10 also prove another point that needs to be looked at with greater care. Because that is the positive signal amid the overall dismal language teaching environment. Despite the students fear of English as an alien language, and despite the awkward classroom realities, the students have been maintaining their *consciousness* regarding learning English. That is the reason why they care about their teachers psychological and teaching activities. Some may say that this consciousness of students arises from their awareness that they *have to pass* in their final examination where most pupils fail in English. But the point cannot be overlooked that if they really

lacked the 'urge' to learn, they would not have bothered about the teachers' lack of co-operation in the class. Rather they would have been quite content with whatever goes on in their private coaching classes.

## PART: TWO

**Table 1: Teacher Language for Conversation**

Inside the classroom %		Outside the classroom %	
Bangla	25.08	Bangla	62.33
English	21.42	English	12.5
Both	53.5	Both	25.17

As discussed in *part one*, teachers are used to bilingualism inside the class. The sole use of English depends on the locality where the school is situated. That is in some posh areas where most students come from economically well-off backgrounds, and where teachers too come from equally posh backgrounds. English, in such case, is the only medium of conversation in the class.

But the high percentage of teachers using Bangla outside the class only reveals the fact that outside the academic environment they act like any other normal social context. Hence they tend to converse in MT with the students-- be it some academic affairs or exchanging greetings.

**Table 2 : Teachers' judgement regarding the English proficiency level of their class.**

Excellent (%)	Good (%)	Fair(%)	Poor( %)
Nil	54.25	45.75	Nil

This finding may not depict the real picture as no teacher would like to express the true proficiency level of his/her respective class.

But one thing is clear, nobody is fully satisfied with the quality of English language proficiency anywhere.

**Table 3: The Prime Drawback of Students regarding learning English**

Reasons	( %)
Lack of Motivation (because of socio-economic reasons)	24.44
Fear of English (as an alien subject)	75.56

Here we find a slight difference between the students' perception (see *table 7* in **part one**) and the teachers' perception of the students in regard to motivation. Irrespective of socio-economic status students receive ample motivation from parents, and also they themselves feel the urge to attain the proficiency in English.

But on the otherhand, if we carefully observe the percentage of 'English fearing students' then we have to assume that despite being so strongly motivated, the 'fear' has not lessened. Herein lies an interesting question. We know that self awareness, motivation and interest helps to lesson the fear. Then why do we get such contradictory result ?

Let us try to tackle the issue from a slightly different angle. When parents 'motivate' their children to learn English, does this motivation mean 'to achieve proper command of the language for the sake of life-time needs' or it means 'becoming well-equipped only to pass the competitive examination?'

If the first case is true, then the 'fear' is supposed to perish eventually as the learner psychological setting would gain substantial boost. In other words, the learner would experience 'integrative motivation'. But if the second case is true, then the 'fear' would increase further. Hence it is difficult to draw any specific conclusion from this result.

But then there is an other point. Being motivated either way, when a student comes to his/her class only to find the learning environment below-satisfactory and the teacher's desired cooperation absent, then the 'fear' is very much supposed to gether in his/her mind. As regards the reality, the high percentage of *fearful* learners seems quite natural.

Lastly, one needs to point out the fact that since English has been reduced to a language of the classroom and outside the class the social motivation or



rather temptation to speak English is totally absent, the 'fear' of English appears even more logical.

**Table 4 : Whether teachers *try* to get rid of learners' fear or *motivate* learners.**

Yes, of course (%)	Yes, I try to(%)	Sometimes(%)	Not at all( %)
57.93	27.57	14.5	Nil

A Teacher can be a great motivating factor for the students to take interest in their learning. This skill and personality are instrumental in creating congenial conditions for learning. It is because s/he brings with her/him certain important personality characteristics that can go a long way towards determining whether her/his pupils, by getting rid of their fear or uneasiness, make the most of their opportunities for learning. Given such capability of a teacher, if we now look at the above results, we have every reason to be enthusiastic. But if we take into account the findings of *table 9 and 10* in part one , then the above results appear dubious and incorrect.

The contrast is clearly evident! The teacher who emphatically stated that they *do act* to get rid of learners fear or *try* to motivate them, were the same teachers who 'get angry' (even punish) in seeing learners commit errors and who 'do not always explain the reasons for those errors.

**Table 5 : Types of errors/mistakes students normally make (*teachers' perceptions*)**

Types of Errors	( %)
Tenses/Verbs	51.25
Syntectic Structure	36.50
Phrases	21.38
Prepositions	9.68
spelling	6.50

Here too we can notice the contrast between students' perception of their own mistakes/errors and the teachers' perception-- which is relatively low.

The reason behind this may be thus, teachers did not freely express their views in this regard and tried to minimise the results, because the real picture could convey negative impression with respect to their teaching.

But the positive side is that in terms of the *order* of the errors, there is similarity between the students' answers and the teachers' answers.

**Table 6 : Teachers' reaction to students' errors**

Become angry and give punishment %	Becomes angry but do not punish %	Do not become angry %
6.66	32.5	60.84

Here too, one can notice the sharp contrast as compared to *Table 9* in part one. The high percentage of teachers 'not becoming angry' depicted here may prove the self-defence attitude of the teachers.

If we are to take the teachers views as 'correct' then the students have to be judged guilty of supplying wrong information. But when we keep in mind the fact that the students are nobody but the 'English fearing sufferers' who are at the receiving-end. And at the same time, if we remember the gloomy picture of English education in the country, then we have no option except accepting the learners' views as authentic.

**Table 7 : Whether teachers try to explain reasons for students' mistakes/errors and help.**

Yes, always (%)	Yes, Sometimes (%)	Not at all (%)
61.33	38.67	Nil

Same is the disparity between the findings of this table and those of *table 10* in part one. Hence our assumption remains the same as the previous table, i.e. teachers' act in self-defence.

**Table 8 : Whether there are sufficient Teacher Training Programmes (regarding English)**

Yes %	No %
25.33	74.67

At present, there are three different Teacher Education Programmes for secondary teachers run by the TTCs, Bangladesh Open University and the University of Dhaka. Previously, only the TTCs (situated in the major cities and towns) used to conduct the programme offering one year course for the Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.). The qualification for admission in this course has been and at least the first university degree. One year M. A. in Education Course i.e. M. Ed. is also offered in one TTC.

However, simultaneously the Institute of Education and Research (IER) of the University of Dhaka used to offer one year course for the graduates leading to Diploma in Education equivalent to B.Ed. This was followed by one year M. Ed. and after that a provision for Ph. D. existed.

From the 1994-95 session, IER discontinued their diploma course and introduced a 3-year Honours course titled '*Integrated Bachelor of Education*'. Students after passing the Higher Secondary Examinations can apply for admission. This course includes special emphasis on languages and communicative skills along with all the facets of modern educational research and professional sector. This is followed by one year Master of Education and thesis based Ph. D. on Education Programmes.

Meanwhile the Bangladesh Open University has introduced a 2 year Bachelor degree course specifically designed for secondary school teachers of English titled *Bachelor in English Language Teaching* (BELT).

Hence one can assume that with regard to teacher education, the recent developments are showing signs of a more positive approach.

**Table 9A : Whether attended any teachers' training programmes/courses**

Yes %	No %
75.45	24.55

Now the teachers (the participants in this survey) who have expressed their dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of teacher education programme, mainly referred to the programmes of the TTCs. As far as their age group is concerned, they could not avail the programmes of IER or of BOU since

these are recent developments. So their reply appears to be logical in that sense.

**Table 9B : Whether they are adequate or up-to-the-mark (personal feeling)**

Yes (%)	To some extent (%)	No (%)
11.00	31.50	57.50

As assumed in the previous discussion, the teachers mainly referred here to the TTC's programmes. Because since the IER's Honours course started from 1996-97 session, it's very much unlikely that the participants could avail themselves of the opportunity (*for practical reason*).

Hence their discontent clearly lies with the courses offered at TTCs.

*Chapter Five*

**ENGLISH, CURRICULUM and  
the SCHOOL:**

**WHERE TO START FROM ?**

**A. The SCHOOL and the  
TEACHING of ENGLISH**

**B. The LEVEL at which ENGLISH  
should be INTRODUCED**

It has been everybody's favourite hobby to constantly bemoan the deplorably poor standard of English that prevails now in Bangladesh, especially those who belong to the generation of 50s and 60s. While sympathising with their opinion, it must be stated in all fairness that English at that time was learnt not only through English classes and their teachers, but also used to be reinforced through other subjects which too were taught through English. It was so because English was the medium of instruction. Besides, the standard of teaching and the teachers was much higher on an average.

On top of that, the motivation for learning the language was very sharp because of the fact that nobody would get any worthwhile job without adequate proficiency in English. The standards automatically became high even at the matriculation level. Under that system where motivation was automatically generated, even the grammar-translation approach proved effective in developing reading and writing skills, but not the other two skills (listening and speaking) which one had little scope for practicing outside the classrooms. The Japanese and the Chinese, by the way, recently have been experiencing similar problems in their respective countries. They know their grammar thoroughly well but not their usage in practical communicative situations.

However, since our task is to deal with the causes and effects of the existing reality, let us try to throw light upon some basic issues. These were highlighted in the introductory chapter, and now need to be pinpointed on the basis of the discussions so far.

Evaluating the status of the teaching and learning of English at the secondary level school education, we cannot afford to brush aside issues like- -

- a . Analysis of the *schooling environment* in regard to the English language syllabus structure, methodology, teachers' role, learners' expectation and the like.
- b . Determination of the *exact* level at which English should be introduced to get the desired result.

The real picture will hopefully help to assess the English language situation in the overall context of Bangladesh.

## PART-A **THE SCHOOL and the TEACHING OF ENGLISH**

It is almost trite to mention that *schooling* is the first genuine step in the process of child's socialisation. Childhood is a state of being untouched to interfering social influences. The simplicity, the forthrightness and the playfulness of childhood is omnipresent and irrespressible. 'Children's awe and curiosity, their searching looks, the major connection that their minds can retain and reproduce leaves even the adults perplexed'.<sup>1</sup>

Keeping in mind this exciting wave in the sea of human life a child undergoes, we now look into his/her gradual process of assimilation in school environment.

Bernard Shaw once remarked that his education had been continuous from childhood except for a brief interruption in school! Ironically the statement seems to be true as far as the English language education in the schools of Bangladesh is concerned. Inconvenient classroom conditions with overcrowded pupils, lack of proper ventilation and light, followed by inconsistent syllabus pattern and teaching style by unskilled or semi-skilled teachers have only propagated the misery of learners as a whole.

The main complaints raised about schools included poor quality of education as a result of badly trained (or absent) teachers, large classes and shortage of books, and the lack of responsibility of schools towards the pupils.<sup>2</sup>

In such circumstances, students are often victims of several kinds of stresses in schools and do not often know how to cope with these.

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1. Singh, Asha(1998) *The Problem : Early Childhood Care and Education* in *Seminar* Vol 462. p12.
  2. *The Economist Intelligence Unit (1998) Bangladesh (CountryProfile1997-98).London.*

Among several sources of stress in adolescents (specifically when they are at the secondary level), most important are *information load* and *parental expectations*.<sup>3</sup>

*Information load* results primarily from improperly planned curriculum which leads to excessive burden in the classwork and home work. The respondents to the survey (*chapter four*) personally maintained that in English classes specially, they were given too much work as home task. The teacher would, for instance, read out a piece of prose, give a minimum description and ask the pupils to do all the exercise at home without explaining or guiding properly. As a result, the volume of their homework note-books was three-four times larger than that of their class work note-books. So they had to depend heavily on private tutors.

*Parental expectation* is yet another burden. Parents, who are motivating them to acquire adequate proficiency in English, are often not aware of the shortcomings in the school situation. Hence, when a student fails to achieve the 'desired marks' in the subject, parental outrage is obvious, because to them, the 'outcome in the report cards' is important rather than the 'reasons behind failure'.

To get a more clearcut idea of the ongoing reality regarding school education, we may present here the comments of the ENGLISH TEACHING TASK FORCE, set up on 27.10.1975, in order to seek information about the teaching of English in Bangladesh. This taskforce was the first major initiative in this regard and so its findings and observations are authentic enough to merit consideration.

Their findings on English Language Proficiency<sup>4</sup> depicted the following

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- I. The only students who can as a body be said to have reached a satisfactory level of proficiency of English at secondary and higher

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3. Nathawat, S.S. (1997) *Reducing Academic Burden on School Students* in *Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology*, Vol 24.

4. *Report of the English Teaching Task Force*(1976) p.1



secondary levels are students from the cadet colleges.

- II . The English proficiency of students in class IX is at least two years behind the standard assumed in their text books.
- III . The English proficiency of students of class XII is at least four years behind the standard assumed in their text books.
- IV . The majority of trainees at secondary teacher training institutions (at least 70%) are not proficient in material beyond that used in the class VII text books, yet they are expected to teach up to class X.
- V . No more than 20% of the students at Primary Training Institutes (PTI) can be considered proficient in material which they are supposed to teach in classes III-V.
- VI . The levels of English proficiency are very low throughout the secondary and teacher training levels. They indicate a desperate situation in English language,teaching in Bangladesh.

Further findings on personal and teaching material revealed <sup>5</sup>:

- I . Very few primary school teachers in training can be considered capable of teaching the material found in English textbooks for classes III-V.
- II . Most of the secondary school teachers can be considered capable of teaching the material in the textbooks for classes VI-VIII. But probably only 15% of secondary teachers can handle the present class IX and X material.
- III. At all levels there is a grave shortage of trained teachers in English .....

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5. *Ibid*, p.2

- IV. Teaching methods observed were not conducive to effective learning; from the primary level students are made to learn by rote without understanding.....
- v. None of the textbooks were closely related to the present levels of achievement of the students achieving them. This is most evident at the transitions between class V to VI and between classes VIII and IX... Students arrive in class VI with only a rudimentary control over English... [similarly] The graded course ends at class VIII and students are suddenly expected in class IX to master relatively upgraded English which they find almost impossible. These two situations put both learners and teachers in a very difficult position...

However, these were the outcomes of the overall educational situation existing then. That the situation has not improved much was again proved in the observations of the Task Force Report on *Development Strategies for the 1990's* published in 1991--

The educational system has failed to promote uniform mass-oriented and universal system of education.... The education is rigid and compartmentalised and this has resulted in wastage, primarily manifested in drop-out rates, failure in public examination and educated unemployment rate. The literary rate is low, functional literacy is ever lower..<sup>6</sup>

As for secondary education, the report maintains--

The secondary schools, largely non-government, manifests the divisions and deficiencies of the primary education. The enrollment ratio is below 20% and less than the half of that women. The number of schools have increased over the years as has enrollment of students and employment of teachers largely due to population pressure.... overcrowding in metropolitan and government schools remains a perennial problem. The organisation of secondary schools remains enhanced with attending low quality of management.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Sobhan, Rehman et al (1991) *Report of the Task Forces on Bangladesh Development Strategies for the 1990s Vol. 1 [ed], Dhaka:UPL p146*

7. *Ibid*

The situation regarding the curriculum and textbooks was no better--

The quality of instruction despite supply of standard textbooks... and increasing number of trained teacher remain poor as manifested by failure rates... The lack of interaction with community and identification of need-based curriculum fails to enlist the support it needs to mobilise available resources. In most secondary schools physical facilities remain a constraining factor. In this sector, the divisive education has gained roots through... mushrooming growth of English medium schools in cities...<sup>8</sup>

Even subsequent reports in various national newspapers support the statements, especially with respect to English. Some of them are follows:-

a. TEACHERS OF OTHER SUBJECTS TEACHING ENGLISH IN SCHOOLS.<sup>9</sup>

[ *Report: Because of want of experienced English teachers, school authorities in Netrokkona district have engaged teachers of other subjects to teach English.*]

b. MISERABLE PLIGHT OF COUNTRY'S LARGEST HIGH SCHOOL.<sup>10</sup>

[*Report: Tejgaon Government High school, the country's largest Govt. high school which has been nationalised on April 1981, had 99 teachers previously and quality of education was high. In 1995 teaching staff has been reduced to 49. Now 3-4 teachers remain absent per day. Worse is that, there exists only 1 English teacher for 3 thousand students !*]

c. STANDARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION DETERIORATING IN BARGUNA.<sup>10</sup>

d. SECONDARY EDUCATION IS BEING HAMPERED IN CHAPAINAWABGANJ.<sup>11</sup>

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8. *The Bangladesh Times* (20.2.93)

9. *The Daily Aajker Kagoj*(Bangla) 27.12.95

10. *The Bangladesh Times* (8.5.94)

11. *Ibid* (18.4.94)

e. TEACHER SHORTAGE HAMPERS EDUCATION IN RAJSHAHI.<sup>12</sup>

f. KURIGRAM: IN A GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL, STUDENTS  
250, TEACHERS 2!<sup>13</sup>

The gist of the reports under all these headlines, if summarised is as follows:-

.... Most of the high schools are facing numerous problems including shortage of teachers, educational appliances, accomodation and fund. Shortage of classrooms and furniture, alongwith lack of educational equipments are common phenomena. School buildings are in dilapidated conditions. Absence of sanitation is a major problem.

.... Good English language teachers are not available in the non-government high schools.

... Private coaching has become commercialised in large scale. The teachers are so much engaged with their private coaching that they can hardly can give attention to their students in the class.

.... The teachers do not follow any modern methods of teaching. They impart lessons in the class without any plan.

... Few schools have libraries, but these are not functioning well. Library books are not distributed among the students regularly.

.... According to a survey, educated persons do not take up teaching at the non-government secondary schools as salary of teachers in those schools is meagre. Schools are unable to pay 30% of the salary due to shortage funds. Moreover, these is a government ban on increasing tution fees of the students whereas the institutions have no other sources of income. Hence, teachers with no proper qualification have been engaged in the non-government high schools.

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12. *The Bangladesh Observer* (27.2.94).

13. *The Daily Ittefaq (Bangla)* (14.2.94).

Hence the woeful plight of the schooling process is clear, and even today the situation has not shown signs of improvement. Now the point we want to highlight is that, because of these grim realities in the infrastructure the outcome in all related sectors have been equally distressing. How can one expect the situation as regards English teaching to be ever 'fair'--let alone 'good' or 'better'--when English is a *fearful* foreign language and the minimum groundwork has never been done in the educational policies?

Let us now analyse in brief the prime drawbacks of English teaching in the school education with special reference to the secondary level.

We have chosen the following features for our discussion:

1. Syllabus structure,
2. Teaching materials,
3. Testing and evaluation process and
4. Role of teachers and student-teacher relationship.

## **1. SYLLABUS STRUCTURE**

The syllabus which is a part of the curriculum, is a set of guidelines, a concise written account of a course of study. Pupil's age, mental maturity, aptitude, intelligence and related aspects should be determined through research and taken into consideration during the formulation, selection and the sequencing of the topics and pieces. It should not be overloaded with too many subjects. Grade-wise package of knowledge should be determined first.

Now the on going curriculum of the secondary stage, which was formulated in the eighties had some major drawbacks. Specially in terms of English education, too much emphasis has been put on literature-oriented teaching. *The English paper I* has been containing prose and poetry items, with the stories and essays of various British and American writers and poets of 18th and 19th century poets. And interestingly, the selection of those pieces has shown no significant consistency. On what basis they have been included and what the learners have been supposed to acquire from these has been an unanswerable question. Whereas we

know that ' the contents syllabus must reflects national objectives (of any country concerned)-- aims and aspirations of the nation'<sup>14</sup> , and hence we can easily notice the *isolation* the English syllabus from the both learners' and societal expectations! Hence students expectations have only been memorising the selected answers of 'suggested' questions (without any sort of meticulous reading) and sit for the examinations. In this way, *English paper I* has been cleared.

Then in *English paper II* the story has been a complex one. Suffocated with the bunch of grammatical elements followed by comprehensions, translations, paragraphs and essays, it has been dealt with by the teachers in different ways-- on the basis of their teaching abilities and also the capabilities of the learners to 'digest' them. Students have learnt to act according to the 'suggestions' where even 'voice', 'narration', 'idioms' etc. have been expectedly 'common' in the question papers! So has been the case with the compositions.

It is obvious that the concept of *acquiring language through situational process* has been totally absent, and that English basically a skill-based (not a content-based) subject has been overlooked by the syllabus planners.

Since this type of primitive approach has been in practice in case of all other subjects, a 'task force' was set up by NCTB in 1996 which reviewed the existing curriculum structure and submitted a report proposing a modern and real-life oriented curriculum for the lower secondary, secondary and higher secondary levels. The Report discussed elaborately the loop holes of the existing curriculum system and the competence of the new structure that has been proposed-- giving detailed subjectwise account of all the aspects to be taught.

For the teaching of English, the new syllabus structure is intended 'to focus on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as learner centered activities within communicative contexts.'<sup>15</sup>

As regards the nature of English Teaching, the report maintains-

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14. Ahmed, N. U. (1995) 'Guidelines for formulation and implementation of school Curriculum in Bangladesh' (key note paper at the NAEM, Dhaka).

15. 'English Language Syllabus' in the 'Report of the Task Force on Curriculum and Syllabus' (1996) NCTB, Dhaka.

.... English needs to be recognised as an essential work-oriented skill that is needed if the employment, development and educational needs of the country are to be met successfully. Elementary to intermediate communicative competence in English, therefore, constitutes an important skills for learners at this stage. ....English should, therefore, be taught as something to be used, rather than something to be talked about.<sup>16</sup>

Stage by stage the syllabus has been thus formulated, with elaborate discussion of the elements to teach. Also specific importance has been given to teaching style and teacher's skills. It now seems that the proposed structure is quite in line with the recommendations put forward in the *Report of the English Teaching Task Force 1976* where it was mentioned (regarding syllabus) that --

an appropriate graded syllabus should be introduced at each level and textbooks related to the needs and capabilities of the students should be prepared.<sup>17</sup>

However, at the same time, some words of caution have also been expressed by the new Task Force(1996) that--

...The changes that are required in order to bring about an improvement in the teaching and learning of English are radical and manifold, and it will take time for these changes to be fully understood, accepted, absorbed, and finally have their desired effect.<sup>18</sup>

We prefer to desist from making any sort of forecast with respect to the *desired effectiveness* of this new syllabus structure. We have, in the later part on (Part B) of this chapter, provided a set of arguments regarding the *level* at which English needs to be introduced. Hopefully it will be evident to everybody that only a serious rethinking of the English Language Policy regarding the primary and the secondary level can yield positive results.

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16. *Ibid*    17. *Task Force Report (1976)*

18. *Task Force Report (1996)*

## **2. TEACHING MATERIALS**

Teaching materials are essential components of the curriculum and go side by side with the syllabus designing. The fundamental aspect of 'material' is the text book, supported by the subsidiary materials like the student-guides, audiovisual aids like the blackboard, overhead projector, tape recorder etc.

In case of implementing any communicative language teaching syllabus, all these materials play a vital role-- as a unit, not in isolation.

In a country like Bangladesh, one cannot expect all the materials to be available in all schools all over the country-- especially in terms of the prevailing realities (as discussed under the previous sub-heading)

But obviously we can talk about the textbooks, as well as the teacher-guides. A textbook is different from other books in the sense that it has specific objectives to fulfill, i.e. help the pupils imbibe certain knowledge, values etc.

Since the new syllabus is on its way to implementation, the required teaching materials especially the new text books, will obviously be introduced soon. But the fear still remains. Except for the urban schools, most of the rural schools may not get the desired support regarding teaching materials. At the same time, these will be ineffective without competent teachers of English.

## **3. TESTING AND EVALUATION PROCESS**

It is clear by now that because of the existing ineffective and backward syllabus structure, the testing and evaluation system has also been of the primitive kind in all respects. What has been (and is being) tested so far was the students' *capability of memorising notes* written in traditional style.

The entire gamut of the education system has been putting one basic lesson in students' minds : you attend a course and get a piece of paper [certificate] at the end of it, having proved the examiners that you can remember (and, ideally, make sense of and draw conclusion from) what



you read or were told.

Now let us judge the consequences more clearly in terms of English. When a subject like English is taught in a 'content based' manner, automatically the issue of 'revolving around the content' comes to fore, that is one cannot go beyond the contents. Students prepare notes from some selected questions, and all the questions come from the 'domain' of those selected items and the students *vomit* whatever they have *digested*. Similarly the teachers go through the scripts and put grades according to their so-called understanding of students' acquisition!

This situation is best compared to an imaginary event as follows :-

Imagine a person going to the car licensing authority and saying, 'Look, I learnt how to drive a car in the open ground near my campus, you must test my driving in the same place where I learnt how to drive, and thus give me license. You can't test my driving ability in any other place because that will be outside the syllabus.'

If driving licenses are given on the basis of such an argument, there will be only licensed killers and not drivers! This is exactly what is happening in what is called testing.<sup>19</sup>

This prevailing system has been also generating a hidden long-term negative psychological impact in students' minds. Let us look at it clearly. Language learning has always been a skill or ability rather than a 'studial activity'.<sup>20</sup> The success of pupils in the language learning depends on their ability to use it for communication. This, of course, assumes that they do in fact need it for this purpose and not just, for example, as a library skill. Language learning cannot be compared to the acquisition of knowledge or the memorising of information.

But because of the existing tradition, most of the students' academic careers have consisted in imbibing information, committing it to memory,

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19. Krishnaswamy, N. and Sri Raman, T. (1994) *English Teaching in India Madras*.

20. H.E. Palmer, cited by John Curtin (1979) *Attitudes to Language Learning: The Adult Student in ELT Journal Vol XXXIII No. 4. OUP*

and synthesising from it. So they think, why should language learning be any different? Since language learning is not as such, the pupils waste much time and mental effort, and thus become depressed and frustrated by their failure.

Hence, it is evident that this conventional 'prose poetry-composition memorisation practice' has done the greatest harm both to the learners and the education system, because the ongoing evaluation system, which is in line with the prevailing social milieu, has been encouraging learners only to pass in the first division with *star* (i.e. 75% marks) and even *stand* (i.e. securing place within first 20 in merit list)-- leaving an unbridled scope to adopt unfair means in the examination by a vast section of pupils. But this has bothered little to the authorities so far!

On the other hand, the teachers have been finding this system 'convenient' because they do not have to put in any work at all-- what has to be done has been done by the note-writers, and that's all.

Now from this 'content-based' outlook, let us go to the teaching of English as a 'skill-based' subject. We already know about its utility. As regards the newly designed syllabus, the 'task force' has put forward a changed system of evaluation which is as follows--

There will be 'continuous assessment' throughout the academic year. The students should only move to a new item, when the previous one has been sufficiently well understood- - and importantly, every new item will be subsequently recycled.

This continuous assessment should replace the present 'monthly tests' by providing necessary marks from regular classwork and homework set throughout the month. It has been recommended further that schools should frame a homework time table for all subjects.

In addition to continuous assessment, there is now a provision for 'internal examination', two in number. (The existing ones are also internal examinations named 1st term, 2nd term and Final examinations).

The first one will be 'progress test' while the second one will be 'achievement test'.

These tests are intended to assess the students' language skills rather than their memorising-ability. It has been maintained--

..Consequently, examinations should not be based on passages and exercises memorised from the textbooks, but rather they should test the learning outcomes specified in the syllabus. In addition, teachers should ensure that examinations are based solely on the skills and language that have been taught up to that point in the academic year.<sup>21</sup>

And hence, in the public examination (like the SSC and HSC), questions will be prepared on the 'learning outcomes as specified in the syllabus'. Students' revision is supposed to be based on their regular practice of the language skills, particularly reading and writing rather than on last minute memorising. Noticeable here is the mention of 'reading' and 'writing' as the two foremost skills. It puts the emphasis on them as is required by Bangladesh's social context.

However, there will still be the Rapid Readers only to encourage extensive reading, while grammar books are to be regarded as 'reference books' only.

But probably the most significant change in this regard is the 'omission of translation' from the SSC examination. Because, learning English communicatively without recourse to Bangla is what the new syllabus aims at. Translation-practice 'inhibits rapid comprehension and fluent expression'.

So in comparison with the existing systems, the newly proposed evaluation pattern may hopefully bring some improvement provided the other issues are taken care of properly.

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21. *Task Force Report(1996) op. cit. p152*

#### **4. ROLE of TEACHERS and STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP**

As far as the discussion on the schooling infrastructure is concerned, the teachers' role and consequently their relationship with the students appear to be one of the most fundamental issues-- especially keeping in mind the woeful scarcity of skilled or trained teachers in Bangladesh, one has reasons to be skeptical about the successful implementation of the education policies.

In an FL setting, the teacher is the most important single element in the learning process. Teachers should not only serve as models of the target language (TL), but should be willing to prepare a wealth of instructional materials for group and individual instruction, to understand group dynamics, and to plan lessons which are balanced and varied.

But this is still a distant dream in schools all over the country where we already know that 'only 5% of the secondary school teachers were capable of handling class IX & X teaching materials' or 'only 20% of the primary school teachers were capable of teaching the materials they were supposed to teach' (discussed under the headline *The school and the teaching of English*).

As already mentioned in Chapter 4 (*Table 8 : Part II*), the TTCs have been the main agencies responsible for teacher- education throughout the country offering diplomas to teachers till the introduction of 3-year Honours programme (B.Ed) in the Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University from the 1993-94 session, along with a 2- year Bachelor programme in ELT in the Bangladesh Open University. The quality of training offered at the TTCs was far from satisfactory and necessary upgradation in the syllabuses has been demanded from various corners for a quite long time.

However, NCTB has undertaken a teacher-education project for the teachers of secondary schools in accordance with the newly formulated curriculum structure. Till date, 1 lakh 36 thousand secondary teachers have been provided training and the rest are about to undergo training.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Huq, M. Sayeedul (1997) *The role of NCTB in the modernisation of Education [Bangla]* in the *Journal on National Education Week*. Ministry of Education, Dhaka.

However there are some other points to be taken care of. When it comes to the *role* of an English teacher, and specifically to the 'absence' of that desired role, we need to consider some hidden reasons too apart from the 'lack of training'.

*School Management* is an aspect which needs to be emphasised. Educational reformers believe that to improve schooling, teachers would have to be an integral component in the process. For this, the 'climate' or 'culture' in which teachers work deserves utmost attention. The organisational structure must be so designed that teachers can achieve their goals. And at the same time, teachers must be rewarded for their accomplishment. Neglect of those means the teachers enter the profession with a set of goals they have little chance of achieving. This is what has been happening in most of the schools of the country. In numerous cases, a number of young people become teachers of English who genuinely hold a great deal of love and enthusiasm for teaching, and strong conviction for the ideals of teaching profession. But all their love and ideals are shattered in no time due to some external factors linked to their career. For example, when they see that they are being superseded by the ones less qualified, or they have no scope/opportunity to pursue higher studies / training, their aspirations suffer a severe set back. To counter this 'frustration', teachers rush for private tuitions (and the prevailing traditional education structure has gladly supported them doing so!).

Also due to the frustrating school organisation, the relationship between the teachers and students has never been a pleasant one. Learners have been always at the 'receiving end' - - receiving not only inadequate input but also pity and hostility! Teachers have been playing the 'authoritarian' role, seldom have there been 'democratic' teachers.

Now a days, the term 'teacher development' (TD) has become wide spread as a modern concept in teacher education. A teacher needs to develop both personally and professionally in order to face the growing classroom challenges.

Hence the teachers need to adopt strategies like--<sup>23</sup>

- I. having a positive attitude towards the learners, school authority and the materials,
- II. having a knowledge of the students' social and psychological background,
- III. trying to improve their own skills in the TL and its culture.
- IV. being aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and so on.

The teacher has to be sensitive enough to sense a problem. When a student's academic performance dips, either due to stress, insecurity or emotional turbulence, the teacher should be the first to feel the difference. He should always give the liberty to his pupils to ask questions in and out of the class. The pupils should never be subdued and made to sit down - humiliated, but in fact should be encouraged to ask about anything he does not understand or follow-- a thing which is a great boon to the young mind. This is very much true in case of English or foreign language teaching.

But unfortunately, the existing teacher-education programmes still have not incorporated this TD approach, rather emphasis is laid mostly on being able to teach the prescribed text books properly (the only exception is BELT Programme in BOU.)

Also teachers should be given language-improvement training which will enhance their command over the language via regular upgradation. There is virtually no language improvement centre anywhere in the country.<sup>24</sup>

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23. Finocciaro, Mary (1984-88) *Teacher Development: A Continuing Process in Forum Anthology: Vol. 4*

24. Hoque, M.S. et al (1997) *op. cit.* p119

## **PART-B**

### **THE LEVEL AT WHICH ENGLISH SHOULD BE INTRODUCED**

Much hue and cry has been prevailing since the pre-independence days on the issue of determining the *level* of introducing foreign language (English) in the curriculum. In fact, seldom has any other education-related issue come to the fore time and again. To one's great amusement, this has never been settled properly despite overflow of arguments and debates from various corners in newspapers, journals and seminars. Almost all sorts of education committees regarding school-education have dealt with this particular topic without any fruitful outcome.

English has been introduced from class III according to the decision of NCSC in 1973, but later on, this decision has been changed by the NCTB by making English compulsory from class I.<sup>25</sup>

However, the Bangladesh Education Commission set up in 1972 under the able chairmanship of renowned educationist-scientist Dr Qudrat-e-Khuda, had proposed very clearly, with all related explanations and rationale that English should be introduced from class VI-- while the 'primary level' would have a duration of 8 years (i.e. class I- VIII).

Recently, the latest Education Committee has proposed the implementation of the Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission's report, where primary education will be upto class VIII, and the teaching of FL ( not mentioning the name of English) will start at class six. But interestingly, though the former proposal is being more or less accepted by all, the later proposal is facing stiff opposition from several quarters, giving rise to non-stop confusing debates. This is probably due to the fact that the people opposing the proposal are not considering the ins and outs of the overall issue.

Let us, for the sake of a lucid outlook on the issue, including the entire range of facets, focus firstly on the arena of primary education in Bangladesh.

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25. *Ibid.* p132

We have to keep in mind two basic features :-

- I . The primary level, being the threshold of pupils' subsequent educational levels, shapes and determines their psycho-social and educational-cultural infrastructure,
- II . The issue of introducing English revolves round this primary level-- be it *AT* or *AFTER* the primary education.

Hence the need for a brief-but-concise overview of the educational system is obvious.

### **THE PRESENT PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BANGLADESH**

It may be recalled that the UN convention on the Rights of the child recognises the Rights of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right it requires all member states to make primary education free and compulsory.

Hence in 1992, compulsory primary education was introduced in Bangladesh and the coverage was extended throught the country with effect from 1993. Separate Divisions of Primary Education and Mass education were set up in 1992 for 'providing effective management and policy support' to primary education.

So accordingly, the 'strategies' of the Primary education have been identified as follows<sup>26</sup>

- 1 . Compulsory primary education all over the country to be enforced,
- 2 . Operating schools in two shifts to be explored,
- 3 . Textbooks to be supplied free of cost to all children at this level,

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26. Ahmed, S.U.(1997) *Education Policy and Management in Bangladesh in Journal on National Education Week, Dhaka.*



4. Learning materials to be distributed,
5. Existing facilities to be optimally used and additional physical facilities to be provided on need basis,
6. Food for education or its effective alternative to continue and so on.

Before discussing the present situation regarding the success of these strategies, we need to have a glimpse of the facts depicted in the *Task Force Report on Bangladesh Development Strategies for 1990's* (Vol 1). Under the subheading 'Primary Education', the report maintains<sup>27</sup>

... Most of the schools do not have adequate physical facilities and teachers are either untrained or uncommitted or both.

...The enrollment rate varies from 52 percent to 86 percent while the average would be close to former. There is a substantial wastage in primary education due to low retention rate. It is estimated that only 20 percent of those enrolled in class I complete five years of primary education, and 50 percent drop outs take place between class I and II .... Given this macro scenario, it is necessary to mention that lower socio-economic groups with low household income show three times lower enrollment rate and six times higher drop out rates.

...Even though compulsory primary education has been on the agenda, the achievement has fallen far short largely due to non-availability of resources and also due to lack of sincerity and commitment on the part of the government.

...this has adversely affected the quality of primary education, particularly in rural areas and for poorer sections of the urban areas.

...Importance of parental and community involvement has not been properly realised.

These observations cannot be taken to be a sudden outcome of a short time negative situation at the primary level. If we look at the comments of the *1976 Task Force Report* on English teaching, we have reasons to be convinced that a long time awkward environment-- lacking any planning has been prevailing in this sector, and obviously in case of

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27. Sobhan, Rehman et al(1991) p151/152

English Teaching it needs to be remembered that the primary schools visited by the task force were better than average.

The English Teaching situation in the primary system appears to be far worse than that seen in any other part of the education system. ...In the primary schools visited there seemed to be little true learning at all : after three years of English in most schools the children at best learn to write the letters of the alphabet and to recognise simple words in isolation. Instead of basic language skills, students only pick up memorising habits.<sup>28</sup>

As regards attainment of students in primary schools, the report stated that

...In classes III and IV most students had great difficulty forming the letters of the alphabet. By class V they all seemed able to form most letters separately, but even after three years consonant groups were still difficult.

The most that can be hoped for in a majority of schools is ability to recognise certain words and write the alphabet.

This finding is reinforced by discussions with teachers of class VI who say that they must begin teaching the alphabet.<sup>29</sup>

But probably the condition i.e. English Proficiency of the primary teachers who were being trained in the PTIs as one of the greatest concerns:

...The PTI trainees with HSC were 10-20% weaker than first year College of Education students, and they were all consistently weaker than class IX students in government high schools...

...At most 21.6% correctly recognised the structures taught in classes IV -V [the PTI trainees were given questionnaires comprising the structures and elements taught in classes III-IV which they answered], and 30% had a mastery of a comprehension passage of class VII level...

...These results indicate that from teachers like these, only text-book bound teaching can be expected and that a large number of teachers will understand little of what they are teaching. In such a situation little learning can occur.<sup>30</sup>

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28. *Report of the Task Force (1976) op.cit.p28*

29. *Ibid p30*      30. *Ibid p29*

Hence when it came to observing the teaching methods in the classroom, the report maintained that

...In teaching method the only discernable difference between trained and untrained teachers was that the former used the blackboard a little more effectively.<sup>31</sup>

Thus after some related arguments, the 'future of English at the primary level' was envisaged as follows- -

...the evidence from primary schools themselves is against trying to teach English there. However, in order to meet the possibility of English being taught from class III, two proposals were made by superintendents. The first was an emergency one : that short courses on 'how to teach the textbooks' be given to primary teachers during vacations at the thanas (sub districts). The second proposal was that when the normal duration courses at the PTIs begin again, English should become a compulsory subject at all the PTIs.....However, as none of the staff at the PTIs visited has a degree in English, this appears over optimistic.<sup>32</sup>

These observations were made in 1976. Then the *Task Force of the Development Strategies* made its observations in 1991 (already stated). This shows that the scenerio has not changed to any considerable extent in 15 years (1976-91) and there is hardly any cause to be optimistic. It is clear that at present, at least some of the major shortcomings still exist despite the programmes undertaken by the government.

### **THE PLACE of ENGLISH at PRIMARY LEVEL : PAST and PRESENT**

After the overview of the overall situation of the primary education with specific reference to English, we would now like to focus on the status of English as a subject at the primary level-- which it has been enjoying since the post British era, i.e. the East Pakistan days till now. This, it is hoped, will help us to analyse the prevailing anarchy, and recommend with logic the exact level at which it needs to be introduced in the school curriculum.

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31. *Ibid.* p30

32. *Ibid*

## **I . STATUS IN THE PRE- PARTITION PERIOD**

English was an optional subject at the primary level in the pre-partition period, and was taught in classes III & IV in those primary schools only which could satisfy certain conditions. When taken up, this was treated as examination subject but marks obtained were not taken into account for awarding of scholarships.<sup>32</sup> English was also taught as a compulsory subject from class III upward in secondary schools and this practice continued even after partition.

There were strong arguments against teaching English to the primary school children in undivided Bengal. A special investigation was carried out regarding the conditions of primary schools in Bengal in 1943, and on the basis of that investigation, it was concluded that English should be dropped from the syllabus of such schools.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, many other provincial education officers opposed the teaching of English as a foreign language at the primary stage on psychological grounds. They opined that the teaching of an FL to tender-aged children was one of the errors committed by the British rule here. The abortive attempts of teaching English at such early age has severely damaged the real spread of people's education, they maintained. Also educational psychology doesnot admit the justification of teaching an FL before the age of 11 years.

## **II . ENGLISH TEACHING IN THE POST-BRITISH ERA : EAST BENGAL SITUATION**

After the emergence of Pakistan, the Pakistan Educational Conference and the Advisory Board for the Education for Pakistan (ABEP) maintained the same policy by not recommending any FL teaching at the primary level. Several other related bodies of the government felt the same and at last English was officially dropped from the primary classes in 1948. At that time, primary level did not include class V. It was added from January 1952 when the compulsory Free Primary Education scheme was sanctioned. Now, that English should also be discontinued in class V-- was proposed by the

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32. *Khatun, S.(1992) Development of Primary Education Policy in Bangladesh. Dhaka. p89*

33. *Ibid. p90*

Director of Public Instruction to the Education Department.<sup>34</sup> In his letter he argued that there was hardly any point in teaching English for only one year in the final primary class since the vast majority of the primary school learners would have no opportunity to get higher education. Hence a proposal under the above was placed in the Cabinet meeting for approval. English was completely given up at the primary level with effect from 1952.

But very poor demands for retrodution of English at the primary stage began from various quarters. Different educational body and competent bodies starting pressurising the Government in this regard advancing their own logic. In the light of popular demand, the same direction of Public Instruction now felt the reverse and urged the Government to reconsider their precious decision, and pass necessary orders to permit the teaching of English at the primary level from class IV upward as a non-examination subject as an alternative to Urdu or Bangla.

Thus a recommendation was made by the Education secretary to make English as an additional optional subject along with Urdu and Bangla where he also stated:

....I do not however, favour teaching of English at the cost of Urdu or Bengali. If the new constitution makes provision for state language, it will in all pobability lay down both Urdu and Bengali as the state languages. We have therefore to teach these languages from the earliest possible state. We should not, therefore, give up teaching Urdu to Bengali speaking children and Bengali to Urdu speaking children at the primary stage. I propose, therefore, to recommend to the Government that English be made an additional optional subject in classes IV and V...<sup>35</sup>

The cabinet meeting took up this recommendation and approved it. English became an additional optional subject from 1956.

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34 Ibid. p90

35 Ibid.

### **III. THE COMMISSION ON NATIONAL EDUCATION 1958: VIEWS ABOUT TEACHING ENGLISH**

This commission opined in favour of English at the primary level and gave some reasons. It said that firstly, English was by all means associated with the history of this sub-continent for 200 years. It was through English that the different parts of India could join the struggle for Independence. Then secondly, after independence, English had been used as a medium of communication between the two wings of Pakistan. The commission had other reasons too.

Hence, it recommended that English be included as compulsory language from class VI to XII and at the graduate level. English was not omitted from primary curriculum. It was recommended to be offered as an optional subject from class III to V. Since then, English virtually has become a compulsory SL in the primary schools of East Pakistan.

### **IV. ENGLISH AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL: BANGLADESH ERA**

The first Bangladesh Education Commission (i.e. the Qudrat-e-khuda commission) in 1972 did not recommend the inclusion of English (or any other FL) at the primary level. The commission proposed that primary level should have a duration of 8 years, and English would be introduced from class VI. Not only that, in class VI only 3 hours per week were allotted for English while Bangla was given 7 hours a week. In class VI to VIII, Bangla's share came down to 6 hours per week, while English was allotted 3 hours per week.

The commission held the opinion that a solid and stable grounding in the MT in the first 5 years of academic career would assist people to encounter and cope with any foreign language proficiently at the secondary stage.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, considering the historical association of English with the education system of the country, the commission recommended that English should be offered as an SL from class VI as a compulsory subject.

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36. *Ibid.* p90

But none of the recommendations of this commission was implemented, and it was totally pushed under the rug with the formation of Bangladesh National Curriculum and Syllabus Committee in 1975-- which included English as a compulsory subject from class III. They, of course, had several arguments in favour of their decision.

Since the introduction of the new curriculum in 1978, English had been taught as a compulsory subject from class III, though in quite a large number of schools, English had been taught from the beginners class of the primary schools, primary sections of Junior and Secondary schools. 'Public pressure in favour of English' had been the prime reason behind such move.

The NCSC later changed its decision in favour of English to be introduced compulsory from class I. According to the committee, English has been allocated 3 class hours per week in class 1 and 2, and 4 class hours per week in classes 3 to 5. Hence, English is now being studied as a compulsory subject for 14 years, i.e. from class I to the level of graduation.

### **C. WHAT SHOULD be the EXACT LEVEL to START ?**

So far we have gone through the *fluctuations* the teaching of English as far as the Primary education is concerned. However, this issue has at the same time been sensitive enough for all concerned since the education policy makers or experts have never agreed on any specific point. The unfortunate portion of the educational saga in Bangladesh has been-- decisions have always been taken from the respective standpoints of the concerned authorities, and these (being highly biased) have been implemented without thorough assessment of the situations or without any analysis of feasibility. Bureaucracy has played the pivotal role in handling educational issues, and as an obvious result, most of the decisions implemented have turned out to *impositions* rather than *spontaneous acts*. The outcomes that ensued from these have inevitably been enough to open one's eyes!

The status and the plight of English in the socio-education lives of the Bangladeshi people can never be measured in isolation. As discussed earlier, in order to analyse a particular aspect, a broad birds-eye view is required

all the time, and that is the sole reason behind expending so much efforts in this dissertation. The proficiency-level of the secondary students is a direct outcome (resulting from chain reaction) of their attainment process. along with the physical environment at the primary level. Time and again it has been proved that the shortcomings of the primary education system (despite governments 50% allotment of the educational budget in this sector<sup>17</sup>) are not matters to be wiped out within any short period through any sudden drastic steps. Rather they deserve to be treated with great care, sincerity and open- mindedness-- from a patriotic standpoint !

Why doesn't everybody try to find an answer to this basic question: Is learning English *essential* for all the citizens of Bangladesh ? How far in it *realistic* to impose English language education upon the vast majority of people who can afford not more than half a dozen of chapatis plus one item of vegetable (that too without much needed salt !) during supper time ? The government wants their children to have school education (under the uniform education system) which is appreciated, and it is also a matter of enthusiasm that 'food for education' has been in operation for quite some time. Then the question arises : what *type* of education needs to be given to them, and why?

As we know, there exists a uniform system of education country wide, and as both the 'cultured urban elites' and 'starving rural folks' study under the same curriculum. But where is the room for complacency ? The basic logic behind this uniform education system is not to create separate classes in the society and propagate hierarchy. But haven't the undesirable 'separate classes' been created from the very beginning, and hasn't the hierarchy been carefully nurtured ? (Nobody needs to ask : by whom ?)

Well, at present, it is agreed that any alternative to this uniform education system can prove too expensive and non-feasible in all respects. So then let us propose the idea of *uniform abolition of English from the primary level* - which may turn out to be a blessing for the education and the people of the country !

With respect to the overall scenario relating to English teaching, our stand is clear and <sup>is</sup> straightforward:



**ENGLISH SHOULD NOT CONTINUE AS A SUBJECT IN THE CURRICULUM FROM CLASS I TO V-- REGARDLESS OF THE DURATION OF THE PRIMARY LEVEL THAT MAY BE 5 YEARS (as now) OR 8 YEARS (as proposed).**

*The English Teaching Task Force* in 1976 had made the recommendation that there should be a truly unified system in which English would be taught either from class III or from class VI (English at that time was optional from class III and compulsory from class VI). However, the policy makers did not consider the 'class VI factor', rather they made English compulsory from class III and later on brought down the subject to the starting level, class I. And interestingly, the prevailing drawbacks (mentioned elaborately in the task force report) remained 'unnoticed' (!) and kept on perpetuating in the absence of any remedial measures. So what has been the point of all these exercises ? Has it not proved that the policy makers via the bureaucratic machinery have been the 'masters of imposition' rather than 'friends of the people' ?

We now put forward the logic behind our proposal to abolish English from the early stages of education, i.e. from class I to V, which we hope, would be considered seriously by all concerned.

**I. SHEER WASTAGE OF TIME, ENERGY AND RESOURCES:**

Since the entire infrastructure of the teaching of English at the primary level has been, and is, still poor and improper in all respects, it would be an utter wastage of time and resources to keep on wrestling with this language at this level. It has been so for the last 26 years and will be so, if continued, in the coming days.

Applied Linguists and ELT experts like J.D. Corbluth have frequently expressed their views in support of this notion:

I have been coming round more and more to the concept that, in a developing country, with the usual teacher and equipment problems, it

would be more effective and economical to teach English properly to limited numbers and/or in limited areas. The normal decision, for all pupils to learn English from standard X to standard Y, is a political and not an educational one. We all know that only a limited number will achieve success in the language, and that for the country's needs -- and this is the really important point, only a limited number will need to...<sup>37</sup>

Noticeable here is the use of the phrases 'limited numbers' and 'limited areas'. These are crucial as far as English in Bangladesh or any other developing country is concerned. Some ELT experts in Bangladesh too have no doubt in their minds regarding the fact that Bangladesh needs English for certain limited purposes and that the main aim should be to meet these purposes satisfactorily.<sup>38</sup> Hence it is obvious that English needs to be taught to limited numbers in limited fields for fulfilling limited purposes-- and that is the bottom line.

## **II. LANGUAGE LEARNING IS A MATTER OF MOTIVATION, NOT IMPOSITION**

Our first point might well raise some eyebrows because of the *incompleteness* of the argument. What next? How will it be at all possible to teach English in the next five years (from class 6 to 10) which is such a short span of time? Is it not an absurdity?

Let us put forward the point that language learning is primarily a matter of motivation--be it instrumental (*i.e. for specific needs*) or integrative (*i.e. arising from a positive outlook towards TL culture and context*). When the 'goal' or 'need' of FL learning is clearly perceived by a person, the learning becomes spontaneous or a natural process.

This is why, the undergraduate and post graduate students going to countries like China, Japan, France, Germany, Russia or Norway easily

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37. J. D. Corbluth quoted in V.V. Yardi's *A Note on the Changing status of English in India in Bhatnagar, Y.C.(1981) Problems and Perspectives of FLT in India. Aurangabad.*

38. Rahman, A.M.M.H(1985) *Rationale for a Language Teaching Policy: The Case of English in Bangladesh in IML Journal Vol.2. Dhaka University.*

attain the required level of proficiency in those languages in six months or an year, and are able to pursue their higher studies successfully. It has never been heard that anybody had any problems whatsoever.

By the way, intensive courses in foreign languages conducted by the U.S. army during the World War II achieved reasonable success.<sup>39</sup>

So now our point becomes clearer. The pupils in class I, II or III, very reasonably, do not possess the capability of understanding the 'need' or 'goal' and hence have no grounds to be motivated either! Rather, after crossing the barrier of class V, they start broadening their minds. At least they gather a basic sense of judgement which enables them to understand why they are doing what (if not how) they are doing. So the 'need' or 'goal' of learning English is understood by them more than any pre-primary students. And because of this, they can be more flexibly motivated to learn the language skills. Looking at it the other way, if post-graduate students can learn languages like German, Chinese and so on, within a short period, why can't lower secondary students adequately master a lot more familiar language like English?

### **III. NO SPECIAL ADVANTAGE IN STARTING THE STUDY OF ENGLISH FROM EARLY CLASSES**

There has been a great deal of controversy about the optimum age of language learning, and even now many people try to focus the point that human brain loses 'plasticity' after puberty. Language learning after that stage becomes increasingly difficult. But experimental data do not support this argument.<sup>40</sup>

Stern sums up different arguments frequently advanced for and against

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39. Ingram, E. (1975) *Psychology and Language Learning* in Allen, J.P.B and Corder, S.P. (ed) *Papers in Applied Linguistics: The Edinburg Course*, APPLIED LINGUISTICS Vol. 2 OUP p272

40. A Canadian neurosurgeon Dr. Wilder Penfield argued that there is a Biological Time table for language learning and came up with several notions in favour of his arguments. But later, Leon Jakovittes in his book 'The Context of FL learning (1974)' refuted this claim with experimental data.

starting language learning at different stages of life.<sup>41</sup> It can be found that at the pre-adolescence period (ages 3-10), despite some advantages of learning, there are disadvantages like--

- a. Possible confusion with first language habits,
- b. no conscious acquisition of language learning process and
- c. time spent not commensurate with results.

On the other hand, language learning at the adolescence period (ages 10-11 to school leaving), in spite of some shortcomings-- which include 'already crowded curricula and specialisation of studies'(we will come to this later) 'self consciousness' 'possible refusal to memorise' etc., the advantages are noteworthy:

- a. Increased capacity to appreciate aspects of language and culture contacts;
- b. Sufficient time to attain high standard;
- c. Improved memory and higher level of intellectual growth;
- d. First language skills well- established, hence no confusion.

If we look further into adult hood, then we find such advantages as

- a. Specificity of purpose;
- b. Good motivation added to reasons mentioned for adolescence;
- c. Greatest amount of learning in least amount of time.

Apart from Stern's observations, let us look at the outcome of the investigation carried out by the 'International Association for the evaluation of Educational Achievement' cited and explained by Carroll.

The study provides no clear evidence that there is any special advantage in starting of the study of the FL very other than the fact that this may provide the student more time to attain a desired performance level at a given stage. In fact the data suggests that who start the study of an FL at relatively older ages make somewhat faster progress than those who start early. The recommendation that emerges is that the start of an FL

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41. Stern, H.H.(1974) *Foreign Languages in Primary Education*. London p21

instruction be placed only so early as to permit the students to have the amount of instructional time they need to achieve whatever level of competence is regarded as desirable by a given stage of their education. If necessary the start of instruction can be delayed more than normally if more intensive instruction is given. (This practice has been successfully employed in Romania, for example).<sup>42</sup>

Noss made a detailed study of the language problems and FLT situations in various South East Asian Countries, where he offered the following solution:

When unfamiliar languages are to be taught by means of language courses only, the language instruction should be delayed as long as possible, being given just before the objective for which they are designed (e.g. general instruction in a new medium comes into play). This takes maximum advantage of both attrition rate and compression factor.<sup>43</sup>

The average South East Asian student completes only four years of schooling.

Therefore, it is obviously cheaper to delay instruction in the new language as long as possible; the expected reduction in numbers of students to be taught makes it possible to concentrate language teaching resources on those who can benefit from them most. The opposite choice to teach them the new language to everyone from the first grade, not only dissipates resources, but takes time away from the instruction of early school learners in other subjects, which may prove costly in terms of the whole country's economic development.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, it is crystal-clear that the sky will not fall on the pupils' heads if they are "deprived" of English at the early stage with respect to the *age factor*.

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42. Carrol, J.B. (1975) *The Teaching of French as a Foreign Language in Eight Countries*. Stockholm. p276-7.

43. Noss, Richard (1967) *Language policy and Higher Education and Development in South East Asia Vol. 3 part 2*. Paris: UNESCO and Int. Association of Universities. p66

44. *Ibid*

#### **IV. REDUCING THE BURDEN ON INEFFECTIVE TEACHER TRAINING**

A huge amount of resources, time and energy has to be spent the members of teaching staff, especially the English teachers, for pragmatic reasons. If English is abolished from class I upto class V, then this large number of English teachers will instantly be reduced. As a result, the 'burden' of inappropriate teacher-education policy will be removed gradually, and the problems will be far more easy to handle-- because the government will only have to concentrate an training English teachers for classes VI to X. In terms of number and effort, this will be both feasible and sustainable.<sup>45</sup>

#### **V. PROPAGATING EFFECTIVE EDUCATION THROUGH MT**

Because of the exclusion of the English upto class V, the proficiency-level in the other subjects through the MT will be much higher. The students will be psychologically tension-free(because they will now know that the alien language, is no longer holding a sword over their heads), and become spontaneous in their approach towards learning.

In their MT, they will acquire a basic grounding in other subjects. Hence, in class VI there will be a group of students all over the country who will be well-equipped with the primary knowledge of science, mathematics, social sciences and humanities in their MT, and will be now needs for the successive advanced level of learning

This type of serious implementation of the early education exclusively in the MT will thus mean that for all the children in the country, the beginning of their education will be a step towards self-reliance and more immediate awareness of their surroundings. Hence there will be a better chance to access their own position within the society with a awareness of their own

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*45 In a Post Editorial Article in Bhorer Kagoj( a Bangla Daily of Dhaka) renowned Educationist and Professor of English Dr. Zillur Rahman Siddiqui has emphatically highlighted this issue, and has further argued that as per the prevailing education system and policy, there is no such action plan from any quarter by which this 'English teacher shortage' issue can be solved--even in the next twenty five years!*

surroundings, the students in class VI (and onwards) may then go on to acquire English for their special communicative purposes.

In addition to this, the significance of MT in the early stages of education is always immense. The UNESCO in 1953 in *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* referred to the MT as the 'best medium for teaching of the pupils.'

According to G. R. Sharma, a renowned educationist of India,

no foreign language can take the place of the MT and so system of education can afford to disregard it without the serious detriment to the mental development of the child. The child thinks and dreams in the language which he acquires at the earliest first hand experiences of life. This naturally happens to be the MT. And for this reason the MT becomes the first condition of schooling for the intellectual development of the child<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, the role of MT at the early stages of child's schooling cannot, by any means, be ignored.

Now our next point, in this regard, is that when it comes to the teaching-learning of an FL (i.e. English), the teaching-learning of the MT and that of the FL can support and assist each other.<sup>47</sup> Whatever methods or approaches would be adopted-- be it the MT or the FL - the principles underlying these would be the same. Hence, improvement in the teaching of MT is highly desirable at the early stage. Three main reasons have been put forward in this connection:

Firstly, improvement in handling language is directly favourable to improvement of all kinds of thinking, such as reasoning and other mental operations that make use of words.

Secondly, nearly all children need instruction and specially devised practice in the use of their MT in order to acquire the ability to express themselves with clarity, ease and correctness.

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46. Sharma, G.L. (1957) *The Teacher of Hindi. Education: April issue.*

47. Gurrey, P. (1970) *Teaching English as a Foreign Language. Longman Group. p181*

Thirdly, those children who acquire some skills in the use of their MT, have had a good preparation for acquiring similar skills in using an FL.<sup>48</sup>

One has to remember that when one is using an FL, one is bringing into play the same linguistic skills as those one uses when one speaks or writes in one's MT. So acquisition of the skills properly in the MT (we need to notice that Bangla, the MT, is also not even taught properly--let alone effectively-- in the early stages!) will not only increase the pupils' intellectual maturity and make them capable of thinking, deciding or planning-- but will intensify their learning of English at the later stages, when they will be already motivated.

## **VI . LOWERING EARLY DROP-OUT RATE**

The excessive drop out rates at the primary level will be reduced to a considerable extent. In Bangladesh, drops outs primarily result from poverty no doubt, but at the same time, these are the result of 'burdens'. Which pupils are unable to cope with due to emotional, social or educational causes.

Also one needs to judge the drop out issue as follows :

Of the ways students can signal their unhappiness with the social system, dropping out is the most public, the most dramatic and the most consequential--for both the school and the student. By dropping out, students turn thumbs down on the values underlying formal education and the basic activities that make up schooling.<sup>49</sup>

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48. *Ibid.* p182

49. Voelkl, K.E.(1997) *Identification with School in American Journal of Education* Vol. 105 No.3 Chicago



way, as regards ESL in Bangladesh, should not be overlooked (i.e. omitting English from class I to V)-- if the policy makers really want to eradicate illiteracy.

Education through MT during the first five years of educational career can be an incentive (apart from others like-- food for education) for minimising the high drop out rate.

## **VII . EARLY ENGLISH TEACHING DOES NOT HELP EASIER ASSIMILATION**

This point may be called an extension of point no III, but not a repetition.

The section of literati and academics who advocate the early teaching of English for easier assimilation even refer to Chomsky to argue that a child learns a language easily between the age of 4 and 10/12. But unfortunately they seem to overlook or forget the fact that this is true only when a child learns through his/her ears, and not through text books and traditional teaching.

It is a common experience for an immigrant Bangladeshi man to a foreign land, say the USA or Australia, that the first to learn English are his children(*who play with the local boys and girls*), followed by his wife (*who has to deal with hawkers and shopkeepers*).

Similar is the case with all Bangla- speaking parents in the Arab or European countries, who do not speak those native tongues, but their children speak Arabic, German, French etc. fluently. If English has to be taught effectively at the early stage, the children have to constantly *hear* and *use* the language(which is by no means possible in 99% of cases in Bangladesh), and not learn the alphabet, spelling and meaning of words by rote.

## **VIII. OVERCROWDED CURRICULA AT THE SECONDARY STAGE IS NOT A PROBLEM**

After all the arguments stated above, one might, despite being convinced, still raise two fundamental questions: 'How far will it be feasible to start fresh English language course from class VI when everybody knows the massive extent of the curriculum, comprising a lot of other subjects?' 'Can the courses in English be covered within the stipulated time?'

No doubt, the point is serious and deserves our attention, because adequate amount of instructional time needs to be allocated here.

According to modern applied linguistics, it is reckoned that 1000 hours of contact time is sufficient for a complete beginner to attain the level of near native proficiency in a language.<sup>50</sup> At this moment, a Bangladeshi child, starting English at class I gets about 1920 contact hours before s/he enters the University (as per the calculation that English is at an average allocated 3 class hours weekly). With respect to this calculation what has been, and is, the outcome? Well, by now, after so much discussion, we are quite aware of that!

On the other hand, the required 1000 contact hours, provided that a constructive and scientific learner centred curriculum of English is designed, are getting 5 years of secondary level (class VI to X) as the instructional period. That means English has to be allotted 200 class hours a year--more accurately--a bit more than three and a half class hours per week. Does it sound so absurd or impossible? And we have to remember that the instructional hours relating to English are not the ordinary or the conventional hours-- these are supposed to be 'intensively and meticulously designed'. That is, what is the ultimate meaning of *learner centered curriculum*<sup>51</sup> as put forward by Nunan. The entire planning of the step- by- step. Syllabus will have to be done on the basis of various biographical data. These will include pupils' current proficiency level, age, educational background, previous language courses, the length of time spent in the

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50. Rahman, A.M.M.H. (1985) p109

51. Nunan, David (1988) *The Learner Centered Curriculum: A Study in Second Language Teaching*. CUP

language classes(whatever it may be ), educational and life goals, and so on. And since the teachers, in this approach, will be the key factor playing the pivotal role, the issue of then education will be in the forefront.

What we mean is that, concerted efforts from every concerned authority will have to be made for programming a cost-effective and sound English teaching policy. The student, who will be supposed to have adequate MT proficiency, supported by ample motivation for English and understanding of their goals, will pick up whatever is taught in a much better way (again the teachers will have to be rigorously trained before everything comes into operation).

Therefore, the logic of 'overcrowdedness of other subjects' does not necessarily hold water.

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This is our rationale so far as all our arguments are concerned. We have tried our utmost to look at the brighter side of the story, and judge things from positive standpoint, only for the sake of the thousand of millions striving at the primary and secondary levels against the 'fearful hurricane' of English language. We believe that the sorry plight at the primary level can be easily overcome, not by spending 50% of the allocation for education on primary sector, but by a coherent approach. The *missing patriotic outlook* mixed with *diehard initiative* is the greatest need of the hour.

Some may claim that the interest of urban students, specifically those who really need English education, has been ignored in such a proposal. Do we want to forbid them to study English before class V even if they possess the desire or motivation?

The answer is a clearcut *NO*.

Being aware of the big disparity between the urban and the rural societies, we have put forward our arguments in this way so far. Our proposal does not mean that there is any prohibition for anybody to achieve proficiency in English or any other FL from childhood. Anybody can learn

English at any stage, but it should not be imposed as a *rule* in the formal uniform education system of the country. Nobody is obstructed from enjoying the benefits of numerous English medium schools or attaining English education at homes. And side by side, television channels, books, newspapers or other related means (to learn English) are available everywhere. So urban children will never be without the 'English' environment.

One should not forget that English will be omnipresent among the urban elites-- as it has been in the past. Children of these societies will always be provided good English education due to its utility for upgrading social status. Like all other ex-colonies, in Bangladesh too, English has been instrumental in creating a hierarchy by providing middle-class status to the semi urban class, upper-middle class status to the middle class and upper-class status to the upper-middle class and so on, with the support of money-power. Since this *de facto* status of English will never perish, and since children of these societies will enjoy the privilege of English knowledge, our concern is basically with the majority, which does not actually require English for survival.

Therefore, English needs to be incorporated in the curriculum in a proper manner, so that a portion of this majority, if it feels, can also be rightly motivated to acquire mastery over the language at the right moment, and thus be benefitted. This is one side of the coin.

The other side as we have seen in our survey, is the poor plight of English proficiency of the urban students. That they are surrounded by ample scope for learning English is one issue. The real issue is the extent of their acquisition received in schools. So now, through our proposed system, these students will equally, or even more, be the gainers. The 'burden' that they experience in schools will be removed, and they will be able to achieve proficiency in the in a fruitful way.

And last but not the least, there may be an attempt to refer to the West Bengal situation in India, where a strong advocacy of restoring English at the primary level has been going on for quite some time. We should not confuse the Bangladeshi situation with that of West Bengal or any other

Indian state. Because, firstly, in West Bengal, ever since English was first taught till 1983 at the primary stage, the schools had at least the trained teachers and books. There was no significant complaint about these components.<sup>52</sup> English was abolished from the primary stage without any real complaint from the public, academics or the media against its retention.<sup>53</sup> Such has not been, and is still not the case in Bangladesh.

Secondly, the ground realities in the post-independence Indian geopolitical context is very much dissimilar to the Bangladeshi context. The existence of a pluralistic society has made India a multilingual country where English, not even Hindi, is bound to operate as the effective link language country wide. Since West Bengal particularly preferred English to Hindi as a link language, as well as, in state government administration, it has reason to cling to English at the primary stage (though there exists a forceful opposition to the restoration of English at this stage).

Thirdly, there is no statistical evidence there that English teaching at the primary level has in any way hampered their literacy rate.<sup>54</sup> It is simply because of the fact that, since English is almost a lingua franca in India, the 'motivation' to learn English from socio-economic, cultural and political viewpoints has been, and is, strong. In addition, there exist the required infrastructural components.

But all these are neither true, nor relevant to the Bangladeshi monolingual setting, which lacks the desired infrastructure in all respects.

Apart from the Indian context, some may point to the spreading practice of teaching ESL in non-English European countries. They forget that when a Dutch, Italian or Swedish child learns English, s/he is helped by the fact that the alphabet is familiar to her/him. Also many words of common use look and sound alike in their own language and in English. They can therefore, learn English much more easily than the Bangladeshi children, to whom everything about English is truly foreign.

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52. *Thakurata, S.N.Guha(1998) West Bengal: Rigmarole Over English. EPW, May 30 Vol.33 No.22 Mumbai p1300.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Cited in Ibid*

Similarly, if one tries to point finger at the African nations, especially the non-Arab ones which are also developing nations like Bangladesh but have substantial practice and use of English in almost every sphere of life. we request one to have a careful contrastive analysis of the two situations.

There are two prime reasons for which English is so much needed and preferred in the East, West and Central African states. Firstly, these countries, despite having their respective MTs, do not have any 'written scripts' of their MTs. They have all adopted the 'Roman script' for the written expression in their MTs. Therefore, English works as a 'compensatory tool' in this regard.

Secondly, unlike Asian countries which are diverse and different in socio-cultural nature, the East, West and the Central African countries, quite considerably, possess unique and common features in geo-social terms. A pan-African sense of solidarity functions emphatically among the people of these nation in spite of their separate identities. English again acts as a natural lingua franca-- to put it concisely as a language of wider communication-- among these nations.

For these reasons, the teaching and learning of English at their school levels has been given so much priority. English is not an FL there (as in Bangladesh), and hence in most of the countries, it is the medium of instruction in their school education after class III or IV, along with the active co operation of the public. Consequently, they have structured and developed their educational system as such.

Considering the question of English in all its ramifications, it can be reasonably assumed that our proposal, with respect to the Bangladeshi situation, deserves sincere consideration of policy makers, educationists and experts for the sake of a prosperous, people-oriented educational environment. Our words are nothing new. These were recommended in the first Education Commission Report of 1972, and have been repeatedly expressed by a section of educationists every now and then. The cart has always been put in front of the horse-- it is hightime that the reverse is done.

Chapter Six

**CONCLUSION**

The arguments put forward so far, along with the findings of the survey, should be adequate to confirm the then case of English in Bangladesh cannot be taken up in isolation. The ground reality regarding the teaching and learning of English are inextricably related to such issues as-- absence of any definite language policy with respect to English, failure of the authoritative agencies to develop the schooling infrastructure, inability of the planners to design a long term policy for improving the English curriculum as well as the evaluation system, lack of proper teacher education programmes to create skilled and devoted teachers and the like.

But only labelling these features as 'criminal active forces' would be a cliché-ridden exercise, something which has been in practice since long, and hence would serve no real purpose.

That the system of education is a major social institution of a country has largely been a forgotten theme in every quarter. The Bangladeshi society suffers from an inordinate load of tradition where the gulf between the rich and the poor has only widened. The country's planned targets have yielded few results. The heavy concentration on educational facilities in the urban areas has been on the increase. The maximum number of drop outs at all stages continue to belong to the lower strata of the society. The chances of an average intelligent child remaining in the school are very meagre, if s/he is not favoured by factors like parental social status, economic support, suitable place of residence etc. These are by themselves highly inhibitive and restricting variables operative in the Bangladeshi society as far as one's chances of education are concerned.

In such a context, utterances like '*educational benefits should be equalised countrywide in order to make it fruitful... etc. etc.*' sound ironic indeed. After all, muddle-headed understanding of any problem and the consequential ill-conceived strategies for solution can never be effective in propagating educational development.



So, in order to contribute effectively to the solution of the *English* problem, one must first analyse the educational need (especially with relation to English), adjust programmes toward greater productivity and plan a realistic investment programme for English education. After that, one needs to review the entire system of the primary and the secondary education, because only tangible progress at these stages can bring satisfactory results at the successive stages.

This dissertation has been basically aimed at investigating the prevailing *condition* and *nature* of English language teaching and learning in the secondary urban schools in Bangladesh-- to put it more precisely, in Dhaka city. We have gone through various facets of the situation, and the survey that was conducted served a significant purpose in this regard. The eventual *outcome* of the survey clearly reveals that :

- [A] Bangla, the MT, not only enjoys an overwhelming status in the sociocultural life of the pupils, it occupies a favourable position inside the classroom too--be it in conversation among the pupils, or in communication with the teachers.
- [B] Students do possess the habit of reading English novels, short stories and newspapers, and they also do watch English movies--but these do not have any significant influence on their day to day activities where Bangla acts as a spontaneous medium.
- [C] There is no shortage of parental motivation or influence to learn English. Irrespective of socio-economic status, parents maintain a high awareness-level in regard to the 'utility' of English. This has helped to generate self awareness among the pupils, specifically among those of the higher classes at the secondary level.

[D] But the students, despite being sufficiently motivated, receive the greatest shock in their learning environment. Factors like inconvenient classroom conditions, shortage of educational equipments, inconsistent syllabus pattern, unskilled 'authoritarian' teachers with their improper teaching styles, faulty evaluation system etc. create a negative impact on their psyche.

[E] The *teacher factor* has turned out to be vitally negative regarding English language learning, to such an extent that all other shortcomings have become less significant comparatively.

The teachers, in most schools, have been engaged in one-sided teaching activities, being the least bothered about feedback from the pupils. The concept of language learning as a two-way communicative affair is still non-existent in most English classes.

[F] A significant percentage of the teachers has shown a tendency to remain *indifferent* towards learners' errors in the class. Because of their lack of competence and inability to handle the students from a psycho-emotional perspective, they react negatively to their errors--which acts as a great *hindrance* to their acquisition of English language skills.

[G] On the teachers' part, the findings have revealed that they are also accustomed to the use of MT with their students in most cases. We already know the reasons behind this.

But what may be interesting is the degree of disparity between their response and that of the students in terms of 'common' questions. As per teachers' response, it has been claimed that they try to motivate the students by getting rid of their 'fear' of English. And also they do not react negatively to pupils' errors, rather try to help them to sort themselves out.

As regards the overall scenario plus the students' response, the teachers' response may quite well seem to be 'acts in self'

defence.' If they were *right* and *committed*, then how come the woeful situation has been persisting, and continues to intensify?

[H] With respect to training, though most of the teachers have undergone courses at the TTCs, they are dissatisfied with the system-- which they view as inadequate.

Here one needs to notice that almost all the teachers, as far as training is concerned, have referred to the TTC courses-- since they have not undergone the recently initiated 3-year Honours programme in Teacher Education at the University of Dhaka, or even the 2-year Bachelor programme in ELT at the Open University. Therefore, the *outcome* of these two prime teacher-education programmes has not been reflected in

this survey. If one is to understand these results of the survey conducted at the school level, one ought to free oneself from segregated understanding of the problem. What are the schools? The schools act as mediating agencies of a culture, because they have continual and prolonged contact with the students as they develop into adolescence and prepare for adulthood. But the schools, at the same time, are not the only social institutions affecting the individuals; we have the family, the government, the economic system and so on. Therefore, the issue of English at the secondary level in school education is inextricably bound with the status of English in all other social institutions. If it can be determined how English should operate in all these social institutions, the problem will be easier to solve. So let us repeat what we have stated in *chapter three* that, English, if maintained properly in the Bangladeshi setting, can be effective in socio-economic mobility, educational advancement and also in international understanding.

Since it has not happened so far, English, instead of playing its proper role in the Bangladeshi society (after the elimination of the *colonial hegemonistic touch* from its body,) has only managed to identify itself as a *subject of horror* in the curriculum. But interestingly, it did not allow the learners to forget that whatever they can achieve in future is only through the knowledge of English.

This love-hate relationship with English, which has been perpetuated since the very beginning, needs to be wiped out forever. And that is why a cohesive English language policy (*keeping Bangla in its due place*) mixed with good faith and political will is of utmost importance.

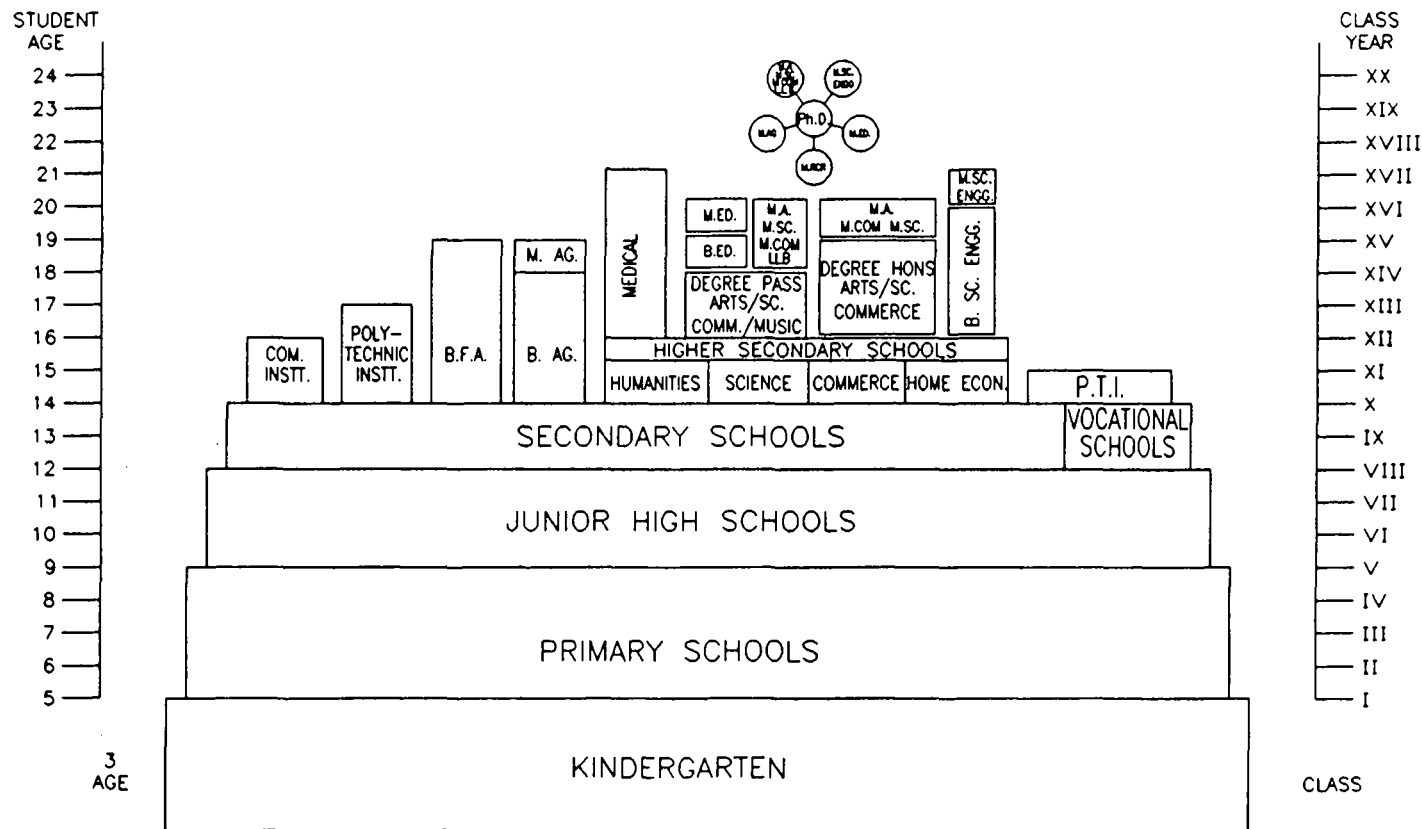
We have, in *chapter five*, presented our arguments as to what should be the exact starting point of English (in the curriculum) with the sincere hope that all the concerned authorities would promptly act before the situation gets out of everybody's control.

After all, any educational reform which does not explicitly and courageously face up to issues surrounding the changing and the challenging patterns of the socio-cultural structure of a country is bound to fail. The feckless consequence of educational reforms in the past half century should be enough to teach everybody this lesson.



## *Appendix*

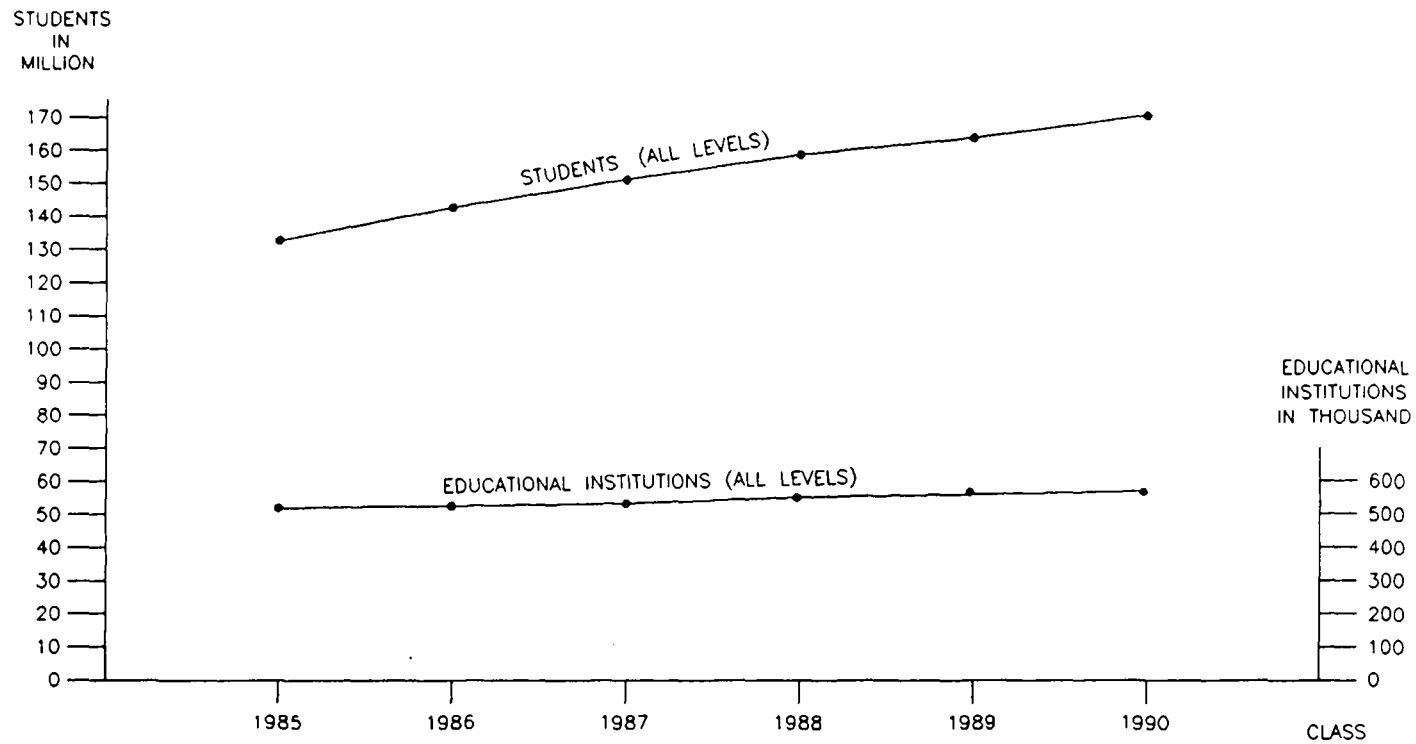
# EDUCATION SYSTEM IN BANGLADESH-1990



SOURCE : BANGLADESH EDUCATION STATISTICS - 1995

BANGLADESH BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION & STATISTICS (BANBEIS) : JUNE 1996

# EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS IN BANGLADESH 1985-1990



SOURCE : BANGLADESH EDUCATION STATISTICS - 1995

BANGLADESH BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION & STATISTICS (BANBEIS) : JUNE 1996

**TABLE: Indicators of education system in Bangladesh**

	1993	1994	1995
Primary school(Number)	49942	66168	61550
Secondary school(Number)	11095	11019	na
Madrashah(Number)	6179	5762	na
College, general(Number)	989	1268	na
Govt. Medical college(Number)	13	13	13
Non-govt. Medical college(Number)	4	4	5
Dental college(Number)	1	1	1
Engineering college(Number)	4	4	4
Govt. University(Number)	11	11	11
Non-Govt University	6	18	18
Full time students in University(Govt.)			
Total	63006	117359	134813
Male	48381	89799	101638
Female	14625	27560	33175
Student per Teacher			
Primary	63	63	66
Secondary	33	36	na
College	38	29	na
University	17	32	36
Operating expenses per student (Current Taka):			
Primary	567	475	508(p)
Secondary	1638	472	na
College	1146	1485	na
University	22958	11503	10014(p)
Total government revenue expenditure on education(Crore Tk.)	1641	1756	1877
Total government development expenditure on education(Crore Tk.)	635	751	1060
Total government expenditure on education(Revenue & Development) (Crore Tk.)	2276	2507	2937
Per capita total public expenditure on education(Current Tk.)	197	213	245



**Number of Primary schools,  
teachers and students by division**

Division	School		Teacher		Student(000)	
	1993-94	1994-95	1993-94	1994-95	1993-94	1994-95
Bansal	5839	6007	23104	24779	1129	1171
Chittagong*	17647	14597	60930	59904	4106	4518
Dhaka	17349	15716	66029	66343	4229	4736
Khulna	9725	7642	32718	31327	1892	1989
Rajshahi	15608	17588	59471	72132	3830	4409
Bangladesh	66168	61550	242252	254485	15186	16823

\*Including Sylhet Division.

Source: (i) Directorate of Primary Education.

(ii) BANBEIS, Ministry of Education.

**Number of Secondary schools,  
teachers and students by division**

Division	School		Teacher		Student(000)	
	1992-93	1993-94	1992-93	1993-94	1992-93	1993-94
Barisal	1155	1103	12232	1954	330	323
Chittagong*	2458	2415	28709	28434	1048	1155
Dhaka	2910	3141	37869	42982	1242	1721
Khulna	1662	1614	18077	17826	561	592
Rajshahi	2910	2746	29807	34221	970	1093
Bangladesh	11095	11019	126694	135217	4151	4884

\*Include Sylhet Division.

Source: (i) BANBEIS, Ministry of Education.

## Number of madrashahs with teachers and students

Type of Madrashah	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Madrashahs			
Dakhil	4466	4388	3995
Alim	821	827	817
Fazil	822	858	851
Kamil	96	96	99
Total	6205	6179	5762
Teachers			
Dakhil	58058	57044	49179
Alim	17241	16540	13730
Fazil	17262	17160	16749
Kamil	2400	2263	2416
Total	94961	93007	82074
Students(000)			
Dakhil	1117	1097	1096
Alim	246	248	265
Fazil	329	343	327
Kamil	43	43	53
Total	1735	1731	1741

Source: (i) Bangladesh Economic Survey, Ministry of Finance (ii) Madrasha Education Board

## Number of Professional colleges by type and number of students and teachers therein

Type of Institutions	1993-94			1994-95		
	College	Student	Teacher	College	Student	Teacher
Medical	17	8522	1054	18	9247	1206
Dental	1	410	51	1*	330	49
Engineering	4	2893	239	4	3105	226
Polytechnic	20	10565	884	20	12882	902
Law	32	15087	295	39	22648	382
Agriculture	3	1115	128	3	1125	128
Arts & Crafts	1	750	38	1	615	45
Home Economics	1	3500	48	1	3610	45
Institute of Social welfare & Research	1	661	15	1	532	16

Note: \*Out of 18 medical colleges, 13 are govt. and 5 are non-govt. colleges.

Source: (i) Bureau of Educational Information & Statistics, (ii) Bangladesh Economic Survey, Ministry of finance, (iii) Principals college of arts & crafts, Home Economics & Institute of Social welfare & Research.

## Number of students and teachers by government University, 1994-95

Name of University	Students		Total
	Male	Female	
Dhaka	15201	7150	22351
Rajshahi	10504	3375	13879
Chittagong	7299	2435	9737
Jahangirnagar	3151	1043	4178
Engineering	4423	617	5040
Agricultural	4452	580	5032
Islami	2865	309	3174
Shahjalal	985	154	1136
Khulna	605	119	69562
<b>Total</b>	<b>101638</b>	<b>33175</b>	<b>134813</b>

Name of University	Teachers		Total
	Male	Female	
Dhaka	914	287	1201
Rajshahi	534	61	595
Chittagong	409	40	449
Jahangirnagar	251	49	300
Engineering	394	34	428
Agricultural	379	16	395
Islami	101	8	109
Shahjalal	97	20	117
Khulna	71	6	77
Open(p)	44	10	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>3194</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>3725</b>

Source: (i) University Grants Commission.

## Number of Student and Teachers of selected non-govt. University, 1994-95

Name of University	Students			Teachers		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Independent University	122	71	193	26	6	32
North-South University	467	166	633	29	11	40
International University of Business, Agriculture and Technology(IUBAT)	263	33	296	74	2	76
University of Science and Technology, Chittagong	424	201	625	88	18	106
Women's University	--	71	71	12	14	26
Darul Ihsan University	na	na	na	na	na	na
<b>Total(p)</b>	<b>1276</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>1818</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>280</b>

Source: Respective Universities

## Number of teacher's training colleges and institutions and number of students therein

	Teachers Training college (Secondary school)				Teacher Training Institute (Primary School)			
	College	Male	Female	Total	Institutions	Male	Female	Total
1986-87	10	2615	1009	3624	53	4675	3725	8400
1987-88	10	2584	1040	3624	53	-	-	6893
1988-89	10	2379	1328	3707	53	3286	4439	7725
1989-90	10	2444	1342	3786	53	3144	2417	5561
1990-91	10	2444	1342	3786	54	NA	NA	5010
1991-92	10	2983	1469	4452	54	2662	2348	5010
1992-93*	11	3098	1517	4615	54	2662	2348	5010
1993-94	11	3471	1508	4979	54	1595	1700	3295
1994-95	11	3363	1575	4938	54	2015	1431	3446

\* Include one private Teacher's Training College.

Source: 1. BANBEIS 2. Bangladesh Economic Survey, Ministry of Finance

## Education and literacy rate, 1995

Indicators	Divisions							
	National	Rural	Urban	Banisal	Chittagong*	Dhaka	Khulna	Rajshahi
Primary school enrolment ratio (percent)	74.2	73.4	84.8	79.7	76.7	71.0	74.5	68.8
Male	80.7	78.5	91.5	86.7	83.5	74.3	79.2	73.2
Female	73.4	68.0	89.4	72.3	69.4	67.5	69.4	64.1
Primary School Drop out ratio	16.8	17.3	7.6	15.9	16.6	17.6	17.2	18.6
Male	15.3	16.2	7.1	14.6	15.8	16.4	15.4	17.5
Female	17.6	18.5	8.0	17.3	17.6	18.7	19.0	19.8
Literacy rate of population 5+	37.2	30.0	51.8	48.7	35.4	38.2	41.2	30.6
Adult literacy of population 15+	42.6	33.6	60.0	56.4	41.2	43.0	47.2	35.2

\* Include Sylhet Division.

Source: Health and Demographic Survey, 1995, BBS.

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